

ZAG NEWS

VOL 3 ISSUE 2

www.zaggift.com

MAY 2005

2005 TOY FAIR

NEW YORK CITY 2/20-23

Toy Fair is the major trade show for seeing vendors in the plush, doll, hobby and toy industries. Held annually in the Javits Convention Center, New York City, the February 2005 show offered 1,400 vendors in every category, including custom souvenir products, games and educational science kits. Several years ago Toy Fair was split into two shows, with the October show focusing on major toy manufacturers (Mattel, Hasbro, etc.) and major retailers (Wal-Mart, Sears). The February show focuses on smaller toy vendors and independent buyers for gift shops, zoos and aquariums.

Although it's massive, a buyer can cover the trade floors in two days (if you really hustle) and the overall trip can be relatively affordable. The show organizers, Toy Industry Association, offer special housing deals that make hotels in the Manhattan area (near Times Square) comparable to Gatlinburg hotel rates during November's Smoky Mountain Gift Show! This being New York City, food is plentiful, fairly inexpensive, and it's much easier to get a good meal than in Gatlinburg. The show organizers provide free shuttles between participating hotels and the Javits Center. Vendors at the show were offering many show specials and free freight deals, making it a good show to place orders.

Trends seen during a visit to the February show included ooey-goey/squishy items, softer fabrics in plush, and "brainy baby"-type infant videos, games and cards. Zoos and aquariums will find plenty of merchandise that is suitable for them, either educational or wildlife-themed. Licensed product is plentiful here, and film clips for the Memorial Day DreamWorks ("Shrek") computer animated movie "Madagascar" were featured at several booths.

"Madagascar" is about four animals that escape from the Central Park Zoo and get shipwrecked on Madagascar. This could be a natural tie-in for zoos if your zoo will allow you to carry some more whimsical stuff. Vendors offering licensed "Madagascar" product include Russ Berrie (plush), Sandylion (stickers), Scholastic (story and coloring books), Cedco (calendars, daily planners), Hallmark (party goods) and University Games (games). Although licensed product is usually more expensive, often comes in awkward assortments, and there is some risk involved (what if the movie tanks?), it also can allow the buyer to tie into some hot pop culture trends. Remember "Finding Nemo?" Don't we all wish we had stocked up more on clownfish?

For more information on Toy Fair 2006, which will again be held in New York City, contact the Toy Industry Association at 212-675-1141 or at www.toy-tia.org. Toy Fair may move to another location in 2007, possibly Orlando or Las Vegas.

MERCHANDISE TRENDS FOR 2005

Since our sponsors attend so many gift shows, we thought they must have been seeing some buying trends for 2005. Five of our sponsors submitted "trend" information to share with our readers.

Bruce Miller/Pinnacle Designs (custom souvenirs):

SILICONE WRIST BANDS, SILICONE WRIST BANDS, SILICONE WRIST BANDS! All colors, all name drops. By far, the hottest item in years. Call Pinnacle Designs for a quote.

Angelo Curmaci/Royal Headwear (hats):

This year has been all about the artwork for us. The past few years we concentrated on adding all the bells and whistles to the caps, having a lot of embroidery, and appliqués added overseas. They looked great and sold OK, but were a little pricey. This year it was back to fresh, solid embroidered designs on the garment washed caps, visors, and bucket hats. Of course, youth hats continue to be our strongest items for the zoo and aquarium market.

Jilene Framke/Angel Toes (tattoos):

38 billion dollars a year! That's the buying power of youth. Kids love to make their own purchases and feel independent. Animal and sea life-themed tattoos allow kids to express their individuality and show off their visit to the zoo or aquarium. Zoo Tooz and Sea Tooz are brightly colored, family-friendly, and targeted toward 3-13 year olds and their parents. They are affordable (the retail price is less than a can of soda), bar-coded, hypo-allergenic/non-toxic, last up to five days, and are designed especially for zoos and aquariums. Tigers and paw prints are most popular with boys; girls opt for dragonflies and sea horses. Zoo

Tooz and Sea Tooz are great add-on items and impulse items...once one kid sees another sporting a tattoo on their cheek or ankle, he/she has to have one too!

Harry Chernin/Beachcombers (gifts, souvenirs):

Brightly-colored items have been selling very well for us as we have seen with our "Fun in the Sun" line, which includes picture frames, wall hooks and plaques with a sandal or swimsuit theme. Old standbys like dolphin and nautical items are still extremely strong. We sell dolphins in every medium from resin figures to marble and glass items. Nautical home décor and plaques are our top selling items.

Steve Kaufman/Ideaman (gifts, souvenirs):

We have found that consumers today are looking for products that are more interpretive of nature. Today's consumers are engaged in the "information age" and are looking for items that are more meaningful and intellectually stimulating. They want their gift and souvenir products to convey more than just images of the wildlife they feature. The American Expedition™ line answers this trend by presenting information about each animal subject on every item we carry, from our desk clocks all the way down to our art wood magnets. Even our display programs are designed to be interpretive.

For ZAG Information

General Information

Steve Fairchild-316.266.8225

sfairchild@scz.org

Dave Albert -708.485.0263 x685

dalbert@brookfieldzoo.org

Web Site Information

Bill Lucey- rainforest24@juno.com

NEW SPONSORS

The companies listed below have recently joined ZAG as commercial sponsors. If you would like to know more about their products, contact information has been included. Check them out... They all have fantastic products, and they don't bite!

Caviar Kids: Leader in caviar beaded zoo wear for boys and girls.

Contact: Jeff Nachman 800.923.3131

JACO: Unique glassware, enameled tiles with animal designs and more.

Contact: Irma Baun 407.324.9867

Encore: Living stone and united design, animal figurines, mugs, pewter custom.

Contact: Saverio Barbieri 800.621.3647
Ext. 106

Toysmith: Impulse and novelty items as well as classic toys and unique gifts.

Contact: Roger Smith 253.859.4343

Penny Press Machines- unique penny press machines.

Contact: Rocky Rockholt 651.777.9000

ZAG NEWSLETTER INTERVIEW

April 2005

The Butterfly House
St. Louis, Missouri

ZAG recently visited with Peggy Drackert, Retail & Admissions Manager for the Butterfly House in St. Louis, Missouri. The following is a summary of her operations.

Describe your facility (size, annual attendance, major exhibits, most popular animals, etc.).

The Butterfly House is located within Faust Park, a 200-acre park, originally a farm owned by Missouri's second governor, Fredrick Bates. The Butterfly House opened in September 1998. The annual attendance is currently running at 150,000 visitors.

The core of The Butterfly House is the 8,000 square foot Conservatory. At any given time, you will find over 1,000 tropical butterflies representing around 60 different species, as well as 150 tropical plant species. By far, the most popular butterflies are the Blue Morpho.

Also a part of The Butterfly House is an ever-changing exhibit hall (generally housing a variety of other insects), the Native Habitat (planted to attract local butterflies), an Education Center and (of course) the Madame Butterfly Gift Shop.

Describe your merchandise operations.

The Madame Butterfly Gift shop is 1,000 square feet and our only merchandise operation. During the first few years of our existence, we sold ice cream from a cart on the plaza. This was not a very successful venture for us. We found that our visitors were looking for something more substantial (meaning---lunch!), which we were not able to provide.

What are some of your best-selling merchandise items or categories?

We began carrying the Artistic Impressions name necklaces in April 2002. It has never Fallen off of my top 10 list and more often than not is #1. Generally, this is an item that we tend to sell in multiples. The Twinkle Candy lollipops are also usually on the Top 10 list... until we get down to just the green and yellow colors—or better yet, eliminate them. Another item that we always sell in quantity is Femilia Greeting. Customers seem to feel a need to stock up on these.

Are any items or categories trending downward in popularity?

Hats. This was a really good category for us until the last two years. Only infant/toddler designs and really, really “girly” designs continue to sell well.

What trends are you seeing in 2005?

We had a couple of rather soft jewelry years...this seems to be turning around. Both our adult and children’s jewelry categories are definitely trending upwards.

Is there any merchandise you are looking for but can’t find?

It is always a challenge for me to find butterfly-related apparel (other than t-shirts). With all the butterflies the department and mall stores are showing this year, you would think there would be a lot available in the market! I’m not finding the resources.

Will there be any new shops, carts or attractions at your facility in 2005?

We are developing a web shop that we are hoping to have up and running in the next six months.

Do you have any special merchandise projects that are unique to your facility (for example, photo opportunities, special sale events, gift cards, etc.)?

We are part of a very loosely knit organization of local museum stores.
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Annually (in March) we get together for a “garage sale”. For the last few years, the Saint Louis Zoo has generously hosted this event. This will be our sixth year and many of our customers have come to look forward to it. It is a wonderful way to reach another audience, not to mention getting rid of your mistakes!

Thanks for sharing your experiences with us, Peggy!

Our own web site:

www.zaggift.com

Less than a year ago our web site went “live”. The response to our site as a resource for improving sales and finding products has been extremely favorable. If you haven’t used it, here are a few resource categories that are offered on the site.

ZAG members Need a fellow buyer’s e-mail address? A complete list of all 330+ buyers and members is available to all registered ZAG members.

Hard to find products Looking for hard to find merchandise such as plush, apparel, or souvenirs? In our “sponsor” section, an alphabetical list of over 60 vendors is provided. For your convenience, all of the sponsor’s products are also listed by the following categories: Plush, Souvenirs, Toys/Games, Clothing, and Jewelry.

Photo Gallery A variety of pictures featuring kiosks, merchandise displays and storefronts, submitted by ZAG members.

Past ZAG newsletters a collection of our newsletters for quick reference on past trends, interviews, gift shows and more.

UPCOMING GIFT SHOWS

The following is a brief list of gift shows that will be taking place this summer and through the fall.

July 9-12

Philadelphia Gift Show –

Fort Washington, PA

Location: Ft Washington Expo Ctr

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

JULY 15-18

The Gift Fair in Atlanta-Atlanta, GA

Location: Georgia World Congress Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

JULY – 22-25

California Gift Show- L. A., CA

Location: L.A. Convention Center

Contact: GLM @213.362.5640

JULY 24-27

Washington Gift Show - Washington, DC

Location: Dulles Expo & Conference Center

Contact: GLM @914.421.3200

AUGUST 6-10

San Francisco Gift Fair- San Francisco, CA

Location: Moscone Center

Contact GLM @914.421.3200

AUGUST 13-18

New York Gift Fair- NY, NY

Location: Jacob Javits Convention Center

Contact: GLM @914.421.3200

AUGUST 27-30

Denver Jewelry & Gift Show-Denver, CO

Location: Denver Merchandise Mart

Contact: 303.297.6278

AUGUST 30-SEPT 2

Orlando Gift Show – Orlando, FL

Location: Orange Co. Convention Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

SEPTEMBER 10-13

Boston Gift Show – Boston, MA

Location: Boston Convention Center

Contact: GLM @ 914.421.3200

October 9-11

Galveston Gift & Resort

Merchandise Show – Galveston, TX

Location: Galveston Island

Convention Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

October 9-11

Panama City Gift & Resort Merchandise

Show – Panama City Beach, FL

Location: Boardwalk Beach Resort

Convention Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

November 4-9

Gatlinburg/Pigeon Forge Resort Gift

Show- Gatlinburg & Pigeon Forge, TN

Location:

Contact: M & M Gift Shows

@800.430.7608

November 5-10

The Smoky Mountain Gift Show-

Gatlinburg, TN

Location: Six Locations in Gatlinburg

Contact: SMGS @ 800.441.7889

November 13-16

East Coast Resort Gift –Ocean City, MD

Location: Ocean City Convention Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

December 4-7

Grand Strand Gift & Resort Merchandise

Show - Myrtle Beach, SC

Location: Myrtle Beach Convention Center

Contact: Urban Expositions @678.285.3976

Contact Steve Fairchild for additional details or information about gift shows in your area.

Quick Reference for 2005 ZAG Sponsors

The following is a complete list of phone numbers and e-mails of our current sponsors.

Plush

Aurora World – Paul@auroragift.com
 Folkmanis - howard@folkmanis.com
 K & M/ Wild Republic – Pcugini@kmttoys.com
 Kraf & Associates – (formerly Morla)
bobbylee@att.net
 Mary Meyer – David_quimby@marymeyer.com
 Wishpets—michael@wishpets.com
 Platte River – 303.795.2380
 Wildlife Artists – PeteB@WildlifeArtistsInc.com

Clothing

Activewear Unlimited – Krosss1023@aol.com
 ArTees Island Designs – Info@artees.biz
 Capelli Straworld – Bonnie@cappellistraworld.com
 Caviar Kids - www.caviargirl.com
 Ecowear – Ecoorders@hotmail.com
 Great Graphics – Bill@Ggoltd.com
 Jacobson Hats- Sales@jhats.com
 Just Kiddin Playwear – Darin@justkiddin.com
 Out of Hand Graphics –
Outofhandsgraphics@comcast.net
 Royal Headwear—royalhead@aol.com
 Sherry Manufacturing –
Scott.coltune@sherrymfg.com
 Stephen Joseph- Lesliem@stephenjosephinc.com
 The Duck Co. – Bdoyle@duckco.com
 The Mountain – mountaingallen@aol.com

TOYS

Action Products – spruitt@appi.com
 Awesome Kids – Awesomemail@aol.com
 Club Earth –401.333.1311
 Darnos Toys glen@darmostoys.com
 Pecoware – paul-lee@pecoware.com
 Safari – gordonmeyers@safariltd.com
 Schleich – Sam@schleich-s.com
 Toysmith – CaryL@toysmith.com

Souvenirs

Allstar Wholesale – Rimstefanick@aol.com
 American Expedition – Info@ideaman-inc.com
 Angel Toes, Inc – Angeltoes@mn.rr.com
 Beachcombers Int'l- Harryc@thebeachcombers.net
 Bocin International-- bocin@mindspring.com
 Charles Products – Frank@charlesproducts.com
 Crazy Mountain – dcamire@crazymt.com
 Custom Souvenir –609-822-2200 x11
 D & D Ddd@ix.netcom.com
 Encore – Sbarbiere@the-encore-group.com
 Geo Central – JackQ@GeoCentral.com
 Impact Photographics –
Mrimpact@impactphotographics.com
 JACO of America – 407.324.9867
 Jelly Belly Co – jpola@jellybelly.com
 Karol Western – Garyz@karolwestern.com
 Mistco – Mistco@bellsouth.net
 Nanco- Nancy Sales – Petters@nancobos.com
 Nature's Accents – 800.600.8963
 Penny Press Machines- rocky@rockyrockholt.com
 Pinnacle Designs – bruce@getpinnacle.com
 Silver Streak – Sales@silverstreakind.com
 Stoneage Arts - Rajshah@stoneagearts.com
 Stravina – Raystokes@stravina.com
 Swibco – George@swibco.com
 Toysmith-253.859.4343
 TYCS – tycstoys@aol.com
 Warm Fuzzy- Wfei@aol.com

Jewelry

Cool Jewels- Rallen@cooljewels.com
 Cruz Accessories- Ms-cruz@att.net
 Jelli Jewels – Olga@jellijewels.com
 Lighthouse Express – LIExp@aol.com
 Shark Crafts – Sharkcrafts@aol.com
 Wildthings – Bryan@trendyjewels.com
 World End Import –Bryan@trendyjewels.com

Other

M&M Gift Shows –susan@mmgiftshows.com
 Urban Expositions – 678.285.3976