

## Indiana Stores Partner with Local Chocolatier

Store Director Scott Hoffman has a passion for shopping local, and it shows in his Fort Wayne store, where he's made a point to bring in local vendors to the Meijer shelves to sit alongside national and Meijer own brands.

Last year, he reached out to Cathy Brand-Beere, Founder and President of DeBrand Fine Chocolates, to discuss the idea of bringing her company's products into his Meijer store on Dupont Road in Fort Wayne.

"I have a real love for local products, whether it's in my own shopping cart or making them available for others to discover and easily purchase," Scott said. "DeBrand seems like such a natural fit for our stores, because not only are they family-owned just like Meijer, but everyone in the Fort Wayne area knows them and loves their products."

Today, DeBrand Fine Chocolates are in five Meijer stores, including Scott's store on Dupont Road, three other Fort Wayne-area Meijer supercenters on Lima Road, Illinois Road and Maysville Road, and the Meijer supercenter in Angola.

"This partnership is a win/win/win for DeBrand, Meijer, and the community as far as we're concerned," said Cathy. "It's making our chocolate more available to local residents who can now buy a great gift while they're doing their weekly shopping, and increasing our visibility by reaching Meijer shoppers."

Growing up in a family deeply involved in the confectionery arts, Cathy began working with chocolate at age eight. She loved the creative process of making fine chocolates and dreamt of opening a "real chocolate shop" when she grew up. She continued to pursue this passion through elementary school and high school, selling candies to classmates and baking and selling custom wedding cakes as a summer job.

Cathy started DeBrand Fine Chocolates in 1987, and her husband joined the company a year later. Today, it's a multi-generation family business, with her three daughters working for the company full-time as well, pursuing their own passions in the family business. Her youngest daughter, Audree, is DeBrand's Business Operations Manager, middle daughter, Jasmine, is an Artisan Chocolatier and Culinarian, and oldest daughter, Niki, is the company's Outreach Coordinator for wholesale accounts like Meijer.

"One huge benefit to our store presence in Meijer is that Meijer team members are already skilled at keeping an eye on freshness dates, rotating stock appropriately and making sure our display always looks great," Cathy said. "That's really important to us, as we are committed to making the highest quality products that we possibly can, and we want to ensure that they are perfect when customers buy them or give them as a gift."

Today, DeBrand employs nearly 100 people with two retail shops in Fort Wayne, one in Indianapolis, and a mail order department that ships all over the world. They use the highest quality ingredients as a foundation, imported from Belgium, Switzerland and France, along with fresh local ingredients and inclusions from all over the world.

While the holiday season is one of their biggest sales periods, Mother's Day, Easter and Valentine's Day are close followers, as special occasions when customers want to go above and beyond for someone special.

"We've gotten so much great feedback from customers who are excited to find DeBrand Chocolates here at Meijer, and their sales have far surpassed our original expectations," Scott said. "We look forward to their selections for the holiday season and expect that they will continue to grow in their success."

---

Additional assets available online: [\*\*Photos\*\*](#) <sup>(1)</sup>

<https://meijercommunity.com/Indiana-Stores-Partner-with-Local-Chocolatier>