



Grayslake pediatrician helps invent potty training toy

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(Candace H. Johnson)

Caption

By ANGELA SYKORA - editorial@nwherald.com

Grayslake pediatrician [Shelly Mann](#) has been advising parents on potty training methods since 1990.

“So many parents are so anxious about it and unsure what to do,” the doctor said.

To help make reaching this milestone easier on parents and children, Mann teamed up with longtime friend and inventor Fred Longenecker of Indiana to develop the [Potty Duck](#), an interactive squirt toy that demonstrates how to use the toilet.

“When Fred showed me the prototype, I thought it was the cutest idea as a visual to help children learn to use the potty,” she said.

The Potty Duck is a new take on the traditional rubber ducky children have long enjoyed playing with at bath time. Suction cups enable the toy to stick to the bathtub or sink. The child fills the duck with water, squirts it into the attached potty and presses a button on top to “flush.”



The goal is for the child to imitate the toy when they sit on the toilet. The Potty Duck also acts as a companion to remind the child how the process works.

“We’re very excited about it,” said Longenecker, who first got the idea for the product when his daughter, now in college, was 2 years old.

During a bath, she was playing with a squirt toy that happened to be leaking from a small hole in the bottom. Longenecker enlarged the hole to make the toy appear to be urinating. A few days later, his daughter declared she wanted to go to the bathroom like the toy.

The idea was put on the back burner until just a few years ago. Longenecker, who met Mann while students at Goshen College in Indiana, knew she would be the perfect partner being a pediatrician who specialized in potty training.

They began quietly selling the Potty Duck online last winter, only recently launching an advertising campaign after gathering feedback from experts, such as pediatric occupational therapists and, of course, parents and children.

“We’re very happy with the product. The children are more engaged than I expected from the reports I’m hearing,” Longenecker said.

Mann, who’s given the toy to parents, said she’s been told their children really enjoy it and even carry it around with them.

“One of the things I like about it is it’s unisex. Boys and girls both like it,” she said.

Mann is confident the Potty Duck can help children become potty trained at an earlier age.