



Greene County Public Health

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EDITORIAL

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“Brain Rot”: How Too Much Screen Time is Stealing Childhood—and What Greene County Leaders Are Doing About It

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Just a few decades ago, childhood meant scraped knees, backyard adventures, and long summer days spent riding bikes with friends. But today, childhood looks different. Instead of climbing trees, kids are glued to screens. Instead of building forts, they’re scrolling TikTok. Instead of having face-to-face conversations, they communicate through emojis and Snapchat streaks.

The consequences are alarming. Teachers report that students struggle to focus in class. Parents see their kids withdrawing, anxious, and irritable without their devices. Studies show excessive screen time can rewire young brains, impairing attention spans, emotional regulation, and social skills. Some experts have even called it “brain rot”—a term gaining traction to describe how endless digital consumption is eroding normal childhood experiences and stunting mental development.

A group of Greene County leaders decided they couldn’t sit back and watch this happen. In 2022, they launched the Disconnect to Connect (D2C) Coalition, a cross-sector effort to advocate for policy change, raise awareness, and encourage families, schools, and businesses to unplug from digital technology—at least for a little while.

A Movement to Reclaim Childhood

What started as a small group of concerned educators, health professionals, and community leaders has become a county-wide movement to push back against the digital takeover. The D2C Coalition has led initiatives across Greene County, including:

- Encouraging schools, parents, child-serving programs, and agencies to be screen-free as much as possible.
- Participating in the annual Global Day of Unplugging by encouraging local businesses, agencies, and organizations to embrace “unplugging” for 24 hours.
- Launching a social media campaign with posts on the benefits of screen-free time, plus pictures of people holding signs that say, “I Unplug To...”

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- Chalk the Walk events, where kids and families shared messages about why screen-free time matters.
- Creating “Ditch the Tech, Read a Book” bookmarks to promote reading over scrolling.
- Handing out frisbees with the D2C logo at local events to encourage outdoor play.
- Hosting a public screening of Childhood 2.0 to educate families about the dangers of digital overuse.
- Engaging students in drawing competitions, where they illustrated how they planned to disconnect from digital devices.
- Receiving proclamations from local cities recognizing the importance of digital wellness.
- Being featured on Dayton 24/7 and WDTN
- New stories spreading the message across the region.

This year, the Coalition will host a Special Earth Day Event: Screenagers Movie Screening & Discussion

As part of its ongoing efforts, the D2C Coalition invites parents, students, educators, and concerned community members to a special screening of Screenagers: Growing Up in the Digital Age (Elementary Version) on Earth Day—April 22, 2025, from 6:00-8:00 PM at the Greene County ESC (360 E Enon Rd, Yellow Springs).

The event will raise awareness about screen time and its impact on kids and families while providing an opportunity to discuss what we can do to save childhood and preserve screen-free time for kids. With technology becoming an unavoidable part of life, this is a chance to reflect on how we can create a healthier balance for the next generation.

Join the Movement: #GreeneCountyUnplugged

The Global Day of Unplugging is coming up on March 7-8, 2025, and the D2C Coalition is calling on the entire community to participate. From sundown to sundown, families, businesses, schools, and individuals are encouraged to unplug from screens and rediscover real-life connections.

Want to participate? Here’s how:

- Take the pledge to be screen-free for 24 hours.
- If you can’t do 24 hours, select certain times throughout your day to go screen-free, such as stepping away from the computer and taking a short break, mealtimes, and one or two hours before bedtime. You can even set up “no phone zones” to encourage face-to-face interactions.
- Post on social media before March 7 using #BeScreenFree, #GreeneCountyUnplugged, and #GDU2025.
- Download and print an “I Unplug To…” sign, fill it out, take a selfie, and share it online or email it to lfox@gcph.info.

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- Spread the word—share the message if your business or school has a marquis sign, newsletter, or social media page!

Technology isn't going anywhere—but how we use it matters. Greene County's Disconnect to Connect movement reminds us that while screens will always be there, childhood won't. It's time to unplug, recharge, and reconnect.

The Disconnect to Connect (D2C) Coalition is a group of professionals from local organizations, including Greene County Public Health, the Greene County Educational Service Center, Mental Health and Recovery Board of Clark, Greene and Madison Counties, Greene County Children Services, Greene County Family & Children First, and the Greene County Public Library. The group was developed to tackle the concerns of parents, educators, and community members about the effect of digital devices on the mental health and well-being of our youngest community members.

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