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## ***TOP-DRAWER EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS FOR TOY INVENTORS ADDED AT ASTRA'S MARKETPLACE & ACADEMY***

### ***CHITAG TEAMS UP WITH ASTRA TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR TOY INVENTORS AND MANUFACTURERS WHO BRING THEIR IDEAS TO MARKET***

**Chicago, Illinois** (March 13, 2013) – The American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) announced today that it is collaborating with the Chicago Toy & Game Group (ChiTAG) to provide toy inventors and specialty manufacturers with strategies for bringing new toy innovations to market.

Two educational sessions focused on the needs of inventors have been added to ASTRA's Marketplace & Academy in Nashville, TN (June 16 - 19, 2013). These sessions are for toy manufacturers and inventors only, and any manufacturers or inventors who are exhibiting at or [registered](#) for ASTRA's [Marketplace & Academy](#) may attend these sessions at no charge.

“ASTRA manufacturers offer some of the most creative, exciting and high value toys on the market, and of course much of that innovation comes from inventors,” notes Kathleen McHugh, President of ASTRA. “Adding more services and education for inventors is a natural fit with ASTRA's programs and ChiTAG is our natural partner. Over a decade ago, Mary Couzin, ChiTAG's founder, saw the need to support and promote toy inventors and through ChiTAG's groundbreaking programs, she has put toy inventors on the map. It is an honor and strategic win for ASTRA to partner with her.”

“Much of the industry's creativity finds its way to market through the specialty side first,” says Mary Couzin, ChiTAG's founder and President. “It is important for ChiTAG and ASTRA to work together to ensure inventors have the information they need to be successful and the recognition they deserve.”

These educational sessions at Marketplace & Academy represent the first joint effort planned by ASTRA and ChiTAG:

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***From Great Idea to Hot New Product: The Basics of Production, Packaging, and Promotion: Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup> 11:00 am – Noon***

Bringing your invention to market means understanding production, retailing, and how to get sales reps and retailers to support your product. This session will cover production decisions (domestic vs. overseas); packaging trends; graphic design that gets consumer attention; and working with sales reps and retailers. Mary Couzin will moderate, and panelists include: Matt Nuccio, Peggy Brown, Carle Wunderlich, Ann Kienzle and Katherine McHenry.

***What It Takes for Success: Leveraging Licensing, Social Media, Gamification, and Marketing Opportunities: Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup> 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm***

Building on the *Great Idea to Hot New Product* session, this seminar will walk inventors through the marketing opportunities offered by licensing new products and using social media tools to market on a budget. Attendees will learn about international markets and toy/children's products fairs that can be useful for introducing new toys. Panelists include: Lisa Orman, Anna van Slee, Michelle Spelman and Mary Kay Russell with Mary Couzin as moderator.

**About the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA)**

With more than 1300 members, the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) is the largest association for companies in the toy and children's products arenas. ASTRA and its member companies promote the growth of the toy industry by delivering products that serve children's best interests. For more information, visit [www.astratoy.org](http://www.astratoy.org).

Because Community Matters, ASTRA members thank you for shopping locally.

**About the Chicago Toy & Game Group (ChiTAG)**

The Chicago Toy & Game Group is a family of initiatives promoting the power of play and joy of invention. The Chicago Toy & Game Group consists of: playCHIC Toy Inspired Fashion Event, Int'l Summit for Professional Inventors, Int'l Toy & Game Inventor Conference, Toy & Game Inventor of the Year Awards, DiscoverGames.com and the Chicago Toy & Game Fair. [www.chitag.com](http://www.chitag.com)

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