

By Robert Kemmery

A CTE Legacy Built on Chocolate: Milton Hershey School's 100 Years

MHS PROVIDES EVERYTHING FOR CHILDREN FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS—A TOP-NOTCH EDUCATION, RECREATION, FOOD, HOUSING, CLOTHING AND MEDICAL AND DENTAL CARE—ALL FREE OF CHARGE.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MILTON HERSHEY SCHOOL



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ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, CHOCOLATE MAGNATE MILTON S. HERSHEY AND HIS WIFE CATHERINE

signed the deed of trust creating the Hershey Industrial School in the heart of their Pennsylvania farming community. They had no children of their own and wanted to help orphan boys get a good education. The couple eventually left their entire fortune to the school.

Known today as Milton Hershey School (MHS), the school provides everything for children from disadvantaged backgrounds—a top-notch education, recreation, food, housing, clothing and medical and dental care—all free of charge. But just as importantly, the school provides caring structure and guidance to help children learn responsibility and keep them safe. MHS, located in Hershey, Pennsylvania, serves more than 1,800 boys and girls in financial and social need in grades pre-kindergarten through 12. It's the largest school of its kind in the world.

The academic program at MHS is designed to prepare each student for further education, the world of work, and personal excellence. The school understands that each child is unique and there is no one-size-fits-all method of helping students achieve success. MHS helps students by offering Individual Success Plans which guide students through their years at the school, bringing together academic, behavioral, career and social needs and goals. All students are required to participate in a career and technical education (CTE) program in addition to taking college preparatory classes.

A History of Excellence

From its inception in 1909, the school focused on vocational education, or CTE as it is recognized today. During the passage of 100 years into the 21st century, the Hersheys' original dream and the career focus of the school have evolved dynamically and positively to meet the changing education needs of America.

In its early years, MHS emphasized agricultural education, reflecting the pastoral Pennsylvania countryside's primary economy of dairy farming and undergirding the growing chocolate industry in Hershey. This emphasis continues to be a component of the CTE curriculum, although it has been modified to include the technological and other informational advances that serve agriculture today. For example, as a part of the contemporary farm-to-the-table concept, students provide produce and other commodities to the new restaurant, Harvest, a part of the successful Hershey Entertainments and Resorts corporation and Hershey Hotel, a four-star resort and spa complex known worldwide.

As the agriculture-based economy progressed into a manufacturing economy, MHS added programs that addressed post-World War I America. These programs included specific trade skills learned on the job at the chocolate factory in Hershey. During the next decades, MHS prepared its students for a society transitioning from the Great Depression and into another World War. In the 1930s and 1940s, students learned skills in electricity, printing, plumbing, machine shop and welding. As the 1950s post-World War II economy provided a jumpstart for

the burgeoning automobile industry, the MHS curriculum mirrored this through its upgraded automotive shop courses.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, MHS shifted into new technological training areas in business education, electronics, drafting, graphic arts, and heating/air conditioning. Although originally designed for Pennsylvania orphan boys and their vocational needs, MHS became a co-educational and more inclusive institution when girls were admitted in 1976. The CTE programs already in place at MHS adapted to address the changing population and to support students of varying backgrounds and genders to find their successful, postsecondary employment niche. Milton S. Hershey said in 1923, "The Industrial School grew gradually and I had no idea when it started that it would ever reach these proportions."

During the late-1990s, new programs in health occupations and communications revealed the school's movement toward a standards-based curriculum, advanced technology and increased attention to academic achievement for all MHS students. At the beginning of the 21st century, the potential to realize Milton and Catherine Hershey's dream increased dramatically for students, whose education now features greater academic and vocational rigor through national testing and certification standards. For example, computer technology students earn certifications in Comp TIA A+ and Network+, and electronic media and journalism students earn certification in Final Cut Pro. In 2008-2009, MHS students earned 284 CTE certifications with a 93 percent pass rate. In addition, all students complete a demanding academic program that spotlights the application of knowledge in contexts spanning current and future workforce requirements. No longer simply an agricultural/industrial school, MHS emphasizes multifaceted programs that prepare students for the critical skills needed to meet college and workplace



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expectations. These programs motivate students to be successful in postsecondary education settings, such as community and technical colleges and universities, and in the contemporary job market.

The 2009-2010 CTE model at MHS is structured by five small learning communities (SLCs), which include: Ninth Grade School (career exploration); School of Business and Service; School of Communications and Humanities; School of Engineering and Technology; and School of Health, Agriculture and Sciences. In addition to the Ninth Grade School, the other four SLCs offer 11 career pathways:

- **School of Business and Service**—administrative and information management; business/financial management and accounting; and culinary arts/restaurant management services.
- **School of Communications and Humanities**—electronic media and journalism; and graphic communication technology.
- **School of Engineering and Technology**—automotive technology; computer technology; construction/carpentry; and engineering and design.
- **School of Health, Agriculture and Sciences**—agriculture and natural resources and health science.

All 11 career pathways have functioning advisory committees with representatives from business and industry, postsecondary institutions and MHS faculty. A plan of study for each student's pathway identifies their required academic, CTE and elective courses and state and national CTE certifications. Also, a work-based learning experience in employment settings—such as the Penn State Hershey Medical Center and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation—infuse job shadowing, cooperative education and internships into each pathway.

MHS Has Come a Long Way

From 1909 through 2009, Milton and Catherine's establishment of the Hershey Industrial School has come a long way while staying true to its noble mission. With more than 8,000 alumni, the school supports that extraordinary dream of two people who had no children of their own and wanted the disadvantaged children of others to experience a stable family environment and a solid education with practical employment training at its center. Rooted in the pastoral landscape of Pennsylvania and financed by chocolate, the legacy of MHS continues to be a sweet dream and a CTE reality for all of its students. ■