

## PROMO PRODUCT OFFERS HOPE

✿ A large, stuffed teddy bear used to sit on the bed of the late Caylee Anthony – it was her favorite. More than a year after her disappearance, Caylee's memory lives on through hundreds of teddy bears just like

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Adrienne Barker, vice president of Barker Specialty Co. Inc. (*asi/132690*), worked with the Anthonys and Jim Socci, president of Artistic Toy Co. Inc. (*asi/37122*), in mid-April to find the perfect teddy bear to honor Caylee's memory. They landed on Artistic Toy's most popular character, 8" Kirby Brown Bear, and the Caylee Bear was born.

"It was a natural fit," Socci says. "Ironically, somehow, the bear that we presented was exactly like one of the bears she had in her room, so it all kind of tied together."

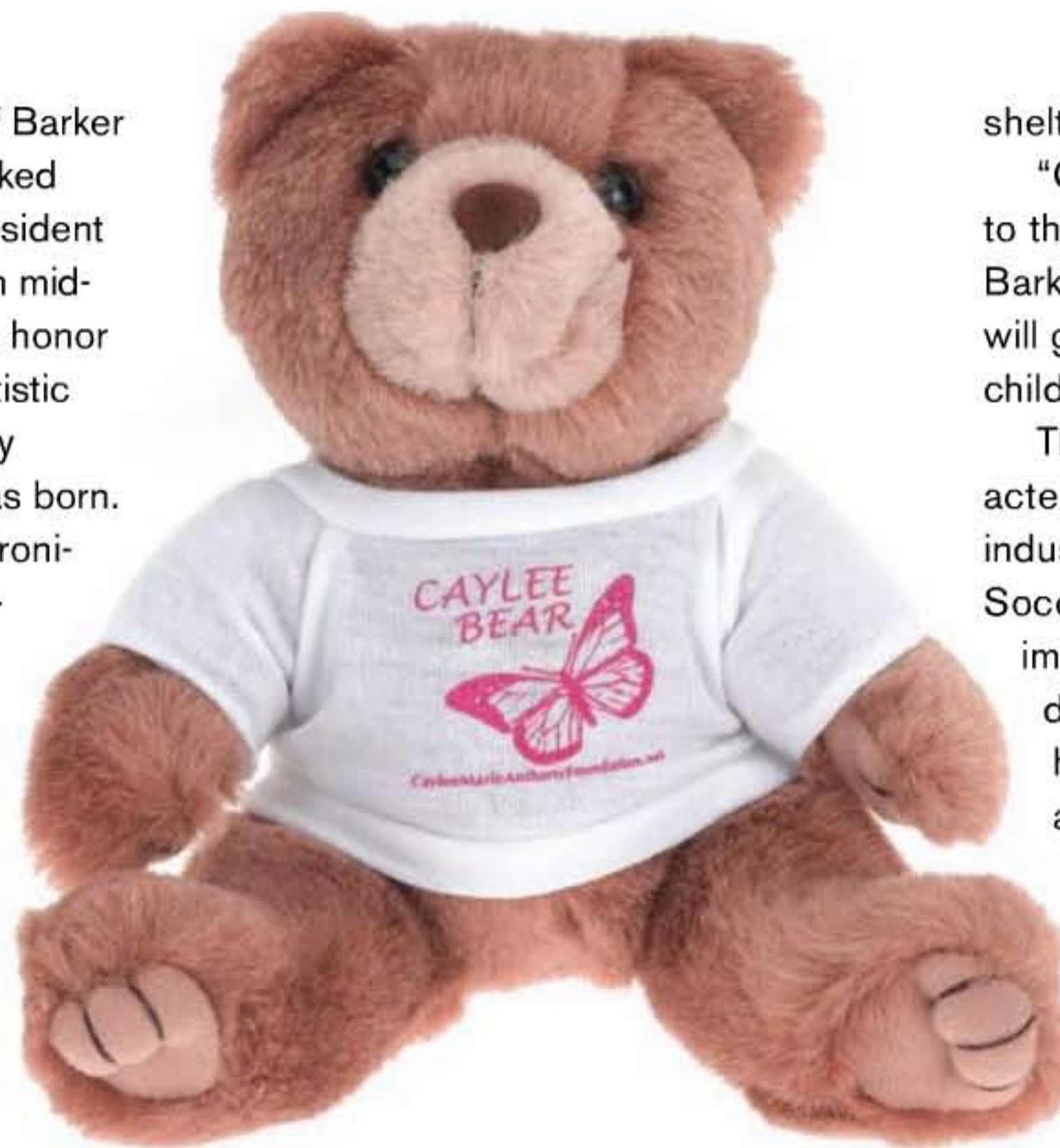
Socci ensured the toy had passed all safety regulations and Barker helped Cindy design a T-shirt for the Caylee bears that features a butterfly in Caylee's favorite color, pink. Just a few months after the program began, almost all of the 500 bears Artistic Toy produced have been placed in the hands of first responders and nonprofit groups. Socci said he hopes to produce more as the program's success continues. The Anthonys have distributed Caylee

hers, supplied through industry companies and given to children in distress.

George and Cindy Anthony, Caylee's grandparents, started the Caylee Bear Program in late April by giving smaller versions of Caylee's "teddy" to first responders at local police and fire departments for dis-

tribution. The Anthonys, who also founded the Caylee Marie Anthony Foundation, say on their Web site that they wanted to spread the comfort and love Caylee's teddy brought her to children who had experienced an accident or traumatic incident.

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Bears to the Orange County, FL, police and fire departments and are working to widen the program's reach to children at local battered women's shelters, homeless

shelters and children's hospitals.

"Cindy and George wanted to give back to the community and also to its officers," Barker says. "They're hoping the bears will generate positive interest in saving our children."

The use of teddy bears and plush characters as cause promotions in a hurting industry may seem counterintuitive, but Socci doesn't think so. He says it's more important than ever to reach peoples' deepest needs, and character products have an extremely long shelf life and a high perceived value. "We're a society that wants an immediate return on investment, and this product doesn't guarantee that," he says. "It's about building brand awareness and is more of a longer-term strategy."

Socci, though, says Artistic Toy's involvement in helping create the Caylee Bear was bittersweet. "This is a tragic situation, but how they're turning this around – it's a blessing what they're doing with it," he says. – *Haley Jones*

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