

# Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

**Annual Report**  
July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011



# Our Mission

The 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.

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.



**Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood**  
NonProfit Center, 89 South Street Suite 403, Boston, MA 02111  
(617) 896-9368 / [ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org](mailto:ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org)  
[www.commercialfreechildhood.org](http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org)

Dear Friend,

What a great year it's been! Despite overwhelming odds, I'm happy to report that the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood is flourishing. I'm proud that our small staff and staunch supporters have had so much success standing up for families by limiting harmful marketing to children.

Since our founding in 2000, CCFC has worked through every legal means possible to stop the commercialization of childhood. We've expanded to over 43,000 members and built a reputation for integrity, creative advocacy, and effectiveness. In these pages, you'll read about how we convince corporations to curb egregious marketing by shining a spotlight on their worst practices. You'll learn about our Federal Trade Commission complaints to hold companies accountable for deceptive marketing and how we help parents mobilize to stop advertising in schools. You'll also read about the great leap forward we've taken to help parents encourage creative play and discourage screen time for their young children.

Throughout this incredible year, you've been with us—participating in our e-campaigns, alerting us to deplorable marketing, and spreading the word by blogging, tweeting, posting on Facebook, and talking about our work to friends and family. And we're so grateful for your support, especially in these tough economic times. Because of you CCFC continues to stand up successfully to corporations whose sophisticated, insidious, and ubiquitous “kid-marketing” deprives children of the kind of childhood we all know they deserve.



All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Linn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Linn, EdD  
Director, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

# Scholastic Scraps Coal-Funded Education...and More!

Bill Bigelow, Curriculum Editor of *Rethinking Schools*, was appalled when he discovered that Scholastic was distributing coal industry PR in 4th grade classrooms. These “teaching materials” extolled the virtues of coal without even one mention of its negative impact on human health and the environment. So he called CCFC, wondering if we could launch a campaign to end Scholastic’s partnership with the coal industry. And because commercial-free education is central to CCFC’s mission, that’s exactly what we did.

First we enlisted environmental groups like Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace as partners. Then we asked our members to voice their concerns directly to Scholastic and spread the word to their own networks. As our campaign took off virally, the media took notice: including great coverage from the *New York Times*, CNN Money, Public Radio International’s *Living on Earth*, and *Mother Jones*. Next, the *Times* weighed in with a supportive editorial. Faced with public pressure and harsh criticism, Scholastic pulled its coal materials—just three days after we launched the campaign!

And that’s not all. Scholastic announced it would review its InSchool Marketing division, which created materials “to promote client objectives” and “make a difference by influencing attitudes and behaviors” on behalf of corporations like Disney, Shell, and Nestle. So, even as we celebrated our victory, we worked to convince Scholastic to stop promoting corporate interests in classrooms entirely. CCFC members flooded the company with calls and held a virtual rally at Scholastic’s Facebook page. And nearly sixty thousand parents, teachers, and concerned citizens wrote to Scholastic.

Our hard work paid off: Scholastic agreed to eliminate most of its corporate-sponsored teaching materials. We’re so pleased that children around the country will be subjected to significantly less corporate marketing in their classrooms.



SCHOLASTIC

VICTORY

# Keeping Salesmen Off of School Buses



CCFC believes that government policies are needed to protect children from harmful marketing. So when several states introduced legislation to overturn long-standing laws that prohibit advertising on school buses, we launched our School Bus Ad Action Center. It provides state-by-state updates on the status of each bill and actions that parents and educators can take to stop the transformation of school buses into traveling billboards.

The Action Center has become a go-to resource for reporters. As a result, stories in dozens of media outlets include CCFC's point of view that school buses – and all school property – should be commercial-free. And we can point out publicly what many communities don't know: that selling ads is a terrible source of funding, typically raising as little as \$1 per student per year for school districts.

Thanks to our terrific press coverage, and to CCFC members around the country who deluged their representatives with calls and emails, proposals to put ads on school buses were defeated in the 2011 legislative session in Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Washington, and New York!

*“Our children are attacked by marketers on a daily basis. Their protection should be our number one priority. Thank you, CCFC, for leading the fight.”*

*- Supporter Angela MacEwen*

# Changing How Children Spend Their Time

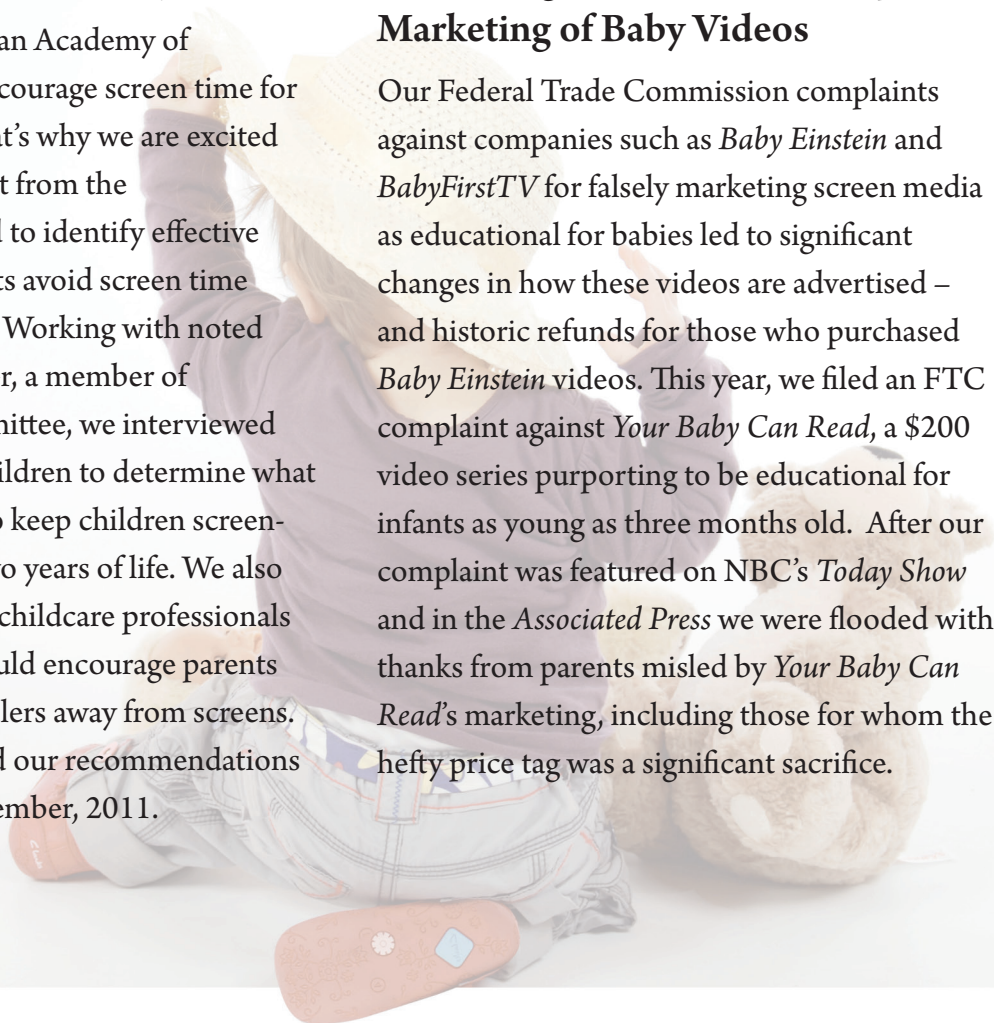
Reducing young children's screen time and encouraging hands-on and active play has been a long time priority for CCFC. In addition to its negative impact on play, excessive screen time is linked with problems like sleep disturbance, poor school performance, and childhood obesity. And screens are the primary vehicle for marketers to bypass parents and target children. That's why CCFC has launched several initiatives to help parents reduce the amount of time their children spend with screens:

## Promoting Screen-Free Babyhood

We support the American Academy of Pediatrics' efforts to discourage screen time for children under two. That's why we are excited about our research grant from the David Rockefeller Fund to identify effective means of helping parents avoid screen time for babies and toddlers. Working with noted psychologist Tim Kasser, a member of CCFC's Steering Committee, we interviewed moms of very young children to determine what would motivate them to keep children screen-free during their first two years of life. We also interviewed health and childcare professionals to explore ways they could encourage parents to keep babies and toddlers away from screens. Results of our study and our recommendations will be available in December, 2011.

## Preventing the False and Deceptive Marketing of Baby Videos

Our Federal Trade Commission complaints against companies such as *Baby Einstein* and *BabyFirstTV* for falsely marketing screen media as educational for babies led to significant changes in how these videos are advertised – and historic refunds for those who purchased *Baby Einstein* videos. This year, we filed an FTC complaint against *Your Baby Can Read*, a \$200 video series purporting to be educational for infants as young as three months old. After our complaint was featured on NBC's *Today Show* and in the *Associated Press* we were flooded with thanks from parents misled by *Your Baby Can Read*'s marketing, including those for whom the hefty price tag was a significant sacrifice.



# Changing How Children Spend Their Time

## 2011 Screen-Free Week a Smash!



CCFC is the new official home of Screen-Free Week (formerly TV-Turnoff), the annual celebration where children and their families turn off televisions, video games, and computers and turn on the world around them. This year, Screen-Free Week was celebrated in hundreds of schools, churches, municipalities, businesses, and libraries around the world. Here are just a few of those events:



- **Read Boston** asked 5,000 students in 14 partner schools to take the screen-free pledge! Children who returned their tracking logs after break received a prize pack with items that promote fun (and learning) without screens.
- **The Early Years Institute** in Long Island, NY worked with local merchants and community organizations to provide wonderful screen-free activities for children and families for free or at discounted prices.
- **The Church of St. Michael the Archangel** incorporated Screen-Free Week into its observation of Holy Week.
- In Guam, **Island Girl Power** hosted music in the park (pictured here), held an egg hunt, played volleyball and had arts and crafts in their clubhouse.

Save the date for next year's Screen-Free Week:  
April 30-May 6, 2012

# Changing How Children Spend Their Time

## Standing Up for Screen-Free Preschools

When we learned that the nation's premier early childhood association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), was updating its position statement on Technology and Young Children for the first time in 14 years, we sprang into action. A recent study shows that 36% of center-based childcare programs include TV, for an average of 1.2 hours a day, and 70% of home-based childcare programs include TV for an average of 3.4 hours per day. That's in addition to the 32 hours a week that preschoolers spend, on



Children playing at Peace Through Play Nursery School in Chestnut Ridge, NY.

average, with screens outside of classrooms. So we organized a letter signed by 70 leading early childhood educators, pediatricians, and child development experts urging NAEYC to join the American Academy of Pediatrics and the White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity in taking a strong stand for limiting screen time in the lives of young children.

We were more than disappointed when NAEYC issued a draft of its recommendations. As written, the draft

undermines growing public health efforts to reduce screen time and prescribes that all early childhood settings incorporate screen technologies, regardless of the age of the children they serve or they type of program they are. So we wrote another public letter and urged our members to weigh in. NAEYC was inundated with emails passionately describing the numerous advantages of a screen-free preschool experience.

NAEYC hasn't issued its final position statement, but we've been told by its creators that the new statement will address many of our concerns. While we don't know the extent of the changes, we do know that we've made a difference and that children's lives will be better for our effort.



We will not compromise our commitment to children by accepting corporate funding. We rely on you, and donors like you, to support our work.

## CCFC in the News

Educating the public by attracting media attention to the commercialization of childhood has always been one of CCFC's strengths, and last year was no exception. From *Fox News* to the *Huffington Post*, CCFC staff and Steering Committee members gave hundreds of interviews and our voices were heard in a wide array of media outlets. CCFC director Dr. Susan Linn was interviewed extensively by the *Today Show* about our *Your Baby Can Read* FTC complaint. Associate Director Josh Golin was featured in stories on National Public Radio and the *New York Times* about school bus advertising. The *Associated Press* covered our complaints against *Your Baby Can Read* and Zevo-3, a cartoon created by Skechers based on the sneaker giant's advertising spokescharacters. These AP stories were syndicated to hundreds of newspapers around the world. And the editorial boards of the *LA Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *New York Times* all wrote favorably about our work. To learn more about CCFC's media coverage, please visit the "newsroom" on CCFC's website.

## Donor Spotlight

# Why I Support CCFC

by Nancy Marsden



During my 20-year teaching career I noticed changes in my elementary students, from the way they processed information, to their core values and dreams. I saw a generation driven by materialism, increasingly addicted to technology, alienated from adults, unable or unwilling to focus. More and more kids were overweight and undernourished. Yet with the media pushing junk food, alcohol, gambling and tobacco on screens of all sizes, health lessons fell on deaf ears.

I hit the wall when marketers penetrated children's literature, planting messages in the novels my students were reading. That year (2006) CCFC launched an email campaign protesting stealth advertising embedded in the youth novel, *Cathy's Book*. Newspapers across the U.S. picked up the story. Public reaction was strong. As a result, the paperback was published with no embedded advertising. That's when I sent my first contribution to CCFC. Sure, I could have used the money for a million other things...but how can America prosper while we allow entrepreneurs "open season" to target our offspring for unhealthy behaviors, values and lifestyles?

Today I contribute monthly on my credit card, and I have been duly rewarded by CCFC's remarkable accomplishments, from putting the brakes on BusRadio to confronting Disney and Scholastic. Though I can't always fight alongside Susan and her dedicated staff, every dollar I donate helps level the playing field for children who otherwise have no bargaining power in a profit-driven economy. The integrity, intelligence and pure "moxy" CCFC delivers are what I call the right kind of "bang" for my charitable buck! It's an investment I must make in America's future.

# 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 2011 (July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011) donors.

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### **Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood**

*Reclaiming childhood from corporate marketers*

NonProfit Center, 89 South Street Suite 403, Boston, MA 02111

(617) 896-9368 / [ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org](mailto:ccfc@commercialfreechildhood.org)

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