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Big Lots Launches \$27 Million TV Campaign *Commercials Reinforce that Closeout Shopping is Smart Shopping*

July 2, 2001 (Columbus, Ohio) Big Lots, the nation's largest broadline closeout retailer just launched a humorous series of four new television commercials featuring comedian veteran Jerry Van Dyke as the resident closeout expert. The commercials will begin running June 26 for a 24-week, \$27 million campaign which will run in approximately 50 of Big Lots' top markets.

"We're increasing our national television advertising to enhance our leadership image," said chairman and CEO Michael Potter. "We'll go from covering 32 percent of our sales base with TV to covering 52 percent. That means 10.5 million additional households will hear our television message over the next year."

Van Dyke, best known as the loveable "Luther" on the television comedy series *Coach* was the overwhelming choice when the company set out to name a spokesperson three years ago. SBC Advertising in Columbus, Ohio, helped Big Lots select Van Dyke and formulate an advertising campaign, which over the past few years has evolved into a successful and entertaining look at the world of closeout shopping.

"In creating the campaign, we wanted to build on the strong link with current customers and broaden the relevance of the brand to a new customer base," said Matt Wilson, general manager for SBC Advertising. "We utilized our proprietary research process to uncover consumer insights on the very real emotions consumers bring to retail shopping. We believe this year's campaign successfully demonstrates the benefits of closeout shopping."

To date, the plan has worked – through the first two years of the campaign, brand awareness scores for Big Lots have risen and reaction to the advertising has been positive.

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Year one of the campaign centered on Van Dyke's initial journey into the world of closeout shopping. Though he never physically entered the store, he eavesdropped and peered through the windows to find out about the great deals customers found inside. Year two found Van Dyke enthusiastic about the bargains he personally found in the stores as his frugal behavior continued.

This year promises to be the most entertaining when Van Dyke, now the resident "expert" in closeout shopping, accepts gratitude from shoppers who have experienced their own "closeout moment" – the instance when customers find an unbelievable bargain.

"We want our customers to connect with Jerry and come to understand the value, fun, and rewards of closeout shopping," said Kent Larsson, Big Lots executive vice president, merchandising and promotion. "Every day at our stores throughout the country, our customers can save on average 20 to 40 percent on brand name quality merchandise – many times the savings can be up to 70 percent.

Big Lots offers customers brand name consumables, seasonal products, furniture, housewares, toys, and gifts at deeply discounted prices. Big Lots enthusiasts shop the stores frequently for daily consumables as well as exceptional deals for which the company has become known. Some of those deals in the past have included bass boats, golf carts, computers, slot machines, and high-quality furniture from a dot.com merchant who closed their business. "It's advantageous to shop our stores frequently," Potter noted. "By aggressively pursuing deals on quality merchandise at great prices, customers never know what hidden treasures they'll find from week to week."

The TV spots, which are shot documentary style, highlight Van Dyke and the shoppers going back and forth as each closeout moment is described.

To receive additional information on Big Lots, or speak with a company representative, contact Keri Lucas at 614.278.7023.

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Big Lots, Inc. (www.biglots.com) is the nation's largest broadline closeout retailer with annual revenues exceeding \$3 billion. Headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, Big Lots operates more than 1,300 retail stores serving 46 states. Four regional distribution centers throughout the country, ranging in size from 1 million to 3 million square feet, provide the company's stores with brand name products from more than 3,000 manufacturers. Big Lots offers merchandise at 20 to 40 percent below most discount retailers and up to 70 percent below conventional retailers. Founded in 1967, the company employs more than 40,000 associates across the U.S. By creating excitement with brand name closeouts and bargains through a unique shopping experience, Big Lots meets the needs of customers by providing an assortment of merchandise including consumables, seasonal products, furniture, housewares, toys, and gifts. Big Lots, a Fortune 500 company, is currently traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol **BLI**.