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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **The TharpeRobbins Company, Inc. Announces New Ownership and Financial Partnership with Gridiron Capital, LLC**

**Statesville, North Carolina — March 31, 2010—** Gridiron Capital, LLC has joined with the management of the TharpeRobbins Company, Inc. (“TharpeRobbins”) in an investment partnership with the global leader in managed employee recognition and rewards.

The partnership was formed to leverage the TharpeRobbins position as a premier brand in the recognition industry, to enable the company to pursue additional growth opportunities and to deliver world-class customer service.

“Following our strong performance and growth over the past several years, the infusion of capital from Gridiron will help us grow to the next level,” said Brett Tharpe, President and CEO of TharpeRobbins. “We look forward to a strong partnership. Together, we are poised for an even stronger track record of growth through expansion into new markets and through innovative new programs, superior customer service and cutting edge technologies.”

TharpeRobbins is a leader and an innovator in the recognition industry, with a client list including many of the world’s largest corporations. The company is responsible for a number of industry firsts, ranging from the introduction of consumer focused award offerings, to the application of technology to improve program results. TharpeRobbins’ mission is centered on fostering superior performance in organizations by creating new standards for employee recognition and rewards through imaginative solutions, flawless execution, professional services and world-class technology.

“As an industry leader, TharpeRobbins fits Gridiron’s overall strategy of investing in industry-leading businesses where we can help drive significant growth,” said Gridiron Capital Managing Partner, Tom Burger. “TharpeRobbins has a strong market position in the recognition industry, and we look forward to supporting management with its growth initiatives,” added Owen Tharrington, Gridiron Capital’s Principal.

#### **About TharpeRobbins:**

TharpeRobbins ([www.tharperobbins.com](http://www.tharperobbins.com)) fosters superior performance by creating new standards for employee recognition and rewards through imaginative solutions, cutting edge programs, flawless execution, professional service and world-class technology. For more than 100 years, the rich history of the company as an innovator has covered the breadth of managed reward and recognition programs. TharpeRobbins has built its reputation on developing customized programs to help its clients reach their employee attraction and retention goals.

TharpeRobbins was formed in 2007 through the merger of two industry leaders, The Tharpe Company, founded in 1981, and The Robbins Company, founded in 1892. TharpeRobbins’ headquarters are located on a 25-acre campus in Statesville, N.C. and include an extensive showroom and state-of-the-art distribution facility. The Attleboro, Mass., ISO-certified operations include creative services, software development and jewelry manufacturing.

#### **About Gridiron Capital:**

Gridiron Capital, LLC, headquartered in New Canaan, Connecticut, is a private equity firm focused on creating value by acquiring and building middle-market manufacturing, service and specialty consumer companies in the United States and Canada. The firm’s principals have historically achieved superior investment returns by employing a combination of strategic, operating and financial experience to provide portfolio companies with competitive advantages. Gridiron’s principals work closely with management teams to develop strategies for portfolio companies, as well as providing resources to execute business plans and build industry-leading companies. Additional information about Gridiron is available on the firm’s website at [www.gridironcapital.com](http://www.gridironcapital.com).

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**Press Contacts:**

Brett Tharpe, TharpeRobbins President and CEO, [btharpe@tharperobbins.com](mailto:btharpe@tharperobbins.com); (704) 872-5231

Thomas A. Burger, Jr., Managing Partner, Gridiron Capital; [tburger@gridironcapital.com](mailto:tburger@gridironcapital.com); (203) 972-1100 x222