ACTIONLINE

CUTS THROUGH RED TAPE, GETS ANSWERS, SOLVES PROBLEMS AND STANDS UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS! | FOR RECENT COLUMNS, GO TO WWW.HERALD.COM AND CLICK NEWS THEN ACTION LINE

• ASK ACTION LINE

DONATED GOODS CAN BE PUT TO GOOD USE AT NEW FAMILY SHELTER

• Q: *I have two items I would like to donate — a bench that a disabled person could use to sit in the shower and an electric sewing machine. Could Action Line guide me?*

Inez Young
Miami

• A: "We would love a sewing machine," Lois Legge of The Lodge, Miami-Dade's newest domestic abuse shelter, said. "We're doing a summer camp for the children, and we're going to be making a quilt."

Before your offer came along, the quilter-instructor was going to transport a sewing machine to the camp every day and take it back home. Your donation makes things much easier for everyone involved.

The shelter could also use a number of other items — cellphones, clothing for women and children, a piano and games (Monopoly, Candyland and the like). "We'd love to have a ping-pong table for the camp, too," Legge said.

If you can help, call 305-693-1170.

• INQUIRY

GYMBOREE REFUND FINALLY ARRIVES

• Q: *In February, the Gymboree Play and Music store located on Northeast 163rd Street in North Miami Beach closed its doors. Two weeks later, I received a letter from the owner stating that I was owed for 14 classes, for which I had paid $230. She didn't issue a refund but said I could use the letter as credit at another location or when the location reopened. Neither of these work for me. My child's to start camp fall time this month, and I will no longer need Gymboree. I sent the owner a letter and called Gymboree headquarters in San Francisco, but I'm still waiting for a reply. Can Action Line help?*

Lisa Mannis,
Hollywood

• A: You're getting your $230. The process was already in motion when we called Gymboree's headquarters. The franchise operator on Northeast 163rd Street apparently met most of her obligations. Jennifer Meyer, a Gymboree spokeswoman, said the company had only three complaints from customers.

"Unfortunately, some fell through the cracks," Meyer said.

Gymboree is at 877-449-6932, toll-free.

• ALERT

TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE IN HIGH-RISES, INSTALL WINDOW GUARDS

• Every year, almost 5,000 children — mostly toddlers — fall out of windows; 28 percent require a hospital stay, and dozens die, according to Safe Kids, the nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing unintentional childhood injuries. A child who falls 10 feet can suffer spinal cord injury, paralysis and fatal head injury.

Safe Kids recommends window guards on all windows above the first floor, preferably guards equipped with an emergency release device in case of fire.

A screen isn't a safety device. It's designed to keep insects out, not to keep children in. Proper window guards were shown to reduce fatal falls by up to 87 percent as part of a pilot program in New York City. In an apartment in a high-rise building, window guards should be considered essential safety equipment.

Still, it says, no safety device can take the place of active adult supervision. Toddlers have been known to fall out of windows that were open as little as five inches.

Safe Kids reminds parents and caregivers:

• Keep windows locked when they're closed, and keep furniture away from windows so kids can't climb to the ledge.

• Don't assume a closed window is childproof. If you have double-hung windows (the kind that can open down from the top as well as up from the bottom) it's generally safer to open the top pane, but growing kids may have enough strength, dexterity and curiosity to open the bottom pane.

• Never try to move a child who appears to be seriously injured after a fall. Call 911 and let trained medical personnel move the child with proper precautions. (If a child isn't breathing and you're trained in CPR, as all parents should be, follow the CPR protocols.)

• Tie the curtain pulls or blind cords out of reach. Children have been strangled while playing with dangling cords. Install safety tassels, or cut the loops, so a child is less likely to get trapped.

• ADDENDUM

SENSORS CAN LOWER CARS' POWER WINDOWS

• And while we're on the subject of windows: If you have children and you're buying a car with power windows, pay attention to the kind of switch used to raise the glass. There have been many serious injuries and even deaths when a child leans out of the open window, accidentally pushes on the toggle button and gets trapped by the rising glass.

These tragedies are most often associated with American-made vehicles. European and Asian safety laws ban switches that must be depressed to raise the windows; instead, switches have to be pulled up. Additionally, many foreign manufacturers have installed a sensor that automatically lowers the window if it meets resistance on the way up.

Although American car manufacturers plan to address the issue, it will be a long time before vehicles with dangerous switches are off the road.

RECALLS

FIREWORKS' DESIGN POSES SAFETY HAZARD

Jake's Fireworks of Pittsburg, Kan., is recalling about 75,000 artillery shell kits because the aerial shells are fused, shaped and labeled in a way that could cause consumers to unintentionally place them into the launch tube upside down, resulting in a ground-level explosion. Such an explosion can cause serious injuries to consumers in close proximity of the device.

The 24-shot Excalibur Reloadable Artillery Shell kits are sold in a black box with plastic windows. The kits are a consumer fire-works device that consists of a black plastic launch tube and 24 display shells. They were sold at fireworks retailers, including display stands and tents in the United States that permit the sale of consumer fireworks, from the winter of 2003 through the winter of 2004 for about $50.

Consumers should return the entire device to the point of purchase for a full refund or contact Jake's Fireworks for further instructions. It's at 800-766-0277 and www.jakesfireworks.com.

ROCKETS' RED GLARE
Fireworks mesmerized the crowd July 4 at the North Perry Airport in Pembroke Pines.

L. ALBERT PAZ / HERALD STAFF

Write Action Line, The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, FL 33132, or call 305-376-3000. In Broward, call 954-463-0404. Or e-mail actionline@herald.com

Thanks for all your inquiries. We wish we could answer, solve or even acknowledge every request you make. This isn't possible.

Do not send original documents; send copies only. We cannot be responsible for returning the originals.