

# No Cabbage Patch this year — shop smart!

By Susan Mahoney  
staff writer

Parents need not worry about the Cabbage Patch-type shopping hysteria when Christmas shopping for children this year, according to a top toy industry official. But, he adds, they should nonetheless stress educational value and safety when buying presents.

"There is no blockbuster this year," said Charles Riolto, executive director of Toy Manufacturers of America. "There have been no reports of shortages of anything."

That's good news for shoppers who won't have to duke it out in long lines for that popular gift that every child is begging for.

Riolto, interviewed at the Southfield Radisson last week, said there were categories of toys that are popular such as ride-on toys in the warm weather South.

A more diverse selection of dolls is popular this year now that the

Cabbage Patch dolls are not pushing other varieties to the back of shopping shelves.

REGARDLESS OF the gift, "Parents should really take the time to learn the interests of the child before they buy something," said Riolto.

Consumers should also consider buying a toy with several qualities, he said.

Toys and games should concentrate on the child's physical and creative development, said Riolto, and not just the educational side, which has become a parental trend.

"Other things are just as important, especially the physical challenge toys can offer," he said.

Thoughtful, rather than impulsive, buying can prevent the chance of a child playing with a toy once or twice before tossing it in a closet or under a bed where it will never be touched again, he said.

How often children play with their toys is a parental concern, but there



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— Charles Riolto

is probably no other worry like toy safety. But if parents use common sense and follow some guidelines, Riolto said their fears can be put to rest.

He warned parents to read toy labels and take them seriously.

"If the toy says for 4-year-olds and up, don't give it to a 3-year-old," he said. "A lot of research goes into

those labels."

ANOTHER SAFETY tip is making sure older children put their toys away so younger siblings cannot innocently crawl up to the toy and attempt to play with it. The age labels for some toys denote possible physical dangers for younger children, such as choking on a toy's small parts.

"If a 5-year-old is playing with a toy and leaves it lying around his 3-year-old brother or sister could pick it up and get hurt," he said.

Riolto expressed confidence in the safety value of games and toys that are on the market. But there really is no substitute for parental supervision, he said.

Economically speaking, consumers shouldn't have to reach too far into their pockets to buy games or toys this season. Prices of most products have stayed constant, he said. But if consumers run into high-

priced toys, Riolto suggested switching to the standbys, such as Ken and Barbie-type products.

"Stick to the classics to save money," he said. "Go with products that have been around a long time. They are excellent value for the money."

He also suggested consumers draw up a plan of attack before shopping.

"Before you shop plan what you want to buy and how much you're going to spend," he said. "And always comparison shop."

"Have the salesperson demonstrate the product and ask questions."

As executive director of TMA, Riolto is involved in the day-to-day operation of the national toy industry trade association. TMA members, who are U.S. producers of toys and holiday decorations, represent 98 percent of sales for the \$12 billion industry.

## OCC art exhibit slated

The Oakland Community College Arts and Humanities Club Annual Fall show and sale has been scheduled for December at the Royal Oak Campus of the college.

The juried exhibit will display works in all media by OCC alumni and current students.

This year's featured artist is Mary Fortuna, a student whose work includes color drawings, watercolors, collages and assemblages. She is the vice president of the Arts and

Humanities Club.

The fall show begins with an opening reception in the gallery on Friday, Dec. 2, from 7-10 p.m. and will remain open through the weekend.

The show will continue through Monday, Dec. 19, during regular school hours.

The Royal Oak Campus of OCC is at 739 S. Washington in Royal Oak.

Further information about the fall show and sale may be obtained by phoning 867-5760.

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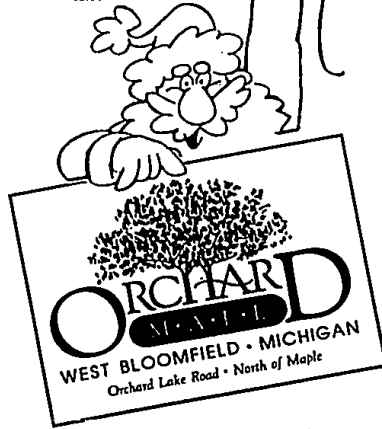
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**T**he Big Man arrives promptly at 1 p.m. in a helicopter, and will be staying until 3:30 p.m. He's promised to bring surprises for all the boys and girls who come by.

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