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CHECK YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING LIST TWICE FOR SAFETY

The Wisconsin Optometric Association urges parents to make smart choices and avoid eye injuries to children

MADISON, WI - The holiday season is a wonderful time of year to enjoy with friends and family and is certainly a popular time for parents across the county to purchase toys for their children. While toys and games are a great way to challenge a child's eyesight and sharpen his or her visual acuity, certain toys can pose serious dangers to children's vision and eye health.

As the holiday season approaches, the **Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA)** joins organizations across the country in recognizing December as Safe Toys and Gifts Month. The member doctors of the WOA would like to remind parents that some toys can cause serious eye injuries and urge them to be vigilant in regards to safety when purchasing their child's toys.

"It comes down to common sense," advises Dr. Jeff Sarazen, WOA President and Wausau optometrist. "Be proactive and watch for dangerous toys that could injure your children."

According to the American Optometric Association (AOA), parents should avoid purchasing toys for children that have pointed, sharp edges or pieces. Blocks are good choices for a variety of ages, as long as their corners and edges are blunted to reduce the risk of eye injury. Long-handled toys such as mops and brooms should have rounded handles. Be careful to select toys which are age-appropriate for the child. Ideally, toys like slingshots, dart guns and arrows should be avoided completely, especially with younger children in the house.

Certain toys can even promote the development of fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, including magnetic letters, stringing beads, and toy cash registers. The WOA recommends the following age-appropriate toys to stimulate visual development, improve hand-eye coordination, and demonstrate spatial relationships:

- **For children under 2 years of age** – Brightly colored mobiles, stuffed animals, activity gyms, blocks/balls, stacking toys, buckets/measuring cups, puzzles, shape sorters, and musical toys.
- **For ages 2 and over** – Child-sized household items, vacuums, rakes, lawn mowers, refrigerators, stove sets, sandboxes, riding toys, backyard gyms, and swings.

Some toys are simply not safe and may be recalled by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). For a list of toy recalls, call the CPSC's hotline at (800) 638-2772 or visit its website at www.cpsc.gov. There are many safe toys on the market today that will not only enhance your child's creativity and personality, but will also allow them to have fun and stay safe.

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Over 630 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.