

The Wildcat Chronicles

Durant High School

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Sexting photos: disturbing local trend

By Nicole Brown

High School Principal Joel Diederichs believes that students sending sexually related photos through texts, a form of sexting, has become a problem with Durant teens.

“Everyone has one [cell phone] now, so I believe it is a growing trend,” said Mr. Diederichs. “I think it’s a problem more than we know of. I don’t know the exact figure here. I’m not naive to tell I don’t think it happens.”

A variety of federal charges are connected with transmitting sexually related photos, with punishments ranging from five to 20 years, according to Durant’s school resource officer Sgt. Mike Meier. State authorities would consider harassment charges, he noted.

“I want to believe that as a nation I

don’t think our parents, me included, know enough about all the dangers of it,” said Mr. Diederichs about sending inappropriate photos. “There is so many apps, there is so many things. There is an app that actually looks like a calculator...but you type in there and it is actually a vault to store photos.”

Almost all high schoolers have their phones with them throughout the day, even while in school. They have full access to many of their friends’ locations and constantly check social media to stay up to date.

One of the most popular social media apps with Durant teens is Snapchat, where students can send pictures and then set a time limit for the photos to be viewed.

However, Snapchat can also be used to send inappropriate pictures to peers, and many students believe that the images

and messages disappear after 10 seconds. But Sgt. Meier wants students to understand that this isn’t the case, and he can access them when investigating a crime.

“They don’t ever go away,” Sgt. Meier said. “Everybody thinks they do, but everything is stored in your phone, whether you delete it or not.

“Yes, I would have to get a search warrant but if it came down to it, where it was some type of sexual misconduct, i.e., pictures of a minor, and I get a search warrant for your phone, you lose your phone.”

High school relationships often times end, but students in these relationships may share these inappropriate photos, believing they can trust that person to keep them private.

“Once you hit send on that you can never get it back,” said Sgt. Meier. “You

may send it in confidence to a friend, but what happens when you’re not friends anymore.”

Dealing with the problem as a school can be a complex process. Once Mr. Diederichs receives a report of sexting, he works with law enforcement to investigate the incident.

“They’ll turn it [the report] into me, and then I’ll work with law enforcement as we go forward because anything under the age of 18 is with a minor obviously and can lead to federal charges,” Mr. Diederichs said. “Not just our charges but federal charges.”

Although cases have been reported at Durant, no criminal charges have been filed against any students, according to Sgt. Meier.

Sharing can lead to emotional trauma

By Ellie Olsen

In today’s society, it seems as if sexting and sending nude photos has become normalized. However, many teens do not understand the serious effects that sending inappropriate photos and messages could cause.

“If there is a picture that gets disseminated, we’ve seen people who have gone through major depression,” said Auston McLain, outreach advocate for Braking Traffik, a program associated with Family Resources of Davenport.

“They’ve gone through major bullying at school, and we’ve actually had real cases where those pictures are used as blackmail.”

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, almost

40% of all teenagers have posted or sent sexually suggestive messages. It was also found that inappropriate messages were more likely sent by males than females.

In an interview with McLain, he said sending inappropriate photos could have long-term effects. He said there are revenge websites where a spiteful ex can leak such photos after a relationship ends.

He also gave a specific example where people are searching for a job later in life, and they are not able to get one because of a photo they sent out when they were seventeen.

One thing that teens do not realize when they send these photos is that the photos are not theirs anymore. Whoever they sent them to can screenshot or save the pictures and do whatever they want with them.

“That can affect somebody’s long-term plan,” McLain said.

The Braking Traffik program tries to educate as many young people as possible and reaches out to the community to bring awareness to this issue.

“For instance, we will go to schools and do classes about human trafficking and about how somebody might go about asking for pictures and how to handle it if you fall victim to it,” said McLain.

Little do people know that sexting and sending nude photos actually falls under the scope of sex trafficking. With technology constantly advancing, this issue is becoming more prevalent, especially for students in high school.

Braking Traffik provides a variety of services for sex and labor trafficking victims. Advocates including McLain can help with things like restraining orders, medical advocacy, or even help getting a job.

“We don’t go in and rescue people,” he said. “We want to empower people in order to take that step to get out of that life.”

Braking Traffik can also help walk survivors through the legal process.

To contact Braking Traffik or any other Survivor Services Program at Family Resources, please call the 24/7 crisis line at (866) 921-3354. All services are free and confidential.

Durant’s school resource officer, Sgt. Mike Meier, has also contacted Allyson Pereira, a resident of northern New Jersey, to address the high school about the dangers of sexting. Pereira has shared her story on several national television shows.

According to her website, she was only 16 in 2006 when a naked photo of herself was forwarded by an ex-boyfriend to everyone in his contact list.

In a week, the photo had spread to 12 different schools from high school to elementary. Afterwards, she was afraid to go to school and was even harassed at home by phone calls and text messages.

According to her website, “Ally had her friend’s parents ask her out, bosses who told her they were going to find her picture and rate it, and teachers who made comments in class about it.”

After remaining silent for three years, Pereira started speaking out on the topic in 2010 and continues to do so today.

Class of 2020 makes U of I top destination for college

By Danielle Paulsen

Many Durant seniors finishing up their last two semesters of high school still have a lot of planning to be done. For some, it’s planning where to go to college and finalizing scholarships, financial aid, and housing applications. For others, it may be finding a job after graduation or entering the military.

A majority of Durant seniors are planning for college next year, and the top choice at Durant is the University of Iowa for seven of the 38 seniors surveyed by *The Wildcat Chronicles*. Tied for second, Iowa State University and Muscatine Community College are the destinations for four students each.

“I plan to go to Muscatine Community College to get my essentials out of the way,” said senior Ethan Johns.

It seems as if the seniors plan on spreading out after graduation because of the many other different college choices such as the University of Northern Iowa, Kirkwood Community College, St. Ambrose University, and Drake University, as well as trade schools.

For some, the trip home after traveling to college will be a long one. Seniors Kyman Liske and Joe Lilienthal will be trav-

eling out of state while furthering their education. Liske will attend the University of Wisconsin-Platteville while Lilienthal plans to further his football career at the University of South Dakota. Also, senior Allie Poston will attend Briar Cliff University in Sioux City to play softball.

A majority of the seniors, 81.6%, do not plan on living in Durant later on in their adult lives.

However, Kira Schult, who will attend the University of Iowa, looks forward to her college experience and coming back to Durant afterwards.

“I want to live in Durant to be close to my family,” Schult said.

The seniors who are not continuing their education still have big plans for their futures with two joining the military, two taking part in an apprenticeship, and two starting work right away.

As this school year quickly comes to a close, a large chapter of the seniors’ lives is closing as well. Whether they are looking at colleges, apprenticeships, military, or the workforce, the seniors at Durant High School have a lot of mixed emotions about leaving behind the school many have known their entire lives.



Photo by Danielle Paulsen

Class raises \$1,300 for shelter

The Adult Living class at DHS recently put on a fundraiser to donate money and pet food to King’s Harvest No-Kill Pet Shelter in Davenport. On November 12, the class got to deliver the check and food to the shelter while meeting the animals they helped. Pictured from left to right are Jasmine Ruggiero, Addisyn Skinner, Mariah Miller, and Tyler Ostofi. In total, the class raised \$1,300 as well as many dog and cat food donations from a variety of fundraising events including two assemblies, a bake sale, class competitions, and outside donations.