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Everyone Loves a Slinky, Especially the World's Largest

Local Artist Helps Virginia Historical Society open *Toys of the '50s, '60s, and '70s* Exhibition

Richmond, VA — Expect the fun to spiral out of control when an upcoming special exhibition springs to life with the biggest Slinky ever seen at the Virginia Historical Society (VHS). Richmond native, sculptor and founder of MCS Design and Production Inc., Allen Jessee produced this massive and moveable work of art to mark the opening of *Toys of the '50s, '60s and '70s*. Installed in the VHS lobby, Mr. Jessee's creation has a 48 inch diameter, weighs 150 pounds and can extend to 100 feet in length.

"Creating this was a fun and imaginative process," said Mr. Jessee. "It is fully functioning, but you'd have to be a superhero to lift and operate the VHS Slinky."

Toys opens to the public on February 24. Beneath the iconic and nutty names of Mr. Potato Head, Gumby, Barbie and Slinky are rich veins of nostalgia, memory and history. These toys – and the stories of the kids (today's Boomers), parents, child-rearing experts, inventors, manufacturers and advertisers they affected – reflect the dynamism of American life. Featured in this exhibition are hundreds of America's most beloved toys popular in the 1950's, '60s and '70s.

"*Toys* lends us the extraordinary opportunity to connect to generations past and present," said VHS Interim CEO and Board Chair, John R. Nelson. "This show brings something for visitors of all toy-loving ages, whether you're a Boomer or a Millennial. *Toys* has all the bells and whistles of a blockbuster exhibition."

As the largest special exhibition brought to the VHS, with 445 pieces and parts (and some assembly required) *Toys* displays all of the childhood favorites in reconstructed period rooms. For example, the 1950s living room with the times' popular western theme illustrates the transition from wooden to plastic toys, including the first African American doll, Sara Lee, and the first toy advertised on television, Mr. Potato Head.

The '50s, '60s and '70s saw a huge increase in the number and variety of toys available to American children. The evolution of toys during that thirty-year period, from Lionel trains and Tiny Tears dolls of the 1950s to the Atari game systems and *Star Wars* figures of the late 1970s, is nothing short of astonishing. Many toys reflect events in the larger context of American society. Representing the evolving changes in family life, gender roles and advances in technology, toys reveal kids' and parents' thoughts, feelings, fears and aspirations.

VHS members receive complimentary admission to all special exhibitions. Admission is free for children 18 and under, and \$10 for nonmembers. The exhibition is organized by the Minnesota Historical Society.

The Virginia Historical Society (VHS)—a privately funded nonprofit organization—collects, preserves, and interprets the Commonwealth's history, linking past with present to inspire future generations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond's Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the library. For more information about the VHS call (804) 358-4901, visit vahistorical.org, or connect with the VHS on Facebook and Twitter. Allen Jessee's other work can be viewed at www.lookatmcs.com.

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