



COLLETTE LIANTONIO



Inventions 'R' Us BY CARRIE M. HARPER

So, where do you go to find the next great American inventor? A good place to start is Pittsburgh, Pa. That's right, Pittsburgh.

The Invention & New Product Exposition (INPEX) held its 22nd annual invention trade show on June 7-10. INPEX is America's largest invention trade show and exposition showcasing numerous inventions and new products available to license, manufacture or market. As I entered the trade show floor, you could practically feel the excitement and enthusiasm that surrounds the show, as more than 350 inventors from 20 countries around the world gathered under one roof in hopes of getting their product on store shelves or featured on a live shopping show.

The show featured innovations ranging from an upside-down Christmas tree, to new power tool and fitness ideas, to a love-detection collar for pets.

INPEX is also where amateur inventors get chosen and invited to participate in ERA's annual Invention Showcase. The association launched the show in 1999 to provide inventors with a safe forum to understand the invention process and see firsthand how to turn their dreams into a marketable reality and to bring new products and ideas to ERA member companies.

For the fifth consecutive year, ERA hosted a product review panel to qualify products for its 2006 Invention Showcase to be held September 10-12 in Las Vegas. The panel was comprised of six ERA members representing all segments of the multichannel marketing and direct response industry, from catalog to DRTV to Internet to call cen-

ters. Industry experts included: Collette Liantonio, president, Concepts TV Productions Inc.; Karen Hyman, president, Live Link TV; Bridget Corish, director of business development, Livemercial Inc.; Tami Cubel, vice president of client development, InPulse Response Group; Wendi Cooper, CEO, C Spot Run Productions, LLC; and Curtis Clarke, vice president of Catalog Solutions Inc. Each panelist brought a unique perspective to the panel and represented years of direct response knowledge and experience.

Over 50 inventors with products geared toward the direct-to-consumer industry presented their ideas

great breakthrough that is destined to make our lives better."

This year's inventors are no doubt hoping to duplicate the success of one of last year's Invention Showcase winner, Carrie Jeske. Her invention, Sports Shade, a portable awning that can be attached to a fixed object to provide shade and cover during summertime recreational activities, was recently featured live on QVC and is available for sale on its website.

As the long day ended, marking another successful partnership with INPEX, ERA's Invention Showcase Task Force chair, Wendy Cooper, commented, "Every year it is such a joy to be able

"...it's thrilling to see the high-level of entrepreneurship entering the direct response world." —Collette Liantonio, Concepts TV Productions Inc.

and innovations in the hopes of pre-qualifying for this year's Showcase. Products ranging from "things that make you go hmm..." to those that made you ask yourself "now why didn't I think of that?" were auditioned; the panel invited more than 30 inventors to exhibit in Vegas.

"As our industry becomes increasingly more sophisticated and focused on the big brand Fortune 500 companies, it's thrilling to see the high-level of entrepreneurship entering the direct response world," says Concepts TV Productions' Collette Liantonio. "It's exciting to see the American Dream in action and to have the opportunity to recognize the next

to give back to the people who make our industry thrive—the inventors. It's so refreshing to see how ERA's Invention Showcase has grown, how ERA members have stayed committed, and how our efforts with the support of everyone at INPEX provide exactly what we set out to do: provide a safe forum where education meets opportunity."

Information about ERA's Invention Showcase, including a list of past winners, is available at www.americaninventiveness.org.

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