

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Online Gaming Leader to Create Safer Gaming in Schools and at Home

The Varsity Esports Foundation, an online gaming leader, announces partnership with online monitoring company Bark Technologies, to further the mission of creating safer online gaming communities in schools and at home.

Kansas City, MO (March 4, 2020) - The Varsity Esports Foundation today announced a partnership with Bark Technologies to help further its mission of creating safer online gaming communities in schools and at home. Currently supporting more than 6,000 YMCA, middle schools, high school, and college esports programs nationwide, the Varsity Esports Foundation fosters safe and inclusive environments and encourages academic achievement by introducing STEM learning through gaming. Bark, an award-winning monitoring service that helps protect more than 5 million kids online while preserving their privacy, covers 30+ of today's most popular social media platforms — as well as texts, chat, email, and YouTube — by alerting parents to potential issues.

The Varsity Esports Foundation/Bark partnership will highlight Bark's monitoring of Discord on Android devices— a platform many gamers use to chat — to reinforce the importance of healthy digital communication while gaming. “The online gaming world is fun with a large social community, but it's important to be aware of the risks, especially with conversations that happen when people you don't know send you direct messages,” says Varsity Esports Foundation Executive Director, Bubba Gaeddert. “Our partnership with Bark will help us engage with our 300,000 gamers to create literacy around keeping online gaming fun and safe, with a greater degree of protection for kids both at home and in school.”

Gaeddert continued by saying, “We hold firm our foundation's values and initiatives. Many of our initiatives such as diversity, inclusion, healthy habits, digital citizenship, belonging, online addictions, or literacy are important, and now our partnership with Bark will give us the ability to help more students with our internet safety, cyberbullying, and suicide prevention initiatives.”

In 2019, Bark analyzed more than 3.4 billion messages across multiple platforms and detected 7.6M+ instances of cyberbullying, 631,812 instances of self-harm and/or suicidal ideation, and 456 child conversations with sexual predators. To date, Bark has also helped prevent 16 school shootings and currently monitors more than 2,000 schools and districts nationwide at no cost. Bark's work to help stop online predation was recently featured on Good Morning America, and will be part of a larger documentary on online dangers to be released in the summer of 2020.

“Working with Varsity Esports Foundation reinforces the great work both organizations are doing to effect change,” says Bark's VP of New Business, Matt McKee. “Any space where a kid is spending time online is a space we need to be.”

About Varsity Esports Foundation

The Varsity Esports Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization established to offer financial assistance to schools and to provide a pipeline for students to reach their potential through Esports. We strive to increase literacy around the Esports industry's positive impact on healthy lifestyles, mental health, community, and STEM. Whether students are passionate about a career in professional esports, video games and electronic entertainment, programming, or production, the Varsity Esports Foundation will be there to help students throughout their journey. The organization emphasizes the importance of academic achievement and encourages students to pursue their interests in STEM subjects and higher education — and the practice of healthy lifestyles in order to facilitate their goals. VEF initiatives promote mental health awareness and students connecting with fellow classmates to discourage bullying and promote diversity and inclusion in the scholastic space.

For the latest news and updates from VEF, like the organization on Facebook at facebook.com/VarsityEsportsFoundation and follow on Twitter [@VEsportsFDN](https://twitter.com/VEsportsFDN), Instagram and at Twitch.tv/VarsityEsportsFoundation.

To download the Bark app for your family and support the mission of this non-profit charity the Varsity Esports Foundation, use this link: <https://www.bark.us/?ref=VARSITYESPORTSFOUNDATION>

About Bark

Bark helps keep children across the U.S. safe from issues like cyberbullying, online predators, adult content, depression, acts of violence, suicidal ideation, and more. Launched in 2015, Bark began with its flagship product, Bark for Families. This award-winning service monitors online activities and sends timely alerts to parents and guardians when it detects potential issues. After the tragic shooting at Parkland, Florida, Bark extended its suite of online safety services to all K-12 public and private schools in the U.S. — at no cost to them or their communities. Offering content monitoring, web filtering, and a Parent Portal for after-hours alerts, Bark for Schools is trusted by more than 1,900 school districts to help protect their students from digital dangers. For more information, visit <https://www.bark.us>.

###

PRESS CONTACTS:

For Bark:

Adina Kalish, Director of Media Relations

adina.kalish@bark.us

Downloadable media assets at <https://www.bark.us/media>

Recent press at <https://www.bark.us/newsroom>

For VEF:

Bubba Gaeddert, Executive Director

816-920-3016

bubba@varsitiesportsfoundation.org