

Exclusive: San Diego retailer keeps growing

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Toy Fair Preview
Meet the New Neighbors

Craft Kits Pump Up The Style

GAINING MOMENTUM with tweens across the country, do-it-yourself kits encourage girls to get creative by designing their own jewelry, decorating their rooms and adding some extra flash to everyday fashions. And when they stand back and take a look at what they've made—or better yet, wear it themselves or give it to their friends as a gift—it's smiles all around.



As crafts manufacturers have learned, self-expression is essential to one's art, and takes on even more emphasis when a girl grows into an image-conscious tween looking to assert her individuality.

Continued on page 38

Specialty Toy Sourcing Tips

AS TOY MANUFACTURERS ramp up for the start of another busy year filled with trade shows and new product launches, specialty retailers across



the country are making their own sorts of preparations—by organizing their stores in the aftermath of the holidays, taking stock of sales in

2006 and, most of all, psyching themselves up again for the never-ending quest to source the most exciting and innovative new products for their loyal customers.

Continued on page 12

Plus...

Bound for Glory?

Bookshelf games get new life

Hometown Heroes

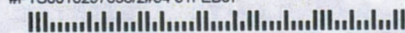
'Emergency' play's enduring appeal



On The Horizon

The challenges that will shape the course of 2007

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The New Neighbors

By Cliff Annicelli

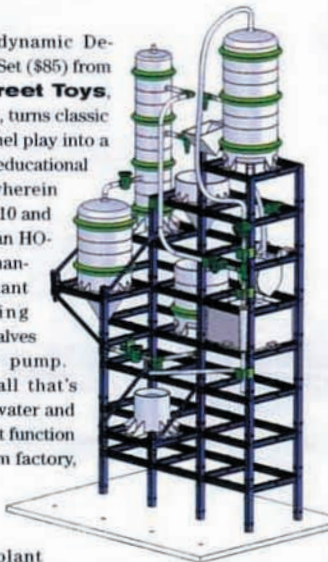
Roll out the welcome mat for these first-time Toy Fair exhibitors



Applepie Toys Distribution, Orinda, Calif., the newly formed U.S. unit of Britain's Applepie Toys, brings the company's award-winning Pull Along Pals (\$60-\$70) toddler ride-ons to the U.S. in three styles. Dippo, the Ride Along Pal Dinosaur, is a brightly painted dino that has a wiggle tail. Ellie, an elephant, is painted in a circus theme and has a trunk that sways. Gracie, a goose, features wiggle action and is trailed by a gosling. Each are approximately 28 inches long by 17 inches high by 9 inches wide.

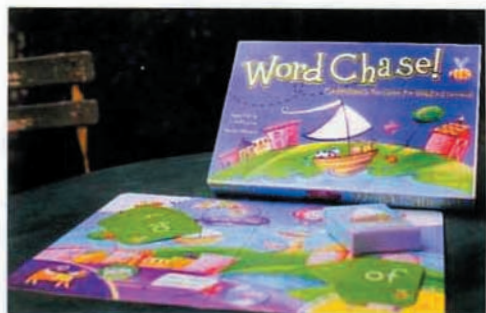
when pieced together weighs more than 300 pounds and measures more than 2 feet tall and nearly 6 feet long. The company's 12-inch-tall Scratt statue (\$109.99) immortalizes *Ice Age's* manic squirrel. Its Astro Boy statue (\$39.99) is a 10.5-inch-tall version of Osamu Tezuka's robot boy with human emotions. All of the statues are numbered, limited editions.

The Hydrodynamic Deluxe Building Set (\$85) from **Bridge Street Toys**, Weston, Mass., turns classic girder-and-panel play into a more directly educational experience wherein children ages 10 and up can build an HO-scale (1:87) manufacturing plant with working tanks, pipes, valves and electric pump.



Once built, all that's left is to add water and watch the plant function as an ice cream factory, water treatment plant, oil refinery, distillation plant or an industrial structure of a child's imagination. A plastic tote holds all the pieces for transport or storage.

Word Chase! (\$19.95) from **Beyond Learning**, Santa Monica, Calif., is a game designed to help emerging readers ages 4 and up become familiar with "sight words," the top 25 building block words in English upon which most new readers stumble. It can also be played by younger children just learning to identify



letters, as well as by older children as a strategy game. Word Chase! is printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper, and a percentage of each sale will be donated to the Children's Health and Environmental Coalition.

Safety Brainiac—Junior Edition (\$35.90), from **Brainiac Games**, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, is a family board game created to help children ages 5-12 learn



to make good safety decisions. Players race around the game's board earning "brain" puzzle pieces for answering questions and uncovering age-appropriate safety tips about dealing with bullies, strangers, the Internet, fires, poison and other hazards that threaten the welfare of today's children.



Collectibles maker **Attakus America**, Montreal, slips into Toy Fair with a select assortment of cold-cast resin statues based on the *Star Wars* trilogy, manga favorite *Astro Boy* and Fox's fledgling film franchise *Ice Age*. For fans of George Lucas's epic sci-fi series, Attakus offers a 17-inch-tall Probe Droid (\$459), last seen menacing Han Solo on the ice planet Hoth; and a Millennium Falcon & Death Star diorama (\$3,199) inspired by the original film's concluding battle, that