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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovative website strives for safest online gaming and chatting for kids

Kelowna, British Columbia - With concerns about online safety for children at an all time high, a new virtual world that allows children to have fun and interact in one of the safest online environments to date is being heralded as a welcome addition to the Internet.

Club Penguin (www.clubpenguin.com) is a fun-filled, virtual world, populated by colorful, animated penguins.

Visitors to Club Penguin choose a penguin, give it an identity and explore, interacting with other penguins by chatting, text messaging, playing games and sending greeting cards. Players can also use icons to express their emotions and have their penguin perform actions such as waving, dancing or throwing a snowball.

Club Penguin is designed for six to 14-year-olds, but is open to children of all ages.

"Chatting and gaming are the two most popular online activities for children, yet most products out there are geared towards older teenagers and adults," points out Club Penguin's Lane Merrifield. "As parents of young children, we wanted to incorporate games, safe chat and social interaction in a unique way by creating a fun, online world that we'd be comfortable letting our own kids visit."

Club Penguin's sophisticated filtering system offers parents unprecedented peace of mind by providing one of the safest online chatting environments on the market.

"The system on our *Open Chat* option is already designed to catch any obvious swear words and inappropriate comments, but it can also break codes and screen out hidden methods players might sometimes use in an effort to get past the filter and bully or harass another participant," says Merrifield.

Although the filter is constantly being updated and will catch more than 95 per cent of unacceptable words or messages, Club Penguin has taken its commitment to player safety one step further by hiring moderators to monitor what's going on and deal with reports of misconduct.

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Players are strongly encouraged to play fair and protect themselves, and those who engage in inappropriate behavior can be silenced or banned.

For its youngest players, Club Penguin offers another level of protection, by allowing parents to set their child's level of interaction.

Parents who choose *Easy Chat* get the ultimate in online safety. This bulletproof option limits what users can say to a predefined menu of greetings, questions and statements, as well as emotion icons, actions and greeting cards.

In Club Penguin, you can drop by the coffee shop to chat or play a game of *Mancala*, visit the ice rink, meet up with friends for a little dancing at the night club or waddle over to the dock for a game of *Hydro-Hopper*, which involves dodging obstacles while tubing behind a motorboat.

Club Penguin doesn't require downloading so it can be played with any kind of Internet connection and carries no risk of computer viruses.

And while users are having fun playing games and exploring, they're also getting the chance to develop some valuable early social, computer and money management skills.

"We want the children who visit Club Penguin to take responsibility for this virtual world and learn the value of acting appropriately. So, when they do good deeds and help others, for example, players earn virtual coins that they can save up and use to buy clothing and accessories for their penguin, and furniture or other decorative items for their igloo," explains Merrifield.

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