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## KIDSTUFF PUBLIC RELATIONS CELEBRATES 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY in 2024

*Since 1994 KSPR Has Pivoted From Fax Machines, Car Phones & AOL To Zoom Meets And Influencers But Childhood & Toys Have Always Been Top Priority*

Thousand Oaks, CA (January 9, 2024) – KidStuff PR is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year in business in 2024. During its three decades of promoting playthings and services for families, the agency has seen the toy industry, the media world and parenting go through a lot of changes. The team at the agency couldn't be more excited than to celebrate this major milestone and is both reflecting on things they've learned and survived over the years, as well as looking forward to things to come.



KidStuff PR (<https://kidstuffpr.com/>) has been helping companies ranging from small start-up toy companies and retailers to medium and larger-sized manufacturers spread the word about their products. The initial team of publicists, located coast to coast and using the technology of the times, happen to also be parents of very young children. They relied on their *momsense* to promote local, national and global clients. Both clients and the media were delighted with this fresh approach -- and its constant results. Let's just say they've seen a lot, learned a lot, cried and laughed, and on balance feel truly blessed to have focused on working in the play industry for so long.

One of a very small number of public relations agencies focusing only on children's products and toys, KidStuff PR offers a unique and targeted approach to public relations.

### **Once Upon A Zany Time**

The agency started in Wisconsin, where founder Lisa Orman needed a team to service her huge new client, retailer Zany Brainy, as it opened new stores westward from its east coast established locations. She had a new baby daughter and had a son in 1997. She had a journalism degree and years of working at newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* and *Crain's Chicago* business and had worked as a retail management consultant. Like all new parents, Orman felt overwhelmed by all the choices that needed to be made in raising her kids. Her career and motherhood are what won her the Zany Brainy account, so she set out to hire other mom publicists from around the country as contractors where the retailer was opening stores.

It worked! In 1994 KidStuff PR was officially founded, the name was trademarked, and the group of moms offered their kids as play testers and attendees at the grand openings and daily store events. To show how much the PR business has changed from then to now, the agency had a \$5,000 a month secretarial service bill to sort 65 versions of press releases based on store locations into envelopes addressed to local media in 65 metro areas.

The printing bill and postage was \$12,000 a month. The fax bill was \$3,000 because back then, TV stations would only accept story pitches and press releases by fax.

Now, all of that is gone. Email is not only an acceptable method of communication with media but is preferred. Instead of US mail and faxing, the agency uses (expensive) state-of-the-art online media databases, distribution, monitoring and reporting tools. Ecommerce and business websites weren't a thing, but now look at our expectations for both and the changes we've seen! Thanks to the pandemic, Zoom video calls are here to stay.

KidStuff PR was the agency of record for 7 years and things were going great, until Zany Brainy filed for bankruptcy. Talk about a crash course in business crisis and how to deal with it!

But even a bankruptcy with their biggest client wasn't going to stop the team of moms because they had learned so much about the toy industry and had relationships with so many toy and game makers, so they decided to continue to focus on the play industry and rolled with the punches.

### **Necessity Is The Mother Of Invention**

Because the team of publicists worked remotely from home *well* before "WFH" was a thing, KidStuff PR has been regarded as a pioneer and has been featured in many books about the rise of the internet with small businesses. To make long-distance remote work a successful reality, the agency had a big long-distance phone bill so the team could talk regularly, met annually in person in Las Vegas in a hotel conference room, and later after PCs were affordable and readily available, they communicated by email. Back then, AOL was the only game in town.

Fast forward three decades and influencers and bloggers are among the mix of coverage alongside TV, newspapers, magazines and digital media the agency seeks for its clients.

Today, Orman lives on the west coast, in the Los Angeles suburbs. One of her employees is a dad of three sons. Those employee babies of the '90s that grew up with the agency are now adults with successful careers from DC's State Department to an LA law firm. Orman strongly believes they grew into brilliant humans with compassion and strong social skills because they played with brilliant playthings made by the agency's specialty clients.

"Thirty years in the PR business and focusing on this niche is an accomplishment I'm proud of," said Orman. "We won't even get into how many years that is in dog years, ha! Throughout my company's history I've had office dogs, so I say that only partly joking."



*After a 3½ year gap since Toy Fair 2020, Orman hosted the agency's beloved media briefing, bringing all clients' products in one place for demos and background on their companies. The Oct. 2023 event was the first time the party was held off site and was a great success.*



*Orman with longtime toy friends Elizabeth Werner and David Katzner at Lunch & Learn event at Toy Fair 2023.*

Who knew there could be such a thing as a pandemic that would shut down the nation and economy, distress the toy industry but ultimately translate to off-the-charts growth in toy sales thanks to parent consumers who diverted money usually spent on eating out, movies and travel to entertain, placate, comfort and educate their children whose world was turned upside down. The agency is plucky and resourceful, so it weathered that storm and came out even stronger. It aimed to help its clients maximize the opportunities to help families in need of their educational and developmental toys and connected clients with stores looking desperately for new products amid manufacturing and shipping delays.

Through it all, the team has maintained a playful attitude. Team members live and work remotely in PT, CT and ET times zones. They have helped hundreds of small businesses get started and grow, achieved thousands of awards for clients and had clients featured in countless media stories and social media pages. Orman served a three-year term on **Astra**'s Board of Directors through the pandemic, has volunteered on numerous committees at various networking groups and associations. Most parents would probably say they are the ultimate play experts, but the agency team are also officially Certified Play Experts after completing the certification with Astra.

Orman's personal favorite achievement is winning the Wonder Woman award from Women in Toys, and that her husband made the Wonder Woman theme song the ring tone for when she calls him so when anyone who hears it asks him what's up with that, he can say "that's my wife, a bona fide wonder woman."