

SHOWCASE

PAGE 33 | WWW.SUNTIMES.COM | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2008 | EDITOR: AMANDA BARRETT | Let's get into it.

YOU'RE KIDDING ME

PETER PANS | Boys who never grew up show off their outer child



"Stoogeapalooza" is must-see TV on Saturday nights for Tom Ciesielka. His snack of choice? Fruit Loops.

BY PAIGE WISER

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Technically, Tom Ciesielka is an adult. He is 47 years old, he's married, he even owns his own public relations agency.

But in many ways, this North Sider never grew up. There's the extensive toy collection, for instance, including the clanging monkey who screams when you bang its head.

He likes to sing, too. In public. Silly songs, loud enough to amuse the people around him without warranting police intervention.

Ciesielka says he has a "playful and joyful" spirit. "I eat Fruit Loops like caviar while watching 'Stoogeapalooza' on Saturday nights," he says. (His wife steers clear, in polite disgust.)

He's a big kid. And he's not the only one.

"Peter Pan has nothing on parents nowadays, the Boomers and Gen X'ers who only want to preserve their youth," says Aaron Cooper, a clinical psychologist and educator with the Family Institute at Northwestern University.

According to the book *The Death of the Grownup: How America's Arrested Development Is Bringing Down Western Civilization*:

◆ More adults, ages 18 to 49,



Jim McClure sees himself onscreen at the latest Indiana Jones flick at the Buffalo Grove Theaters. | RICHARD A. CHAPMAN-SUN-TIMES

watch the Cartoon Network than watch CNN.

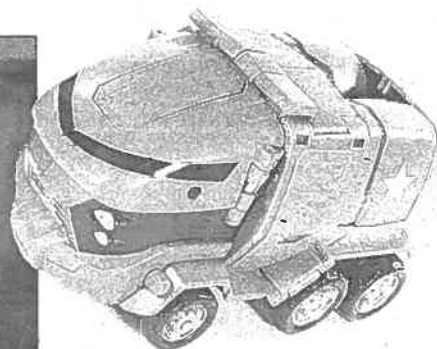
◆ The average video gamer was 18 in 1990; now he's going on 30.

◆ The MacArthur Foundation has funded a research project that argues that the "transition to adulthood" doesn't end till age 34.

Brian Simms would agree with that. He goes beyond the call of duty in his activity with his kids' Boy Scouts groups. He is a pump-

kin-carving connoisseur and will not hesitate to shave his head if he's lost a bet. Best of all, he works at Chicago's headquarters for Radio Flyer as a vice president of sales and customer service.

"We get to design wagons and ride-on toys every day, so it's hard not to feel like a kid," Simms says. "I've been known to ride the My 1st Scooter around the office, even though the age range for that item



Telling his 4-year-old son the new Transformer is called "Bulkhead" gives Dave Dorman, 50, a charge.



Brian Simms zips around his Chicago office on a My 1st Scooter. At least he works at Radio Flyer.

is 2 to 5 years old." That's one sturdily built product.

Cooper approves. Up to a point. "We can, all of us, incorporate elements of childlike interest into our lives," he says. "We call it play. Imagination. Creativity. Fun."

Regardless of how we play, though, Cooper thinks we have to make sure we are responsible in two areas: work and love. Are we conscientious? Considerate of oth-