

# Inventors COUNCIL

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## OF MID-MICHIGAN

PO Box 232, Lennon Michigan 48449

Web Site: [INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG](http://INVENTORSCOUNCIL.ORG)

The Inventors Council is an independent, non-profit 501 C-3 corporation formed to help inventors pursue their dreams of bringing new and innovative products to market. Our goal is to help fellow inventors succeed in the most efficient and least costly manner possible by providing education and business networking.

**Founded by Robert (Bob) Ross in 1995**

We meet monthly at Walli's Restaurant, 1341 South Center Road Burton, Michigan. Just Two blocks south of I-69, Exit 139

VOLUME SIXTEEN

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY 13, December, 2012, 7:00PM

NUMBER TWELVE

### Thursday December 13, 2012 Meeting

The meeting will begin at 7:00pm at Walli's as usual. We may be in the upper or lower conference room this month due to availability so Walli's can rent out the large upper room if a large party is scheduled.

Our December tour of a testing facility was cancel due to scheduling issues with the host company. We may reschedule next year.

We have decided to provide ICMM members with a paid salad bar at the meeting. We will all buy our own drinks.

We have some business to conduct but we will be having a networking party for the season. Let's have a great time.

### ICMM Dues for 2013

We will discount the yearly 2013 membership fee of \$55.00 to only \$50.00 for all members that pay in December 2012.

January Elections be held on January 10, 2013 at our regular membership meeting.

Remember that we need members to join the Board of Directors and help determine the direction of the Club. More to follow.

### Happy Holidays To Inventors and Friends of ICMM!!!!

#### December 8th Meeting to start at 7:00pm at Walli's Restaurant

1341 South Center Road  
Burton, Michigan

A Salad Bar will be provided for all ICMM members in attendance at no charge.

**2013 Dues paid in December 2012 will be discounted to \$50.00 for members. Dues paid in January will still be \$55.00 per year for everyone.**

### 2012 Highlights Review

Cubicle Cop—"ICCM Invention 2011" This is our invention project and we are at the packaging and marketing stage. We are refining some issues and will continue to work on the product development of the "Cubicle Cop" in 2012 and onward to continue to train our inventors how to invent.

We want to thank our Speakers and partners for 2012 at ICMM Meetings for a job well done.

Susan Shindricks - Enrichment Brigade  
Diane Durance - GLEQ  
Steve Fogarty and Alan Verstraete - Kidlock Products  
Matt Hahn - Michigan Thumb Works  
Daniel Davis - Icanstand Mobility Transporter  
Mike Suman - Author and Inventor/Consultant

Enhanced Invention Review process—We have added information to our review to better help the inventor to move forward after the review. We provided many more reviews.

Skype Presentations—We can now use UIA speakers around the country to present more information to our club

E-Team Membership and Networking Improved—We are working with many other organization to help new inventors and business start ups around the County and State and will be working with the E-Team in 2013.

Michigan Thumb Works—our members again attended and participated the Thumb Works event in Marlette

ICMM  
Home of the Happy Inventors



## MARKETING

Hints from the Fog  
by Mike Ball, President



### Top 10 Strange and Weird Inventions that made Millions

10. Take Doggles, the goggle-style [sunglasses](#) that aren't just for the pulchritudinous pooch on the go. These rover Ray-Bans do more than protect your pet from the sun's glare: They also keep out dust, debris and wind, block UV rays and assist in relieving ocular medical conditions, such as a rare autoimmune disorder that prevents dogs' eyes from producing tears [source: [Metro](#)].

So, who's the Fido behind those Foster Grants? Besides doing their duty (ahem) for hounds at home, Doggles shielded U.S. dogs in uniform from windblown sand in Iraq. We can't say for sure if the helicopter-hopping hound that accompanied [SEAL Team Six](#) on its mission to take out Osama bin Laden wore them, but it seems likely. Efforts are also under way to supply the shielding specs to search-and-rescue dogs.

Doggles, LLC has sold millions of pairs to pooches at \$19.90 a pop [source: [Montgomery](#)]. That's what we call making your bones

9. This Snuggie Team proudly poses at the 2010 Snuggie Choice Film Awards at 57 Screening Room on Oct. 20, 2010, in New York City.

Imagine you're sitting on your couch on a cold December day reading a book. It's chilly, so you decide to use a blanket. But wait! The blanket limits the use of your hands! What are you to do? Well, if you're willing to risk a little embarrassment, you can solve this problem by joining the millions of owners of sleeved blankets like the Snuggie, or its less-popular competitor, the Slanket.

Of course, you could simply wear a robe or a sweater when you get cold, but where's the fun in that?

There's no denying the Snuggie's appeal: More than 20 million Americans purchased a Snuggie between fall 2008 and Christmas 2009, at between \$10 and \$20 per blanket

Sales continue to be strong, and Snuggies for kids and pets (yes, pets) have heated up as gift items. They're a common sight on [airplanes](#) and at sporting events, and have even inspired "Snuggie pub crawls" in which human blankets trot from bar to bar, their inebriation barely outpacing their mortification

8. "Without a doubt," Albert Carter and Abe Bookman would have needed psychic powers to have predicted the eventual success of their Syco-Seer fortune-telling device. Even then, they would have been "very doubtful" that it would one day take the form of an 8 ball. "It is certain," however, that the spherical soothsayer owes its trademark black-and-white flair -- and, perhaps, its success -- to Chicago's Brunswick Billiards and its promotional interest.

Inspired by Carter's mother, a self-proclaimed Cincinnati clairvoyant, the ball began as a tube containing a thick liquid and a die with predictions printed on it. It was then briefly marketed as a crystal sphere, which caught Brunswick's eye, after which it assumed its sartorial fondness for basic black. Following a few technical advancements, the Magic 8-Ball became what it remains today: A sphere surrounding an alcohol- and dye-filled tube, which contains a 20-sided die stamped with various answers [source: [Walsh](#)].

7. Chains of paperclips, balls of rubber bands and piles of Post-it notes scattered throughout schools and workplaces everywhere silently attest that fidgety boredom, not necessity, is the mother of invention. Sometimes, though, the mother of invention is a father.

Looking for a ball that his kids could more easily catch, inventor Scott Stillinger tied a few rubber bands together into a sphere of strands surrounding a soft [rubber](#) core. Little did he suspect that he had a million-dollar idea on his rubber-reeking hands. His elastic echidna, Koosh, dominated the 1988 Christmas marketplace.

The multicolored dandelion went on to sell millions. After Stillinger was bought out, the company that purchased Koosh was sold to toy giant Hasbro in 1997 for more than \$100 million [source: [Adams](#)]. Koosh remains on the market today, both in its original form and in branded crossovers, including the Star Wars Episode 1 Sebulba Koosh, which strikes us as neither intimidating nor particularly fit for pod racing.

### Invention Review Panel

For objective evaluation and priceless feedback, share your invention ideas with an educated group of inventors, business owners, engineers and authors!

Our Panel will sign a non-disclosure agreement to guarantee your ideas are kept secret while we provide you with the input needed to make decisions, no matter what stage of the invention process you're at!

There's a \$25.00 Donation for a Review. The Panel meets at 6:15pm before each meeting. Call Panel Chairman Marty Sovis at 810-659-6741 for an appointment.

Review Panel Members  
Marty Sovis Rick Mason  
Jim White

**Bob Ross 1919 - 2004**  
*Inventors Education Column*

### *Inventors Resources*

**Michigan Inventors Clubs**  
Inventors Council of Mid-Michigan  
[Inventorscouncil.org](http://Inventorscouncil.org)

**Muskegon Inventors Network**  
[Muskegoninventorsnetwork.org](http://Muskegoninventorsnetwork.org)

**Grand Rapids Inventors Network**  
[GRinventorsnetwork.org](http://GRinventorsnetwork.org)

**Jackson Inventors Network**  
[Jacksoninventors.org](http://Jacksoninventors.org)

**MidMichigan Innovation Center**  
[www.mmic.us](http://www.mmic.us)

#### Officers and Directors

Mike Ball <i>President</i> 810-245-5599 michaelball@turbousa.com	Rick Mason <i>Vice-President</i> 810-659-7935 xyzmason@aol.com
Marty Sovis <i>Secretary/Treasurer</i> (810) 659-6741 Msovis@comcast.net	Mike Wiley <i>Director</i> 810-691-4451 mwiley1111@aol.com
Ron Kilponen <i>Legal</i> 248-344-7132 kilponen@bignet.net	Roger Stolpin <i>Director</i> 248-634-2129 Finite-007.att.net
Jim Harris <i>Member-ship</i> 810-621-	Mary Kordyban <i>Director</i> mkordyban1@gmail.com
Bill Brabeneck <i>Director</i> 810-724-2722 brab@tir.com	A 501-C-3 All-Volunteer Corporation

See pages 3 and 4 for other holiday inventions

## Top 10 Strange and Weird Inventions that made Millions (cont.)

6. Who would have guessed that the world was waiting for a revolutionary advance in plastic wishbone technology? Ken Ahroni, founder and inventor of Lucky Break Wishbone Corp., that's who. The idea to manufacture and sell fake wishbones came to the merry thought maven during an argument over who would get the wishbone from his [holiday turkey](#). Now, everyone, even vegans, can have a wishbone all their own -- because that was necessary, apparently. To his credit, Ahroni had to fracture a lot of furculas to come up with a plastic that would break like bone. After all, most plastics are designed not to break, and the ones that do break tend to shatter into slivers instead of delivering a satisfying snap. No, we're not pulling your pulley bone: The company sells millions of these bones of contention at a rate of four for \$3.99 or, even, 400 for \$195.99. It just goes to show that, for inventors, it's not over until the fish on the wall sings

5. This Big Mouth Billy Bass seems to have survived 2005's Hurricane Katrina. We're not quite sure if that's a good or a bad thing. At some point, just about everyone has had an [animatronic](#) fish like Big Mouth Billy Bass, Boogie Bass or Rocky Rainbow Trout belt a tune at them from a wall, a grocery store shelf or a white elephant gift box. The device was originally created by a Texas novelty toy company in the late 1990s, and it was soon reeling in the dough. Perhaps as a monument to buyers' questionable taste and willingness to annoy family members, by the start of the 2000s, the "[singing fish](#)" had become a hugely popular gag gift and stocking stuffer. Stores sold hundreds of singing stripers each hour and struggled to keep them in stock. Sales of the fish topped 1 million in the year 2000 alone

The fish spawned a slew of imitators, including other fish, lobsters and even [Christmas trees](#). But, as the word suggests, novelty items depend strongly on newness. Their popularity eventually tapered off, and while you can still find the fish in many stores, it's not nearly as in demand as it once was.

4. This fake pair of choppers, and others like it, generated some cash for an enterprising dental student and his partner, an ex-college football player. It must be a little disheartening for parents to see their progeny pop in a pair of Billy-Bob Teeth. There's nothing like spending thousands of dollars to correct a crossbite or undo an underbite, only to see it undone for \$9.99. Call it innocent fun, classism or revenge for months of stabbing wires, tight rubber bands and ludicrous headgear; whatever the motive, parents probably die a little inside. It's hard to believe that the profits from a set of novelty teeth could pay a dental bill, let alone settle a pair of student loans; but these [counterfeit](#) choppers not only dug their developers out of [debt](#), they made them millionaires. Born of a partnership between a dental student and a struggling ex-college football player, these demented dentures -- and related novelties such as Zombie Feet Sandals and hats with hair -- have sold more than 15 million units since 1994, and as of 1998 had grossed \$1.8 million [source: Chew on that.

3. Quick! What has fur, corgi ears and a bird beak, and can supposedly learn English? If you didn't guess the Furby, well, no one would hold it against you. The hottest toy on the market in the late 1990s is today little more than a faded memory, the subject of Internet snark and Urban Dictionary entries. Released in 1998 by Tiger Electronics, Furby stood 6 inches (15.2 centimeters) tall, was covered in colorful fur, and could play games and wiggle its body. Tiger marketed the computerized critter as one of the first widely available "artificial intelligence" toys. One of Furby's tricks was to "learn" English (thereby easing relations with those few owners not fluent in Furbish); actually, it was simply programmed to speak less of its gibberish language over time, replacing it with English. When one Furby was brought together with another, the two would engage in gibberish conversations, much the way some humans do. The hideous, hirsute critters debuted with a \$40 price tag, but in the proud tradition of holiday fad toys, soon saw demand drive their prices into the hundreds. In just three years, more than 40 million freakish furballs flew off the shelves, in a menagerie of shapes, sizes and themes, including a [Christmas](#) Furby, [Halloween](#) Furby and even a 2000 Presidential Election Furby [source: [AdoptAFurby.com](#)].

2. Like the Furby, this '90s relic simulated owning a pet -- a pet more prone to dying than a carnival goldfish during Rush Week. If you've ever dreamed of cleaning up the virtual excrement of a chirping, [battery](#)-powered, egg-shaped key chain, then rejoice: You're clearly not alone, because these electronic "virtual pets" sold like hotcakes. Japanese toymaker Bandai first unveiled "Tamagotchi" -- a portmanteau of the Japanese word for "egg" and the English word "watch" -- in 1996. It worked like this: You turned the Tamagotchi on, gave it a name and then used the buttons on the device to feed it, play games with it, put it to bed or, yes, clean up its waste. Over time, the creature on the black-and-white [LCD screen](#) would grow and change into different versions -- if you took good enough care of it, that is. The earliest Tamagotchi required near-constant attention or they would "die," mandating a reset of the device so the process could start over. This made them unpopular with parents and teachers, who noticed their kids sometimes cared for the toys at the expense of chores and homework. At one time, Bandai estimated it was selling a Tamagotchi per second. More than 70 million have been sold since then, spawning a slew of imitators [source: [Takahashi](#)]. The virtual varmints are still available, and elementary school kids can still be seen toting them on their backpacks, though not in the numbers they once did.

## Top 10 Strange and Weird Inventions that made Millions (cont.)

1. What is arguably the weirdest invention of all time to make millions of dollars wasn't really an invention at all:

The Pet Rock.

In case you don't recall this rocky fiasco, Gary Dahl, an advertising executive from California, figured out a way to decorate and market rocks as pets. It might not sound like much, but it spawned a fad that swept the U.S. like a runaway [rockslide](#).

Dahl purchased ordinary gray pebbles from a construction supplier and sold them as pets. Some models sported painted faces, while others bore glued-on googly eyes on their stony countenances.

In a testament to marketing, and to [P.T. Barnum](#), Dahl billed the pet rock as the perfect pet, one that never needed to be fed or cleaned up after. As outlined in a humorous manual included with the "pet," owners could talk to it, name it or teach it to do simple tricks. Many owners painted them or found other ways to personalize their rocks.

The Pet Rock debuted in 1975 at \$3.95 -- about \$16 in the current economy. In just six months, Dahl sold more than 5 million pet rocks, raking in a profit equivalent to \$56 million in 2011 dollars, in large part because of his lack of overhead: Buying the rocks and delivering them probably cost only 95 cents apiece [source: [PetsDo](#)].

Pet Rocks have staged a comeback on the Internet in recent years. You can still buy them online, though many are fancier than Dahl's originals.

Does that qualify as progress?

What is your crazy idea?

Can you make millions like these people?

You never know when one of your strange ideas will make it big.

**Keep inventing and have fun with it!!!!**