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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AGS & JA Lead Group in Evaluating Resources for Bench Jewelers

*Committees will examine JA Certified Bench Jeweler program,
educational resources and marketing outreach*

New York, NY – The American Gem Society (AGS) and Jewelers of America (JA), along with a group of bench jewelry industry leaders, have formed a task force called the Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum, to examine the current state of bench jeweler education and certification. AGS and JA convened the meeting, in recognition of the importance of bench jewelers to the future health and prosperity of the independent jeweler.

“The repair and design services that a competent bench staff provides to the retail jeweler are a key source of differentiation,” says Ruth Batson, CEO of the American Gem Society, which recently created a Certified Jewelry Arts Professional program for AGS members. “A skilled bench staff conveys a message of service and professionalism that is critical to independent jewelers’ ongoing success.”

“JA led the industry 10 years ago in its creation of the JA Certified Bench Jeweler program,” says JA President and CEO Matthew A. Runci. “Now, its time to gather all interested parties to take a fresh look at certification, and at all the resources available to bench jewelers.”

The Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum has formed four committees that, over the next year, will assess key areas of interest. JA Director of Education David Peters is leading the process, with assistance from JA Assistant to the President Sharie Fogarty.

- **JA Certified Bench Jeweler Program/Content and Structure.**
The committee will assess the current content of the program, as well as its structure. It plans to review current tests and projects, consider new specialized tests and evaluate the current four titles that bench jewelers can attain to see if they continue to be relevant. Ulla Raus of the Texas Institute for Jewelry Technology, Alan Revere of the Revere Academy and Brad Simon of Bench Media will serve as co-chairs.
- **JA Certified Bench Jeweler Program/Fulfillment.**
The committee will evaluate the fulfillment process, grading turnaround times and consistency of grading. Peters and Fogarty will lead this committee.

– More –

- **Educational Resources for Bench Jewelers.**

The group has already compiled a first draft list of known resources, from associations and companies such as Manufacturing Jewelers & Suppliers of America (MJSA), Stuller, the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), Bench Media, TIJT, the Revere Academy and others. The committee will now research missing elements and the development of new educational programming. Teresa Shannon of MJSA will chair this committee, with assistance from Bill Herbert of GIA.

- **Media and Marketing.**

This committee will consider how to best market bench jeweler expertise as a key benefit of shopping with a professional jewelry retailer. Its outreach will consider messaging to bench jewelers, storeowners and consumers. David Gardner of David Gardner's Jewelers in College Station, TX, will lead this committee. Gardner also led the AGS committee that crafted the new AGS Certified Jewelry Arts Professional title.

The committee will work through the next year on finalizing recommendations, and plans to meet in Tucson during the February gem shows, as well as at the next AGS Conclave in Seattle, WA, in April. For more information on the work of the Bench Jeweler Education Resource Forum, please contact JA Director of Education David Peters at davidpeters@jewelers.org.

***Jewelers of America** is the national trade association for retail jewelers. With 11,000 member stores, JA also works locally through its 40 state and regional affiliates. JA advocates high social, ethical, and environmental standards, promotes professional business and leadership skills, and enhances its members' profitability by offering education, certification, marketing and cost-saving programs. For more information, visit www.jewelers.org.*

*The **American Gem Society** is the international professional organization for all Registered Jewelers (RJ), Certified Gemologists (CG), Certified Gemologist Appraisers (CGA) and Independent Certified Gemologist Appraisers. Members are held to the highest ethical and professional standards in the industry and must pass annual recertification examinations to maintain their American Gem Society titles. For more information visit their website at www.AmericanGemSociety.org.*

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