



## Nominees for Living Induction in 2023

Candidates	Title	Professional Affiliation	Nominated by	Nomination History
<u><a href="#">Clark, Maxine</a></u>	Founder & CEO	Build-A-Bear Workshop	Sharon Price John, President & CEO, Build-A-Bear Workshop	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Dorfman, Alan</a></u>	President	Super Impulse	Received Multiple Nominations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bob Glaser, EVP &amp; GM, aNb Media</li> <li>▪ Jeffrey Jay Kennis, President &amp; CEO, Enchanted Moments, Inc</li> </ul>	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Eason, Yla</a></u>	Founder	Olmec Toys	Jeremy K. Saucier, Assistant VP for Interpretation and Electronic Games & Editor, American Journal of Play, The Strong National Museum of Play	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Harary, Ronnen</a></u> <u><a href="#">Rabie, Anton</a></u> <u><a href="#">Varadi, Ben</a></u>	Co-Founders	Spin Master	Tammy Smitham, VP of Communications and CSR, Spin Master	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Lockhart, Dalene</a></u>	Founder & Owner	Toy Town	Jon Lockhart, Owner, Toy Town	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Ouboter, Wim</a></u>	Founder	Micro Mobility	Jamie Rau, Director of Marketing & Business Development, Micro Kickboard	Carryover from 2022
<u><a href="#">Valenta, Rudy and Noriko</a></u>	Founders	Magna-Tiles	Rudy Tomonori Valenta, National Sales and Marketing, PlanToys, Inc.	Carryover from 2022

**CLARK, MAXINE**

Founder, CEO, Build-A-Bear Workshop

***Nominated by:***

***Sharon Price John, President and Chief Executive Officer, Build-A-Bear Workshop***

**Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

The experts said it was a fad, but the dynamic founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, Maxine Clark, defied the skeptics, reinventing both the toy and retail industries in the process. Hailed as one of the most important changes in retail in the last century by Inc. Magazine, back in 1997, Build-A-Bear was a forerunner of recognizing the importance of elevating consumer experiences well before the term retail-tainment existed.

Today, the brand enjoys over 90% aided awareness and has sold more than 200 million furry friends. In fact, the sun never sets on this global company which has generated over \$5 Billion in cumulative revenue and will be celebrating its 25th year in 2022. The Silver Anniversary marks an impressive milestone for this make-your-own plush company which is now beloved across multiple generations having facilitated countless heartfelt moments and memories for children and children at heart.

Part of Maxine's inspiration was based on her personal understanding of the comfort and importance of a teddy bear, from the memory of her own special childhood plush animal. Embracing that memory and encouraged by the young daughter of a friend, she was driven by a desire to create something where a child could make an emotional connection with a stuffed animal. This desire led to the famous and beloved Build-A-Bear process, where a furry friend is chosen, stuffed, dressed and named by their new owner. Importantly, this process also included adding a small satin heart to the plush animal during a signature "heart ceremony", bringing it to life through this unique bonding experience.

As Build-A-Bear has become an iconic brand, Maxine has also become an icon herself. She is a sought-after speaker with generous accolades and honors associated with entrepreneurship, education, retail, women's leadership and toys and it is well deserved.

However, her greatest pride and much of her recognition is linked to the philanthropic intent that she had for the company from the very beginning. It is clear that Maxine always had her heart in the right place, as she envisioned the company's core value of giving.

This led to the establishment of Build-A-Bear Foundation, where she still serves on the board in an emeritus position. Since its inception, the Foundation has donated more than \$18 million to deserving causes in support of its mission as well as over 300 thousand furry friends in the last five years alone, with the goal to add a little more heart to life to those in need. As impressive as that is, after retiring from her position as Chief Executive Bear, Maxine has continued to have a remarkable personal philanthropic impact through the Clark-Fox Family Foundation, where she currently serves as CEO.

Maxine Clark innately knew that a toy is much more than toy. She tirelessly nurtured and elevated that belief to create a global company with heart. Clearly, only a true visionary could have reimagined the classic teddy bear in a way that has had this much lasting positive impact.

#### **Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

The creation of Build-A-Bear Workshop in itself was one of the most innovative developments in the toy and retail industry reinventing a classic toy like the teddy bear into an efficient and replicable do-it-yourself process that makes a heart-filled memory - both at the same time. The idea of putting equipment and hardware into a retail space such as industrial level equipment with a stuffing machine so that kids could actively participate in the production of a classic toy or putting in computer equipment that customers used themselves - was ground-breaking. The idea to have furry friends, as Build-A-Bear plush products are known, registered into a database as they were being given their name which included a Find-A-Bear program that could reunite lost furry friends with their owners if they were ever lost or separated, fueled a contactable marketing list of millions of connected consumers.

Under Maxine's leadership, innovation has defined Build-A-Bear's history in both products and marketing campaigns. Maxine was a pioneer in combining passion and relevance with products empowering consumers to have a voice through the merchandise they purchase. Lines featuring a cause animals, in which a portion of proceeds was donated to charities, were created supporting animal welfare, children's literacy and health and wellness. Licensed relationships with popular entertainment properties, fashion brands and culturally relevant organizations were started and continue broadening appeal across ages, geographies and demographics.

Understanding that the hug of a teddy bear would lead to an emotional brand connection, Maxine started an outbound licensing program in order to expand the Build-A-Bear brand into other toy, consumer product and entertainment categories.

The appeal of Build-A-Bear led Oprah Winfrey to recreate a workshop space on the stage of her televised talk show so that she could personally demonstrate the fun of making a bear for a friend (in this case, Quincy Jones) as she recorded a custom message on the highly innovative record your voice sound chip that is put inside the finished product. And of course, the idea to bring the furry friend to life made the process into a mission with purpose when Maxine created the now iconic satin red heart that goes into every furry friend sold at Build-A-Bear that's over 200 million times and counting.

#### **Active involvement in the Committees or work of The Toy Association.**

Build-A-Bear Workshop is a member of The Toy Association and is currently represented by President and CEO Sharon Price John who is a member at large of The Toy Association Board of Directors. In addition, CFO Voin Todorovic is a member of The Toy Foundation Board of Trustees. Given Maxine's deep roots within the industry and career before turning her passion to toys and teddy bears, she focused her active involvement within the retail real estate industry. Accordingly, Maxine was a member of the board of trustees for the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) including serving as an educator through ICSC University.

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

From the first order for merchandise in 1997, with just a single store - strict attention has been made in order for Build-A-Bear products to represent high standards for quality and safety. Maxine set up processes to certify factories and pass toy safety tests complying with all standards required by all countries with stores that sell Build-A-Bear products. High-quality materials and stuffing products were chosen. Suppliers were required to be compliant with the International Council of Toy Industries (ICTI), CARE (Caring, Awareness, Responsible, Ethical) certification, or comparable designation. These programs promote ethical manufacturing, from fair labor treatment to employee health and safety, in the toy industry worldwide. The commitment to quality and ethical manufacturing has resulted in less than 0.5% of products recalled from the thousands of styles that have been created in Build-A-Bear's history. And it has paid off with consumers. Over 80% of US consumers surveyed agree that Build-A-Bear is a high-quality brand and one that they can trust.

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Maxine Clark gives tirelessly to numerous charities with both her time and financial support. Soon after Build-A-Bear Workshop was started, Maxine established Build-A-Bear Foundation infusing a sense of volunteerism and giving back into the company's culture. In fact, one of Build-A-Bear's corporate core values is GIVE. Maxine also developed a program called Huggable Heroes that celebrated young people that gave back to their communities with innovative charitable programs. Maxine and her husband, Bob Fox, launched a \$10 million pediatric cardiac intensive care unit with a sizable multi-million dollar personal gift to St. Louis Children's Hospital.

Maxine is a recent past member of the national Board of Trustees of Teach For America and is on the local St. Louis regional board, an Emeritus member of the Board of Trustees of Washington University in St. Louis, The Board of Directors and Executive Committee of Barnes Jewish Hospital and its Goldfarb School of Nursing, the Board of Directors of Beyond Housing, the national Board of PBS where she is the newly elected Vice Chair of the Board, and the local Nine Network of Public Media Board of Directors. She is also a board member of Parents As Teachers, New America and a member of the Committee of 200 from which she received the 2006 Luminary Award for Entrepreneurial Achievement.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, is widely admired and respected by leaders across multiple businesses and industries. She has received numerous awards and recognition as a testament to the tremendous impact she has had throughout her career.

Maxine was named one of the Wonder Women of Toys by Playthings magazine and Women in Toys in 2005 and was also one of the National Finalists in Retail for the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2004. In 2005, the National Association of Small Business Investment Companies made Build-A-Bear Workshop Portfolio Company of the Year; it was named one of the International Council of Shopping Centers Hottest Retailers of 2004 and the Retail Innovator of the Year for 2001 by The National Retail Federation. In 2006, Maxine was inducted into the Junior Achievement National Business Hall of Fame; in 2008, she was named one of The 25 Most Influential People

in Retailing by Chain Store Age. In 2017 Maxine was named to the Missouri Public Affairs Hall of Fame and in 2019 was given the Missourian Award for her outstanding public service to Missouri. Build-A-Bear Workshop has also been named to the FORTUNE Best Companies to Work For list for ten consecutive years as well as named to Forbes 2021 list of the best mid-size employers. Maxine is a graduate of the University of Georgia and holds an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Saint Louis University and A Doctor of Humane Letters in Education from the University of Missouri St. Louis and an Honorary Associates degree from St. Louis Community College. In 2006, she published her first book The Bear Necessities of Business: Building a Company with Heart. In addition to her seat on the Build-A-Bear Workshop Board, Maxine is a member of the Board of Directors of Footlocker, Inc. and privately held Big Dot of Happiness.

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

Over 10 billion media impressions in 2020. And in 2019. The level of coverage that the company experiences today was made possible by Maxine's vision and understanding that the public is interested in the story behind the company. In fact, a story published in a local St. Louis paper before the first store was even opened about Maxine's new concept, led to the first angel investor that would help fund the early expansion of the company. As a company that has products that are in the toy category, Maxine was the entrepreneur, business expert and passionate personality that promoted the public's awareness that a product and a store could be more and could actively contribute to making the communities where we operate better because we operate there.

**Additional Comments**

Maxine Clark started a one-of-a-kind toy company that became a beloved consumer brand that continues to positively impact the lives of millions of consumers. Maxine created an idea that was so big that it has withstood tests such as a global recession, retail apocalypse and most recently a pandemic. She created a corporate culture that remains committed to giving back as well as delivering a personal and unique experience for every guest that crosses the threshold of a store or clicks through their phone or computer to a digital site. Maxine is the visionary that believed that a toy company could have and fulfill a bigger mission not just sell toys, but actually add a little more heart to life. As the company that Maxine started in 1997 crosses into 25 years in 2022, what could be a more befitting recognition than being elected into The Toy Industry Hall of Fame?

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**DORFMAN, ALAN**  
President, Super Impulse

***Nominated by:***

***Bob Glaser, EVP & GM, aNb Media***

**Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

Alan has been working in the toy industry for 35+ years. He built the original Basic Fun toy company. He created an entirely new category in the toy business, miniatures. Took popular well known products and miniaturized them but they still work and perform some functions of the original product. Started with the Super Soaker and went from there. Solf Basic Fun, started another toy company, Super Impulse and has carried on delivering great innovative product to consumers.

**Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

First one to miniaturize popular products yet still provide function.

**Active involvement in the Committees or work of The Toy Association.**

N/A

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

Only works with ICTI certified factories.

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Don't know.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

The highest. Well respected member of the toy/licensing industry.

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

Yes

**Additional comments**

Alan built an entirely new category of products for the consumer to enjoy. His companies have brought endless enjoyment to toy consumers and fans of the licensed products he has manufactured. Alan deserves to be recognized by the industry he has devoted his life's work to.

***Nominated by:***

***Jeffrey Jay Kennis, President/CEO, Enchanted Moments, Inc***

**Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

Mr. Dorfman has been involved in the toy industry for the better part of his adult life. Alan, as principal owner of BASIC FUN, created an entirely new category of "REALLY WORKS MINIATURE KEY CHAINS!" Mr. Dorfman was then responsible for having BASIC FUN be the exclusive licensee for almost every well known toy company in the world such as: HASBRO, MATTEL, DISNEY, LEGO, RUBIX, OHIO ART, NICKELODEON, POKEMON, and VIACOM.

After selling BASIC FUN to an investment company, Alan then after a contractual hiatus, started another company named SUPER IMPULSE. Once again, Mr. Dorfman created yet another entirely new category of "WORLD'S SMALLEST TOYS!" Within that brand new category, and with all the major toy companies on board, "TINY ARCADES" was born. These fully functional micro miniature well known arcade games such as ORIGINAL ATARI, PAC-MAN, TETRIS, SPACE INVADERS to name but a few were major retail successes in all retail and online channels.

To this impressive product line up WORLD'S SMALLEST TALKING KEYCHAINS, WORLD'S COOLEST EVER PRODUCTS, MICRO FIGURES AND WACKY PAKS MINI'S were added. Alan has been responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in retail sales, and has brought much needed smiles to people of all ages. All in a very humble manner which is affordable, and in an under the radar type of approach.

**Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

Please see the above.

**Active involvement in the Committees or work of The Toy Association.**

Although not an 'official' member of the board, and/or committees Alan has been a 30 year supporter of the Toy Association. Additionally, he has been a trusted and sought out advisor to past and present board and committee members.

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

Alan, through both BASIC FUN and SUPER IMPULSE has been part of ethical manufacturing standards from the beginning. In fact, BASIC FUN was one of the first in the toy industry to engage in that very important initiative. As a Hasbro licensee of their brands, BASIC FUN voluntarily adopted those requirements, before ICTI compliance was a requirement, to be in step with Hasbro, and then all other key manufacturers.

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Alan, personally and on the company level has been very involved with JDRF, Cystic Fibroses, and has participated in every Toy Association charity drive with significant product donations, as well as donating BASIC FUN and SUPER IMPULSES booth after NY Toy Fair.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

Mr. Dorfman has earned the respect of the entire toy community: Manufacturers, inventors, sales representative organizations, and trade associations (is a past member of the board of the Licensing Association).

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

Alan has been an active supporter of all trade publications and social media content. BASIC FUN and SUPER IMPULSE has brought many consumers into the toy world, as it were, that have otherwise not been aware of the impact toys have made on the world. Additionally, Alan has almost single handily revived a 'retro' interest in toys that has been emulated by many manufacturers in the past decade. More significantly, Mr. Dorfman has increased the age barrier wherein adults are now proud purchasers of in the past BASIC FUN, and presently SUPER IMPULSE products bringing added recognition to the toy industry in general.

#### **Additional Comments**

You know, being down to earth here, we always think of the 'well-known' names when it comes to the Toy Industry Hall of Fame, and rightfully so, however there are those, such as Alan who have a love of toys that is both infectious and to an extent spiritual. That, in this writers and nominators opinion, is worthy of serious consideration.

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**EASON, YLA**  
Founder, Olmec Toys

#### ***Nominated by:***

***Jeremy K. Saucier, Assistant VP for Interpretation and Electronic Games & Editor, American Journal of Play, The Strong National Museum of Play***

#### **Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

Spurred by a comment her three-year-old son made and a lack of racial and ethnic diversity in children's toys, in 1985, Yla Eason founded the trailblazing multicultural toy company Olmec Toys. The company followed in the footsteps of earlier black-owned toy and doll companies such as the National Negro Doll Company and Shindana Toys, producing playthings primarily for children from marginalized communities. A former journalist and Harvard MBA, Eason knew little about the toy industry. But through shire grit she developed and sold Sun-Man, a positive black superhero action figure whose indestructible magical melanin skin gave the character super strength. Eason understood the power of play and the power of children being able to see themselves reflected in their playthings. Eason's toys allowed many young black children and other children from marginalized communities to see themselves in their toys and to imagine themselves in fantastic play worlds.

#### **Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

Put simply, Eason is one of the pioneers of the multicultural toy market. In the middle 1980s through the 1990s, Eason developed an extraordinarily diverse line of toys, including Sun-Man and the Sun People, Butterfly Woman, and Bronze Bombers action figures; Imani fashion dolls; Hip Hop Kids dolls; Kids of Color infant line (with Playskool/Hasbro); Black by Design memory matching game; and the Our Powerful Past Martin Luther King Jr. And Malcolm X historical figures.

Olmec's products were not simply black versions of white toys. Eason worked diligently with artists and manufacturers to try to design, sculpt, and color dolls and figures that authentically represented the communities she was selling to.



Eason also broke new ground in developing a market research program aimed at identifying and selling products to underrepresented communities. She found that a large and growing percentage of children were Black or Latinx, but they were not being specifically targeted with playthings.

**Active involvement in the committees or work of the toy association.**

N/A

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

N/A

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

As the black female founder of a company targeting underrepresented communities, Eason has always combined entrepreneurship with a broader social vision. In her present career as an educator, she continues this kind of work. For example, as a lecturer at Medgar Evers College in 2009, she and a colleague organized and implemented a grant-funded project that provided students with the opportunity to help the Harlem Dowling West Side Center for Children and Family Services develop a marketing and communications strategy. Founded in 1836, the center is the first U.S. charitable organization dedicated to children of color.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

She has earned numerous awards for her work, including an honorary doctorate of laws from Bloomfield College in 1994 and the Business Enterprise Trust Award in 1996. In presenting the award, keynote speaker President Bill Clinton said: "Eason's success has helped change the entire toy industry. . . And have helped promote positive images of beauty and self-worth for countless minority children." In 2020, she received the Alice and the Alice H. Parker Women Leaders in Innovation Award from the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Eason is currently assistant professor of professional practice at Rutgers University, where she teaches business communication and marketing.

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

N/A

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**HARARY, RONNEN**  
**RABIE, ANTON**  
**VARADI, BEN**  
Co-Founders, Spin Master

***Nominated by:***

***Tammy Smitham, VP Communications and CSR, Spin Master***

Ronnen Harary, Anton Rabie and Ben Varadi are the Co-Founders of leading global children's entertainment company, Spin Master. Since its inception in 1994, they have led and established Spin Master's presence in the toy, game, entertainment franchise and digital toy space.

Fresh out of university, the nascent entrepreneurs' first product was the Earth Buddy, funded with their own \$10,000 investment. This initial success served as the springboard for Spin Master's entry into the toy business. Since then, the three have become a name stay in the industry, successfully bringing over 2,700 toys to market, resulting in over 110 Toy of the Year nominations.

Ronnen's expertise and passion for children's entertainment has led to the creation of award-winning programming and global franchises including Bakugan and preschool powerhouse PAW Patrol, which has touched the lives of children in more than 160 countries. As a leader of Spin Master's entertainment division, Ronnen plays an integral role in developing new entertainment properties such as Abby Hatcher and the soon to launch, Mighty Express. Ronnen is passionate about forming partnerships and building relationships with domestic and international broadcasters to bring the magic of Spin Master to kids around the world. His latest venture includes bringing the famed PAW Patrol series to the big screen in 2021.

Anton's fearless entrepreneurial mindset was instrumental in the early years of Spin Master, helping to create a culture of risk-taking and acceptance of failure. Described as an "energy force" by his colleagues, Anton is passionate about people, promoting the company's culture and inspiring employees. In recent years, Anton has spearheaded the company's global expansion with the establishment of international offices in more than 20 countries. He plays a foundational role in Spin Master acquisitions, with more than 20 completed to date, including Tech Deck, Cardinal, GUND and most recently Orbeez.

From the beginning, Ben has played an active role in product design and development with a keen instinct for ideas. An early demonstration of Ben's intuition for sensing the next successful product, Spin Master purchased novelty item Catch-A-Bubble on the spot in a Hong Kong hotel room, signing the back of an envelope. The product was launched at lightning speed at the annual New York Toy Fair, where it sold a remarkable 4 million orders and won the 2003 TOTY Outdoor Toy of the Year Award. To this day, Ben's creative approach and out-of-the-box brainstorming sessions remain influential to Spin Master's product selection and development process.

The founders each have a strong sense of social responsibility and are passionate about giving back to enrich the lives of children. In 2013, they founded the Toy Movement, a global initiative that provides toys to children in need, giving them the opportunity to experience the joy of play. Since its inception, Spin Master has led missions to over 12 countries, including Kenya, Iraq, Israel, Mexico and South Africa, delivering more than 450,000 toys to disadvantaged or displaced children. Together, the partners have created and fostered Spin Master's DNA, focused on innovation, meticulous attention to detail and most importantly delivering the joy of play to children and families.

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**LOCKHART, DALENE**

Founder and Owner, Toy Town

***Nominated by:***

***Jon Lockhart, Owner, Toy Town***

**Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

Dalene started toy town in 1984 in casper, wy in order to provide child powered and child activated toys for the community. Being an oil and gas boom/bust town, she has grown her business and created a long lasting footprint in the downtown of her small town. While raising two young boys without any prior business experience, dalene has created a business that is loved by multiple generations.

**Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

N/a

**Active involvement in the committees or work of the toy association.**

N/a

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

N/a

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Dalene donated to many causes locally and nationally. Being the staple toy store in town, she is always ready and able to help. She also employs mentally handicapped individuals to come and help at the store through local organizations.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

Dalene is the most honest woman you will meet. She grew up on a cattle ranch where hard work and a hand shake are what your character is built on. She carries this over to her business where she is admired my her community and colleagues.

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

Dalene has always had a philosophy about how play is the most important thing for children as well as adults. She carefully brings in products that are fun but also enhance the mind.

#### **Additional comments**

Dalene lockhart is an incredible woman. To start a business from scratch and thrive for more than 35 years is incredible. She is the toy lady who knows almost every child by name (and now those children are parents themselves). I know this award is for individuals who stand out nationally/globally but i thought some recognition to a local retailer who defied all the odds would be a great honor!

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#### **OUBOTER, WIM**

Founder, Micro Mobility

#### ***Nominated by:***

***Jamie Rau, Director of Marketing & Business Development, Micro Kickboard***

#### **Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

In 1999, Wim Ouboter founded Micro Mobility with the goal of creating quality scooters for children and adults. He wanted to make them comfortable to ride and convenient to use for short 'micro journeys that were too far to walk and too near for a car'. Recognizing the potential of scooters to provide personal transport that could be fuel-free and convenient to use, Wim's philosophy was to create designs that would be exceptionally smooth-gliding and comfortable to ride. They would need to be strong enough to hold an adult, yet lightweight and foldable to carry inside at the rider's destination. Wim's first design later became the first Razor scooter.

Although his first kickboard scooter was designed for adults (and is still popular today for its skateboard-style ride), Wim quickly recognized the kickboard style scooter, with its two front wheels and lean-to steering, had massive appeal to children and was significantly more stable than traditional children's scooters. He created the Mini Micro in 2002, using Swiss design, the best available materials and strong construction. Its smooth glide and exceptional quality was quickly recognized, becoming popular around the world. Parents everywhere saw that the Mini was a great form of exercise, a mode of transport, and kids loved it, all while helping them develop balance, coordination, and confidence in children.

Wim's design was groundbreaking in 2 important ways:

1) In creating the Mini, Wim chose to apply a kickboard design, creating a significantly more stable scooter for young children. Previously used only for Adults, the kickboard design features a steering style known as 'Lean-to-Steer' with 2 Polyurethane wheels in front. The kickboard design offers greater stability, a smoother ride and a more fun turning style. It has since become the standard design for children's scooters.

2) The Mini features an unsurpassed level of quality rarely seen in products for young children. Quality materials and careful design goes into every part, translating to an incredibly smooth, stable, child-friendly ride, with exceptional durability. Designed with modular construction, every part is replaceable, so the Mini lasts virtually forever.

By adding a level of quality not seen before, Wim effectively elevated scooters from toys to transport. Designed for ages 2 to 5, the Mini lasts for years, and can be passed down from sibling to sibling. All Mini parts are replaceable so they last almost literally forever. The Mini soon became a worldwide phenomenon, enjoying free press as seemingly every celebrity with young children took the Mini out and about. Loved by virtually all children, the Mini also received an Oppenheim Portfolio Snap award for its adaptability to children with challenges. Micro has received many calls and letters from parents whose children were able to join the neighborhood kids for the first time, by riding the Mini.

A few years later, Micro developed the next size up, the Maxi, for ages 5 to 12. It's an even more durable kickboard style scooter, so tough we say it's 'indestructible' - perfect for the age group it was designed for. Super lightweight yet incredibly strong, smooth-gliding, and stylish, it is everything a child would want in a scooter.

**Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

In the 20 years since the launch of his first scooter, Wim's focus has been on creating a range of high quality scooters and other innovative personal transport products. To date he has launched 87 new products, including a wide variety of 2- and 3-wheel scooters for children and adults, ride-on luggage for children and adults, and the Microlino, an electric bubble car.

**Active involvement in the Committees or work of The Toy Association.**

Micro Kickboard has enjoyed 8 years of membership with The Toy Association.

**Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

Wim's latest innovation comes at a time when the toy industry must look to more eco-friendly processes. The Eco-Collection, launched in 2020, offers children's scooters created from recycled materials, specifically waste from the commercial fishing industry. The project is one of several pro-environmental efforts being pursued by Micro Mobility headquarters in Switzerland. In additional effort to support sustainability, Micro Mobility recently joined 1% for the Planet, pledging 1% of annual sales from its Eco-Collection to non-profit organizations committed to protecting the planet.

**Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Wim has a long history of charity and service, most recently to children's hospitals and refugee organizations. He recently donated 100 scooters to medical staff in order to tend to hospital patients faster.

**An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

Wim Ouboter continues to be a visionary, innovator and leader in groundbreaking, quality, sustainable design for all ages. He is well-respected globally for his work!

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

In retrospect, Wim's visionary approach was evident as far back as 1999 when he named his company Micro Mobility. He promoted the idea of a 'micro-distance', and early on discussed the concept of 'Last Mile' distances,

common terms now used in describing today's transport revolution. A Google search for Wim's term 'micro mobility' today yields 152 million results.

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## **VALENTA, RUDY AND NORIKO**

Founders, Magna-Tiles

### ***Nominated by:***

***Rudy Tomonori Valenta, National Sales and Marketing, PlanToys, Inc.***

### **Long experience and record of accomplishment in the industry.**

Rudy and Noriko have been part of the Toy Industry for over 50 years combined. They are who I believe inventors and entrepreneurs look up to today and hope to achieve the same success. From the early years in 1997, they had a booth at New York Toy Fair with a two-person team, they visited local stores and schools to pitch Magna-Tiles and build a foundation of word of mouth. With no outside investors and hard work, they grew Magna-Tiles into a global brand and paved the way for the Magnetic Construction category that did not exist before them. The brand and product Magna-Tiles is synonymous for magnetic construction toys and you now see everyone from small up-and-comers to the global toy manufacturers creating their version of Magna-Tiles for children around the world.

### **Innovative product, marketing introductions or significant process improvements.**

Magna-Tiles

### **Active involvement in the Committees or work of The Toy Association.**

N/A

### **Demonstrated commitment to ethical manufacturing practices.**

Magna-Tiles and Valtech have always been committed to ethical manufacturing and safe practices. They only work with facilities that are transparent with operations and exceed safety and work standards for their employees.

### **Charitable efforts benefiting children and/or children's causes.**

Magna-Tiles has partnerships with many organizations including Sesame Street and Eric Carle to combine play and learning to teach children the importance of foundational changes one can make to benefit the whole world, such as recycling.

### **An unimpeachable record of integrity and respect in the industry.**

Since 1997, Rudy and Noriko have supported The Toy Association with attendance at NY Toy Fair, building connections and products that fit both national chains and small local toy stores that are so crucial to our industry. Outside of the TA, they have been members of global and national toy associations such as ASTRA and NAEYC.

**Promoting the public's awareness of the toy industry as a significant and responsible member of the business community.**

From the early years to today, Rudy and Noriko have always taught the importance of play and shared how important the toy industry is for children and future generations. Through the many ups and downs of growing a business, Magna-Tiles has always supported the toy business community from PR firms, small boutiques, sales rep agencies, award companies, to national retailers and conventions around the world. You can see from their many collaborations from small manufacturers to Ravensburger that they are respected for their contributions to the industry.

**Additional Comments**

I don't think you can find a parent of a 3-year-old today that does not know what Magna-Tiles are or have magnetic construction toys in their home. The contributions to the Toy Industry speak for themselves as they grew a family company from their home garage going from store to store, school to school in the early days to now having a developed a global brand that is bringing STEM toys to every home and classroom. They are a true testament to what can be accomplished for future and current members of the toy industry with hard work and dedication.

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