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One Year After Public Service Campaign's Release, New Posters Added To Dismantle Negative Mississippi Stereotypes

Jackson, MS – A public service campaign designed to directly combat the negative stereotypes often associated with the state of Mississippi is being expanded with three new public service announcements in the form of print ads and posters.

The *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM campaign was designed to inform and educate the citizens of Mississippi, as well as the rest of the country, about the many positive attributes of Mississippi. It now includes fourteen public service announcements created to run in both newspapers and magazines. Just as the Agency did a year ago, a full set of the *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM posters containing all 14 posters will be sent to every public and private K-12 school and every college and university in the state in the new year. The campaign also includes a website that houses the posters in a downloadable format, as well as links to other sites which list little-known facts about the state.

The campaign features many of the wonderful people, aspects, stories and facts associated with the state of Mississippi. The *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM campaign was designed pro bono by The Cirlot Agency, a Mississippi-based, full-service, marketing, public relations and corporate communications firm, as a gift to Mississippi in an effort to thank the state for supporting its business over the past two decades. The campaign was recently featured in *The New York Times*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and the *International Herald Tribune*.

According to Rick Looser, COO of The Cirlot Agency, the campaign has been fueled just in the past few weeks with the negative comments about Mississippi by Rep. Charles Rangel of New York. "The three new ads were developed weeks before Rep. Rangel made his now infamous comments, but ignorant statements such as his demonstrate the need for a continuing effort such as *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM," Looser said. "We plan to

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send him one of the T-shirts from our new online store -- I think the, "Yes, we can read. A few of us can even write.," T-shirt would be most appropriate," Looser added.

The campaign takes common Mississippi stereotypes and twists them to reveal the truth about the state. For instance, the headline of one the newly added posters reads, "Meet a few of our new good ole boys." The ad explains that Mississippi has more black elected officials than any other state in the country. Women in high ranking positions are featured, as well as Chief Phillip Martin of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

In the other newly added posters, one features the success of Hartley Peavey and Peavey Electronics. The ad's headline reads, "A Mississippi stereo type." Peavey started his company in 1965 in his dad's basement in Meridian, MS. Now, his operation stands at 1.5 million square feet and supplies many of today's music stars with equipment, such as audio mixing consoles, amplifiers, microphones and guitars.

The third new PSA features the late Dr. Arthur Guyton, who is world-renowned for his physiology textbook, which he wrote in 1956 while at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The headline says, "Mississippi. When it comes to modern medicine, we wrote the book." The ad explains that the *Textbook of Medical Physiology* has been used for decades in medical schools in the United States and abroad. The best-selling physiology book ever published, this textbook may be the best-selling medical textbook of any kind. UMC physiologist Dr. John Hall has carried on Dr. Guyton's legacy by updating the textbook with new editions.

"Throughout the 189 years of Mississippi's statehood, untold numbers of the state's citizens have made marvelous medical advances, entertained the masses, and invented products that do everything from make lives better to improve space travel," said Looser. "That's just to name a few of the state's successes. But all too often, Mississippi is only thought of regarding a short period in her history in which civil rights atrocities took place. In many parts of the country, this is all Mississippi is known for and, unfortunately, this negative perception has greatly affected how Mississippi's own citizens view their state."

Looser believes that until Mississippi's own citizens are proud of its successes, the rest of the country cannot be expected to change their perceptions about Mississippi. The Cirlot Agency is asking that newspapers across the state again donate space to help

educate people and share positive information about Mississippi. The ultimate goal is to create “citizen ambassadors” for the state. A year ago, the Agency simply hoped that these “citizen ambassadors” would visit the website, www.mississippibelieveit.com, download the posters and email them from coast to coast. To date, through the website and emails, an estimated 20 million people have seen the posters, making *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM a success.

Another added feature to the website is an online store, where anyone can purchase *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM merchandise. T-shirts, caps, and other gift items are available for sale as a fundraiser for the campaign. “Our hope is that the online store will be so successful that we will be able to buy advertising space in national newspapers and magazines to further spread the word about Mississippi,” concluded Looser. All the proceeds from the store go toward expanding the campaign nationally, as well as covering expenses, such as packaging and postage. No one involved with the campaign will profit from the sale of any merchandise.

While visiting the website, users are encouraged to email other great Mississippi success stories by clicking on “Know Another Great Mississippi Story?” section. “We realize there is a plethora of great Mississippians and stories not featured in the campaign,” continued Looser. “So many, in fact, that it is next to impossible to include them all. Isn’t it a wonderful ‘problem’ not to have enough space to feature all of our extraordinary stories?”

The cost of the *Mississippi, Believe It!*TM campaign is estimated at over \$315,000 to date. The Cirlot Agency has donated over \$275,000 in time and resources to bring this campaign to fruition. Service Printers, Inc., of Flowood, MS, donated over \$40,000 in printing services and paper costs for the posters.

The Cirlot Agency, a Mississippi-based, full-service, marketing, public relations and corporate communications firm, represents accounts on a national and international basis ranging from Fortune 100 companies to some of the world’s largest privately held corporations.
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