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Working Together Toward Our Goals

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whether it be as Mayor, Councilman, or any of the
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James L. Cassella
NJLM President
Mayor, East Rutherford



Focus:
Leadership

Sweet Deal

How Hackettstown and Mars Wrigley work together as good neighbors

By Maria DiGiovanni, Mayor, Hackettstown

The Town of Hackettstown is one of the sweetest towns in New Jersey. Located in a valley along the banks of the Musconetcong River in Northwest New Jersey, Hackettstown is 3.5 square miles with almost 10,000 people calling it home.

Also calling it home is Centenary University, Hackettstown Medical Center, and Mars Wrigley Confectionery U.S. Hackettstown has been home to Mars Wrigley since 1958 when Mars moved its national headquarters and plant to Hackettstown from its original location in Newark.

The sweet smell of chocolate drifts through the town most mornings, replaced only by the smell of roasted peanuts once or twice a week. It's a gentle reminder of our Mars Wrigley neighbor—a neighbor that employees approximately 1,000 associates, many of whom live in Hackettstown.

Good neighbors

Being a great neighbor, Mars Wrigley sponsors many town events, including the annual Springfest where tons of its candy, snack food, and product is given away, and the company is a welcomed participant in Hackettstown's Community Day every October. More recently, Mars partnered with the Hackettstown Police Department and the Hackettstown Business Improvement District to co-sponsor Hackettstown's Halloween Downtown event.

A Mars representative also has a seat on the Hackettstown Business Improvement District's Board. However, until 2012 you would have been hard-pressed to actually recognize Mars Wrigley Headquarters and Plant—the plant where half the M&M's in the United States are made.



Those of us who live in Hackettstown know that we can turn over a pack of M&M's and see it says "Made in Hackettstown, NJ," but there were no distinguishing signs or characters on their buildings or within the Town.

Building partnership

When I was elected Mayor in November 2011, my goal was to partner with Mars Wrigley, then called M&M Mars Chocolate, N.A., to brand Hackettstown and Mars together. I wanted to showcase how much having a worldwide company, and such a well-recognized one at that, in our town meant to me and the residents of Hackettstown.

“ Along with the new benches, new sidewalks, and decorative lamp-posts, new street signs with M&M characters would be a welcome sight.”

Meeting with Mars Wrigley executives in March 2012, I presented my vision on branding. After discussion on several ideas, the renaming of the street that the headquarters and plant are located (High Street) was the first initiative we wanted to take on. It was agreed that residents would participate by voting on the five top names that we settled on. The vote took place over two weeks and finally a winner was selected: M&M's Chocolate Avenue. The street signs along the road from Main Street (State Highway 46) past Mars Wrigley and to the town boarder would have new street signs with the new name.

On October 16, 2012, the new signs were unveiled in a ceremony at Mars Wrigley headquarters. In attendance were

Delicious Welcome to Hackettstown



On the entryways into the Town, "Welcome to Hackettstown" signs with the Town's logo on them announced that people were coming into Hackettstown. The signs were older and wooden and needed repair.

For two years conversations between Mars, myself, and our Department of Public Works were held concerning the specifications of the signs, the characters on the signs, and our budgets.

We knew we wanted the Red and Yellow M&M characters holding up the words "Welcome to Hackettstown," to be consistent with street signs within Town. In addition, a hanging sign underneath would proudly boast "Made in Hackettstown with pride since 1958" showcasing M&M's.

Mars Wrigley executives and associates, then Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, State and County Officials, Town Council members, and the director of the Hackettstown Business Improvement District, among others. On that same day, an M&M's World "pop up" store opened on Main Street for two weeks a few blocks away, featuring products that boasted "Made in Hackettstown." People lined up for blocks to purchase candy and products. Our first branding initiative was a great success; it was a wonderful day in Hackettstown.

About a year after, I was invited to a team-building event for Mars associates. At that event, it was revealed that benches would be built and placed along Main Street with various Mars characters and product pictures. The benches were placed throughout Main Street. It is great to see people walking on Main Street and stopping to take pictures of the benches, especially with their children.

By Halloween 2014 we were completing yet another branding idea. Hackettstown has a wonderful, walkable Main Street, thanks to a revitalization effort that



started in 2009 and completed in 2015. Along with the new benches, new sidewalks, and decorative lampposts, new street signs with M&M characters would be a welcome sight.

Once again we went to work with ideas of what we wanted to have the street signs look like. It was decided that all

street signs on Main Street and the cross streets would be changed. At the town's Gazebo Park at the Hackettstown Downtown Halloween event, the new street signs were unveiled. Hackettstown now had new street signs up and down Main Street and side streets with the Red and Yellow M&M characters on them.

The sweetest town

Leighanne Eide, Hackettstown Site Director for Mars Wrigley Confectionery U.S., said the company and the community have a strong, longstanding relationship. "We're proud to make M&M's in Hackettstown for almost 60 years and what better way to show our pride than by partnering with the town on new welcome signs, benches, and street signs with our iconic characters" Eide said, adding, "Being part of the Hackettstown community and having multiple generations of residents be part of making M&M's is an essential part of our history and success."

In August of this year, the welcome signs went up. As the Red and Yellow M&M welcome people passing through the town, people visiting our town as well as the people who work in town, and those of us who are lucky enough to live in Hackettstown—one of the sweetest towns around. 🍬

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