



## **PRESS RELEASE**

TO: Editor in Charge

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Keep the Holidays Merry by Avoiding Eye Injuries and Mishaps**

*December is Safe Toys and Celebrations Month Across the United States*

(Honolulu, Hawaii), December 13, 2007 –In the 1983 holiday movie classic, “A Christmas Story,” young Ralphie Parker sets out to convince his mom and dad, his teacher and even Santa Claus that a Red Ryder BB gun is the perfect, and even necessary, gift. However, despite all his arguments, Ralphie consistently hears that “You’re going to shoot your eye out!” To help ensure that no child loses an eye or makes an emergency trip to the doctor because of holiday celebrations or gifts, the American Academy of Ophthalmology has designated December as Safe Toys and Celebrations month.

While parents might lean toward getting their child what seems like the perfect gift it is important to remember that not all toys are appropriate for all children. In addition, certain traditions and decorations can also be a hazard if not properly supervised.

“It is important to be sure that all toys purchased for holiday gifts are in the proper age range for the child who will receive the gift,” said Dr. Christopher Tortora, M.D., Medical Director of the Hawaiian Eye Center. “Every year thousands of eye injuries put a damper on the holidays because small parts, sporting equipment or propulsion gifts are too mature for certain children or not accompanied with the proper safety equipment.”

Propulsion gifts, such as BB or pellet guns (including Ralphie’s Red Ryder BB gun), paint ball guns, slingshots and other toy weapons account for almost 20% of all eye injuries around the holidays. For this reason it is important to be sure that any gift in this category is given to an especially mature child who is old enough to use it safely and within the proper boundaries.

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Another popular gift, sporting equipment, is too often given without the proper safety accessories. While a new football and replica jersey of a children's favorite NFL player is sure to please, the addition of a helmet and pads can be the difference between a big turkey dinner with family and dinner at the hospital cafeteria.

Beyond just toys, children can be harmed during the holidays during routine celebrations. For example, children should be sure to stand back when and if a fresh Christmas tree is brought into the home. When cutting the tree open, branches could snap down and cause an eye injury. Another unfortunate, but common, holiday accident can occur when uncorking champagne or wine bottles. If not done properly and away from family and guests, the exploding cork can quickly turn into a dangerous projectile.

A third popular form of celebration, especially in Hawaii, includes both legal and illegal fireworks set off to ring in the New Year. Fireworks of all kinds are extremely dangerous and very often injure innocent bystanders rather than the operator. It is safest to attend only professional fireworks displays, however, if fireworks are used at home, they should only be used by an adult and in secure areas far enough away from family and friends to not cause injury to the audience.

“The holiday season is a wonderful time to be with friends and family and focus on children, and with a little forethought and selective purchasing in regards to toys, everyone can have a safe and happy holiday,” Dr. Tortora said.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of “The Hawaiian Eye Show,” a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8488 where *“life has never looked better.”*

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