

Askinosie Chocolate

Askinosie Chocolate is a small batch bean to bar chocolate manufacturer located in Springfield, Missouri, sourcing 100% of their beans directly from the farmers. Shawn Askinosie, founder and chocolate maker, travels to regions of the Tanzania, the Philippines, Honduras, and Ecuador to work directly with the farmers and source cocoa beans for their chocolate. This allows the chocolate to be traced to the source and labeled Authentic Single Origin Chocolate. It also enables Askinosie Chocolate to profit share with the farmers, giving them a Stake In the Outcome™. The Askinosie Chocolate mission is to serve their farmers, their neighborhood, their customers and each other and to share the Askinosie Chocolate experience by leaving the world a better place than they found it.

Chocolate University

Chocolate University was created to benefit the children of the Askinosie Chocolate factory neighborhood. Nearby Drury University is a partner in this endeavor. It was formed with a vision to provide a learning experience to Boyd Elementary, Pipkin Middle School, and Central High School students through the lens of artisan chocolate making. Shawn Askinosie was motivated to found this program because he wanted to reach out to the neighborhood children. The factory is located in the Historic Commercial Street District and is one block from the Missouri Hotel, Springfield's largest homeless shelter, where too many children have to spend the night. Many of the kids attend nearby schools just blocks from the factory and near Drury University. The goals of the project are to inspire the children about (1) social entrepreneurship and (2) a world beyond their own. Askinosie Chocolate is the sole funding source of Chocolate University by donating 100% of their tour proceeds to Drury University for the benefit of the neighborhood children. The many projects of Chocolate University are designed to impact the children of the neighborhood.

Central High School -- Cocoa Honors

Thirteen juniors from Central High School were selected out of over 60 applicants to participate with Askinosie Chocolate in the selection of their next cocoa bean source country in Africa as part of an 18 month-long cooperative learning project. The students met every week with Shawn Askinosie to learn about chocolate, cocoa beans, share research and discuss the cocoa country choices. Chocolate University raised the money to bring the students (along with some teachers) to a remote village in Tanzania to meet the farmers they helped select. They also funded a deep water well to provide clean water to the 2,000 villagers of Tenende. They specifically sought a woman led cocoa farmer group and Mama Kyeja - now pictured on the front of the chocolate bar package - left an indelible impression on them all. The success of the trip can best be summed up by the text message that one student sent to his mother during the trip that said: "this is the best day of my life." This marks the first time that a chocolate maker has traded directly with a Tanzanian cocoa farmer group. Special thanks to Chocolate University's many donors, Maji-Tech, Drury University, and Goodwill Ambassador Doug Pitt. The hope is to bring Mama Kyeja and the other leaders of her farmer group to Missouri to visit Askinosie Chocolate and learn more about the chocolate process.

The Chocolate University students are now raising money for textbooks for Mwaya Secondary school located next to Tenende village. They visited the school and learned that 800 students have only 10 teachers, no textbooks, and no electricity.

Boyd Elementary School - fourth/fifth grade

Askinosie Chocolate is involved in every unit of study of the fourth / fifth grade classes of Boyd Elementary School. The students learn about the business methods of Askinosie Chocolate and feel like they are part of the business as Chocolate University students. They come to the factory and get hands on experience in ways that no tour of the factory would offer. When Shawn Askinosie travels to origin countries he emails the students, sends updates and photos, and answers questions. Upon his return Shawn visits the classroom to discuss the journey. Chocolate University funds are used to send the children on field trips outside of Springfield.

Pipkin Middle School - Cocoa Cares

The Malagos Elementary School in Davao Philippines is in the heart of the area where Askinosie Chocolate cocoa beans are sourced. Shawn Askinosie visited this school on his trip to Davao, met the children, gave them chocolate and told them about the Chocolate University program. That school did not have Internet connectivity. The Pipkin students raised money that enabled the school in Davao to purchase a computer, color printer and services to connect the net.

The students have begun a cross cultural communication program to learn about each other's history, current cultural climate and educational experiences, in an effort to broaden each student's awareness of the world outside of their local community.

Chocolate University -- Missouri Hotel Computer Lab

The Missouri Hotel homeless shelter is a block from the Askinosie Chocolate factory. It houses about 80 children on any given night. These children previously had no place to study, research, and create. The computer lab was Boyd Principal James Grandon's idea and dream that he communicated to Shawn Askinosie in 2007. Askinosie Chocolate designed the lab, arranged for installation of all the furniture, acquired the computers, and enlisted the services of a local artist to make the lab inviting and warm. Drury University students along with Mr. Grandon help the children learn computer skills on Wednesday nights. This project was funded by Chocolate University and the generous donations of the Turner Family Foundation, Service World Computer Center, Grooms Office Environments, artist Jessy Linder, and Drury University.

Victory House Women's Shelter

This nearby women's shelter and educational program houses women in need. These women are employed by Askinosie Chocolate to tie the strings that are placed at the top of every Askinosie chocolate bar package. The strings come from the bags of cocoa beans

that the women take apart and re-use. The women use the money earned to take short distance field trips and create special projects to help others in need.

Cocoa Farmers and their Stake in the Outcome™

Askinosie Chocolate provides farmers with a Stake in the Outcome™: paying them higher than Fair Trade prices, opening their books, and sharing profits. Askinosie Chocolate works directly with farmers and can boast 100% traceability knowing the name of each farmer.

Shawn Askinosie Biography

Shawn Askinosie, Founder & Chocolate Maker of Askinosie Chocolate, had a successful career in criminal law for nearly 20 years before founding Askinosie Chocolate. Over the years he has had a number of high profile cases that have garnered national media attention. Shawn never lost a criminal trial. His first murder trial was a death penalty case broadcast live on Court TV. Two of his murder trials were made into NBC Dateline Specials. He was named Best Lawyer in Springfield in 1998, 1999, and 2000 by 417 Magazine. In 2001, Missouri Lawyers Weekly named him one of the Missouri Lawyers of the Year. He has spoken to many lawyers and judges over the years as a seminar speaker on crime scene forensics, jury selection, and DNA among other topics.

When Shawn was 14 his father, also a lawyer and his hero, died after a two year battle with lung cancer. In 2000 Shawn co-founded Lost & Found, a regional grief center for children who have experienced the death of a loved one.

In May 2007, Shawn sold his first chocolate bar from his factory in Springfield, Missouri. In the ensuing years Askinosie Chocolate has received high praise from around the world for their craft chocolate. In 2009 and 2010 the National Association of Specialty Food honored the company with a Silver Medal in the Outstanding Chocolate category. Time Out New York magazine reported the Askinosie Chocolate Ecuador bar was their number five favorite food in New York City in 2008. The Times of London recently named the White Chocolate Nibble Bar as one of the Top Ten Chocolate Bars in the World.

Since founding the company, Shawn has been a frequent guest on the Fox Business Network discussing chocolate (of course) and small business issues. He is a sought after public speaker and has been the keynote speaker for several events around the region. He has been the Convocation Speaker at Drury University. The Springfield Business Journal named Shawn 2008 Entrepreneur of The Year. He sells his chocolate throughout the US, and exports to stores in Sweden, Australia, Canada, Singapore, and the UK and has been nominated Missouri Exporter of the Year. He remains on the Board of Lost & Found and is on the Lay Advisory Committee of Assumption Abbey (a Cistercian monastery in Ava, Missouri). Shawn was the 2010 (and slated for 2011) Mel Carnahan Fellow at Missouri State University's Public Affairs Academy and is an Adjunct Professor at Drury University.

