



CritterKin

# Briefing Kit

## Teaching Kids about the Joys and Responsibilities of Owning a Pet

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# CritterKin

“If I had one dream for CritterKin™ it would be that every person who engages with the characters and their stories experiences the simple joy and unconditional love I felt as a child when spending time with my dog.”

- *Jena Ball, CritterKin, Founding Partner, Startled Cat, Inc.  
CritterKin Artist and Storyteller*

“Our dream, and what I feel we accomplished with The Magic School Bus, was to facilitate a change in perception. We wanted girls to fall in love with and believe they could be scientists. I am convinced there is a similar opportunity with CritterKin. We want to encourage pet adoption and teach children the facts of pet care. More importantly, however, we want to change people’s relationships with their pets by encouraging empathy, understanding and respect.”

- *Marty Keltz, Founding Partner, Startled Cat, Inc.  
Co-Founder and former President, Scholastic Productions*

“As a professional focused on teaching families about responsible pet care, my hope is that CritterKin™ will reach a worldwide audience and enrich the lives of families and pets. Only when people understand their responsibilities to their pets can animal suffering and the need for shelters be decreased.”

- *Vanessa Budnick, MLS Humane Educator,  
SPCA of Wake County, NC*



**CritterKin**

## **Overview**

CritterKin is an educational and entertainment property for kids that teaches them about the joys and responsibilities of owning a pet. CritterKin is being developed by Started Cat, Inc. in association with the SPCA of Wake County, North Carolina, and Silent Joe in Toronto, Ontario.

## **The Mission**

The word CritterKin is a mash-up that reflects how the founders feel about animals and the shift in understanding that needs to occur if we are to continue to survive and thrive on the planet. A “Critter” is a living creature. In a very real sense, we are all critters, our lives inextricably linked to one another through an inter-dependent web of life. “Kin” refers to family - those souls who mean the most to us, whether or not they belong to our species. This awareness and acknowledgment that all creatures/critters are part of our larger family/kin is at the heart of CritterKin.

The mission of the CritterKin™ project is to help children (and through them their families) learn the invaluable life lessons that pets can teach. These include respect for all life, an understanding of and appreciation for difference and diversity, empathy, responsibility, and an awareness of our role as the species that has the greatest impact on the planet.





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## Highlights

- The first CritterKin product will be a mobile app for children between the ages of 6 and 10, and is designed to teach them about responsible pet care through fun, interactive activities and games. Kids will play with the app for 30 days, completing daily chores and a series of interactive activities and games. Children who successfully complete the program are officially “CritterKin Certified,” and receive a digital certificate of completion.
- The CritterKin app will teach kids how to love and care for a pet through a series of fun, interactive games and activities.
- The CritterKin app will be funded through Kickstarter.
- The team behind CritterKin is composed of global leaders in storytelling. They believe that entertainment and fun are critical if you want to capture children’s hearts as well as educate their minds.
- Marty Keltz, the executive producer behind the Magic School Bus TV show, is one of the founding partners of CritterKin. He inspires the team to do for kids and pet care what the Magic School Bus did for girls and science.
- CritterKin is partnering with the SPCA of Wake County, with a goal of allowing other organizations to benefit from the world-class storytelling and educational materials included in the app.
- At the heart of CritterKin are the Critters! Jena Ball, the artist and storyteller behind CritterKin, isn’t just developing a platform for education, she’s creating a compelling world of characters and stories that kids will love, relate to, and learn from.
- CritterKin is a community. Whether you’re our friend on Facebook, a media partner, or a pet care organization, we hope you’ll be part of the CritterKin Community. For more information about how to connect and work with us, see “How You Can Help.”





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### The Dream: Facilitating Happy Endings

Of course you do, and the lessons you learned from your pet were invaluable. In addition to teaching you about responsibility, your pet taught you about loyalty, unconditional love, and maybe even heartache.

It is memories like these that inspire each of us on the CritterKin project. We know that not all stories have a happy ending. Too often, a child's dream of owning a pet ends with a rushed decision, a pet that isn't suited to a family's circumstances, or returning a dog to the shelter from which it was adopted.

When it comes to owning a pet, our hope is to help facilitate happy endings.

We've put together a world-class team to create products for kids that will guide, inspire and entertain them as they prepare for and care for a pet. We hope you'll join our CritterKin community and help us create happy endings for the children in your life and community.





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### Meet the Critters

*At the heart of CritterKin are...you guessed it - the Critters!*

*CritterKin doesn't just educate. It entertains, engages and inspires. It lets kids relate to the characters, learn from their adventures, and have a laugh or two along the way.*

*We wanted to introduce you to Sprout, the unofficial CritterKin spokespup. But since Sprout is never at a loss for words, we thought we'd let him speak for himself:*

Greetings and Salutations!

Sprout here. I am the official spokespup for the CritterKin pack, mostly because I fancy myself a bit of a wordsmith. In reality, I am more of an author by association. My person, Freddie, is a writer of mystery novels featuring a canine sleuth named Dodger. Though I follow and support Freddie's efforts with interest, I am no detective. I much prefer my role as liaison and relationship broker for CritterKin. It is my pleasure, therefore, to give you a little background on CritterKin and its pack members.

CritterKin is a word used by our instructor Ms. Jenaia. In her classes, which teach humans and canines to communicate more effectively, she refers to us as her family of critters. A "critter" as you may know is a living creature, and "kin" is another word for family. The combination of the two into CritterKin has a friendly ring to it, don't you think?

The first CritterKin class was composed of 10 canines and their people. Each, as you will see, has a unique story, personality, and skill set. It is by sharing these stories that CritterKin pack members raise awareness about important topics and have a boatload of tail wagging fun to boot. So without further ado, let the intros begin!





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### Meet the Critters



Annie

Trained as a service dog, she has a special knack for helping those suffering with PTSD.



Chance

A pit bull mixed breed, she is a strong, energetic girl with a kind heart and artistic talent.



Doxie

A canine version of a British butler, the perfect gentleman and an intelligent playmate.



Ernest

The friendliest pooch on the planet who gets too close to other critters sometimes.



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## MEET THE PUPS



Jamba

He has a collection of wrinkles and spots, celebrates differences and can be found playing with the kids no one is playing with.



Mariah

The survivor of a puppy mill, she's a fashionista and supporter of animal rights groups.



Newphie

A gentle giant with couch potato tendencies, his favorite position is sitting down.



Rufus

A terrier with some Labrador thrown in for good measure, he can play "wild" with the kids.



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## MEET THE PUPS



Scottisha

A rescue dog who loves to hunt squirrels, bark at cows and has become the poster dog for the rescue movement.



Sprout

The elder in the CritterKin clan at 12 years, he dispenses wisdom and advice, and mentors younger pups.





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### **The CritterKin Creators**

CritterKin™ is the brainchild of Startled Cat, Inc., a studio for immersive storytelling founded in 2010 with a goal of combining the power of storytelling with new media to create engaging, entertaining and useful products that have a positive impact on people's lives.

#### **Jena Ball**

A writer, illustrator and creative lead at Startled Cat, Jena Ball is the artist/storyteller on the CritterKin™ project. Her work focuses on using new media to produce compelling narratives while building strong communities focused on innovation, creativity and collaboration.



She began her writing career at SONY in where she penned everything from technical papers and textbooks to speeches for Akio Morita. She also wrote a restaurant review column for the Japan Times. As a freelance writer she specialized in articles about the environment, cross-cultural differences and health. She has written for a range of well-known publications including Backpacker, House Beautiful, Women's Health, Cooking Light and Mother Earth News as well as a syndicated humor column.



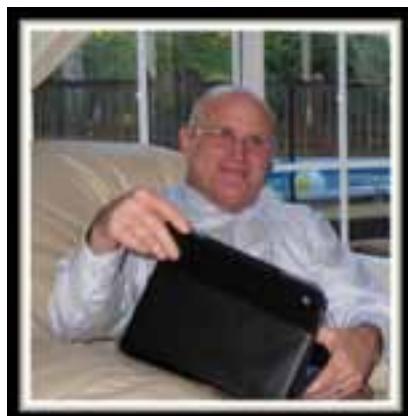


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In 2007, Ball spearheaded a project for the National Library of Medicine designed to educate the general public about HIV/AIDS and was the Coordinator of the Project in Second Life. Her work in virtual worlds, combined with her interest in illustration and social media led her to collaborate with Martin J. Keltz and Doug Thompson on several new media projects and to the formation of Startled Cat, Inc.

### **Martin J. Keltz**

An Emmy Award-winning producer, Marty Keltz was the co-founder and president of Scholastic Productions, Inc. (1978-1995) and a Senior Vice-President in charge of New Media at Scholastic Inc., the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books.



Keltz led the team that created The Magic School Bus - first broadcast by PBS and now seen worldwide, The Indian In the Cupboard and The Baby-Sitters Club feature films, home videos for Clifford The Big Red Dog, and more than 300 hours of television programming that received numerous Emmys and other awards.

As a media executive and producer in both the U.S. and Canada, Keltz has worked with documentary filmmakers, visual effects companies, global





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brands, the Discovery Channel on international co-productions, and the Alliance Atlantis Lifetime Channel for a series with True Entertainment about Doctors Without Borders.

Early in his career as publisher of Media & Methods magazine, Keltz broke new ground with a publication for teachers that focused on quality media products for use in the classroom. As a teacher he brought media into junior high school English classes to teach writing and story development.

### Doug Thompson



A veteran brand strategist Doug Thompson brings more than twenty years of experience in market research, brand positioning, advertising, design and digital media to Startled Cat.

In 1998, Thompson formed Remedy Communications, Inc. in Toronto and the company worked with global brands in Canada and the U.S. The full service agency's clients included Fortune 500 companies such as Johnson & Johnson (Tylenol), AstraZeneca, the U.S. Dept. of Defense for projects designed for veterans with disabilities, museums, health foundations and not-for-profit organizations.

In 2010, Thompson founded AOBI Ltd. (Academy of Bright Ideas) and co-founded of Startled Cat Inc. As the founder of the 2011 *Brain Power Initiative* in Toronto, he brought together a cross-disciplinary effort - led by leading researchers in neuroscience, institutions and industry - with a goal of translating the findings of neuroscience for applications in media and education with a special emphasis on childhood development.



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### Kickstarting CritterKin

The first CritterKin app will be funded by a Kickstarter campaign due to start near the end of April. For those unfamiliar with Kickstarter, it is a platform that allows creative people of all kinds to ask for grassroots financial support from individuals and their communities. The response to Kickstarter's approach has been nothing short of astonishing. In the film industry alone, Kickstarter has accounted for over \$100 million in pledges.

In addition, 17 Kickstarter funded films were official selections at the 2013 Sundance film festival, with five of those films taking home awards, including this year's Oscar winning documentary short, "Inocente". To learn more about Kickstarter, please visit: [www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com)

In order for our fundraising efforts to be successful, we must find and enlist the support of as many liked minded individuals and groups as possible. This is where your help can be invaluable. We are hoping that you will be willing to help us spread the word (see list below) and share any thoughts or suggestions you might have about how we might work together to create a large, proactive community of support.

### How You Can Help

The CritterKin mission is one we hope you share and will want to pass along. Our community is composed of a wide variety of people and organizations, so your support can take many forms. We've listed some suggestions below, but are open to other ideas as well. Our initial focus is on the launch of our Kickstarter campaign in the late April, so any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated. We want to be clear that we are not asking for financial support, just assistance spreading the word.





## CritterKin

### Interview the Pack

Members of the CritterKin team are available for radio, TV, blog, and podcast interviews. Some areas of mutual interest we've identified include:

- Storytelling across multiple platforms - As the co-founder and former President of Scholastic Productions, Marty Keltz has seen a lot of media come and go. He is passionate about the power of stories to educate and create positive change, as well as the many new storytelling tools that available.
- Pets with Purpose - As the creator of the CritterKin concept and the artist/storyteller responsible for bringing the CritterKin characters to life, Jena Ball loves talking about our connection to our pets and what they have to teach us. In particular, she is intrigued by the different perspectives animals can provide on human attitudes and behavior.
- What's In a Name - A brand expert and new media guru, Doug Thompson has spent the last 20 years creating, shaping and driving new brands in the marketplace. He is particularly intrigued by and uses the process of design thinking to identify the questions that will inform brand development and marketing strategies.

### Become a CritterKin Supporter

When you become a CritterKin supporter, we'll send you a CritterKin badge identifying you as part of the pack committed to educating kids about responsible pet care. You can post this badge to your sites. In return, we will add your name and logo to our CritterKin Supporter page.





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### **Contribute Stories, Videos and Photos**

All the values inherent in CritterKin - respect for life, empathy, understanding, interconnectivity, responsible care of our pets and our world - are best communicated through story. Send us your images, written narratives and videos and we'll post them either as CritterKin Moments on our Web site or on our "Stories That Inspire Us" page. *NOTE: We reserve the right to use or not use, edit and/or change material that is sent to us.*

### **Stay in Touch and Connect**

We have a lot of content on a variety of platforms that should make it easy for you to connect and stay in touch with us.

#### **Web site ([www.CritterKin.com](http://www.CritterKin.com))**

In addition to basic information about CritterKin, we also have three regular features that might interest your members:

- Puppy Dog Tales: Written by the CritterKin characters
- CritterKin Tips: Practical tips about pet care from the SPCA of Wake County's education coordinator, Vanessa Budnick
- CritterKin Moments: Special moments that capture the heart of the CritterKin message
- Stories That Inspire Us: A collection of stories contributed by friends and colleagues that capture the CritterKin spirit.

#### **Facebook ([facebook.com/Critterkin](http://facebook.com/Critterkin))**

Like and share our posts on Facebook. Comment on how our messages and artwork fit with your own.

#### **Twitter ([twitter.com/Critterkin](http://twitter.com/Critterkin))**

Tweet about CritterKin using the #CritterKin hashtag

Retweet our messages

