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LOCAL SPECIALTY ADVERTISING FIRM DEBUTS NEW BUSINESS LINE THAT'S TURNING THE INDUSTRY ON ITS EAR AND TAKING OFF LIKE A ROCKET

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, June 6, 2008 –The Prestigious Mark of San Antonio announced today its new business division and product line called “*a la Mark*.” Starting soft in January but gaining ground fast, *a la Mark* focuses exclusively on producing upscale, custom-made corporate and promotional gift baskets—and big companies from all over are abuzz about it and placing orders.

“I have been consistently busy since we started,” says Hannah West, *a la Mark*’s creative director and the talent behind every gift “basket” that takes the shape of a margarita glass, Texas-shaped reusable container or novelty cigar box. Already, *a la Mark* is working vigorously to fill mounting orders from enthusiastic clients including Valero, Lyda Swinerton, American Dental Association, Travis Commercial Real Estate Services, Primesports Mexico, Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce, The RK Group, Mercy Health System and CE Group.

a la Mark is revolutionizing the traditional cookie-cutter approach to promotional products by offering unusual, handmade gift baskets chocked full of custom-imprinted goodies and filling orders for hundreds at a time. The niche apparently is overdue in the industry. According to the Advertising Specialty Institute, the promotional product and specialty advertising industry may not be spending much time in general on creative custom packaging or “whole experience delivery” as the niche is coined. Not so with *a la Mark*.

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The idea behind *a la Mark's* made-to-order product line is to integrate a company's logo, and even the lifestyle preferences and cultural nuances of employees or customers, into both the design and the treasures loaded into each memorable, reusable container.

Philip Rodriguez, specialty services buyer for Valero, weighs in about *a la Mark's* one-of-a-kind new line. "*a la Mark* takes 'promotional' one step further," he says. "Now we have a resource for the unique promotional gifts we've wanted for a very long time."

Recently, when Valero needed Texas-themed mementos for visiting out-of-town officials, West invented her now-popular "Fiesta Margarita Glass." The oversized goblet is stuffed and piled high with trinkets like cascarones, maracas and Mexican tin ornaments as well as tasty munchies including candy, snacks and drink mixers, and it's all dressed up in elegant cellophane and streams of cheerful ribbon.

"My favorite so far was the humorous presentation I designed for a visiting dignitary's birthday," West says. "I created a colorful 'birthday cake' over two feet high, filled it with traditional Mexican toys and candies, and then topped it off with a Twister game."

It is West's personal touch blended with her professional training that distinguishes *a la Mark*. She joined The Prestigious Mark in 2006 with experience as lead-designer in the event-planning industry and an impressive 3,000 events under her belt, and as principal of a high-end family-owned leather business. The new custom line affords West the creative outlet she craves while also satisfying a market niche that contributes to The Prestigious Mark's bottom line.

"We combined our creative director's passion and talent for designing one-of-a-kind gifts with our clients' need for unique promotional and corporate items they can't get anywhere else," says Patricia Wallace, vice president of operations of The Prestigious Mark.

"I can come up with almost anything anyone needs, from small inexpensive party favors to over-the-top presentations for a special occasion," says West. "I'll gift-wrap a car if someone wants me to!"

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With custom gifts, one size does not fit all. When Mercy Health of Kentucky held its convention in San Antonio, West came up with novel ideas to suit a variety of different needs for the one affair. She fashioned 132 small cellophane-wrapped baskets for attendees' hotel rooms, 78 Texas-themed promotional packages for executive attendees, and 20 barbecue-themed gifts for a chili cook-off.

For another conventioneer, she handcrafted upscale, personalized packages for the top officials of the American Dental Association, outfitting each gift container with lots of local memorabilia such as boxes of Alamo-shaped cookies.

In addition to serving as impressive mementoes, custom gift baskets are practical marketing tools. *a la Mark* helped Diabetica Solutions, for example, differentiate itself by introducing a new medical instrument to 200 physicians in an unusual way. West packaged each of the devices along with literature and tutorial CD in a festive leave-behind—an insulated hand-carried cooler wrapped up and decorated to resemble a charming picnic basket.

“To the best of our knowledge, no one else is doing this in our industry or anywhere else in the region,” says Karen Norman, CEO of The Prestigious Mark. “I’ve always thought the gift-basket business would be wonderful to get into, as long as we could keep our products unique and fresh and satisfy large-quantity orders. Now we can do both, with *a la Mark*.”

a la Mark offers an inexpensive, unique assortment of stock custom gift presentations, including Texas- and Fiesta-themed baskets, “Wine Accessories,” “Picnic Time,” and “Cigar Box” for approximately \$30 apiece. Its more pricey presentations, which are rising in demand West says, each cost \$150 or more, with reasonable minimum orders required if the company’s logo is integrated into all the items inside. Turnaround times vary by type and quantity ordered.

For more information on *a la Mark*, contact Karen Norman or visit www.theprestigiousmark.com.

The Prestigious Mark is a San Antonio company established in 1998 that specializes in extraordinary specialty items and promotional and corporate gifts. The Prestigious Mark is a 10-year member of the Advertising Specialty Institute and Promotional Products Association International, and is a certified small, woman-owned and historically underutilized business. For more information contact Karen Norman, CEO, The Prestigious Mark, 7979 Broadway, Suite 200, San Antonio, Texas 78209. PHONE: (210) 820-0093. EMAIL: knorman@theprestigiousmark.com. WEBSITE: www.theprestigiousmark.com.

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