

For Immediate Release

The California State Quarter: A Tribute To The "Greatest Californian."

The California State Quarter will be released in 2005, and 139 million quarter collectors will be waiting for it. Thanks to MPI Coin and the California Bankers Association, they might just find it in your lobby.

The California State Quarter will be the first State Quarter of 2005, and should become available some time in January. It pays tribute to naturalist John Muir. The man whose writings helped establish the conservation movement in America is depicted in Yosemite National Park, which he helped to create. Half Dome rises majestically behind him as a California Condor soars above.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, in his announcement of the selection of the John Muir design for the California State Quarter, said: "John Muir has been a role model to generations of Californians and to conservationists around the world. He taught us to be active and to enjoy -- but at the same time protect -- our parks, our beaches, and our mountains."

Through CBA, member banks will be able to offer their customers a unique presentation of the California State Quarter through MPI Coin's State Quarter Collection. They can also offer the many other State Quarter Collections currently available as part of MPI Coin's Coins of America program. Member banks enjoy special CBA discounts when they start, and can take advantage of Guaranteed Starter Packages, which offer a full six-month exchange on the coins in the Package.

Banks that start their programs now will be well-positioned to take advantage of the excitement and interest that will be generated throughout the state when the California State Quarter is released.

To contact MPI Coin, call 1-800-459-9487. You can see the State Quarter Collections at their web site, www.coinsofamerica.com.

Since 1996, Coins of America has helped financial institutions across the country use coins and coin sales to attract new customers and make new connections to their existing accounts. "It's an idea that worked from the start," says MPI Coin president Andrew Schwartz. "Americans are always attracted to an opportunity to shop. And coin sales are an obvious extension of a bank's core services. Put them together, and you've got a unique way to promote yourself that also returns a profit."

MPI Coin takes U.S. Mint and other specialty mint coins, adds their own packaging to create unique coin products, and sells them to banks at wholesale prices. Banks use the coins for premiums, promotions and direct sales, helped by the marketing materials that MPI Coin provides free of charge.

The State Quarters are clearly the stars of this show. "There's never been anything like them," says Schwartz. "They single-handedly brought coin collecting into the American mainstream." The U.S. Mint introduced the State Quarters in 1999. Every year through 2008, five quarters will be released with a special reverse celebrating one of the 50 states. Citizens of the home state submit the designs, and also vote to select the final choice.

The success of the Collections speaks for itself: Coins of America sells more than two million Collections annually through the 6,500 financial institutions that offer the program.

"We turn each quarter into a celebration of home state pride," says Schwartz. Each Collection features two State Quarters in a colorful tri-fold display card, which opens up to reveal information about the state: famous natives, notable sites, and historical facts and trivia. "There are two quarters, one from each coinage mint," says Schwartz. "Serious coin collectors want both mints; it also allows us to display both sides of the coin." The Collections are exclusive to Coins of America. "Lots of people can sell you a quarter; no one else can sell you something like this," says Schwartz.

For banks, the main benefit of the State Quarters is consistent return visits. Most people who buy the quarters will start a collection. A new quarter is released every 10 weeks, and collectors quickly get in the habit of stopping by their local branch five times a year to buy the latest release. This will continue through 2008, and maybe beyond; the Mint is considering producing a series of quarters in 2009 celebrating Washington D.C. and the United States Territories.

Home State Quarters are always the most popular. "The Mint promotes them, the governor's office promotes them, the local media runs stories," says MPI Coin Marketing Director Sean Morrison. "If you've got the quarters, this is all free publicity. People see your ads side by side with articles in the newspapers and on television. And home state pride has a powerful effect on people's curiosity; everybody wants to see what the home state quarter looks like."

Interest peaks when the State Quarter is released, and banks that already have their program in place enjoy the best return from this one-time event.

"The Collection should make everyone who reads it want to visit the state," says Morrison, who writes the Collections. "It's my favorite job, though it takes a lot of work to fit all the great stories I find. California was particularly difficult; there's so much history, so much culture, so much nature, so much everything! I lived in the state for more than ten years, but I still learned a lot while doing the research."

To see which stories made the cut, look for an California State Quarter Collection. The best place to find one will be in your lobby.

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