

THE J REPORT

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JA Leads Bench Jeweler Resource Forum

Plan to update certification, educational and marketing resources

In recognition of bench jewelers' importance to the prosperity of the independent jeweler, Jewelers of America, along with the American Gem Society (AGS) and bench jewelry industry leaders, formed a Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum last year to examine and improve the current state of bench jeweler education and certification. The Forum's four committees assessed key areas of available bench jeweler resources.

"Jewelers of America led the industry 10 years ago in its creation of the JA Bench Professional Certification program," says President & CEO Matthew A. Runci. "Now, it's time to take a fresh look at certification and the resources available to bench jewelers."

The Forum met at the JA New York Show in August 2007, at the Tucson Gem Shows in February 2008 and during the AGS Conclave in April 2008. During the meeting in Tucson, the four Forum committees – Marketing, Education, Content & Program Structure and Fulfillment – decided upon next steps to take in the promotion and renovation of bench jeweler certification programs. Participants discussed the need to increase the perceived value of bench jewelers by storeowners and consumers, to emphasize the value of certification to bench jewelers, and to modernize the bench jeweler exam process.

PROMOTING BENCH JEWELERS

One of the Forum's key objectives will be to strengthen the status of bench jewelers within the trade and among consumers. Bench jewelers are vital to independent retailers' success, as the quality and custom services they provide can attract customers and help differentiate a specialty jewelry store in today's competitive market. The Forum plans to develop ways to advance this message.

The Marketing committee also discussed ways to effectively promote certification – like the JA Bench Professional Certification program and the new AGS "Certified Jewelry Arts Professional" designation – to bench jewelers, via industry partnerships, E-newsletters and campaigning to students.

Related:

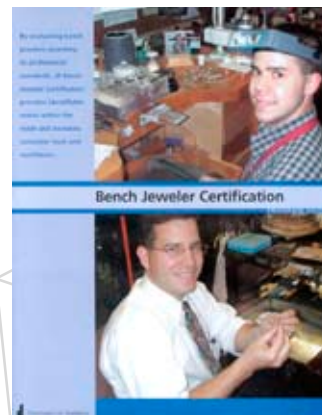
Southeastern Findings is sponsoring Bench Jeweler Certification scholarships, details on page 4.

STREAMLINING CERTIFICATION

In order to determine how to refresh and streamline the JA certification process, the Content & Program Structure and Fulfillment committees examined all stages of certification. The Forum plans to maintain the low cost for exams, while improving the turnaround time on exams and certification by implementing new technology and restructuring the grading system.

In other efforts to modernize the JA certification process, several specialist certifications will be added, including Advanced Stone Setting, Platinum Group Metals, and Polishing and Finishing. A comprehensive Bench Certification Community website and an informational E-newsletter are planned.

Leading the Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum are JA Director of Education David Peters and JA Assistant to the President Sharie Fogarty. They are working with many individuals and organizations, which include Ben Bridge, Bench Media, California Institute of Jewelry Training, GIA, MJSA, Paris Junior College, Platinum Guild International, PM West, Rio Grande and Stuller.



The Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum will update bench jeweler certification materials, like the guide above.

ROUTING BOX:

Be sure to initial and pass on among store staff.

For more information on available bench resources, visit www.jewelers.org and www.ags.org.

JA to Help Members Thrive in 2008

Members will receive weekly tips on how to improve store profits

In response to members' concerns about the challenging economy, Jewelers of America is developing a series of programs to ensure in-store success throughout the year. Under the banner of "Thriving in 2008," the program kicked off in May with an E-Newsletter that brings usable, effective business-building tips right to a member's email Inbox. Using the expertise and knowledge of our products and resident experts, like JA Director of Education David Peters, the E-Newsletter will deliver the most up-to-date and timely strategies for retail success.

The actionable tips will cover all areas of jewelry retail, from financial management, marketing and customer service to display, merchandising and more. "Thriving in 2008" will also be

"Members who ...visit 'Thriving in 2008' at JA's website will gain ideas to help their business in the run up to the holiday selling season."

featured at Jewelers of America website, www.jewelers.org. Retailers can visit the "Thriving in 2008" page to access the tip archives and check out successful

strategies JA members are using to improve their businesses.

Members who receive the E-Newsletter and visit the "Thriving in 2008" page on www.jewelers.org will gain creative ideas to help their business in the run up to the holiday selling season. In addition to the daily tips and online advice, the JA education department is designing two full-day

"Thriving in 2008" education programs for the JA New York summer show in July. The programs, designed for retail jewelers, will cover effective marketing and how to improve store and inventory management.

The J Report Goes Green

At the beginning of 2008, Jewelers of America made a decision to "Go Green" with The J-Report. Starting with this issue, The J Report will now be printed on paper containing 20% post-consumer content, using 100% soy based inks. Our printer, Narragansett Graphics, Coventry, RI, explained that the newsletter could retain its print quality while improving the association's carbon footprint. Jewelers of America has long advocated for responsible business practices within the industry, and the choice to use environmentally responsible paper is an extension of that commitment.

Member Tip: In-store changes, like using environmentally responsible paper, can improve your store's image and enhance the bottom line, while improving the planet.

Jaime Wilson, owner of Narragansett Graphics, provided this guide for JA members interested in sourcing eco-friendly paper:

- Check that your chosen printer supports emissions reduction efforts and uses inks and papers that are manufactured with reduced environmental impact. In addition, check that they further reduce their carbon footprint through recycling. For example, Narragansett Graphics has applied for Forest Stewardship Council certification and uses soy-based inks.
- Look for post-consumer recycled papers and paper made with recycled fibers or emissions-free energy.
- Ask about soy inks. Also, inquire as to whether the printer conserves mixed batches for future re-use or just "dump" overruns.
- Ask if the printer employs computer-to-plate technology, which eliminates chemicals used in older technology.

Environmentally responsible print companies, like Narragansett Graphics, can provide you with environmental calculations on paper choices along with environmental logos. For more information, visit www.narragansettgraphics.com or email solutions@narragansettgraphics.com.

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Strengthen Profits: Take the Cost of Doing Business Survey

JA members receive free report with completed survey; new online application makes survey completion easier

With many jewelers currently wondering how to best fine tune their business plans for challenging economic times, Jewelers of America is offering its members a straightforward solution – participate in the 2008 *Cost of Doing Business Survey*. Proactive JA members who complete the survey by the end of May, receive a free copy (a \$150 value), when the report appears later this year. The survey allows participants to compare their own numbers to high-profit retailers' combined numbers, giving them a competitive edge to effect change in managing their businesses.

CRUCIAL TO SUCCESS

Industry analysts agree efficient and effective management is vital to a retailer's success, yet store owners often struggle to pinpoint how or where they could perform better. Jewelers of America's *Cost of*

Doing Business Survey can help by highlighting the strategies that were most effective in improving profitability.

The *Cost of Doing Business Survey* takes the guesswork out of your business management. It gives you a rare glimpse at other retailers' financial data for key performance variables, highlighting strategies that are effective in improving profitability.

“I find this format much easier. If jewelers tried it once they would repeat the survey year and year; I know I have participated every year, and find it very enlightening.”

– JA Director Michael White of White's Jewelers, after completing the new online survey in March



Participants will receive a free copy of the *Cost of Doing Business Survey* (above).

ONLINE FORMAT UPDATED

In addition to the print survey, which was mailed to members in late March, JA members can also complete survey online at <http://ja2008.advantage411.com>.

Jewelers of America has improved the online format. Now, online survey participants' can receive:

- **A Personalized Operating Ratio Report:** At the end of the survey, your ratios will be calculated immediately.
- **Quicker Performance Analysis:** Print out your operating ratios and you can easily compare your numbers with industry averages published in the final report, to quickly analyze your company's overall performance.
- **Useful reference for financial advisors:** Have authority when talking with your banker; back up your business decisions with hard numbers.
- **User-Friendly Design:** The format is organized like the four-page print survey and you can navigate between pages prior to completion and not lose data.
- **It's confidential:** the research company doesn't see your name and JA doesn't see the numbers.

New Design for Popular “What You Should Know About” Guides

JA releases updated designs for its consumer brochures on *Buying a Diamond* and *Fine Jewelry Care & Cleaning*

Jewelers of America has released its popular *What You Should Know About* consumer brochures on **Buying Diamonds** and **Care and Cleaning** with new designs.

The updated designs are intended to be even more useful for consumers. New to the *Buying a Diamond* brochure are a carat-size chart and examples of diamond shapes and settings.

The *What You Should Know About* guides are one of the most popular products Jewelers of America offers to retailers, because there are many ways to incorporate them into the sales structure. Sales associates can use them as illustrative guides with customers looking for specific jewelry, and they make inexpensive bag

stuffers for sales transactions. They also provide a branding opportunity: the back cover can include your company logo and information.

Jewelers of America's *What You Should Know About* brochures are available for a variety of jewelry topics. Each brochure introduces consumers to jewelry terminology, concepts and history, answers frequently asked questions,

and stresses the importance of shopping at a JA member store.

Brochures are available to all jewelers, discounted for members, and sold in quantities of 100: \$20.00/100 (\$25.00/100, non-members). Order your consumer brochures at www.jewelers.org or call 800-223-0673.



Bench Certification Scholarships Available

Southeastern Findings donates \$7,500 to Jewelers of America's bench certification program

For the many bench jewelers who have yet to take advantage of JA's Bench Jeweler Certification program, don't miss this opportunity. Wholesale supplier Southeastern Findings Inc., is sponsoring 10 JA Bench Jeweler Certification scholarships. The 10 scholarships will be available for three levels of JA Bench Jeweler Certification: JA Certified Bench Jeweler (CBJ), JA Certified Senior Bench Jeweler (CSBJ) and JA Certified Master Bench Jeweler (CMBJ).



WHY GET CERTIFIED?

For bench jewelers who want to exhibit their bench proficiency, advance their careers or better market their talents to customers, becoming a Certified Bench Jeweler could be the answer.

The JA Bench Jeweler Certification program – open to all bench jewelers – gives bench jewelers an instantly-recognized standing in their profession. Certified bench jewelers are acknowledged as professional leaders in their field and can use their certified skills to differentiate their stores' services from competitors.

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Any bench jeweler interested in communicating his or her talent and ability to employers, colleagues or customers. Eight scholarships are available to one jeweler from each of the following Southern states: Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Virginia and Kentucky. The final two scholarships are open to jewelers from any two other states.

HOW TO APPLY?

The Southeastern Findings Scholarship application form will be available at JA's website, www.jewelers.org, after April 20. The scholarships will be granted on a first-come basis; all scholarship applicants must meet current JA Bench Jeweler Certification guidelines.

To learn more about the JA Bench Jeweler Certification program, email Director of Education David Peters at davidpeters@jewelers.org or call 310-287-1161.

ABOUT SOUTHEASTERN FINDINGS

Southeastern Findings (www.sefindings.com) has a strong commitment to serving the manufacturing jeweler. According to President Gene Callaway, the company wanted to help bench jewelers achieve JA Bench Jeweler Certification. "After 30 years of working closely with manufacturing jewelers, we realize it is important to distinguish the quality and talent of professional bench jewelers," he says.

Continuing our three-part series on credit reporting, we look at how suppliers use Jewelers Board of Trade credit ratings to check retailers.

Extra Credit: Part 2

The Jewelers Board of Trade has over 120 years of experience gathering credit information and offering collections services, assigning credit ratings when sufficient data and disclosure are available, and serving as a resource on credit matters. The Nov/Dec *J Report* explained how retailers can use JBT's rating system to get on suppliers' "radar." But to have a supplier notice you with a poor credit rating does no good.

The Benefits of Good Credit

Without a doubt, good credit is an extension of a retailer's reputation and translates into a competitive advantage in an increasingly challenging marketplace.

For instance, good credit can give retailers access to better sources of supply. The strongest suppliers with the highest quality products are more likely to do business with retailers in good financial standing. In fact, suppliers are more likely to provide retailers with better pricing and service when they are paid on time. Late payments hurt retailers, since suppliers often build in extra costs for slow or extended payments.

Let's face it. Suppliers want and need to be repaid in full in a reasonable timeframe. Each has a different appetite for risk and will balance risk factors against rewards. The higher their risk, the more you as a retailer may pay in terms of higher prices, later deliveries, slower service and less access to occasional accommodations.

What's Your Rating?

The first step to maintaining the best rating is to take advantage of JBT's database. Retailers who are unsure of their status, or if they are listed with JBT, should call 401-467-0055. Ask whether you are a JBT-listed retailer and whether your company is currently rated.

Next J Report: How JBT separates the good from the bad

JA Members' Donations to JFC Reach \$100,000

In five years, members have donated more than \$100,000 to the children's charity



Jewelers of America was pleased to learn that our members recently passed the \$100,000 mark in individual donations to Jewelers For Children (JFC), the jewelry industry's national charity.

In 2003, JA began including a voluntary donation section on its dues renewal forms. Members can donate to JFC by checking off an additional box when they renewed their annual memberships.

"We're proud of our members for reaching this milestone," says Jewelers of America President and CEO Matthew A. Runci. "Their individual dedication to Jewelers For Children speaks of jewelers' natural generosity. Most jewelers are already committed to their local charities, yet they also recognize that the causes for which JFC works so diligently are still worthy of their support."

The voluntary donations of Jewelers of America members are significant, because JFC's success is widely attributed to the continuing generosity of jewelry

trade organizations, jewelry and watch manufacturing companies, jewelry retail stores, individual jewelry professionals and jewelry consumers.

JFC was founded in 1999 by the U.S. jewelry industry with the mission of helping children in need. Since its inception, the organization has donated nearly \$28 million to programs benefiting children whose lives have been affected by illness, abuse, or neglect through charity partners St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and the National CASA Association.

JFC's fundraising effort for 2008 officially began in January. Allen Brill, president and CEO of Rolex Watch USA, and Peter M. Engel, president of Fred Meyer Jewelers, Inc., have taken on the responsibil-

ity for assisting JFC in raising funds to benefit children who are the victims of catastrophic illness or life-threatening abuse and neglect.

They will be honored at JFC's annual Facets of Hope dinner on Sunday, June 1, 2008, at the Venetian Resort Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, during the Las Vegas show events. For ticket information or to make a donation to Jewelers For Children, go to www.jewelersforchildren.org, or call 212-687-2949. 



Jewelers For Children provides in-store collection canisters with the JFC logo to retailers for use as part of their JFC fundraising promotions. Promotions can involve donating service fees, like Goodman's Jewelers (below), or having a special promotion in which proceeds from a particular product go to the canister fund.



Spotlight: Goodman's Jewelers

How Small Donations Made a Big Difference

JA Board Director John Hayes, owner of Goodman's Jewelers, Madison, WI, was one of the many

JA members who helped reach the \$100,000 donation mark at Jewelers For Children. In only a few years, Goodman's Jewelers has raised more than \$10,000 for JFC, with a simple in-store program. Here's how Goodman's took small service fees and turned them into big donations.

After attending a Make-A-Wish presentation during the Midwest Jewelry Expo a few years ago, John Hayes was inspired to make a difference. But how?

"It hit me, we change a lot of watch batteries on Mondays. What would it cost me to donate all of the sales of watch batteries from Monday to Jewelers For Children," says Hayes of the inspiration for his in-store charity program. "In fact, it costs me very little and gains me a whole lot."

The gains: Hayes has had positive feedback from his customers, who are impressed by Goodman's dedication to children. Goodman's Monday charity program is simple enough. All proceeds

from watch batteries sold on Monday go directly to JFC. Goodman's sales associates explain the program to each Monday watch battery customer. After writing up the bill, they thank the customers for helping the store in its cause.

"This gives the customer a great feeling and puts us in a very favorable image," explains Hayes. "You can make a difference. It really is not that hard and you will feel good about it too."

To find out how you can donate to JFC or create cause marketing programs in your store, visit Jewelers For Children at www.jewelersforchildren.org.



2008 JA Affiliate Design Competition Winners

Jewelers from Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin take home top prizes

Jewelers of America held its 18th annual Affiliate Design Competition, during the JA New York Show, March 9-11. Designers from Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin took home the first place prizes in four categories (based on the cost of materials used): \$1,000 and under; \$1,001-\$3,000; \$3,001 and over; and a Buyer's Choice Award.

The competition features unique jewelry that has won design contests sponsored by JA's regional affiliates throughout 2007. This year, Jewelers of America expanded the competition by allowing submissions from member jewelers whose affiliate organization did not hold a local competition.

This year, the designers displayed an inclination for innovative designs. Many pieces involved movement and complex construction, while others emphasized elaborate detail, like the winner of the \$3,001 and over category: a necklace and earrings set with hundreds of pave diamonds in a flowing leaf design.

"Jewelers of America is pleased to recognize the talents of regional jewelers, whose designs demonstrate the remarkable jewelry available from our members nationwide," says JA Chairman John Green, Lux Bond and Green. "We congratulate all of the contestants on their award-winning designs."

Receive National Recognition for Your Designs:

How to Participate in the 2009 Competition

The JA Affiliate Design Competition is open only to JA members and their employees. Any JA member interested in participating in next year's competition should enter the design competition held by their state or regional JA Affiliate in 2008. For more information, check with your state association, visit www.jewelers.org or call 800-223-0673.

CATEGORY I (\$1,000 & UNDER)

Steven Kistner, Steven Paul Designs
Delafield, WI

Wisconsin Jewelers Association

Gentleman's ring in 14-karat white gold, with 12 trapezoidal pieces – nine that move – inlaid with black onyx and diamonds totaling .44 carats.



CATEGORY II (\$1,001 - \$3,000)

Joel Wiland, J. David Jewelry
Broken Arrow, OK

Oklahoma Jewelers Association

Large blue topaz pendant on white-gold omega chain, the topaz is set over a selection of trilliant and round diamonds.

CATEGORY III (\$3,001 AND OVER)

Ziad H. Noshie; Almaza Jewelers
Houston, TX

Texas Jewelers Association

Necklace and earrings in 18-karat white gold, with more than 600 pavé-set diamonds in total and 11 freshwater pearls.



BUYER'S CHOICE AWARD

Dale Hurt; Gold-N-Designs
Lee's Summit, MO

Missouri Jewelers & Watchmakers Association

Platinum and 18-karat yellow gold pendant with tanzanite, pink tourmaline, opal doublet and diamonds.

All Images by Alfredo Parraga



JIC Opens Gem Awards Nominations to Industry

Jewelry Information Center (JIC) is inviting all association members and others in the jewelry and watch industry to submit nominations for the 2009 JIC Gem Awards. This is the first time since the Gem Awards were launched in 2003 that JIC's Board of Directors is opening the nominations process to non-members.

The Gem Awards recognize achievements in marketing, style and other categories at a gala dinner in New York City in January. Nominations for next year's Gem Awards may be made on JIC's website, www.jic.org, through May 15, 2008; award winners will be announced this summer.

The 2009 JIC Gem Awards dinner will be held on January 9, 2009 at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York City.

NYSJA Annual Gala Dinner in July

New York State Jewelers Association will hold its annual Gala Awards Banquet on Saturday, July 26, 2008, at The Mandarin Oriental Hotel at the Time Warner Center (pictured) in New York City. The event honors industry leaders with an evening of silent auctions, dinner, dancing and an awards ceremony.

To celebrate with NYSJA, visit www.newyorkjewelers.org or contact Barbara Keefe Rosenstein at 212-290-1555 or BKeefeRose@aol.com for more information. Tickets are \$325 for individuals and \$2,950 for a table of ten. Journal advertising and sponsorship and silent auction opportunities are available.



JFC to Honor JA Board Director Peter Engel

Jewelers for Children will honor JA Board Director **Peter M. Engel**, president of Fred Meyer Jewelers, Inc. with Allen Brill, president and CEO of Rolex Watch USA, at the annual Facets of Hope event Sunday, June 1, 2008 in Las Vegas. The event will be held for the first time at the Venetian Resort Hotel and Casino. The move marks Jewelers for Children's tenth anniversary.

The Facets of Hope event culminates JFC's fundraising efforts for the year and attracts more than 2,300 industry guests during the JCK Show. Both Engel and Brill will assist JFC in raising funds to benefit children who are the victims of catastrophic illness or life-threatening abuse and neglect. "Through JFC, our industry has had the opportunity to give back to children in need. I am honored to be a part of an event that makes such a difference," says Engel. Fundraising began in January.



Those interested in sponsoring can find information on the JFC website, www.jewelersforchildren.org, or by calling 212-687-2949.

Upcoming Events

JUNE

Connecticut Jewelers Convention
Marriott Hotel, Rocky Hill, CT
June 18

JULY

New York State Jewelers Dinner
Mandarin Oriental Hotel, New York, NY
July 26

JA New York
Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York, NY
July 27 - 30

AUGUST

Atlanta Jewelry Show
Cobb Galleria Centre, Atlanta, GA
August 9 - 11

Nebraska/South Dakota Jewelers Association
Leadership Conference & Convention
Holiday Inn Midtown, Grand Island, NE
August 15 - 17

Arkansas Jewelers Association Convention
Peabody Hotel, Little Rock, AR
August 15 - 16

*For a full list of upcoming events,
updated regularly,
visit www.jewelers.org/aboutjalevents.html*

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