

# CARU NEWS

For Immediate Release

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## **CARU AND SULAKE, INC. WORK TOGETHER TO ADDRESS CHILDREN'S PRIVACY**

*New York, NY – March 22, 2005* - The Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., the children's advertising industry's self-regulatory forum, is pleased to announce that **Sulake, Inc.** has committed to modify its Website, [www.habbohotel.com](http://www.habbohotel.com) to comply with CARU's *Self-Regulatory Guidelines for Children's Advertising* (the *Guidelines*). CARU was prompted to visit [www.habbohotel.com](http://www.habbohotel.com) after receiving a letter from a concerned parent about the safety of the Website.

The Habbohotel Website, which features cartoon drawings of a city and little people who are similar in appearance to popular children's toy figures, offers games, chat, message boards to an international community. After a brief review of the Habbohotel Website it appeared to CARU that the Website, while not intended for children under age 13, might be attractive to them. The Habbohotel homepage and registration contained leading language (e.g. "If you are 13 or older come right in."; "Born before December 1991"; "Born after December 1991,") which tipped underage children off as to age requirements for entry into activities.

CARU has taken the position that in order to responsibly address the child audience Websites that potentially appeal to children 12 and under should implement neutral age screening along with a tracking mechanism.

In response to CARU's concerns, Sulake Inc. asserted that [habbohotel.com](http://habbohotel.com) is a general audience website that does not purposefully target children under 13 years of age. However, Sulake also informed CARU that it intends to follow best practices and thus take CARU's *Guidelines* into consideration. Sulake committed to implement neutral age screening including a tracking mechanism and to remove any leading language by March 14, 2005.

Sulake, Inc. worked constructively with CARU on this matter.

CARU's inquiry was conducted under NAD/NARB/CARU Procedures for Voluntary Self-Regulation of National Advertising. Details of the inquiry, CARU's decision and the advertiser's response will be included in the next NAD/CARU Case Report. Members of the press who wish to see a copy of the decision now should email [elascoutx@caru.bbb.org](mailto:elascoutx@caru.bbb.org).

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The National Advertising Review Council (NARC) was formed in 1971 by the Association of National Advertisers, Inc. (ANA), the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Inc. (AAAA), the American

Advertising Federation, Inc. (AAF), and the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc. (CBBB). Its purpose is to foster truth and accuracy in national advertising through voluntary self-regulation. NARC is the body that establishes the policies and procedures for the CBBB's National Advertising Division (NAD), the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), and the National Advertising Review Board (NARB).

NAD and CARU are the investigative arms of the advertising industry's voluntary self-regulation program. Their casework results from competitive challenges from other advertisers, and also from self-monitoring traditional and new media, including the Internet. The National Advertising Review Board (NARB), the appeals body, is a peer group from which ad-hoc panels are selected to adjudicate those cases that are not resolved at the NAD/CARU level. This unique, self-regulatory system is funded entirely by the business community; CARU is financed by the children's advertising industry, while NAD/NARB's sole source of funding is derived from membership fees paid to the Council of Better Business Bureaus.