



For Immediate Release

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**CITIZENS URGED TO TAKE PRECAUTION AS TROPICAL STORM ALICE
HEADS TOWARDS THE VIRTUAL WORLD WHYVILLE.COM**

*The Consequences of Global Warming Demonstrated in the Virtual World
to Encourage Kids to Learn More About This Important Issue*

(Whyville Square, Whyville – June 26, 2007) – At approximately 3:00 pm WST (Whyville Standard Time), a large tropical storm is expected to hit Whyville.com, the only learning-based virtual world for today's digital kids. "Tropical Storm Alice" is heading towards the virtual world, populated by 2.3 million 8-15 years olds. Winds near the center of the storm are already registering between 20-34 knots, or 23-39 mph, with rainfall amounts of up to 20 inches an hour, never before seen on the island. Whyville citizens are advised to brace themselves for what may be major flooding.

Tropical Storm Alice is intended to raise awareness of global climate issues and is associated with the opening of the new Whyville Climate Center, which is sponsored by Penguin Young Readers Group, the publisher of Al Gore's young adult book, "An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming" (Viking Children's Books/Rodale Books \$16.00; 208 pages; Ages 11 up). The Climate Center will serve as the focal point for the discussion and further educational activities, while significant virtual rainfall continues for at least another 12-36 hours. This will result in widespread flooding and destruction throughout Whyville, with considerable rubbish and debris littering the virtual world. Whyville's citizens will need to join together in a massive clean up effort to restore their environment over the next several days.

The arrival of the tropical storm coincides with a new effort to educate Whyville's citizens about global climate issues. According to a survey conducted on the site in May 2007,

77 percent of responding citizens said that they were aware of the concept of global warming. However, only 50 percent felt they could be a part of the solution.

The Climate Center's initial activities will focus on changes in the levels of greenhouse gases in the Whyville atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide. In the center's CO₂ Lab, citizens will be able to document increases in carbon dioxide in the virtual atmosphere from the site's creation in 1999 to today. Traveling back in time, Whyvillians will sample CO₂ levels from each year and look for correlations with specific human activity. Information on historical events in Whyville, including the rate of population growth and introduction of new industries, will be obtained from the *Whyville Times* (the newspaper of Whyville, with articles written by kids). Citizens will also be able to propose hypotheses and debate consequences in bulletin boards within the Climate Center.

"The objective of this activity is not to prove any particular association between greenhouse gases and the climate, in general, or our first tropical storm in particular," said Dr. James Bower, CEO of Whyville. "Instead, we want to help kids understand the complexity involved in the growing international debate on these issues and get them involved in that discussion, since we already know that they care."

Activities in the Whyville Climate Center will also support citizen involvement in solving the problem of greenhouse gas emission. Each citizen will be assigned their own carbon footprint calculator in order to assess their individual contribution to rising CO₂ levels in the virtual world. The size of their footprint will increase, or decrease, depending on the personal choices they make, such as the number of virtual accessories they produce in Whyville's avatar factory, the number of trips taken around the world in the warp wagon, the number of times they teleport to the moon or mars, or even which types of foods they choose to eat. Whyvillians who substantially reduce their impact will be recognized with a distinctive green badge for their avatar and will even be able to trade their carbon credits to other Whyvillians for "clams," Whyville's virtual currency.

"We know from our surveys that Whyvillians are concerned about environmental issues, but don't believe that they can do very much to have an impact themselves," said Dr. Jen Sun, president of Whyville. "This activity is intended to address both the complexities of this issue, as well as provide examples of ways that our kids can get involved - not only in our virtual world but also in the real world."

Over the coming months, this new climate education activity will continue to unfold, impacting Whyville and its citizens in parallel to developments on this important issue in the real world.

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About Whyville

Whyville.com is the only learning-based virtual world for today's digital kids. Whyville offers a seriously fun extension of 8 to 15-year-old kids' real lives, giving them ownership of and participation in creating their own experiences. Named for the founding principle that asking *why* is the true basis of learning, Whyville citizens safely chat, earn currency, design avatars, play games, create projects, eat, govern and much more. Parents and teachers approve of Whyville because of its multiple levels of safety protection including proprietary technology and staff monitoring. For sponsors, Whyville integrates popular brands and institutions by following its learning-based principles of encouraging Whyville citizens to engage in experiential interactions relevant to today's digital kids.

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