

Attention Assignment Desks/Education Editors/Technology Writers/Parenting and Life Writers:

TVOKids.com launches new web game on online safety

Firewall! tackles cyberbullying, protecting privacy and setting rules about computer usage

TORONTO, June 4 /CNW/ - With internet safety being a top-of-mind concern for today's parents, TVOKids.com, one of Canada's most popular online destination for kids, has launched Firewall!, a unique activity aimed at teaching 6-9 year olds about safety and proper etiquette online. The game builds on TVO's commitment to supporting families and helping them address important issues through TVO's media tools.

Firewall! was created with the guidance of TVO's in-house educational adviser and Cathy Wing, co-executive director of the Media Awareness Network in Ottawa. The game addresses a range of safety issues, such as guarding a child's privacy and identity, cyberbullying, the trustworthiness of information on the Web and establishing rules with parents about computer usage.

In Firewall!, the computer at the Super Citizens' headquarters - home to TVOKids' comic-book do-gooder heroes - is under attack from the evil Dr. Burns, who wants to unleash bugs on the system. To protect the computer, kids must correctly answer a series of true or false questions about online safety. Should you reveal whether you're a boy or a girl when chatting online? Can you give your passwords and e-mail addresses to just anyone? Is it OK to send "flaming" messages? Can you trust everything you read on the internet? With each successful answer, a section of the firewall goes up to shield the computer. The game features 30 questions in all, half of which are presented through streamed videos.

"The internet is organic to the lives of today's kids, and they take advantage of multiple platforms in a way we adults can't comprehend," says Patricia Ellingson, TVO's creative head of Children's Media Content and Programming. "Often parents are unaware of their kids' activities. We wanted to provide a fun activity that kids and parents can play together and use as a 'conversation starter' about how to communicate and behave appropriately when online."

She adds, "The internet can sometimes be a cruel and unsafe environment, with offensive material, bullies and predators. But it can also be a very positive and powerful tool when used safely. Firewall! equips kids with a few 'intelligent weapons' so they can decode the dangers in the high-tech world responsibly and confidently. This is gaming with a social conscience."

To further support the theme of online safety, new TVOKids' Super Citizens episodes on the topic are also now appearing during the after-school programming block, The Space. To play Firewall!, visit TVOKids.com.

About TVOKids.com

The award-winning TVOKids.com is a trusted web destination for inquisitive young minds. Winner of the "Most Popular Website" Gemini award in 2001, TVOKids.com is the choice destination for fun and safe online learning. TVOKids.com has consistently introduced games and activities that are curriculum-based and fully integrated with longtime TVOKids broadcast favourites.

About TVO

TVO is Ontario's public educational media organization and a trusted source of interactive educational content that informs, inspires, and stimulates curiosity and thought. We are committed to empowering people to be engaged citizens of Ontario through educational media.

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