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Talaris Research Institute and KCTS/Seattle present new early learning initiative for parents and caregivers

National multimedia campaign includes on-air, outreach and online resources developed for public television's Ready To Learn model

SEATTLE – Parents and caregivers across the United States will have access to a new source of information designed to help them facilitate children's learning when KCTS/Seattle Public Television and Talaris Research Institute present *Parenting Counts: A Focus on Early Learning*, a public information initiative designed to help adults understand the importance of parenting in the early years. Unique to the PBS system, the initiative is centered around six 60-second on-air spots aimed at providing parents, childcare providers and parent education specialists with an engaging, informative and useful look at how young minds develop. These spots have been fed via satellite to all 349 PBS stations.

The *Parenting Counts* initiative is the result of a unique collaboration between KCTS/Seattle and Seattle-based Talaris Research Institute, which studies early learning in children from birth to five years of age and translates research into practical applications for parents.

"Talaris looks forward to bringing parents and childcare providers easy-to-use information on how they can nurture children and foster early learning and emotional development. Our goal is to improve parent-child relationships, which in turn helps young children form solid foundations for a lifetime of learning," says Terrence Meersman, executive director at Talaris.

"KCTS has a longstanding tradition of helping children in our community prepare for lifelong learning; it's one of the most important things we do," says William "Bill" Mohler, president and CEO of KCTS. "We're pleased to join Talaris in creating this campaign, which will help parents make the most of those critical first five years in their child's life."

In support of the on-air spots, parenting tips and additional information on early learning and child development have been co-developed by KCTS and Talaris, and will be hosted on pbsparents.org. The *Parenting Counts* spots, Web resources and related outreach materials are designed to be used by PBS stations in conjunction with their local Ready To Learn services, which are targeted at maximizing the school readiness of children ages birth through 8. The Ready To

Learn service is a national effort to improve the school readiness of young children through the reach of public broadcasting.

The ***Parenting Counts*** campaign features information on children from birth to five and focuses on three key topics: how young children learn, how kids learn to communicate and how parents handle stress when children are watching. The 60-second spots focus on these messages to parents:

- **Imitative Behavior** – Whether you hum when you're happy or stomp your foot when you're mad, your kids are learning from you every day and in every way.
- **Hypothesis Testing** - At two years of age, toddlers like to test their environment and everything in it, including you.
- **Talking to Baby** - Babies love the sound of Parentese, a sing-song speech that stretches out the sounds of words, like BaaaBeeeee (baby).
- **Getting in Tune with Baby** - Babies communicate with special cues long before they speak. It is your job to interpret what these little signals mean and respond appropriately.
- **Communicating Approval** - Your child is learning what to do and what not to do by reading your expressions and watching your gestures. This is called “social referencing.”
- **Handling Everyday Stress** - We all experience stress, but when children are watching, the way you handle stressful situations can help them learn about how they can cope with stress in their life.

In addition to the public television initiative, Talaris plans to offer these spots along with full lesson plans to parenting organizations, childcare providers and community colleges.

Award-winning team creates spots

In June, the first three ***Parenting Counts*** spots were honored with a Northwest Regional Emmy Award for outstanding achievement in the category of “PSA-Series or Campaign.” KCTS brought together an award-winning team to produce the six spots, including Talaris Research Institute as the content partner and veteran Seattle producer/director David Leonard, of Leonard Creative. The spots were written by Ken Bennett, founder and creative director of Outer Planet Inc., a Clio- and ADDY® Award-winning Seattle company.

Additional Support

Talaris Research Institute has committed up to \$150,000 in additional funding to the ***Parenting Counts*** initiative, to be paid in mini-grants to PBS stations. These dollars will help to promote community partnerships, creative activities and sustainability of the early learning topics within local markets. PBS station grant recipients will send their outreach coordinators to a training session hosted by Talaris at the Talaris Conference Center in Seattle.

The Boeing Company is helping to support the *Parenting Counts* outreach campaign's work with parents and child caregivers by donating services for printing of materials about early childhood development and best parenting practices.

"Boeing is proud to support the *Parenting Counts* initiative," states Bob Watt, Vice President of Government and Community Relations, Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "By working together, we can provide parents and caregivers with the information they need to get children off to the right start."

About Talaris Research Institute

Talaris Research Institute, www.talaris.org, is a nonprofit institute for advanced study located in Seattle. Talaris's mission is to advance knowledge of early learning and the importance of parenting in the first years of life. Dedicated to providing parents, caregivers and parenting professionals with research-based information on how children think, feel and learn, Talaris combines the science of learning with the practice of learning. After careful analysis of a large array of scientific information, Talaris translates research into easy-to-understand tools and information for all who nurture children.

Credits: Funding for production of the *Parenting Counts: A Focus on Early Learning* spots is provided by Apex Foundation. Outreach materials and activities are funded by Talaris Research Institute. Additional support provided by The Boeing Company.

About KCTS/Seattle

KCTS/Seattle (www.kcts.org) serves viewers by producing and presenting quality information and entertainment programs that reflect its mission to "inform, involve and inspire" and that contribute to lifelong learning. Among KCTS' numerous national credits are the Emmy Award-winning children's series, *Bill Nye the Science Guy*; the Emmy-nominated PBS miniseries, *The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color*; and such popular how-to series as *Nick Stellino's Family Kitchen* and *Graham Kerr's Gathering Place*.

KCTS' local Kids & Family initiative extends the station's community impact through participation in PBS Ready To Learn (RTL), serving parents and educators in Washington state and Canada with high-quality educational programming, resources and services that support children's development and school readiness.

Screeners: Members of the press may obtain VHS screeners of the *Parenting Counts* spots by contacting Cindi Pendergraft at Talaris Research Institute (206.529.6898 or cell 206.571.5532, cp@talaris.org).