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Toys R Us Publishes "Toy Guide For Differently-Abled Kids"

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Wayne, NJ (AHN) - Toys R Us Inc. put out its free "Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids" Monday, which is available in Toys R Us stores and online. With the help of experts at the nonprofit National Lekotec Center, the New Jersey-based toy retailer has put out a guide of 85 toys as a guidepost for those who purchase toys for any of the 6 million children in the United States who have disabilities.

Toys R Us started publishing the guide in 1994. This year the retailer is printing 600,000 copies of the 52-page guide - approximately 100,000 more copies than it printed in 2005 - and is absorbing all costs. All toys in the guide are sold nationally, and only six are exclusive to Toys R Us stores.

Each toy in the guide is accompanied with a description of how it can be used, along with symbols that indicate what areas of development it can help stimulate - such as creativity, self-esteem, vision or hearing. It comes with questions to help the buyer decide whether a toy is the right fit for the child, like, "Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration?" and "Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong way?"

Diana Nielander, Executive Director at Lekotek, tells the AP, "The Toys R Us Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids is an incredible resource because it speaks to a child's individual needs and offers qualified recommendations on toys that accelerate educational and developmental skills."

Jennifer Navarro, the mother of with a 5-year-old son who is autistic, says finding toys was always difficult.

She says, "It's hard to find something just for him. It's pretty aggravating shopping for toys for him, at times. Some toys that are meant for his age group are too complicated, but some are too simple."

Navarro says she discovered the guide two years ago and it has helped her find toys that are more appropriate for her son, Nicholas.

"I thought it was wonderful. I've never seen anything like that before," she says.

Nielander says Lekotek evaluated about 200 toys during the past nine months to pick which ones were best to go into the guide. She says one of the criteria for getting into the catalog is that a toy is easily handled or manipulated and doesn't have a "right way" of being used.

Nielander says, "These are things that are good for all children, but especially good for children with challenges.

"We want to see toys that are great for the most amount of children, and sometimes the smallest thing can make the biggest difference."

Guides can be found at Toys R Us stores or online at toysrus.com/differentlyabled.