

# OPINION

## AN ECHO PRESS EDITORIAL

# Lessons on how young kids use social media

In some instances, children are better than adults at setting an example of how to act and behave.

Consider social media. A lot of adults use it to splatter hate-filled political opinions, misinformation and simplistic, insulting memes to anyone and everyone in their social media world.

Kids – not so much. They're using it to make friends (not the creepy kind), bond with other children, interact with the real world around them and build their own identities in a positive way.

That's according to Marguerite Ohrtmann, assistant teaching professor in the College of Education and Human Development and president of the Minnesota School Counselor Association. She was recently interviewed as part of the University of Minnesota's "Talking...with U of M" – an online series in which the university's faculty answer questions on current and other topics of general interest.

Ohrtmann stressed, however, that adults still need to monitor what their children are doing on social media, take precautions and set boundaries.

Here are key segments from the interview:

**Q: What social media sites are the kids using today?**

Prof. Ohrtman: In a recent study, we explored what social media platforms fourth graders were using. We found that YouTube was the most popular, but Snapchat and Instagram were also used frequently by preadolescents. Students are using these vehicles to connect with others — whether on a larger social scale or one-on-one. Children and teens may not use Facebook like their parents and guardians, but, like adults, they are looking for creative ways to interact with the world around them.

**Q: We hear a lot about the negative influences of social media. What can kids gain from socializing online?**

Prof. Ohrtman: We are finding that students are able to expand

their social circle. Elementary school students in our study who use YouTube reported it gives them the ability to expand their social network to individuals with life experiences that might differ from their own (bridging). Those who use Snapchat told us it deepened their one-on-one relationships (bonding). In addition, we found participants were using social media when they were lonely. This suggests that social media helps students connect with others. Lastly, we found no significant difference in emotional intelligence scores between social media users and non-users. This contradicts some media reports that social media could contribute to hyperactivity and peer problems.

**Q: What activities/interactions do elementary school-age children typically enjoy participating in online?**

Prof. Ohrtman: From our findings, elementary school children enjoy watching videos on YouTube but also want the immediate interaction that Snapchat provides. For many children and adolescents, social media is a way to build an online identity. This identity may be a lot like who they present as in person, but it can also represent who they want to be. Social media can give children a voice in a world where, often times, their voice is not heard.

**Q: What tips do you have for parents to ensure kids have positive experiences online?**

Prof. Ohrtman: The first step is to know what your children are doing online. Communicate regularly about what sites are being used; show kids what privacy settings are and how to use them; and model appropriate online behavior (e.g., with what you post and "like" online). I think when parents and guardians assume children have good online boundaries, kids can get themselves into negative situations..

Ohrtman added that it's the association's hope that these findings will help school counselors guide kids and their parents in building healthy online relationships.

## LETTER

### Column was smug, self-righteous

To the editor: The "It's Our Turn" column, "Things President Trump has taught me" by Karen Tolkkinen was smug and self-righteous. If her intent was to insult a large percentage of Echo readers, she was successful.

I will start with her most egregious error, No. 9. "Make friends with the marginalized...I'm talking neo-Nazis, white supremacists and other 'very fine people.'" Tolkkinen is repeating the journalistic malfeasance of the mainstream media. Trump was describing the peaceful protestors who were on two different sides of the issue of "whether or not to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee," he was not referring to neo-Nazis or white supremacists. In fact, he condemned the neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the very same speech.

No. 5. Call people names. If we're going to make a list of politicians who have stooped to name calling,

why not start with Hillary Clinton who called a large segment of Americans, "deplorables," or Minnesota's Representative Ilhan Omar, who has made a series of anti-Semitic comments such as "It's all about the Benjamins baby."

No. 2. "Blame things that start with "M." The migrants, the media, the Muslims, the Mueller report." The migrants you are talking about are illegal aliens, and don't call me a racist, my grandchildren are first generation Mexican Americans.

No. 4. Concoct imaginary supporters. Trump, to your surprise and horror, will most likely win in a landslide because Democrats' progressive vision can be summed up in two repetitive campaign promises: 1. Promote the idea that unborn children are simply an inconvenience and a burden and provide unlimited abortion at any point up to and including birth at taxpayer expense as a solution. 2. Focus on impeaching Trump.

**Ann Redding  
Minneapolis, MN**

### Submitting letters to the editor:

The Echo Press encourages readers to voice their opinions through letters to the editor. Please, however, keep your letters brief and to the point. Letters of more than 300 words or excessively long letters may be edited to a shorter form by the newspaper staff. Personal attacks against private individuals will not be printed. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. Letters published will include the writer's name and the city of residence only. Writers are limited to publishing one letter every 30 days. Submissions can be emailed to aedenloff@echopress.com or submitted to the Echo Press office at 225 7th Ave. E., Alexandria, MN 56308. For information, call (320) 763-3133.

## IN THE KNOW

# Help is here for those who are struggling

'Live well at home!' That is the battle cry that the Alexandria Senior Center Activities Director, Bernice Wimmer, keeps telling me is the goal and purpose she and fellow program developers are hoping to enhance with the over 60 crowd.

As I think about those words and their meaning, I realize how many of us are not taking the steps to ensure that we can and will "live well at home." All reports inform everyone that we are living longer and that longevity and inflation have greatly reduced our assets. Over 30 percent are living below the poverty level. Many cannot maintain their homes and definitely cannot afford many of the alternatives such as assisted living and nursing homes.

However, there is a reality in our wonderful state and community. Seniors actually can live well at home if we take advantage of the many wonderful program offerings created just for us! Regrettably, many will not make contacts to get it. Fear of completing forms and income qualifications or the old stigma of "being on welfare" prevents it. If you have a neighbor or a family member you think could use some help, be aggressive and offer some advice.

What's available? Anyone can find out by calling the statewide Senior LinkAge Line. That's a toll free



**KATHRYN  
LEBRASSEUR**  
Alexandria  
Senior Center

number: 1-800-333-2433. That call will connect you to a local expert who is aware of all the services available in our area and how to contact them. Or you can pull up the Douglas County web site and find a complete listing of local services there.

Need more details? The Senior Center has brochures on most of them. Now if you are willing to actually talk to a local person, there is a lady with the county available to talk to you and help you. It is the Douglas County Senior Services Director, Joyce McIntosh. She is located down by the library or call 320-762-3027. Those are the starting points of contact. You are not committed or enrolled in anything for yourself or others at this point. Tell them your problems and learn how easy it is to get help.

Need help with fuel assistance? West Central Minnesota Community Action Program can help you with that. They also have funds to assist with weatherization so that you can get those doors and windows energy efficient. Need a ramp at the entrance or within the house? How about guardrails? Our local Habitat for Humanity

has volunteers able and willing to come out and get those done. Losing your vision and need help running your appliances? Minnesota State Services for the Blind has an expert who will come out to your home and enhance tricks/tips to keep you independent. You don't have to be blind either. The state program on free telephones for the hearing and visually impaired can help you stay in communication. The Senior Center can help you receive home delivered or congregate meals at a price you can afford. Local businesses deliver groceries! Even simpler, there are Senior Companions who will help you attend to your needs and Elder Network volunteers to stop by and visit. The list goes on and on.

If there are many needs, we have Family Services and Horizon Public Health to help. We can "live well at home" right here in Douglas County! Get a start and one contact at a time will greatly enhance your life or help you enhance the life of someone you know. Just get started!

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*Kathryn LeBrasseur is a former executive director of the Alexandria Senior Center and has been involved in a variety of community organizations, many focusing on senior issues. "In the Know" is a rotating column written by community leaders from the Douglas County area.*

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ARCHIVES

# 2009: Woodland Elementary opens

By Rachel Barduson

**1919, 100 years ago:** Arrangements for a mammoth Victory Celebration at Alexandria on Labor Day are almost complete and it's apparent that this will be the biggest day in the history of our beautiful city. The Holmes City band of farmer boys under the leadership of Paul W. Hanson, will furnish music all day long.

**1969, 50 years ago:** Donald R. Hansen, president of Alexandria Developers, Inc., and Bud Thoen, president of Douglas Machine Company, announced that ground was broken for the new building to be constructed by the developers for Douglas Machine Company. The 13,000 square-foot building, costing \$100,500, will be located on the Developers Industrial Park on Highway 27 south of the airport. Douglas Machine, now on South Broadway in Alexandria, was organized three years ago by Bud Thoen, Vern Anderson and Paul Anderson to design and manufacture packaging and production machines.

*Flying members of the Civil Air Patrol Squadron, based in Alexandria, purchased a Cessna 172, which will improve the services made available throughout west-central Minnesota. Radio equipment, night flying equipment, plus flight instruments for flying in weather, are all included with the newer plane. The L-4 Piper Cub, which the CAP has been flying, will be retired and soon advertised for bids.*

**1994, 25 years ago:** Coffee prices have doubled after news that a frost in July wiped out half of Brazil's coffee crop. Although the Brazil coffee crop won't arrive in stores until next year, the certainty of shortages immediately affected worldwide commodity markets. At Holiday Foods, Kevin Loken, assistant manager, said a can of coffee "on special" that once sold for \$3.99 could now sell for \$10.99.

*A thunderstorm swept through Douglas County, devastating some farmers' fields. The Evangelical Covenant Church, 4005 Dakota St. near Target in Alexandria, sustained the heaviest damage locally,*

when strong wind gusts blew down all but four of the rafters on a new fellowship hall-gymnasium addition that the church is building. Officials estimated the damage at \$20,000.

*The parochial New Testament School in Alexandria will participate with District 206 in Minnesota State High School League activities, specifically, football, band and speech. The school is part of the New Testament Church.*

**2009, 10 years ago:** An estimated 2,000 people attended the community open house at Alexandria School District 206's newest school, Woodland Elementary School. There are 510 students enrolled for 2009-2010 with four sections of kindergarten and three sections of grades 1 through 6. There are 80 staff members, including 41 teachers. There are 165 students registered for the preschool program at the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Center.

**Just for fun 1969 – 50 years ago:** Attendance at the Douglas County Fair for 1969 totaled 27,137 to top the record of 25,427 set in 1968. Grandstand attendance was up from 6,260 to 7,067.

**1994, 25 years ago:** The 1994 Douglas County Fair broke all attendance and revenue records with over 50,000 people attending – 10% more than last year – which translates into an increase in revenue of 20% over last year's figures. Due to the growing success of the local fair, Bud Greenquist, fair secretary, said the fair board is considering a five-day-long fair.

**SPORTS TRIVIA 1994 – 25 years ago:** A free ski show will be held at City Park in Alexandria by the Lake Darling Skiers. It will include 18 acts and is sponsored by the Alexandria State Bank, Olson's Super Market, Coca Cola Bottling Co., Wayne Lee Construction, Sports Craft, Inc., and the Darling Ranch Resort. Members of the skiers, who have been presenting shows at the Darling Ranch for the past three years, are Tom Akenson, Linda Engstrom, Steve Tessmer, Kim Thompson, Dennis Spaulding, Bob Harpster, and Bryce Lundeen. Drivers are Ed Torguson and Howard Akenson.

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*Rachel Barduson of Alexandria is a regular contributing columnist to the Echo Press Opinion page.*