

# CARU® NEWS

Immediate Release

Contact: Linda Bean  
212.705.0129

## **CARU REVIEWS ADVERTISING FOR STARDOLL.COM WEBSITE**

*Company Brings Website into Compliance with Guidelines*

*New York, NY – May 28, 2008* – The Children’s Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., has recommended that **Stardoll AB**, operator of the Website [www.stardoll.com](http://www.stardoll.com), modify the site to assure it is in compliance with CARU’s guidelines and the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). The company has taken steps to do so.

CARU – the children’s advertising industry’s self-regulatory forum – monitors Websites for compliance with *CARU’s Self-Regulatory Program for Children’s Advertising*, including guidelines on Online Privacy Protection, as well as with the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act.

The Stardoll Website came to the attention of CARU through its ongoing monitoring efforts. The Website offers a virtual world where visitors can design fashions for paper dolls and play other dress-up games. When registering for basic membership on the site, visitors must first select one of the following two options: “12 year and under” or “13 year and under.”

Potential members clicking on the “12 year and under” link were asked to enter their gender and a user name, password and e-mail address. Once that information was submitted, the next screen asked for a parent’s e-mail address. The parent was then sent a notice stating that the child signed up for the site, and will be registered for newsletters, etc. The notification e-mail also provided an opportunity to opt-out of the collection as well as a link to a mail-in or fax-in form through which parents could provide their consent for the child to participate in the Stardoll Community Membership.

Upon its review of the Website, CARU was concerned that the Website’s age screening process was not neutral and did not contain a tracking mechanism.

Responding to CARU’s initial inquiry, the operator stated its willingness to bring the Website into compliance with CARU’s Guidelines and took steps to do so.

The operator agreed to create a procedure that removes all tip-off information for the potential registrant and contains a tracking mechanism so that the registrant cannot go back and change his or her age to circumvent the age screening. The operator noted that the new process will be implemented as soon as it is finalized.

CARU, in its decision, said it “is pleased by Stardoll’s decision to implement a neutral age screening process and tracking mechanism.”

Stardoll, in its advertiser's statement, said "[w]e fully agree with and accept CARU's recommendation, and have worked closely with them to craft and implement a revised process. We thank CARU for their time and expertise in this important matter, and we look forward to an on-going collaboration with them ... ."

###

*CARU's inquiry was conducted under NAD/CARU/NARB Procedures for the Voluntary Self-Regulation of National Advertising. Details of the initial inquiry, CARU's decision, and the advertiser's response will be included in the next NAD/CARU Case Report.*

**About Advertising Industry Self-Regulation:** 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) and Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), as well as for the National Advertising Review Board (NARB) and Electronic Retailing Self-Regulation Program (ERSP).

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. 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/NARC/NARB's sole source of funding is derived from membership fees paid to the CBBB. Funding for ERSP is derived from membership fees paid to the Electronic Retailing Association. For more information about advertising self regulation, please visit [www.narcpartners.org](http://www.narcpartners.org).