



BUILD-A-BEAR WORKSHOP® WHERE BEST FRIENDS ARE MADE®, TO OPEN IN AKRON!

July 10, 2003

ST. LOUIS, MO (July 10, 2003) - Build-A-Bear Workshop®, Where Best Friends Are Made®, announced it will be expanding soon to Akron, OH. After opening the premier store in St. Louis with resounding success in 1997 and then in cities throughout the United States over the last five years, Build-A-Bear Workshop® is now bringing its unique entertainment retail concept to a Akron area shopping center, Southpark Mall. The new store is scheduled to open late July.

Build-A-Bear Workshop is based on the premise that nearly everyone, regardless of age, has a special fondness for stuffed animals. At Build-A-Bear Workshop, visitors, or Guest Bear Builderssm, create their own stuffed animals as they "choose, stuff, stitch, fluff, name and dress" their way through a series of bear-making stations. A variety of inventive bear merchandise is also available, including hundreds of coordinating outfits and accessories for all bear occasions.

Chief Executive Bear Maxine Clark, former president of Payless ShoeSource, knows what families want in a shopping experience, and the store is her response to happy memories of shopping as a child. Build-A-Bear Workshop's innovative store concept takes children's interactive entertainment retailing to a new level, combining the process of making your own bear with the exciting atmosphere and fun of shopping the way it used to be. "When I was young, it was exciting for me to see all the decorations in the stores, and I loved every minute of it," says Clark. "That excitement was something I wanted to re-create for children and families today."

"We want to provide a quality fun shopping experience for children and families," says Clark. "Besides, we all need to remember what it is to be a kid. We love seeing the smiles on our Guests' faces, sharing their excitement and watching them have fun."

Build-A-Bear Workshop stuffed animals are very affordable, ranging in price from \$10 to \$25. In addition, with every purchase of \$10 or more, each Guest joins the Buy Stuff Club®, which is the Build-A-Bear Workshop frequent-buyer incentive program. For every \$100 spent, Guests receive \$10 off their next purchase.

Clark is looking forward to opening a store in Akron. She notes, "Our plan is always to open in the premier malls across the country, and we will continue this approach as we open at Southpark Mall. We have had many Guests in the Akron area ask us when we will be opening a location in their community. Now that we are opening this store, we will be able to reach more Build-A-Bear Workshop Guests in the Akron area and we are thrilled to be there."

"One of the reasons that this mall is in the category of premier U.S. malls is the work of its development company, The Westfield Group," says Clark. "The Westfield organization has been wonderful to work with and we are looking forward to bringing another Build-A-Bear Workshop to one of their locations."

In 2003 a major focus of the company's commitment to children will include Nikki's Bear, a very special bear that was introduced in January of 2003, dedicated to raising money for pediatric cancer. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of each Nikki's Bear is donated to the Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation to support treatment programs and children's cancer research and to help families of children with cancer. Since January, tens-of-thousands of Nikki's Bears have been purchased to help the cause of children's cancer.

Build-A-Bear Workshop aims to continue its aggressive expansion plan nationally to such new markets as Albany, NY, Coralville, IA, and Cleveland, and Dayton, OH-as well as internationally. The company has been planning its global strategy for the past several years, and opening stores in Japan, Australia and Canada symbolizes a natural extension of its international business growth.

Commenting on the plan, Clark said, "Our decision to open stores abroad is a response to the thousands of requests we have received from our international Guests who have shopped in our stores in the United States and on our Web site since we opened our first store in 1997-both factors indicating a strong customer base and reputation in other countries. Build-A-Bear Workshop's expansion has continued to exceed our expectations during this past year and we look forward to bringing more smiles to our Guests and friends in Japan, Australia and Canada."

Build-A-Bear Workshop® continues to redefine the concept of mall-based entertainment retail. In doing so, the company has been recognized by the retail industry with numerous awards including: National Retail Federation's International 2001 Retail Innovator of the Year; ZD Net Interactive's 2001 Best Places to Work; and St. Louis Business Journal's 2001 Laclede Award: Best Place to Work.

Build-A-Bear Workshop® is an interactive, entertainment mall-based retailer that invites Guests of all ages to create their own customized stuffed animals. The company currently operates 120 stores nationwide with a very successful e-commerce business, and will have 150 stores by end of 2003, including multiple locations across Canada. Build-A-Bear Workshop is the innovator and leader of the make-your-own-stuffed animal concept for mall-based retailing. The premier store opened in Saint Louis Galleria, St. Louis, Missouri, in October 1997. For more information, call (888) 560-BEAR or visit the company's award-winning Web site at www.buildabear.com.