

He Has Chemistry

Ted McGuire often fantasized about inventing a great construction toy, the next Lego, if you will. But after earning his product design degree, he went to work at Adobe Systems, unaware that his mother was laying the foundation for Ted's dream to come true.

Thames & Kosmos develops and distributes science toys. Ted's mother, Jane Holdsworth, started the company after serving as director of the Thames Science Center in Newport, R.I. Under her supervi-

Parents' Choice awards, among other honors. Everything from microscopes to sustainable-living toy houses to candy-making sets—55 kits in the past few years—are now available through Toys "R" Us, Target, Fry's Electronics and the National Geographic catalog. Thames & Kosmos shipped 150,000 units in 2007. Most of the Kosmos kits simply needed translation, repackaging and new marketing for an American audience, but McGuire also has co-developed



sion, the museum store, filled with science toys and kits, became a main attraction. Customers began requesting kits from a respected German company, Kosmos (which won a gold medal with a chemistry set exhibited at the 1937 World's Fair), but the kits weren't available in English. After Holdsworth and a Kosmos representative met at a toy fair, Thames & Kosmos was born.

Holdsworth first brought the Kosmos fuel cell car kit to American customers. But soon after, she learned she had lung cancer. McGuire returned to the East Coast to care for his mother until she died in 2003, and then faced the task of running her company.

He's done pretty well. That first fuel cell car kit was featured in the 2002 Hammacher Schlemmer catalog (ground zero for hot technical toys)—and every year since—and was used on an episode of the *West Wing*. In 2008, McGuire's company won seven

three new kits and currently is working on a chemistry set and electronics kit based on the bestselling book *The Dangerous Book for Boys*.

McGuire says demand for the newest and most realistic technology drives sales. He wants children and adults to have fun with science, and he believes hands-on toys and chemistry sets are needed to help turn kids into scientists when they grow up. "I want kids to go into science, not just in college or as a profession, but for their whole lives. . . . And I want them to experience the joy that comes with this." When he needs a break from the daily administrative responsibilities of running a company, McGuire stokes himself by answering technical support calls. "When a child calls up to ask a . . . question for a science fair project . . . all the hard work becomes worth it."

—Monya De, '00

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