

SESAME WORKSHOP STUDY:

CHILDREN AGES 6-11 AFTER SEPTEMBER 11TH *Study Shows Kids Finding Strength in Sense of Unity*

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 5, 2001 – Following the events of September 11th, children in middle childhood revealed that they were both inspired and comforted by a newfound sense of connectedness and community, according to a new study by Sesame Workshop, creators of *Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales*, and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat*.

As a follow-up to a study released last May, the Workshop conducted new research among 6- to 11-year-olds just following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The results were released today in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club.

For the original study, 233 children across the country filled out booklets that created comprehensive self-portraits using cameras, artwork, and mini essays. The new results were gathered from eighty-seven children using the same instruments. The sample concentrated on children closest to the events, with approximately half from the New York and Washington, D.C. areas and an additional 40 from geographically dispersed locations. Data from the two studies provide a unique opportunity to see what was on children's minds then, and what's on their minds now.

“Clearly September 11th changed our children's world, and we felt this study's methodology would be an invaluable tool to reveal children's feelings following this tragedy,” said Gary Knell, President and CEO of Sesame Workshop. “This research provides us with insight that will enable us to support them and their families.”

Though they were not directly asked about the attacks, children exhibited a range of responses to them: some directly referred to them in their books; others reflected them in more oblique ways, and some made no mention of what had happened. However, a cross-cutting theme was the importance of adults and community as role models and support systems for children. Key findings were:

- **Despite expressions of fears of death and violence, many children showed empathy and sadness.**

Almost no children expressed vengeance or anger.

Chris, age 11: *“My worries is that terriest (sic) will harm my Family and I will be left with no family like the kid in NY.”*

- **Children responded to heroism as well as pop culture.** Children in our previous study wanted to be like celebrities such as Britney Spears and The Rock. Now they also want to be like heroes real and imaginary such as policemen, political leaders and even Superman.

Erica, age 11: *“This person [fireman] is a hero because with all of the things that have been going on, these firemen are the heroies (sic) to all of us.”*

- **Children want to help.** The desire to help was expressed in a variety of ways. When asked what special power they would like to have, children expressed an interest in flying as in the previous study, but now many want to fly to stop “the bad guys.” One girl in Los Angeles told us in an interview that she would like to be able to bring a plane down. Others collected money to help victims and participated in vigils.

Emily, age 9: *“3 weeks ago many people died. I gave money at my school to help those who lost everything.”*

- **National and community connectedness is giving children strength.** Children consistently expressed hope for the future, evidenced by mentions of communities rallying together, displays of charity and a new sense of patriotism.

Christian, age 11: *“Everybody is helping each other; and the flags are a symbol that we will not stop helping people.”*

Sesame Workshop is a not-for-profit educational organization that stands alone in its ability to creatively help meet major educational and developmental needs that affect children around the world. For over 30 years, the Workshop has created innovative and engaging media to help all children reach their highest potential. The organization grounds its work in research to understand how multi-media platforms help children learn, develop and grow. Best known as the creators of *Sesame Street*, *Dragon Tales* and *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese Cat* airing on PBS, the Workshop continues to break new ground with Noggin, the only 24-hour kids’ thinking channel. Find the Workshop online at www.sesameworkshop.org

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