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## **Industry Association Seeks to Improve the Image of Granite Countertops**

AUSTIN – May 7, 2009 – Artisan Group, a nationwide network of premier countertop fabricators, set out to change the stone industry by offering more experience, better quality stone and higher accreditation levels than what has become standard. Artisan was the first company to offer a comprehensive lifetime warranty on its own brand of granite-Artisan Stone Collection. Because of the way members conduct business, the group is attracting more members and exclusive contracts with some powerhouses in the kitchen and bath industry such as Kohler.

"On average, our members have more than 20 years of countertop fabrication experience and we wanted to raise the bar and offer our business partners and consumers more value through our products and service," says Evan Kruger, Artisan Group board member. "This approach has resulted in some synergistic relationships that include an exclusive dealer program with Kohler and our own line of exotic wood countertops, Heritage Wood."

In a first-of-its-kind program for Kohler, as a Registered Specialty Dealer, the Artisan Group has access to KOHLER and STERLING brand kitchen sinks and KOHLER kitchen faucets, aligning with the manufacturer's expansive network of national and regional plumbing wholesalers. Additionally, Artisan Group showrooms are equipped with displays and product information on kitchen sinks and faucets, some of which are not offered elsewhere, so customers better understand their choices to complement countertop surfaces.

"Combining two leading brands--Kohler and Artisan Group--fills a need in the marketplace that is currently underserved," said Mally Henne, channel manager for kitchen products, Kohler Co. "Kohler's wholesale channel is ready to connect and build business in this important surface market. This program ensures customers receive high quality products from recognized brands within their respective industries. It's a win-win for everyone involved."

The Artisan Group members use the latest and most accurate fabrication tools and techniques and the fact that the group consists of more than 35 members spread across the United States and Canada creates an ideal distribution network.

Every Artisan countertop is sealed with Firstline Sealer which is exclusive to the Artisan Group and provides the very best stain protection technology.

"We are confident that homeowners will embrace our lifetime warranty and will appreciate the superior fabrication and service Artisan Group provides," said Sid Mackay, Artisan Group board member. "This new warranty offers customers perpetual peace of mind about a major purchase that's generally a focal point inside their home."

The Artisan Group continues to add new members who meet its stringent requirements and also looks to add more quality products to its offerings.