



Somerville Public Schools

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PRODUCER JONI SIANI TO FACILITATE FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF “CELLING YOUR SOUL: RAISING KIDS IN A DIGITAL AGE”

Community invited to attend this free event to understand the impact of digital dependence and learn strategies for addressing the challenges of digital socialization

Somerville, MA – On Tuesday, April 3rd, filmmaker, writer, professor and producer of [“Celling Your Soul”](#), Joni Siani, will facilitate an examination of our love/hate relationships with our digital devices and the impacts and reactions of the first digitally socialized generation. All are invited to join this free film screening and discussion event on April 3rd, 2018, 6:30-8:30pm at Cohen Auditorium, Aidekman Arts Center, Tufts University, 40 Talbot Avenue, Medford, MA.

Parents and youth in 5th grade and above are encouraged to attend this screening to understand what is happening with teens today, and to learn strategies for reconnecting on a more personal level and offer solutions to the digital dependency that we are all facing. Siani gets to the heart and soul of this dilemma with a proven action plan that you can implement immediately into your home, your schools and your life. You will leave the session with tangible take-aways and a deeper understanding for the truth behind the technological addictions, implications and effects on individuals and our society.

This award-winning documentary is being used in curriculums in K-12 schools, colleges and universities across the nation. The “No App for Life” challenge, a free downloadable school activity, was endorsed by National Screen Free Week (April 30th-May 6th) and offers a way for people to be part of the change to address the unintended consequences of digital socialization, such as increased rates of depression and loneliness, and decreased interpersonal skills.

“In our eagerness to embrace digital communication as a way of life, we have forgotten how critical face-to-face, personal communication is to our language, social, and emotional development. The ease with which we can access and share information or connect with others digitally has allowed us to expand our worlds exponentially, which in and of itself is a good thing. However, nothing can replace the value of the human connection,” commented Mary Skipper, Somerville Public Schools Superintendent.

“As this screening points out, we’re seeing the impact of an over-reliance on digital communication in a number of concerning ways among youth of all ages, which in the long run will impact entire communities,” Superintendent Skipper added. “But it is important to note that this is not a one-generation concern. If we want to truly effect change, we have to look at how we each choose to interact and connect with one another, and each make the necessary changes to ensure that we are striking a balance between taking advantage of the benefits that digital resources offer, and building personal and authentic relationships that will allow us to develop the language, social, and emotional skills to help us succeed in life.”

“The rate of proliferation of digital devices in the lives of children of all ages is alarming, when you consider the impacts on typical development, obesity and sleep,” shares Dr. Malessa Dias, CHA Pediatrician at Broadway Care Center. “Creating a healthier balance will take a community level approach and supports at all levels, from a child’s home to government policies.”



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Tufts Community Health Professor and Chair, Jennifer Allen, ScD, MHP comments, “With the ubiquity of electronic devices, we are in the midst of one of the largest social experiments of all times. We don’t know much about the long-term impacts of digital connectedness or social, emotional and cognitive growth of children. This is such an important issue – we need more information – and opportunities for discussion about social impacts.”

Youth and young adults who have screened the film and participated in the No App for Life challenge have offered positive feedback, including improved social relationships and mental wellness. The April 3rd screening and discussion offers parents and youth the support they need for a healthy tech approach as they work together to strike a balance between the effective use of digital communication and the human connection, and address the challenges of digital dependence.

This event is sponsored by the [Somerville Family Learning Collaborative](#) of the Somerville Public Schools, in conjunction with the [Family Talk Campaign](#). It is co-sponsored by Tufts University School of Arts and Sciences Community Health and Cambridge Health Alliance. For more information about the film and related book, visit ["NO APP FOR LIFE"](#).

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