

## ***A note from Millie***

*As you've no doubt heard once or twice, the economy in this country is not exactly thriving and things are tough all over. In talking to other local business owners, it seems we are all trying to tighten our belts and find ways to remain affordable and relevant to our customers.*

*One term that gets bandied about a lot in times like these is "value". Some people equate value with cheap. Big box stores in particular are poised to offer you plenty of that type of value.*

*Another definition—one we prefer—has more to do with quality. Specifically—what is the quality of the item relative to the cost? A cheap electronic toy that breaks after your child has played with it once can never be a good value, however little you paid for it. Similarly a cheap cloth diaper that's so thin it doesn't absorb anything is not a good value.*

*Another concept of value is the idea of "play value". How much is your child going to play with a toy? Over how many months or years? Is a toy open ended or can it only be played with in one way? Maple unit blocks,*

*for instance, are a relatively expensive toy, but in play value they are second to none. Children can play with them in a myriad of ways, and a one-year-old or an eight-year-old can both enjoy playing with them.*

*We also try to impart value to the experience of shopping in our store. We pride ourselves on offering excellent customer service and quality information about the products we sell so that you can make good decisions about how to spend your money. We think this is an aspect of value that can best be found in locally-owned independent businesses.*

*Finally—we bow a little to the simple concept of price. We do offer some very expensive, beautiful European toys, but we've always resisted becoming a "toy boutique." We try to offer choices at a variety of price points, and have enough inexpensive items that a child can bring in pocket money and find something fun.*

*Our family truly appreciates your continued business. We will continue to look for ways to bring you the kind of value you can feel good about.*

*Peace and best wishes,*

*Millie*

## ***Cool New Toy: The Recycled Recycling Truck***



New from Green Toys is our Recycling Truck made from recycled milk jugs. It's sturdy, it's green, and it's ready to take on all your separated recyclables!

Green Toys also makes a wonderful tea set out of recycled plastic, which we wrote about last year. We like them a lot because they're made in the USA and they show kids in a very dramatic and positive way that being kind to the planet really does make a difference.

# Introducing Lumberjack Logs



Audaciously big. Sturdy enough to be played with as a toy after they're put together. This is one log cabin that won't be falling down anytime soon.

So, building the structure is only half the fun. Once it's built, you can play with it with dollhouse dolls, toy horses, toy furniture, etc. The play value of these toys is tremendous.

We happily agreed to be the first toy store in the world to carry Lumberjack Logs. We think they may just be the next BIG thing. Available as either a cabin or a barn, Lumberjack Logs are available now in our store. Stop in and let us know what you think.

Made in Minnesota out of unfinished solid maple, the long sides of this log cabin are 18" long. One side is open, as are the gables, which is great for pretend play. The second story has a floor made of maple slats and the roof is reinforced with notched cross pieces that keep it steady. Available either as a cabin or a barn (with stalls for all your toy animals!).

When two local dads stopped by to show us their new product called Lumberjack Logs, all we could say was "Wow..."

These are exactly what we wished Lincoln Logs were like when we were kids. Substantial. Stable.

## Something Special About Dog on Fleas

We're always looking for quirky and fun kids music that you, a grown-up, can enjoy without running screaming from the house with the latest Wiggles tune stuck between your ears. We've seen bad kids' music and it isn't pretty.

The antidote needed is a dose of some Dog on Fleas, a prolific trio out of Upstate New York (the apparent epicenter of good kids music). They describe themselves this way: "In a very large saucepan mix equal parts Cab Calloway and Woody Guthrie. Stir in

a pinch of Spike Jones, NRBQ and Sun Ra. Top with a sauce of calypso, cajun, highlife, soul, and reggae. Stir with Ringo's drum-stick and simmer."

What you get is a very eclectic mix of fresh original songs that range from folksy to jazzy, from rock and roll to blues. Every song is its own little wonder, carefully crafted and unique. Their latest disc, *When I Get Little*, is a musical homage to childhood from grown-ups who haven't forgotten what it was like to be seven. From the banjo-strumming title track to the

African thumb-piano symphony of "The Coo-Coo", this is tight, down-to-earth, wholesome fun. Try it out and we're sure you'll be back for *Cranberry Sauce Flotilla*, *Hoi Polloi*, and *Beautiful World*.

In short, we're pretty sure that Dog On Fleas won't make your run screaming from the house, but it just might make you jump up and down and spin in circles. We've seen this, too, and it's pretty fun.



# What to Look for in a Crib Mattress

If your baby is going to sleep in a crib, we believe it makes sense to get the most natural crib mattress you can find. Crib mattresses are required to meet rigorous fire retardant standards. (Because lots of kids smoke in bed?) Unfortunately, crib mattresses are not required to be non-toxic. Many of the chemicals used to make mattresses flame retardant are, in our opinion, quite toxic, especially considering the amount of time a baby will spend in bed. We've done a lot of research and come up with what we think are a couple of good options:

Option one is the Apollo organic innerspring mattress from Ecobaby. This is probably the most organic crib mattress on the market today. It features a core of steel coils, organic wool batting (which provides the fire retardant), and organic cotton ticking. It is our über-green option and is actually Oregon Tilth



Certified Organic. One drawback is that the cotton ticking is, well, extremely absorbent. If the mattress gets wet with kid-fluids, there's not much you can do to get the moisture or odor out. Because mildew is the enemy of any mattress, we especially recommend the use of a high-quality mattress pad with this mattress. We stock an organic cotton/polyethelene pad that works great.

Option two is the No-Compromise organic mattress from Naturpedic. This mattress also features steel core with organic cotton batting. Fire retardant is provided by a proprietary system of baking soda and silica. The ticking is organic cotton fabric impregnated with food-grade polyethylene providing a water resistant outer cover. This mattress will not get wet, no matter what.

Stop by to check out both mattresses.

## Fresh, Local & Organic Baby Food By Sweet Cheeks

If you've ever wanted to feed your baby fresh, local and organic baby food (and who wouldn't?), you should try Sweet Cheeks.

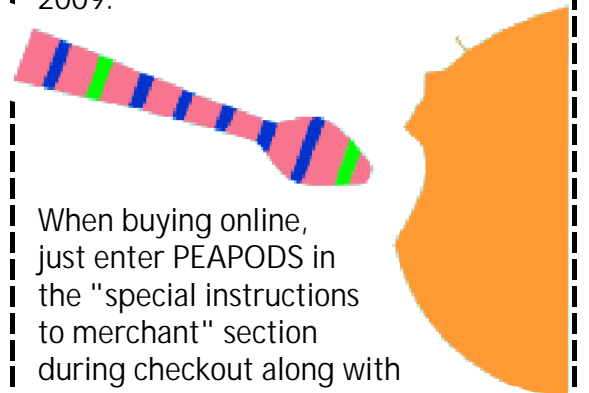
Lori Karis started Sweet Cheeks when she was working as a nanny and tasted a batch of her homemade baby food. It was pretty darn good! And now, her customers tell her the same thing when they sneak their own tastes.

Sweet Cheeks works directly with local organic farmers for the freshest quality and healthiest product. It's made weekly for the freshest result, and frozen in individual servings for convenience.

You can find Sweet Cheeks at the St. Paul Farmers Market (look for the orange umbrella) and at local co-ops including the Mississippi Market. Plus, Sweet Cheeks is now on the menu at 128 Café in St. Paul and at the Birchwood Café in Minneapolis. How cool is that? Yum!

### Friendly Neighbor Coupon

Buy \$20 or more and get 3 free!  
Valid online at [sweetcheeksbabyfood.com](http://sweetcheeksbabyfood.com) or at the St. Paul Farmers Market. Expires August 31, 2009.



When buying online, just enter PEAPODS in the "special instructions to merchant" section during checkout along with your choices. Sweet Cheeks delivers in the metro, and delivery in St Paul is FREE!

# Save Handmade Products from the CPSIA

When we wrote this newsletter a year ago, small American children's product manufacturers were enjoying a budding renaissance. Parents were looking for alternatives to junky products made in China and the dozens of small, family-run businesses we buy from were growing quickly. Hundreds more were springing up on websites like Etsy. A trend dating back three decades was beginning to reverse as more and more companies were consciously deciding to make their products in the US.

Then, in August of last year, all of that came crashing to a standstill when President Bush signed the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA).

The CPSIA was intended to halt the sale of dangerous children's products which turned 2007 into "the year of the recall." Mass-market companies like Mattel and RC2 (makers of Thomas the Tank Engine) were responsible for importing millions of unsafe products from China. The CPSIA requires thorough third-party testing on all children's products, including not just toys, but also clothing, bicycles, shoes, books, CDs — anything intended for a child under the age of twelve.

This third-party testing was designed for mass market producers, who can afford to test a few samples of a production run of tens of thousands of units.

Unfortunately, the CPSIA makes no distinction between Mattel and a work at home mom who makes hand-knit baby hats or a small company that makes wooden baby rattles in Michigan in batches of a few dozen. Under the CPSIA, both are required to do the exact same testing required of Mattel and other mass-market manufacturers.

Third party testing isn't cheap, either. Every manufacturer has to pay a testing company to test each piece of their product for lead, phthalates (a plasticizer used in soft plastic toys which was banned by the CPSIA) and a host of other standards. Depending on the type and complexity of a product, testing can cost anywhere from about \$400 to \$4,000 *per product*. For most of our small suppliers, these

costs will drive them out of business. Only larger companies will survive. As a result of the CPSIA, we have already lost quite a few of our suppliers, most notably Selecta Spielzeug, one of our German toymakers.

To save the small companies we buy from, we founded the Handmade Toy Alliance in November of last year. The HTA now has more than 330 small business members and has gotten the attention of Congress and the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the agency charged with implementing the CPSIA. The HTA has been written about in

the LA Times, the Associated Press, the Star Tribune, The Wall Street Journal, Mothering Magazine, Businessweek, and Reason Magazine, among many others.

Our goals are simple: to reform the CPSIA so that it protects consumers without destroying small businesses. We are arguing for common-sense reforms such as exemptions from testing for natural materials, an allowance for component-based testing, and harmonization with European Union standards. We are asking Congress to revisit the CPSIA and correct its unintended consequences. For more information as well a petition to sign and letters to write, please visit [www.handmadetoyalliance.org](http://www.handmadetoyalliance.org).

One way or another, we'll find a way to continue to offer high-quality products made with integrity.



[www.handmadetoyalliance.org](http://www.handmadetoyalliance.org)

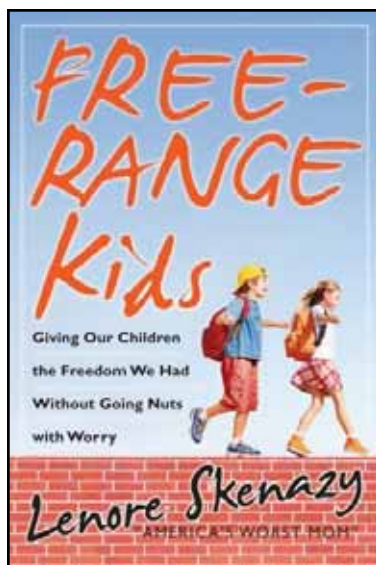
# Let the Children Run Free

Our daughter Abby became a teenager a few months ago—it's hard for us to believe that our little "Peapod" has become a young woman. And, we've been thinking about what we did at her age and how uncomfortable we would be with those things now.

Dan at thirteen often took the bus downtown and spent the day exploring skyways and record stores. Millie gathered signatures against nuclear weapons in Uptown for INFACT. Somehow, both of these activities in this day and age fills us with fear.

*In this day and age?* Who are we kidding? Why would we be more scared now of our daughter being out in the world than when we were hanging out in City Center or Lake & Hennepin? A generation of fear has blunted our instincts and caused us to trust our children less. Two decades of media saturation about the dangers of the world have left us struggling to reconcile our childhoods with our parenting.

Lately, we've come to recognize that if we want to raise strong, capable, self-actualized children, we need to overcome these fears. Thankfully, Lenore Skenazy's *Free*



*Range Kids* movement ([freerangekids.wordpress.com](http://freerangekids.wordpress.com)) is leading the way. Lenore's journey began when she wrote about letting her nine year old son Izzy ride the NYC subway on his own. In doing so, she tapped into the humongous schism that's grown between reason and fear in the minds of every parent today. "Somehow," she writes, "a whole lot of parents are just convinced that nothing outside the home is safe. At the same time, they're also convinced that their children are helpless to fend for themselves. While most of these parents walked to school as kids, or hiked the woods — or even took public transportation — they can't imagine their own offspring

doing the same thing."

In her new book, Lenore takes on all the crazy things we do as parents because of fear, not the least of which are the ridiculous safety products that use fear to make a buck. We've seen loads of these—knee pads for crawling toddlers, GPS tracking devices, marionette-like harnesses for learning to walk, helmets to cushion falls, and "glovies" to keep germs off little hands. All of these products not only deny a half million years of human evolution, but also plant in our children an insidious, damaging message: You are not fit for this world. You need constant protection. Be afraid.

As parents, we know it's a constant struggle between our instincts to protect and to create healthy, capable children. Unlike birds, there is no single moment when our children fly from the nest—it's something that happens every day in a thousand tiny steps. What's important is what's between our ears each time our children take a step out into the world. Do we inveigh a sense of fear or trust? We're hardly perfect, but we're bending our minds toward trust.

## Do Good Diaper Service

A diaper service is a great way to begin using cloth diapers—it's how we first learned how easy cloth is. We're pleased to refer people to Do Good Diapers, the Twin Cities' only diaper service. If you're not up to washing your own just yet, give them a call. They're also working on a deep-cleaning diaper stripping package for people who need to freshen up their home-washed diapers.

## Friendly Neighbor Coupon

One free week for new customers when you sign up for four weeks. Expires 8/31/09.



612-990-2183

[www.dogooddiapers.com](http://www.dogooddiapers.com)

# 9th Annual Sidewalk Sale!

This is the buried treasure event of the year! We bring all of our scratches, dents, questionable ideas, and slow moving merchandise out into the sunshine and offer them to you at savings from 25-75% off. Just doing our part by putting some fabulous into the economic stimulus.



## June 26th and 27th 10am to 6pm

The fine print: Because our sidewalk sale is a busy event next to a busy street, we recommend (but do not require) 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. No fair arriving early!



## Fan Peapods on Facebook

Keep track of upcoming event, news products, and random Peapods news by “fanning” us on Facebook. Simply go to [www.peapods.com/fb](http://www.peapods.com/fb) and log in or create an account to join.

www.peapods.com  
251 Snelling Ave S  
St. Paul, MN 55105-2044



PRSR STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SAINT PAUL, MN  
PERMIT NO. 2977



Printed on 30% post-consumer recycled paper. Please share with a friend or recycle.

