

SANTAFACTS

The hottest toys this season?

What will be the next Furby, Cabbage Patch Kid or Tickle Me Elmo? Here are some top contenders:

- Elmo's Radio Control Roadway (Fisher-Price).
- Harry Hairball (Rumpus).
- Hydro Battle (Pressman).
- Magnet Mania Discovery Jar (LearningSmith).
- Music Blocks (NeuroSmith).
- Oogly Googly Motorized Building Set (Learning Resources).
- Play-Doh Seaside Playworld (Hasbro).
- Stacks of Hats (Roylco).
- Yummy Chocolate Bugs (Curiosity Kits).



■ Oogly Googly is a 3-D motorized puzzle with infinite combinations.

SOURCE: Family Fun Magazine, Rumpus Toys, Learning Resources

Building traditions Crafts your kids can make

BY JOAN CARL
SPECIAL WRITER

Getting ready for another marathon of shopping for the holidays? Are the kids focusing all their energy on what Santa might bring them?

One healthy way to divert their attention, and perhaps bring a little more focus on the concept of giving, is to get them involved in the gift-giving process.

Handmade gifts for grandparents, aunts and uncles are usually around long after the leather gloves have worn out or the tie has gone out of fashion.

The project can also bring together parents and children for a special activity during a very busy time of year. Even an hour a week can net some impressive results according to Leslie Williams, art director and public programs coordinator at the Children's Museum in Detroit. "What a wonderful way to get together and share in a project. Have your family make something that represents a special memory that you want to hold onto."

Not feeling particularly artistic? Take a trip to the local craft store and let your children pick out something that interests them. Even prepackaged items can be personalized for each member of the family.

One child might want to work with wood, making a birdhouse or a bird feeder as a gift. Others may be into rubber stamp art, decorating picture

frames, making custom cards, even designing their own Christmas wrapping paper.

Artwork that lets children show their personality and gives a sense of family tradition is preferred, notes Williams.

She suggests having children make an ornament which denotes something special about the year. Or construct a family recipe book with favorite family dishes.

One item that's fun to make is a picture frame constructed of sturdy cardboard covered with scraps of wall-paper, construction or wrapping paper. The frame is cut to fit the picture then covered with decorative paper and adorned with paints, feathers, markers, ribbons, beads, buttons, stickers or shells.

Williams has discovered the value of such homemade gifts in her family. "My daughter will be 21 soon and I still have things she made in preschool that I pull out during the holidays."

Another idea is to have children create a TV show, something such as "I Love Grandma," or CAT-TV, writing the script, planning the costumes and the set, even creating their own commercials. With a parent's help, they can make a videotape to send to relatives for Christmas.

Children can also become authors, writing and illustrate books. Let your children pick family photos for their books, then get colored photocopies of the pictures for their pages. Put the fin-

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