

Waiting 'til eighth grade for phone is smart



Phil Gianficaro

The tug of war begins from the nanosecond she gets in the car. What I cannot believe is the tremendous pull on the other end of the imaginary rope. I can't see the herd of elephants pulling our 13-year-old daughter's attention in the opposite direction, but I know they're there. From the moment I pick her up from play rehearsal at school, the tug of war begins: Talk vs. Technology. Chat vs. Snapchat. Phil

vs. Phone. Me vs. her smartphone, to be precise. Tugging. Pulling. Yanking. Frustrating. Not having seen the girl who owns my heart since our 10-second hug at bedtime the night before, I want to reconnect. So, I run down the parent questions list: How was school? Did you have any tests? Anything interesting happen today? How's the play coming along? What would you like for supper? Her responses: OK. No. No. OK. Whatever. Brevity be thy name. And all while she's staring into her smartphone Snapchatting. I tell both our children — her brother is 16 — the world is a waterfall of wonderful things to see, so they might want to take their noses out of

those phones and drink it all in. Last month, Common Sense Media and SurveyMonkey released a study revealing 47 percent of parents worry their children are addicted to their mobile device. Count me among them. Their ship has sailed. Much like schooling kids on the dangers of cigarette smoke, you've got to get them early. A grassroots group in Austin, Texas, is trying to do just that. The campaign is Wait Until 8th. The mission: Hold off on giving kids smartphones until they're in eighth grade. The key: A parent's pledge becomes active only when they're joined by 10 or more families from a grade at the same school. According

to a story last week in The Star Tribune, of Minneapolis, the Wait Until 8th pledge helps parents band together, decreasing the pressure felt by kids and parents alike over the kids having a smartphone. "We need to put boundaries in place, and exert authority," said Brooke Shannon, who founded Wait Until 8th last year. "But there is strength in numbers." Smartphones are distracting and potentially dangerous for children yet are widespread in elementary and middle school because of unrealistic social pressure and expectations to have one. I witness the addiction firsthand outside her middle school, where at dismissal kids walk in groups down sidewalks

staring into smartphones. Few of them having conversations about school, tests, the play, who's dating or just broke up with whom, or what's for supper. Technology has become hypnotic, walling kids off from the world around them. The dilemma is worsening. A study from Influence Central found that the average age of a first smartphone user is 10, down from 12 in 2012. Some kids just two years out of kindergarten have 'em. Wait Until 8th has gained traction nationally, as parents in all 50 states, more than 8,500 in all, have signed up. The campaign has been featured on "Today," "Good Morning America" and National Public Radio, as well as in print

nationwide and on social media. Hopefully, the campaign makes a dent. Smartphones are a distraction for our children, negatively impacting personal social interaction, sleep patterns and academics, and increase the risk for anxiety and depression. In fact, studies show that after a child receives a smartphone, their grades are likely to suffer. But hey, look at the funny face our kid made on Snapchat! Will Wait Until 8th achieve its desired result? Tough call, but I hope so. Gonna take a lot of tugging, pulling, yanking. Frustrating. Phil Gianficaro can be reached at 215-345-3078, pgianficaro@theintell.com, or @philgianficaro on Twitter.

Nonprofit appoints interim CEO

Staff report

The Bucks County nonprofit Family Service Association has appointed Marlene Piasecki its interim CEO. Piasecki, who has been with FSA for 17 years, most recently was the chief operating officer. She replaces former chief executive Audrey J. Tucker, who died suddenly last month. "In the midst of our sadness, we still have a clear path to follow. Audrey set that path and we will make sure we honor her memory by continuing to achieve the goals she set for all of us," said Board President Joseph C. Bondi in a news release. "The board has placed its full confidence in Marlene Piasecki to lead the



Piasecki

Family Service team during this difficult transitional period." In her former role, Piasecki served as FSA's primary grant writer and oversaw all of the agency's community-based programs including the Bucks County Emergency Homeless Shelter and the CONTACT Helpline. Piasecki was instrumental in the formation of new programs within FSA as well as community partnerships including the Bucks County Housing Link, an innovative collaboration between housing agencies, homeless advocates and county government to provide a centralized

intake and coordinated assessment process into the housing crisis response system in Bucks County, according to the news release. Family Service Association offers a variety of programs and services including school-based counseling, outpatient counseling, behavioral therapy, an intensive outpatient drug and alcohol program, co-parenting classes, parent support groups, Bucks County Housing Authority case management and HIV/AIDS programs. It operates the Teen Center at Oxford Valley Mall. It also operates the Bucks County Emergency Homeless Shelter, a temporary residence for individuals and families who have lost safe and stable housing.

Prosecutors push judge to let other Cosby accusers testify

By Michael R. Sisak
The Associated Press

NORRISTOWN — Letting jurors hear from Bill Cosby's dozens of accusers would strengthen prosecutors' he-said-she-said case by showing the one criminal case against him fits an alleged five-decade pattern of sexual misconduct, legal experts said Tuesday. Prosecutors are eager to widen the scope of Cosby's April 2 retrial as they attempt to portray the once-beloved entertainment

icon as a serial predator who made a sadistic habit of drugging and molesting women. At Cosby's first trial last year, which ended in a hung jury, Judge Steven O'Neill barred prosecutors from mentioning Cosby's past and allowed just one other accuser to testify. O'Neill did not rule Tuesday on arguments made over two days by prosecutors and defense lawyers on how many, if any, of Cosby's other accusers will be allowed to take the stand.

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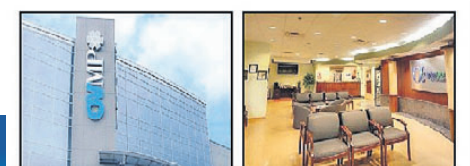
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