WGBH’s PBS Kids Series ARTHUR Receives a Grant From the John Templeton Foundation to Develop Interactive Comic Book to Promote Character in Collaboration with Tufts University

(Boston, MA, Wednesday, April 10, 2013) — WGBH Boston, a longtime leader in educational children’s media and the producer of PBS’s popular Arthur series (on air and online), has received a one-year research grant from the John Templeton Foundation. WGBH’s award-winning kids interactive group will use Arthur characters and stories to design and pilot a groundbreaking interactive comic book that promotes character development, positive decision-making, and pro-social behavior in children.

The project launches a brand-new collaboration with the Institute of Applied Research in Youth Development (IARYD) at Tufts University’s School of Arts and Sciences and its Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development. Under the direction of IARYD’s Richard M. Lerner, one of the nation's foremost experts on positive youth development, Tufts will lead a research study to assess the impact of interactive technology and collaborative learning on character development in young children.

According to Lerner, who is the Bergstrom Chair in Applied Development Science at Tufts, "this method of engaging with content and concepts has the potential to strengthen positive behaviors, but has not yet been studied within character education programs for young children."

In fall 2013, the interactive comic book will be implemented in a pilot program as part of a cross-age buddy program, matching first and second graders with older students in elementary schools in Massachusetts. Together, the students will use the interactive comic book as the focal point of their shared experience and participate in activities designed to encourage discussion and growth around such character attributes as empathy, forgiveness, and generosity.

“This is a creative and well-designed initiative, combining high-quality popular children’s media, interactive technology, and peer mentoring — not to mention rigorous evaluation research,” says Craig Joesph, Director of Character Development at the John Templeton Foundation. “We anticipate that this project will make significant contributions to promoting children’s character development and well-being.”

Now in its 16th season on PBS, the WGBH-produced, animated Arthur series follows the world’s most popular eight-year-old aardvark and his friends as they experience the challenges that real kids face in learning to navigate a complex and sometimes confusing world. Maintaining friendships, working things out with siblings, dealing with fears and anxieties, and doing the right thing are common series’ themes, and provide an ideal springboard for promoting conversations at school and home. “We hear all the time from kids and families that watching Arthur has been meaningful to them as they face challenges in their lives,” says WGBH’s Carol Greenwald, Senior Executive Producer. “We're very excited about the opportunity to work with such great partners to learn how those experiences might translate into substantive, positive growth for kids.”
About the John Templeton Foundation
The John Templeton Foundation (www.templeton.org) serves as a philanthropic catalyst for discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality. The Foundation supports research on subjects ranging from complexity, evolution, and infinity to creativity, forgiveness, love, and free will. It encourages civil, informed dialogue among scientists, philosophers, and theologians and between such experts and the public at large, for the purposes of definitional clarity and new insights. The Foundation's vision is derived from the late Sir John Templeton's optimism about the possibility of acquiring "new spiritual information" and from his commitment to rigorous scientific research and related scholarship. The Foundation's motto, "How little we know, how eager to learn," exemplifies its support for open-minded inquiry and its hope for advancing human progress through breakthrough discoveries.

About the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development
The Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development is a laboratory within the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development at Tufts University. The Institute helps build the knowledge base vital for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners to foster positive development, improved life chances, and contributions of young people. This commitment is rooted in an evidence-based approach to teaching, research, and application that emphasizes the strengths of youth and their families, schools, and communities.

About WGBH Children’s Media
WGBH Boston is the number one producer of PBS content for TV and the Web, including such innovative, entertaining, curriculum-based children’s media as Arthur, Curious George (the most-watched show for preschoolers on American television, proven to boost understanding of science and math), Martha Speaks (and its Dog Party mobile app, with measurable impact on kids’ vocabulary), Design Squad Nation, Fetch! with Ruff Ruffman, Postcards from Buster, Between the Lions, and Zoom. These join such “produced in Boston, shared with the world” productions as Masterpiece, Nova, Frontline, American Experience, and Antiques Roadshow (PBS’s most-watched program). WGBH also is a major source of programs for public radio (including PRI’s The World) and a pioneer in educational multimedia and in technologies and services that make media accessible to the 36 million Americans with hearing or vision loss. WGBH has been recognized with hundreds of honors: Emmys, Peabodys, duPont-Columbia Awards...even two Oscars. Find more information at www.wgbh.org.

About ARTHUR
ARTHUR, based on the best-selling books by Marc Brown, is television’s longest-running children’s animated series. Over the past 16 seasons, Arthur has remained one of the highest-rated weekday children’s series on PBS among children 4-8. Arthur has won numerous awards, including the George Foster Peabody Award, a BAFTA, and six Daytime Emmys®—four for Outstanding Children's Animated Program. Arthur is produced by WGBH Boston and 9 Story Entertainment. Executive producers are Carol Greenwald (WGBH), Vince Comisso (9 Story), and Marc Brown (Marc Brown
Studios). Directed by Greg Bailey. Funding for Arthur is provided by public television viewers. Corporate funding is provided by Chuck E. Cheese's®.

**About PBS KIDS**
PBS KIDS, the #1 educational media brand for kids, offers all children the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television, online, and community-based programs. For more information on specific PBS KIDS programs supporting literacy, science, math, and more, visit pbs.org/pressroom, or follow PBS KIDS on Twitter and Facebook.

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