

Executive Life

Beyond trinkets

Promotional items can help a business leave a lasting impression

BY KATH USITALO

SPECIAL TO CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Long after the oompah-pah music fades and the sauerkraut is a memory, the **Tepel Bros.**' Oktoberfest remains with the graphics arts crowd that attends the commercial printer's annual German-themed open house in Troy.

Each guest receives an Oktoberfest T-shirt and keepsake beer glass as a "thank-you-for-coming" gift, says sales rep Steve Tepel. The 3-year-old tradition is so popular that, "Even if (clients) can't come they want the glass and T-shirt for their collection," Tepel said.

Donna Hall, executive director of the **Michigan Promotional Products Association**, could point to the Tepel Bros.' success to support her claim that give-aways are superior to

print, television or radio advertising. "A tangible item with a company name or logo is a hands-on way to get your message to your customer," she explains. "It gives them something of value. When they look at it they think of you and your company."

And that's why, says Ken Kelsey, "People are using promotional items more than ever."

He started **Kelsey Promo** in Livonia in 1973, when specialty items such as pens, key chains and litter bags were sometimes referred to as trinkets and trash.

Today Kelsey has 31 file drawers full of catalogs representing just a fraction of the promotional gifts available. Clocks, leather notepads, denim jackets and full-size

