

HEALTH

PIRG releases toy report

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Most toys are safe, but there's room for improvement, according to a national watchdog group.

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group recently announced the results of its 1997 "Trouble in Toyland," which rates toy safety. The group surveys hundreds of toys annually to ensure they meet the standards of 1994 Child Safety Protection Act, which increased the sizes of balls and small parts which might put children at risk for choking. The group found 18 toys that didn't pass muster.

While the number of deaths caused by faulty or dangerous toys have declined this year, the group says more can be done.

"Children are still needlessly choking to death on toys, especially balloons and balloon parts and dangerous toys can still be found on toy shelves," said K.T. Lawson, campaign director of PIRG's North Carolina chapter. "But, we have good news as well. Our 12th national survey of toy

stores finds the number of toy hazards appears to be declining and the vast majority of toys finally include tough new choke hazard warning on small part, balls, marbles and balloons that will help prevent future deaths."

According to Lawson, 147 children have died of accidents caused by toys over the last six years.

PIRG found at least nine toys violated the Consumer Product Safety Commission's small parts standards and small ball regulations, while several other toys passed the standards but still could be harmful.

"While most manufacturers should be commended for complying with the new law, parents should not assume that all toys on store shelves this holiday shopping season are safe or adequately labeled," Lawson said. "We believe that all manufacturers and distributors should add warning stickers to old toy packages printed before the law took effect."

Here's a partial list of PIRG's

findings:

- 101 Dalmations; various. Small fuzzy dogs with dish/tub accessories that are small and fit in the choke tube.

- Arthur Toys - Arthur's Mom/Baby Kate with duck and Dressed for School Arthur with lunch box.

All toys are labeled for age 3 and over, but the ones listed above have small parts that present a choking hazard. The toys have become popular because they are linked with a Nickelodeon TV show.

- Bolt N Nut

Big plastic screw and nut sets with bolts that fit in choke tube.

- Bottle Magic

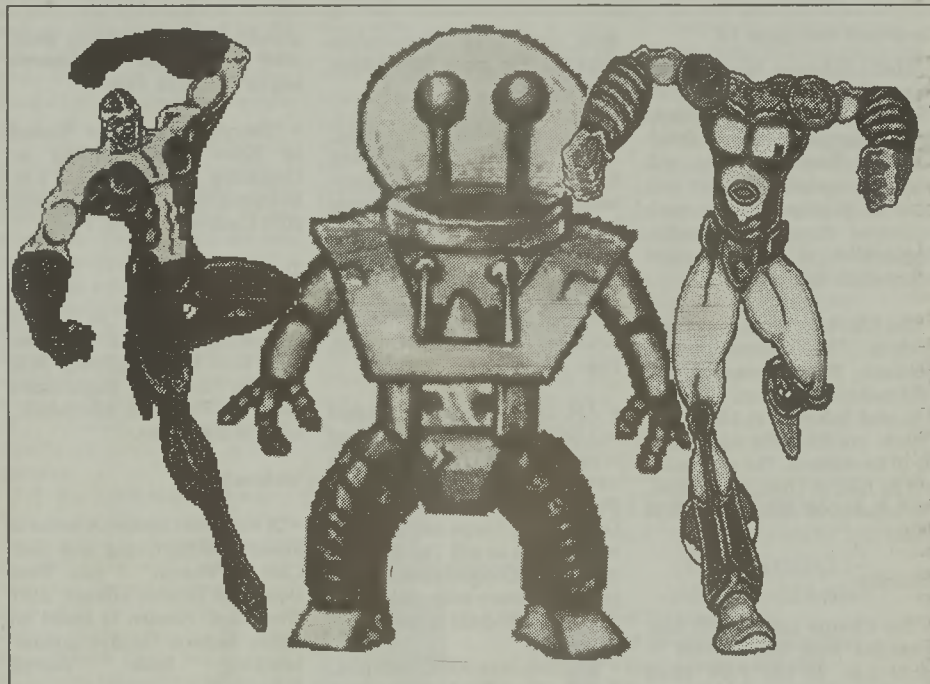
Doll bottles with disappearing milk and juice, the small, hard plastic bottle nipples come off easily.

- Eraser Helicopter

Tail comes out and is a small part.

- Madeline Doll

Eight inch doll wearing a blue coat is based on the Madeline



book series. The small shoes come off easily.

- Press N Go Tank

Driver's head comes off easily and is a small part.

- Pounding Drum

Product has small parts and is mislabeled.

- Tub Squirts

Fails small ball test.

- First, second third birthday balloons

Packaging is properly labeled but PIRG recommends balloons not be given to children under the age of eight.

- String Along Beads

Presents choking hazard.

Family finds salvation in foundation that helps needy finance transplants

By Avonie Brown
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WHEATON, Md. - Andrew Greene beams with the pride of a father who delights in the accomplishments of his children.

On the surface Clinton, 17 and Melinda, 15 are typical teenagers - preoccupied with music, sports, television, the computer and the telephone.

But the situation is anything but typical in the Greene household. In late spring of 1996, Melinda began complaining that she couldn't sleep properly. "I attributed that to the fact that she was young, active, energetic, involved in all kinds of activities with her friends," Greene explained. "I thought she was plain tired so I didn't give it much weight." He remained unconcerned until he received a call from her school that there was a medical emergency.

The family's medical odyssey took them to Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Four days after admission Melinda suffered a stroke, losing much of the use of her right side. By June 1996 she was diagnosed with Dilated Cardio-Myopathy - the left side of her heart is dilated and the walls are thinner than they should be.

Dr. Eric Quivers, transplant cardiologist at Children's Hospital, said doctors are unsure how long Melinda had the condition. "Transplant is the best option.

You can choose not to do anything or you can choose to treat it medically but the heart typically will continue to deteriorate," he explained. "But individuals typically die within two years, however there is a 80 percent survival rate five years after surgery."

She was transferred to the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore where she spent six weeks rehabilitating her right side. On the day of her scheduled discharge she suffered a cardiac arrest and her heart stopped for 12 minutes. Doctors were able to revive Melinda but the stroke and the cardiac arrest did do some damage. She suffers from short term memory loss, her speech is slightly slurred, she does not have use of her right hand and she has a limp.

By October, with an auto implantable cardioverter/defibrillator, an electrical device used to restore normal heartbeat by applying a mild electric shock, she was back in school, had learned to write with her left hand and was making the honor roll.

Even though the heart of a 70 year-old faintly beats inside this 15-year-old, she has not allowed it to stop her. She fixes her own meals, takes showers by herself and dresses herself. She refuses help from her father and brother.

But despite her bravado, the situation has also taken its toll.

"I'm scared," she said. "It's hard to see my family going through

this."

Greene says the most difficult thing he has to deal with is fear.

"My hope is that I get rid of the fear," he said. "If the fear of her heart failing can be removed, then that's enough for me."

Melinda is one of three children awaiting heart transplants at Children's Hospital. All are African American.

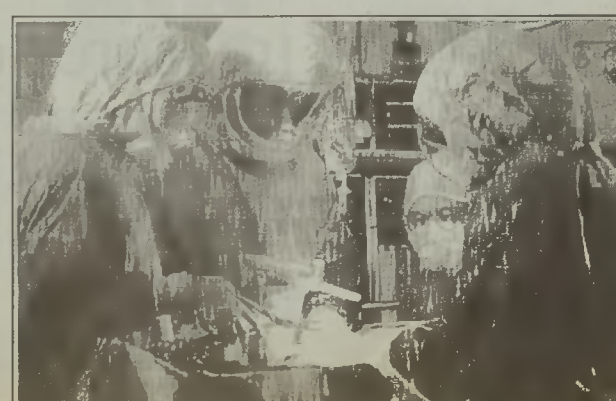
The typical wait is approximately one year.

Until recently a new heart seemed like a remote possibility as the cost of health care and lifestyle changes has overwhelmed this single parent. Last year Melinda's bills were over \$675,000 and most of that was paid by Greene's insurance. However, the heart transplant that Melinda requires could cost as little as \$175,000 or over \$550,000, depending on her health status at the time of the operation. And that is only the beginning. After the transplant, Melinda can expect to be on medication for the rest of her life.

Hairstylist Pearl Greene, Andrew Greene's ex-wife, was talking with a client when the conversation turned to Melinda's situation. Unknown to Pearl Greene was the fact that seated in her chair was Judith Thomas, the co-director of the Larry King Cardiac Foundation. Thomas told her that LKCF, helped people

who are unable to pay for heart surgery and follow-up care, and told her to have Greene call her at the foundation.

Andrew Greene followed through and Thomas invited him to submit a letter detailing the family's medical and financial circumstance as the foundation was getting ready to choose their next grant recipient. All candidates were evaluated and after meeting with Melinda's doctors and on Thomas' recommendation, the foundation choose Melinda as its first pediatric grant recipient.



Phenomenon syndrome affects many

By Jim Shelton
NEW HAVEN REGISTER

NEW HAVEN, Conn. - By most anyone's definition, Cynthia Barker is a big success.

She runs her own company, a custom drapery shop, from her North Branford home. She has clients in Fairfield County, Westchester County and New York City. Her skills and knowledge are such that she can combine style and functionality, while conforming to the specific vision of interior designers.

Yet Barker, 56, sees herself much differently. All too often, she says, she looks in the mirror and sees a fraud.

"People will say I've done a really good job and my response is, 'No, I don't deserve what you're saying,'" Barker explains. "I will come home from meeting a client and just fall apart. I'll think, this is the time when I'm going to fall on my face. What I've done or accomplished really isn't ever enough."

Barker's situation is similar to that of many successful women from all walks of life, says New Haven psychotherapist Linda S. Barone. It's a syndrome that crosses all racial and socioeconomic lines and even has a catchy name - the Imposter Phenomenon.

"Many women who are very tal-

ented and bright think they have only fooled others into thinking they're talented," Barone says. "They attribute their achievements to everything but themselves. They're terrified of failure. Not afraid. Terrified. They will overemphasize any error or mistake."

In some cases, the Imposter Phenomenon causes near panic in women at critical moments. For example, Barone once worked with a highly successful surgeon who feared the worst every time she stepped into the operating room.

In other cases, the condition leads to nightmares, migraine headaches or psychosomatic symptoms.

"These are people who don't enjoy their own achievements," Barone says. "It sets up a cycle. They're faced with a new task, and they know this is the time they'll be found out. Then they work feverishly to get the job finished. When it's a success, they start worrying about the next task."

Joanne Ludwig of East Haven, a product manager at Southern New England Telephone, has lived that way for years.

Ludwig, 52, works through her lunch hour, stays late at the office and routinely completes her projects early. Yet when she gets a

promotion or praise, she's shocked.

"I can't even relax without feeling guilty," Ludwig says. "Sometimes I wonder, when am I ever going to feel confident and comfortable enough to enjoy myself?"

Ludwig is convinced that many women feel this way because of the way they were raised. "It's something we develop," she says. "As children, we're always trying to prove our worth."

"If society tells you you don't belong in positions of power and authority, naturally you're going to believe you don't belong there," she says.

She also says the Imposter Phenomenon remains one of the best-kept secrets in psychotherapy.

Author Pauline Clance coined the term in 1978 and later devoted a book - "The Imposter Phenomenon: Overcoming the Fear that Haunts Your Success" - to it. Since then, Barone says, little has been written on the topic. Even her professors in college hadn't heard of it when she proposed it as a research topic.

"What fascinated me was, I'd mention it to people and across the board, they'd say, 'God, I thought it was just me.' That spurred me to do the research," she says.

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