

From this week's Business of Life

Captain Sully: now a force for motivation

By: Kevin Davis April 06, 2009

Celebrity pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger's heroics are now fueling the motivation and inspiration business.

The U.S. Airways pilot who safely ditched his jet on the Hudson River, saving the lives of all 155 people on board, is showing up on posters, T-shirts, mugs, key chains and even neckties.

At Tribune Tower, where there's a mandate for bold change in the media business, a blown-up photo is on display showing Mr. Sullenberger's plane floating in the Hudson with a quote from composer Leonard Bernstein: "To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time."

The poster is part of a continuing series of inspirational pictures, slogans and sayings the company displays, many of them created by employees, says a Tribune Co. spokesman. The U.S. Airways poster was created by Chief Innovation Officer Lee Abrams.

"We get them from a variety of people," the spokesman says. "They tend to be inspirational or motivational."

Several companies across the country have been manufacturing clothing and hats with sayings such as "Team Sully," "Sully is my homeboy" and "When I grow up I want to be just like Captain Sully."

Palatine-based motivational speaker and humorist Doug Dvorak says he's used Mr. Sullenberger's heroics in his talks. "It was such an inspiration," he says. "Positive stories like that are comforting."

One holdout: Aurora-based Successories Inc., which sells inspirational posters, books and other items but tends to use more timeless images. "We don't have anything yet," company President Alan Kipust says. "But we're thrilled that he's motivating people."

©2009 by Crain Communications Inc.