ALBANY

Forum helps untangle Web risks

BY ELI FANNING
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The play was called “Cyber Smart in Cyber Space,” and was one of many events at the first-ever Cyber Security Awareness Conference held Thursday at The Egg in the Empire State Plaza. As Bobby “surf ed,” roughly 200 adults in another theater heard from Internet security experts and Gov. George Pataki, who spoke via satellite from New York City.

The adults were a mix of police officers, teachers, school board members and others from across the state, said organizer Tamara Wilson. The conference was sponsored by the state Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination, and focused on methods of protecting children while they use the Internet.

“The Internet is an integral part of education, but at this point there are too many risks,” says Pataki. See SAFETY, page A4

Safe surfing
Internet tips for elementary school students:

- Cyberpals are strangers.
- Never meet an internet acquaintance without telling a responsible adult with you.
- Never give out your personal information without parental permission.
- Keep your passwords private.
- Ask your family to use firewall and antivirus software to protect your computer.

SOURCE: THE CYBERSMART EDUCATION COMPANY

Safety

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that come with that opportunity,” Pataki said.

The conference was split into an “adult track” and a “children’s track.” The adult track included panel discussions with people such as Jack Adams, head of information technology for the South Colonie School District, and Thomas Spina, a federal prosecutor based in Albany who deals with Internet-related sex crimes.

Conference-goer Shane Yocall, a New Hartford police officer, said he was seeking ideas on how to monitor children’s Internet usage. Yocall teaches special classes in two school districts that are aimed at helping children learn to safely navigate the Internet.

“The Internet is a great communication tool, but it can also be misused very easily. And kids are not supervised when they are using it,” said Tom Duffy, deputy director of the state cyber security office. “You wouldn’t give a 5-year-old the keys to your new car, but would you let him sit down in front of a computer?”

The child’s portion of the conference was aimed at teaching children ages 10 to 12 to be their own “Internet filters,” said Jim Teicher, executive of The CyberSmart Education Company. The company provided many of the play’s messages, such as “In cyberspace, you have no way of knowing who you are talking to.”

The goofy child characters were played by adult actors and interacted with a teacher named “Ms. Owens.” At one point Bobby embarrassingly admitted to “using bad language while talking to his friends” via e-mail.

“It’s matching the emotion of the kids so that they know what feeling uncomfortable feels like,” said Teicher. “We are educating children so that they can be responsible on their own.”

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