

TESTIMONY OF PARRY AFTAB, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CYBERANGELS

BEFORE THE COPA COMMISSION

JUNE 8, 2000

Cyberangels is the world's oldest and largest Internet safety, help and educational program. Formed in 1995 by Guardian Angels, in response to a call-in listener's request to Curtis Sliwa, ABC Radio talk show host and Guardian Angels founder, it is now run by Parry Aftab. Ms. Aftab is an Internet lawyer (having hosted AOL's Legal Discussions and created Court TV's Law Center's Legal Helpline), and author of *A Parent's Guide to the Internet* (SC Press 1997) and the newly released *The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace* (McGraw-Hill, 2000), which was specially adapted for, and released in, the U.K. and Singapore in April and May, respectively. It is being adapted for Europe, South and Central America and Asia, as well, and translated into more than six languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and German.

Cyberangels operates through its volunteers, which now number more than 5,000. It is run virtually, online, in more than fourteen countries around the world. Its website contains safety and privacy information for adults, parents, teachers and children, including interactive quizzes, and fun safety cartoon characters, such as "Super Safe Kiddo." It also contains most of Ms. Aftab's first book, *A Parent's Guide to the Internet*, without charge.

Unlike other safety educational programs, however, Cyberangels also offers help to Internet users. Rather like a Cyber911, people who have encountered problems online, ranging from being hacked and infected with viruses, being cyberstalked and harassed, or encountering cyberpredators, to simply not understanding how to use their computers effectively online, or when they are seeking help with selecting and configuring parental control products, can all find immediate help from Cyberangels, via e-mail, instant messaging or in our help chats.

It maintains IRC help channels on most major IRC networks which are staffed during most hours by specially-trained IRC Ops. One of these channels, using a family-friendly IRC service, SuperChat, is available directly from the Cyberangels site, using a java-interface, allowing web-access to the IRC channel. This channel is staffed almost 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Cyberangels IRC Ops, trained to handle online problems.

Cyberangels' volunteers apply online, and are trained online as well. Online classes are provided to anyone interested, without charge, ranging from "When is Your Child Old Enough to Chat" to "Protecting Your Privacy Online." They are also provided at special times to accommodate the special time zone needs of various international volunteers and site visitors. While it is a U.S. 501c3 non-profit, it operates online worldwide. It has, currently, four foreign language teams, principally to find and report child pornography online. The most active of its international and foreign language teams is Japan, which has been responsible for the first two arrests of alleged child pornographers in Japanese

history. (The first took place a mere ten days following the implementation of their first child pornography law on November 1, 1999.)

Cyberangels is perhaps best known for its work with parents, teachers and children. Its Cybermoms and Cyberdads program trains parents in Internet safety and privacy, and provides offline programs for schools and community groups around the world. Its Teenangels program, run in conjunction with Wired Kids, trains teens in Internet safety, privacy and ethics and has created both a website written by teens, and a Teenangels Safety Ambassador program, where the specially-trained teens visit schools, and community groups to teach Internet safety and smart surfing. The first group of Teenangels have been invited to the Whitehouse to attend the ceremony when Cyberangels received its President's Service Award (selected by the Points of Light Foundation) and to teach various members of Congress about the Internet. A brief tape of their presentation to certain Congressional Representatives was shown at the launch of GetNetWise, in July, 1999. The Teenangels offline programs have been replicated in Japan, the U.K., Canada and Singapore, to date.

As well as teaching parents about safe surfing for their children, Cyberangels has also instituted programs for schools, building Internet safety and privacy into the school curriculum. Packets explaining risk management and the necessity for adoption of acceptable use policies and safe website practices have been distributed and will be distributed in schools around the world. Cyberangels also holds programs for school administrators on these issues, as well as on filtering and technological tools which are available, as well as their effectiveness. Working with large educational groups, its Smart Surfing programs have and are being adapted for the U.K., Singapore and Japan as well. Its Japanese program was first adopted by NEC Corporation, who made it their community service project for 1999, giving the employees of their twelve tech-related subsidiaries in Japan the day off, with pay, to deliver the program to parents and their children in Japanese schools. This program will be replicated here in the U.S. in October.

Cyberangels is a proud advisor to GetNetWise, and Ms. Aftab helped create the content at the GetNetWise site. Its Cyberangels Safe Site list is featured at GetNetWise, as well as Ms. Aftab's safe surfing contract. (This list is being regionalized worldwide to include sites that are Asian-centric and European-centric, as well as in other languages.) To dovetail with the extraordinary filtering tools resource of GetNetWise, Cyberangels has reviewed more than 120 filtering tools and services, and will be posting that information at the site. (GetNetWise doesn't review the products, but lists their features. This will give parents a sense of what other parents who used and tested the products thought.) In addition, Ms. Aftab's chart from her new book has tested the big four filtering tools against certain inappropriate site content to see how well they performed against hate, vs. satanic materials, vs. violence or bomb building. This appeared in the December Reader's Digest and will be posted along with the tool reviews, shortly.

Together with SOC-UM (Safeguarding Our Children – United Mothers), Cyberangels has compiled a copyrighted list of sites that advocate pedophilia or support pedophile groups. This list, known as KIDList (Kids In Danger List) contains approximately 45,000 websites. The list is available without charge to law-enforcement agencies, and for a licensing fee to filtering companies. Net Nanny is among the companies licensing the list.

Cyberangels also works very closely with law enforcement agencies around the world, including Hong Kong police, West Yorkshire police, Scotland Yard, the FBI, U.S. Customs Cybersmuggling Unit, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Japan's National Police and their Tokyo Metropolitan Police. It has more than 350 active law enforcement volunteers, and a special law enforcement division, run by a law enforcement officer volunteer. Its work has helped the FBI successfully prosecute many child molesters, helped law enforcement find children who have run off with Internet "friends" (recently helping return three in one week) and prosecute child pornographers and cyberstalkers. It runs training programs for law enforcement online and at police academies, and has been selected by the New Jersey Police Benevolent Association to train them in Internet safety for creating community and school programs, such as D.A.R.E.

Cyberangels is a main arm of UNESCO's online safety program, Innocence in Danger in North America. Ms. Aftab was named to chair the project by UNESCO. This resulted in the creation of Wired Kids (www.wiredkids.org) a consortium of commercial companies, non-profits and governmental groups who focus on equitable access, Internet safety and privacy and effective educational use of the Internet. Most, if not all of the experts testifying here today are members of Wired Kids. It was designed to allow groups to collaborate and share their work in the field of children online.

In response to the Columbine tragedy, Cyberangels set up its KIDReportline, a place where students can report threatening online behavior of their classmates. Too many children feel unable to report such behavior directly to their schools, but they are the ones most likely to know if a fellow classmate has a troublesome website and also to know if that particular classmate is likely to act on their online threats. The tips to the KIDReportline must come from children, and must relate to a fellow classmate's online website, which must display a credible threat of violence. Cyberangels does not keep any database of these tips. When a credible tip is received meeting all the conditions, Cyberangels alerts the appropriate authorities.

By making presentations to hundreds of parents and thousands of children and teens each month, Cyberangels stays on top of what they want and need. In addition, Ms. Aftab and it conducted (with Drs. Berson from the University of Central Florida) a survey of 10,800 teen girls, learning what they do and where they are at risk. It learned that 12% of the girls meet strangers offline, 48% share personal information with strangers online and 60% engage in some sort of graphic sexual discussions online. The Teenangels programs are designed to teach teens and preteens to use the Internet more intelligently.

In addition, Cyberangels works very closely with the FTC on COPPA matters, helping report sites which violate the law and educating schools, parents and children about Internet privacy. Together with corporate sponsors, Cyberangels has helped create educational bookcovers and posters on Internet safety, and online safety programs for schools around the world. The "Ask Parry" syndicated column is available without charge for any website which wants to provide online safety advice for their visitors. Cyberangels will screen questions from those sites and select a few each week for Parry to answer in her column. The column can then reside that those sites.

A recent article from Reader's Digest is being supplied in reprints for your review on work Cyberangels does for adults and teens who are victims of cyberstalking, as well.

Any questions can be directed to Ms. Aftab, at parry@aftab.com. The Cyberangels site is found at www.cyberangels.org.