

Yorktown Teens Learn the Dangers and Consequences of Cyberbullying

By Sam Barron

Anything you post on the Internet can come back to haunt you.

That was the message delivered by Officer Brian Mundy, a school resource officer with the Yorktown Police Department, as he spoke to a group of kids at the Yorktown Teen Center last

Wednesday about cyberbullying and Internet safety. The kids, all boys, were mostly seventh-graders at Mildred E. Strang Middle School.

“Once you post something on a Web page, even if you take it down, it is physically there forever,” Mundy said.

Mundy said that bullying on the Internet can lead to charges of aggravated harassment, especially if the parents of the bullied decide to take it that far.

“Even if you’re annoying someone, it could be seen as harassment,” Mundy said. “It will be on your juvenile record. Anyone can take something written on the Internet and cause a big problem with it. You better hope it’s not a person that wants to press charges.”

Mundy told the kids that once paperwork is filed, it can cause all sorts of issues and

be a burden on both kids and parents. He said if a kid is found guilty, they would be forced to do community service, which would eat up a lot of Saturdays.

“They want you to realize, through punishment, what you’ve done, so you don’t do it again,” Mundy said.

The officer asked the kids if they had seen anything online that would qualify as harassing and everyone raised their hand. Recently, a fight had broken out at the Yorktown Teen Center, which was blamed on things being written online.

“Why do you feel the need to hide behind cell phones and computers?” Mundy asked.

Mundy pointed out that people could take things the wrong way that they read on Facebook or Instant Message.

“You can say it was just a joke, but that’s

when something gets started,” Mundy said.

The Yorktown Teen Center is a privilege for the kids, Mundy reminded the children. “You guys are fortunate to have a place like this,” Mundy said. “This is a great place. If there are a few incidents that happen here, they could talk about closing this place. You guys have a tool, use it to your advantage. Don’t let it be a detriment.”

After the meeting, Michelle Marchetti, a volunteer at the center and a teacher at the middle school, said the meeting was productive because often kids don’t understand the consequences of what they put online.

“You can’t see someone’s reaction,” Marchetti said. “You have no idea how they feel.”