



# Peapods

Natural Toys & Baby Care

Peapods Natural Toys & Baby Care, 251 Snelling Avenue South, St. Paul, Minnesota

May, 2004

## A note from Millie

Hello again to everyone! We only write a newsletter once a year for the occasion of our annual sidewalk sale (see back). So, if you were wondering why you signed our mailing list, here you go.

2004 is shaping up to be a year of huge change. We are very thankful for your support as our business continues to grow. We're growing, too, in many ways.

We've added some new products this year. A few notable additions are Brio wood train sets, FuzziBunz pocket diapers and Kangaroo Korner adjustable fleece baby pouches.

We also have a couple of new

employees. So, if you see someone you don't know, please say hello.

Finally, our family will be growing this year. We are expecting a new baby to arrive in mid-November. So, if you see me asleep on the easy chair in the back room, you'll know why!

As for other changes, we've seen some of our manufacturers make adjustments this year as they adapt to the changing retail environment. Some, like our two local favorites, Fairy Finery and BEKA toys, have adapted by reaching out more to small, independent toy stores around the country. Others, like Radio Flyer, have moved to China to better

serve mass marketers like Wal\*Mart. More and more toy manufacturing is finding its way to China. In some stores, it's hard to find a toy that isn't made in China.

It's not that all Chinese-made toys are bad, but we're always searching for alternatives that provide higher quality and support smaller, independent toymakers.

Of course, change is the only constant in the universe. And, I hope that when you next visit the store, you'll find that we're making changes for the better!

Thanks and best wishes,  
Millie

## New products at Peapods...

### Kangaroo Korner Adjustable Fleece Pouch

After many requests, we've finally added the Kangaroo Korner Adjustable Fleece Pouch to our repertoire of slings.

Made in Minnesota by our friend Tanya Westerman, the Adjustable Fleece Pouch is just about the hippest baby sling in the country right now. It's made of a unique Malden Mills fleece that's breathable and stretchy. The stretchiness means that the fabric automatically covers more area at pressure points, easing strain without the need for padding. And, a unique nylon snap design makes this the most versatile pouch around.

We are proud to be Kangaroo Korner's first retail customer. Stop in and try one on!



### Fuzzibunz Pocket Diapers

Yet another smart use for fleece, Fuzzibunz pocket diapers feature a unique micro-fleece pocket that holds a prefold or contour diaper, or a diaper doubler pad. Once inside, wetness wicks through the fleece and is soaked up by the cotton diaper, keeping baby's bottom dry.

Simple yet remarkable, we recommend Fuzzibunz mostly for nighttime diapering, when babies seem to pee a lot. (Hey—a few more hour's sleep is a big innovation!)

We also stock Fuzzibunz blankets, changing pads, and diaper liners made from the same great micro-fleece.

So, if you haven't tried one yet, snap one on and see what you think.

# Where to Catch a Train in St. Paul

Why are trains so compelling to young children? Here's our theory: A) Trains are very big, but kids seem to know that a comparatively small person is inside making it go. B) You don't see a train every day. So it's a mini-event every time. And, C) Trains offer a simple metaphor for children, who are chugging along their own growth track, speeding to the next developmental stage.



Luckily, St. Paul and its environs offer gobs of opportunities to get to know trains better. **The Jackson Street Roundhouse** museum, which is about half a mile north of the capitol on Pennsylvania Avenue, is run by the Minnesota Transportation Museum ([www.mtmuseum.org](http://www.mtmuseum.org)). They have restored cars and engines you can tour, a working turntable, and a giant wooden train table. They offer tours of their restoration

shop and rides on a caboose, a 1/8 scale model of the Rock Island Rocket, and various other rolling stock.

Another great outing by the Minnesota Transportation Museum is the **Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway** in Osceola, Wisconsin (also [www.mtmuseum.org](http://www.mtmuseum.org)), about an hour north of St. Paul. You can take a beautiful 50 or 90 minute ride on a restored train, walk between the cars and talk to retired rail workers who know what working on the railroad was really like.

And, if you haven't been to Bandana Square on Energy Park Drive in St.

Paul, you're missing an enchanting and inexpensive train experience at **The Twin City Model Railroad Museum** ([www.tcmrm.org](http://www.tcmrm.org)). The museum has a huge layout of model trains, including a recreation of Downtown Minneapolis in the 1950's. Just downstairs is **Como Shops**, a memorabilia and toy store that has antique train stuff, books, model trains, and everything from Thomas the Tank Engine.

Lastly, if you prefer non-anthropomorphised toy trains, we've added the classic wooden **Brio trains**. Brio trains are the best built, with track that's easy to assemble and cars with quality wheels and strong magnets that won't fail. They're fully compatible with other train sets, as well as our Plan City toys, which incorporate train crossings and linkages, offering multi-modal transport play.

## 2004 Marble Tourney

Our friends at the *Essence of Nonsense* toy store will be holding their annual Twin Cities Marble Tournament for kids ages 6 and up at their store on August 15th.

At the Essence of Nonsense, they're serious about marbles. Not only do they sell dozens of different kinds, but Co-Owner Tom Fletcher knows hundreds of games from around the world. Tom teaches classes every Saturday in July at 10am to get kids ready for the tournament.

The Essence of Nonsense is located 1 block east of Fairview on St. Clair. Stop in and check them out!

## A Quick Idea to Connect With Other Parents

Meeting with other like-minded parents is a great way for both you and your children to form lasting friendships. One way to do that is Attachment Parenting International (API), a support group for both moms and dads.

With monthly meetings in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, API "provides a means of learning attachment parenting, a place to share ideas and ongoing child rearing concerns, and a safe haven where parents can communicate openly about their choices." For more info, see [www.twincitiesAPI.org](http://www.twincitiesAPI.org).

## Attention Hip Mamas!

The 2004 Mama Gathering will be coming to Downtown Minneapolis July 16-18th.

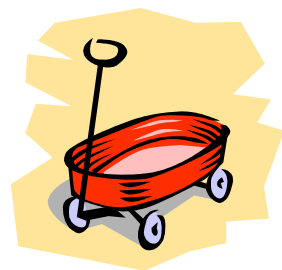
Billed as "Biggest, baddest, most subversive parenting conference and party of the year," it's an annual event that draws mamas from all over the world and promises "some of the smartest, edgiest workshops around".

For more information, check out [www.mamagathering.org](http://www.mamagathering.org).



# Radio Flies to China, We Fly to Berlin

**First, the bad news:** Last month, Radio Flyer, an 80 year old icon of Americana, announced that they have closed their Chicago factory and have moved all production to China, where wages typically represent only 1-5% of a toy's retail value. They've also eliminated the classic designs of their Tiny Trike and Toddler Push Wagon.

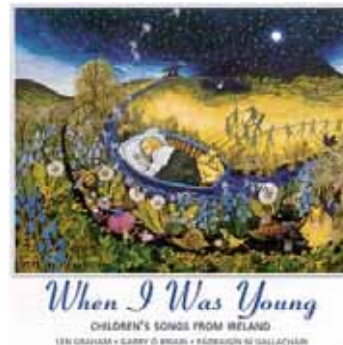


We're very disappointed in Radio Flyer. In the toy industry, this has been an accelerating trend as more and more manufacturers stretch for profits in an era where Wal\*Mart has become the nation's largest toy retailer. Nonetheless, Radio Flyer could have chosen to keep a smaller niche and stay in Chicago. For our part, we've said a sad goodbye to a favorite old brand.

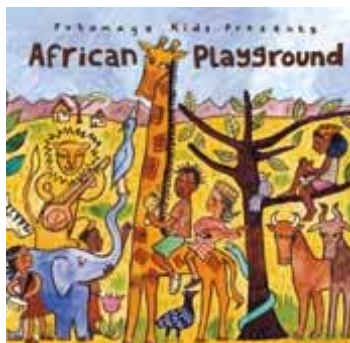
**Now, the good news:** For our large wagons, we switched last year to Berlin Flyer, which are Amish-made in Berlin, Ohio. They have a wooden base and red slatted sides, similar to Radio Flyer's Town & Country wagon. Berlin Flyer uses high-quality wood and have a unique "No-Tip" mechanism which keeps the front wheels moving parallel to the direction of travel instead of pivoting from a central point like Radio Flyer. They make a "Sport" version, too, which uses large pneumatic tires with greased axles—great for off-road adventures, gardening, or trips to the farmer's market. Berlin Flyer wagons are competitively priced at \$110 for the standard Berlin Flyer and \$160 for the Berlin Flyer Sport. Plus, we assemble them for free!

## What we've been listening to

We've always believed in intelligent music for children. After all, a child of any age is a sentient being, capable of understanding beauty and born with a love of wordplay. And, we grown-ups need to listen to the music, too.



With that in mind, we've tried to build in our store and in our home a collection of fun, interesting, and artful music that we can all listen to. Here's three CD's that we've been spinning a lot lately:



**When I was Young, Children's Music from Ireland**—A collaboration of three great Irish musicians—Len Graham, Garry Ó Blain, and Pádraigin Ní Uallacháin—this album is magical. Some songs are like tunes overheard by a child in a rowdy Irish pub, others are like the gift of a faerie. Our favorite songs are the rousing "Johnny When You Die" and "The Magical Band", a lyrical and haunting tune.

**African Playground**—If you ask Jule for a recommendation, she'll recommend this title from Putumayo Kids. It's upbeat, energetic, educational and danceable! Jule uses it as housecleaning music. We've found that kids just love the rhythms and melodies of African music. We have several other wonderful, multicultural CDs from Putumayo, including *Latin American Playground*, *World Playground*, and *Sing Along with Putumayo*, their newest release.

**You Are My Sunshine**, by Elizabeth Mitchell, a former kindergarten teacher who became one of the founders of the folk group *Ida*. Imagine smart, lovely acoustic kids music. Dan's favorite song: Elizabeth's beautiful and calm rendition of the Sesame Street classic "Ladybug's Picnic".



**By the way**, we are closing out our inventory of cassette tapes. (When did everybody agree to stop buying cassettes? Nobody told us!) They are now 25% off and any that make it to our sidewalk sale will be deeply discounted.

# Fourth Annual Sidewalk Sale!

Our Sidewalk Sale is back this summer and it's our biggest yet! This year, we're calling it our "Finely-Crafted German Wooden Toy Outhouse Sale". Who knew that "A Quiet Place" is a euphemism in Germany for outhouse? Anyway, we'll have two Quiet Places on sale—at an affordable price! We'll also have loads and loads of returns, repaired toys, scratch 'n dents, odds 'n ins, leftovers, and slow sellers—all at discounts from 25-75% off. Let our mistakes be your gain and help us make way for new items!



## June 25th and 26th 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 no longer able to accept personal checks for purchases over \$100



### Yoga Garden Game

If you're looking for a truly unique family game experience, try the Yoga Garden Game! Designed by a kids' Yoga teacher in California, it's a cooperative game that teaches Yoga poses as players work together to plant a garden before nightfall.

The game was a big hit at Abby's 8th birthday party, which also featured homemade Saris, bangles, and Indian Food. We sell it for \$30.

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

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