

Hot toys

FROM PAGE 16

fielding requests for the high ticket item and is expecting high demand when the gaming system comes out on November 22.

"Everybody's talking about it," he said. "That's going to be a big deal."

With the release of Star Wars Episode III, Umsted is expecting a continuation of the popularity of all things Stars Wars.

One item that was a hit last year and seems to be carrying through to this year is the Terrain Twister, a hover-craft with pontoons. According to Umsted it drives over snow, through water and on land.

Portable DVD players have continued to rise in popularity and he anticipates there will be many of those under the tree this year.

Many times at the holidays, retailers will see an old item

come back with a new twist. At Target in Traverse City, manager Kirk Lewellyn says that is the case with Furby. The Hasbro toy, originally launched in 1998, is making a comeback in 2005.

"The bonus feature this time is that he has an on and off switch now," Lewellyn said. "No one could stand him before because you couldn't turn him off."

The talking plush not only talks, but now listens and responds based on his mood.

For girls, Lewellyn expects that Bratz dolls will continue to be a popular holiday seller.

"The trend continues," he said, "because they continue to renew the assortment and keep it fresh."

Leslie Ansted, manager of Toy Harbor in downtown Traverse City, has noticed that certain toys remain popular year after year. These toys continue to remain popular because of the introduction of new items within existing lines.

"The items that we see that are new things are usually within the lines we've always carried," she said.

One example is the Breyer Horses, an item they've carried for many years. This year Toy Harbor is carrying new accessories for the horses, including a gable barn with removable roof and a traveling stable.

Ansted has noticed that knights and horses are incredibly popular right now.

Toy Harbor is now carrying a number of "ride on" toys for younger children. These include a "smart trike" that has allows parents to steer with a removable control handle and the Speedster car, which features detailed chrome accessories, a working horn, a steering column and rubber tires.

For the craft lover, Toy Harbor offers over 60 craft kits including knitting, crocheting and bedding. There are also Craft Kids geared at boys. These include a

T-Rex, which starts off as a skeleton but can be covered with a water-activated plaster gauze and then painted.

In Northern Michigan, winter wouldn't be complete without snow. To accommodate outside play, Toy Harbor is expecting a new shipment of sleds, just in time for holiday sledding.

Ansted is anticipating the arrival of a new pull-sled for toddlers which features a back support. They will also be carrying toddler-size skis.

Ansted says an important thing to consider when giving toys for the holiday is their longevity and investing in something that will last. She noted that many toys like Erector sets, Tinker Toys and Lincoln Logs stand the test of time and enjoy generations of play time.

"As a grandmother, there are more toys I wish I would have kept from when my boys were younger," Ansted said.

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