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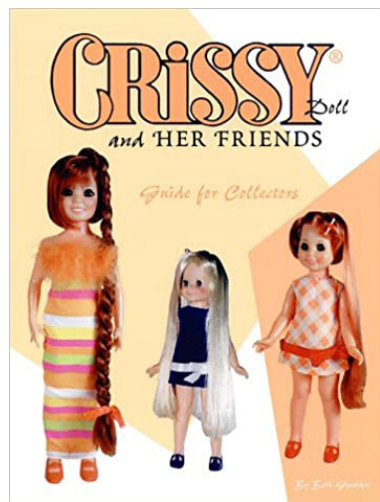
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Celebration Edition

Midwest Direct's Favorite Christmas Toys

If there is one thing for certain that most people remember from their childhood, it's that one toy they received for Christmas that they will never forget. This year, we decided to send out a survey to the people here at Midwest Direct to find out their favorite toys they received for Christmas as a child. Here are a few fun facts about those toys:



- The first toy lightsaber, The Force Beam, was essentially a red flashlight with a translucent plastic tube sticking out and made its debut in 1977. Companies such as Hasbro continued to release new lightsabers throughout the years and even released a build-your-own lightsaber in 2005. (A lightsaber was the favorite toy submitted by Will Ulrich, Strategic Account Manager.)

- The famous 70's toy, the Crissy Doll was a favorite among young girls since its hair could "grow" with a turn of a dial. However, most did not know that Crissy was not the only hair-growing doll made by the Ideal Toy Company. She was later joined by other adjustable-hair dolls named Tressy, Kerry, Velvet, Cinnamon, and Tara. (A Crissy Doll was the favorite toy submitted by Michelle Toivonen, Director of Strategic Marketing.)

- Surprisingly, the first ice skates ever created were not what they are today. They were originally created by attaching leather straps to leg bones of a horse, ox, or deer. The skater would use a pole with a sharp metal spike to push them forward on the ice. Modern ice skates were not invented until 1865. (Ice skates were the favorite toy submitted by John Nousek, Controller.)

- As the TechDeck Fingerboards grew in popularity, California entrepreneur, Carlton Calvin, began making his own brand of fingerboards. This decision ultimately led to the creation of the Razor Scooter which was introduced to California in the late 1990s after becoming popular in Japan. (A Razor Scooter was the favorite toy submitted by Dana Fowler, Internal Marketing Coordinator.)

- Although the 1972 Barbie Beach Bus was certainly at the top of a young girl's Christmas list, it was only the beginning when it came to Barbie vehicles. After the Barbie Beach Bus came Barbie Corvette, Barbie Ferrari, and even Barbie Mercedes. These are just the cars! There are over 50 Barbie vehicles. (A Barbie Beach Bus was the favorite toy submitted by Karla Hodges, Customer Service Representative.)



Team Treats



INSTANT POT BEEF STROGANOFF

Although the holidays are over, the winter season in Ohio has a ways to go. This recipe for Instant Pot Beef Stroganoff, by Allrecipes, is the perfect comfort food for the winter season.

INGREDIENTS:

- ½ onion, diced
- Salt and ground pepper
- 2lbs beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 3 cups mushrooms, chopped
- 2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 (16oz) package egg noodles
- ¾ cup sour cream (or to taste)

DIRECTIONS:

1. Saute onion with salt and pepper.
2. Season beef with salt and pepper and add to the pan, browning evenly. Add onions and beef into instant pot. Add garlic and thyme; cook until fragrant then pour in soy sauce.
3. Stir in mushrooms, flour, chicken broth, and season with salt.
4. Close and lock the lid. Set timer for 10 minutes and set to high pressure according to manufacturer's instructions.
5. Release pressure carefully using the quick-release method. Open the pressure cooker and stir in cooked egg noodles and sour cream. Serve.

Find the recipe here: <https://tinyurl.com/yag8tf37>

Postage - You Have More Control Than You Think

Postage can seem extremely complicated at times, but you have more control than you think. There are many factors that come into play when it comes to postage and where your mailpiece falls. There are a few easy things to keep in mind that will help you to better understand and control your postage.

- Choose the right Mail Service Provider (MSP). Many people face unclear fees, complicated contracts, and shifting priorities with their mail service provider. Your MSP should always be upfront with any fees your mailings may incur and work with you to resolve any problems.



- Comingle your mail. Commingling is a process by which mailings from more than one company are combined to meet USPS discount minimums for quantity for mailings to targeted neighborhoods. When your mail is mixed with mail with other organizations (commingled before mailing), you achieve greater USPS discounts.
- Pay attention to data hygiene. Data hygiene is a fancy term for ensuring clean, accurate data. Clean data is almost error-free; but dirty data contains duplicate records, outdated or incomplete records, and records that didn't mesh well when imported together from different systems.
- Pay attention to the minimum mailing dimensions. Although the visual design of a mailpiece is important, the most fundamental part of any mailing is the technical design of the mailpiece itself. Properly designed mailpieces make it through machinery, qualify for discounts, actually get delivered, and please the Post Office.

Postage can be stressful and expensive but you have more control of it than you think. With the right team behind you, you can navigate through options to reduce postage costs and get the best ROI on your mailing. At Midwest Direct, we have specialists that can help you with commingling, data hygiene, mailpiece design, mailing regulations, and save you vast amounts of time and money. Contact us now to get started!



Mandy's MOTIVATIONAL MOMENT

Mandy picked a great quote to remember while starting your New Year's resolutions this year - *"The Best Way To Get Started Is To Quit Talking And Begin Doing."* - Walt Disney

THE BEST OF MIDWEST DIRECT IN 2020

From The Blog



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21:32

35 & 36: The Power of a Partnership Data Review; Part 1 & 2

In episodes 35 & 36, we interviewed Jean DePalma, Director of CTRAC Direct, and Gary Seitz, VP of CTRAC Direct, on the power of a data audit, offered to clients of Midwest Direct. In that interview, Jean covered how these partnership reviews can help inform and accelerate your marketing plans. In a previous podcast, she gave examples of a few partnership reviews. She decided to save this case study as it encompasses one of CTRAC Direct's most extensive partnerships reviews and is well-deserving of its own podcast. We sat down with Gary Seitz, VP of CTRAC Direct, and Jean DePalma, Director of CTRAC Direct, to discuss the findings from this audit, how the company benefited, and how a partnership review can help you with analysis to inform and accelerate growth.

Listen to this episode of the Plus Podcast with Gary Seitz and Jean DePalma at mw-direct.com/pluspod35 to learn how our team can help you interpret your data and advise you on actionable insights for your next marketing effort.

Throughout the year 2020, the Midwest Direct marketing department worked hard to bring you relevant and timely content. Try as we may, that also means the “unexpected” can happen along the way. Recording our YouTube videos and The Plus Podcast, publishing blogs on direct marketing, mailing services and client literature, interviewing industry thought leaders and clients with stories to tell is challenging -- especially in a busy office. Heck, even when we sneak off to a “quiet” place, it doesn't always go as planned. Our safe spaces are packed full of unpredictable sound, and pet appearances. Wherever we record or whoever we record with, we generate a lot of fun. So, for our year end wrap up, we thought we'd share a little of that fun with you. Watch our bloopers video on our YouTube Channel or at mw-direct.com/bloopers to find out what ended up on the cutting room floor at the Midwest Direct “production department”.



We're not great actors, but we are great in all things data, mail and marketing. Contact us today to get started with a member of our team. For more fun content check out other videos on our YouTube Channel and subscribe to The Plus Podcast!



Ugly Holiday Mask Contest

The year 2020 brought many challenges and cancelled many festivities this holiday season. Although we were not able to celebrate the holidays as we usually do, we still wanted to show our holiday spirit! Therefore, we came up with a COVID safe way to “celebrate” the holiday season this year at Midwest Direct - an “ugly” mask contest! Our employees participated in a contest where they decorated a mask and wore it to the office. Our categories were “most ugly,” “most festive,” and “most creative” and the winner's of those categories received a prize! Check out some of the masks below!



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Inside This Edition...

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Discover A New Chapter of The Plus Podcast

Read about it on mw-direct.com/blog

Tell us what you think. Email your comments and give us your feedback on what you enjoy about Direct Hit!



Questions or comments?
Email us at marketing@mw-direct.com.