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THE CHICAGO MARKET: LIVING AND GIVING® ANNOUNCES JULY 2010 RETAILER OF THE MONTH, JULIE HUBBARD OF JULIE'S CORNER STORE IN LACON, IL *Program Recognizes Outstanding Retailers Each Month*

CHICAGO, IL (July 19, 2010) – The Chicago Market: Living and Giving® is proud to announce the July 2010 Retailer of the Month honoree. The ROTM program is designed to acknowledge exceptional retailers who are making a difference in the gift industry, as well as to provide inspiration to other retailers who can benefit from the winners' stories.

Congratulations to the July 2010 Retailer of the Month, Julie Hubbard of Julie's Corner Store in Lacon, Illinois.

Hubbard fell into the gift business by accident when she was asked to sell some of her father's items on eBay. She very quickly became hooked with the auction website and what started as a favor to her father soon became an obsession. Before long Hubbard applied for a license to buy in bulk and started her own online store. It was at this time that Hubbard realized there were exciting gift products stores in her community weren't offering. With that in mind she took a downtown storage facility (and the oldest commercial building in the town) and converted it into a 600 square foot gift shop.

Hubbard was also known throughout her small community for making great homemade fudge. She started selling fudge out of her new store and quickly she saw her business transform from a "Gift store that sold fudge on the side, into a Fudge store that sold gifts on the side." Before long, Hubbard partnered with a large food company to help mass-produce the fudge and turned an area of her store, which by this time had doubled in size, into a commercial wholesale fudge kitchen. She now sells over 75 different flavors of fudge at over 20 county market grocery stores and it has been recognized by the Illinois Department of Agriculture as an Official Illinois Product.



Julie's Corner Store also honors Lacon's local artisans, but selling their hand made art. This allows Hubbard to have one of a kind product to sell, while also providing her neighbors the opportunity to have their work available for purchase in a retail setting.

Throughout the store's product changes and rapid growth, over the last four years Hubbard has followed one strong philosophy that has helped her survive what has been a hard time for many gift companies: Give the public an experience destination store. It is a mentality that she shares with all her employees and one that has helped create a store that is a draw for not only the

people of Lacon, but visitors from all over the country. With an old world feel, high quality products, a strong promotional mindset, lots of community out reach and 75 different flavors of fudge, Julie's Corner Store has become an Illinois small town mainstay.



"The basic philosophy for the store is to provide not only a great place to shop but to provide an entire experience," explains Hubbard "Hence the Oh Fudge! Oh Gifts! Oh the Experience! is the perfect tag line for our little store. Our goal is to have every single person that comes in the door leave with a Wow!"

For more information about Julie Hubbard and Julie's Corner Store, please visit www.juliescornerstore.com or www.fudgeconnection.com.

For more information on MMPI or The Chicago Market: Living and Giving, please visit www.shopchicagomarket.com or call 800.677.6278 (MART).

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MMPI is a trade show and property management firm, specializing in managing buildings devoted to wholesale showrooms and commercial office space. MMPI produces more than 300 trade shows, market events and conferences each year.

MMPI manages The Merchandise Mart and 350 West Mart Center in Chicago; Market Square, the Suites at Market Square, Hamilton Market, Plaza Suites, Furniture Plaza and the National Furniture Mart in High Point, N.C.; the Architects & Designers Building and 7 W New York in New York; the Boston Design Center in Boston; the L.A. Mart in Los Angeles; and the Washington Design Center in Washington D.C.

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