



Candidates for Living Induction in 2025

Candidates	Title	Professional Affiliation
<u>Clark, Maxine</u>	Founder & CEO	Build-A-Bear Workshop
<u>DiMinico, Sharon</u>	Founder, Chair	Learning Express Toys
<u>Kohner, Michael</u>	President	The Michael Kohner Corporation; Kohner Bros. 1966-1975
<u>Larian, Isaac</u>	CEO and Founder	MGA Entertainment
<u>Price, Shirley</u>	President	Funrise
<u>Rubik, Erno</u>	Professor and Inventor	Rubik's Cube
<u>Wood, Michael</u>	Founder/COO	LeapFrog

CLARK, MAXINE

Founder and former Chief Executive Bear of Build-A-Bear Workshop

Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, revolutionized both the toy and retail industries by pioneering the “retail-tainment” store concept more than 25 years ago. Now a globally recognized brand, Build-A-Bear Workshop has sold more than 200 million furry friends and generated over \$5 billion in cumulative revenue. Inspired by her own childhood connection with a teddy bear, Clark sought to create an emotional bond between children and their stuffed animals. This led to the famous Build-A-Bear process, where owners can choose, stuff, dress, and name their furry friends, accompanied by a signature “heart ceremony” that brings the plush animal to life through a unique bonding experience.

Understanding that the hug of a teddy bear would lead to an emotional brand connection, Clark started an outbound licensing program in order to expand the Build-A-Bear brand into other toy, consumer product, and entertainment categories. The company has also incorporated cause-related lines in which a portion of the proceeds have been donated to charity, as well as licensed partnerships with popular entertainment properties, fashion brands, and culturally relevant organizations to expand its brand presence beyond its traditional roots.

Clark established the Build-A-Bear Foundation, which has donated more than \$18 million to deserving causes and provided hundreds of thousands of plush friends to those in need. Her philanthropic work extends to the Clark-Fox Family Foundation, where she serves as CEO, and she has received numerous awards and recognition as a testament to the tremendous impact she has had throughout her career.

DIMINICO, SHARON

Founder and Chair of Learning Express Toys

Sharon DiMinico, founder & CEO of Learning Express Toys, has devoted most of her career to the toy industry, building an empire of neighborhood toy stores throughout the U.S. What started in 1987 as a fundraiser for the Groton Nursery School in Massachusetts to provide resources to the children and supplement the school's revenue, evolved into the nation's leading franchisor of specialty toy stores with over 90 locations.

DiMinico has helped hundreds of people realize their dreams of small business ownership and has brought play to children in communities nationwide. Among the company's key innovations are the Easter Bunny Buffet Marketing Program; the Children's Birthday Box Gift Registry; special product exclusives; first-to-market items like the Rainbow Loom phenomenon; and the Skill Builders program (educating customers and communities about the benefits of toys and screen-free play). In the early 2000s, she also created a franchise council of current stores to offer guidance to franchise owners and invite feedback to continually improve the business. The council continues to this day.

Learning Express partners with Toys for Tots and other charities throughout the holidays to deliver toys to kids in need and DiMinico spearheads the organization of product donations at the close of every Learning Express annual convention to donate to a local children's charity. Learning Express stores donate tens of thousands of dollars in supplies, donations, and gifts to their local communities each year.

KOHNER, MICHAEL

President of The Michael Kohner Corporation and Former President of Kohner Bros.

Part of the Kohner Bros. family behind such classics as Busy Boxes, Trouble with Pop-O-Matic, and Hi-Q puzzles, Michael Kohner entered the family business in 1965 after his father's passing. In his role, he created a worldwide licensing program that helped grow the company until its purchase by General Foods in 1969. He went on to form the Michael Kohner Company in 1975, which represented inventors around the world and helped license hundreds of products throughout his career, including games like Loopin' Louie, Lucky Ducks, Don't Panic, Fraidy Cats, Pencil Nose, Slap, Magic Tooth Fairy, and others.

Kohner also found a unique way to serve all ranks of the industry through the creation of the All-In Pricing System, developed in 2004. The system, which has become an industry standard, allows inventors to ship their products to distributors at all-inclusive prices that include royalty, development, testing, etc., resulting in easier product placement for manufacturers and a turnkey process that reduces risks.

Throughout his career, Kohner has donated product and time toward charitable causes. He is a long-time supporter of The Toy Foundation, participating in its annual toy collections both at Toy Fair and throughout the year. Kohner has also served as a mentor to many in the industry and regularly gives his financial and personal support toward inventor-related events, such as those organized by People of Play.

LARIAN, ISAAC

CEO and Founder, MGA Entertainment

Isaac Larian founded MGA Entertainment in 1979, and it is now one of the largest privately held toy and entertainment companies in the world.

MGA Entertainment prides itself on its commitment to creativity, quality, and innovation from product design and packaging to entertainment and marketing. Through Larian's leadership, MGA developed several multibillion-dollar brands over 45 years, including Bratz, L.O.L. Surprise!, MGA's Miniverse, and more. MGA has created a multitude of new packaging styles that have transformed the toy industry. From trapezoid packaging, ball packaging, and diorama-like PDQs, they have all helped tell the stories of the brands and influenced countless other toy companies.

Now a grandfather of five, Larian believes that parents want to instill long-lasting values and educate their kids via their favorite toys, including on topics of environmental responsibility. Through his leadership, MGA Entertainment has committed to reducing its carbon footprint. In 2019, the company committed to achieving and maintaining 95 percent recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified content in the paper and wood fiber used in products and packaging, and to achieving 100 percent recycled, recyclable or bio-based plastic materials in products and packaging. In 2021, MGA moved from plastic packaging to all cardboard boxes for Amazon shipments and worked to feature packaging for L.O.L. Surprise, Little Tikes, and other brands that can be re-used for play and storage.

Larian has also remained committed to giving back. He has generously supported The Literacy Project, which benefits underperforming 2nd and 3rd graders in bridging the literacy gap. In 2020, he founded MGAE Cares, which originally provided COVID-19 relief products worth in excess of \$5 million. Today, MGAE Cares continues to provide relief to children displaced by the wars in Ukraine and Israel, those affected by natural and man-made disasters, homelessness, and kids with medical challenges. He is also active in several charitable organizations such as Toys For Tots, Children's Hospital Los Angeles/Orange County, City of Hope, New Image Emergency Shelter, and more.

PRICE, SHIRLEY

President of Funrise

For more than 35 years, Shirley Price, president & COO of Funrise, has not only made an impact on the toy industry but on the company itself. Price was Funrise's first hire, signing on after only months of its founding as an administrative assistant in 1987 and working her way up to her current role. She has been involved in every aspect of the company's operations, from administration to sales and product development, including the introduction of multiple Funrise brands such as Gazillion Bubbles and Tonka's off-road racing program, which marketed Tonka to dads.

Throughout her career, she has been actively involved in the work of The Toy Association, serving on its Board of Directors, its Executive Committee, and multiple committees to serve the greater toy community. She was also awarded a Wonder Woman Award by Women in Toys, Licensing, and Entertainment (WiT) in 2011.

Among her charitable contributions, Price has served as an organizer for the Funrise Toy Run for Kids, bringing truckloads of toys to the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles for many years, benefitting hospitalized children and their siblings.

RUBIK, ERNO

Professor and Inventor of Rubik's Cube

Born in Budapest, Hungary, Erno Rubik was just a child when he became obsessed with puzzles. While working as a professor of design at the Academy of Applied Arts and Design in Budapest, he carried his passion into adulthood, spurring the assembly of the very first version of the Rubik's Cube, the Magic Cube, in 1974. Within two years of its premiere at the 1979 Nuremberg Toy Fair and with a global distribution deal with Ideal Toy & Novelty Company that rebranded the puzzle as Rubik's Cube, it became a phenomenon with 100 million cubes sold. Today, more than 500 million Rubik's Cubes have been sold worldwide. It was inducted into the Toy Hall of Fame in 2014 and remains one of the top-selling toys of all time.

Through his original invention and others (the Rubik's Snake, Rubik's Magic, and the Rubik's Tangle), Rubik has encouraged everyone to embrace their inner curiosity. The Rubik's Cube has gone on to spawn many puzzle-themed extensions, foster hundreds of spin-off products, and inspire speed competitions in more than 50 countries. Rubik also worked with the Liberty Science Center in New Jersey to create a touring exhibition, Beyond Rubik's Cube, designed to merge learning and playfulness.

Rubik also established a charitable foundation in 1982 to help inventors and designers find investment partners for their ideas and to help design students travel abroad to discover the world of design. His philanthropic work also extends to museums, science centers, and academic institutions around the world.

WOOD, MICHAEL

Founder & COO, LeapFrog

In 1994, when Michael Wood's son was having trouble learning to read, he worked with a leading phonics professor at Stanford University to create a solution. What he created in the process, the original Phonics Desk, would go on to have a lasting impact on children everywhere, revolutionize the educational language arts (ELA) category, and lead to one of the most respected preschool learning brands in the industry, LeapFrog.

Woods continued to bring fun to learning through the development of additional now-classic LeapFrog products, including The Phonics Bus, Leap's Learning Plush, and Twist and Shout Learning Toys. In 1999, he spearheaded the development of the LeapPad and LeapPad Software, which won the TOTY Award that year and brought learning further to the forefront of the toy industry. He also continued to push for innovative learning products with the introduction of the My First LeapPad. In 2003, the Leapster & Leapster Software resulted in another TOTY-winning toy, which merged handheld game play with learning. By 2003, LeapFrog dominated the learning category and was a major player in the global toy industry. Within 10 years, the company had \$450 million in revenue.

Woods has donated and been involved in various charities and learning outreach programs focused on reading and math, serving kids in underprivileged situations throughout his career. For more than 15 years, he has taught kids to read every week (and packs lunches for his students) in one of San Rafael, California's lower income school districts. Through LeapFrog, he helped support charitable causes for children, including the Rosie O'Donnell Foundation, and he has personally donated to many causes benefiting children in need.