



A Healthy Message

The food industry, together with groups such as Concerned Children's Advertisers, plays an important role in encouraging positive eating habits from childhood up

Through the development of a new social messaging campaign and with the help of Canada's food and beverage industry, Concerned Children's Advertisers is hoping to help Canadian children improve their media literacy skills and their perception of their own health.

"It is imperative for food marketers to be part of the solution to pressing issues of poor nutrition and obesity," says Dr. Peggy Cunningham. Cunningham is director and a professor of the School

of Business Administration, associate dean of Research for the Faculty of Management, and R.A. Jodrey Chair, Dalhousie University. She is also an executive member of the CCA Board of Directors. "Those who are authentic in their efforts to address these issues, and those who align themselves with credible NGOs like Concerned Children's Advertisers can win back consumer trust while improving the reputation of their brands," she says.

Concerned Children's Advertisers (CCA) was founded in 1990 by a group of Canadian companies concerned with the issue of marketing to children and families. Members include food and beverage manufacturers, toy manufacturers, retail outlets and broadcasters. "Our commitment to responsibly marketing and advertising our products to children and their families is only enhanced through our membership with Concerned Children's Advertisers," explains Dale Storey, vice-president of Marketing for General Mills. "As a proud founding member, General Mills believes in and has seen the positive impact the work of Concerned Children's Advertisers has had on Canadian children and their caregivers. Our continued membership and support is our way of giving back to Canadian families."

For the past 19 years, the CCA has been producing and delivering industry-funded social messaging campaigns on issues of challenge in children's lives. These include drug abuse prevention, child abuse prevention, child safety, self-esteem, media literacy, bullying prevention, and healthy active living. "As a mother of two young girls, I see firsthand how the issues we tackle are timeless," said Bev Deeth, executive director of CCA. "We believe that when presented with informative messages, children are capable of making informed life choices."

To date, CCA has produced 36 public service announcements (PSAs). Now, in the third phase of the organization's Long Live Kids (LLK) initiative, there is another PSA that will launch in the fall of 2009. LLK was developed in 2004 in response to the concern of childhood overweight and obesity, and is a one-of-a-kind initiative that brings together industry, issue experts and government to provide children with tools for healthy eating, active living and improved media literacy. "Concerned Children's Advertisers has a unique ability to unite industry, government, educators, parents and issue experts to bring a voice, as well

as solutions, to important issues that affect children today,” says Catherine O’Brien, director of Corporate Affairs for Nestlé Canada. “This collaborative approach is the only way to make a true difference.”

The first two phases of LLK (in 2004 and 2007) focused on healthy eating and active living. The third phase, which is currently in development, will focus on media literacy as a key strategy on the issue of childhood overweight and obesity. “Given the media-saturated, multi-channel, Web-enabled world we live in, never before have media literacy skills in children and youth been so critical,” says Deeth. “These skills can help children to reflect on their own media use and question and deconstruct the messages they receive through all media, including advertising, regarding their health and well-being so they can make balanced choices for themselves.”

In Phase III the CCA isn’t stopping with the production of a PSA. “Today’s children don’t just interact with the medium of television,” explains Deeth. “Media has changed so much so quickly and children are the ones keeping up with and accessing new mediums and technologies. It’s important for us to develop an integrated campaign through which we can extend our reach beyond the television.”

In keeping with its collaborative spirit, earlier this year CCA formed a partnership with the Media Awareness Network (MNet), a non-profit organization that has been pioneering the development of media literacy programs since 1996. The partnership saw MNet writing a research brief that will provide direction for Phase III of LLK. “Working collaboratively with issue and industry experts ensures the most credible and relevant resources are leveraged towards one common goal,” agrees Christine Lowry, vice-president of Nutrition and Corporate Affairs for Kellogg Canada. “Concerned Children’s Advertisers’ integrated and multi-tiered approach to addressing childhood obesity aligns with our own commitment to empower children and parents with information and resources to make informed diet and lifestyle choices.”

CCA’s process of developing social marketing messages is unique and unconventional in that it is entirely consensus-based. Supported by the marketing muscle of representatives from its member companies, CCA forms a creative committee to oversee the creative direction of the campaign. The committee’s role includes reviewing the research brief, developing a creative brief with the advertising agency and reviewing and approving all stages of creative development

through to the finished product. The process is rigorous but it ensures that the final product is supported and endorsed by all member companies and is in line with CCA’s values and intents. This year’s creative committee is made up of representatives from Canwest, Mattel Canada Inc., Corus Entertainment Inc., Nestlé Canada Inc., Loblaw Companies Limited, PepsiCo, McDonald’s Restaurants of Canada Limited, and Weston Bakeries Ltd.

Drawing on that same notion of consensus, this will be the first year that CCA forms a committee of representatives from their member companies to develop a plan to launch the campaign. CCA’s research shows that the most effective media literacy initiatives have three vital characteristics: that children were actively involved so that they were developing critical skills as well as creating something that helped other children; that children were empowered by taking social action; and that parents were involved.

Going forward, 2010 will mark CCA’s 20th anniversary and project plans are already in the early stages of development. “We’ve had a very successful 19 years as the only organization of our kind in Canada, and as we move into our 20th year and beyond, Concerned Children’s Advertisers is full of possibilities,” says Craig Hutchison, senior vice-president of Marketing for

Loblaw Companies Ltd. and chair of the CCA Board of Directors. “We will continue to provide relevant social messages and educational materials by evolving with both the issues concerning Canadian children and in how we deliver our uniquely Canadian messages and materials to them and their caregivers.”

The members of CCA know they have a privileged place in the homes and lives of Canadian children. As a result, they’re committed to communicating to children in a way that is both responsible and respectful. “With the recent economic meltdown, trust in business has fallen to historically low levels,” says Cunningham. “At the same time, consumers are demanding that companies work to resolve social problems – especially those they are directly involved with.”

We all have a role to play in helping Canadian children live long, healthy lives. CCA and its members are playing a contributing and proactive role by providing media literacy education and producing social messaging on healthy, active living to the tune of Long Live Kids! ■

For information on Concerned Children’s Advertisers or to inquire about membership, contact Bev Deeth, executive director, at 416-484-0871 ext. 1, or at bdeeth@cca-kids.ca; www.cca-kids.ca

