

Tie-ins: If You're Swiss, Don't Miss This

December 13, 2004

By Sandra O'Loughlin

Swiss Roots, a national program headquartered at the Swiss consulate in New York, will launch a national outreach effort next year to connect Americans and Swiss people living in the U.S. with their Swiss heritage.

The initiative, currently being developed, is an outgrowth of Swiss Peaks, a private, not-for-profit venture that began in 2003 with support from both sides of the Atlantic to promote Swiss culture and arts. The effort will include a Web site with a search engine where people can research their family history and communicate with each other, and a direct mail effort to people belonging to Swiss organizations, ski clubs and other institutions. An exhibition on the city's Ellis Island in spring 2006 and a road show also is in the works. Hello, New York, is handling design and communications.

Celebrity outreach could involve

A-listers with Swiss roots such as Renée Zellweger or Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer. The organization is targeting sponsors such as government and tourism agencies and airlines. Swiss Peaks sponsors include Ricola, Rolex, Swiss International Airlines, Swiss Re, Switzerland Tourism and UBS.

"Americans are very interested in their roots," said Lukas Fitze, marketing/communications director at Swiss Peaks and Swiss Roots. "We hope to create a dialogue with Swiss people living in Switzerland where people can post family stories and pictures, like a chat room."