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From the community: smART postcards™—How To Connect With Kids: Keep in Touch with Favorite Preschooler with Colorful Postcards



smART postcards™ Inc. offers a total of 51 colorful photographic images on the postcards which place familiar subjects in lively and artful graphic compositions. (Posted by DEBAT MEDIA NEWS SERVICE, Community Contributor)

By **Community Contributor DEBAT MEDIA NEWS SERVICE**

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Long before architect and interior designer Kathleen Hess conceived smART postcards™, she wanted to engage her grandchildren-Anna and Klaire-and introduce them to a visual world based on her design knowledge.

When Anna was three years old, Ms. Hess started mailing weekly, colorful and visually interesting postcards, addressed directly to Anna, and then discussed the cards in weekly follow-up long-distance phone calls.

Initially, Ms. Hess purchased individual cards at museum shops, and greeting-card stores, a task that became more difficult when pursuing a specific theme, such as the alphabet, colors or counting.

This led to the creation of smART postcards™-a portfolio of her own graphic images that became the three series, now available on the smART postcards™ website. Visit: www.smARTpostcards.com.

Years later, when 18-year-old Anna was cleaning her room in preparation for college, she found several hundred postcards that she had assembled into books. Anna called her grandmother to tell her how much she enjoyed receiving them as a preschooler. Klaire, now 15 years old, expressed similar feelings.

Preschoolers today are "almost universally exposed" to expensive mobile devices-from smart cell phones to tablet computers, reports a recent study in Pediatrics journal. The study found that 20 percent of 1-year-olds own a tablet computer, and 28 percent of 2-year-olds can navigate a mobile device with no help.

And, nearly one-third of preschooler parents say they use a mobile device to put their kids to sleep, according to the survey.

Despite this trend, Hess believes in the Old-School concept of sending postcards to preschoolers through the U.S. mail is an enjoyable way for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and family members to entertain, intellectually stimulate and stay lovingly in touch with young children. She noted that there are 65 million grandparents in the U.S., and each spends about \$500 per year on each grandchild.

That's the business plan behind the launch of smART postcards™ Inc., a Chicago-based postcard company chartered to create engaging graphic materials designed to stimulate and entertain preschool children.

"We've created three series of affordable 4-by-6-inch picture postcards designed for preschoolers that illustrate the Alphabet, Colors and Counting," said Hess, President of smART postcards™ Inc.

Hess offers a total of 51 colorful photographic images on the postcards which place familiar subjects in lively and artful graphic compositions.

The postcards illustrate 26 letters from A to Z, a dozen colors, from hot red to cool blue, and numbers to help children learn to count from 1 to 10.

To add to the stimulating experience, the word for each number or color is printed on the back of the card in five languages-English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese text.

The photography was done mostly in Chicago-area locations, including the Lincoln Park Zoo, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum and at Brookfield Zoo.

"The smART postcards™ series could have been produced overseas, but it was important to have the product designed and printed in Chicago to support local business," Hess said.

The company's mission statement outlines its goal: "smART postcards™ is dedicated to making good design accessible to preschool children, by seeking the visual essence in the familiar-and when feasible, by relating the images to an implied verbal alliteration."

Utilizing the U.S. mail as a delivery system for the smART postcards™ is a key part of the preschooler's experience.

"Children enjoy receiving mail in their own name, as a regular event," Hess said. "This can foster self-identity and self-worth."

The mailing of a postcard to a preschooler usually provides a common conversation topic and may contribute to cultivating a bond between the sender and the recipient, she said. And, "the cards could be mailed with interesting postage stamps."

Lastly, an unexpected graphic image, when coupled with verbal descriptions in multiple languages, "introduces children to a global outlook, which nurtures literacy, comprehension and reasoning," noted Hess, who outlined details of the three series of postcards:

- "Alphabet" series. This set consists of 26 photographic-image postcards illustrating the letters "A" through "Z". Each of the cards offers a delightful visual experience that places familiar subjects in lively and artful graphic compositions.

A photo of three red apples-one with a bite out of it-is on the front of the "A" postcard, with a block letter "A" and the word "apples" printed on the back of the card in English text.

And, the letter "Z" is illustrated with a photo of zebras on the front of the postcard, and the block letter "Z" is printed on the back of the card with the word "zebras".

- "Colors" series. Twelve photographic-image postcards illustrated by familiar subjects represent the following colors-red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, brown, beige, gray, white and black.

A photo of blue balloons is on the front of the "Blue" postcard, and the word "blue" is printed on the back of the card in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese text.

The photo of pink flamingos on the front of the "Pink" postcard, and the word "pink" is printed on the back of the card in the five languages.

- Postcard construction. The 4-by-6-inch color photographic images are printed with soy-based ink on 15-point recycled content cardstock. The postcards are coated on the image side with a gloss finish and black and white text on the matte reverse side. Each series booklet is pad-bound along the top edge making the cards removable. The product arrives shrink-wrapped.

- Photo album. If a preschooler is provided with a standard 4-by-6-inch photo album with transparent pages, the child can create a book while collecting a series of postcards. The images also can serve as flash cards to nurture literacy and comprehension. Years later, the album of collected postcards will remain as a permanent, tangible record of the preschooler's childhood relationship with a parent, grandparent or sender.

- Postcard prices. The 26-card Alphabet series is priced at \$15.95. The 12-card Colors series sells for \$8.95. A 10-card Counting series costs \$7.95. A set of all three postcard series retails for \$27.95. All internet sales include free shipping.

smART postcards™ is committed to the literacy, education and welfare of children. For more information on smART postcards™, or to place an order for one or all three series of the cards, visit www.smARTpostcards.com.

About Kathleen Hess

Kathleen Hess, President of smART postcards Inc., is a licensed architect and interior designer practicing in Illinois. She has called Chicago her home after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Design from the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. When not photographing the next postcard series, Hess is designing residential interiors or traveling with her husband.

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