

Research could make Christmas shopping less stressful

The following article was compiled by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

It may not buzz, walk, talk or light up, but an informal game called Consumer Research could help make Christmas toy buying less stressful for many Ontario families.

According to consumer experts, the equipment required is minimal: your children's wish list, a few store catalogues and a copy of the 1990 Toy Report produced by the Canadian Toy Testing Council (CTTC).

The object of the game is to find toys that will thrill the children Christmas morning and still hold their interest long after, says Carolyn Lentz of the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (MCCR).

Too often, children's choices are influenced by hard-hitting marketing campaigns, toy council officials say. Tearful protests of "but everyone else has one," are heard more often than Christmas carols in some homes. Parents face the same dilemma every Christmas - how to fulfil their children's dreams without doing them the disservice of buying poor-quality playthings.

"Children may be responding to peer pressure, but as parents we are victims of 'tear pressure' - fear of disappointing our children," says Leslie Burch, director of evaluations for the council. "Regrettably, we always seem to find ourselves dealing with two lists - our children's wish list and our own list of toys we know will be satisfying. The trick is to find a toy that appears on both."

One of the best ways to do this is to sit down with the family for a game of Consumer Research, Ms. Lentz says. Challenge children to find a few of the best toys listed for their age groups in the CTTC's report, in categories that interest them. Also suggest they look up ratings for the items on their own wish list.

The toy report rates more than 1,500 products, based on a year-long, play-testing program.

"This publication is the definitive reference guide to Canadian toys," Ms. Lentz says. "Not only does it help with the selection of quality playthings, it offers a great opportunity to show young people how to use product reports. Too often Christmas teaches

children to overspend and buy on impulse. Why not teach them good shopping skills instead?"

Once a few toys have been selected from the report, the consumer game can be augmented by comparing their catalogue prices. This activity teaches comparison-shopping skills and has the added benefit of letting children see pictures of the products they like, says Ms. Lentz. Trips to a few toy stores to see the merchandise first hand can also be a good idea. The toy report does not include photos.

Leslie Burch points out that, despite best efforts, parents may still have to compromise in their final gift choices to avoid disappointment on Christmas morning. If it is within the family budget, supplement a good toy choice with one modestly priced fad item from the child's wish list.

The toy report is available at major bookstores for \$8.95 and can be found in many libraries. Copies can also be obtained by mail for \$8.95 plus \$2 postage and handling. Write to the CTTC, 950 Gladstone Ave., Suite 110, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 3E6.

As well as shopping for good play value, parents should check toys carefully to be sure they are safe, Ms. Lentz says.

Electrical toys that are not battery-operated should bear the CSA mark of the Canadian Standards Association.

CSA officials also warn that electric toys such as trains, race-car sets, stoves and similar products can be damaged and even made dangerous if they get wet. They should not be used outside.

For further information about safety standards for toys, contact the CSA Info Centre at (416) 747-4058.

General consumer advice is available from MCCR's information centre at 555 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 2H6 - (416) 326-8555 or toll free at 1-800-268-1142. Ontario residents with an 807 area code may call the 416 number collect. The TDD/T-TY line for the hearing/speech impaired is (416) 326-8566.



Bring on the leader

The Georgetown and District High School annual play went on despite a bad storm on Dec. 15. The play "Leader of the Pack" was delayed approximately 30

minutes due to the weather conditions but delighted those who got to the school. (Herald photo)

Fireflies pack Optimist Hall

By J.D. HEWITT
Herald Special

The Georgetown Fireflies packed the Optimist Hall with 19 families showing up for their annual Christmas dinner. A hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings was put on by the ladies. Santa Claus arrived leaving scads of presents for all the children and adults.

The Fireflies had a very successful camping year, starting out with the Canadian Families Camping Federation at Bingham Park in Kitchener. At the long weekend festivities the Fireflies looked after the lawn dart tournament. They also participated in Saturday night entertainment with the men dressed up in the latest apparel.

On the Sunday they put in a float for the parade around the cam-

ground.

There were a lot of theme campouts this year with Fireflies members attending some of the following: Chick-n-Fest at Milton, Surprise Birthday Campout at Terra Cotta, Christmas in July at Orillia, Western Roundup at Niagara, Corn Roast at Guelph, Porky's Weekend at Jordan, Ghosts-n-Goblins at Woodstock, Golfing Campouts at Barrie and Fergus plus many other weekend barbecues.

The Georgetown Fireflies keep

active during all the off camping months. Holding their own theme dance Octoberfest, they also attended a Spring Fling, Mardi-Gras and a clean-air dance. The club enjoyed card games, bowling, snowrides, dinners and theatres.

All in all the Fireflies had a busy year and have elected new executives for 1990: President - Jane and Kevin News; Past President - Ellen and Dave Hastings; Vice President - Helen and Bill Anderson; Secretary - Audrey Hofdahl; Publicity - Elsie and J.D. Hewitt.

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