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#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### 27<sup>TH</sup> iHOBBY EXPO™ POSTS STELLAR NUMBERS DURING LAST CHICAGO AREA SHOW

**November 3, 2011.** Despite unseasonably warm weather and a continued downturn in the economic prospects for many industry manufacturers and retailers, the 27<sup>th</sup> edition of iHobby Expo™ was well-attended by both the dealer and consumer audiences. Total attendance for the public days was up slightly to 20,019 v. 19,800 in 2010. The two day trade and two day public event was held at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL.

"Once again in 2011, Stevens International had a great iHobby Expo. Given the proper tools such as Ticket to Ride and other show specials we offer each year, we have learned how to maximize our success at each Expo. The Stevens Intl staff is looking very forward to Cleveland in 2012 to meet additional dealers who have not traveled to Chicago for previous iHobby Expos. We also look forward to spending our evenings in downtown Cleveland, which has been revitalized over the past few years with museums, boutiques and restaurants. We all look forward to even more dealer participation next year so we can personally meet more of our customers," said Michael Bass, Owner of Stevens International.

The trade portion of the four day event drew 3,089 total exhibitor and buyer attendees with 1,694 buyer attendees from 797 retail stores/distributorships. This compares to 1,703 retailer/distributor personnel representing 886 stores and distributorships who attended in 2010. 195 exhibitors (69 new to the show) took 489 booths, about 50,000 net square feet of exhibit space.

"2011 is rated as one of, if not **the** best iHobby shows for BSI. Thank you for everything you do for us," said Charlee Smith of Bob Smith Industries.

The Make & Take areas were perpetually full, with children and adults creating their own model train car, tie dye bandana or plastic model for free! In addition to the action-packed show floor featuring many opportunities to see hobby products in action

(including the Traxxas Dirt Track, staffed by Al's Hobby Shop, The Empire Hobby Flying Cage, Big Squid Race Track, MRC's Slot Car Track, Chicagoland Hobby's Pinewood Derby Track, and the NRCTPA Truck Pulling Track), attendees experienced the 5th Phoenix Cup competition of professional airplane flyers where nationally ranked pilots from across the U.S. competed for cash and prizes in the various flying competitions held on Saturday and Sunday. The Mecha Mayhem Robotics Battle Zone was once again a hit with kids and adults alike. 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. Youngsters enjoyed the Thomas the Tank Engine Kiddie Train Ride, sponsored by Bachmann Trains and a Legoland play area presented by Beth Weis.

Continuing on with his traditional appearance at the Expo on Saturday was model train enthusiast, Michael Gross. Michael appeared in the long-running sitcom "Family Ties" as the dad, Stephen Keaton. He is an avid model railroader and long time friend of the Expo. Appearing for the first time was Stacey David from the Speed Channel show "Gearz." Stacey appeared in the Revell/Great Planes booth on Friday and in the iHobby Celebrity Autograph booth on Saturday to greet fans and sign autographs.

HMA continued its retailer certificate series of educational seminars, "Hobby University" with four seminars focusing on: *Social Media Marketing for Retailers and Retail Re-Invention*, and *Taking Your Business Off Auto Pilot*, both presented by retail specialists Kizer and Bender; *Cultivating Your Market With Demos & Hands-On Events* with Tom Grossman; and *Estate Planning Pitfalls and Solutions*, presented by Dale West from the American Society for Asset Protection.

HMA partnered with NRHSA and Model Retailer Magazine to present an industry panel titled, "Tips of the Trade – Successful Retailing at Your Fingertips." Panelists included Theo Captanis of Pacific Coast Hobbies, Jeff Setzer of Trains and Lanes, Michael Brey of Hobby Works, Brian Berlin of Hobby Haven and Rex Simpson of Hobbysports. The session was moderated by NRHSA President and Walt's Hobby Shop Owner, Bruce Throne. It was well attended and great ideas were shared.

"Our thanks as well to the National Retail Hobby Stores Association for co-sponsoring the Friday morning retailer seminar," said Fred Hill, HMA President. "The excitement on Saturday and Sunday was felt throughout the floor. The "make and take" areas were always busy - many families left the show with lots of packages in their hands and a smile on their faces. We know 2012 in Cleveland is going to exceed everyone's expectations."

The 5th year of the ***Ticket to Ride*** program generated over \$20,000 of exhibitor coupon requests to give out at the Expo. Dealer attendees need to send their Ticket to Ride coupons and travel receipts to the HMA office by December 15, 2011 in order to redeem payment.

Doug Blaine, HMA Show Committee Chair, thanked the numerous clubs and volunteers for their assistance in helping consumers at the Make & 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," stated Blaine. "While the talk of the show was looking forward toward our 2012 move to Cleveland, it was a fond farewell in Chicago. Both hobby retailers and consumers took advantage of a show floor filled with great products and hobby fun."

The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual iHobby Expo will be held October 11-14, 2012 at The I-X Center in Cleveland, OH. For exhibiting and attending information, contact HMA at 973-283-9088 or visit [www.ihobbyexpo.com](http://www.ihobbyexpo.com).

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