



## **The Jim Henson Company and KCET to Produce Next “Big Idea” for PBS KIDS®**

### **New Preschool Show Promoting Science Readiness Will Continue Legacy of Quality Children’s Programming**

**Hollywood, CA (September 5, 2007)** – Continuing a long line of successful preschool programming that includes “Fraggle Rock,” “Bear in the Big Blue House” and “Muppet Babies,” The Jim Henson Company will partner with KCET, the PBS West Coast flagship station, to produce “What’s the Big Idea?,” a new educational television series to debut on PBS KIDS in 2008. The animated series will promote science readiness by encouraging kids’ instinctive curiosity about the world around them. The announcement was made today by Lisa Henson, co-CEO of The Jim Henson Company, and Al Jerome, President and CEO of KCET.

“What’s the Big Idea?” has a sketch-comedy format and features Josh, an inquisitive youngster who tackles the everyday ideas that preschoolers find fascinating (Why do bananas go “bad”? How does my juice box straw work? How does a bird fly without a plane?). Forty half-hour episodes of the series will be created using the Henson Digital Performance Studio, a proprietary technology that allows puppeteers to perform digital characters in real time creating a more spontaneous and fresh result.

“What’s the Big Idea?” is a co-production of The Jim Henson Company and KCET/Los Angeles for PBS KIDS. It will be executive produced by Brian Henson, Lisa Henson and Halle Stanford of The Jim Henson Company. Mary Mazur is executive in charge of production for KCET. Joyce Campbell is executive producer for KCET. Production will begin in fall of 2007, and the show is scheduled to premiere on PBS KIDS in 2008. The Jim Henson Company is handling all ancillary exploitation of the property including licensing, video and merchandising.

Lisa Henson says, “We are thrilled to continue our legacy of creating entertaining educational programming by partnering with KCET and PBS KIDS on this project. We recognize that we have a unique opportunity to excite and educate our youngest viewers about science and we are looking forward to meeting that challenge in a fun and irreverent way.”

“Through our KCEd™ initiative,” says Jerome, “KCET develops lively, entertaining, educational programs designed to enrich the lives of children, and we extend these projects beyond the broadcast to include dynamic outreach programs and extensive web resources. ‘What’s the Big Idea?’ is an ideal project for KCEd™ because there are numerous avenues for inspiring children to become engaged with science. We look forward to working with The Jim Henson Company and PBS KIDS to create and distribute a series that helps develop readiness in this important field of study.”

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2-2-2 What’s the Big Idea?

“PBS KIDS is excited to bring more science and exploration themes to its preschool audience through ‘What’s the Big Idea?’,” said Linda Simensky, Senior Director, Children’s Programming, PBS. “KCET and The Jim Henson Company’s commitment to providing engaging, educational content to kids pairs well with the big idea behind PBS KIDS — to make a positive impact on the lives of children through curriculum-based entertainment.”

Through a partnership with the multimedia design studio FableVision, the series’ online component at pbskids.org will feature experiences that further develop the show’s world of wonder and pre-science discovery. Complementary online and offline tools will support family and care-giver based learning environments and inspire a “call to action” for children to embrace and celebrate their own curiosity thus promoting a strong foundation for life-long scientific exploration.

#### About The Jim Henson Company...

The Jim Henson Company has remained an established leader in family entertainment for over 50 years and is recognized worldwide as an innovator in puppetry, animatronics and computer graphics. Best known as creators of the world famous Muppets (the rights to which are now owned by The Walt Disney Company), Henson is the recipient of over 50 Emmy Awards and nine Grammy Awards. Credits include the Saturn Award-winning *Farscape* and the features *MirrorMask*, *Five Children and It* and *Good Boy!*. With additional locations in New York and London, The Jim Henson Company is headquartered in Los Angeles on the historic Charlie Chaplin lot complete with soundstage and post-production facilities. Independently owned and operated by the five adult children of founder Jim Henson, the Company is also home to Jim Henson’s Creature Shop, a pre-eminent character-building and visual effects group with international film, television and advertising clients, as well as Henson Recording Studios, one of the music industry’s top recording facilities known for its world-class blend of state of the art and vintage equipment. The Company recently launched *Puppet Up! - Uncensored*, a live puppet improvisational show that has played to sold out crowds in Aspen, Hollywood, Edinburgh, Sydney and Melbourne and premiered as a special on TBS. The Company has also announced the creation of *Jim Henson Designs*, a merchandise collection inspired by Jim Henson’s earliest sketches. The Jim Henson Company’s website is located at: [www.henson.com](http://www.henson.com)

#### About KCET

KCET, the West Coast flagship station of PBS, is public television for southern and central California. KCET is watched by four million viewers a month in 11 counties, the largest broadcast reach of any public television station in the United States. The station also serves as a content provider for national and regional PBS member stations. Throughout its more than 40-year history, KCET has garnered hundreds of major awards for its local and regional news and public affairs programming, its national drama and documentary productions, its quality educational family and children’s programs, and its outreach and community services. Series produced from the station’s Hollywood studios include *Tavis Smiley*, *Wired Science*, and *Life & Times*. KCET recently received a distinguished Peabody Award for its companion series *A Place of Our Own* and *Los Niños en Su Casa*, which offer information and support to parents and caregivers of young children.

#### About PBS KIDS and PBS KIDS GO!

PBS KIDS, for preschoolers, and PBS KIDS GO!, for early elementary school kids, are committed to providing the highest quality non-commercial content and learning environment for children across the country. Providing age-appropriate, diverse programming for kids, PBS KIDS and PBS KIDS GO! programs consistently earn more

prestigious awards than any other broadcast or cable network. Only PBS KIDS and PBS KIDS GO! have earned the unanimous endorsement of parents, children, industry leaders and teachers. With additional PBS resources to complement its programming, including PBS KIDS online (pbskids.org), PBS KIDS GO! online (pbskidsgo.org), PBS Parents (pbsparents.org), PBS Teachers (pbs.org/teachers), PBS Ready To Learn services and literacy events across the country, PBS is providing the tools necessary for positive child development. PBS is a nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 355 public television stations, serving nearly 90 million people each week and reaching 99% of American homes.

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With additional locations in New York and London, The Jim Henson Company is headquartered in Los Angeles on the historic Charlie Chaplin lot, complete with soundstage and postproduction facilities. Independently owned and operated by the five adult children of founder Jim Henson, the Company is also home to Jim Henson's Creature Shop™, a pre-eminent character-building and visual effects group with international film, television and advertising clients, as well as Henson Recording Studios, one of the music industry's top recording facilities known for its world-class blend of state-of-the-art and vintage equipment.

The Company is currently in production on "Wilson and Ditch: Digging America," a webisode series for PBSKIDS.org featuring the Company's Emmy-winning animation technology, and the Company's Henson Alternative brand continues to produce "Puppet Up! - Uncensored," a live puppet improvisational show that runs monthly at the Avalon Hollywood. The Company has also announced the creation of The Hub, a third party licensing banner established to acquire and service global consumer products programs for external brands and entertainment properties.

<http://www.henson.com>