



## **HAPPY HOOBIDAYS! PBS KIDS SPROUT<sup>SM</sup> LAUNCHES NEW SERIES *JIM HENSON'S THE HOOBS* ON DECEMBER 25**

**Marks U.S. debut of award-winning preschool series**

**created by The Jim Henson Company**

Philadelphia, PA - December 12, 2006 /PRNewswire/ -- PBS KIDS Sprout, the first and only 24-hour preschool destination available on TV, on demand and online for kids ages 2-5 and their parents and caregivers, is launching the award-winning preschool series *The Hoobs* on December 25 with a "Happy Hooby Holidays" marathon from noon – 6 p.m. EST, marking the series' U.S. television debut. *The Hoobs'* Tula and Groove will appear on-air as the special guest hosts for the marathon, as they are introduced to the world of Sprout where parents and "tiddlypeeps" (the Hooby word for children) interact, learn and discover new ideas together. Created by The Jim Henson Company and licensed by HIT Entertainment, *The Hoobs* was Britain's largest ever commission of a preschool show from an independent producer when it launched in the UK in 2000.

Set in the sunny, colorful Hoobland, *The Hoobs* are great explorers who learn about planet Earth by posing different questions to all the children that they encounter along the way. In each episode, they try to find the answer to a question which they put into the great Hoobopaedia created by Hubba Hubba Hoob back in Hoobland. The four main Hoobs – Tula, Groove, Iver and Roma – live in the Hoobmobile and travel to all parts of the world in their quest for discovery and learning.

"The Hoobs' passion for knowledge is contagious," said Andrew Beecham, senior vice president of programming, PBS KIDS Sprout. "This age group is all about learning and discovery, and *The Hoobs* encourage preschoolers to ask questions, explore new ideas, think creatively and communicate with confidence."

Lisa Henson, co-CEO of The Jim Henson Company, said, "*The Hoobs* is a great example of our company's philosophy to create educational programming that is entertaining and engaging for children as well as parents. Young audiences around the world have enjoyed learning about the power of being curious from *The Hoobs* and we're thrilled to introduce them to U.S. audiences through PBS KIDS Sprout."

Following the December 25 launch, *The Hoobs* will air every day at 2:00 p.m. EST in its regular time slot. Viewers can also ring in the New Year with *The Hoobs* when the "Happy Hooby Holidays" marathon repeats on Sunday, January 1 from noon – 6:00 p.m. EST. For more information on *The Hoobs* and other Sprout programs, go to [www.sproutonline.com](http://www.sproutonline.com).

### **About Sprout**

PBS KIDS Sprout<sup>SM</sup>, the first and only 24-hour preschool destination available on TV, on demand and online for kids ages 2-5 and their parents and caregivers, was created as a partnership among Comcast Corporation, the country's leading provider of cable, entertainment and communications products and services; HIT Entertainment, a leading provider of quality entertainment for young children; PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the most trusted distributor of award-winning children's programming; and Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street. Since debuting its video on demand (VOD) service in April 2005, PBS KIDS Sprout has become the #1 Kids On Demand service, generating over 100 million orders since launch. The 24-hour digital channel, which launched in September 2005 along with the website ([www.sproutonline.com](http://www.sproutonline.com)), is available on digital cable and satellite to 20 million committed subscribers. The network's program lineup of gold-standard, curriculum-based children's shows includes: Sesame Street®, Bob the

Builder™, Barney & Friends™, Thomas & Friends™, Angelina Ballerina™, Sagwa: The Chinese Siamese Cat™, Caillou™, The Berenstain Bears™, Jay Jay the Jet Plane™, Teletubbies™, Dragon Tales™, Pingu™, Make Way For Noddy™, Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks™ and more.

#### **About HIT Entertainment**

HIT Entertainment, owned by private equity investment group Apax Partners since June 2005, is one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights-owners. HIT's portfolio includes internationally renowned children's properties, such as Bob the Builder™, Barney™, Thomas & Friends™, Pingu™, Rubbadubbers™ and Angelina Ballerina™. HIT acts as a representative for The Wiggles® in the UK, US and Canada and as worldwide representative for The Jim Henson Company's library of classic family brands, including Fraggle Rock™. HIT also owns the Guinness World Records™ publishing and television property and Fireman Sam™, a joint venture with S4C. Launched in 1989, HIT's lines of business span television and video production (including studios in the US and the UK), publishing, consumer products licensing and live events. With a catalog of more than 1,000 hours of young children's programming, HIT sells its shows to more than 240 countries worldwide, in more than 40 different languages and has operations in the UK, US, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. In 2005, the Company joined Comcast Corporation, PBS and Sesame Workshop to launch PBS KIDS SproutSM, a 24-hour digital cable channel and VOD service for preschoolers. For more information, visit [www.hitentertainment.com](http://www.hitentertainment.com).



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 digital animation. Best known as creators of the world famous Muppets, Henson has received over 50 Emmy Awards and nine Grammy Awards. Recent credits include the Emmy® nominated "Sid the Science Kid," "Dinosaur Train," "Wilson & Ditch: Digging America" and "Pajanimals." Features include "The Dark Crystal," "Labyrinth," "MirrorMask," and "Unstable Fables" and television productions include "Fraggle Rock" and the sci-fi cult series "Farscape."

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's Henson Alternative brand has recently launched the national tour of "Stuffed and Unstrung," a live puppet improvisational show named one of the top 10 "Best Stage Shows of 2010" by *Entertainment Weekly*.

<http://www.henson.com>

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