

The Chicago Market: Living and Giving® leads the way in affordability, innovation, retailer needs and product selection for the Midwest and across the U.S.

Exhibitors and buyers converging on the Windy City this January for the 2010 Chicago Market: Living and Giving® will be welcomed by a number of significant changes, all designed to make one of the Midwest's largest gift shows an even better value and a "not-to-be-missed" event on the show calendar. What remains the same, however, is Chicago's vast collection of nationally branded destination showrooms and strong rep based showrooms offering comprehensive product lines and brand name products that have the pulse on what sells. Support this with a growing number of emerging companies in the popular Temporaries and Beckman's™ Handcrafted Show section, and the Chicago Market delivers on what buyers need and want in one location.

First and foremost, the market has been pushed back a week to allow showrooms and exhibitors more time to ready their staff and product, and to give retailers more flexibility in their travel schedule. The dates for the 2010 show are January 21-27, with the expanded Temporaries and Beckman's™ Handcrafted Show set to open on January 23-26. The Chicago Market is held in The Merchandise Mart, one of the largest design centers in the nation, located in the heart of Chicago.

The Chicago Market makes Chicago a great value for its exhibitors, with the launch of its new \$10 per square foot rate, plus a comprehensive package that includes drayage and a high profile marketing program. As a result of these affordable rates and amenities, the Chicago Market buyers can expect a greater number of the industry's most sought-after exhibitors showcasing high profile lines and new product launches.

Sara Dahlstrom, Managing Director of Market Suite Sales, says the price reduction has had a significant effect on the number of exhibitors that have signed on. "It has allowed many noteworthy exhibitors to add another show to their very busy January calendars," she explains. "It has also enabled more resources to come to Chicago first before moving onto other regional shows within the same month."

The date and rate changes are just the beginning of an aggressive plan to provide what today's buyers and exhibitors need as they leverage the Chicago Market's equity in the marketplace.

"The Chicago Market is invested in the gift industry for the long haul," states Paula Guiliano, Senior Director of Marketing for MMPI. "Because we own the building and the show, we have the ability to be flexible with our lower rate, which allows for more exhibit space and booth expansion. Exhibitors are not space confined."

"We are making a major investment in the gift industry with the Chicago Market: Living and Giving and have introduced a number of other new initiatives with leasing, marketing and programming as well that will make a major impact," Guiliano adds.

For starters, Guiliano and her team are rolling out a new creative advertising campaign called "Especially the Lines." Guiliano says: "We have a significant number of nationally recognized, destination showrooms, large rep-based showrooms and Temporaries offering a comprehensive list of product lines, and name brand products making the Chicago Market a destination in the Midwest. We have a great story to tell and we are showcasing it through our advertising.

"We are mailing out a new Preview Directory to provide a comprehensive look at what we will be offering in January, and we have equipped our interactive web site with a new product locator making pre-market planning even easier," Guiliano adds.

Toni McIntosh, Vice-President of Leasing adds, "We're also proud of the fact that we have major rep-based showrooms that have a vast knowledge of the Midwest market, because they know what sells here. They're committed to providing the service their retailers need in order to be in the best position possible to sell product." Most

often, this means finding merchandise that helps differentiate their store from another.

In Chicago, that search also leads buyers straight to the renowned Temporaries and Beckman's™ Handcrafted show. "We are doubling our resources in the Temporaries this January," McIntosh explains, "ensuring buyers that they will find the most trend setting concepts and new product introductions on the market today."

With a growing movement toward handcrafted, handmade goods, the Chicago Market turns its attention to Beckman's™ Handcrafted Show. Designed as a "show within a show," Beckman's is one of the strongest

brands in the country for one-of-a-kind goods designed by artisans for retailers, buyers and interior designers as well as for galleries, resorts and museum shops looking for distinctive products. Beckman's brand equity in the marketplace also allows artisans/exhibitors a unique opportunity to establish their brand and build their business in the wholesale market. It allows buyers to showcase unique products for the discriminating tastes.

Another Chicago exclusive – Lake Living – celebrates lake-inspired products for those consumers whose tastes and lifestyles are enriched by fresh water living, and for those who wish theirs were. "From city condos to suburban homes, and resort/vacation homes, Lake Living products help Midwest buyers differentiate themselves with products that are right for the Midwest," says Guiliano.

Unparalleled amenities make the Chicago experience complete with the lowest hotel rates, \$10 parking at Mart garages, free trolley service to and from participating hotels, personal concierge services and the Club Chicago buyers lounge.

Significant program enhancements have been added that are "retail driven" such as notable keynote speaker Gordon Segal, founder of Crate & Barrel, and new Power Lunch-n-Learn seminars, so retailers can expect a comprehensive resource of information on "survival" strategies and tactics for today's economy. Plus, back by popular demand is the Speed Networking seminar where buyers are paired with "new-to-market" exhibitors in a fast-paced one-on-one presentation, which nets quick results.

"Also look for 'Starting Gate' where we display innovative floor displays that inspire and educate, while you can see, hear, touch and feel what's hot and trendy for 2010," Guiliano adds.

"We are energized by the spirit and vigor we see emerging right now in the Midwest market, and we look forward to making the 2010 Chicago Market one to remember," she concludes.

The Chicago: Living and Giving opens Thursday, January 21 through Wednesday, January 27 with its Temporaries and Beckman's™ Handcrafted Show opening on Saturday, January 23 through Tuesday, January 26, 2010.

For information on The Chicago Market: Living and Giving, visit www.shopchicagomarket.com, and for Beckman's™ Handcrafted Show specifics go to www.beckmans.com.

MMPI is located at 222 Merchandise Mart Plaza, Suite 470, Chicago, IL 60657.

