

CARU NEWS

For Immediate Release

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CARU AND MARAPETS TELECOMMUTE TO PROTECT KIDS' PRIVACY

New York, NY – May 5, 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 the operator of **www.marapets.com** (Marapets), based in London, England has modified its Website in order to comply with CARU's *Self-Regulatory Guidelines for Children's Advertising* (the *Guidelines*). The Website came to the attention of CARU through its routine monitoring of the Internet.

The Marapets Website offers children the opportunity to be a part of a world- wide community and take part in, among other activities, Maramail (an internal email feature), chat, and join its kids club, with the ability to buy, sell and collect virtual pets. CARU found that the Website was in violation of the *Guidelines* as it lacked a privacy policy and allowed children to disclose personally identifiable information (PII) without age screening mechanisms or parental consent.

CARU has taken the position that in order to responsibly address the child audience, Websites that potentially appeal to children should implement neutral age screening along with a tracking mechanism. In addition, the operator of a Website has to obtain parental consent prior to collecting information from children under 13 years of age.

The operator was receptive to CARU's concerns and responded by posting a privacy policy and implemented a downloadable parental consent form. The operator also deleted its data base containing PII of children under 13 who had not provided the operator with prior parental consent. Finally, the operator has committed to implementing neutral age screening by April 30.

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.

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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.