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Kevin Clash Earns Association of Children's Museums' *Great Friend to Kids Award*

Washington, DC - The Association of Children's Museums will present Emmy award-winning puppeteer and co-executive producer of "Sesame Street" with its distinguished *Great Friend to Kids Award* at its 2004 annual conference, *InterActivity*, to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, May 3 - 5. Mr. Clash was selected in recognition of his lifetime commitment to developing smart, sensitive and educational characters for children and families. Mr. Clash will speak about his career in children's television in a keynote address at the conference on Monday, May 3.

ACM began the *Great Friend to Kids Award* in 1991 to honor individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions toward strengthening education and advancing the interests of children. Last year's award was presented to former First Lady Barbara Bush in recognition of her tireless efforts on behalf of family literacy. Past recipients include UNICEF (2003), Dr. David Elkind (2001), Dr. Robert Coles (2000), Children's Television Workshop (1999), Hillary Rodham Clinton (1998), Dr. James P. Comer (1997), Fred Rogers (1996), Dr. Ernest L. Boyer (1995), Peggy Charren (1994), Marion Wright Edelman (1993), Dr. Howard Gardner (1992) and Michael Spock (1991).

A "Sesame Street" fan from early childhood, Clash began making puppets when he was 10 years old. A native of Baltimore, Maryland, he started performing with his puppets at age 12 in his neighborhood, later taking his act to Baltimore's Harborplace. Local Baltimore television personality Stu Kerr spotted Clash and hired him for his show, "Caboose." In 1979, he began working for national television shows like "The Great Space Coaster" and "Captain Kangaroo." His work came to the attention of Muppet designer Kermit Love, and he joined the cast of "Sesame Street" full-time in 1985.

(More)

At that time, Clash was entrusted with the task of developing the character Elmo. Clash gave Elmo a falsetto voice and a sweet curious outlook on the world and soon Elmo became one of the most popular characters on "Sesame Street."

Clash has been executive producer of several films featuring Elmo; in addition to Elmo, his Muppet characters include Hoots, Natasha and others from "Sesame Street," and Leon and Clifford from "The Jim Henson Hour." Nominated several times for an Emmy, Clash took home the award in 1990 for outstanding performer in a children's series. He won again in 2001, 2002 and 2003 for his work as co-executive producer of "Sesame Street."

"In today's changing world, it's increasingly important to provide children and families with sensitive and educational role models through the media," said ACM Executive Director Janet Rice Elman. "We're thrilled to recognize Kevin Clash with the *2004 Great Friend to Kids Award*."

The Association of Children's Museums is the professional service organization that endeavors to expand the capacity and further the vision of children's museums around the world. ACM's vision is to bring children and families together in a new kind of Town Square where play inspires lifelong learning. Founded in 1962 as a support group for directors, ACM has broadened its services and purposes as an international association with over 400 members.

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