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Workshop looks at one downside of high-tech presents

No holiday for cyberbullying

By Rebecca Forand

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HARRISON TWP. — This holiday season, as children receive new cell phones, laptops, iPads and other electronic media devices, one organization is hoping to make sure that neither they, nor any of their friends, are using them to harass anyone else, or to be abused by someone else.

New Jersey Child Assault Prevention (NJCAP) will be hosting a Cyber Empowerment training workshop for parents, teacher and administrators Dec. 17. The seminar will address sexting, cyberbullying and the consequences of one's actions.

"Our philosophy comes from a human rights perspective that all children have the right to be free from abuse," said Jeanette Collins, the director of curricula at NJCAP. "We have to know about the issues they can be faced with."

With unfortunate events such

as the deaths of Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers student who took his own life after two other students posted a live feed of a sexual encounter on the Internet, dominating headlines this year, the group hopes to draw attention to the fact that cyberbullying is happening everywhere and not only can it be prevented, but it can be dealt with in a better way.

"We have kids like Tyler Clementi that end up taking their own lives and we want them to realize that that's not the only way to solve this problem," Collins said.

The seminar will feature three speakers, including Collins. Joining her will be Cheryl Mojita, NJCAP's director of operations, and Patti Crimaldi, its regional supervisor. Each will address separate parts of prevention, knowledge and reactions to cyberbullying.

They hope to inform the adults that regularly deal with children on how to address the problem, how to monitor cyber activity and

how to help their kids if they are the victims of cyber bullies.

"The way we are going with society there's no going back. Technology is just going to be more and more and more," Collins said. "We have to keep current with what's happening in the world. A lot of times the grown-ups are a little afraid of the technology and the kids aren't afraid at all."

The workshop will teach adults that they have to be able to navigate the Internet almost as well as their kids do, and have to be up on the current trends and especially watch what their kids are doing. It will also give helpful tips on how to do these things and protect kids from being victimized by other children.

The event will take place Dec. 17 at EIRC in the South Jersey Technology Park, 107 Gilbreth Parkway, Harrison Township, and there is a \$15 fee to attend. Registration can be done online at www.eirc.org or by calling NJCAP at 856-582-7000 ext. 158.