

## Community

# Toy talk

From plush to puppets, Cotswold's Toys & Co. specializes in 'back-to-basics' toys



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Ask Sherry Stone what to give the children on your holiday gift list this year, and she'll have plenty of suggestions – creative, unique toy suggestions, that is.

As the manager of Toys & Co., a 9,000-square-foot tot haven at 242 S. Sharon Amity Road, Stone has the inside scoop on all things playtime.

Toys & Co., which also has stores in Greensboro and Myrtle Beach, S.C., has been in business for more than 30 years. Since opening an outpost in the bustling Cotswold Village Shops in 2007, it's grown its legion of devoted fans, who hail not only from the Queen City but also Huntersville, Union County and even neighboring states.

You won't find many toys that need batteries here, Stone said. But you will find family-friendly options that children will treasure and parents will appreciate for their focus on safety and education.

Toys & Co. doesn't stock the typical "hot toys," such as video games and play consoles, Stone said. Instead, it specializes in back-to-basics toys and games that inspire creativity and imagination.

Known for its welcoming atmosphere – complete with myriad play stations and a play-first policy that allows children hands-on time with various toys – the store has become a year-round gathering place for families. "That's what we encourage," Stone said.

### Green, sustainable toys

An increasingly popular line of toys is made by PlanToys, Stone said. The company uses nontoxic, natural materials such as organic rubberwood. From a block puzzle set, \$24.99, to a wooden farmhouse and accessories, \$89.99, PlanToys products are as unique as they are sustainable and help foster appreciation for the environment in young children, Stone said.

Children visiting the store often gravitate to the CitiBlocs display. The high-quality building block sets, which cost \$17.99 to \$79.99 depending on size, are crafted from Grade A Radiata pine from certified-renewable New Zealand forests. Each block is precision-cut to inspire young architects to new heights.