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24th ANNUAL iHOBBY EXPO™ - ANOTHER GREAT SHOW!

Butler, NJ October 27, 2008. The 24th Annual iHobby Expo, held October 16-19, 2008 in the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL, built upon the successes of the 2006 and 2007 Expos and offered exhibitors, trade attendees, and hobby consumers a dynamic show floor with events and new products not to be found at any other hobby trade and public event in the world. Planned floor space was again sold-out in advance of the show and 283 exhibitors showcased their products in 70,000 net square feet of exhibit space (the equivalent of 700 10x10 booths) an increase of 8% over exhibit space in 2007. Additionally, 79 new and first time exhibitors joined the show in 2008, an indication that interest in the model hobby industry is growing and attracting new business entrepreneurs.

Despite a beautiful fall weekend and a weakening economy, the Expo drew 15,556 adults, children and seniors to the show on Saturday and Sunday, an increase of 5% over 2007 attendance and the best consumer attendance ever for the Expo. The 2007 Expo had 14,747 consumer attendees. "More than 50% of the attendees were new to the iHobby Expo this year, said Ed Rogala, Show Committee Chair of the Hobby Manufacturers Association, sponsors of the Expo. "We are very pleased that the show is exciting a broad range of consumers to attend...we're on track to reach 20,000 in the years ahead."

Trade attendance was strong on the first two days of the show with 2,500 trade attendees of which 1,784 were retailer/distributor personnel representing 1,002 stores and distributorships. This compares to 1,760 retailers and distributors from 664 stores and companies in 2007. Total trade attendance, including exhibitor personnel, was 5,041. "We had a wonderful time at the show and were very happy that we attended this year," said Sandy Feuer of Alsand Merchandise of Plainview, NY.

In addition to the action-packed show floor featuring many opportunities to see hobby products in action at the Traxxas Dirt Track, Empire Hobby Flying Cage, Biq Squid Race Track, MRC & Al's Hobby Slot Car Track, Hobby Xtreme Pinewood Derby Track, and Thunder Tech Monster Truck Track, attendees experienced the second Phoenix Cup

competition of professional airplane flyers and the Mecca Mayhem Robotics Battle Zone. The Chicago Area Robotics Group (Chibots) also returned to the Expo this year to hold their “Fall Chibotica Contest” – interactive robot competitions featuring national and regional competitors and a robotic seminar for consumers. New to the show this year was the Thomas the Tank Engine Kiddie Train Ride and a Legoland play area for kids. Nationally ranked pilots from across the U.S. competed for cash and prizes in the various flying competitions held on Saturday and Sunday.

Appearing at the Expo on Friday and Saturday was Michael Gross, actor and model train hobbyist. Michael appeared in the long-running sitcom “Family Ties” as the dad, Stephen Keaton, and currently appears in the daytime soap opera, The Young and the Restless. “Michael was a great asset to our show and the publicity he garnered and interviews he had with local Chicago media presented our industry and the show in the best possible light. He was terrific,” stated Frank Ritota, HMA President. Michael met with the public and signed autographs on Saturday.

HMA initiated a new series of educational seminars for retailers entitled “Hobby University.” “There were four seminars that covered the topics of finance, advertising, store design and internet retailing,” said Pat Koziol, HMA Executive Director. “All the seminars were very well attended and we will be issuing certificates of completion to the retailers who attended.

The third year of the ***Ticket to Ride*** program generated over \$30,000 of exhibitor coupon requests to give out at the Expo. Also, this year’s Expo included “Dealer Paks” of products that retailers could purchase at significant savings. Dealer attendees need to send their Ticket to Ride coupons and travel receipts to the HMA office by November 30, 2008 in order to redeem payment.

Koziol also thanked the numerous clubs and volunteers for their assistance in helping consumers at the make and take areas and presenting their train layouts on the show floor. “Without their volunteer efforts, we could not offer the range of activities and projects for the public to see and experience at the show,” added Koziol.

The 25th Annual iHobby Expo, **the silver anniversary show**, will be held October 22-25, 2009 again in the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL. For exhibiting and attending information, contact HMA at 973-283-9088 or visit www.ihobbyexpo.com.

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