

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 16, 2003

Missing children nonprofit releases innovative safety CD-ROM

Twelve-year-old Brittany waits on a street corner for her mother to pick her up. A strange car screeches to a halt in front of her and an angry stranger leaps out, yelling at her to get in the car. What should she do?

That is one of many questions posed to children in "Be Alert, Be Prepared, Be Safe," an unique interactive CD-ROM produced by Child Protection Education of America (CPEA), a national missing children nonprofit based in Tampa, Fla.

The CD-ROM, narrated by local news anchor Reginald Roundtree, teaches children what to do in possible abduction situations then shows a dramatized scene related to the lesson just learned. The scene is brought to the "critical point" where there is a pause and the child must make a decision about what they would do if they were in that situation. Children giving wrong answers are reminded of the lesson and given a chance to pick again; choosing the correct answers shows the positive outcome of the situation.

One of the biggest problems with teaching children about this type of safety is reinforcement reminding a child of lessons learned so it will be fresh in their minds should a dangerous situation ever arise. Normally, that job is left to parents but it can fall to the wayside in this hectic world we live in. This project is an alternative way to reinforce these valuable lessons.

"Our CD-ROM shouldn't replace the parental roll in teaching children about safety, but it should help to remind children of the techniques and tips they should know," said Vince DiNova, executive director of CPEA. "We wanted to offer something that children could use repeatedly on their own."

The interface of the program uses large buttons and drop down menus, making it easy for kids to use and simple to access specific lessons if needed. Printable coloring and worksheets are included on the disk as another way to reinforce lessons.

The CD-ROM also includes a section for parents describing how they should instruct their children to use this learning tool as well as information about CPEA's day-to-day mission.

"Our staff has never seen anything like this offered by the missing children field," said Director of Development Don Smith, who wrote the script for the project. "There are plenty of safety videos and DVDs out there that a child can just watch, but we haven't run across anything that is this interactive."

"Be Alert, Be Prepared, Be Safe" was produced with the assistance of BVP, a production company based in Tampa. BVP performed all aspects of production and worked within the nonprofit's project budget by offering a large in-kind donation of services.

The disks will be sold through a variety of marketing sources across the country to raise money to support CPEA's work. The nonprofit assists parents and law enforcement officers involved with missing children cases by offering free nationwide photograph distribution. The charity also hosts safety education speeches and events, including digital fingerprinting using its state-of-the-art ID ME NOW fingerprinting program.

CPEA is the second largest missing children organization in number of registered cases in the country. The organization's three founding members have over 30 years of experience in the missing children field. The nonprofit focuses on photograph distribution as a way to help in the search for the missing because, according to Department of Justice statistics, one in six children are found because someone recognized their picture.

A copy of the CD-ROM will be donated to each of the public library branches in Hillsborough and Pinellas counties.

CPEA will host a July 2 preview party at BVP, 3505 Frontage Road, Suite 140, from 3 to 5 p.m. Invitees will get to see how the CD-ROM works as well as meet with the project creators and charity directors.

For more information about CPEA, see the charity's Web site at www.find-missing-children.org or call 813-626-3001.

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