

NBC Promises to Maintain Family Hour

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(April 9, 2008) With objectionable content occurring every three minutes during the 8 to 9 p.m. Family Hour of television, a renewed commitment from NBC to honor this time slot with more family-friendly fare shows that broadcasters may finally be listening to parents' complaints.

The Parent's Television Council (PTC) announced April 4 that NBC has recommitted itself to cleaning up its airways during the traditional family hour.

"Families do not want to be barraged with graphic sexual content, violence or profanity and want a time during the evening that is considered safe for the whole family to watch television," said PTC President Tim Winter in a press release.

"Responsible television programming is good business. We are heartened that NBC appears to be listening to the calls of so many parents and families, and we hope that other broadcast networks will follow NBC's lead."

The announcement comes on the heels of a recent PTC report that found children who watch television during the Family Hour are assaulted by violence, profanity or sexual content once every 3.5 minutes.

"In the past six years, the Family Hour has become even more hostile to children and families," the report found. "Though broadcasters claim that they care about the concerns of parents, and are working to help parents control their televisions, their actions do not demonstrate such concern."

PTC researchers studied programs airing on six major broadcast networks during the family hour for three separate two-week periods during the 2006-2007 season. A similar study was conducted in 2001 and since that time, the quality of Family Hour programming has been in a steady decline.

Since the 2001 study, violent content during the Family Hour increased by 52 percent. Sexual scenes or references to sex occurred at a rate of nearly four per hour, representing a 22 percent increase since the last study. Foul language was found in 76 percent of the episodes that aired during the current study period. "Whether scripted or uttered on a reality program, foul language is found on almost every series airing during the Family Hour, the report found.

Data from Nielsen reveals that over ten million children are sitting in front of the television in the early evening hours and, according to this study, much of what they're seeing is raunchy.

"For example, according to Media Research, on Sunday, November 12, at 8:30 p.m., over two million children were in the viewing audience for an episode of the animated program *American Dad* on Fox which contained 37 instances of violence, foul language and sexual content in a

show less than 30 minutes long,” the report said.

In March, 2007, a Zogby poll found that 79 percent of the American public believes there is too much sex, violence and coarse language on television but broadcasters don't seem to care.

“Though they have pledged their dedication to upholding broadcast standards, their legal departments have filed lawsuits seeking to allow them to air expletives any time, day or night,” the report states. “Meanwhile, they race against one another in search of ‘edgier’ material to air - and while programming later in prime time becomes raunchier, more and more seeps, or is pushed, into the Family Hour.”

In 2001, the PTC joined a bipartisan coalition in the U.S. Congress calling on the industry to self-regulate in order to provide at least one hour each night of family-friendly television.

“The initial response was somewhat encouraging, with advertisers and some of the networks announcing efforts to clean up the Family Hour. Unfortunately, that initial encouragement was short-lived. In the past six years, the Family Hour has become even more hostile to children and families. There is no safe haven for children on nightly broadcast television.”

While the NBC commitment is a positive sign, parents need to keep up the pressure.

“Parents who are concerned about TV's influence on impressionable children cannot just passively accept the current state of broadcast television. They must actively oppose the broadcast networks' efforts to obliterate decency standards by pressuring their local broadcast affiliates to refuse to air programs containing high levels of inappropriate sex, violence and profanity during Family Hour and by pressuring the advertisers to stop underwriting offensive Family Hour content.”

For more information, visit www.parentstv.org

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