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STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A celebration of innovation, healthy child development, and what might be.

CHICAGO, IL, May 7, 2013 – The internet is abuzz this week with a posting at GIZMODO (<http://gizmodo.com/this-ad-has-a-secret-anti-abuse-message-that-only-kids-493108460>) that celebrates a new child abuse and neglect ad which they state “has a secret.”

The secret is that via a “lenticular top layer,” which allows different messages to be seen at different angles, adults see a sad child and message that reads “sometimes, child abuse is only visible to the child suffering it,” and children see a bruised child and receive a different message which reads, “if somebody hurts you, phone us and we’ll help you.”

We applaud any effort to reduce child abuse and neglect and so we also celebrate the innovation being displayed with this ad. At the same time, we want to share the lessons we have learned to provide a teachable moment as well.

What isn’t different about this approach is the message itself, especially the message being directed towards adults. Nor is it different in terms of its use of graphic, imagery. Further, it is not a message about prevention, and we cannot overlook prevention if we are going to talk about child abuse and neglect.

We understand there is an effort here to empower children, which we applaud as well, but what science tells us, is that we need to tell a different story when we talk about preventing abuse and neglect, and that story is one about solutions, about children finding adults they can trust, and that ultimately prevention is about adults taking responsibility for the children, all children, in their lives and communities.

Our research is very clear that for the adults seeing this message, pictures of abused or sad children don’t engage or activate them, not most of us anyway, but instead have the opposite effect, the message may wow us, or sadden us, but it does not prompt us to take action.

All of which might lead you to assume that we are not excited about the possibilities of this ad or what it represents; but we are.....just for different reasons.



This ad shows us that innovation is possible when it comes to the work of preventing child abuse and neglect, and that smart, creative people want to play a role in doing so. We just need to ensure that their science and creativity is matched with our science, and what makes prevention messages effective.

So, please take this statement as a celebration of what might be, people of all kinds, with unique skills, joining us in the fight for healthy child development in communities everywhere.

“The call to action here is simple,” says James M. Hmurovich, President & CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America, “we call on everyone to learn more about what we do to raise awareness, and how we do it, policymakers, funders, community members, and creative people, and then work with us to tell a new story in their places of work, worship, and where they live - a story about healthy child development, solutions, and the role we all play in the prevention of child abuse and neglect before it ever occurs.”

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ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

Prevent Child Abuse America, founded in 1972 in Chicago, works to ensure the healthy development of children nationwide. The organization promotes that vision through a network of chapters in 50 states and 580 Healthy Families America sites in 40 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and Canada. A major organizational focus is to advocate for the existence of a national policy framework and strategy for children and families while promoting evidence-based practices that prevent abuse and neglect from ever occurring. To learn more about what we're doing to prevent child abuse and neglect and how you can help, please visit our websites, preventchildabuse.org and healthyfamiliesamerica.org.