

PACER'S NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION CENTER AND SPOOKLEY THE SQUARE PUMPKIN OFFER FREE DIGITAL TEACHER TOOLKIT TO "STOP BULLYING BEFORE IT STARTS"

Spookley is a square pumpkin who lives in a round pumpkin patch world. Last year, Spookley the Square Pumpkin teamed up with PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center by lending his message of tolerance and kindness to a public service announcement promoting National Bullying Prevention Month in October. This year, they are teaming up to bring Spookley's messages directly into the classroom with a free digital teacher toolkit.

"The Legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin deals with advanced concepts of tolerance, diversity and acceptance in ways that are easily understood by early learners," said Julie Hertzog, director of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center. "Teachers can use this toolkit to help prevent bullying before it even starts." PACER Center is hosting the online toolkit, which provides links to free resources that teachers can use for important character values education and for multi-subject learning. Teachers can register for the program at <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/activities/toolkits/spookley/>.

The core of the program involves a reading of the book *The Legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin* and lesson plans/activities that teach bullying prevention and character values. Educators who do not have the book can download a free audio-visual recording by Bobby "Boris" Pickett, writer and performer of the hit song "The Monster Mash." In addition, the toolkit offers a Spookley classroom play with guidelines, access to classroom streaming of the Spookley movie, information about Spookley field trips to nearby farms and pumpkin patches and other ways to enhance the bullying prevention messages.

"There is a pressing need for bullying prevention teaching tools targeted specifically to early learners," Hertzog said. "We think the broad range of activities offered in this toolkit may also encourage teachers to involve older students, so they can present these vital lessons to the kids who are already looking up to them as role models." A classroom play written especially for the program by Spookley author Joe Troiano is "a wonderful addition to the toolkit," adds Hertzog.

Teachers and caregivers are being made aware of this offering through a campaign that includes targeted email, newsletter, social and traditional media outreach to hundreds of thousands of teachers, including an awareness campaign organized by Scholastic Book Clubs. In addition, Spookley's message of celebrating our differences will again be shared at special venues and screenings including the Museum of Tolerance, the Liberty Science Center, and at pumpkin patches and corn mazes across North America, where Spookley can be seen in activities such as storybook readings, kiddie corn mazes, interactive stage shows and school field trips. The Spookley movie will again air on the Disney Channel and be offered this year for the first time for digital download and rental. For more information about Spookley and Holiday Hill Farm, visit www.spookley.com.

About PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center: Founded in 2006, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center serves all children, including those with disabilities by uniting, engaging, and educating communities nationwide to address bullying through creative, relevant, and interactive resources. In 2006, PACER also established October as National Bullying Prevention Month and recently named Spookley its official "Spokes-Pumpkin." For more information, visit PACER.org/Bullying or call 952-838-9000. Based in Minnesota, PACER Center is a national parent center serving all youth, with a special emphasis on children with disabilities.

About Spookley the Square Pumpkin and Holiday Hill Farm: Created and written by Joe Troiano, *The Legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin* is an illustrated storybook that has become a perennial best-seller and fall season favorite among children, teachers and parents. The Spookley story is now also available as an app for the iPad/iPhone, Android and Nook platforms, and the all new *Spookley the Square Pumpkin a Family to be Thankful For* will be released this year through Scholastic book clubs and fairs. The animated classic, "Spookley the Square Pumpkin", will air once again this October on the Disney Channel in the US and abroad. Spookley lives on Holiday Hill Farm, a world where stories teach life lessons and which is the setting for Joe Troiano's other storybook classics *Mistletoe and the Christmas Kittens*, *Lyla the Lovesick Ladybug*, *JellyBean the Unbreakable Egg* and *Beacon the Bright Little Firefly*.