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Hot thing-a-ma-jigs

Kids put the holiday season's newest toys to the test

By Gina Joseph

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When it comes to picking out toys for children, toys buyers and parents are alike — they rely on instinct.

“When I go to the toy fairs, I’m always looking for something new,” said Wendy Bacon, who has the fun job of buying toys for the Whistle Stop Toy Shop in St. Clair Shores. “Last year I remember cupcakes were big.”

Among the many version of cupcake-themed toys were Cutie Cakes from Manhattan Toy. These cupcakes don’t have your traditional filling, but convert into sweet dolls. There also are lovable pets

that live inside bite-size cupcakes geared for children ages 3 and up. They were the icing on the gift-giving season last year, but appear to be melting this year. One toy that Bacon knew would be a hit were **Uglydolls (\$9.99-\$50, infant-adult)**. Created for Uglydolls by David Horvath and Sun-Min Kim, Bacon describes the stuffed dolls as kind of old fashion with a sort of Japanese sock-monkey look to them. Whether it’s their old-fashioned charm or funky ugliness, kids are still asking for them.

“These are outselling Webkinz,” said Bacon, looking over their big display of the cute but also ugly thing-a-ma-jigs. “They’re hot, hot, hot.”

That’s the thing. Children are fickle.

They might love, love, love a toy one year, but toss

Animal Tracks (\$14.99, 5-up) by The Young Scientist Club is a combination of a guessing game, bingo and a matching game. First-graders Benjamin and Gabriel thought it was great, and they would like it for Christmas. Benjamin had fun matching the animals and Gabriel said it was fun because you can play it with a lot of people. To make it even better, they suggested adding animal sounds and a narrator, as some of the words were hard for first-graders to read.