

Mar 2013 - Journal Pioneer - Sobeys/Griffins museum promotion 'exceeded our wildest dreams'

"We would buy our specially marked bags from WP Griffins," he said in explaining his sales pitch, "and sell them like Girl Guide cookies, door to door. I thought that we would maybe make \$1.50 a bag and we could probably sell 2000 bags if we worked or tails off."

MacKendrick took his idea to WP Griffin co-owner John Griffin who subsequently tweaked it significantly.

On Wednesday (March 27) members of the staff from WP Griffins and Sobeys visited the (O'Leary, Prince Edward Island) museum to present a cheque for \$49,500. Griffins and Sobeys collectively contributed 25 cents to the museum from every specially marked Heritage Netted Gems bag of WP Griffin potatoes Sobeys sold in its Atlantic Canada stores during Potato Month, February.

They sold 198,000 bags during the month. Griffin said his plant workers were shocked to get a mid-month order for 140,000 bags to satisfy a final week sales campaign.

During normal sales, such a campaign would have netted the museum \$8,000 to \$9,000, said Kevin Kane, Produce and Floral specialist for Sobeys in Northern Nova Scotia and P.E.I., but Sobeys targeted raising \$20,000 for the non-profit entity.

"We ended up really pushing the bar and we went from 80,000 bags to 198,000 bags. It was quite a substantial increase in sales. It's pretty amazing when you focus on a category what you can do and the stores did a great job of jumping in and really trying to promote it," Kane said.

Asked if Sobeys would repeat the campaign next year, Kane said that is not his decision to make but added, "When I did hear about this, I was the first one to jump in and say I'd love to help out. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

The Potato Board, Fresh Media, P.E.I. Bag Company, Rodd Mill River Resort and Golf P.E.I. also assisted with the special fundraising initiative.

"To say this project exceeded our wildest dreams would definitely be an understatement," MacKendrick said. "We had gone from selling door-to-door to selling province-to-province. What a great opportunity."

There were numerous other buy-ins in the project including a contest where customers could enter online for a chance to win a summer golf vacation at the Rodd Mill River Resort and any of 60 other prizes. All prize-winners also received two free admissions to the Canadian Potato Museum in O'Leary. The draw for prizes was made following the cheque presentation. The grand prize-winner is Leslee Nicholson from Victoria Mines, Nova Scotia.

Stanley MacDonald, chair of the Potato Museum, estimated the exposure the museum



received through the sales promotion, online contest and media exposure was worth thousands of marketing dollars.

The Sobeys/Griffins donation, he said, will help pay off some of the cost overruns from last year's expansion which, he said has helped turn the museum into a premiere P.E.I. attraction."

"We've raised the level of recognition of this museum very substantially over what it was before," he said.

Mackendrick said some of the money from the potato promotion would be used to help leverage funding for future projects at the museum.

Journal Pioneer