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**GREETING CARD ASSOCIATION HONORS BEST IN THE INDUSTRY
Announces LOUIE Award Winners, Launches Consumer's Choice Contest at Annual Gala**

NEW YORK -- May 22, 2017-- The [Greeting Card Association \(GCA\)](#) announced the winners of the 2017 International Greeting Card Awards Competition, the "LOUIE Awards," at a Gala Sunday evening during the National Stationery Show® (NSS).

The GCA awarded highest honors to: Madison Park Group (Card of the Year, \$4 and below category) and Easy, Tiger (Card of the Year, \$4 and above category). The second Judge's Award for Excellence, first created last year, was awarded to Emily McDowell Studio. And two companies were recognized as "Rising Stars:" The Cove Company (\$4 and below category) and Birdwalk Press (\$4 and above category). Richard Evans, a 50+ year veteran of Birchcraft Studios (now Birchcraft Studios by DFS) received the GCA's Lifetime Achievement Award for his tireless dedication to his company and for advancing the industry through his leadership in the GCA.

"Today, when many communications are abbreviated to a couple of words on a screen, greeting cards are a way to show friends, families and co-workers that you're thinking of them in a creative, thoughtful and meaningful way," said Carlos LLansó, GCA president and CEO, Legacy Publishing.

And today's typical greeting card buyer is changing. In fact, research from GCA member American Greetings (Quantitative Consumer Studies, 2015 – 2016) demonstrates the value of greeting cards among Millennials; their total spend on greeting cards surpassed Baby Boomers last year.

History, Criteria and Lifetime Achievement Award

Launched in 1988, the "LOUIEs" honor Louis Prang, the German-born Boston lithographer and publisher known as the "Father of the American Christmas Card." More than 230 companies throughout the world submitted nearly 1,000 entries for the greeting card and social expression industry's definitive awards competition. Seventy-six companies had at least one card advance to the finalist round. The LOUIE Awards are open to all publishers in the U.S. and throughout the world and while GCA members receive a reduced entry fee, any publisher who marketed and sold cards in the U.S. last year is eligible.

A panel of 19 industry experts comprised of retailers, publishers and designers judged entries against five criteria: originality, impact, design excellence, "sendability," and value; all identifying information about the entrant was withdrawn from the entries. A Blue Ribbon Panel of five judges selected the "Cards of the Year" and "Judge's Award for Excellence" from among all categories.

In addition to the LOUIEs, the GCA recognizes individuals who have made a significant and enduring contribution to the industry through their work, dedication, creativity and excellence.

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“Richard Evans exemplifies the very best in our industry – for his commitment to service and quality and for his continued stewardship of a family-owned business,” said Peter Doherty, CAE, Executive Director, GCA. “We are grateful to Richard for his countless contributions, and we are so pleased to honor him with the GCA’s Lifetime Achievement Award,” said Doherty.

Sponsors

“Congratulations to all of the winners and finalists and thank you to every company that participated in the LOUIE Awards,” said LLansó. “Your support of the LOUIEs helps strengthen the GCA’s voice as *the* voice of the greeting card industry in Washington and throughout the country,” he said. “And a special thank you to Nicole Hite-Heleniak, Vice President, Creative Studios, Hallmark Cards Inc. and her team for their tireless work over the last several months to create a magical “Universe of Wonders” for this year’s LOUIEs Gala,” said LLansó.

Sponsors of this year’s LOUIE Awards include: American Greetings, Designer Greetings, Hallmark Cards, Inc., National Stationery Show, and Universal Presentation Concepts (Platinum Sponsors); Viabella (Gold Sponsor); Infinity Foils, Neenah Paper and Universal Engraving Inc. (Silver Sponsors); Avanti, Birchcraft by DFS, Bobst and The Madison Park Group (Category Champion Sponsors) and LOUIE Supporter: Fine Impressions. Hallmark Cards, Inc. provided entertainment at the LOUIE Awards Gala. Ten GCA member companies supplied materials and production for the call for entries, Gala invitations, program book, thank you and congratulatory cards, envelopes and the Gala’s décor. Those companies are: BrightMARKS, Exclusive Bordering Company, Fine Impressions, Infinity® Foils, J.S. McCarthy Printers, Leader Paper Products, Neenah Paper, The Occasions Group, Universal Engraving, and Universal Presentation Concepts.

Universal Presentation Concepts designed the display showcasing winners and finalists as well as the inaugural “GCA Village” which provides up to 12 GCA member companies with the opportunity to exhibit under the GCA brand and benefit from pre-show promotional opportunities. The LOUIE winners and finalists are on display and open to the public through May 24 at the Jacob Javits Center. Consumers can vote for their favorite cards by visiting www.facebook.com/LOUIEAwards through June 9; one lucky voter will receive a selection of the winning cards.

The Greeting Card Association is the U.S. trade association serving the greeting card and social expression industry. Founded in 1941, the GCA represents nearly 200 American and international publishers from businesses ranging from start-ups to established companies of all sizes, scopes and industry tenure -- as well as suppliers that provide production services and wholesale product distribution. All LOUIE winners are posted at www.greetingcard.org. For information on GCA membership, contact gca@greetingcard.org.

View the 2017 LOUIE Award Winners at <https://greetingcard.secure-platform.com/a/gallery?roundId=15>

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