

HISTORY OF SCREEN-FREE WEEK

In 1994 when Henry Labalme and Matt Pawa came up with the idea of a national organization to reduce the screen-time habit, few believed it was a problem at all. Television was considered harmless and a great babysitter. Perhaps improving some of the programs was a good idea, but reducing television time? Ridiculous! Others admitted that Americans could do with a little less TV. But TV is here to stay, they maintained, so why bother tilting at windmills?

But Henry, Matt, and a few others ignored the skeptics. Now, many years later, Screen-Free Week (formerly TV-Turnoff) is continuing to have a deep and lasting impact around the world.

As preparations got underway for the very first Turnoff, no one could have guessed what would happen in the ensuing years. That first year, nine organizations lent their official support to the week, and a couple thousand organizers around the nation brought the event to a million or so people. It might not have been an earth-shattering event, but it was a great start and prelude to the years to come.

Each successive Turnoff grew. New organizers signed up to help out. New organizations supported the event. Major health groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics and American Medical Association, education groups like the National Education Association, and civic groups like Big Brothers/Big Sisters lent their voices to the chorus.



www.screenfree.org

The media began to pay attention, and coverage in publications like *Parade Magazine* and on hundreds of radio stations spread the word even farther. Since that first year, the number of Turnoff Week organizers grew more than eight-fold, with millions more participating annually.

Any way you look at it, it's clear that the skeptics were wrong. Reducing children's screen time has become a national concern, with regular stories in major news outlets and support from President Obama and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity. Now, at Henry and Matt's request, Screen-Free Week has a new life as a program of Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood. Together, we can help children and adults "power down" their screens and rev up their involvement in life! We're looking forward to Screen-Free Weeks for years to come.

KIDS SCREEN-FREE WEEK

"...when my house had no TV, computer and video games, all I did was read. Until one day I dreamed big about becoming a writer... Loving to read gave me an idea to write my own book...it made me happy."

- ANTHONY GREEN
HYDE PARK, NY