



Teens Discuss Social Media Privacy at Youth Law Fair



Want to talk with a teen? Forget e-mail, now an outdated form of communication among young people. Instead, tweet a message to their Twitter handle. Post on their Facebook Wall. Send them a text.

However, with teenagers' growing dependence on social media interaction comes major privacy concerns. These issues were the topic of conversation on March 24 during the 13th annual Youth Law Fair, an event jointly sponsored by the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Bar Litigation Section.

As Judge Melvin R. Wright welcomed a crowd of more than 200 local students and parents gathered on the third floor of the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse, he posed a question that would become the focus of the day: "What happens when you put certain things on [social] media?"

Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield and D.C. Bar President Darrell G. Mottley followed with remarks about privacy on the Internet, and then turned the floor over to Curtis Etherly, vice president for public affairs and communication for the Mid-Atlantic region at Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.

In his usual animated style, Etherly engaged the audience in a discussion about how teens share information and the consequences of broadcasting inappropriate behavior online and through phones. "Whatever you put out there online, do not believe that it ever disappears," he said. "Don't think that if you do it now, it's not going to turn up 20 years from now."

From sexting to bullying, the way you conduct yourself online matters, he told attendees. Looking at a person's online presence is now commonplace during the hiring process, Etherly said.

Shannon, a teen from Maryland, was blunt, admitting to making "a lot of mistakes in my life," but the one piece of advice from her father she continually tries to adhere to is to behave in a way that will protect her reputation and her brand.

As a brand expert for Coke, Etherly expanded on her comments. "You are a brand and the name of your product is you. If you allow your brand name to be corrupted, to be sullied, to be dragged through the mud, people are not going to like your brand," he said.

"None of us here are suggesting that you should not be online. It is an asset. It is a tool that can be helpful to you in your academic lives, in your personal lives, in your professional lives," Etherly added. "But like any tool, it has dangers and you have to be aware of those dangers."

Following the morning breakout session, the students broke up into groups and spread out into the different courtrooms to begin the mock trials. With the guidance of attorney volunteers, students acted as defense attorneys, prosecutors, jurors, judges, and witnesses. After the mock trials, participants were given the opportunity to talk with representatives from 11 local organizations and government agencies that had set up tables to offer law-related career information.

During the afternoon session, Marsali Hancock, president of iKeepSafe, and Etherly got the conversation going again about managing social media networks, and then raffled off 20 Verizon Center box seats for Washington Wizards games to five lucky attendees and 12 Six Flags passes to three students.

The 2012 Youth Law Fair was cosponsored by the D.C. Bar Antitrust and Consumer Law Section; Corporation, Finance and Securities Law Section; Criminal Law and Individual Rights Section; Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Section; Family Law Section; Intellectual Property Law Section; Law Practice Management Section; and Taxation Section.—*T.L.*