

# Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Annual Report  
July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013







Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

## Our Mission

Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood supports parents' efforts to raise healthy families by limiting commercial access to children and ending the exploitive practice of child-targeted marketing. In working for the rights of children to grow up—and the freedom for parents to raise them—without being undermined by corporate interests, CCFC promotes a more democratic and sustainable world.

Cover photo: Shara Drew

The Independent Charities Seal of Excellence is awarded to the members of Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America that have, upon rigorous independent review, been able to certify, document, and demonstrate on an annual basis that they meet the highest standards of public accountability, program effectiveness, and cost effectiveness. These standards include those required by the US Government for inclusion in the Combined Federal Campaign, probably the most exclusive fund drive in the world. Of the 1,000,000 charities operating in the United States today, it is estimated that fewer than 50,000, or 5 percent, meet or exceed these standards, and, of those, fewer than 2,000 have been awarded this Seal.



# Dear Friend,

The other day I watched a fourteen-month-old make an astounding discovery. As she explored the contours of an old baby doll, she encountered tiny protuberances on the sides of its head. She ran her finger over each one and sat thinking intently for a moment. One finger extended, she lifted her hand and deliberately explored the sides of her own head—and then went back to the doll to repeat the sequence until she was fully satisfied that, indeed, both she and the doll had ears.

I love so much about that experience—from being reminded of the amazingly complex connections necessary to recognize a doll's ear as representing our own, to the chance to see, in action, the innate drive to learn and make meaning that is so powerful in human beings from birth. It poignantly reminds me why the CCFC staff and I work so hard to stop the rampant commercialism causing children so much harm.

Commercialism is toxic to children, and not just for the things it sells. It deprives kids of the time, space, and silence to initiate, explore, make meaning, and create—to satisfy their need to know about the world.

As a CCFC supporter, I'm sure you have your own favorite commercial-free moments with children. Thank you so much for helping us make more of them possible. As you'll see in these pages, we're challenging companies that falsely market their apps as educational, depriving babies of experiences crucial to healthy growth and development. We're standing up to corporations that stifle creative play, market violence to boys, and transform childhood icons like the Tooth Fairy into sexualized, commercialized characters for girls. And as always, we're leading efforts to keep marketers out of schools because every child deserves a commercial-free education.



With gratitude for your ongoing support and encouragement,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Linn". The script is fluid and cursive.

Susan Linn, EdD

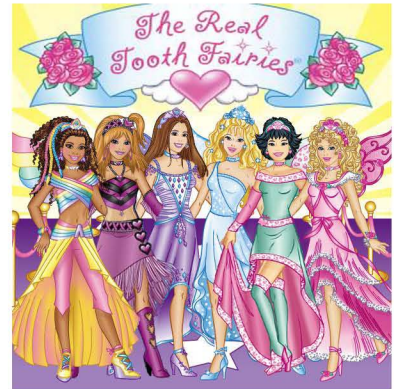
Director, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood



# Saving the Tooth Fairy

After more than a decade countering all kinds of marketing that targets kids, it's tempting to think we've seen it all. But even we were shocked by The Real Tooth Fairies, a cynical ploy by toy-industry executives to brand a childhood icon.

It began when we discovered their outrageous video pitch to investors. "Can you believe," the video asks, "that a childhood character known by millions worldwide has not yet been licensed?" To the alluring "ca-ching" of a cash register, a voice-over exclaims, "With a target audience of ten million



US girls ages six to ten who lose 20 teeth, that translates to 200 million Tooth-Fairy moments. And biology guarantees that will never stop."

## #SaveTheToothFairy



Christopher Gerrior

I am a dad and I am the real tooth fairy. Step off!

4 MONTHS AGO



Kirsten McKnight

I just clicked on the links in Susan's article and browsed the website a bit. Ugh. What a rotten concept to sell to little girls. Every single one of the fairies has a boyfriend (even Stepella), and one of the boyfriends makes fun of his girlfriend for having hair on her leg. And the sidebar of the page shows a photo of a little girl, with the caption "Can you believe that leg!" Blech. [therealtoothfairies.com/rea...](http://therealtoothfairies.com/rea...)

4 MONTHS AGO



Brandy King  
@KnowldgeLinking

Follow

#SaveTheToothFairy -- Girls do NOT need another line of sexualized princesses branded for them!  
[bit.ly/16Erbk1](http://bit.ly/16Erbk1) Thx @commercialfree!

9:12 PM - 16 Jul 2013

2 RETWEETS 1 FAVORITE



Ljiljana  
@tigerljily

Follow

See, if you're a girl you get a tooth fairy, but that's not good enough for boys they get a tooth elf.

1:11 PM - 16 Jul 2013

2 RETWEETS



Our scathing exposé of The Real Tooth Fairies—complete with the embedded video—was featured on the front page of *The Huffington Post* and our campaign to Save the Tooth Fairy went viral. CCFC members took to social media express outrage at the brand's damaging sexualization and gender stereotypes, as well as its assault on creativity and family traditions. The story was picked up by media outlets around the world, including *The New York Times*, the *London Daily Mail*, *Harpers*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, and prominent blogs such as *Jezebel* and *Babble*. Even better: The Real Tooth Fairies received a well-deserved and hilarious takedown on NPR's *Wait Wait...Don't Tell Me*.

This blitz of bad publicity was not the coming-out party The Real Tooth Fairies envisioned! We won't stop our campaign to Save the Tooth Fairy until the beloved icon is safely back where it belongs: in the public domain of children's imaginations.



# Laps, Not Apps

This year CCFC took aim at the latest unsettling baby media trend: the proliferation of tablet and phone apps that purport to be educational. In August, we filed Federal Trade Commission (FTC) complaints against two leading app makers, Fisher-Price and Open Solutions, for false and deceptive marketing.

The extensive media coverage of our complaints—including stories in *The New York Times*, *Associated Press*, *The Washington Post*, and on CNN, NPR, and CBS News—spurred an important national conversation about babies and screen time, as well as the need to enforce existing consumer protection laws to stop the exploitation of well-meaning parents.



Within days of our filing, Open Solutions completely revamped its marketing and dropped all of the educational claims about its baby apps. We met with FTC staff and the agency is currently reviewing our complaint against Fisher-Price.

CCFC has a long history of successful advocacy to stop media companies from deceptively marketing products as educational for babies. In 2009 our efforts led the Walt Disney Company to offer an unprecedented refund on Baby Einstein DVDs. In 2012, in response to a CCFC complaint, the FTC issued a landmark judgment against the video series *Your Baby Can Read*. Thanks to our latest efforts more parents and caregivers are getting the important message that smart phones and tablets are the last thing very young children need for optimal learning and development.

## Celebrating Our Work

Susan Linn received the 2012 Peace Award from Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment (CEASE): “With strength and determination you have become a successful leader in the struggle to protect children from the excesses of commercial culture. CCFC leads the way in pressuring corporations and government agencies to limit the worst of marketing to children. As a writer, leader, and a force for change, you inspire us all.”



# Our 8th Consuming Kids Summit

## Reclaiming Childhood from Corporate Marketers

Since 2001 CCFC has brought together parents, educators, activists, students, and health care professionals for the only conference dedicated to protecting children from harmful commercialism. On March 21-23, 2013, attendees from around the world gathered at Wheelock College and heard electrifying keynotes from Lenore Skenazy, Michael Rich, Diane Levin, Makani Themba, and Alex Bogusky. Breakout sessions and lunch discussions, led by more than 30 presenters from as far away as Brazil and Peru, covered a range of topics, including reducing children's screen time, combating junk food marketing, transforming neighborhoods into playborhoods, resisting the corporate takeover of education, using social media to combat sexualization, and more. We all left energized and armed with ideas and resources for protecting children from commercialism at home, at school, and in our communities, and for changing the culture at large to give all kids the childhood they deserve.



"Thanks for doing a beautiful job with the summit. It was so well-paced, with time to learn, connect, network and collaborate. I had high expectations~and they were all met. It gave me an opportunity to meet with many leaders in the field and discuss my work as a practitioner with both presenters and attendees. I left with plenty of research-based information that helped me create new curriculum for other professionals and for parents." *Katy Smith, Licensed Parent Educator/2012 Minnesota Teacher of the Year*



# Protecting Children's Privacy in School

CCFC has always been the go-to organization for parents and educators looking to preserve schools as commercial-free spaces for kids. This year we expanded our in-school advocacy and added a new focus: preventing school districts from helping corporations profit from schoolchildren's most sensitive and confidential information.

CCFC is collaborating with privacy advocates and educators around the country to stop inBloom, a Gates Foundation initiative that will store student information in a "data cloud" and share that information with for-profit corporations—with no guarantee that the information will be kept secure. inBloom is configured to collect personally identifiable student data, including names, grades, test scores; detailed disciplinary, health, and attendance records; race and ethnicity; and economic and disability status.



Our hard work is paying off. Five of the nine states originally committed to participate in inBloom have pulled out. In CCFC's home state of Massachusetts, we collaborated with the ACLU of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts PTA to delay the implementation of inBloom, hopefully for good. We're also working hard in New York, Colorado, and Illinois to protect students' privacy.

## Spreading the Word

From prestigious national conferences to local preschools and PTAs, CCFC staff are sought after for keynotes, presentations, and workshops. This year, our voices were heard at conferences of the American Library Association, the National Association for Education of Young Children, and at Harvard Law School, and by countless parents, educators, and health professionals at events around the country.

# Facing the Screen Dilemma

## Young Children, Technology, and Early Education

Scant research shows any benefit of our youngest children using new screen technologies. There's plenty of evidence, however, that many children spend far too much time with screens, and that excessive screen time is harmful. At the same time, educators face growing pressure to increase the amount of time children spend with digital technologies in early childhood settings, taking valuable time and resources away from activities proven to benefit learning and development. Much of the information about the benefits of screen time comes from sources with a vested interest in the proliferation of new media products for young children.

That's why CCFC published *Facing the Screen Dilemma*, created with our friends at the Alliance for Childhood and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (TRUCE). Packed with relevant research and practical tips, *Facing the Screen Dilemma* is the first guide designed to help early educators make informed decisions about whether, why, how, and when to use screen technologies with young children. While *Facing the Screen Dilemma* was written for educators, parents will find the research sections and practical suggestions helpful in making decisions at home. You can download a free guide at [www.commercialfreechildhood.org/screendilemma](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/screendilemma).



When we premiered the guide at the National Association for Education of Young Children's 2012 conference, many early educators told us it was exactly the resource they've been looking for. This year, we'll be expanding our work with preschools and daycare providers as part of our new Screen Time and Early Childhood Project.

## And the TOADY goes to:

Appalled at Fisher-Price for squeezing screen time into snuggle time, CCFC members selected the Fisher-Price™ Laugh & Learn™ Apptivity™ Monkey as winner of this year's TOADY (Toys Oppressive And Destructive to Young children) award for the worst toy of the year. The first stuffed animal for infants with an iPhone in its tummy barely bested the LEGO Friends Butterfly Beauty Shop in the closest TOADY vote yet. Timed to the holiday shopping frenzy, the TOADYs are a fun way to highlight the worst toy industry trends, with CCFC members taking to social media to passionately campaign for their choices.





# Stop Marketing Violence to Kids!

Addressing our culture of violence requires complex and multifaceted solutions, but public dialogue is often rife with over simplifications. That's why CCFC's efforts to protect young children from media violence are more important than ever—especially in the wake of this year's tragic mass shootings in Newtown and elsewhere. Our advocacy is grounded in extensive research that demonstrates exposure to violent media is a risk factor for becoming desensitized to violence, lacking sympathy for victims, and aggressive behavior, including bullying.

We stepped up our campaign to hold companies accountable for targeting young children with violent toys and media.

- We urged the Motion Picture Association of America to stop film companies from marketing violent PG-13 movies to children as young as preschoolers. In 2012 CCFC found 650 ads for *Avengers* (rated PG-13 for sequences of intense violence) on children's television networks.

- When a family was kicked off a United Airlines flight for asking the airline to turn off the movie *Alex Cross* so their young children wouldn't see it, we responded. Our petition demanding United Airlines stop showing violent PG-13 movies on overhead screens was signed by several thousand parents and received extensive media coverage.

- After the Newtown shootings, *The New York Times* invited Susan Linn to explain, in its *Sunday Dialogue* feature, why media violence is a real public health issue.

Stories and toys have long been vehicles for passing on societal values to children. When they are controlled by companies that glorify violence to make a profit, children inevitably get the message that violence is a legitimate solution to conflict. That's why CCFC is committed to continuing—and winning—our campaigns to end the marketing of violence to young children.



Adapted from: Huesmann, (December 2007). Impact of Electronic Media Violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41 (6), S1, p. S6-S13.  
Image: *Alex Cross*, rated PG-13 for violence including disturbing images, sexual content, language, drug references, and nudity.

# Changing the Rules to Protect Children

Advocating for policies to protect children from exploitative marketing has always been a major component of our work. This past year we expanded our efforts at the state, national, and international levels.

In Massachusetts, Josh Golin testified in front of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and urged the Board to reconsider a plan to share confidential student data with for-profit companies. Josh also testified at a hearing of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Education in support of legislation that would prevent for-profit cloud computing services from using student data for commercial purposes. Susan Linn testified at the Maine State Legislature (pictured right) in favor of a bill that would prevent companies from marketing products with BPA to infants and toddlers.



CCFC works with a national coalition that successfully lobbied the FTC to make important changes to the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). These changes, implemented over strenuous industry objections, require companies to obtain parental permission before tracking or collecting personally identifiable information from children online or on mobile devices.

CCFC's international influence is growing as well. This year Susan Linn testified about the impact of commercialism on children for the National Congress of Brazil and for the Working Group on the Quality of Childhood at the European Parliament.



## Doing the Right Thing

In an unprecedented move, MOM's Organic Market, a grocery chain in the Baltimore and Washington area, announced it will no longer allow marketing to children in its stores. MOM's rid its shelves of any product targeting children with cartoon-festooned packaging—dropping items ranging from Dora the Explorer frozen soybeans to Elmo juice boxes—and replaced them with alternatives in cartoon-free packaging.



# Screen-Free Week 2013

Screen-Free Week just keeps getting better. This year, thousands of volunteers signed up to be organizers and planned events around the world. Here are just a few of our favorites:

- In New York, The Early Years Institute hosted free and discounted events all over Long Island, including a petting zoo, story times, visits to natural outdoor classrooms, a family game show, a ping pong tournament, an American folklore concert, bird watching, and more.
- The Greater Gallatin United Way in Montana organized a full week of activities, including a kids' bike ride, an obstacle course, a "tour for tots" of the Museum of the Rockies, an afternoon of theater games, a family swim night, and a group hike.
- The Early Childhood Alliance in Fort Wayne, Indiana, held a week of fun family activities, including games and healthy cooking lessons.
- In Brazil, our friends at Instituto Alana led an incredibly successful "Semana Sem Telas."
- For the first time, Random House Children's Books participated, hosting readings and events with noted children's book authors at schools and bookstores nationwide.



Screen-Free Week at the Providence Children's Museum, RI

"I saw my nine-year-old daughter lying on the floor, just day dreaming. I immediately thought, 'Oh no, she is bored, maybe she could'... then I stopped myself and just let her lay there.... She wasn't bored, just deep in thought. We don't always have to be doing something!" *Kim G., Ivins, UT*

Save the date for next year!

**screen-free week**   
May 5-11, 2014

# Why I Support CCFC

## by Chris Milner

As a father of three young children, I feel besieged by a steady stream of corporate marketing and commercialism present in all aspects of our children's lives today. I see unhealthy food promoted in schools and by the Boy and Girl Scouts for fundraising – products that promulgate bad gender, racial, and body image stereotypes, and, of course, the growing predominance of screen-based activities coming at the expense of outdoor activities, face-to-face time, and creative play.

I and my family are long time supporters of CCFC because we believe that children should have the right to grow up (and parents should have the right to raise their children) without being undermined by corporate interests. CCFC has taken on an important job to advocate for our children – to be a voice for the voiceless – against corporations who see children as the next frontier of customers.



Deciding what's best for our kids is complicated – but a clarifying question for me has always been to ask who's benefiting – the kids or the corporations. We are thankful that an organization like CCFC exists and we are glad to provide financial support. They are making a real difference, not just in the lives of my children but in the lives of millions of others as well.

## Keeping School Buses Ad-Free

Another legislative session, another round of victories for CCFC's ongoing campaign to stop state legislation around the country that would allow advertising on school buses. Only four bills were introduced this year—in Florida, Missouri, Virginia, and West Virginia—and none of them passed. Since our efforts began in 2012, we've defeated every bill introduced—all 13 of them!



# CCFC Financials

INCOME	
Contributions	377,434
Event Registrations	16,265
Total Income	393,699

EXPENSES	
Personnel	204,279
Events	15,222
Rent & Utilities	26,455
Website & Publications	18,612
Membership Management & Fundraising	13,161
Travel	1,869
Supplies & Subscriptions	2,692
Contract Services & Professional Fees	36,695
Total Expenses	318,984

NET INCOME	74,715
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NET ASSESTS, JULY 1, 2012	134,515
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NET ASSESTS, JUNE 30, 2013	209,230
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“I am very cautious in investments and donations and I want maximum bang for my buck. I never want to overpay for anything, and I support CCFC because they have proven over and over again that they aren’t merely child advocates—they are effective child advocates. CCFC does not just ‘fight the good fight.’ They win. Ask Disney. Ask BusRadio. Ask Channel One. Ask Scholastic. Ask Hasbro.” *Jim Metrock, Birmingham, AL*

# Our Supporters

We are grateful to our supporters, whose generosity allows CCFC to continue its important work reclaiming childhood from corporate marketers. Below is a list of our fiscal year 2013 (July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2013) donors.

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\$50,000 +

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\$25,000 - \$50,000

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\$10,000 - \$24,999

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Milner Family Foundation

\$2,500 - \$9,999

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## Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

*Reclaiming childhood from corporate marketers*

89 South Street, Suite 403, Boston, MA 02111  
(617) 896-9368 / [ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org](mailto:ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org)

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