



CONTACT: Lee Ann Martin  
Fleishman-Hillard, Inc.  
816/512-2387

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Best-Selling Mitford Novels Inspire  
Hallmark Gold Crown® Stores' Main Holiday Offering For 1999**

*Mitford Author Jan Karon Calls Creative Union A "Marriage Made In Heaven"*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Jan Karon, best-selling novelist of the Mitford series, has a special gift for her readers this Christmas, courtesy of Hallmark: More than 200 cards, gift items, Hallmark Gold Crown® exclusive Hallmark Keepsake Ornaments, partyware, gift wrap and more, inspired by the fictional North Carolina mountain village she has made famous. The products will be exclusively available at the 5,000 Hallmark Gold Crown Stores nationwide beginning Nov. 1. and, in fact, represent the stores' main holiday offering.

Today's consumers yearn for products that reflect the values and real-life sentiments found in Karon's books, and Hallmark's Mitford products deliver. Warm and simple without being nostalgic, they are an invitation to experience a life that's less complicated and more meaningful.

**Something for Mitford fans and newcomers alike**

**(And a giant snowman for a few thousand lucky winners!)**

For Mitford fans, the new products authentically bring "the little town with the big heart" into tangible reality. Well-known Mitford icons come to life in stocking holders, snow globes, figurines, and earthenware. There are miniature replicas of Father Tim's house, haven for Dooley Barlowe, Lace Turner and Harley Welch; as well as Lord's Chapel, Cynthia's house, The Local and Winnie Ivey's Sweet Stuff Bakery.

A heavy mug looks like it could have come straight from Percy Mosely's Main Street Grill, and in fact carries the establishment's logo.

- over -

Holiday greeting cards and plaques feature messages from the Mitford books. One card even features the *real* recipe for Esther Bolick's Orange-Marmalade Layer Cake, legendary among true Mitford fans.

Those new to Mitford don't have to know the stories to love the products, however. Snow-covered Christmas trees, plush snowman characters, ceramic pitchers, candle holders, and earthenware place settings will appeal to anyone who appreciates the simple pleasures of everyday life.

During the Hallmark Gold Crown Stores' Holiday Open House, Nov. 13-14, shoppers can register to win a giant, plush Mitford snowman. That weekend only, they can also purchase a 21-inch snow-covered Mitford evergreen tree, normally \$7.99, for just \$4.99.

### **"A marriage made in Heaven"**

The Hallmark-Mitford union was born when Mary Ann Odom, a Hallmark creative director, read the Mitford series and thought, "We should *do something* with this!"

Within months, a deal had been struck with Karon to develop a special line of products exclusively for Hallmark Gold Crown Stores, and Odom was directing a team of writers and designers. Together with Karon, they created the Mitford-inspired products.

"There's a natural tie between Mitford and Hallmark," explains Odom. "Like Jan, we try to capture moments of life and relationships in ways that are very real, very beautiful, and very meaningful. We share the same values."

Karon agrees.

"People *need* the messages of friendship, redemption, loyalty and love that Mitford has to offer, and I just can't imagine a better way to take those messages beyond the books than through these good and beautiful things," she says.

"Mitford and Hallmark are a marriage made in Heaven."

###

*When you mean "Hallmark Gold Crown," be sure you say more than "Hallmark."*  
The 5,000-store Hallmark Gold Crown network is the second-largest specialty retail network in the United States and the premier name in retailing excellence.

For the Hallmark Gold Crown Store nearest you, call 1-800-HALLMARK (1-800-425-5627).  
Visit Hallmark on the Internet at [www.hallmark.com](http://www.hallmark.com).