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Free Creativity in a Bad Economy

Local Marketing Firm Donates \$60,000 of Pro Bono Work in First Year of Operation

*Spoke, LLC creates “Sprockets” program to help nonprofits and charities
through economic slump*

St. Louis, MO (January 13, 2010) – 2009 was an economically dreary year. The recession led many businesses to cut staff, eliminate benefits, or close shop altogether. Rather than concentrate on minimizing last year, **Spoke, LLC**, a local boutique marketing agency founded in late 2008, decided to focus on maximizing their services.

The founders/partners of Spoke – **Dan Klein, David Meyer, and Brian Schwartz** – created a program called **Sprockets** to offer a variety of professional marketing services such as branding, website development, marketing strategy and graphic design work to St. Louis-based nonprofits and charities free of charge. The program of pro-bono services was fueled by the combined efforts of talented college interns working alongside the experienced partners of Spoke. The result from Sprockets’ inaugural year was a total of **\$60,000** worth of pro bono services donated to five different organizations.

“It’s pretty amazing what comes out of a recession,” said **David Meyer**, founder/partner at Spoke. “On the down side, revenue may drop, projects may be put on hold, and in some cases, especially in the marketing industry, staff may be cut. But on the positive side, there is an increased level of creativity. And Sprockets is just that. It’s about sharing our creative talents to those who need it most at a critical time.”

Sprockets serves two different communities: one that needs creative services and the other that wants to give it. Spoke sent out a reverse RFP to more than 200 St. Louis non-profit organizations, soliciting applications for marketing assistance. At the same time, Spoke created a fun and creative internship program to appeal to college students who wanted to see their ideas and efforts come to fruition. In the end, three talented Washington University students worked on the professional marketing projects of five local nonprofits: The Mission Center, Inc., Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club, Connections to Success, The Blessing Basket Project® and St. Louis ArtWorks.

Results from the first year of Sprockets include:

- A newly-created identity and branding for **The Mission Center, Inc.**, which previously had no real branding.
- A full-scale, integrated 2010 marketing plan was developed for **Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club**.
- **Connections to Success** received a sleek layout of its 2009 Annual Report, which was distributed to board members, supporters and potential donors.
- A new logo and identity were created for the non-profit organization **The Blessing Basket Project®**. It was also given innovative, in-store promotional materials to further advertise its Prosperity Wages® artisan products made in developing countries such as Ghana, Uganda and Bangladesh. The organization now projects a 300% sales increase in one of the Whole Foods Market® stores using the new promotional materials.
- **St. Louis ArtWorks** and **StudioSTL**, which compiles and publishes the literary and art work of underserved youth in St. Louis, received new packaging material for its newest book and a creative sell sheet that was used for a new cross-promotional venture.

“Thanks to Sprockets, our sales are up,” said **Theresa Wilson**, founder and executive director of The Blessing Basket Project®. “Sprockets pointed out that in-store marketing can be more effective than traditional advertising, so they designed new promotional materials for our displays in Whole Foods Market® stores. The new ideas and materials definitely helped push the sales of our Prosperity Wages® artisan products, which in turn enable us to reduce poverty in the developing countries we serve.”

Performing free work is not a new concept in the business world, but for small businesses like Spoke it is a risky move, especially in the first year of operation and during a global recession. Still, Sprockets, which will become an annual program, is a way for Spoke to be involved in the community, donate its skilled services to those who need it most, and train college students.

“Ultimately, this is what it comes down to – helping others with the skills and talents you’ve been given,” said **Dan Klein**, founder/partner at Spoke. “We believe that people will not only see the quality of our work through the Sprockets program, but will also understand our sincere intentions in helping others.”

For more information on Sprockets or to see some of the design work completed this past year as a part of Sprockets, please contact David Meyer at 314.827.0600.

About Spoke, LLC

Spoke is a first-of-it’s-kind, full-service integrated marketing agency in St. Louis, Missouri formed in 2008 by three veteran marketing gurus – Dan Klein, David Meyer and Brian Schwartz. The nationally-recognized agency focuses on growing its clients’ businesses through unique marketing solutions. Unlike the model of traditional agencies, Spoke follows the less-is-more mantra by creative problem solving: listening to the client, determining the problem, assembling the best experts and team for the job, and delivering agency-caliber work. Each project starts with the three partners and ends with the three partners - and the focus is always on the client. For more information on Spoke please visit the official website at www.wearespoke.com or the blog www.spokenwhirred.com.

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