

For Immediate Release

## **CARU RECOMMENDS KIDZWORLD MODIFY WEBSITE TO BETTER PROTECT CHILDREN'S PRIVACY; COMPANY AGREES TO DO SO**

*New York, NY – August 3, 2009* – The Children's Advertising Review Unit of the Council of Better Business Bureaus has recommended that Kidzworld.com, Inc., the operator of the Website [www.kidzworld.com](http://www.kidzworld.com), take steps to better protect the privacy of children who visit the site. The company has agreed 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 (COPPA). The Website [www.kidzworld.com](http://www.kidzworld.com) came to the attention of CARU through CARU's ongoing monitoring.

Kidzworld.com is designed for kids and teens, ages 6-17. The Website features chat rooms, online games, message boards and blog platforms. Members can discuss celebrity gossip, get help with homework or play online games. Upon CARU's initial review, the Website also had an "Invite Your Friends" feature and an E-card feature.

Following its review of the Website, CARU determined that the chat rooms, message boards, and photo posting practices at [www.Kidzworld.com](http://www.Kidzworld.com) complied with the guidelines and COPPA. CARU found that when a member attempted to post personally identifiable information through the message boards, chat rooms or photo posting service, it was held for review by KidzWorld and ultimately not posted.

However, CARU found that the operator's age-screening practices were not in compliance with CARU's guidelines or COPPA. If a visitor to the site entered a date of birth that indicated an age under 13, a field requesting a parent's email address would appear. The visitor could then change the date of birth to indicate an age above 13. The field requesting a parent's email would disappear and the visitor could register. CARU recommended that the operator implement a session cookie in connection with its age screening process so that visitors under 13 could not change their ages.

CARU determined that potential members were required to enter more personally identifiable information (PII) than was necessary to register for the site and found that the parental-consent mechanism was inadequate. CARU also expressed concern about the information collected for both "Invite Your Friends" feature and the E-card feature.

In response to CARU's inquiry, the operator removed the "Invite Your Friends" feature and revised the e-card functionality to assure that the sender's email address and full name are not disclosed to the recipient of the e-card.

The operator also agreed to change its registration process with respect to the collection of PII to collect a parent's email from children who enter a date of birth that would indicate an age below 13.

In its operator's statement, Kidzworld.com said it "strongly advocates the online safety, privacy and protection of children. Through our filtration process and live moderation of all user interaction, we believe that Kidzworld is the safest website for kids. However, with CARU's assistance we believe we are able to further protect our users by implementing new programming features to the website. We will continue to seek out new ways to improve our user experience while continuing to make their safety our core value."

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*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).