

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 19, 2023

## GINGERBREAD HOUSE TOYS ANNOUNCES NEW WINK ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BABY FOLD

### ***How one shop dog inspired a line of stuffed animals and raised \$38,750 to help kids in central Illinois***

Bloomington, IL – Gingerbread House Toys is partnering with The Baby Fold to be the fourth recipient of their unique annual giving program, the Wink Alliance. Named after their famous shop dog Wink, each year the program selects one local non-profit to be the sole recipient of all proceeds from the sale of a limited edition Wink inspired toy.

For 2023, kids and families can take Wink home as their very own stuffed animal, modeled after him, and wearing a bandana for The Baby Fold. This year “Wink” is super soft and floppy, with long legs ready to stretch out and relax just like the real Wink! With the Gingerbread House Toys logo on his paw, and an adorable blue Baby Fold bandana, he is ready to be the perfect stocking stuffer for the upcoming holiday season.

For years, Gingerbread House Toys has supported local non-profits. But in 2020 they decided they wanted to make a bigger impact, by focusing on one organization at a time, in a way that kept kids at the center. To date they have distributed \$38,750 in support of Marcfirst (now Lifelong Access), Child Protection Network, and Special Olympics Illinois.

This year the Wink Alliance is thrilled to partner with [The Baby Fold](#)! The Baby Fold is a local agency founded in 1902 that focuses on improving the lives of children and families by building safe, loving, healthy environments through foster care, adoption services, special education, and family and community services.

Owner Kate Green shared, “We LOVE giving back to the community and partnering with organizations that help kids, especially when they have been doing it for over 120 years, like The Baby Fold!” We’re honored to partner with them in this way and at The Baby Fold’s Festival of Trees! How cool is it that Wink, the best shop dog in the entire world, is a symbol for helping kids in our community!?”

Clete Winkelmann, President and CEO of The Baby Fold, shares, “We’re thrilled to partner with Gingerbread House Toys. The Baby Fold’s vision is transforming children’s lives through strong family and community partnerships – the Wink Alliance is a great example of that vision coming to life. The Baby Fold provides life-critical services such as foster care, adoption support, special education, autism programs, early childhood initiatives and more to around 1200 children and families every year. The Wink Alliance is a fun way the community can get involved and support The Baby Fold’s vital mission.”

“I have a feeling this year’s Wink Alliance partnership might just be the most unique one yet,” Winkelmann continues. “How often do you have three ‘Winks’ in one room? With a name like Winkelmann, ‘Wink’ has been my nickname since childhood. Then there’s the adorable shop dog ‘Wink’, and now the limited edition ‘Wink’ stuffed animal – it’s the perfect Wink trifecta!”

As the Wink Alliance continues this year, a new and updated Wink “stuffy” is at the center of the giving campaign. Each custom-designed plush toy is 8 inches long, with floppy long legs, a Gingerbread House Toys logo on his paw, and most importantly he wears a blue bandana with The Baby Fold logo, displaying Wink’s support for his friends. These custom-designed creations are the handiwork of Stuffed Animal Pros, a member of the Budsies family of brands based in south Florida.

The new Winks are only \$25 and are available now. All proceeds will be donated to The Baby Fold, and Wink can be found in-store, and through the Gingerbread House Toys online store at [shop.gingerbreadhousetoys.com](http://shop.gingerbreadhousetoys.com). Gingerbread House Toys will also be featured at Central Illinois’ largest holiday celebration, The Baby Fold’s 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Trees, and the Wink stuffy will be available to purchase at the event.

Going beyond their tagline of “Play more, Grow more!”, Gingerbread House Toys and The Baby Fold both hope the community will come together and “give more” this holiday season for the benefit of kids and families in our community who need our help.

Who knew we could all do that through one inspirational shop dog?

[Watch the official announcement video](#) featuring Gingerbread House Toys owner Kate Greene, Baby Fold CEO Clete Winkelmann, and Wink!

## About Gingerbread House Toys

Gingerbread House Toys has been sparking imaginations and delighting children since 1972. Over the years it has become the go-to destination for families, caregivers, and children searching for fun, interesting, high-quality educational toys in Central Illinois. The store’s founder, Tami Jarecki, believed in the power of play to stimulate children’s minds. The shop grew and evolved, moving from her home into an original Victorian gingerbread-style house on Hannah Street.

In 2012, the store changed hands and was purchased by three sisters from Bloomington who had been raised on toys from the original store. Kate, Nikki, and Beki Greene had always loved coming into this magical space as children and were excited for the opportunity to not only continue the traditions of before, but also to offer exciting and innovative products, services, and events. In 2017, the sisters moved into the Foundry shopping district on Washington Street, nestled near Bloomington Cycle and Fitness, Coffee Hound 3, and Green Top Grocery.

At the core of Gingerbread House Toys is the belief that when children play, they're doing more than having fun, they're learning and growing, which is why fun toys with an educational angle are abundantly available in their store. On their website, you can learn more about the purpose of play as a method to improve creative and cognitive abilities, gross and fine motor skills, emotional, language, and social skills, as well as improve spatial reasoning.

#### About The Baby Fold

Since 1902, The Baby Fold has been providing life-critical services to children and families throughout Central Illinois. For well over a century, the nonprofit organization has been a pillar of support for the local community, aiming to nurture and uplift the lives of vulnerable children and their families.

The Baby Fold offers a wide range of services designed to address the unique needs of those they serve. These include foster care, adoption support, special education, autism programs, early childhood initiatives, crisis intervention, and more. Each of these programs is tailored to provide the necessary support and resources for children and families in various challenging situations.

The Baby Fold's rich history and extensive array of services highlight its dedication to supporting the most vulnerable members of the community. By offering specialized care, education, and resources, The Baby Fold strives to create a nurturing environment in which every child has the opportunity to succeed and reach their fullest potential in life. The Baby Fold cares for our youngest citizens so they can be blessed with loving homes, stable lives, and the futures they deserve.

###

#### Contact Information

Local organizations that are interested in participating in the Wink Alliance in the future should fill out the contact form on the website.

#### **JESSICA SHULL**

Gingerbread House Toys | Marketing & Advertising  
jess@joshuaonenine.media

#### **SAM GUILLORY**

Vice President of Development and Public Relations | [sguillory@thebabyfold.org](mailto:sguillory@thebabyfold.org)  
Office: 309.451.7202  
The Baby Fold, 108 E. Willow St., Normal, IL 61761