Celebrating Safer Internet Day

In recognising the 11th anniversary of Safer Internet Day (SID) on 11 February 2014, Google South Africa joined forces with its Online Child Safety Campaign partners to equip learners and parents with tools and knowledge to help them to use the Internet safely and responsibly and educate them on their role in making the Internet a better and safer place for all.

Google facilitated a series of Internet safety workshops for learners, parents and teachers from five Johannesburg schools at Jules High School, east of Johannesburg. The other schools involved were Anchor Comprehensive, Vuwani, Diepdale Secondary and Emshukantambo Secondary School.

The workshops were hosted in collaboration with the Film and Publications Board and supported by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund; Mxit; Parent's Corner; Media Monitoring Africa; Childline SA; Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities; the Gauteng Department of Education; Department of Communications; and UNICEF South Africa.

Managing information

Workshops at the event focused on four different topics: 'How has the Internet made things better?'; 'Ideas, apps and creating'; 'the Responsible user's guide to social media' and a debate around the "advantages and disadvantages of anonymity online." The workshops also featured a 'Silver Surfers' corner, which educated teachers and adults on how they can contribute to making the Internet a safer place for their children.

"At Google, we often speak about how the Internet has changed the world, especially when it comes to the unprecedented level of access to information offered by the web. However, such changes affect each generation differently. For children, this is especially important - the Internet can aid with their schoolwork, help them connect with friends, and offer a creative outlet. At the same time, there are tools that families should be aware of, so that children can explore the Internet safely. We will continue to hold training like this because we are deeply committed to protecting children online and providing all of our users with a safe experience;" says Fortune Mgwili-Sibanda, public policy manager at Google SA.

International drive

Over the last decade, SID has grown rapidly, now spreading to over 90 countries worldwide, including South Africa. The theme for this year's SID is 'Let's create a better internet together'. This year's SID is being celebrated at the same time as the Film and Publications Board's Back-2-School Campaign, a month-long programme for school activations aimed at creating awareness on cyber-safety.

For more information, go to www.saferinternetday.org/web/guest/home and www.fpb.org.za.