

Piecing it Together

Bachman Co.'s puzzle-shaped pretzels target mainstream consumers with education and increased awareness for autism spectrum disorders.

A puzzle piece can symbolize a portion of a larger picture or perhaps a challenge to be solved. Today the puzzle piece also represents hope and an opportunity to crack the code of autism. The Bachman Co., Reading, PA, is using its Puzzle Pretzel snacks to provide awareness and increased understanding about autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The snack, inspired by an ongoing partnership with Autism Speaks, Inc., New York, NY, is a puzzle-shaped pretzel featuring the organization's puzzle logo.

Autism Speaks provides awareness for autism disorders through fundraising, science and advocacy. The organization works to unite the segmented autism community with goals to change the future for children who struggle with autism spectrum disorders, provide support for their caregivers and educate the public about the multiple facets of autism spectrum disorders.

The partnership between Bachman Co. and Autism Speaks was formed in 2007, and the cause is especially personal for the snack manufacturer. The daughter of Bachman Co.'s president Scott Carpenter was diagnosed with autism. In 2007, the company began its ASD educational campaign printing autism awareness facts on the company's product. The facts included: "1 in 150 children are diagnosed with autism;" "a new case of autism is discovered almost every 20 min-

utes;" "67 children are diagnosed with autism each day;" and "there are more diagnosed autism cases than AIDS, diabetes and cancer combined."

Response from the successful packaging educational program encouraged Bachman Co. to produce the puzzle-shaped pretzel. The product was released in mid-March to the public and online, and the launch was timed to coincide with Autism Awareness Month in April. In addition to promoting Autism Speaks through its products, Bachman Co. donates 5% of its proceeds back to the organization. Bachman Co. also offered coupons for the product during Autism Awareness month.

"We are well aware that gluten-free diets are advocated for children with autism, but we want to be able to reach the mainstream market that may not know about autism or understand the disorders that fall within the autism spectrum," said Laura Unger, marketing communications coordinator, Bachman Co.

The all-natural, cholesterol-free pretzel pieces are low in fat and calories and a good source of calcium. The product was created using the company's existing equipment using a specially designed die. Bachman Co. hopes the puzzle shape will catch the attention of consumers in the snack aisle who might not be familiar with autism. The 12-oz grocery size bag retails for \$2.99.

In addition to its availability in conventional grocery stores, the puzzle pretzel is offered in a 0.83-oz 100 Cal single-serve snack bag at Autism Speaks fundraising walks during the summer and fall across the US. Bachman Co. was also honored as Autism Speaks' 2008 corporate sponsor of the year.

"In addition to raising awareness for autism, we want consumers to enjoy a really great-tasting pretzel that continues the tradition of quality Bachman products," Ms. Unger said.

— Jennifer Barnett

