



December 20, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

As the coordinator of the assembly program at Marlborough School, an independent all-girls school in Los Angeles, I am always on the lookout for speakers who will both educate and entertain our students. This is not an easy feat, for the girls range in age from twelve to eighteen, and their interests and attention spans, as you might imagine; vary wildly. John Sileo more than accomplished this feat. He came to speak about identity theft and internet safety in September 2006 and was, as one student put it, “the best speaker we’ve ever had at Marlborough.”

John had the remarkable ability to speak to the girls about the seriousness of protecting one’s identity without ever becoming pedantic or alarmist. Unlike many of our less capable speakers, he steered clear of condescension and yet managed—in a deeply compelling way—to relay his adult experience and knowledge to skeptical teenage girls. Many of our faculty members sent me enthusiastic emails about how he had “really *spoken* to the girls,” and indeed it was John’s perfect combination of humor, creativity, and wisdom that made his talk so powerful: he played The White Stripes to establish his theme (“Denial”), flew down off the lip of the stage on a snowboard to demonstrate how one must know where one’s “edge” is, and threw bags of chocolates to illustrate how quickly we will grab things for free without ever considering the potentially dangerous power dynamic involved (the seventh graders beautifully helped make his point by nearly knocking themselves out trying to get to the treats despite the fact that they’d known Mr. Sileo for approximately 20 minutes). Literally and figuratively, John had the audience eating out the palm of his hand by the time he left. Best of all, many of our students went home and told their parents about the assembly, anxious to discuss identity protection as it related to their own families. Clearly, John brought awareness of and sensitivity to an issue that is so pressing—especially as our technically adept but often very naïve students head off into this complicated world. He not only kept his audience riveted for a full forty-five minutes, but sent them home equipped with strategies about how to protect themselves and their loved ones. As an assembly coordinator, teacher, and mother myself, I couldn’t have asked for anything more.

I highly recommend John Sileo as a speaker for any age group and for any organization or school. I would also be happy to discuss his merits more fully, and can be reached at 323-935-1147 (X614) or by email at reid.cottingham@marlboroughschool.org.

Sincerely,



Reid Cottingham