

Songbird Essentials Acquires Eklunds' Wildbird Gift Line

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"Mad Bluebird" by Michael Smith ranks as the most popular image in the wildbird gift line. Songbird Essentials, a Mexico, Mo.-based manufacturer of bird products, reached an agreement with Eklunds Ltd., a gift company based in St. Cloud, Minn., to acquire Eklunds' wildbird gift line. The deal became effective Sept. 1.

The wildbird gift line includes flags, cups, puzzles, pillows and magnets, all printed with licensed images of wild birds. Licensed images include the "Mad Bluebird," by Michael Smith, the company's best-selling image; "Nosy Junco and Pipe Dreams," by Shane Dimmich; "Entertaining Friends," by Jim Rataczak; and "Chorus Line," by Adele Earnshaw.

Songbird Essentials co-owner and president Mel Toellner said he plans to continue all images in the line and to expand the offering, especially in the number of available puzzles, Christmas ornaments and sun catchers. In addition, Toellner expects to relaunch several discontinued Mad Bluebird items and has kicked off contest to find new images.

The "What's Next?? -- You Pick 'em Promotion" invites customers to pick which new wildbird image or images Songbird Essentials should offer. The "What's Next?? -- You Pick 'em Promotion" runs through to the end of 2010.

"We intend to expand greatly the use of the images on more items and add more images to boot," Toellner said.

This acquisition marks Songbird Essentials' entry into the gift market. Toellner said the acquisition was prompted by a desire to ensure that unique gift items remain available to the independent channel. He also said coupling functional items with gift items spur retail sales.

"We found that promoting gifts along with functional items helps sell not only gifts, but the consumer ends up buying more of the functional items," Toellner said.