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June 6, 2006

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ESRB AND PENNY ARCADE TEAM UP TO CREATE NEW GAMER PSA CAMPAIGN

NEW YORK – The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) today announced the launch of a new Public Service Announcement (PSA) advertising campaign developed specifically for the video gaming community by the creative team behind the popular webcomic, Penny Arcade. The campaign is comprised of five print ads that include original characters representing the ages of various rating categories, and will be rolled out sequentially throughout the summer.

“ESRB tends to primarily focus on reaching out to parents about the importance of ratings, but this campaign is focused on gamers under the age of 21 who may not yet fully appreciate the benefits of the rating system,” said ESRB president Patricia Vance. “In order for the campaign to resonate with the gamer audience, we sought to have a little ‘edge’ to the creative; and let’s face it, Penny Arcade comics give a whole new meaning to the term *Comic Mischief!*”

For the past several years, gamer magazines and websites have loyally and consistently supported ESRB PSA campaigns, with over 70 ads published generating 25 million impressions. However, game enthusiast publishers felt that the ESRB ads, which target parents, were somewhat disconnected to their readers and the editorial environment. The Penny Arcade campaign was developed with this expressed purpose in mind, and does not replace the existing ESRB *OK to Play?* ads, which will continue to appear in all non-game enthusiast media.

The first ad in the series features a character named Sarah, a girl around age seven or eight that loves video games and whose parents use the ESRB ratings to help them choose ones they are comfortable with. The second ad, which will be released along with the first, introduces readers to the Andersons, a dad and son who play games together. The series progresses with characters of increasing ages and seeks to capture the way each age group views games and ratings.

“We took this project on to allow our signature style to communicate a really important message: the ESRB ratings matter to gamers of all ages,” said Robert Khoo of Penny Arcade. “The characters we created are a reflection of who gamers are and what we love, so we’re incredibly proud of the campaign.”

The ads will begin to appear in the coming months. Some gamers may have gotten a sneak peek at the characters recently at the E3 Expo in Los Angeles, where ESRB ran a teaser campaign for the ads that generated a positive buzz among conference attendees.

“We don’t expect to ever be considered cool among gamers, but at the very least we want gamers to understand the purpose we serve,” added Vance. “After all, many of them will be parents one day, at which time we expect they will be far more appreciative of the tools we provide.”

The new PSA ads complement ESRB’s existing “OK to Play?” campaign targeting parents, which was launched in 2003 and has since generated well over a billion consumer impressions. The ads have appeared in 5 of the top 10 consumer magazines including *TV Guide*, *Redbook*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Family Circle*, as well as *Oprah*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Disney Adventures*, and others. Game enthusiast publications that have supported the “OK to Play?” PSA campaign include *Game Informer Magazine*, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *GamePro* and *PC Gamer*, among others.

The first two ads in the series are attached to this press release. More about ESRB’s PSA initiatives can be found at <http://www.esrb.org/about/psa.jsp>.

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About Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is a non-profit, self-regulatory body established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESRB independently assigns ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry.

About Penny Arcade

Equal parts online comic and commentary, Penny-Arcade (<http://www.penny-arcade.com>) covers videogames in a way that is genuine, insightful, and respected by the gaming community. What started as a hobby for Jerry “Tycho” Holkins and Mike “Gabe” Krahulik has, over seven years, grown into an online phenomenon that serves 50 million page views a month to millions of readers worldwide. In addition to the comic strip, Penny Arcade Inc. also manages Child’s Play (www.childsplaycharity.org), a gamer-driven charity for sick kids in Children’s Hospitals across the world as well as the largest consumer level game show in the nation, the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) (<http://www.pennyarcadeexpo.com>).



