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## Cyberbullying expert to speak to teens, public at Milton school

By NEIL JOHNSON (Contact) Friday, Dec. 9, 2011

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MILTON — It could be as elaborate as a fake Facebook page that damages someone's reputation or belittles his or her physical appearance.

It could be as simple as a text message that threatens harm to someone.

Whatever form it comes in, most teens have the savvy to make life hard for their peers using more than words or actions. These days they've got technology as a weapon.

According to Dr. Justin Patchin, a national expert on teen use of technology and social networking, one in five middle school students reports being a victim of cyberbullying.

Patchin will be at Milton Middle School on Monday to give a presentation to students on cyberbullying. The Milton School District and the Milton Police Department are hosting the appearance, which also includes an evening presentation that is open to the public.

Patchin, who teaches criminal justice at UW-Eau Claire, has studied cyberbullying extensively. He is director of the Cyberbullying Research Center, a national organization that studies adolescent cyberbullying, and he has written articles and books on teen use and misuse of technology and social networking.

The goal of Patchin's presentations is to explain to students, parents and adults what cyberbullying is, how it impacts teens and how to handle it.

The Cyberbullying Research Center defines cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices."

Patchin elaborates on why it's a serious issue: "Bullying is bullying. Let's establish that. But cyberbullying can potentially be worse than any typical schoolyard bullying," said Patchin.

That's because it can be done anonymously, any time, anywhere—even when the person being bullied isn't aware of it.

That can embolden teens that otherwise might never bully someone in person.

"Kids will say things online they would never say in the real world. With technology, you're accessible around the clock, and you can't escape it," Patchin said.

Patchin has heard from students around the world who report cyberbullying as a major source of stress. He says children as young as third grade report being bullied through technology.

Statistics show the problem peaks in the teen years, once students have gained a grasp of how technology works and how to use it to bully their peers.

Patchin's goal is to for parents and adults to be armed with the same knowledge so they can spot abuse if their child is being bullied—or is bullying others—through technology.

Patchin also wants parents and students to understand that cyberbullying can involve intervention by school officials and police, and he wants them to know how and when to pursue those channels.

"Everybody from police to parents to school staff needs to be on the same page with this," Patchin said.



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Photo



Justin W. Patchin

### IF YOU GO

**What:** Presentations on cyberbullying by Dr. Justin Patchin, a national expert on cyberbullying and teen misuse of technology and social networking.

**When:** Patchin will give a presentation to Milton Middle School students during school Monday. He will offer a second presentation, which is open to the public, at 6 p.m. Monday.

**Where:** Milton Middle School 20 E. Madison Ave., Milton.

**For more information:** Visit [cyberbullying.us](http://cyberbullying.us)

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