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**THE SOCIETY OF INCENTIVE & TRAVEL EXECUTIVES RECOGNIZES
THE LIGHT GROUP, INC. WITH A 2003 CRYSTAL AWARD**
Best Incentive Promotion Program, Consumers or End-Users

CHICAGO – The Light Group of White Plains, NY, USA was awarded a 2003 Crystal Award by the Society of Incentive & Travel Executives (SITE) for their work with Lauren Ralph Lauren. Their program, *Lauren VIP*, was honored in the category: Best Incentive Promotion Program, Consumers or End-Users. SITE recognized the best incentive campaigns, special/motivational events and promotion campaigns at a ceremony 15 Sept. at Chicago Shakespeare Theater on Navy Pier.

The key criteria of this category was the originality of the concept, creativity, copy, design, presentation, continuity and the overall effectiveness of the promotional/communication element. The sub-category of Consumers or End-Users was targeted to increase sales and/or market share of a packaged goods product, retail store, restaurant, etc.

When The Light Group, Inc. (TLG) began working with clothing manufacturer Jones Apparel Group Inc. for its Lauren Ralph Lauren (LRL) brand to create a customer loyalty program, they were breaking new ground in customer retail marketing. Generally customer loyalty programs are driven by retailers rather than product manufacturers; however, LRL was optimistic they could implement a customer loyalty program, while at the same time demonstrate support for the sales and marketing efforts of their retail channels.

To successfully drive sales among existing customers and attract new ones, motivate sales associates to promote the offer, and increase traffic in stores, the program – *Lauren VIP* – needed to be multi-faceted and strategic. To develop the program, TLG and Lauren management needed to partner with one retailer who was equally committed to the effort and willing to help target their Lauren customers. After conducting one-on-one discussions with multiple retail partners, they selected Parisian – a retailer with 42 outlets throughout the Southern United States. Seven out of 42 were selected to be part of the *Lauren VIP* launch program.

The *Lauren VIP* program was designed to be an exclusive membership-based club for top customers, building on their loyalty to the LRL brand. The program rewarded *Lauren VIP* members with quarterly promotions and offers tied to seasonal collections, offered gifts with certain-sized purchases, and incorporated Lauren partners into the mix by offering “highly valued” rewards to qualifying members, such as closet makeovers and engraved personalized stationery.

To ensure the program’s success, TLG and Lauren management worked closely with Parisian’s sales associates to train them on the *Lauren VIP* program offerings and encourage them to promote it to their customers. Sales associates received program brochures and training kits, had the opportunity to participate in a pre-program tele-conference, and were invited to attend an in-store training session led by TLG event coordinators. They were further motivated by receiving US\$1.00 for every customer who they registered. Two Caribbean cruises added to the incentive — the top sales associate would win one, as would another associate whose name was randomly drawn. The effort proved extremely successful with 96 percent of associates participating in the effort and many commenting on the unprecedented effort to incorporate them into the initiative.

In order to drive customers to the seven designated stores to sign up as Lauren VIPs and purchase from the Lauren spring/summer line, TLG implemented a direct mail campaign consisting of program postcards and local newspaper ads. They also equipped each store with displays and eye-catching collateral such as posters, handouts, buttons for sales associates, pens, membership cards and applications for customers. Fashion shows

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organized with Lauren partners helped to drive prospects to the stores, while at the same time, brought added life and excitement to the newest LRL fashions.

The proactive, well-rounded promotional campaign paid off. In the first six days of the program's launch in April 2003, the seven Parisian retail stores registered more than 2,300 members to the *Lauren VIP* program. Overcoming the weak economy, unseasonably cold weather in the main launch site of Atlanta and global political unrest, *Lauren VIP* drove significant traffic to the stores and spurred big jumps in sales. The stores participating in *Lauren VIP* reported an incredible 430 percent increase in sales of Lauren products when compared to non-participating Parisian stores. In addition, the program generated a 74 percent return on investment for the overall effort, and helped build Lauren customer loyalty for years to come.

The SITE Crystal Awards were established in 1980 as a means to recognize the unique blending of objectives and imagination that enable motivational programs to be successful in achieving business objectives. Incentive campaigns, special/motivational events or promotion campaigns held between 1 May 2002 and 31 May 2003 were eligible. Entries were evaluated by an independent panel of judges in the areas of return on investment, creativity, and mechanics.

The judging panel for the 2003 SITE Crystal Awards was composed of individuals well-versed in the field of incentive/motivational travel. Judges evaluating entries were: Richard Aaron, Biz Bash; Vince Alonzo, *Successful Meetings*; Jeanne Casison, *Incentive*; Lisa Grimaldi, *Meetings & Conventions*; Bill LaViolette, *Incentives & Meetings International*; Barbara Scofido, *Corporate Meetings & Incentives*; Laura Shepherd, Apothecom; and John Touchette, John Hancock Meeting Management.

SITE would like to recognize IMEX for their support as Lead Sponsor. IMEX, the worldwide exhibition for incentive travel, meetings and events, will hold its tradeshow in Frankfurt, Germany, 12-14 May, 2004. SITE would also like to thank Event Sponsors: Creative Memories and Mexico Convention Bureau and Tourism Board and Contributing Sponsors: Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Jewell Events Catering and Orrefors/Kosta Boda.

Founded in 1973, SITE is the only international, not-for-profit, professional association devoted to the pursuit of excellence in incentives, a multi-billion dollar global industry. SITE provides educational seminars and information services to those who design, develop, promote, sell, administer and operate motivational programs as an incentive to increase productivity in business. Currently SITE has nearly 2,000 members in 81 countries, with 28 local and regional chapters. Members represent airlines, cruise lines, corporate users, destination management companies, ground transportation companies, hotels and resorts, incentive houses, official tourist organizations, trade publications, travel agencies and supporting organizations such as restaurants and visitors attractions.

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