



SESAME PLACE® BECOMES THE FIRST THEME PARK IN THE WORLD TO BE DESIGNATED AS A CERTIFIED AUTISM CENTER

Certification readied for April's Autism Awareness month and start of new season

Langhorne, PA (April 2, 2018) – Sesame Place®, the nation's only theme park based entirely on the award-winning show *Sesame Street*®, in conjunction with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), today announced the completion of a staff-wide autism sensitivity and awareness training at the theme park. The completion designates Sesame Place as a Certified Autism Center (CAC) as distinguished by IBCCES, — the first theme park in the world to receive such a distinction. The certification aligns with National Autism Awareness Month and comes as the park readies for its 38th season, opening on April 28, 2018.

For almost 20 years, IBCCES has been the industry leader in autism training for licensed healthcare professionals and educators around the globe. IBCCES recognized that many families with children who have special needs have limited travel options, and in response, created training and certification programs specifically for the hospitality and travel industry.

As a Certified Autism Center, Sesame Place is required to provide ongoing training to ensure that team members have the requisite knowledge, skills, temperament, and expertise to interact with all families and children with special needs, specifically on the autism spectrum. Training takes place in the areas of sensory awareness, environment, communication, motor and social skills, program development, and emotional awareness as well as a comprehensive autism competency exam. The autism training must be taken every two years in order to maintain the certification.

“As the first theme park in the world to complete the training and become a CAC, Sesame Place is better equipped to offer families inclusive activities for children with autism and other special needs,” explained Sesame Place park president Cathy Valeriano. Robust pre-visit planning resources will be added to the park's website including a sensory guide, developed by IBCCES. This sensory guide will make it easier for parents to plan activities that satisfy their child's specific needs and accommodations by providing insight on how a child with sensory processing issues may be affected by each sense for each attraction. The park will also have two quiet rooms located on Sesame Island. These rooms will have adjustable lighting, and a comfortable seating area for guests to take a break.

Sesame Place's certification aligns with Sesame Workshop's commitment to increasing awareness and understanding of autism. Sesame Workshop launched the *Sesame Street and Autism: See Amazing in All Children* initiative in 2015 and Julia, a *Sesame Street* Muppet with



autism, came to life on the award-winning broadcast last spring, signaling a strong, continuing commitment to the autism community. Julia made her debut at Sesame Place in 2017 as a walkaround character and is available for guest meet & greets. The park is developing in-park programs that will be implemented this season giving guests additional opportunities to interact with Julia.

“Since her debut, Sesame Street’s Julia has touched the lives of millions of children and families around the world and we’re proud that partners like Sesame Place are committed to providing autism-friendly experiences,” said Scott Chambers, Senior Vice President and General Manager, North America Media and Licensing, Sesame Workshop. “We applaud them for earning this distinction.”

“IBCCES works with leading travel destinations to create safe, sensory-compatible travel options for parents and individuals on the spectrum. Our Certified Autism Center designation is awarded to premier organizations around the globe that have completed rigorous training and meet the highest industry standards,” said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Board Chairman. “Sesame Place is ideal because of its accessibility to families and convenient location, as well as everything the organization has done to be inclusive for all. The CAC certification helps give parents and other guests on the spectrum peace of mind when visiting a new destination or attraction.”

“Sesame Place is honored to be leading the theme park industry through our commitment to making our facility friendly for families with children on the spectrum,” added Valeriano. “We’re dedicated to providing all of our guests with an exceptional and memorable experience. We look forward to applying this training and expanding our commitment to help spread awareness about autism.”

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About IBCCES

The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) was established in 2001 to meet the training and credentialing needs of professionals who work with individuals with special needs. IBCCES has since expanded into over 40 different countries with training centers in the United States and Singapore and members all across the globe. Our Certified Autism Specialist, Board Certified Cognitive Specialist and Certified Autism Center credentials were established with the highest standards in the industry. As a result, our programs have become the benchmark for those who work with cognitive disorders around the globe. In addition, IBCCES created and hosts the annual International Symposium on Cognitive



Research & Disorders. This global event brings together top neurologists, education leaders and healthcare experts with a focus on research, innovation and collaboration. For information about training and certification, visit ibcces.org

About Sesame Place®

Sesame Place®, the only theme park in the U.S. based entirely on the award-winning show, *Sesame Street*®, is ideal for families and kids of all ages. Conveniently located just 30 minutes from Philadelphia and 90 minutes from New York City, the park has over 25 attractions, three live shows, a daily parade and of course, everyone's favorite furry friends. **NEW IN SPRING 2018:** the biggest, most exciting roller coaster ever – Oscar's Wacky Taxi™! The new wooden-steel hybrid roller coaster will take thrill seekers of all sizes on a crazy, curvy taxi cab ride, with everyone's favorite grouch at the helm. Before little kids become big kids, go before they grow® to the nation's only theme park based entirely on Sesame Street®. For more information, visit www.sesameplace.com or call 1-215-752-ELMO.

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