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National Apple Month announces 2004 retail display contest winners

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VIENNA, VA " The U. S. Apple Association's National Apple Month program has announced the winners of its fall 2004 NAM retail and military display contests, bringing the apple industry's fall generic apple promotion to a close.

"The National Apple Month retail display contest again provided a jump start to our industry's marketing season," NAM Director Kay Swartz Rentzel said in a Jan. 24 announcement. "The support of our partners " T. Marzetti's products and the National Peanut Board " and the use of their products provided for increased sales for everyone during the promotional period."

Retailers and commissaries from across the country vied for the titles of the nation's top apple retailers and the nation's top "health-oriented" apple merchandiser during the 2004 promotion. From September through November, entrants built displays in their stores that prompted consumers to buy more apples, apple products, Marzetti's products, peanuts and peanut products. These displays helped boost sales and increase bottom-line profits.

Consumers were treated to healthy, nutritious U.S. apples, processed apple products and tie-in products upon the launch of the industry's new marketing season.

Contest entries were judged for the best health-oriented display, and then categorized based on geographic region and store size. While all stores vied for the title of Best Health Oriented Display & Merchandiser, the 2004 honor was bestowed upon Publix in Tampa, FL. The entry coordinators were Robert Benitos and Robert Long. Their theme was "The Publix Patch of Apples " An Apple A Day Keeps the Dr. Away," and featured a display with 11 different varieties of fresh apples, processed apple products and Marzetti's caramel apple dips, peanuts and peanut products. Providing

assistance with the display was Michelle Silvia of Crossmark Sales & Marketing, Publix's sales representative for Musselman's and Jif peanut butter.

Scarecrows dressed as a doctor and nurse were part of the display and provided a strong visual for all consumers entering the store. The goal of the display was to communicate clearly that apples and associated products are a healthy dietary choice.

In addition to providing consumers with a valid nutritional message, this Tampa Publix store experienced sales lifts of 20 percent in apple sales, more than 15 percent in Marzetti's apple dip sales, 10 percent in Marzetti's apple crisp sales, 12 percent in peanut sales, 19 percent in peanut butter sales and 11 percent in peanut product sales.

The judges also recognized an honorary Health Winner for its outstanding health communication message to consumers: Fort Detrick Commissary in Frederick, MD. The commissary used a Come Walk with Me " the Apple-achian Trail theme and the 3-Apple-a-Day plan theme and materials to reach consumers. Marzetti's products, peanuts and peanut products were also featured in the display.

Other geographical first-place winners in the 2004 National Apple Month retail display contest were: Eastern region, stores with nine or fewer registers: Eddie's Big M in Mexico, NY, entry coordinator Beth Snider; 10 registers or more: Oregon Dairy in Lititz, PA, entry coordinator James Hensel.

Central region, stores with nine or fewer registers: Chipps & Nichols in Prescott, MI, entry coordinator Crystal Johnson; 10 registers or more: HyVee Food Store in Marshalltown, IA, entry coordinator John Sherman.

Western region: Latienda Thriftway in Carlsbad, NM, entry coordinator Chuck Gurvitz.

Each first-place winner was awarded \$1,000 for the store's creative efforts. Second-place and third-place winners received \$500 and \$250, respectively.

Entries were evaluated on the volume and variety of fresh apples displayed, the volume and variety of processed apple products and grocery tie-in products displayed, the use and volume of Marzetti's dips and crisp, the use and volume of peanuts and peanut products, display creativity and cross merchandising with other store departments.

"As in previous years, the 2004 contest was successful on all fronts " everyone wins with National Apple Month," said Ms. Rentzel. "Apple marketers use the promotion to kick off the harvest season and boost early-season shipments. Retailers use it to increase sales, yield additional profits for the produce department and creatively merchandise throughout the store. Our other team members " Marzetti's, the National Peanut Board and Get Fit Foods " proved to be excellent partners by providing additional opportunities for promoting and merchandising apples and apple products."

The merchandising promotion continued to attract first-time participants. This year, eight first-time participants placed in the NAM display contest.

"Once again, the fall display and merchandising contest shows why National Apple Month is a terrific tool for launching fall apple sales in a big way, both by increasing shelf space and varieties used in displays," Fred Hess, sales manager for Hess Bros. in Leola, PA, and chairman of the NAM committee, said in the statement.

Chipps & Nichols IGA (entry coordinator Crystal Johnson) noted a sales increase of 65 percent while selling over 230 cases of apples, apple products, Marzetti's products, peanuts and peanut products in the store.

Repeat winner James Hensel, entry coordinator at the Oregon Dairy store in Lititz, PA, featured 14 different varieties of apples, accounting for nearly 1,500 cases of apples being sold. Additionally, the store sold more than 1,800 cases of apple products, 60 cases of Marzetti's product, more than 950 pounds of peanuts, and peanut butter sales increased 2 percent over the previous year's sales. Oregon Dairy relies on strong supplier and broker support to make the promotional display event such a phenomenal success.

At Latienda Thriftway in Carlsbad, NM, Chuck Gurvitz found success in "3-A-Day is the Healthy Way." At this seven-register store, the display featured a variety of apples and apple products, cases of Marzetti's products, pounds of peanuts and peanut products and plenty of hand-made signage to attract consumers to the display and buy the featured items.

Military commissaries across the country participated in the display contest that yielded bushels of success for their patrons. During the height of the apple promotion, commissary patrons enjoyed top-quality apples, apple products and Marzetti's products in creative retail displays.

For the fifth year, military commissaries competed among their peers rather than against retail supermarkets. Nearly one-third of all domestic commissaries documented their promotional efforts and were included in the judging.

Earning top honors were the following:

Bangor NSB Commissary in Silverdale, WA, entry coordinator Eric Gidion; Fort Riley Commissary in Ft. Riley, KS, entry coordinator Robin Vincent; and Malmstrom AFB Commissary in Great Falls, MT, entry coordinator Loriann McDonald.

As always, the true winners of the military display contest were patrons of the commissaries. According to military commissary officials, the winners' prizes will be used for patron shopping sprees in the winning commissaries.

The 2004 National Apple Month display contest entries were judged by an independent panel of produce and retail experts: Victoria Kuhns, vice president of education at United Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Association; and Gordon Hochberg, vice president at The Produce News and publisher of theproducenews.com.

(Photos of some of the winners appear in the Jan. 31 issue of The Produce News.)

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