



Peapods

Natural Toys & Baby Care

Sidewalk Sale
July 22-23

Peapods Natural Toys & Baby Care, 251 Snelling Avenue South, St. Paul, Minnesota www.peapods.com June, 2005

A note from Millie

Hello and welcome to you. I hope that the summer finds you and your family well. Our family started the summer with a month-long odessey to New England, where we played on the beaches of Maine's Acadia National Park, walked Boston's Freedom Trail, toured the Ben & Jerrys factory in Vermont, and danced to a bluegrass band in downtown Ithaca.

Such a long family vacation is a rarity these days, but I highly recommend it. We all got a chance to snap out of our routines and re-connect. One word of advice,

though—when camping with a baby, bring extra sleeping bags!

Getting away from the store wasn't easy—we couldn't have done it without the support of our employees, especially Anna, Beth, and my mother Jule, all of whom worked extra shifts to make our vacation possible. Thanks!

Of course, being who we are, we took the opportunity to visit several toy stores and toymakers, which you can read about inside. Travelling from town to town, we also saw first-hand the difference that small, independent businesses make to a community, giving each

town a strong sense of place with its own ice cream parlor, book stores, and coffee shops. Because we want to help encourage that sense of place in the Twin Cities, we've become charter members of the Metro Independent Business Alliance, which you can learn more about at www.MetroIBA.com.

Lastly, I wanted to once again say thank you to all of our customers. With your support, we are slowly growing our business while supporting our family. We hope to continue providing great toys that engage your children's imagination. Thanks!

—Millie



Ecological, Innovative and Fun Bamboo Games

Almost always, Chinese-made toys are either low-end adaptations of classic toys or high-tech injection-molded plastic with blinking lights and batteries.

Of course, these toys are made in China in order to take advantage of cheap labor and lower environmental standards. They are not made to convey any sense of what China is as a country.

So, we were very pleased to discover a new line of Bamboo toys from HaPe Toys (pronounced *Happy*, of course).

They're well-designed, well-made, totally different, and made from fast growing and highly renewable bamboo. Plus, we think they provide a charming feel for China's culture.

Pictured is the *Pandabo* game (\$10), where players take turns stacking bamboo pieces on top of a tippy panda. Our favorite is *Rapido* (\$15), which is kind of like the old game Hungry Hippos, where players race to capture colored wooden balls using bamboo tubes. Both are great for ages 4+. Ask for a demo!



Be Happy! Pandabo Game from HaPe Toys

Celebrating Handcrafted Toys

On our recent family trip to New England, we took the opportunity to visit a couple of the toymakers who supply our store. Of course, many of our toys are factory made in the US, Europe, or Asia, but a few very special toys are made by hand in small workshops.



*The Ongonquit
Wooden Baby Rattle*

Ongonquit Wooden Toys

Our first visit was to the home of William Woods, the owner of Ongonquit Wooden Toys in Maine. William is an accomplished woodworker who has turned his skills to perfecting the baby rattle. "My rattle is a baby's baby rattle," said William. "It's designed to be easy to hold and easy to chew on." He shapes his rattles by hand to create an oblong shape that's easy for a baby to teethe on. Each rattle has two types of wood—ours are birds-eye maple inlaid with cherry—all sustainably harvested. In fact, the birds eye maple used in our rattles came from the leftovers of another Maine workshop that makes shifter handles for luxury cars.

William's work can be found in art galleries around the country, but we like it best in a baby's hand. Even though it's our priciest rattle at \$25 each, we feel that it's well worth the price for their beauty, craftsmanship and functionality.

Wild Apples

Our next visit was to Gunther Kiel's Wild Apples workshop near Ithaca in Upstate New York. Gunther has been making toys for 30 years and

has seen one American toy company after another move to China or go out of business. But, he's endured, creating a selection of toys unlike any others.

Gunther's larger toys, including his Trojan Horse and his Noah's Ark, have dozens of small figures cut with remarkable detail. With the ark, all the animals fit inside. All the soldiers fit inside the Trojan Horse, too, which has a hidden stairway that lowers down.

Gunther also makes a really cool dragon pull toy, a lovely hop-a-long rabbit pull toy, and a one-of-kind "Busy Bodies" toy.

Elves & Angels Workshop

We've sold wooden kitchens from David Smalley's Elves & Angels Workshop in Maine since we first opened our store. We've always loved their sturdiness, charm, and the way you can tell that they are truly a labor of love. Indeed, Elves & Angels is no factory production line—it's just David and his family on a homestead in the far north of Maine.

So, we were deeply grieved last November when David's entire



Julianna's Kitchen from

workshop, all of his Christmas inventory and part of his home were destroyed by fire. Luckily, no one was hurt, and David was able to find help to rebuild his workshop. Happily, we now have Elves & Angels Kitchens back in stock.

We are very pleased to offer these hand crafted toys by William, Gunther, and David. Not only do we love their work, but we are very glad to help support these craftspeople who are doing what they really love. It makes us feel good to have these toys in our store and we hope you will enjoy having them in your home.



The Trojan Horse, by Wild Apples Toys. All of the soldiers fit inside

Sweet Choices for Little Cherry Toes

We are very excited to introduce *Isabooties* soft-soled baby shoes to the Twin Cities. Like *Robeez* (which are just as cute and wonderful as ever!), *Isabooties* are soft and supple and are held in place by a gentle elastic around the ankle that even a determined toddler can't wiggle out of.



Robeez "Blush Cherries"

Instead of using a soft leather, however, *Isabooties* are made with Ultrasuede uppers and Toughtek soles. Toughtek is a super-strong high-grip synthetic fabric designed to protect the feet of search and rescue dogs. So, not only are *Isabooties* a vegan alternative, but they also a lighter-weight and perform better when damp. They come in 5 different patterns (not nearly as many choices as *Robeez*) and are \$24.



Isabooties "Sweet Cherry"

We still carry Soft Star suede leather mocs, which have a fleece lining and are great indoor/outdoor shoes for kids age 2 to 5. Soft Star shoes are made in Oregon, *Robeez* in Canada and *Isabooties* in Colorado. The choice is yours!

If you happen to be visiting us with a hungry stomach or (yikes!) hungry kids, then you might appreciate our local dining options. A new restaurant, *Blondies*, is a wonderful lunch spot just

Lunchtime!

4 blocks south of our store, just north of the intersection of Snelling and Randolph.

They're kid-friendly and have great

sandwiches, soups and salads. Definitely worth the walk!

Just a few doors away, the *St. Clair Broiler*, a classic for fifty years, is now smoke free

(like the rest of Ramsey County!) Always a great place for burgers, malts, or breakfast. Our favorites are the veggie burger and the Spartan omlette.

Acme Deli, one block east of the store on St. Clair, is our favorite hole-in-the-wall deli. They make a mean tuna salad and offer half sandwiches for half-pints. Seating is limited, but they have outside seating and plenty of grassy shady spots on the boulevard. Let 'em know we sent ya!

Blondies

• CAFÉ •

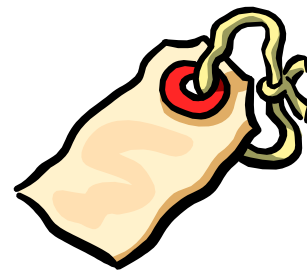
Hey, what's this down here in the corner? It's Bluesman Greg Brown, playing a guitar in the bathtub on *Bathtub Blues!* It's great kids music that grownups can definitely appreciate. It's one of several kids titles from St. Paul's own *Red House Records*, including two from *Bill Staines*, one from *Tom Paxton*, and a *Red House Records* kids sampler entitled "*Kids, Cars & Campfires*."

Not enough genuine kids roots music? Try out the classic "*Lead Belly sings for Children*" from Smithsonian Folkways. Nothing beats hearing your three year old sing along with Huddie Leadbetter!



Fifth Annual Sidewalk Sale!

Our basement is once again full to bursting and its high time for our Sidewalk Sale! This year, we're calling it our "Better Late than Never Sale" because we couldn't get our act together to have it in June like we usually do. We hope you'll forgive us when you see that this year's sale will have loads more than last year at VERY steep discounts. We'll have mountains of samples, returns, repaired toys, scratch 'n dents, odds 'n ends, leftovers, and slow sellers—all at discounts from 25-75% off. Let our storage problems be your gain!



July 22nd and 23rd 10am to 6pm

The fine print: Because our sidewalk sale is a busy event next to a busy street, we recommend shopping without small children. Our sale will take place rain or shine. Sidewalk sale purchases are final—no returns or exchanges. We are unable to giftwrap sidewalk sale purchases. Also, just a reminder that we are not able to accept personal checks for purchases over \$100



Check Out Local Musician Will Hale

We love kids music that's fun for both grownups and kids, with melodies that aren't laced with repetitive hooks that get stuck in your head or lyrics that talk down to children.

So, by our criteria, local artist Will Hale scores a home run. His two CDs, *I Love Everything* and *Perfect World*, are bluesy and fun while celebrating the full range of a child's emotions. Plus, he has a very full schedule of free summer concerts—see www.willhale.com. Definitely not to be missed!



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Detail from Elsa Beskow's "Christopher's Harvest Time" ©1999, used by permission.



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