

Delaware flag stamp unveiled (The News Journal)

Bethany Beach artist designed new series

By JAMES MERRIWEATHER

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DOVER -- The U.S.

Postal Service marked Flag Day 2008 by announcing a three-year series of stamps called "Flags of Our Nation," and, owing to its spot in the alphabetical pecking order, an image of Delaware's flag was one of 10 issued Saturday to get the ball rolling.

On

Tuesday, postal representatives were in Dover, as well as eight other state capitals, to celebrate the issuance of the series.

Gov.

Ruth Ann Minner hosted a ceremony that included U.S. Rep. Mike Castle, R-Del., Kent County Levy Court Vice President Allan F. Angel, D-Dover, and Dover Mayor Carleton E. Carey Sr.

The first 10 flags -- including Stars and Stripes, the national flag -- now are available at post offices, by visiting www.usps.com

or by calling (800) STAMP-24. A second group of stamps will be issued in September and the process will be repeated over the following two years until flags from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories are in circulation.

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Daiutolo Sr., a postal service spokesman, said the series was inspired by the popularity of stamps bearing images of the U.S. flag, which are featured on an ongoing basis.

"It's

part of our commemorative stamp program in which we issue stamps to show what makes our country special and unique," Daiutolo said. "The Stars and Stripes is very popular, and this is a way of spreading that around."

The flags

were designed by Tom Engeman, a former Brunswick, Md., resident who, according to Daiutolo and Minner, now lives in Bethany Beach. Besides images of the flags, the stamps include "snapshot views" of items particular to the various jurisdictions. In Delaware's case, a depiction of a beach scene is featured.

Noting that the postal service handles 212 billion pieces of mail each year, Minner described the stamp issuance as "a great tourism campaign."

"We are very proud and fortunate to be among the first 10 stamps to be launched in this collection," Minner said. "Of course, it does make sense -- we are the First State. And I can't think of a better way to showcase the beauty of our state."

In a statement, Castle praised "Flags of Our Nation" as an educational tool on par with his own 50 State Quarters Program.

"Flags are a great symbol of our nation, representing unity of Americans and pride in our states," he said.

"This initiative will not only serve as something for collectors but also as a means to teach about the history of Delaware and every other state as new stamps are released over the next three years."

Minner noted that Engeman also designed the National World War II Memorial stamp, which was issued in 2004, and a stamp featuring the Liberty Bell released three years later.

"It is no wonder that with an artist from Bethany, our flag is flying on the beach," Minner said.