

# · CHILD'S PLAY ·



A PUBLICATION OF THE USA TOY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Winter 2010

USA-TLA: Promoting Development Through Toys and Play

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## Remembering Jane Donelson, Toy Library Friend

**O**ur dear honorary director Jane Donelson died in October 2010. She was 89 and surrounded by loved ones in her final hours.

We too were loved ones of Jane's. We named the Player of the Year Award, our most prestigious accolade, after her in 2006. We were not alone in realizing her gifts to the world. Many others recognized her deep love of children and her unquenchable thirst to make the world a better, happier place for all the people she met.



An admirer and colleague wrote the following upon learning of her death. "I first met Jane when my daughter was a baby (29 years ago). She talked me into being a 'Toyrarian.' I opened a storefront known as 'The Toy Library Club' full of tender loving care with a lot of encouragement and support from Jane. I haven't seen Jane in years but she will always have a place in my heart. I was actually thinking about her the other day and wondering where she is now. What a surprise to see her obituary in the LA Times. I just want to say she is one of the 'special' women of the world...giving, loving, the most industrious, enthusiastic and caring people I have ever had the honor of knowing.

We knew Jane for 25 years. She knocked on doors for the USA-TLA, bringing Mattel and Lakeshore Curriculum into our financial pool. She introduced us to new friends

who have become empowering to our organization and what we stand for. Most of all, she was present to each of us individually on our journeys to early childhood teaching and toy lending delivery – ever encouraging, bright, smart, optimistic."

Jane was a beacon, one we value and whose light we will continue to follow.

*A friendly blogger wrote the following recently*

### Little Man Touts Library Value

"(Little Man) LM got a new toy a few weeks ago. It flew in from over east. LM was so very excited once he grew accustomed to his new toy. He played with it all weekend, in fact he virtually forgot about My Better Half (MBH) and I for the entire weekend. That was fine though, it gave us some respite. His new toy was just shy of 6 in. tall with brown hair and a little pot belly, and answered to the call sign of 'Uncle'.

"LM's new toy returned from whence he came after a few days, and not surprisingly LM was a little upset about this. However, when we reminded him about his teddy and that he had been ignoring teddy for the weekend, his grief recovered.

"We recently signed up to a toy library also. The idea behind this is that we don't have to buy LM any more toys, we just borrow them. Personally I am a little dubious about the entire thing, given that contrary to certain promises, it hasn't stopped MBH from buying new toys. If I can't restrict the flow of toy 'ownership' into the household by MBH, there is no hope trying to restrict LM's Grandparent from buying them. Toy library = a futile endeavor. LM is enjoying the turnover of toys though. He's so intelligent, I pulled up to the toy library the other day, (he had only been there once before) and you'd think it was a giant bottle dispenser. LM had what can only be described as a bout of excitable delirium. A bit like I get when a new episode of the Simpsons come on."

### SAVE THE DATE!

USA-TLA and the Turrell Child Care & Early Learning Center in Paramus, N.J., will co-host a conference on May 7, 2011, in Paramus. Mark your calendars – great speakers, camaraderie and CEUs will be provided. USA-TLA is grateful to have such a rich partnership with this distinguished early childhood institution. Watch for details at <http://www.usatla.org>.

# Speaking Out About Play

By Judy Iacuzzi, Executive Director

I read a story in the *New York Times* recently about little girls being mean to each other. You may have seen the story, “The Playground Gets Even Tougher.” A recent survey of 273 third graders in Massachusetts, according to the *Times*, found that 47 percent have been bullied at least once; 52 percent reported being called mean names, “being made fun of or teased in a hurtful way; and 51 percent reported being left out of things on purpose, excluded from their group of friends or completely ignored at least once in the past couple of months.” It’s perhaps not a new phenomenon, but today it is one of some proportion with damaging consequences all around — for victims and victimizers.



I scanned the story to find the reasons and came to the paragraph I was looking for at the end. “Rosalyn Rice (the associate principal of the Massachusetts public elementary school who studied young girls’ behavior) and other experts point to a shift in childhood play, with a focus on controlled environments, tech-no-goodies and material objects. Instead of working out issues themselves during free play outside, children are micromanaged by parents who step in to resolve conflicts for them. Debbie Rosenman, a teacher in her 31st year at a suburban Detroit school, said that helicopter parents simultaneously fail to provide adequate authority or appropriate forms of supervision.”

## Other insidious operatives are at work.

Commercial interests are infesting the world of our children, squelching the imagination and thwarting the problem-solving and social interaction that free play – play emanating from within the child – generates.

In our toy lending “communities” we know how important play is. Free play carries lifelong lessons: how to sharpen abilities, get along with others, discover surroundings, understand ourselves and the earth, problem solve, try out new roles, experiment, and in sum, build a rich bed of experience that secures future social, cognitive and cultural development.

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“Play is both culturally universal and fundamental to children’s well-being – factors that led the United Nations to list it as a guaranteed right in its 1989 Convention of the Rights of the Child,” writes Susan Linn in the *2010 State of the World: Transforming Cultures from Consumerism to Sustainability*.

*Continued on page 3*



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## A Happy Ending

# Denver Toy Lending Library Makes Clean Sweep

**T**he recent Consumer Protection Safety Improvement Act came at a steep price for the Northwest Denver Toy Library.

“We’d collected 500 toys over the years,” said a volunteer with the library, “but we didn’t have proof that they did not have lead.” In the wake of the new Act, the library decided the toys needed to go.

For nearly 30 years the toy library has behaved responsibly. Volunteers routinely disinfect and sterilize the toys when they are returned and carefully monitor the loan process so that everyone gets a chance to play with a special toy or two or three.

But the volunteers didn’t anticipate the Consumer Protection Safety Improvement Act and its new hazard effective in February: *potential lead poisoning in toys manufactured prior to 2009*. In response to the Act, the library tossed 400 toys.

“We wanted to have safe toys for kids to play with, but most of these toys were donated before the ‘90s,” said the volunteer. “There was no way for us to find out unless we get proper documentation from every company for every toy, and that was just not possible.” The move left the library with only about 130 toys on hand for in January 2010.

## Fast-forward: November 2010

The stack of board games sits on a rolling cart. The pile seems to go unnoticed by the toddlers playing with the trucks, dolls and colorful blocks. The toddlers seem more interested in the colorful, large items on the shelves.

Thanks to a big push from the volunteers at the Northwest Denver Toy Library, all of the toys available on the shelves today meet federal guidelines for safety. Over the year the library held several outreach events and nearly replaced its missing inventory.

Marjorie Herlth, coordinator of the toy library, said that more than 330 new toys have been added to the depleted collection. She praises the community for stepping up to provide the new toys for the library.

More than 200 patrons utilize the Northwest Denver Toy Library each month. Eighteen volunteers help at the check-out window and track inventory. Children may check out up to three items at a time for a three week period.

As residents begin to shop for the holidays, Herlth notes that the library has created a wish list on its website at [www.denvertoylibrary.com](http://www.denvertoylibrary.com).

## Speaking Out About Play

*Continued from page 2*

“Yet in the twenty-first century, hands-on creative play is an endangered species,” writes Linn, a keynote speaker at the conference cosponsored by the Cuyahoga County Library System and USA-TLA in 2008. “Perhaps the most insidious and powerful threat to what is every child’s birthright is the escalation of commercialism in young people’s lives.”

Linn, with the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and Harvard Medical School, continues, “It is traditionally assumed that when children have leisure time they are engaged in some kind of self-directed or free play, the motivation for which generates from within...but for the first time in history in just five years, (1997-2002) the amount of time that six to eight-year-olds in the U.S. spent in pretend play diminished by about a third. More than half of parents in Japan and France characterize shopping as a play activity. An international survey of 16 countries found that only 27 percent of children engaged in imaginative play, and only 15 percent of mothers believed that play was essential to children’s health.”

Ms. Linn’s sentiments are echoed by educators and others

involved with young children. “Young people, age 8 to 18 now consume more than 7.5 hours of media a day,” according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. “That’s a heavy diet of cyber commentary about who is ‘fat’ or otherwise ostracized that can spread throughout school with a keystroke.”

These statistics provide marching orders to those of us at the toy library helm. We are at the vanguard of children’s play and healthy development. Its importance is greater than ever because it is being so heavily challenged by the commercialized cyberworld. Let us patrol and protect the imaginations of our youth.

The programs you lead are invaluable, more so today than perhaps ever before. Carry on with determination!



## Ahoy Mates! There's Something New in the Block Corner

Block Mates™ fit on standard unit blocks and create realistic or fantasy animals. When I first saw Block Mates™ I was skeptical. Why create something to adorn a traditional unit block? Why mess with perfection? Unit blocks are historic.



They've been entertaining and educating children since the early 1900s. Their beauty lies in their simplicity and precision. They don't need embellishment.

But then I did what every good early childhood educator does – I observed the new toy in action. I had an opportunity to display this new product at many different early childhood conferences and watch teachers' responses. They were intrigued; they were curious; and they were wowed by this innovative twist on block play. I thought to myself, what could be bad about a new block prop that would entice children to rediscover the block area? Or better yet, pique the interest of a child who rarely ventures there?

The sets represent the traditional themes of farm animals, safari animals and dinosaurs, but there's nothing tradi-

tional about their design. Each animal has four parts that may be attached to blocks in multiple ways. Without prompting, children will mix animal parts and make new animal combinations. Why not mix the pig's snout with a sheep's hind quarters and see what you get? The familiar names of cow, pig, sheep, horse and goat will soon become playful words like cow-oat, shorse, or a goateep. There's no better way to teach children phonemic awareness than let-



ting them mix and match sounds.

I'm changing my tune. I see that there is value in bringing something new and different to

block play, but one question remains to be answered. Will these plastic parts hold up to the rigor of children's play? Can these plastic pieces withstand the repeated action of being pushed on and pulled off? Can the goat trip-trap across the newly built bridge without injury? I admit I am pleasantly surprised. They are not only clever creations, they are impressively hardy as well. The patented gasket design ensures a snug fit the first time and every time.

And if you mix and match with abandon, you'll come up with some unforgettable and fanciful characters. My personal favorite is the alligator. I always put him on the double-unit block.

Yes, I've changed my mind. I am sold on the special play value of Block Mates™. Toy librarians who add them to your collections beware: before you know it, your kids, caregivers, even you will have a favorite animal creation!

*Leslie Silk Eslinger  
Education and Product Development Specialist  
Becker's School Supplies  
1-800-523-1490*



### Please Vote!

Enclosed in this issue of *Child's Play* is the ballot for USA- TLA directors. These individuals have been selected by the nominating committee, which serves at the pleasure of the Board of Directors.

**You may vote for any and all nominees.** Please return the ballot to TLA Headquarters by December 20 2010, by fax: 847-864-8473.

Each directors is elected for a three-year term. Their experience and insight into early childhood and toy lending is invaluable to the direction of the USA Toy Library Association.

## APTE's "Classroom Video Workshop" Wins Prestigious Award

APTE Inc., an education publisher, announced recently that its program, *Classroom Video Workshop*, has received the "Media of the Year Award" from *Creative Child Magazine*.

With *Classroom Video Workshop* even young children can produce their own video projects. Charming graphics and a simple interface make it easy for the youngest moviemakers to add special effects, overlays, sounds, and credits to video clips.

"My daughter, Claire, loves making her own video stories with *Classroom Video Workshop*," says Carrie Tolentino. "She can't read yet...so Claire gives a running dialogue as her video story plays. *Classroom Video Workshop* is a wonderful way for Claire to begin the reading process."

*Classroom Video Workshop* comes with a guidebook and software program with templates for making video projects. For example, children learn about weather by making their own wind vane and rain gauge. Using *Classroom Video Workshop* software, they may record their weather project over a period of time and in so doing, gain an understanding of the variances of weather. Videos are easily exported to email, whiteboards, smartphones and You Tube.

*Classroom Video Workshop* is compatible with both Windows and Mac operating systems. The program is available

from APTE education resellers or the APTE web site for \$39.95 ([www.apte.com](http://www.apte.com)).

### About APTE

Established in 1989, APTE is an education publisher of learning technology products for home and school markets worldwide. A leader in the development of visual learning products, APTE's digital photo and video programs have won numerous awards for educational excellence and are enjoyed by kids of all ages. The company distributes its products and services through a variety of channels, including school resellers, online, retail stores and in partnership with leading toy manufacturers.

### About Creative Child Magazine

*Creative Child Magazine's* Toy Awards Program includes evaluations of all products submitted by moms, music educators and early education professionals. The magazine is clear that submissions are reviewed by a collective body of potential buyers, not an individual alone. The magazine is published in Henderson, Nev., on a bi-monthly basis with the intent of giving readers, especially parents, the latest information on how to nurture a child's creativity.

**2010 Media of the Year Award** from **CreativeChild Magazine**

**More than the eye can see...**

*Classroom Video Workshop* is the world's easiest program for kids to make customized videos. Even very young children make a video story in just minutes. With a simple click, they add credits, clipart, sound, special effects, overlays and more!

### Library Sets Records Despite Cuts

**C**uyahoga County Public Library, a system with 28 branches serving 47 communities in the greater Cleveland area, set new records for circulation and customer visits last year despite cutbacks in hours of service. Cardholders borrowed more than 19 million items, a seven percent increase over the prior year.

Though Sunday operations cut out all but seven branches halfway through the year due to state funding cuts, the number of customer visits to the library system exceeded 7.6 million in 2009, topping the prior year by 232,422 visitors.

Since 2003, the library's circulation has increased 58 percent and customer visits have increased 30 percent.

Hennen's American Public Library Ratings (HAPLR) 2009, an annual study published by independent researcher Thomas J. Hennen, Jr., ranked Cuyahoga County's Library first in the nation among libraries that serve populations

over 500,000. HAPLR ratings are based on 15 factors of service quality and operational efficiency related to staffing, materials and circulation. HAPLR reviews more than 9,000 libraries for the analysis.

Cuyahoga County Public Library was also named one of America's Star Libraries last year, as rated by *Library Journal's* second annual Index of Public Library Services (LJ Index). The library earned a five-star ranking and was the highest scoring library in its budget category.

#### About Cuyahoga County Public Library

Cuyahoga County Public Library, which circulates toys and books using an advanced Internet system, consistently ranks as one of the nation's ten busiest and best library systems. Its mission is to be at the center of community life by providing an environment where reading, lifelong learning and civic engagement thrive. For more information, visit [www.cuyahogalibrary.org](http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org).

### International Front: Inclusive, Affordable Turkish Library

**A**lthough specialized care for children with autism is generally only available to the financially secure, a new "toy library" in a poor Istanbul neighborhood is providing affordable childcare through a new model for social inclusion.

Inspired by her autistic son, founder Bahar Sever has created a unique social and educational environment where children with and without social disabilities can interact, providing a first for the city. The bright blue building nestled on the corner of a run-down street in Gültepe, a neighborhood in the district of Kâithane, leads even the shyest of children to sprint toward its door. In launching the unique Gültepe Toy Library, Sever's main aim was to create a homey, friendly environment so that autistic children with social difficulties would be enthusiastic about coming.

"My son was rejected from every daycare in our price range because people feared he would be a bad influence on other children as he had not yet learned basic routine skills such as eating with cutlery and going to the wash-room on his own," Sever said.

With no income of her own and as a resident in a low income area, Sever proposed her toy library-daycare to the Foundation of Support for Women's Work, or KEDV, who agreed to support the project and launch the center.

The facility functions today as a daycare for children from the neighborhood between the ages of 0-6. Seven mothers from the area, including one primary school teacher, run

the daycare providing meals, toys, educational lessons, outings, seminars and gymnastics.

The toy library itself has been the most beneficial aspect of the daycare, according to Hülya Digezen who brings her 4-year-old autistic child on a daily basis. She said the children are allowed to take home a toy for a week and that there has been no problem with people not returning the toys. "Children get bored of toys very quickly, especially after they have figured out all their tricks. As a result, the toy library has been extremely useful because you can keep renewing the toys and for free," Digezen said.

Sever told the local newspaper that no toys had been broken to date. "The children take great care of the toys and play with them very carefully. If they were to be broken we have a toy hospital and can fix them easily," Sever said, adding that the library is used by more than 150 children.

When asked about problems encountered at the daycare, both Sever and Digezen said the two major drawbacks were finance and education for the children with disabilities.

"We were given much support from the foundation and municipality when we built this library but the running costs are high and we struggle because we take a fee according to the income level of the families, which are usually low," Sever said.

She said special training is required for the development of autistic children, but such training is economically beyond many Gültepe families.



# Toy Library Resources

# ORDER FORM

Quantity		Member	Non-member
	<b>Child's Play Newsletter</b> (One-Year Subscription) Included with Membership. An 8-page periodical full of news and information about toy libraries and related topics.		
	<b>USA Toy Library Association Operator's Manual</b> Everything you need to know about setting up and operating a toy library.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	<b>Read It! Play It!</b> by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim An illustrated, 112-page book of fun activities that build literacy through reading and playing.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	<b>Read It! Play It! With Babies and Toddlers</b> by Joanne and Stephanie Oppenheim An illustrated, 103-page book that builds literacy with babies and toddlers. <b>Now in English and Spanish!</b> Please specify.	\$12.50	\$25.00
	<b>Learn and Play the Green Way</b> by Rhoda Redleaf and Audrey Robertson An illustrated, 200-page book loaded with suggestions for homemade toys that teach.	\$18.00	\$36.00
	<b>Theme Kits Made Easy</b> by Leslie Silk Eslinger 161-page book of clever ideas based on "teaching themes" (fairy tales, animals, city life, etc.) packaged as "kits." A great teaching tool for providers, parents and teachers.	\$20.00	\$40.00
	<b>The Power of Play</b> A discussion about early childhood education with Dr. Michael K. Meyerhoff, The Epicenter Inc.	\$5.00	\$10.00
	<b>Science Fun with Toys</b> by Thomas W. Sills with foreward by Judith Q. Iacuzzi A guide for parents and teachers with resource descriptions for unique & educational toys.	\$18.00	\$36.00

Sub-Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Thanks for your support!**



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Evanston IL 60201

**The USA-TLA Board Election Ballot  
is enclosed in this issue.**

Please fax to USA-TLA at 847-864-8473 by Dec. 20, 2010

## TLA Website News: Online Directory Updating Continues

**W**e are updating the Directory of Toy Libraries on the website and enlist your help. If you receive an email from our office, please do respond with accurate information. The media and families regularly visit our site for current information. We want yours to be there!

### About [usatla.org](http://usatla.org)

Based on statistics compiled by USA-TLA website host, all numbers – unique visitors, number of visits, pages viewed – have increased over the last six months. What follows is data for the nine-month period of January through September 2010:

*Number of visits: 6,050 (with a June high of 1100 and a February low of 316)*  
*Unique visitors: 3,921*  
*Daily average number of visits: 31*  
*Daily average of pages viewed: 66*

*Pages viewed per visit: 2.1*  
*About 75% of all visits have a duration of 30 seconds or less.*

The most popular entry pages in order were:

*Locations [of toy libraries]*  
*Welcome*  
*About USA-TLA*  
*Newsletter*  
*Resources*  
*Join Us*  
*Conference*

Typically, more than 30 countries visit our site every month. The top 10 countries, based on pages visited, during the month of June 2010, our highest rated month, are as follows:

*USA – 2929*  
*Russian Federation – 172*  
*Germany – 43*  
*India – 22*  
*Hong Kong – 21*

*Japan – 20*  
*Australia – 16*  
*Brazil – 16*  
*Belize – 13*  
*Canada – 13*  
*Puerto Rico – 11*

These rankings can vary significantly from month to month. For example, China's page visits jumped to 236 in the month of September.

### Shopping on TLA Site Is Now Easier with a Shopping Cart and PayPal®

We have added a shopping cart feature to our website. The online store, which sells USA-TLA resources and publications, can be accessed from a link on the **Resources** page or by going to [www.usatla.org/store](http://www.usatla.org/store). We also added the ability for members and non-members to pay for their purchases with PayPal.