

# Merchandising to the

Offering **products for kids and tweens** can be lucrative — if you understand how to market to them.

Children should be seen, not heard — so goes the old adage. This isn't true, however, when it comes to retailing to kids and tweens. Today's generation of juveniles — the "Millennials" — have billions of discretionary dollars of their own to spend and have tremendous influence on the buying decisions of their parents. In fact, according to American Greetings, five- to 14-year-olds currently spend \$15 a week, \$40 billion annually, and influence another \$146 billion in family purchases.

Tweens — kids aged eight to 12 — make up the backbone of the Millennial's formidable shopping force, with the U.S. Census Bureau estimating that this age group will grow to 17 million by 2005. Tweens can be characterized as "teen wannabes" who are looking for their own identities and seeking freedom from their parents; they may act childish when alone, but "cool" when in public. They still want to have fun and are in no rush to grow up, even though they are already feeling peer pressure to conform to social trends and apparel tastes.

Since the quest for individuality is key for much of the juvenile market, many



A variety of stationery products for kids and tweens is available from **Zoomerang, a div. of Mara-Mi Inc.** (800/627-2648), including autograph pillows, photo books, address books and "gotta be girls" pads (\$7.50-\$16).

companies offer stationery products and activity kits that allow kids to make products "their own." A leading producer of activity kits is Klutz, which offers kits ranging from juggling and face-painting to creating twirled paper — a 500-year-old art form. "Our products allow kids to

develop their own personal creative expression and uniqueness," says Klutz's Kathleen Watson. Each Klutz kit provides step-by-step instructions for learning new skills and activities. Conversely, Made By Hands, Inc., does not include any instructions at all with its "Make-Your-Own" line of children's art activity kits. "Whether it's a Make-Your-Own Cards, Puppets or Frames kit, we felt it was important to leave out instructions so that a child's natural creativity was enhanced by knowing that they didn't have to make their project look like the picture on the box," states co-founder (and mom) Dena Hirschberg.

## Stationery for Secrets

In creating their own identity, tweens like to keep track of their personal thoughts and feelings — and keep them private. That's why journals and diaries are important, especially

locked diaries such as those available from Mudpuppy Press, a division of Galison, which offers a wider selection geared toward girls since they comprise a larger percentage of the tween customer base. Another company specializing in girls' products is Three Cheers! for Girls,