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REAL-TIME NEWS

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Staten Island firm to send out Obama's invitations

by Staten Island Advance

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Staten Island Advance/Irving Silverstein

Prompt Mailers Inc. will be sending out over 1 million invitations to the upcoming presidential inauguration, From the left: Carlos Oliveras, Production Floor supervisor, looks over the invitations with Richard Masucci, company president, in their warehouse.

A small Staten Island company has been entrusted with mailing 1 million invites to what promises to be the year's biggest party: The inauguration of Barack Obama as this country's 44th President.

Prompt Mailers Inc. at 66 Willow Ave., Clifton, received word just before Christmas that its strategic business partner, Precise Continental in Brooklyn, had won the bid to produce the gold and black engraved commemorative invitations, and that Prompt would be doing the mailing.

"We were quite excited," said Dennis Lacognata, who co-owns the 30-year-old business with brothers Andrew and Richard Masucci. "We feel privileged to be involved in the new president's inauguration. It gives us some encouragement of what 2009 is going to bring."

Material started arriving at Prompt Mailers on Monday. The collating and inserting of the invitation, a letter from the Presidential Inaugural Committee and a pamphlet from the inaugural store into envelopes began New Year's Eve.

Every hour, four machines individually collate, insert and seal 3,100 to 3,500 envelopes each. Some 20 of Prompt Mailers' 85 employees are working day and night on the project, to make sure the company meets its Jan. 7 deadline.

"I'm very excited about this," said U.S. Marine veteran Carlos Oliveras of the Bronx, the floor manager, who has been with the company 10 years. "I was a

junkie for all things Obama. I couldn't be happier to be a part of this history - indirectly. It also gives me great pride to tell my grandson, Koby Smith, 6."

West Brighton resident Aborn Etchison, who has worked for the company since 1987, said: "It feels good to be doing this job. It feels pretty good."

But for Stapleton resident Debora King, it was all a part of a day's work. "It's just part of the job we do."

Prompt Mailers is a small business familiar with handling big jobs. The company has done work for the city as well as major retailers. Its services include automatic inserting, addressing, data processing, packaging and fulfillment.

"It's definitely a nice way to start the new year," said Lacognata, who mentioned that due to the economy a couple of projects have been canceled. "Our business is kind of unique and different. When things are bad, people have to advertise to sell their products and services. We're staying positive and active in trying to get new business."

Precise Continental, which has been in business 26 years, prints stationery and specialty items. A week before he was awarded the contract from the presidential inaugural committee, owner Jim Donnelly told employees money was tight and they'd better prepare for a four-day work week.

"We were ecstatic when we heard the news," Donnelly said in a telephone interview. "It's a great way to end the year. Because of this order a lot of companies had a better holiday season." Donnelly, who had 35 of the company's 65 employees work on the project, proudly noted they didn't have any problems with the etching, engraving or printing process.

Since Harry S. Truman's Jan. 20, 1949 inaugural, the printed invitations have had the same look. However, this year, the invitations were printed on cream colored recycled paper, with the traditional inaugural seal at the top in gold.

In black script, the invitation reads: "The Presidential Inaugural Committee requests the honor of your presence to attend and participate in the Inauguration of Barack H. Obama as President of the United States of America and Joseph R. Biden Jr. as Vice President of the United States of America on Tuesday, the twentieth of January two thousand and nine in the city of Washington."

"We think the piece is a beautiful piece to be involved in. It represents the country well and the new president well," said Lacognata.

--- Contributed by *Stephannia F. Cleaton*

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