

**For Immediate Release**

**McDONALD'S® HAPPY MEALS – A HISTORY OF FUN**

*McDonald's Gears-Up to Celebrate 25 Years of Happiness*

Since the introduction of the first national McDonald's® Happy Meal® program in 1979, Happy Meal has reflected the excitement of movies and comics, high-tech electronic games, hottest cartoon characters, and ever-changing toy trends. They've featured the trendiest dolls from Barbie® as well as the highly demanded cars and trucks like Hot Wheels®. There have been space aliens named Gill Face and Veined Cranium, and handsome heroes such as *Captain Kirk*, *G.I. Joe*, and, of course, Ronald McDonald™. Happy Meals have even included *E.T.* posters, Golden Books®, and Sonic The Hedgehog® SEGA® games. And now, McDonald's celebrates the past 25 years of the world famous Happy Meal by bringing continued happiness and smiles to zillions of kids around the world.

McDonald's stays in tune with current trends, like last year's popular 3-D Spy Kids™ comic book Happy Meal. McDonald's has also anticipated the future with innovative technology from companies like Tiger Electronics. And McDonald's has always designed Happy Meals to capture the imagination and create hours of playtime fun for kids.

In 1980, Australia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, the Caribbean and Latin America became the first international locations to offer Happy Meals. Today, McDonald's

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## McDonald's Happy Meals – A History of Fun – add one

Happy Meals are served in 29,000 restaurants in over 100 countries around the world.

### **The Beginning**

Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, McDonald's owner operators across the country toyed with the idea of creating a children's meal. While a few were tested and were fairly successful, none were repeated or rolled-out nationally. It was not until 1977 that St. Louis Regional Advertising Manager Dick Brams – the “Father of the Happy Meal” – challenged his advertising agencies to create a children's meal concept. He was finally presented with the Happy Meal idea by Bernestein/Rein & Boasberg of Kansas City, Kansas.

From that idea, the national phenomenon was born. McDonald's introduced the first national Happy Meal in June 1979 with a Circus Wagon Train theme. The premiums were offered inside decorative boxes and included a McDoodler stencil, puzzle lock, McWrist Wallet, ID bracelet, spinning top and McDonaldland character erasers. The menu items included a regular hamburger or cheeseburger, fries, a separately packaged soft drink, and a McDonaldland Cookies sampler.

“McDonald's originally thought the box was the collectible and designed a series of circus wagon boxes which they advertised as ‘collect all six boxes,’ noted Joyce Losonsky, avid McDonald's collector and author of *McDonald's Happy Meal Toys Around the World: 1975-1995*.

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## McDonald's Happy Meal – A History of Fun – add two

### **Happy Meals – 1979 to Present**

Happy Meals not only featured a combination of traditional characters and toys, such as Bambi, Raggedy Ann and Andy, and Peter Rabbit, but have also highlighted ----- the most popular toys like Hot Wheels<sup>®</sup>, LEGO<sup>®</sup>, the Muppets<sup>®</sup>, Peanuts<sup>®</sup> and Transformers<sup>™</sup>. Of course, Ronald McDonald and all of his friends from McDonaldland have had guest appearances in multiple Happy Meals.

The first Disney Happy Meal, in 1987, featured four activity books of Disney Films. Happy Meals continued the partnership by celebrating Disneyland's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1995 with mini-viewers that featured Disney characters in eight popular Disneyland adventures. In 1997, McDonald's and Disney entered into a 10-year global partnership. Since then, McDonald's Happy Meals have featured the stars of Disney's much-loved movies including *Cinderella*, *Aladdin and the King of Thieves*, *101 Dalmatians*, *The Lion King* and *Finding Nemo*.

Today, new McDonald's Happy Meal launches are eagerly anticipated by kids of all ages. In addition to the play value enjoyed by youngsters, Happy Meal toys have become a much sought-after collectible. While many children and adults are known to be casual collectors, the serious Happy Meal collectors gather every April at the annual McDonald's Collector's convention held by The McDonald's Collectors Club, which was formed in 1990.

## McDonald's Happy Meal – A History of Fun – add three

### **25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

In honor of Happy Meal's 25<sup>th</sup> year, McDonald's will be honoring its Happy Meals as the "Happy Birthday Happy Meals." Beginning in April, these Happy Meals will feature the latest playtime trends and stars. The toys available are a combination of traditional Happy Meal offerings and new, innovative toys. Visit the McDonald's website at [www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com) to keep up with the latest Happy Meal surprises. And keep your eyes open for a special surprise Happy Birthday Happy Meal toy to commemorate the celebration on July 23.

### **About McDonald's**

More than 30,000 local McDonald's restaurants serve about 47 million customers each day in more than 100 countries. Please visit our website at [www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com) to learn more about the Company.

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