



# Newsletter

Winter 2005-2006

**FAMILY RESOURCE GUIDE • [www.kids-houston.com](http://www.kids-houston.com)**

This is not going to be a normal newsletter. It's going to have a bit more of a personal note. It will start off and end like other newsletters...I'll begin by letting you know about upcoming opportunities for our advertisers, I'll talk about our overprints in the months of January through April, and I'll end with the traditional section that lets you know what 'freebies' we have at the office. But the bulk of this newsletter is going to be personal. I want to devote some amount of time and space to pay homage to the notions of commitment, consistency, durability, and integrity; notions that regrettably are becoming the exception, rather than the rule.

## **We Start the New Year With Two Big Advertising Sections and Overprints**

### *There's the Now Famous Spring and Summer Activity Guide*

Every year for the past 12 years or so, **The Kid's Directory (The KD)** has had a special section entitled the *Spring and Summer Activity Guide*. It has become famous...well, if not famous then it certainly has become the most sought after reference source for Mom's and families planning their spring and summer activities. Just ask any of the thousands of advertisers who have been part of this special section in the past. For virtually all of them, it has been their most reliable and successful advertising choice to promote their camp,

summer program, after school activity, and on and on. As always, this section will run from January through June and it will continue to be an excellent platform for any business that is looking to expand its activity during this most active of times. Call us for details.

### *And a New Special Section: The Early School Enrollment Guide*

Most private schools look to early spring to enroll children for the fall. For them, the months of January and February are key advertising months. But then there's the fact that many of these schools have summer programs that they also need to market in these same months...We have a solution. Advertise

### in the KD's new *Early School Enrollment Guide*

section. It's a bit of a win-win situation: Increase fall and summer enrollment in one fell swoop. We encourage all private schools looking to increase their summer and fall enrollment to give us a call.

### *Overprints*

#### *A Bigger Bang for Your Buck*

Due to the number of events that we will be sponsoring over the next 4 months (see that section later in this newsletter), we will be overprinting **The Kid's Directory (The KD)** like crazy. This is a great deal for all the advertisers because they get increased circulation and distribution without incurring any additional cost.

*Remember that our deadlines generally fall on the 12th of the preceding month. So...call us early.*





**It's Not the Name That Counts,**  
*It is the Work Ethic and the Integrity  
or Said Another Way; It's Tough  
Being the Kid's Directory*

We are in an interesting time here at the Kid's Directory. In our 15th year of continuous operation under one Houston based ownership, we have seen a number of publications come and go. We have done business with countless customers, who for the most part, have been overwhelmingly successful (bucking the odds of statistical failure for those brave and noble souls who embark on a journey of starting their own business). And in all this process of success and failure, we've paid attention and we have learned more than a few lessons.

**1st Lesson:**

*Clearly a Name Is Just a Name*

**Case in point:** Our main competition, Houston Family, has just been sold again. By my count, this is the fourth change of ownership in the last 5 or 6 years. With each change of ownership, there has been a change of staff, circulation, distribution, production, accounting, and operational procedure...etc.

We did a little 'Columbo work' and this is what we have discovered so far. The new owners, out of Phoenix, Arizona, just bought the name Houston Family. Production and billing will be out of Arizona. The sales organization will be local. The new owners are also

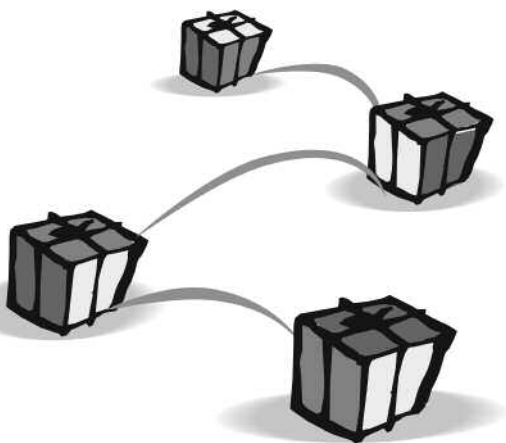
planning to revamp their distribution system.

We don't know what this means but certainly it would appear that Houston Family is not the same Houston Family that it once was. Even though the name is the same, it is essentially a new venture. So our recommendation to any potential advertiser is to be cautious.

**Another case in point:** The Kid's Directory started in Houston in 1991. Since then a national association of franchisees or licensees called *The Kids' Directory* (note the placement of the ' in Kids') has emerged. There are now, by my count, about 110 of these operations throughout the United States. They vary tremendously. If one were to set a bunch of these publications side by side, it would be apparent that there is not any consistent quality control or standardized procedures. Sizes, graphics, pricing, paper quality, distribution, circulation, and not to mention names vary from one publication to the next. However, they do share one characteristic. All of them that we've investigated have an association with a print broker in Dallas, Texas. He and his company have been selling licensing/franchises since 1998. For a fee one can buy rights to certain territories in which one can produce Kid's Directories or Kids' Directories or Wedding Directories or...the list goes on. And for an additional \$500, one can buy a book that tells you...how; you too, can become an independent publisher. Given this scenario, it's no wonder that there is little consistency or quality control.

So **The Kid's Directory** of Houston (**The KD**) has some company...unwelcome company...that we or I thought or hoped would stay out of the Houston area. Maybe not. Lately we have received calls from a few advertisers in **The KD** who were solicited by someone from *The Kids' Directory of Fort Bend*

County. They were confused: "I thought that we were already advertising in **The Kid's Directory** that has been distributed all over Houston as well as Fort Bend County for years." We have assured them, as we are now assuring all of you who are in receipt of this newsletter, that we at **The KD** are addressing this problem. But we do understand the confusion... Please call us with any questions or concerns. Should you get a call from someone claiming to be **The Kid's Directory**, make sure that the person calling is



really from **The Kid's Directory** and not from *The Kids' Directory*. Heck, I'm getting confused just writing about this...it's no wonder that our advertisers are confused.

What is clear here is that **The Kid's Directory**, like the name for any number of other publications, is just a name. But in this case...a name that just happens to have earned tremendous value in the Houston community. The name, in and of itself, did not create the value...the work we've done over the past 15 years did. And frankly, I am more than a bit miffed that someone or another business would try and capitalize on something that they themselves did not earn.

## 2nd Lesson:

*It's all about the Work and the Work Ethic. So What Has The Kid's Directory Done For Our Advertisers Lately?*

### **First, there's Distribution:**

Hat's off to our Distribution Coordinator, Cathy!! Under her enthusiastic leadership, she has marshaled the troops (our loyal and most excellent distributors) and refined each and every distribution route so that each point of distribution is targeted to serve the needs of our advertisers. She didn't stop there. She and the distributors have also increased our points of distribution to close to 5000 different locations. That has also meant that our circulation has been increased to over 80,000 issues every month (that's an increase of over 20%). But there is more. We now publicize and promote our distribution points in all of our publications, on our web site **and on the radio**. But the most important statement I can make to our advertisers is that this is being done without any increase in their advertising cost. It gets better, Cathy tells me that this is only the beginning...OH MY, she is making us all work sooooo much harder.

### **There's the radio:**

**The Kid's Directory (The KD)** has been approached by RADIO DISNEY and SAFE KIDS RADIO to participate

in a couple of promotional programs. We were of course honored by their selection of our publication...and we were appreciative of the airtime they offered us to help promote **The KD**...but we're sort of modest and savvy about marketing notions. We thought; why not use the airtime to *promote our advertisers* who need the 'FOOT TRAFFIC'? So that's what we did. Some of our advertisers are now on the radio telling listeners to come by their



store or business to shop and find the latest issue of **The KD**. And the good news again...is that these are additional benefits we offer our advertisers at no additional cost. Call us for details on how your business can also get some time on the radio.

**Then there are the events:**

We just finished with 'The Children's Festival of the Woodlands'. It was a great event...the best that they have ever put on from our point of view. That's also what their number say as well (they counted more than 14,000 attendees).

**The Kid's Directory** area was a frenzy of activity. In total I think we had over 12 different advertisers helping out. That gave them an opportunity to promote their business while handing out Kid's Directories. We want to highlight all those advertisers who participated.

- Texas Snakes and More
- Sea Sports Swim
- The Party Animals
- The Art Spot
- The Mom Team (*Amber or Vanna White as she is affectionately known*)
- Lively Photography
- Characters and Clowns
- Angel Faces
- Kindermusik of the Woodlands
- Little Miss Tea Time
- SAFE KIDS
- Sassafras Spa Parties

The Kid's Directory even had its own Tattoo Parlor. It was all Great Fun!!!

## **A LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS**

*We're Going to be very busy*

A quick first note: Advertisers are invited to participate in most of the events that are highlighted below. You can help us hand out Kid's Directories and talk to hundreds, even thousands of your prospective customers. This is a great opportunity for our advertisers...just ask the folks listed above.

### **The Showcase of Private Schools and Children's Camps**

**(March 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 at the Cymbia  
Woods Pavilion):**

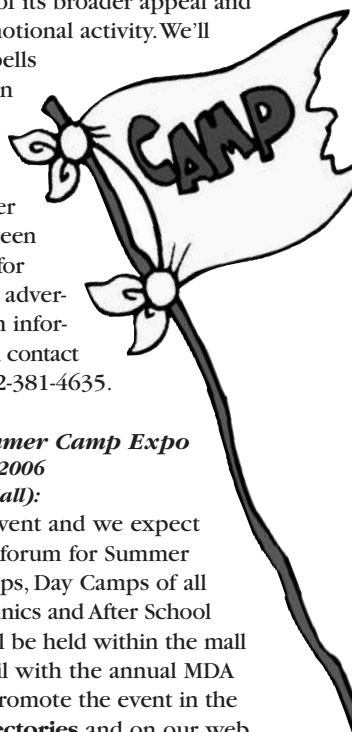
This event is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year. This year they are broadening their scope to include participants who are promoting boarding schools and special needs camps, as well as out-of-state camps.

Last year there were about 2500 people in attendance and the demographics of the participants were great. They expect more this year (they are estimating about 5000) because of its broader appeal and increased promotional activity. We'll

be there with bells on...so come on out and join us. There's another option; a limited number of tables have been made available for Kid's Directory advertisers. For booth information, you can contact Christine at 832-381-4635.

### **The 2006 Summer Camp Expo** **(February 18<sup>th</sup> 2006 at Katy Mills Mall):**

This is a new event and we expect it to be a good forum for Summer Residence Camps, Day Camps of all sorts, Sports Clinics and After School Programs. It will be held within the mall and will dovetail with the annual MDA walk. We will promote the event in the **The Kid's Directories** and on our web site. They also expect to have the event promoted on the radio, in newspapers and on T.V. It's too early to guesstimate the attendance but they will draw from Saturday shoppers that typically number about 35,000. Feel free to call us for updates. Advertisers with **The Kid's Directory** will get a discount on their booth space. Call Celena for details and booth reservation at 281-644-5000.



***The Children's Festival***  
***(April 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 in***  
***Downtown Houston)***

This is the *big kabuna* of Houston events. Now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, *The HEB Houston Children's Festival*, presented by *Baker Hughes* is the best family event of the year. Some 125,000 people from all over the Houston area descend on downtown Houston for 2 days of frolicking interactive good times. We will have our Kid's Directory Family Fun Zone filled with a stage and lots of activities. We had huge crowds last year. For this event, we are looking for advertisers that have an activity that will engage and entertain the thousands of folks who stop by our booth and stage area. It is a tremendous amount of fun and a great opportunity at the same time. Call us to schedule your participation! For booth information call Beth Craig at 713-722-7775.

***Home and Garden Shows***  
***(February 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and***  
***March 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2006)***

Through our relationship with the folks who produce SAFE KIDS RADIO, we expect to participate in a variety of Home and Garden Shows in the upcoming months. These are typically well attended events full of families looking at a whole host of home improvement ideas. In other words, the demographics of those in attendance matches up to our publication beautifully.

***Baby and Family Expo***  
***(April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2006)***

This is a new event. It was initially scheduled for this fall but *Katrina* and *Rita* made that impossible so they rescheduled. We don't know much about this event at this time...except to say that they have had other events in other cities in the past. The organization promoting the event

is out of New York City. We will keep an eye on it as it develops. Call us and we will give you an update on whatever we have learned.

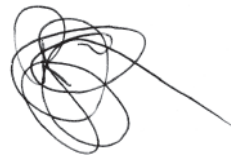
**Now—the Freebies:**

We've got a bunch and as is always the case, our advertisers are going to get first pick. For all those folks who know that they have always wanted to advertise in **The Kid's Directory**...consider the list of free tickets a bribe or, in more genteel terms, an inducement.

We have some limited tickets to Houston Ballet's wonderful rendition of the *Nutcracker*. Still in the Christmas Spirit, we have passes to *Santa's Wonderland* (a magical display of Christmas) that will operate through December 31<sup>st</sup>. There is also the *Monster Jam* event on January 7<sup>th</sup>, *Smucker's Stars On Ice* on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, *Harlem Globetrotters* on February 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> and *Super Cross* on April 1<sup>st</sup>. We also have tickets to the *Aeros* and passes to *Mountasia*. Call us for details.

**In Closing**

Thank you all for your patience in getting through this newsletter. Along with my personal agenda, there was a lot of information to digest...lots of opportunities for advertisers. As always, call us with any questions. We are here to serve your needs.



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**FREE!**  
**Free!**  
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