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**GREETING CARD ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES  
LOUIE AWARD FINALISTS**

Washington, DC – The Greeting Card Association (GCA) has announced the finalists for the best greeting card and stationery products of the past year. Out of the thousands of cards and invitations published each year, 176 made it to the final round in the 21st Annual International Greeting Card Awards competition, better known as the "LOUIEs". The theme of this year's awards program is ***"A CELEBRATION OF IMAGINATION"*** in recognition of the behind-the-scenes creative talents of the industry's designers, writers and illustrators. The competition drew over 800 entries in 58 categories from nearly 140 U.S. and international publishing companies, including those in Brazil, Canada, England and India. All entries were marketed and sold in the U.S. during calendar 2008. The awards are named after German lithographer Louis Prang, who is credited with the birth of the U.S. card industry in the 1870's.

Seventy-three companies were first time entrants in the 21st Annual LOUIEs with 35% of them becoming finalists. Responding to a Call for Entries, competitors entered their best creative work, including everyday and seasonal cards, with both humorous and traditional greetings. Invitations and imprints were also submitted. Companies, ranging in size from one-person operations to multi-employee organizations around the world, are among those vying for the prized LOUIE Award.

"The companies named as LOUIE finalists clearly show the creativity and artistic talent that are evident in our industry's products," said GCA President Steve Laserson of American Greetings Corporation, Cleveland, OH. "With industry appreciation of the LOUIEs expanding annually, becoming a LOUIE finalist or winner often increases buyer recognition for the publisher, which in turn builds confidence in its creative ability."

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The LOUIE Award judging took place at the Doubletree Hotel on January 29-30, 2009 in Washington, DC. The 13 judges included creative and marketing professionals working directly in the greeting card industry and representing GCA members and non-members alike, as well as retail buyers, industry suppliers and an account executive with ***GREETINGS etc.*** magazine. Also judging this year were a graphic arts student and a consumer who purchases more than 200 cards annually. The judges individually reviewed and scored each card submitted on a 1-10 point scale. Each entry was judged on existing criteria including Imagination, Impact, Artistry, Harmony, Sendability and Value. In addition, cards were segregated into those priced above and below \$3.00 at retail.

Winners in every category will be revealed during this year's fun-filled LOUIE celebration on Monday, May 18, 2009 at Capitale in New York City. The event, from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m., will feature a viewing of all LOUIE finalists and the awards presentation, along with a cocktail buffet and dancing. Capping off the evening will be the announcement of two "**CARDS OF THE YEAR**" winners – one to be presented in each of the competition's two price divisions (**Above \$3** and **\$3 & Below**).

George Little Management will showcase the 2008 finalists in a special LOUIE Awards display at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center during the National Stationery Show®, May 17 – 20, 2009 in New York City.

"As a butterfly that emerges from its cocoon in beautiful color and splendor, so do greeting cards, invitations and imprintables arise from the imagination of the individuals who collaborate in the creation of exciting new products year after year," says Margie King, Creative Director, Paper Magic Group (Scranton, PA), and chair of this year's International Greeting Card Awards. "The LOUIEs recognize excellence by honoring words that speak to our hearts with imagery that captures our eyes. It's about creating products that have meaning and provide a way for people to connect with one another."

In addition to a variety of industry suppliers who aid in the production of the LOUIE printed materials and the program book, sponsors of this year's LOUIEs include: American Greetings Corporation; Bobst Group North America, FREEMAN, GLM®, a dmg world media business; Glory Moon Greeting Cards Co., Ltd.; ***GREETINGS etc.***; Hallmark Cards, Inc.; Infinity Foils, Inc.; ***Stationery Trends***; and Universal Engraving, Inc. "Through their financial support, these companies, along with many others, ensure the success of the LOUIEs," said King.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The attached list indicates the finalists in each of the 58 categories. Company name, telephone number and contact information for the finalists are included. Also enclosed for reference is a list of those who served as volunteer judges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual LOUIE Awards. Press wishing copies of the nominated cards may contact the companies directly or Mila Albertson, LOUIE Awards Coordinator, at the GCA.