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FOUND! TOYS THAT STIMULATE THE MIND AND SPIRIT OF CHILDREN
— *Children's Museum Gift Shops Make Holiday Shopping a Snap with a Selection of Traditional, One-of-a-Kind and Inventive Play Items* —

Washington, D.C. — From *I Never Forget a Face*, a memory game that depicts faces of children from all over the globe available at Madison Children's Museum (WI); to antique paper dolls at Kern County Museum (Bakersfield, CA); to *Big Top Flippity Flops*, a classic domino game with a fun circus theme at Providence Children's Museum (RI); to the innovative *X Stream Internal Wing Aircraft* found at Lynn Meadows Discovery Center (Gulfport, MS); children's museums across the United States offer holiday shoppers a superlative array of gifts for children.

Year round, children's museums are one of the hottest play and learning destinations for children and families, serving more than 31 million children and families annually. Providing hands-on exhibits and programs that nurture cognitive development, visual discrimination, socialization and creativity, children's museums add on to the museum experience by selling play items that promote exploration, motor skills and independence. The Association of Children's Museums (ACM) has compiled thematic lists of educational and fun toys to inspire holiday gift-givers. Download the **ACM Holiday Shopping Guide** that includes price information at www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

From the Museum Exhibit Floor to the Museum Store

- The Lincoln Children's Museum (NE) stocks anatomically correct dolls of various ethnic backgrounds that can be found in its "Medical Center" exhibit as well as in its store.
- North Carolina's Wilmington Children's Museum sells *Pirate Parrots* featured in its "Pirate Ship" exhibit. Sporting an eye patch and a museum vest, it's a fine matey for ages 3 and up.
- The Children's Museum of Los Angeles offers tapes and CD's of its audio presentation "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz Centennial Celebration," featuring Annette Bening as Glinda, Harry Anderson as The Wizard, and Phyllis Diller as the Wicked Witch.
- Kidspace Children's Museum (Pasadena, CA) sells cloth market baskets filled with stuffed fruits and vegetables perfect for ages 4-8 that builds on the Harvest to Table program the museum teaches at its "Interactive Garden" and "Farmer's Market" exhibits.
- To complement the "Oh Seuss: Off to Great Places" exhibit, the Children's Museum of Manhattan (NY) features Dr. Seuss licensed apparel such as a *Troublemaker* t-shirt featuring the Grinch, and many of the beloved children's book classics written by Dr. Seuss.
- The Children's Museum of Pittsburgh (PA), home of the award-winning exhibit "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," which Family Communications helped develop, recommends its variety of *Mister Roger's Neighborhood* products such as puppets that encourages open-ended play.

Exclusive and Distinctive Play Items

- The Portland Children's Museum (OR) gift shop features handmade dress-up costumes created by the Portland Children's Museum's costume designers.
- EdCetera, the EdVenture Children's Museum (Columbia, SC) store, boasts *Playchute Parachute*, a rainbow colored parachute that encourages non-competitive and cooperative play.

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- Worldways Children's Museum (Ballwin, MO) offers Russian folk toys and mini nesting dolls, Chinese finger traps and yoyos, dolls representing European cultures, Mexican boleros, plus international candies.
- The Lexington Children's Museum (KY) carries the Breyer brand of collectible horse replicas. From rodeo to dressage, foals to racing legends, the gift shop features a wide range of models.

Toys that Encourage Traditional and Inventive Pastimes

For kids and adults who like to build, find *Erector Sets* from Brio at A.C. Gilbert's Discovery Village (Salem, OR); get *Magna-Tiles* building shapes at DuPage Children's Museum (Naperville, IL); and go to Imagine It! The Children's Museum of Atlanta (GA) for colorful *Zolo-a-Go-Go Play Sculpture*.

To encourage literary youngsters, pick-up a *Kiss the Fish* CD by Bill Buczinsky featuring upbeat and hip poems at The Iowa Children's Museum in Coralville; check-out *Self-Correcting Phonics Frames* from Carson Dellosa at Northwoods Children's Museum (Eagle River, WI); and select *Taking Care of Our World*, an illustrated book about the importance of eco-systems by Howard G. Buffet at the Children's Museum of Illinois in Decatur.

For classic toys that beckon children to create a world of their own, look for wooden dollhouses and castles at The Children's Museum of Houston (TX); track down *Thomas & Friends* trains, books and videos at The Children's Museum of Virginia (Portsmouth, VA) gift shop; choose a durable wooden play food set at the Schoolhouse Children's Museum (Boynton Beach, FL); and grab *A Lotta Piñata*, a customizable piñata at Explorations V Children's Museum (Lakeland, FL).

To please kids from one-month of age to 14 years, request *Lamaze Sit and Spin*, a visual delight for children ages newborn to 36 months, at the Louisiana Children's Museum in New Orleans; ask for *Made By Hand Make Your Own Cards* and *Make Your Own Puppets*, perfect for the pre-school crowd, at The Children's Museum in Oak Lawn (IL); and order *Spa Science: A Science Kit*, which parlays the popularity of spa parties among adolescent girls into a solid chemistry learning experience, at the Science Museum of Virginia in Richmond.

For the hard to shop for child, purchase a soft and realistic Folkmanis® puppet or a gift membership at The Children's Museum of Memphis (TN); honor a child or someone special with a donation to the Central Wisconsin Children's Museum (Stevens Point, WI), which will send a card and a piece of original art created by a child to the honoree; and make a giant impression by sending for a three-foot plush dinosaur at the Children's Museum of La Crosse (WI) or by donating one to benefit a disadvantaged child in the La Crosse community.

ACM is a professional service organization with nearly 500 members, including children's museums in the United States and in 18 countries around the world. Founded in 1962, ACM's vision is to bring children and families together in a new kind of town square where play inspires lifelong learning. In 2003, ACM secured the largest funding ever awarded to children's museums, a \$7 million grant, from the Freeman Foundation to administer the Asian Exhibit Initiative. The Initiative brings seven different exhibits on Asian cultures to 77 children's museums in the United States. For more than 100 years, children's museums have succeeded in their mission of stimulating curiosity and motivating learning in young children. Children's museums complement efforts in schools, childcare centers and homes, enriching the lives and education of children. For more information about ACM, visit www.ChildrensMuseums.org.

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