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The Behrend Beacon

Students should take precautions during holiday break



PHOTO BY PHIL SEARS/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

Florida State University students (from left) Ricky Kennedy, Chris Cantey, Guy Browning and David Dyess are angry about their home's burglary during Thanksgiving holiday. They recently installed an alarm system. Students on leave for the holidays are a prime target for burglars.

by Kim McCoy
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Before heading out of town for the Thanksgiving holidays, the four roommates locked all the doors in their house, even the ones to the bedrooms. They thought their rental home in southwest Tallahassee was secure until one of them returned and discovered the back door swinging open. A search of the house revealed a DVD player and about 60 DVDs had been stolen.

"We immediately got a security system after all that," said Chris Cantey, a freshman at Florida State University. "We'd always been cautious to lock our doors. When we go home for the holidays we'll take our valuables with us."

The number of residential burglaries increases during the holiday season because thieves are hunting for empty homes and apartments, said Rhonda Scott, a crime prevention officer for the Tallahassee Police Department. By next

week, thousands of students will be leaving town for the Christmas break. Some will likely return as crime victims.

"Being in a student populated area, burglars know when school's out and specifically target student housing areas," Scott said.

In Tallahassee, there were 38 home burglaries reported between Dec. 1 and Dec. 10, which would be considered high for such a short span of days, said Patsy Heath, crime analyst for TPD. In one case, wrapped gifts were taken from underneath a tree, she said.

Students and other residents should know as much information as possible about their valuable items and they should engrave them with their driver's license numbers, police said.

"A lot of times the problem we find when a house is broken into is that the people don't know the brand, make, model or serial number," Scott said. "All they can say is a black TV or VCR was stolen. That ties our hands on what to

look for."

In addition to getting a security system, Cantey and his roommates also scribbled a reminder to themselves next to the door that the was kicked in. In black marker they wrote, "11-30-02 Never forget."

"When something memorable happens, we write it on the walls," said Ricky Kennedy, a roommate and freshman at FSU.

Another FSU student said it ended up being pretty easy for a thief to break into his apartment because he and his roommate hadn't noticed that an important feature was missing.

"They didn't have window locks in the windows," Adam Clark, a junior at FSU, said about his apartment complex. "When we got the apartment we didn't know that."

The windows now have locks and a security bar protects the sliding glass door.

Web porn filters block health data, study finds

by Jeremy Manier
Chicago Tribune

The software that many schools and libraries use to filter out pornography also can block legitimate health information sites for young people, including many with information about birth control, drug use and date rape, according to a new study.

In the most in-depth independent look yet at the effectiveness of filtering programs, the researchers found that at the most restrictive setting, the six popular filtering programs tested blocked more than half of health sites dealing with condom use. The blocked sites included some from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Planned Parenthood and the National Institutes of Health.

"It's concerning to me that sites we think of as the gold standard for health information are being blocked," said Dr. Caroline Richardson, a family medicine specialist at the University of Michigan Medical School and lead author of the report.

Researchers at the University of Michigan and the Kaiser Family Foundation tested how filtering programs handled more than 3,500 health and porn sites for the study, published in Wednesday's issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association. The team found that weak filter settings block about 90 percent of pornography, while letting through nearly all legitimate health information.

The results add fuel to an intense debate over whether schools and libraries should allow children free access to the Internet or keep them from viewing certain sites. The Chicago Public Library does not use filters, though research suggests that most schools and 43 percent of public libraries do use the software.

The American Library Association has opposed requirements that libraries use such programs, and successfully challenged such measures in the federal Child Internet Protection Act, which passed in 2000. Emily Sheketoff, executive director of the ALA, said Tuesday the new study underscored some of the reasons her group opposes filters, such as the fact that many pornographic sites make it past filtering programs.

"Filters don't work," Sheketoff said. The study's authors noted that previous studies have found that 70 percent of teens report going online to find health-related information — making the blocking effects of some filters more troublesome.

The study's authors said their research indicates that most schools and many libraries use more than the least restrictive settings. And even minimal settings can exclude some sites disproportionately. About 10 percent of health sites dealing with safe sex or gay-related health topics were blocked under the least-restrictive settings, according to the report.

The most restrictive software excluded some odd sites, including 10 percent of sites dealing with diabetes. One of the excluded Web pages, a study on condom failure rates, was on the Web site of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Evidence of the overly wide net such programs can cast first emerged in 1995, when many users noticed that filtering programs blocked sites about breast cancer.

Such errors are one reason the Chicago Public Library does not use filters, officials there said. In one case, the library found that filtering programs shut out the Cook County sheriff's Web site, apparently because it contained a registry of sex offenders.

Stanford announces plan to clone human stem cells

by Faye Flam
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Researchers at Stanford University have announced a plan to use human cloning to create stem cells for medical research.

A spokeswoman for the university said Tuesday that scientists there would transfer the DNA of adult cells into human egg cells — a process similar to that used to create Dolly the sheep. But the human clones would not be allowed to develop beyond the earliest stages.

The university's research will rely on private financing to avoid a restriction imposed by the Bush administration that severely limits stem-cell research paid for by federal dollars.

The Stanford announcement is likely to accelerate the administration's efforts to ban human cloning, said Art Caplan, a medical ethicist with the University of Pennsylvania.

The cells that Stanford wants to create — embryonic stem cells — have been exciting medical science for several years because such cells have the potential to become any type of tissue: heart, nerves, pancreas, bone, skin. Supporters of stem-cell research say it could lead to revolutionary treatments for such devastating diseases as diabetes, Parkinson's disease and ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Such cells generally come from extra human embryos created and destroyed in fertility clinics. A few come from specially created embryos or from aborted fetuses. Such work has been strongly opposed by abortion foes who abhor the destruction of something that could become a human being.

Current law forbids the use of federal financing for any research that destroys human embryos to create stem cells, allowing only work on existing lines of stem cells. Researchers are permitted to use embryos or cloning to make new stem cells as long as they use private financing.

Stanford would break ground by cloning cells from adult volunteers as well as from

donated human egg cells.

Last year, the Boston-based company Advanced Cell Technology created a cloned embryo but did not turn it into a line of stem cells. If Stanford researchers succeed in completing such a process, they would be the first.

Penn's Caplan said the cloning process was ethically preferable to the use of embryos from sperm and egg.

For one thing, it is not known whether an embryo created from cloning can become a live human being, since it has only been done in sheep, cows, mice, and a handful of other animals. "Cloned embryos have proven very difficult to turn into healthy animals," Caplan said.

In that case, cloned cells would not represent potential human beings, Caplan said.

And stem cells from cloning may prove more practical medically, he said. With cloning, doctors could create an embryo from a patient's own cells, eliminating the risk of rejection.

If it is medically more promising, he said, then the research is morally more defensible.

Caplan said he believed it was likely that the Bush administration would seek to outlaw such research. Last year, Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., introduced a bill to make illegal the type of cloning to be done at Stanford, Caplan said.

The Stanford project will be part of the new Institute for Cancer/Stem Cell Biology and Medicine, launched with an anonymous, \$12 million donation to the school. Much of the institute's research will be geared to treating cancer. Any stem cells created will be shared with outside researchers, many of whom complain of inadequate access to available stem-cell lines.

Dr. Irving Weissman, an outspoken stem-cell research proponent, was named institute director.

"Our avowed goal is to advance science," he said. "For any group to stay out of the action and wait for someone else to do it because of political reasons is wrong."

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