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## **ASTRA HONORS MEMORY OF TOY INDUSTRY VETERAN TED KIESEWETTER**

**Chicago, IL** (June 24, 2019) – The American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) honors the memory of toy industry veteran and founder of International Playthings Ted Kieseewetter, who passed away on May 24, 2019.

Kieseewetter came into the toy industry in the late 1960's when, in his own words, "there was very little interest in quality developmental toys." He was instrumental in driving the development of quality specialty play products with high play value as an alternative to mass market toys, and the channels needed to get them in the hands of children whose families increasingly recognized the importance of play in healthy child development.

"Thanks to his long toy career, most of it at the helm of International Playthings (now Epoch Everlasting Play)—there isn't much about the emergence of the specialty toy industry that Kieseewetter didn't help to create and witness firsthand," noted Kimberly Mosley, president of ASTRA. "He was truly a giant in our industry and his sensible, thoughtful voice as one of our go-to elder statesmen will be missed."

Kieseewetter's commitment to the specialty toy market was legendary. He was an early supporter of the ASTRA and a co-founder of Playing for Keeps, which promoted healthy children's play with products that focus on the features of the child's play rather than the features of the toy. He was the recipient of ASTRA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014, about which he said, "I have been fortunate to receive a number of awards in my career, but I cannot think of another

organization I am so honored to get an award from, because this award is given with sincerity, an emotional attachment to a recipient the organization has known for many years, and no ulterior motives. That reflects ASTRA's integrity and true commitment to its mission."

Kiesewetter's recent thoughts on the future of the specialty toy industry will no doubt resonate for many years to come. First was his reminder to keep up with the way customers are living their lives. "The most important ingredient in our industry is being in the moment," he noted. Second, he emphasized the critical importance of channel relationships. "It's important to visit your key accounts and put in some face-to-face time to build strong relationships." Third, he recommended that manufacturers and retailers grow their expertise about how play helps kids develop. "Healthy play," he said, "is a valuable platform for selling toys. It helps business and it helps kids. Use it."

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

Founded in 1992, the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association (ASTRA) is an international not-for-profit trade organization that serves more than 1,800 independent retailers, manufacturers and sales representatives in the specialty toy industry. ASTRA is a community of dedicated professionals committed to providing children with healthy, quality play materials that have high play value and are designed with a focus on what the child can do, rather than what the toy can do. ASTRA members are leaders who, through their businesses, make a positive impact on the economy and culture of the communities they serve. For more information, visit [www.astratoy.org/](http://www.astratoy.org/).

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