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(54) **LINKABLE-SHARED FRIENDSHIP OBJECTS**

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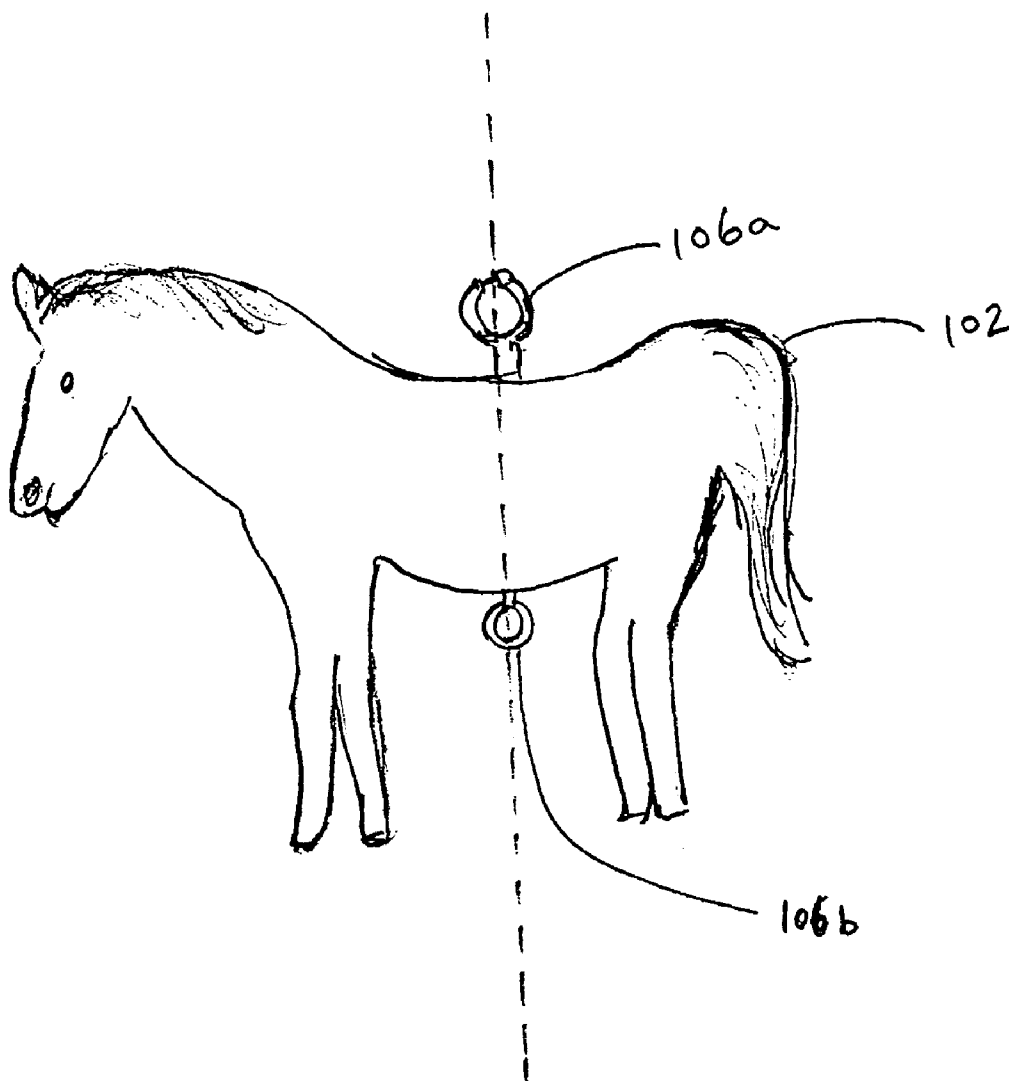
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ABSTRACT

A friendship object kit comprising at least a pair of friendship objects that are packaged and sold together, where a first one of the friendship objects is for a first person to keep and second one of the friendship objects is for a second person to receive from the first person, the pair of friendship objects each comprising a connector mechanism associated with it so that multiple friendship objects from different pairs of friendship objects can be linked together by one person. The friendship objects may be substantially similar or complementary and made in a variety of shapes and configurations.

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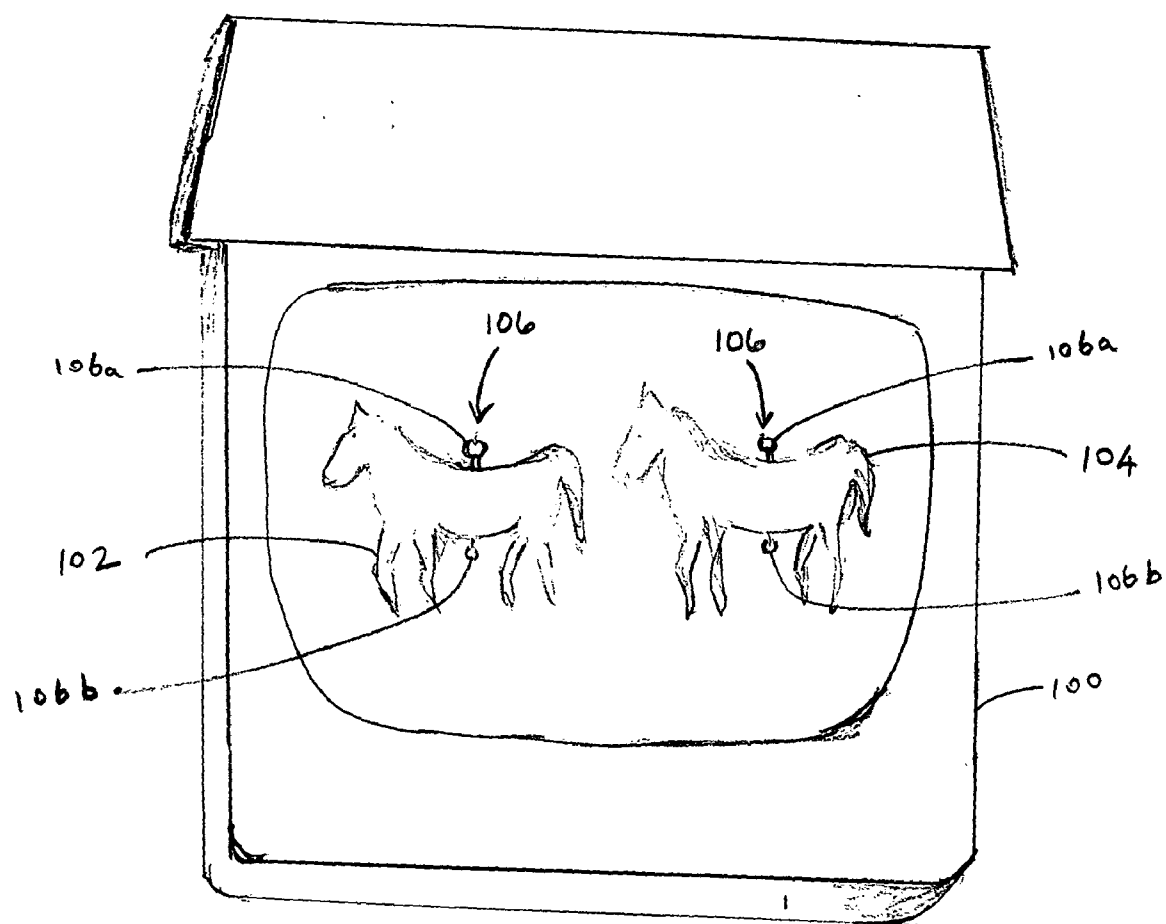


FIG. 1

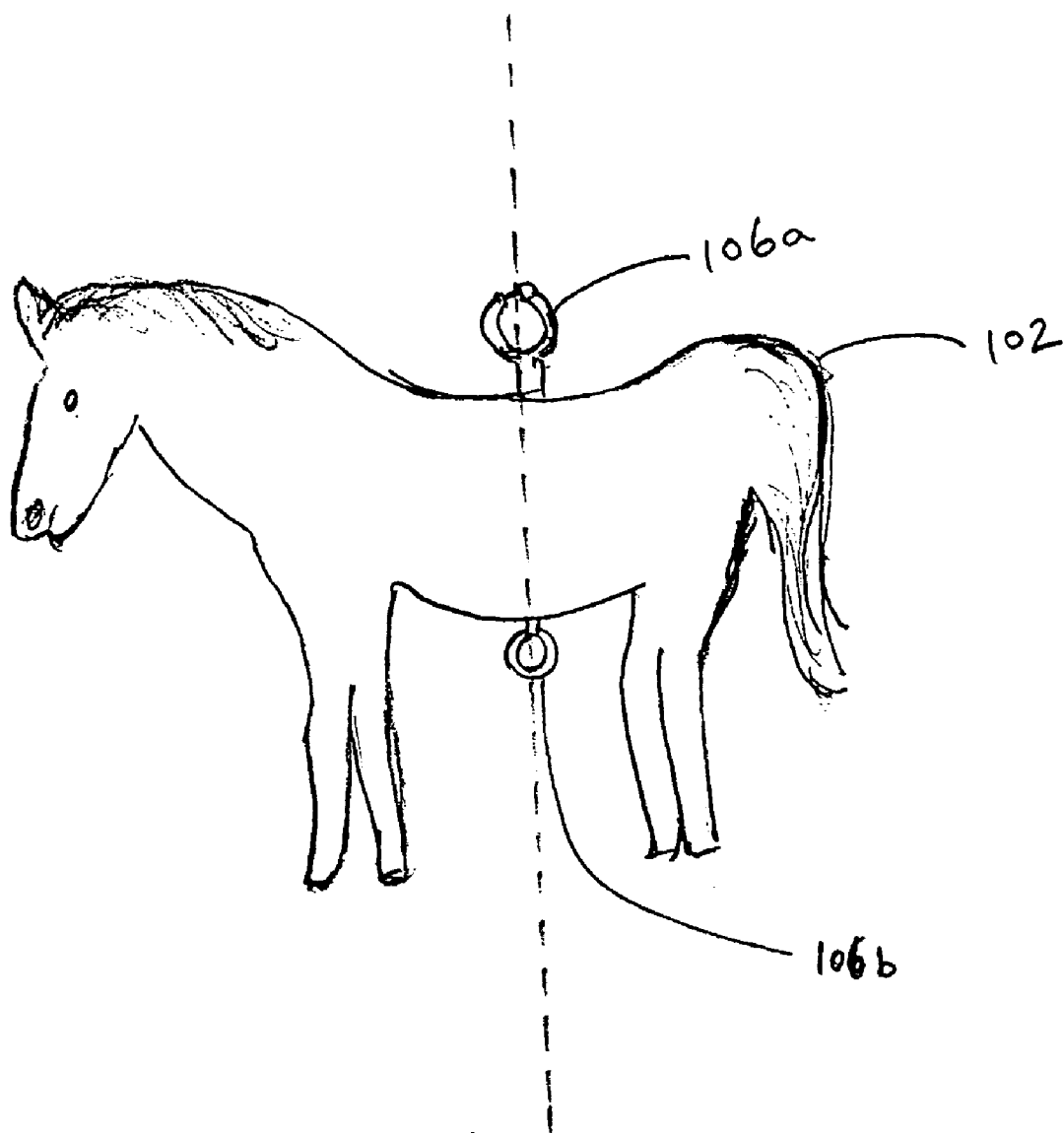


FIG. 2A

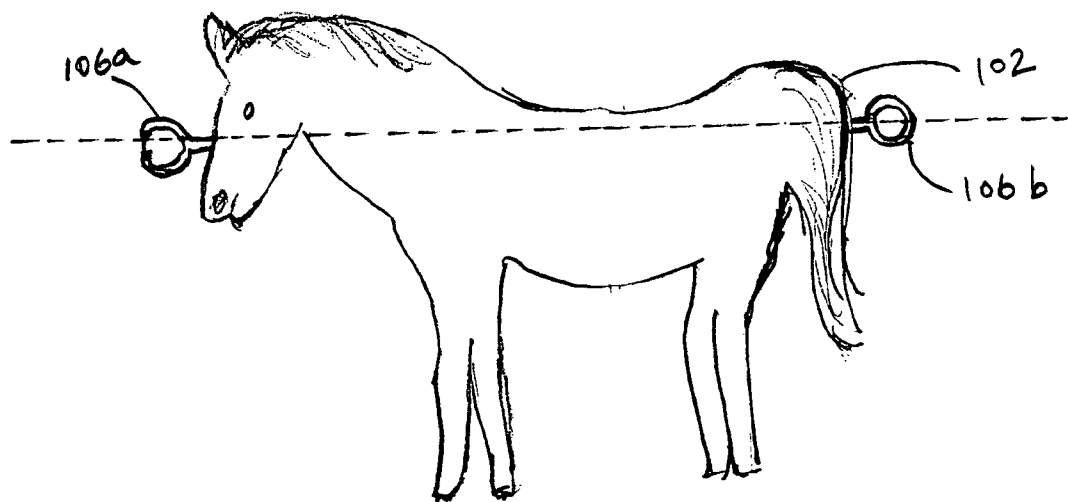


FIG. 2B

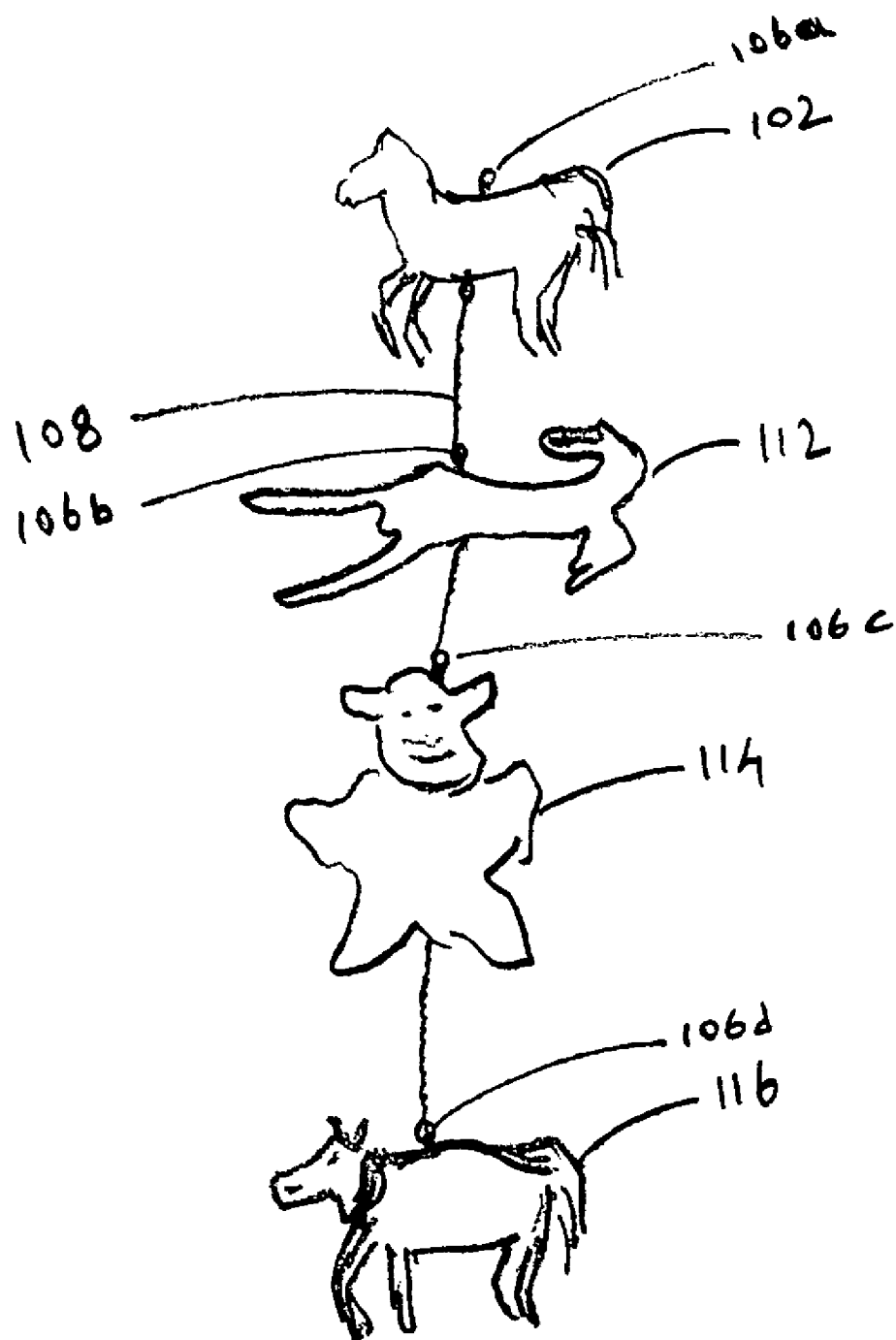


FIG. 3

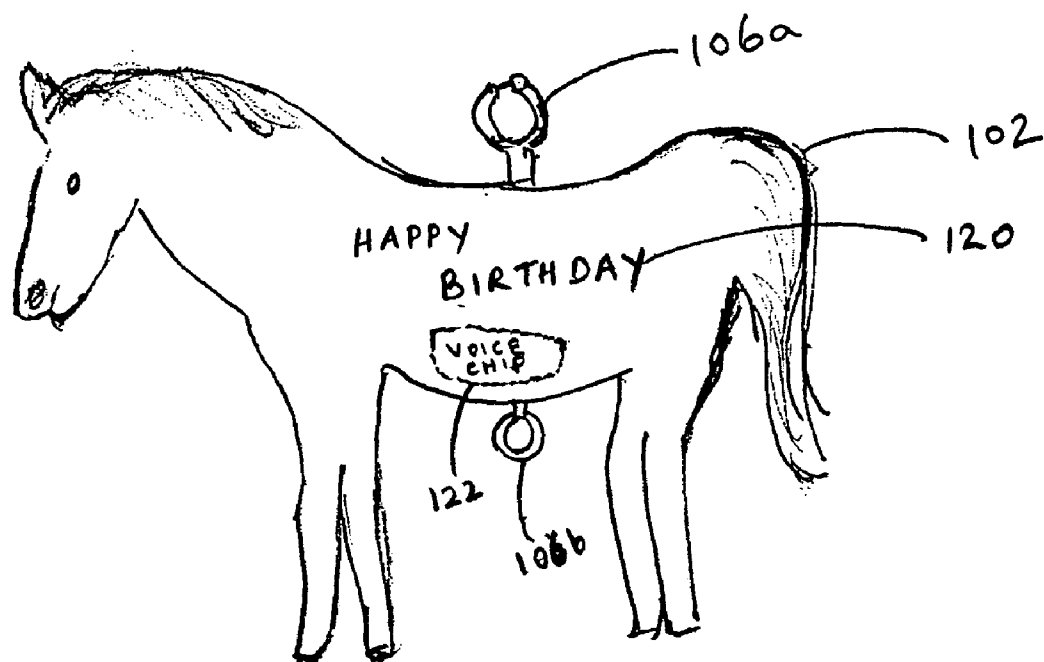


FIG. 4

LINKABLE-SHARED FRIENDSHIP OBJECTS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to providing two or more friendship objects that are sold together, where one object is kept by one person and the other is given to a second person and each of the objects has a connector to enable multiple friendship objects to be linked or otherwise connected together to form jewelry, chains or other linked objects.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Friendship bracelets per se are known. Typically these items are given by one friend to another and worn as a symbol of friendship. Each item typically is created and exists in isolation.

[0003] Other types of friendship objects are also known. For example, in some cases two halves of one object must be put together to complete the object. In these cases, each of two friends keep one of the two objects and when the two friends get together, they can put the two objects together. For example, friendship rings are known. With friendship rings, each person has a single ring. When the rings are brought together, some synergistic result occurs. This pair of objects may be created and exist in an isolated pair.

[0004] Charm bracelets also are known. With charm bracelets, typically a person collects a number of charms. Each charm is typically connected to a bracelet, but not to each other. While a first friend could give a charm to a second friend, there is typically no corresponding charm kept by the first friend.

[0005] Other types of friendship tokens exist.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] One aspect of the invention is a novel idea with respect to friendship objects. According to one aspect of the invention, two or more friendship objects are sold together, where a first person keeps one of the objects and gives a second object to a second person (e.g., a friend, team mate, co-worker, customer or other person) that keeps the second object. Each of the friendship objects may be substantially identical or complimentary. Each preferably has a connecting mechanism associated with it so that a person can collect and link together friendship objects given to or received from a number of friends. In this way, multiple pairs of friendship objects can be created and used together.

[0007] According to other embodiments, more than two friendship objects are created and packaged together. In this way, more than two friends can “share” similar or complimentary friendship objects. Thus, two or more friends can share multiple objects and link together the multiple friendship objects.

[0008] According to some embodiments, the friendship objects are specially adapted to enable the linked objects to form a necklace, a bracelet, or other item of “jewelry, or a belt, (Heidi—list others) or other object that may typically be worn by an individual. According to other embodiments, the objects may be linked together to form chains or other linked structures. These structures may be attached to other structures such as bookcases, knapsacks and other structures.

[0009] The objects may be substantially identical so that each friend has a substantially identical replica of what the other friend has. Alternatively, the objects may be complimentary so that when the objects are brought together some synergistic effect occurs. For example, each of the objects may contain a portion of a visual message so that when they are brought together the entire message is visible, in either a static or dynamic manner (as discussed below). Audible and other forms of synergistic cooperation can be implemented.

[0010] The connecting mechanism may include one or more of a jewelry clasp, a hook and loop fastener (e.g., Velcro™), a clip, or any other suitable connecting mechanism. In some embodiments, the friendship objects are directly connected to one another. In other embodiments, they are indirectly connected (e.g., through a chain or other intermediate connector portion).

[0011] The friendship objects can be made of a variety of materials and can be in any one of a variety of shapes or configurations. According to one embodiment, the friendship objects may be plush objects such as stuffed animals or other stuffed objects. In other embodiments, they can be more rigid objects. Alternatively, the objects can be shapes (e.g., hearts or other shapes), fruits, flowers, automobiles, characters, sports related objects, hobby related objects, logos, mascots, or any other suitable shape.

[0012] According to another embodiment, the friendship objects may be adapted to enable various forms of personalization. For example, the personalization may be in the form of a written message, an engraved or embroidered message, or other visual message. According to other embodiments, the personalization may be in the form of a personal voice message (e.g., recorded on a voice chip), a pre-recorded message or other audible personalization. Various combinations of personalization techniques may be used.

[0013] Other objects and features of the invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in connection with the accompanying drawings. The drawings are designed for purposes of illustration only and the invention is not limited to the particulars shown therein. Various alternatives and modifications within the scope of the invention will be apparent from the description contained herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 illustrates an example of a package including a pair of friendship objects, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0015] FIG. 2A illustrates an example of a friendship object having connecting mechanisms in its vertical axis, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. 2B illustrates an example of a friendship object having connecting mechanisms in its horizontal axis, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0017] FIG. 3 illustrates an example of a plurality of friendship objects linked together, according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0018] FIG. 4 illustrates an example of a friendship object including a personalized message, according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] One aspect of the invention relates to at least a pair of (or more) friendship objects that may be created, packaged and/or sold together. Preferably, one person may keep one of the friendship objects and give a second friendship object to a second person. As illustrated in **FIG. 1**, a package **100** may include at least a pair of friendship objects (**102**, **104**). Each of the friendship objects (**102**, **104**) may be substantially identical or complimentary. Each friendship object (**102**, **104**) may include one or more connecting mechanisms, generally designated **106**. According to one embodiment, the connection mechanism may include a first connection component **106a** and a second connection component **106b**. The connection mechanism (and/or connection components) may be used to connect together or link multiple friendship objects, so that multiple friends can share and link together multiple friendship objects. In one embodiment (not shown), the connecting mechanism may include a jewelry clasp. For example, a first connection component **106a** of a first object may be a substantially solid ring (or other shape) and a second connection component **106b** may include a latch that can be opened, connected to the first connection component of second friendship object, and closed. In another embodiment, the connecting mechanism **106** may include a hook and loop fastener material (e.g., Velcro™). Any suitable connecting mechanism may be used such that the objects are linked together.

[0020] According to one embodiment, a connection component (e.g., **106a**) of a friendship object may be directly coupled to a connection component (e.g., **106b**) of another friendship object. According to another embodiment, connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) of a pair of friendship objects (e.g., **102**, **104**) may be coupled via an intermediate connector, for example, a chain, or any suitable structure.

[0021] **FIGS. 2A and 2B** illustrates friendship object **102** having connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) for linking to one or more other friendship objects. According to one embodiment, friendship object **102** may include one or more connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) oriented along any axis or orientation. For example, in some embodiments, as illustrated in **FIG. 2A**, friendship object **102** may include one or more connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) attached along the vertical axis of object **102**. In other embodiments, as illustrated in **FIG. 2B**, friendship object **102** may include one or more connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) attached along the horizontal axis of object **102**.

[0022] As illustrated in **FIG. 3**, a plurality of friendship objects (e.g., **102**, **112**, **114**, **116**) may be linked together. In some embodiments, each of the plurality of friendship objects (e.g., **102**, **112**, **114**, **116**) may include a connector **108** coupled to connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**). Connector **108** may enable linking one friendship object to another friendship object. In other embodiments, each of the plurality of friendship objects (e.g., **102**, **112**, **114**, **116**) may be directly linked together via connecting mechanisms (**106a**, **106b**) without intermediate connector **108**.

[0023] In one embodiment, a plurality of friendship objects (e.g., **102**, **112**, **114**, **116**) may be adapted to enable the linked objects to form a necklace, bracelet, anklet, belt, or other item of "jewelry" that may typically be worn by an individual. In another embodiment, a plurality friendship

objects (e.g., **102**, **112**, **114**, **116**) may be linked together to form zipper pulls, key chains or other objects that may be attached to structures such as bookcases, knapsacks and other structures.

[0024] According to one embodiment, the friendship objects (e.g., **102** and **104**) may be substantially identical so that each friend has a substantially identical replica of what the other friend has. According to another embodiment, the friendship objects may be complimentary so that when the objects are brought together some synergistic effect occurs. For example, each of the objects may contain a portion of a visual message so that when they are brought together the entire message is visible. Other forms of synergistic cooperation can be implemented.

[0025] As opposed to this static synergistic effect, a dynamic synergistic effect may occur. For example when one object is brought close to or in contact with a second object, that triggering activity may cause at least one (or more) of the objects to exhibit a dynamic behavior. The dynamic behavior may include causing an audible message or other sound to occur, causing a visual display or other visual effect to occur, or to cause some other dynamic effect to occur. One example is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 6,050,695, which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0026] According to another embodiment, the friendship objects may be adapted to enable various forms of personalization. For example, the personalization may be in the form of a written message, an engraved or embroidered message, or other visual message. As illustrated in **FIG. 4**, friendship object **102** may include a personalized message **120** engraved or embroidered on its surface.

[0027] The personalization may also be in the form of one or more personal or pre-recorded voice message (e.g., recorded on a voice chip **122**), or other audible personalization. In some embodiments, friendship object **102** may include a voice recording and a playback mechanism to enable a friendship object to be personalized by recording or re-recording on a voice chip one or more audible messages. In one embodiment, friendship object **102** may be personalized by a first person before receipt by a second person. According to another embodiment, the personalization may occur when both friends are present.

[0028] The friendship objects can be made of a variety of materials and can be in any one of a variety of shapes or configurations. According to one embodiment, the friendship objects may be plush objects such as stuffed animals or other stuffed objects. Alternatively, the objects can be shapes, including but not limited to hearts, fruits, trees, automobiles, planets, houses, people, logos, or mascots.

[0029] The connector mechanism may be located on the friendship object in a location and/or orientation to enable or facilitate the linking of certain types of objects for certain purposes. For example, in one embodiment, as shown for example in **FIG. 4**, the first connector component and second connector component extend along an axis that is substantially vertical with respect to object **102**. In other embodiments, the connector components may be located on an axis substantially perpendicular to that axis. For the particular object shown, the height (along what was referred to as the vertical axis) is less than the length (along a perpendicular axis). If it is desired to maximize the length of

a link, it may be desirable to locate connector components along a longer axis of the friendship objects. If it is desired to increase the number of objects that can be linked in a given length, it may be desirable to locate the connector components along a substantially shorter axis of the friendship objects.

[0030] In other embodiments, more than one set of connector components can be located on a friendship object, along substantially perpendicular axes or otherwise.

[0031] According to another embodiment, the shape, color or other characteristics of object **102** can have significance. For example, a common designator may be used to indicate whether an object was one that the person received from a particular person or if it corresponds to an object that the person received from a different friend. In this way, friends can “compete” to see who can collect the most of a particular type of friendship object. Therefore, a common designator may makes an object recognizable from a specific person.

[0032] While particular embodiments of the present invention have been described, it is to be understood that modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. The scope of the invention is not limited to the specific embodiments described herein.

1-7. Cancelled

8. A friendship object kit comprising at least a pair of friendship objects that are packaged and sold together, wherein a first friendship object of the pair is for a first person to keep and a second friendship object of the pair is for a second person to receive from the first person, the first and second friendship objects each comprising a connecting mechanism to enable multiple friendship objects from different pairs of friendship objects to be linked together, and wherein each of the first and second friendship objects is personalized by an audible message.

9. A friendship object kit comprising at least a pair of friendship objects that are packaged and sold together, wherein a first friendship object of the pair is for a first person to keep and a second friendship object of the pair is

for a second person to receive from the first person, the first and second friendship objects each comprising a connecting mechanism to enable multiple friendship objects from different pairs of friendship objects to be linked together, and wherein each of the first and second friendship objects comprises a voice recording and playback mechanism to enable each of the first and second friendship objects to be personalized by an audible message.

10-16. Cancelled

17. The friendship object kit of claim 8, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise animal-shaped objects.

18. The friendship object kit of claim 17, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise substantially identical animal-shaped objects.

19. The friendship object kit of claim 17, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise different animal-shaped objects.

20. The friendship object kit of claim of claim 8, wherein the connecting mechanism comprises at least a jewelry clasp.

21. The friendship object kit of claim of claim 8, wherein the connecting mechanism comprises hook and loop fastener material.

22. The friendship object kit of claim 9, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise animal-shaped objects.

23. The friendship object kit of claim 22, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise substantially identical animal-shaped objects.

24. The friendship object kit of claim 22, wherein the first and second friendship objects comprise different animal-shaped objects.

25. The friendship object kit of claim of claim 9, wherein the connecting mechanism comprises at least a jewelry clasp.

26. The friendship object kit of claim of claim 9, wherein the connecting mechanism comprises hook and loop fastener material.

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