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(54) **MAGNETIC CUP HOLDER**

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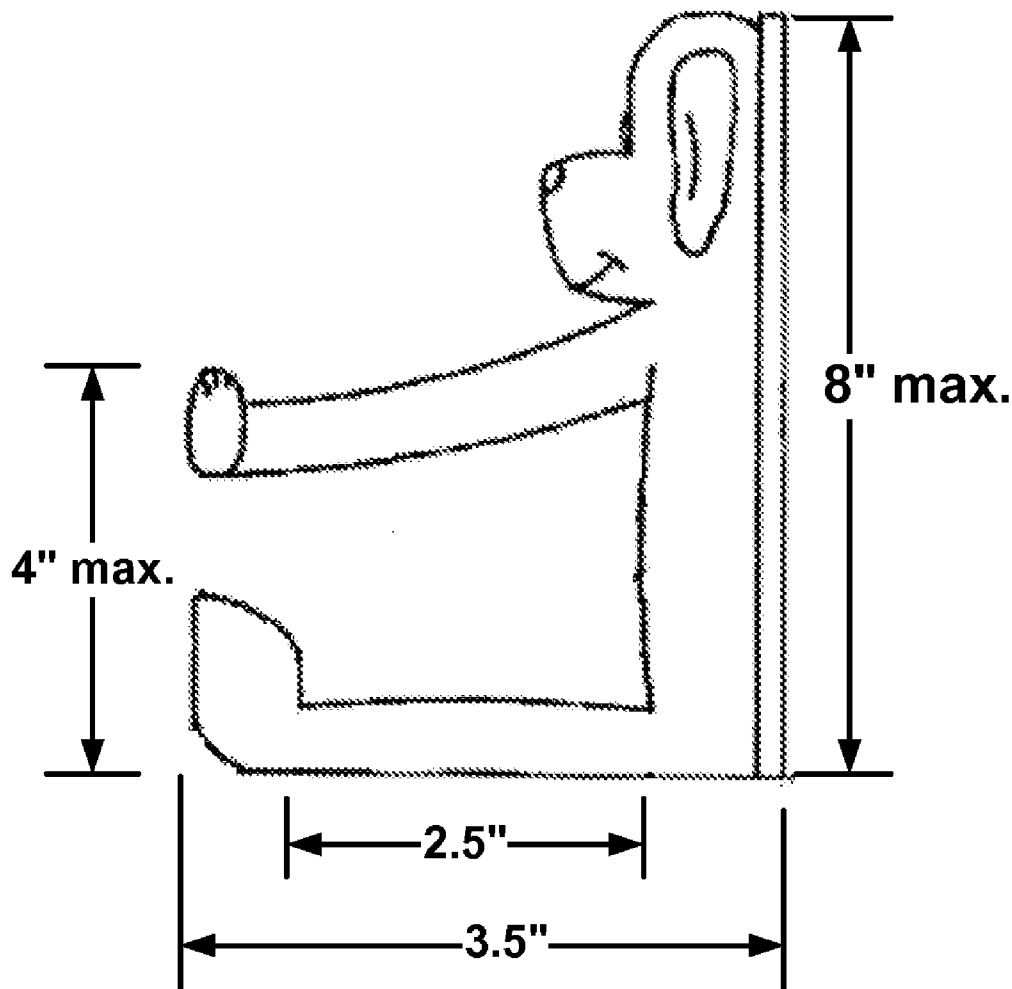
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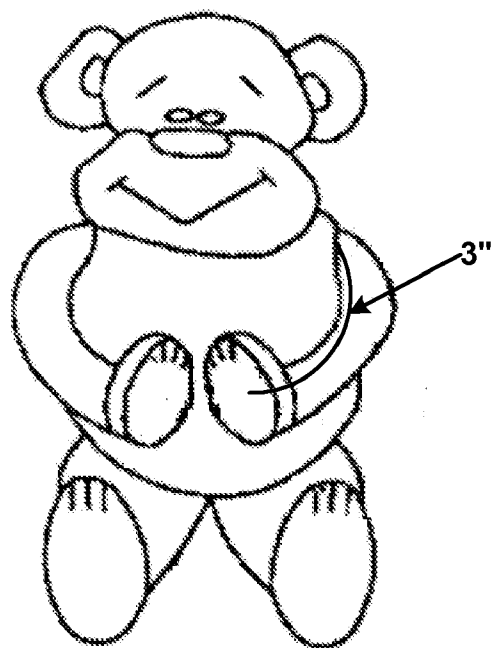
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A cup holder made of material that embraces a cup and that may be shaped to resemble an animal or character. The cup holder may be adhered to a metallic surface via a magnet and may be placed in a conspicuous and hygienically favorable location (i.e. refrigerator) for ease of use by a child or toddler.

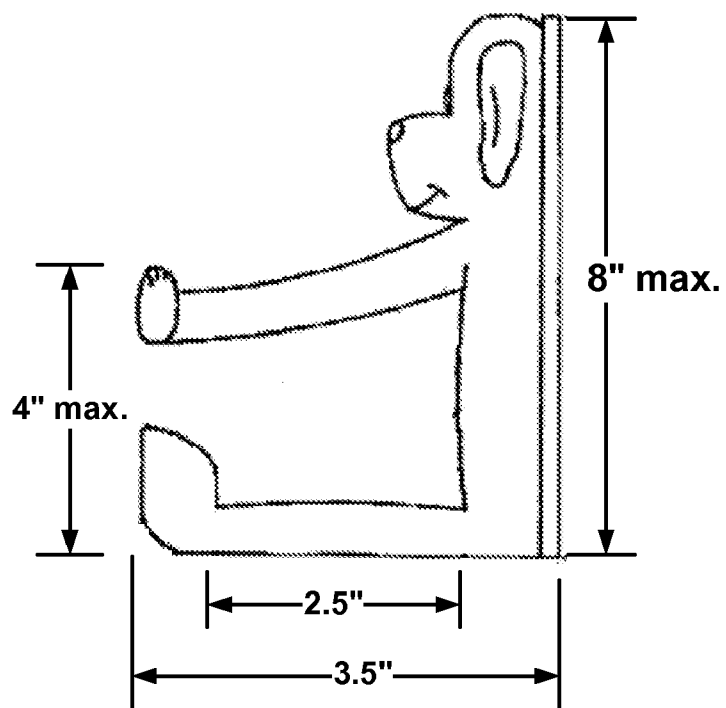
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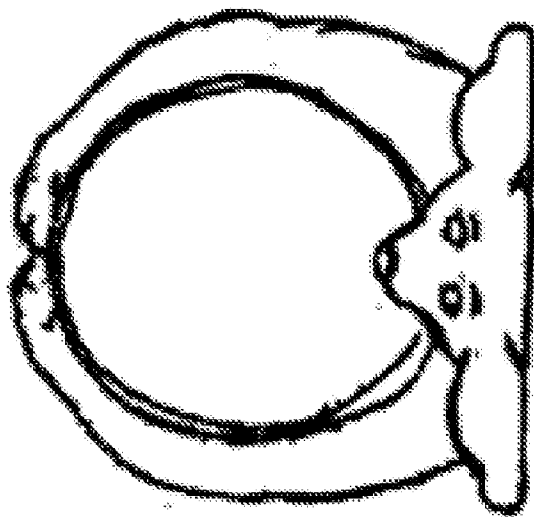
**FIG. 1**



**FIG. 2**



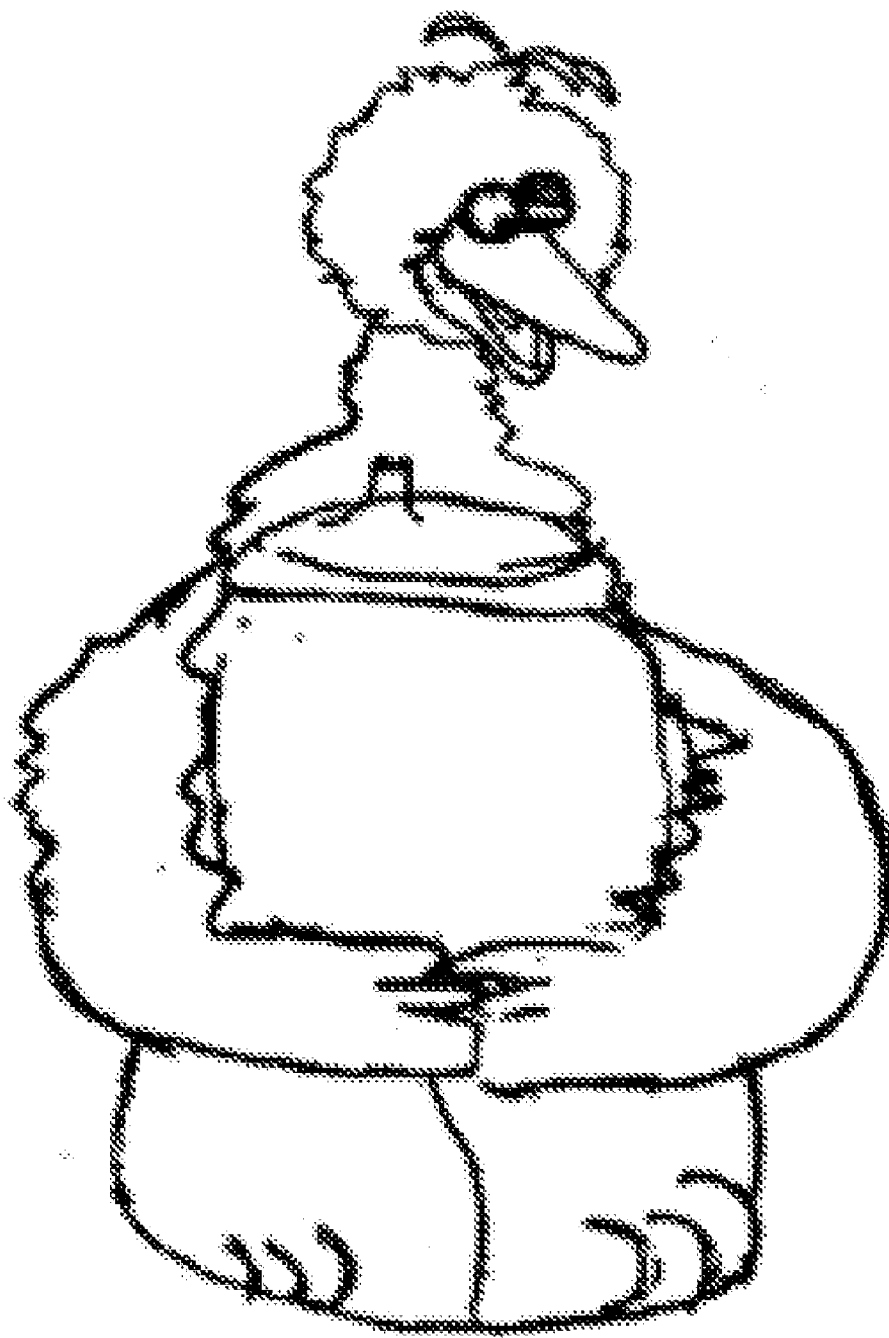
**FIG. 3**



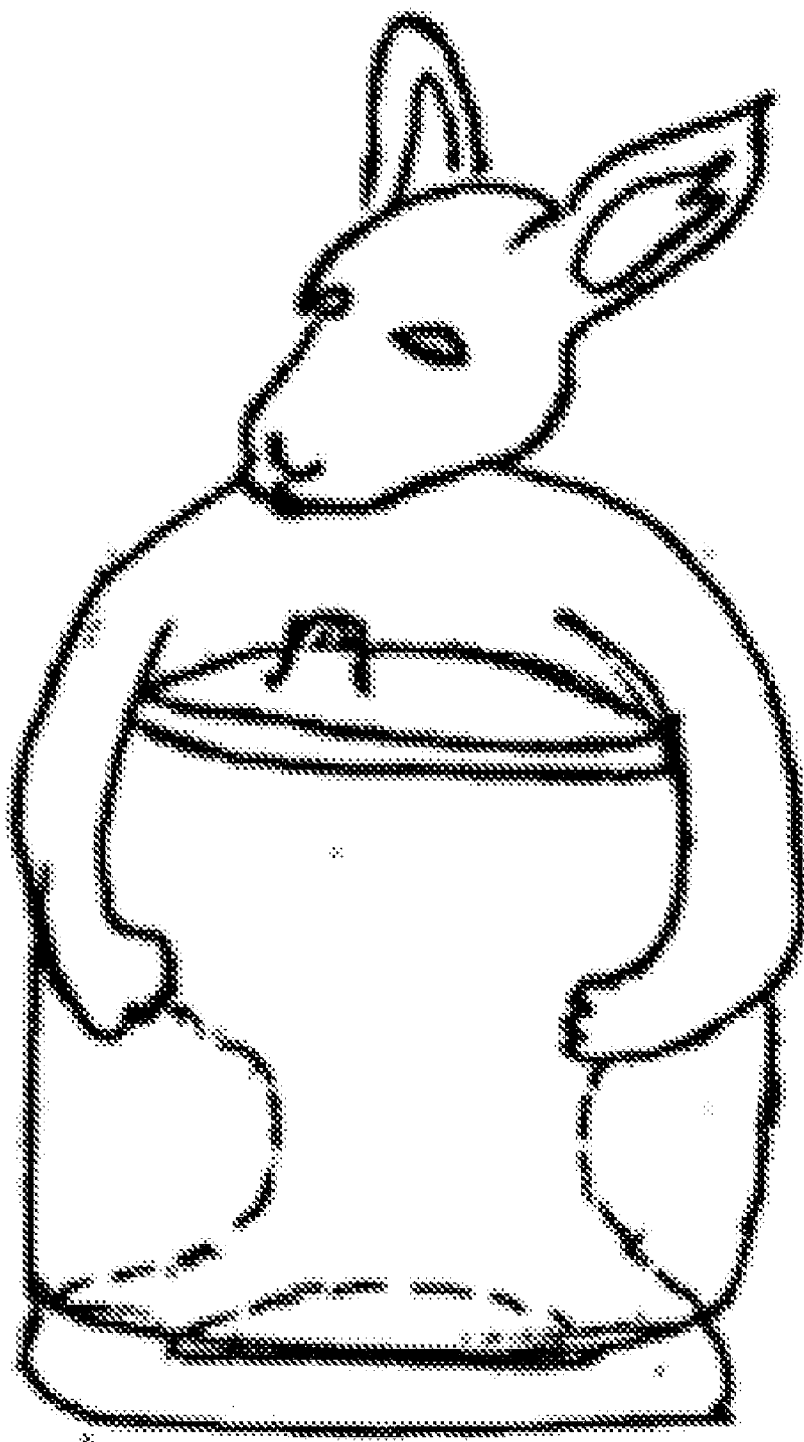
**FIG. 4**



**FIG. 5**



**FIG. 6**



**FIG. 7**

## MAGNETIC CUP HOLDER

### CROSS REFERENCE To RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/805, 274, filed Jun. 20, 2006, the teachings of which are incorporated herein by reference.

### FIELD OF INVENTION

[0002] The present invention relates to a magnetic cup holder device and more specifically pertains to one which may adhere to magnetic surfaces (i.e. refrigerators) and which may retain a child's cup or bottle. The cup holder may include a magnet forming at least a portion of the back of the cup holder. The cup holder may be molded, for example, into the shape of an animal or character. The animal or character may contain segments (e.g., arms) that may engage all or a portion of the circumference of the cup (the arms creating a circle or space in which to place the cup) to retain the cup within the device.

### BACKGROUND

[0003] Parents are often relegated to haphazardly placing cups or bottles on the floor, carpeted areas, counter-tops, or areas located distantly from the kitchen. This action challenges the child or caregiver's ability to independently access and retrieve a child's drink as needed. Additionally, the absence of a conspicuous and easily accessible storage receptacle may lead to unsanitary conditions and inaccessible storage locations (i.e. the kitchen counter). It also creates non-value added labor for the caregiver.

[0004] Several devices involving magnetic and other receptacle holders have been developed which perform a varying range of functions including supporting objects for the convenience of their use and allowing the user ease of proximity to their objects. These devices also offer a consistent base that allow for practical storing and subsequent locating of the stored objects. This affords the user easy accessibility. However, a device has yet to be developed that may provide a conspicuous and easily accessible storage location for a transitional cup, spouted cup, straw cup, or bottle within the household.

### SUMMARY

[0005] The present invention relates to a cup holder comprising an exterior surface that is capable of magnetically engaging a surface including extending features capable of retaining all or a portion of a cup outer surface, such as the outer cup circumference. The cup holder may include visual features that may allow for the user (a child) to identify the cup or bottle and to locate the cup on any given surface capable of supporting magnetic attachment. The extending features may provide mechanical type engagement with a given cup or may also magnetically engage a cup that itself includes features suitable for magnetic cup attachment.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] The detailed description below may be better understood with reference to the accompanying figures which are provided for illustrative purposes and are not to be considered as limiting any aspect of the invention.

[0007] FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of the magnetic transitional cup, spouted cup, straw cup, or bottle holder depicting the dimensional characteristics of the present invention, specifically the encapsulation of the cup.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a side view of the magnetic spouted or straw cup holder depicting the magnetic mounting surface and its accompaniment to the body of the holder.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a side view of an illustrative embodiment of a character that the holder may assume.

[0010] FIG. 4 is a top view of an illustrative embodiment of a character that the holder may assume.

[0011] FIG. 5 is an illustrative embodiment of a character that the holder may assume.

[0012] FIG. 6 is an illustrative embodiment of a character that the holder may assume.

[0013] FIG. 7 is an illustrative embodiment of a character that the holder may assume.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0014] The present invention relates to a magnetic cup holder that allows for the storage of a user's cup in what may be considered a conspicuous and user-friendly environment. The cup may include a spouted or straw top which may be integral to the cup, as in what may be known as a "sippy" type cup for children. The magnetic cup holder may therefore amount to a product which may provide a toddler or child a location-specific device for storing a cup at a desired location within the household.

[0015] This invention may therefore allow for the cognitive and accordant storage of a cup in a conspicuous and efficient area. The magnetic cup holder may be supported on a refrigerator or another commonly located ferrous surface (i.e., dishwasher, washing machine, etc.) for the storage and retrieval of the cup as may be desired by the user. The storage and retrieval process, to be completed by the infant/toddler, may therefore offer an organizationally sound basis of consistent and repetitive storage, as well as a convenient method to store the cup at various convenient locations.

[0016] Placing the receptacle within the reach of the child may afford the user (i.e., the child) a disciplined venue for accessing the cup as needed thereby promoting independence. This placement may also minimize the user's dependence precipitated by locale uncertainty or inaccessibility. It may also reduce the potential for unsanitary conditions provoked by placing the cup on the floor or carpeted areas. In addition, this exercise may promote a cognitive component of a functional necessity by allowing the user to match the cup to a corresponding base. For example, wherein various cups may be present to accommodate the need of more than one child, various holders may be used so that the child may differentiate their own or designated cup. The designated cup holder combination may be triggered by a specific cup color, character or cup shape.

[0017] Referring to FIG. 1, an exemplary magnetic cup holder may include an enveloping figure enabling the user to place the spouted or straw cup in a conspicuous and hygienically favorable receptacle. The enveloping figure may include appendages such as arms, legs, feet, hands, etc.,

which may retain the cup. Accordingly, the holder may be fashioned in such a manner that the figure appears to be “hugging” the cup. That is, the magnetic cup holder may include extending features that engage with the outer surface of a cup. Such outer surface may include the outer circumferential surface of a given cup, and as alluded to above, may engage with all or a portion of the circumference. Preferably, the features that may engage with the cup may engage with 180-360 degrees of a given cup circumference, to retain the cup within the cup holder, including all values and increments therein. For example, as illustrated in FIG. 1, the arm may engage more than 180 degrees of the cup circumference, and in particular, greater than about 270 degrees of the circumference. It may of course be appreciated that the greater amount of circumference engaged, the better the cup may be retained within the cup holder. In addition, while it may be sufficient for such extending features to engage and retain the cup, the cup holder may also include a base portion to provide additional support to the bottom of the cup when placed within the cup holder device.

[0018] Optionally, the cup may also be made of a magnetic material, and the arms of the cup holder may be magnetic, thereby providing magnetic engagement of the cup holder with a given magnetic cup or bottle. The magnetic arms may include an entire arm section made of a magnetic material or magnetic insert, or may include magnets of a selected size selectively position on the arms to facilitate magnetic engagement. In addition, the cup holder may provide a form of mechanical engagement with the cup, or the arms may be configured to define an opening diameter that is less than the diameter of the cup, so that an interference type fit may be available to the user. In addition, the cup may include a bottom section that specifically includes some form of mechanical attachment means to mechanically engage with the bottom of the cup holder, including a magnetic engagement.

[0019] Referring to FIG. 2, the holder may contain a magnetic feature that may allow for fastening to a magnetic (e.g. ferrous) surface. Such magnetic feature may be positioned along the back of the holder, and as shown, along the back of the included character. However, it may be appreciated that the magnetic backing may run along all or a portion of the backing of the cup holder, provided it is sufficient to attach the cup to a desired surface. The magnet may be capable of holding at least 32 ounces, including all values and intervals therein such as between 0 and 10 ounces, 12 ounces, 18 ounces, etc., of fluid to the desired ferrous surface. For example, the magnetic base may be comprised of an industrial strength magnet, preferably, but not limited to, at least minimum grade 5 ceramic anisotropic magnet with a 3.5 MGOe.

[0020] While illustrative dimensions are included in FIG. 1, as well as FIG. 2, and as alluded to above, the holder may assume any dimensions as long as there is provided sufficient space for the magnet and cup. In addition, the cup holder may be dimensioned to provide support for cups of various heights, diameters or geometries. For example, the legs may be flattened to support the bottom of the cup. The holder may allow for the placement of various children's cups including, but not limited to, transitional cups, spouted cups, straw cups, and bottles. A transitional cup may be any cup which aids a toddler or child in transitioning from drinking from a bottle to drinking from a spouted or straw

cup. A transitional cup may also be any cup which aids a toddler or child in transitioning from drinking from a spouted or straw cup to drinking from a conventional cup. A spouted cup may be a cup with a removable spouted cap. A straw cup may be a cup with a removable cap having an opening for a straw. Both spouted cups and straw cups may also be known as “sippy” type cups.

[0021] Referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, the receptacle may also be molded in the shape of a character familiar to children and toddlers so as to promote their usage of the product through familiarity. The appendages of the character may also be positioned in a manner that may allow for dockage of, for example, a dual handle cup. The positioning of the appendages may also allow for storage of other spouted and straw cups. Accordingly, the holder may be shaped so as to accommodate cup handles, spouts, straws, or other irregularities of the outer cup surface.

[0022] FIGS. 3 and 4 illustrate another exemplary embodiment of the present invention, wherein the cup holder assumes the shape of an animal, such as a dog. The particular sippy cup that is illustrated is without handles, however it should be appreciated that the sippy cup may otherwise contain handles. The cup holder defines an interior portion, as illustrated in the top view provided in FIG. 4, which conforms to the outer circumferential dimensions of the sippy cup. Accordingly, the cup holder may include a corresponding cylindrical interior portion to engage such sippy cup. The cylindrical interior portion may also have equivalent upper and lower diameters or may be tapered. It should be appreciated however that the cup holder may include an interior portion that may define any shape, and not just a cylindrical shape, as long as the shape is sufficient to retain the sippy cup.

[0023] In addition, the base of the cup holder may also conform to the dimensions of the sippy cup, defining a cylindrical base. However, it should also be appreciated that the base of the cup holder may be any geometry as long as the base is sufficient to support the cup. Therefore, the base may be a projection, of any geometry, extending from the holder.

[0024] The present invention may be fabricated using a molding technique with a resilient material such as plastic. However, other suitable material may be utilized. Exemplary plastic materials may include thermoplastic or thermoset polymer materials, including polypropylene, polyolefins (e.g., polyethylene and/or polypropylene), polycarbonate, polystyrene, thermoplastic elastomers, rubber, etc. For example, the use of polycarbonate may be desired, as it may provide relatively high impact resistance as well as transparency. The cup holder may be molded via a melt processing method such as injection molding, rotary molding, etc. wherein the plastic material may be over molded onto the magnet, allowing for the magnet to be completely or at least partially embedded within the polymer material at any location in the cup holder (e.g., the back of the cup holder, the retaining arms, etc.). The magnet may alternatively be affixed to the cup holder via an adhesive, such as a curable fast-curing epoxy, single-component adhesive such as cyano-acrylate, or similar adhesive. In addition other mechanical or chemical attachment means may be used to affix the magnet to the cup. For example, the magnet may be retained onto the cup using a fastener. Furthermore,

the magnet may be welded onto the back of the cup holder by plastic welding techniques, such as sonic welding.

[0025] FIGS. 5-7 are further exemplary embodiments of shapes or characters which the cup holder may assume, and as noted above, may allow for the cup to be identified by the user. FIG. 5 illustrates an embodiment wherein the cup holder assumes a dinosaur like character. FIG. 6 illustrates an embodiment wherein the cup holder assumes a bird like character. FIG. 7 illustrates an embodiment wherein the cup holder assumes a kangaroo like character, the phantom lines illustrating an embodiment of the shape of the back and base portion of the holder located behind the cup. Note that the base portion may be a ring defining a hole in the center of the ring. In addition, it may be appreciated that the cup holder may be of different colors or contain any other visual cue which may identify the cup so that they are readily distinguished when in use.

[0026] The above described delineation encompasses a practical description of this invention. This description is intended to include variations and modifications which may be made by those skilled in the art. It is understood that any modifications or variations made by those skilled in the art are within the spirit or scope of the invention are hereto inclusive.

What is claimed is:

1. A cup holder comprising an exterior surface that is capable of magnetically engaging a surface including extending features capable of retaining all or a portion of a cup outer surface.

2. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said features capable of retaining all or a portion of a cup outer surface include retaining an outer circumferential cup surface, and said features engage between about 180-360 degrees of said cup outer circumferential surface.

3. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder includes an interior portion which defines a cylindrical shape.

4. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder includes a base portion which provides a supporting surface for said cup.

5. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder is capable of retaining cups of various heights.

6. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder is capable of retaining a transitional cup, spouted cup, straw cup, or bottle.

7. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said exterior surface capable of magnetically engaging a surface includes a magnet affixed to said cup surface with an adhesive.

8. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said exterior surface capable of magnetically engaging a surface includes a magnet embedded into said cup holder.

9. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder comprises a plastic material.

10. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said cup holder includes a visual feature capable of identifying said cup holder to a user.

11. The cup holder of claim 1 wherein said extending features are capable of magnetically engaging a cup.

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