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CONTACT: Sarah Uhl 860-232-6232
Andrea Cohen-Keiner 860-231-8554
andrea@irejn.org

One in Three Children's Toys Tested by www.HealthyToys.org Found to have Significant Levels of Toxic Chemicals Including Lead, Flame Retardants, and Arsenic

Some Products on Shelves this Holiday Season Will be Illegal to Sell in February

**Environmental Health Groups Urge Manufacturers and Gov't to Phase Out Most
Harmful Chemicals Immediately**

West Hartford, Dec. 3—The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut and partners across the country today released the 2nd annual consumer guide to toxic chemicals in toys at www.HealthyToys.org. Researchers tested over 1,500 popular children's toys for lead, cadmium, arsenic, PVC and other harmful chemicals in time for this year's holiday shopping season. One in three toys tested were found to contain "medium" or "high" levels of chemicals of concern.

Lead was detected in 20% of the toys tested this year. In fact, lead levels in some of the products were well above the 600 parts-per-million (ppm) federal recall standard used for lead paint, and will exceed the U.S. legal limit in February, according to the new Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) regulations. Levels of lead in many toys were significantly above the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended ceiling of 40 ppm of lead in children's products. Children's jewelry remains the most contaminated product category, maintaining its spot at the top of HealthyToys.org's "worst" list.

The CPSC regulations, which go into effect in February 2009, would make certain products on the shelf this holiday season *illegal* to sell two months from now. Experts insist that these new regulations, while a good first step, do not go nearly far enough to protect our children.

The Coalition held a toy testing event to coincide with the release at Our Children's Center daycare located at the First Baptist Church in West Hartford. **Pastor Tom Carr** noted that, "This is an issue of caring for our precious and vulnerable young ones. We feel mandated by our faith to create the safest environment we can."

"Our hope is that by empowering consumers with this information, manufacturers and lawmakers will feel the pressure to start phasing out the most harmful substances immediately, and to change the nation's laws to protect children from highly toxic chemicals," said **Sarah Uhl** of Clean Water Action, who coordinates the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT.

Local lawmakers concurred.

“Last year Connecticut became one of the first states to phase out lead and asbestos in children’s products, but we still need to address other toxic hazards like bisphenol A and brominated flame retardants,” said **State Representative Beth Bye**, D, West Hartford. “Despite the tough economic times, we need to prioritize new policies that protect children from toxic chemicals.”

“Ultimately, we need a comprehensive approach to phase out hazardous chemicals when safer alternatives are available,” added **State Representative David McCluskey**, D, West Hartford.

In addition to allowing parents to search by product name, brand, or toy type to see if certain toys have toxic chemicals, the newly-redesigned site also allows visitors to create a personalized holiday wish list that can be sent to family and friends, and a blog-friendly widget to quickly search the toy ratings.

Researchers tested for chemicals that have been associated with reproductive problems, developmental and learning disabilities, hormone problems and cancer; and for those that have been identified by regulatory agencies as problematic. Babies and young children are the most vulnerable populations because their brains and bodies are still developing, and because they frequently put toys into their mouths. The testing was conducted with a screening technology – the portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) analyzer – that identifies the elemental composition of materials on or near the surface of products.

Highlights from the HealthyToys.org 2008 findings:

- **Lead is Still in Toys** – HealthyToys.org found lead in 20% of all the products tested this year, including 54 products (3.5%) that exceed the current 600 ppm recall threshold for lead-based paint, and the soon-to-be national standard for all children’s products. When children are exposed to lead, the developmental and nervous system consequences can be irreversible. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended a level of 40 parts per million (ppm) of lead as the maximum that should be allowed in children's products.
- **It’s Not Just China** – HealthyToys.org has *not* found a consistent correlation between the country of manufacture and the presence of toxic chemicals in toys. 21% of toys from China and 16% of those from all other countries had detectable levels of lead in 2008. 17 toys manufactured in the U.S. were sampled and 35% of those had detectable levels of lead. Two toys had levels above 600 ppm. Among the highest lead levels detected in HealthyToys.org (190,943 ppm) was in a Halloween Pumpkin Pin made in the USA.
- **It’s Not Just Lead** – HealthyToys.org found a significant number of toys containing cadmium, mercury, arsenic, and bromine. 2.9% (45 products) had bromine at concentrations of 1,000 ppm or higher. This indicates the likely use of brominated flame retardants -- chemicals that may pose hazards to children’s health. Other toxic chemicals found in toys include arsenic, cadmium, and mercury. Arsenic was detected at levels greater than 100 ppm in 22 or 1.4% of products; 289 (18.9%) of products contained detectable levels of arsenic. Cadmium was found above 100ppm in 30 (1.9%) of products; 38 (2.4%) of products contained detectable levels of cadmium. Mercury was found above 100 ppm in 14 (1%) of products; 62 (4.2%) of products contained detectable levels of mercury.
- **Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC / Vinyl)** – HealthyToys.org identified products made with PVC plastic by measuring their chlorine content. PVC is a problematic plastic because it creates major environmental health hazards in its manufacture and disposal and may contain additives, including phthalates, that

may pose hazards. 27% of toys (excluding jewelry) tested this year by HealthyToys.org were made with PVC.

- **Jewelry** – Jewelry remains the most contaminated product category tested. Children's jewelry is five-times more likely to contain lead above 600 ppm than other products. 15% of jewelry samples (compared to 3% of other products) had lead levels above 600 ppm. Overall, jewelry is twice as likely to contain *detectable* levels of lead as other products. Numerous Hannah Montana brand jewelry items tested high for lead. HealthyToys.org recommends that consumers avoid low cost children's jewelry.
- **The Good News** – The good news is that 62% (954) of the products tested contain LOW levels of chemicals of concern, and 21% (324) of all products contain NO chemicals of concern. These products look and feel no different than other children's products on the shelf. These findings show that manufacturers *can* and *should* make toys free of unnecessary toxic chemicals.

HealthyToys.org provides electronic messages visitors can send to urge federal and state government and toy manufacturers to phase out toxic chemicals from toys immediately and reform our laws to protect children.

With millions of toys on the market, HealthyToys.org could not test them all. However, visitors to the website can nominate other products to be tested. The most commonly requested items will be tested each week leading up to the holidays.

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***** ATTENTION JOURNALISTS: B-Roll, hi-resolution photos and worst toy lists are available at <http://www.HealthyToys.org/press.resources.php> To arrange one-on-one interviews with experts please call Sarah Uhl at 860-232-6232 or Shayna Samuels at 718-541-4785. A su solicitud, este informe de prensa esta disponible en español. El B-roll incluye a entrevistas en español.*****

HealthyToys.org is a project of the Ecology Center – a Michigan-based nonprofit environmental organization that works at the local, state, and national levels for clean production, healthy communities, environmental justice, and a sustainable future.