

RCI: Spring Regional in Ohio

Simplicity and success

Retail Confectioners International (RCI) held its Spring Regional Institute in and around Akron, Ohio, USA, in April. Three area confectionery companies opened their facilities for touring and almost 200 people attended the event.

Simplicity was a theme for this regional, ranging from the visit to a shop specializing in nonelectrical devices to the carefree Candy Clinic presentations.

Attendees were encouraged to recognize customers' time concerns and make it easy [read "simple"] for them—provide gift ideas, wrapping services and new experiences to keep things fresh, or maybe build a playhouse for kids to use while parents are shopping.

TOURS

Plant tours, always a highlight of RCI gatherings, took attendees from North Canton to Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Anastasiades Exclusive Chocolates (North Canton)

In 2000 two brothers took over the chocolate operation from their father's ice cream, chocolate and sandwich shop. Sam and Larry Anastas took their family's original Greek name, Anastasiades, incorporated many of their cul-



Sam Anastas answered questions in the production area.



Larry Anastas greeted the tour buses and distributed hairnets before leading RCI members inside.



One of the long-time dippers at Anastasiades was making nut clusters.

tural traditions and transformed their 2,400-square-foot shop into a successful wholesale and retail business. Small but efficient, the kitchen allows for both hand-dipping and machine enrobing plus resourceful storage (a bulk ice cream freezer near the dipper cools the chocolates before wrapping or other processing; rolling tray racks in the center keep products near the retail store).

Like other shops in that region, Anastasiades' chocolates are individually twist-wrapped to be sold by the piece. Customers may select these bonbons themselves for purchase, rather than asking for help at the counter.

Coblentz Chocolate Co. (Walnut Creek)



RCI members were intrigued by the loft display area above Coblentz' retail shop.

Jason and Mary Coblentz founded Coblentz Chocolate in 1987. Since then they have made significant progress and in 2001 vastly expanded the retail, wholesale and corporate business.

Part of the company's expansion included a larger retail area, a larger viewing area for customers to watch the production area and a much larger kitchen/production/shipping and warehouse space that can be further subdivided as needed.

Two unique areas in the retail store were noted. A hand-built playhouse occupies one corner of the shop to keep the attention of children while parents are shopping. Mary Coblentz notes that often the kids aren't ready to leave when the parents are. Of unique visual interest is a loft above one section of the retail store; in it are displayed a variety of antiques from a simpler time.

Six area businesses (including Coblentz Chocolates) ▶