

GIFTWARE NEWS®

WORLDWIDE MAGAZINE FOR GIFTS, HOME ACCESSORIES, STATIONERY, TABLETOP, AND COLLECTIBLES



GREETING CARD GAZETTE
 STATIONERY SHOW PREVIEW
 TWEENS
 PERSONALIZED PRODUCTS
 COVERING THE COVER: PAGE 4

YOUR NAME,

PERSONALIZE ANYTHING
AND EVERYTHING

BY ASHLEY G. WILLIAMS

YOUR COLORS,

YOUR WHATEVER

Slogans like Burger King's "Have it your way" illustrate the emphasis placed on individuality. You like your burger with the works, great. I like mine with ketchup only, please. Capitalize on the allure of choice by offering a selection of personalized products — with options from varying monogram styles to interchangeable pieces and more, the results are limitless.

Tanya Bernard, a tile artisan for Screencraft Tileworks L.L.C. says, "Personalization is unique, fun, clever, and emotional. The reaction from the receiver is amazing! When they see their name in print or their child's name, it tugs at heart strings [in a way] that generic gifts just cannot touch. Giving a personalized gift makes the receiver feel like the gift is one-of-a-kind, made just for him or her."

So take Burger King's marketing message to heart, and give your customers the opportunity to have it just the way they like it.

HELLO, MY NAME IS ...

"Personalization continues to grow by leaps and bounds in all categories and all media — from pottery to baby blankets," says Debi Allison,

owner/designer of Deb & Co (540/261-1723). "People never tire of seeing their names on anything and everything." And while names are an obvious way to personalize products, you can offer a variety of ways to personalize products.

"It used to be you could only have engraving done, and now they're using all sorts of methods," adds Laura Johnson, owner of Cotton Colors. "We do personalized pottery, textiles, and glass ornaments, and within each, we offer different ways of personalizing and cater to the gift business for birthdays, new houses ... and personalized makes the gift all that more special."

And while the category appears strong, consider what types of personalization works best for your store's specific needs. For example, Johnson notes that Cotton Colors uses their own handwriting that creates a personalized piece of art — without blocking the name.

And Marykate Fleming-Ledig, designer of MK & Co., adds her retailers show the samples in their handwriting so customers know exactly what it will look like and the turn-around time is according to the retailer's schedule since it is done in-house. Fleming-Ledig adds



Complete with a gift box and chalk, the Konitz Chalk Talk mug can be personalized with love notes, well wishes, reminders, doodles, pictures, and whatever else can be imagined. Suggested retail: \$7.50. From **The Zrike Company Inc.**; 201/651-5158.

that it is important to give the customer options for this perfect gift that celebrates a special occasion in a unique way.

Carolyn Whiting, president of Z Becky Brown, also sees the demand for personalized product from all ages, adding the appeal is there for everyone 22 to 62 and in between. "Personalization is becoming national. I'm not in stores throughout the country, but I get calls from California, Minnesota, and even Canada," she adds.

GOING UP ANYONE?

While personalization is nothing new, Johnson sees huge potential. "I see the 'big boys' coming on board. I see Nike letting you design your own shoes. Personalization makes gifts more thoughtful," says Johnson. "It's definitely encroaching on the entire country. The South has always been strong. We've worn monograms our entire lives and so

Ideal for high schools or destinations, the 13" teddy bear features a personalized/custom hooded sweatshirt in 21 different colors; various thread colors are also available. Suggested retail: \$20. From **The Herrington Teddy Bear Co.**; 949/727-9482.

have our mothers."

One example of a "big boy" in the category is Nike. Originally launched eight years ago, the Nike Id line plays on the desire for choice; its tagline "You are the Pro" implores consumers "Pick your colors. Unify your team. Tell your story, and show it off." However, this category does more than play on the allure for choice. Mark Allen, general manager of the line, says "It's a strong relationship builder between Nike and the customer, and the customer and the product." Translate that idea into a "relationship builder" between your store and the customer.

Bob Smith, a founding partner of JewelPop Inc., also sees the category gaining momentum for a dif-



ferent reason. "It's going to get stronger. Today, our world is getting crowded by huge corporate brands; not everyone wants to shop at Wal-Mart. People want to be different and that's never going to go away ... People want something that they can't get everywhere else."

Screencraft Tileworks's Bernard takes Smith's idea one step further. "The challenge for independent retailers to compete with the big box stores has helped expand options for personalization. The retailer at one time had to buy 'programs' that were quite an invest-

