INTERNET NEWS FOR PARENTS

The Web: A Good Character?

(NAPSA)—Every parent wants his or her child to be a "good" kid. Polite, kind and happy. Respectful, funny and confident. But how do you teach a child to be gracious or confident? Many parents—and even educators—are turning to technology for help.

With computers now in most schools and homes, parents and teachers are discovering that the Internet is a powerful tool for not only helping children learn geography and math, but also for instilling positive character traits in them.

"Our home computer offers me a great way to teach my kids," said Kevin Dugan, a father of two in Cincinnati, Ohio. "They think they're playing when they're actually learning important skills. Typically, lessons from school are even being reinforced."

Developing positive character traits in children is vital in today's society, and we're seeing character education taking place in the classroom as well as in the home. Increased emphasis is being placed on instilling these positive traits, which are beneficial to both the person and society as a whole.

One site that helps instill positive character traits is www.kidscom.com. KidsCom.com has been entertaining kids since 1995, making it the longest-running commercial Web site for kids. But it's much more than an entertainment site.

"KidsCom.com provides children an online outlet to express themselves and learn the skills and attitudes to help them become responsible and successful adults," said Jori Clarke, president of Circle 1 Network, which publishes KidsCom.com.

Currently, KidsCom.com is teaching children desirable character traits through a unique virtual pet program called "Plant Babies." Each Plant Baby repre-

"Humor," pictured here, is one of seven Plant Babies on KidsCom.com that is helping children learn desirable character traits.

sents a positive attitude: balance, confidence, gratitude, hope, humor, patience and persistence.

Clarke explained, "Children adopt a Plant Baby and are entrusted with its daily care, including feeding it and increasing its 'anti-cloud power' to fight the 'Clouds of Chaos,' which represent negative traits that can 'cloud' anyone's thinking: anger, gluttony, sloth, greed, jealousy and others."

KidsCom.com also features interactive games, writing challenges, message boards and other activities that teach kids how to apply positive character traits in real-life situations—plus a program that permits parents and teachers to reward kids for their good behavior.

Dugan concluded, "It's easy to find education-only sites and gaming-only sites on the Web. But to find a good learning site that kids think is fun can be a daunting task. That's why we're so glad we found KidsCom.com."