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TOHO International Makes Multi-Million Dollar Investment to Acquire 50% Ownership in Select Content and Consumer Products From Genius Brands' Frederator Network

Strategic Partnership Includes the Global Phenom *Bravest Warriors*, Netflix Series, *Bee and PuppyCat*, and the Upcoming *Catbug* Series, in Development

New E-Commerce Store Launched for *Bee and PuppyCat*, to Sell Broad Range of Branded Merchandise in Time for Holiday

***Bee and PuppyCat* Tops Best New Shows to Watch on Netflix in [New York Times](#), [Forbes](#), [LA Times](#), and More**

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif., Jan. 04, 2023 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [Genius Brands International, Inc.](#) (NASDAQ: GNUS), through its WOW! Unlimited Media subsidiary, [Frederator Network](#), today announced it has completed a deal with TOHO International, a subsidiary of one of the largest media companies in Japan, whereby TOHO International is making a multimillion-dollar investment to acquire a 50% stake in two of the Company's original productions, the critically-acclaimed series, *Bee and PuppyCat*, following its successful launch on Netflix, Frederator's pop culture phenomenon *Bravest Warriors*, and the upcoming series *Catbug*, based on the popular character created in the *Bravest Warriors*' series.

The deal provides a framework for Genius Brands' Frederator Network and TOHO International to co-produce new content for the properties and cooperatively develop a global consumer products campaign. Genius Brands will oversee global distribution and consumer products development for the properties, excluding Asia, which will be handled by TOHO International. Additionally, a dedicated online store for *Bee and PuppyCat* launched in September 2022, to coincide with the series release on Netflix.

Genius Brands' consumer products' team will develop a consumer products retail program for *Bravest Warriors*, *Bee and PuppyCat* and *Catbug*, excluding Asia, which will be handled by TOHO International.

Michael Hirsh, CEO of WOW! Unlimited Media, parent company of Frederator Network, stated: "Demand for quality animated content is greater than ever, and yet we recognize the importance of delivering productions that can stand out and provide enduring value. As

illustration, I'm proud to report that the LA Times recently voted *Bee and PuppyCat* as one of the "20 shows our TV experts are most excited to watch this fall." In fact, the sneak peek trailer of *Bee and PuppyCat* achieved over 2 million views within 24 hours and has successfully launched on Netflix. At Frederator, our mission is to foster the creativity of content creators and give them a platform to get their projects seen. We are thrilled that our productions, *Bravest Warriors*, *Bee and PuppyCat* and *Catbug*, are now attracting a global audience. Our partnership with Toho will allow us to further expand the reach of these two series, both in terms of distribution and upcoming consumer products."

Hiro Matsuoka, President of Toho Co., Ltd commented: "This new deal aligns with our long-term strategy, as we build a more effective system for distribution and licensing of our own IP. We have seen the tremendous global popularity of *Bravest Warriors* and the growth of *Bee and PuppyCat*, as well as the growing popularity of *Catbug* along with the overall Western Anime genre. With our production resources and distribution capabilities across Asia, complementing Genius Brands and Frederators' expansive network in key markets around the world, we anticipate these two properties will continue to develop a global fan base as we introduce new content and merchandise."

Andy Heyward, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Genius Brands commented: "This transaction is a huge privilege for us at Genius Brands to now partner with the pre-eminent media company in Japan, and their visionary management. We believe it is a further validation of our strategic acquisition of WOW! Unlimited Media and their impressive portfolio of original content, which we can then migrate to the streamers, our own Cartoon Channel, and media platforms around the world."

From its start as a 2-part, 10-minute short on Frederator Networks that became an immediate hit amassing millions of views on YouTube, to a record-breaking Kickstarter campaign to launch the new *Bee and PuppyCat* series on Netflix, fans and critics have driven the breakout success of *Bee and PuppyCat*, with over 2.5M fans across all social channels. Created by Natasha Allegri ("Adventure Time") and produced by Frederator Network ("Adventure Time" and "Castlevania"), the series' first full season premiered on September 6 as a Netflix series. *Bee and PuppyCat* follows a twenty-something temp worker named Bee and her mysterious companion PuppyCat as the two travel on fantastic adventures across space while taking on various intergalactic odd jobs to help make rent.

Created by Pendleton Ward (*Adventure Time*) and headed by showrunner Breehn Burns, *Bravest Warriors* tells the story of four teenage heroes-for-hire in the year 3085, as they warp through the universe to save adorable aliens and their worlds using the power of their emotions. Launched on YouTube in November 2012, the series rapidly grew an impressive and dedicated online fan base earning 250 million views, three million likes, and over a billion minutes watched. *Bravest Warriors* was the 2013 Shorty Award winner for Best Web Show and the Online Film and Video (Animation) Honoree at The Webby Awards in 2015.

The *Catbug* character was created by Breehn Burns and featured in the Frederator Network's digital series *Bravest Warriors*. *Catbug* is growing rapidly into a viral, pop cultural phenomenon across social media platforms--YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter—with videos featuring *Catbug* achieving over 200 million views to date and counting. Additionally, over 200 million GIFs have been created for *Catbug* on Giphy.com.

About Genius Brands International

Genius Brands International, Inc. (Nasdaq: GNUS) is a leading global kids media company developing, producing, marketing and licensing branded children's entertainment properties and consumer products for media and retail distribution. The Company's IP portfolio of family-friendly content features the *Stan Lee* brand, *Stan Lee's Superhero Kindergarten*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, on Cartoon Channel!; *Shaq's Garage*, starring Shaquille O'Neal, coming to Cartoon Channel!; *Rainbow Rangers* on Cartoon Channel! and Netflix; *Llama Llama*, starring Jennifer Garner, on Netflix and more. Recently, Genius Brands entered into an agreement to acquire Canada's WOW! Unlimited Media (TSX-V: WOW), which includes 2,500 channels under the Channel Frederator Network, and has also made a strategic investment in Germany's Your Family Entertainment AG (FRA:RTV), one of Europe's largest distributors and broadcasters of high-quality programs for children and families.

Genius Brands' Cartoon Channel! is a globally distributed entertainment platform with 100% penetration in the U.S. television market and international expansion with launches in key markets around the world. The channel is available in the U.S. via a broad range of distribution platforms, including Comcast, Cox, DISH, Amazon Prime, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, Apple iOS, Android TV, Android Mobil, Google Play, Roku, YouTube, CartoonChannel.com, Samsung Smart and LG TVs, the JetBlue Inflight platform and more. Genius Brands is now rolling out the subscription-based Cartoon Channel! Kidaverse, featuring metaversal content and exclusive titles.

For additional information, please visit www.gnusbrands.com.

About Frederator

Frederator is a pioneer in streaming video and a leading independent producer of animation for streaming services, linear television, and on-line video platforms, owning and operating the largest global animation network on YouTube, with channels that boast over 2000 exclusive creators and influencers and garnering over a billion views every month. Over the past 20 years, [Frederator Studios](#) has produced 19 series and more than 250 short films for and with partners including Netflix, Amazon, Google, Nickelodeon, Nick Jr., Sony Pictures Animation, and Cartoon Network, including Butch Hartman's *The Fairly OddParents* on Nickelodeon, Pendleton Ward's *Adventure Time* on Cartoon Network and *Natasha Allegri's Bee and PuppyCat* on Netflix. Frederator is a Genius Brands International, Inc. (Nasdaq: GNUS) company and has offices in Burbank, CA and New York, NY.

About TOHO CO., LTD.

Toho Company, Limited, is a Japanese entertainment studio focused on the development, production, exhibition, and distribution of powerful live action and animated content including motion pictures, television and theater. Founded in 1932, Toho remains a prominent force in bringing brands and original storytelling with versatile talents to audiences worldwide. Its subsidiaries include Toho Cinemas, the highest grossing exhibition company in Japan, and Toho International, Inc., a U.S. established incorporated company that manages and commercializes Toho's intellectual property portfolio. To learn more about Toho, visit: www.toho.co.jp/en/.

Forward Looking Statements: Certain statements in this press release constitute "forward-looking statements" within the meaning of the federal securities laws. Words such as "may," "might," "will," "should," "believe," "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "continue," "predict,"

"forecast," "project," "plan," "intend" or similar expressions, or statements regarding intent, belief, or current expectations, are forward-looking statements. While the Company believes these forward-looking statements are reasonable, undue reliance should not be placed on any such forward-looking statements, which are based on information available to us on the date of this release. These forward looking statements are based upon current estimates and assumptions and are subject to various risks and uncertainties, including without limitation, our ability to generate revenue or achieve profitability; our ability to obtain additional financing on acceptable terms, if at all; the potential issuance of a significant number of shares, which will dilute our equity holders; fluctuations in the results of our operations from period to period; general economic and financial conditions; our ability to anticipate changes in popular culture, media and movies, fashion and technology; competitive pressure from other distributors of content and within the retail market; our reliance on and relationships with third-party production and animation studios; our ability to market and advertise our products; our reliance on third-parties to promote our products; our ability to keep pace with technological advances; our ability to protect our intellectual property and those other risk factors set forth in the "Risk Factors" section of the Company's most recent Annual Report on Form 10-K and in the Company's subsequent filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"). Thus, actual results could be materially different. The Company expressly disclaims any obligation to update or alter statements whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise, except as required by law.

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