



New Jersey Is Charmed

STORY BY EILEEN McCLELLAND

GEORGE PRESS FINE JEWELERS of Livingston, NJ, specializes in bridal collections, couture jewelry and timepieces. But it was George's custom design prowess that was showcased with the New Jersey Has Charm contest last year. When George and Cheryl Press meet with their PR firm, the Hip Event of New Jersey, creative ideas often ensue. During one such brainstorming session, their PR specialists suggested the charm contest.

THE IDEA

WEARABLE SYMBOL • In addition to showcasing the jeweler's custom design service, the contest theme, "New Jersey has Charm," was intended to inspire people to create a wearable symbol of what they love about New Jersey. Entrants were invited to submit charm designs in a readable format — jpeg or PDF — that represent New Jersey in a positive light. The top five designs were to be posted to Facebook for voting, which would influence the final decision. The winner would have his or her design made into a piece of jewelry. Cheryl Press particularly liked the idea of putting a positive spin on her state because when she travels to trade shows she finds herself defending New Jersey against stereotypes perpetuated on TV — in everything from *The Sopranos* to *Jersey Shore*.

THE EXECUTION

ONLINE CONTEST • The Hip Event drafted the contest rules, which were posted on the George Press website. Entries were diverse and depicted everything from a tomato (for the Garden State), to a Ferris wheel and seashells to represent the Jersey shore.

Facebook fans voted on finalists, but George selected the winner, based on the design concept and the ability to create the charm.

Peiran Xu of Teaneck, NJ, produced the winning design, a sterling charm with an amethyst in its center, surrounded by diamonds. It's a charm within a charm — the state flower, a violet, nestled inside an abstract NJ.

Xu submitted her design as part of a class project in a Fairleigh Dickinson University art class. Ten entries came from that class



» George and Cheryl Press of George Press Jewelers pose with NJ has Charm contest winner Peiran Xu



» Xu's winning charm design

and when Xu was presented with her charm, her instructor and classmates came along, too.

The top three winners were announced during an unveiling ceremony at the store. Xu was thrilled that the charm looked exactly like she thought it would — even better, Cheryl says. "We gave her a \$150 gift certificate for the store, too, and she bought a necklace for her grandmother."

The first runner-up received a \$100 gift card and the second runner-up, a \$50 gift card.

The event included a presentation on how to go green with jewelry by restoring old pieces — a theme for Earth Day in April.

THE RESULTS

FAN BASE • "Part of the objective was to increase our Facebook presence and our fan base," Cheryl says. "We had a page, but it wasn't an interactive fan page. This turned it around completely. We had huge success with voting on Facebook. Even after the contest was over, people still asked me about it. We'll definitely do it again. It was a great PR event and we got a lot of feedback."

"We were so pleased that there was such an interest in this contest," George says. "We were happy to create a beautiful piece of jewelry to reflect the beauty of New Jersey."

DO IT YOURSELF

"I THINK WORKING WITH A PR COMPANY is important because as a business owner you are pulled in so many directions," Cheryl says. "Quite often you have an idea but you lack the time to implement it. If you cannot have a PR position in house then I find it extremely helpful and important now, with all the social networking to work with a PR firm. It's been a very big asset to us."

