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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Anixter Center and National Lekotek Center Join Forces to Serve Individuals With Disabilities Across the Age Continuum**

*Lekotek – the nation’s largest central source on toys and play for children with disabilities –  
becomes a division of Anixter Center*

**(Chicago, IL) January 6, 2003** - - Anixter Center, one of the Chicago area’s largest providers of educational, vocational, health care and related services to individuals with disabilities, today announced that the National Lekotek Center, the country’s central source on toys and play for children with special needs, will be joining its “family” of services and programs. Lekotek is a national organization with 43 affiliates in 11 states. Lekotek was developed in Sweden in the early 1960s. The first American Lekotek location opened its doors in Evanston, IL, where the U.S. headquarters is located, in 1980.

Lekotek uses family-centered play as the cornerstone for building inclusive environments. Since play is considered the “work” of children, Anixter Center and Lekotek share many missions and objectives, and both are committed to inclusion and accessibility.

“A natural synergy exists between our organizations,” says Stuart G. Ferst, president and CEO of Anixter Center. “Lekotek is committed to helping children with disabilities and developmental challenges to be included in the full range of family and community life, which is very complementary to our mission. Working together, our organizations can extend the range of services we offer to people of all ages, beginning practically at birth.”

Helen McCarthy, executive director of Lekotek, says, “Our shared philosophies bode well for all of the clients we serve, and we’re thrilled to be joining forces with Anixter Center.” Additionally, “One of the most positive aspects of this collaboration is that Anixter Center has successfully partnered in the past with three organizations – CALOR, Chicago Hearing Society and Hearing Loss Link – that all have successfully maintained their individual identities.”

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Anixter Center and Lekotek Join Forces  
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In 1997, CALOR and Chicago Hearing Society became divisions of Anixter Center, as will Lekotek. (CALOR provides services to people with disabilities in Chicago's Latino community – especially those impacted by HIV/AIDS. The mission of Chicago Hearing Society is to empower deaf, hard of hearing and hearing people to communicate with each other, thereby lessening the isolation that separates them. Hearing Loss Link, now part of Chicago Hearing Society, specializes in assisting people with acquired hearing loss who have traditionally been neglected by service agencies.)

Advantages expected to evolve from the partnership are enhanced cost effectiveness, a sharing of knowledge and expertise and a further enhancement of each organization's already-strong reputation.

Lekotek, whose name loosely translates into "play library," will continue to be located at 2100 Ridge Avenue in Evanston.

For information about Anixter Center, go to [www.anixter.org](http://www.anixter.org). To learn more about Lekotek, see [www.lekotek.org](http://www.lekotek.org). Also, see the background profiles included with this press release.

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