

For Immediate Release

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Twin Cities Students Learn to Say ‘Bye Bye’ to Bullying Behavior with New Theater Program

The National Theatre for Children Premieres National Tour Focusing on Character Education in Area Elementary Schools

Minneapolis, Minn. – April 23, 2007 – *Safe & Caring Schools® Bye Bye Bullies!*, an exciting new play that teaches children about personal responsibility, ethics and good citizenship, will make its national debut in Twin Cities schools May 7 through 11, 2007. Created by locally based The National Theatre for Children, Inc. (NTC) along with curriculum-development firm Petersen Argo, Inc. and Free Spirit Publishing, *Bye Bye Bullies!* uses a proven educational method – live theater – to encourage elementary-school students to have empathy for their peers and take positive steps when confronted with bullying behavior. The week-long preview is sponsored by Free Spirit Publishing, a Minneapolis-based publisher of educational materials that support young people’s social and emotional health. The production will then head off on a national tour to more than 1,000 schools nationwide.

“Across the country, 150,000 students won’t go to school today because they are afraid of bullies,” said NTC President Ward Eames. “No child’s education should suffer because fear of bullies prevents him or her from attending school. We hope the *Safe & Caring Schools Bye Bye Bullies!* show will inspire and empower students to become positive bystanders by reporting bullying behavior and asking for help, while adults organize themselves to do their best to create safe and caring learning environments for everyone.”

The play is based on Petersen Argo’s renowned Safe & Caring Schools®, a pre-school through grade 8 program that infuses lessons on self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making into classroom learning. Safe & Caring Schools creators Katia Petersen, Ph.D., and Steve Petersen, M.A., worked closely with NTC’s creative team to integrate their proven curriculum into the 25-minute show. The messages in *Bye Bye Bullies!* are reinforced before and after the performances with exciting student workbooks, an extensive teacher guide, online games and take-home activities for students and their parents.

“With kids, it’s not enough to just say, ‘No, don’t do this or that.’ They need to understand what these behavioral concepts mean and the consequence of their choices,” said Dr. Katia Petersen, a child psychotherapist and recognized authority on school climate improvement, violence prevention and parent involvement. “A theater program like *Bye Bye Bullies!* allows students to interact with the ‘teachers’ – the actors – and really see how their actions can make a difference. One of the most important aspects of the show is that beyond the lessons and information, *Bye Bye Bullies!* calls upon kids and teachers to act by building a positive community where everyone rejects bullying behavior.”

“When we heard about this theater program, we were on board right away,” says Judy Galbraith, president and founder of Free Spirit Publishing. “We feel a very strong connection to the message of the play—supporting young people and teaching important social skills has been Free Spirit’s mission for more than 20 years. We are eager to add our voice to those saying ‘bye-bye’ to bullies. Every child deserves a safe place to learn and grow.”

Background on *Safe & Caring Schools® Bye Bye Bullies!*

Dr. Ivegotit is having a terrible day. It seems as though someone has taken off with his Brain Switcher, which makes a person feel what another person is feeling. His main suspect is his assistant, Igor, a notorious bully. The doctor enlists Anita Hero, hero for hire, to find Igor and his Brain Switcher. With the help of new friends Frank Fixit and Victor Clues, Anita learns about bullying and empathy, the difference between teasing and kidding, and how everyone can be an everyday hero and stand up to bullies. But will Igor learn his lesson, too?

NTC delivered more than 7,000 in-school performances in 2006, and is trusted by educators for its unique formula of live theatrical interaction and sound educational technique. Studies by independent researchers have shown that 99 percent of educators believe that the use of live theater increases students’ capacity to learn and retain key messages, and that 92 percent of NTC’s workbooks and other take-home activities are used by students at home with their parents.

For more information about NTC and its programs, including *Bye Bye Bullies!*, visit www.nationaltheatre.com or call 1-800-858-3999.

About The National Theatre for Children

Founded in 1978, The National Theatre for Children, Inc. (known at that time as Small Change Original Theatre, Inc.) is dedicated to educating young people on important and timely curricular subjects by offering educational live theater in our nation's schools. Based in Minneapolis, NTC has developed the art of teaching through live theater into an evidence-based science of its own. NTC has pioneered extremely successful programs in health, science, social studies, reading and math. Each year, dozens of troupes perform live educational theater programs in front of millions of students, in thousands of schools, nationwide.

About Petersen Argo, Inc.

Petersen Argo, Inc., creators of the Safe & Caring Schools® program, specializes in kid-friendly social/emotional learning that is integrated into the regular school curriculum and home routine. PA delivers training services and has developed print, interactive, distance-learning and media programs for home, school, government and business use. Petersen Argo programs have been recognized by the National Parenting Association, Teacher Magazine, the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Broadcasters.

About Free Spirit Publishing

Headquartered in Minneapolis, Free Spirit Publishing is the leading publisher of learning tools that support young people's social and emotional health. Free Spirit's mission is to help children and teens to think for themselves, succeed in life and make a difference in the world.

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