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The WSA February Event Breaks 33,000 Participants & Captures 7,000 New Buyer Attendees with Significant Buying Power

Newport Beach, CA, March 15, 2005 — The World Shoe Association announced today the final attendance numbers for the February 2005 event. The February event captured 33,286 registered participants which represents 30% more than the February 2004 event.

The Strategy

The WSA's strategy is to build the buying audience event to event through a number of aggressive marketing initiatives. "The outstanding showing at the WSA February 2005 Show was a direct result of the WSA's aggressive retail buyer outreach program and marketing campaign that garnered more than four million impressions worldwide," reported Diane Stone, COO of the WSA.

The new buyer attendance reached a record 7,126 at the WSA Show in February—more than twice the average of the last four events. The number of new attendees indicates the WSA has yet to tap its full potential audience—providing exhibitors a great resource in which to reach buyers seeking new merchandise.

The WSA grew buyer participation across all key categories including the core specialty footwear retailers which accounted for 41% of WSA attendance. "The category with the most growth was the boutiques which grew to 14% of attendance from 7% at the prior event," reported Stone.

The WSA's investment in the retail buyer outreach program paid off—a program whereby key retailers and those who do not attend were personally invited by the retail relations team to the WSA Show. This outreach was complimented by a marketing program that included 43 advertisements in consumer and trade magazines from across the globe, direct mail to over 400,000 professionals and email marketing campaigns that included the birth of the WSA's *footnotes* email newsletter.

"Altogether, the WSA increased market outreach 10 fold for the February 2005 Show. With the help of our media partners, we were able to multiply our advertising messages while also growing the number of direct mail and email contacts," reported Catherine Upton, Chief Marketing Officer for the WSA.

The Buying Power

The net impact was positive. The WSA Show attracted decision-makers across the \$47 billion footwear market. Presidents, vice presidents and owners accounted for 47% of WSA attendance, with buyers closely following at 30%. Ninety-two percent of WSA attendees reported buying authority of footwear products and 69% of these attendees bought for more than one location, and averaged 28 stores.

Retail buyers also sought handbags and accessories at the WSA February 2005 Show. Valued at over \$28 billion dollars, buyers found a full line of handbags and accessories at the show. Thirty-one percent of WSA buyers sought out handbags and another 25% shopped other accessories. "The WSA handbag buyer spends \$1.55 million on average annually, making the WSA Show the perfect venue to exhibit to reach these power buyers of accessories," concluded Stone.

Top designers, manufacturers and retailers in the footwear industry will again converge at the WSA Show in Las Vegas August 4-7, 2005 at the Sands Expo, Mandalay Bay Convention Center and The Venetian. The August event will host additional square footage including an additional hall for handbags and accessories. For information on attending or exhibiting, please visit www.wsashow.com

About the World Shoe Association (WSA)

The WSA is the largest association serving the footwear trade and hosts the WSA Shows, the premier marketplaces for the footwear industry in The Americas, twice a year. The WSA Shows provide the forum for the entire footwear industry to connect manufacturers and buyers, showcase designer brand fashions, evaluate trends, and discover what is new in footwear styles, accessories, handbags, and foot care products. With more than 30,000 participants and 6,000+ key brands from all over the world covering 1.6 million square feet of space, the WSA Show is the *must-attend* for footwear and accessory buyers. For more information about the World Shoe Association or the WSA Show, visit www.wsashow.com.

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