

November 1, 2009

Aspire. Focus. Achieve.

Daruma Kids launch first licensing partnership

Summary

Marchforth is proud to unveil The Daruma Kids' first official merchandising campaign. Partnering with The UNITED DANKS Group of hair and beauty salons and with a portion of proceeds benefiting Make-A-Wish Foundation Japan, colorful mobile phone straps featuring each adorable Daruma Kid character will be available beginning November 1, 2009 to collect at over 500 UNITED DANKS locations around Japan.

Marchforth is pleased to welcome The UNITED DANKS Group as its first official licensing partner for The Daruma Kids. Five colorful mobile phone straps, each one featuring a different irresistible Daruma Kid character, will be available beginning November 1, 2009 at over 500 DANKS hair and beauty salons around Japan. As the very first Daruma Kids merchandise ever produced, these straps are destined to become treasured collector's items. Each strap retails for ¥500 with a portion of the proceeds going to the **Make-A-Wish Foundation Japan**. Collecting all five is both fun and beneficial to a worthy charitable cause.

"This is a very special moment for The Daruma Kids and a huge step forward for the franchise," says Pablo Kuntz, founder and owner of Marchforth. "As we launch our first wave of official merchandise along with our website, we can't wait to start inspiring goal achievement in young people. I'd like to personally welcome The UNITED DANKS Group as a licensing partner and look forward to forging many more mutually beneficial partnerships in the near future."

Compelling, positive content on The Daruma Kids' website

www.darumakids.com is the hub of The Daruma Kids franchise and a place where young people can begin to aspire, focus, and achieve. Constantly evolving and updated, it's the perfect place to become acquainted with Blaze, Carly, Rich, Dharma, and Ollie; the five adorable Daruma Kids. The website features Daruma Kids stories and videos, as well as information about the various campaigns involving The Daruma Kids and how to become a Daruma Kids licensing partner. For a taste of the kind of compelling, positive content The Daruma Kids have to offer, read the newest on-line storybook, "Carly's Kimono" (http://darumakids.com/en/storybooks/carly_kimono.html). Aimed at 3-to-7 year-olds and their parents, "Carly's Kimono" tells the story of Carly, a highly energetic and sporty Daruma Kid, and her quest for balance between a beloved but cumbersome kimono and her desire to win an important tennis match.

Meet The Daruma Kids

Vibrant red **Blaze**, the natural leader of the Daruma Kids, is lightning quick and all about action. Blaze is always on the lookout for adventure and wants to travel and experience the whole world – all at once, if he could. When speed is called for, he utilizes his "flame roll". This move provides with him a burst of super acceleration, leaving a trail of smoke in his wake.

Carly is an extremely athletic Daruma Kid who dreams of one day competing in the Olympics. Her purple color is a reflection of a healthy and active lifestyle. She is the tennis champion of her town and displays an impressive collection of trophies in her house. When she isn't playing tennis, soccer, or swimming laps, Carly can often be found wearing huge earphones, boogieing to her favorite music, which is a workout in itself.

Rich is the most studious of the Daruma Kids. His sparkling gold color is a reflection of his vast knowledge and he dreams of one day becoming a world-famous inventor. Wearing his thick-framed glasses, Rich is so focused on his studies that he often finds himself in trouble. Fortunately, his friends are always there to keep a watchful eye on him.

Dharma is the most artistic Daruma Kid, symbolizing peace and beauty with her pure white color and long fluttering eyelashes. Dharma wears a necklace adorned with a gold-colored peace symbol and aspires to bring love and harmony to the world with her impressive artistic talents. Dharma also happens to be the twin sister of fellow Daruma Kid Ollie.

Ollie, with his bright yellow glow, keeps people safe and out of danger. Ollie is a highly skilled skateboarder who pictures himself in the future as a doctor by day, firefighter by night. Ollie is both cool and noble, earning him the unspoken yet unwavering respect of his fellow Daruma Kids, including his twin sister, Dharma.

A charitable component

Balance means a lot to Marchforth, which is why The Daruma Kids are meant to be not only fun and entertaining, but also to be a benefit to society. To that end, we've adopted two of our favorite charitable organizations to pass on some of the proceeds earned through Daruma Kids campaigns. The UNITED DANKS Group mobile phone strap campaign will benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation Japan (<http://www.mawj.org>), an organization that helps grant wishes to children with life-threatening diseases around the world. Our second charitable beneficiary is Children's Heartlink (<http://www.childrensheartlink.org>), a medical NGO dedicated to developing sustainable programs to prevent and treat children's heart disease in underserved areas of the world.

Becoming a Daruma Kids partner is a great way for companies to give something back in a visible and meaningful way. For information about a licensing partnership, please see the contact information below.

About The UNITED DANKS Group

As a collaborative group of creative hair salons, **UNITED DANKS** (www.united-danks.com) strives to produce superior hair shows, hair-cutting contests, and valuable study groups. They aim to provide a challenging environment for staff to work within, to learn and improve their skills, and to strive for excellence. With ten salon chains within the group, staff members can share not only their knowledge, but also their collective passion for creative work, and, most importantly, help one another grow.

The ten creative hair salon chains within UNITED DANKS Group:

ASH (www.ash-hair.com)

BASSA (www.idea-nov.co.jp)

CLAPS (www.claps.jp)

CLESC (www.clesc.co.jp)

C-LOOP UNITED (www.c-loopunited.jp)

FORTE (www.fortehair.co.jp)

FRIENDS (www.aoyama-friends.com)

KENJE (www.kenji-group.co.jp)

1&ONE COMPANY (www.le-parfum.net)

ONODERA (<http://d-meishi.cc/deramea>)

About Marchforth and Pablo Kuntz

The creative force behind The Daruma Kids is Pablo Kuntz, owner and founder of Marchforth. Marchforth (www.marchforth.com) is a brand management company based in Tokyo that assists internationally minded firms with a business presence in Japan with their online and print strategies.

In 2006, in an effort to introduce western audiences to the splendor of traditional Japanese craftsmanship, Mr. Kuntz launched Marchforth's first homegrown brand, **Unique Japan** (www.uniquejapan.com). Three years later, stirred by his long-standing passion for the traditional Japanese Daruma doll, Mr. Kuntz launched a second brand, **We Love Daruma** (www.welovedaruma.com). Inspired by the traditional Daruma as well as his own energetic children, Pablo and the Marchforth team created **The Daruma Kids** (www.darumakids.com), Japan's newest character brand sensation.

Contact information

Kamimeguro 2-44-24-6F • Meguro-ku, Tokyo, 153-0051, Japan • TEL +81 3 3408 1582
FAX +81 3 4496 5060 • tokyo@marchforth.com • www.marchforth.com