

WIND: Renewable energy science toys take a spin

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retail store in the Thames Science Center in Newport where she worked as science museum director. Many foreign tourists would ask Ms. Holdsworth for Kosmos toys, Mr. McGuire said, so she negotiated to become a U.S. distributor of the German toys. Ms. Holdsworth left the museum and opened the Thames & Kosmos toy store on Long Wharf in Newport. In 2003, the business focus changed to wholesale distribution and moved to Portsmouth when Ms. Holdsworth died of cancer and Mr. McGuire assumed ownership.

Since then, the company has acquired over 1,400 accounts with dealers, mostly specialty toy shops and online stores, across the country. Five full-time employees re-write all the science-kit manuals from German into English and

conduct marketing and customer support from its Portsmouth office.

All of the Kosmos toys are designed and tested in Germany, and many are made there as well. Others, including the Wind Power kit, are made in Taiwan or China.

Mr. McGuire wishes the Wind Power kit weren't made in a developing country, but he said it's a trade-off in energy consumed versus cost of the toy.

"It's something I think about a lot," he said. "They're not totally made in sustainable practices but you have to start somewhere."

And that's part of the reason Mr. McGuire is giving some of the proceeds to the Apeiron Institute for Sustainable Living, a non-profit organization that provides assistance in sustainable practices to businesses and farmers and conducts about 50 school-based education programs in Rhode Island.

Where to buy it

The Wind Power science kit is available in May for \$49.95. Go to www.thamesandkosmos.com for a list of local toy stores and online dealers of all Kosmos toys sold through Thames & Kosmos, including kits in archaeology, astronomy, and genetics, to name a few.

For more information on sustainable-living practices and the annual festival in June visit Apeiron's Web site at www.apeiron.org.

"We really support their educational efforts and Sustainable R.I. initiative," said Mr. McGuire, who is also on Apeiron's board of trustees. "By giving it to a local organization, we can affect things locally."

Rebekah Greenwald, Apeiron Institute director of education, said the donation will help subsidize the costs of programs like one in which middle-school students build a model solar-powered car and compete in a state-wide design and race contest, as well as its annual two-day Sustainable Living Festival.

Ms. Greenwald said, "Ted is really an example of new millennium philanthropy. He does so much to support our program," such as volunteering his time to Apeiron's programs and giving toys as prizes for competitions in which children practice sustainable living.

"We're planting a seed," Ms. Greenwald said. "We fundamentally want to help kids understand the relationship of their lifestyles and the resources they use."