

# VIRGINIA TECH

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## magazine

### Toy Story

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For 13 years, Curtis Jacobson (industrial engineering and operations research '89) developed and tested automotive electronic systems for Volvo Trucks North America, formerly Volvo GM Heavy Trucks, in Greensboro, N.C.

These days, he's set up shop in his garage in Longmont, Colo., where he designs and builds houses—for kids.

Jacobson's new company, Storyboard Toys!, was launched in February at the industry's biggest trade show, Toy Fair, in New York City. Since then, business has been brisk, thanks to the engineer's first toy invention, a delightful dollhouse called ArtHouse.

The idea for ArtHouse came while Jacobson was still at Volvo's drawing board. He liked to sketch toys, and after detecting an error in a magazine advertisement for a dollhouse, he thought that kids would enjoy creating their own space.

At 14 inches tall, 14 inches deep, and 26 inches wide, ArtHouse consists of two rooms with five magnetically attached double-sided walls and a removable roof. The fun part is that kids can craft their own exteriors and interiors, as well as customize the clear plastic walls that open to accept standard 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-by-11 paper.

To get kids started, each ArtHouse is accompanied by a decorating kit that helps create either a cottage or a firehouse. And to encourage its use as an educational tool, Storyboard also offers accessory decoration kits that feature a workbook of pre-designed walls, blank walls that can be colored, and lessons in art and social studies specific to the set's theme. Presently available are kits for a traditional Japanese home, a Viking longhouse, and a horse barn.

The recipient of awards from the Dr. Toy and Parent's Choice organizations, ArtHouse is available in a



growing number of museum shops and independent toy stores across the country, including eight stores in Virginia, such as Blacksburg's *Imaginations Toy & Furniture Company*.

Despite the time he spends constructing, marketing, and distributing ArtHouse, Jacobson continues to develop new ideas. In the works are "a new way to fold paper dolls so they stand up better; a new way to make display cases stackable; and some really nifty plastic animals that have magnets inside their paws so that when several animals are together, the resistance and attraction of magnets in different combinations cause some unexpected movements and arrangements."

To learn more about Storyboard Toys! LLC, call toll free 866-668-TOYS or go to

<http://www.storyboardtoys.com>.

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