

NEWS

National Association of Chain Drug Stores Provides Insight for FDA During Formula Shortage

By Julia Stumbaugh

In early June, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) participated in a listening session with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on an ongoing infant formula shortage that *Datasembly* reports resulted in a national formula out-of-stock rate of 74% by the end of May.

Steven C. Anderson, President and CEO, NACDS and Chair, ASAE, told NACDS members in a June 8 memo this meeting helped FDA Commissioner Robert Califf and industry stakeholders learn how chain pharmacies can help expedite recovery from the formula shortage.

"Overall, this meeting with Commissioner Califf provided an exceptional opportunity to share how the industry is deeply engaged on this critical public health issue," said Anderson. "We highlighted how pharmacies are working to help parents during this time and to communicate what more retailers need from FDA to better serve their customers."

Using information from a poll of

NACDS members, FDA and NACDS officials discussed the need for public education about which formulas are safe to drink. That includes foreign brands imported on an emergency basis to alleviate the shortage.

The groups also talked about how different types of formula, especially specialty blends for infants with health complications, can be distributed evenly across chain pharmacies to guarantee a wide range of local access.

Typically, the vast majority of formula sold by NACDS members and the rest of America's retailers is produced by four companies: Abbott Nutrition, Perrigo Nutritionals, Gerber Products Company, and Reckitt. All are represented by the Infant Nutrition Council of America (INCA) and produce about 90% of all American infant formula.

INCA members' formula production was delayed by supply chain issues in early 2022, then slowed to a crawl during a months-long shutdown of a major Abbott Nutrition formula plant due to contamination issues.

The first illness related to drinking formula produced by this Abbott Nutrition plant was reported in September 2021, but the plant did not close until a voluntary recall in February.

This delay has brought scrutiny upon the FDA, which historically inspects infant formula plants at least once a year. According to the Associated Press, however, no formula plants were inspected during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Abbott Nutrition plant saw a two-year gap in inspections, and the FDA still has yet to resume inspections of three other major formula plants, operated by Reckitt and Gerber.

Steven Mandernach, Executive Director of the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO), an association representing state-level inspectors, said this lack of focus on formula inspections reflects the need for food industry expertise within the FDA. Many high-ranking agency officials, including FDA Commissioner Robert Califf, come from medical, not food, backgrounds.

"It's very challenging for them to get engaged at all in this area

because they don't have the background, the knowledge and the experience in it," Mandernach told the AP.

AFDO and other food industry associations, including the Consumer Brands Association, the International Fresh Produce Association and FMI—The Food Industry Association, have advocated for structural change within the FDA's food branch in order to renew its focus on food regulation. Until these changes take place, outside input from food industry leaders such as NACDS could be crucial in guiding the FDA's food decisions.

As a result of the agency's listening session with the NACDS, Anderson said Califf asked his FDA team to look into how retail pharmacy "can be leveraged in the short-term" to provide infants with necessary formula. Califf also indicated interest in further listening sessions between the NACDS and the FDA.

"Altogether, the discussion provided key insights to FDA that will help the agency prioritize its next steps in addressing these issues," Anderson said.

Hall of Fame

continued from page 3

Hall of Fame Development Era inductees include William "Bill" McGowan, former president & CEO, Indianapolis CVA; Charles Lapointe, former president, Tourisme Montreal; and Major J. Gordon Smith, former director, British Columbia Government Travel Bureau.

Hall of Fame Industry Contributor inductees include Christine "Shimo" Shimasaki, CDME, CMP, Managing Director, 2Synergize; and the late Anne Daly Heller and Ross E. Heller of *USAE Weekly Newspaper*.

"I consider this recognition by the industry I love the highest of professional achievements," said Shimasaki. "My mentor, Reint Reiniers, former president and CEO of the San Diego CVB, encouraged me to get involved in the industry, and I always took his advice literally. I am grateful for the support of my peers, who not only share my passion for industry, but also for the communities we serve."

Ross Heller said: "On behalf of my late wife Anne Daly Heller and our entire family, I thank Destinations International for this very wonderful honor. Anne held the members of Destination International in the warm-

est place of her heart.

"She fell in love with your members in the late 1980s soon after *USAE* came to be when she went to your annual meeting in Amsterdam. We came on a brand-new Boeing 747—it had that 'new car smell.' Several other members were aboard. And from that day until the day she passed away last September, Anne never stopped meeting and talking and thinking Destinations International.

"As to myself, I am not really sure I am deserving. I always felt I served as 'the wind beneath Anne's wings.'"

Destination Organization Leadership Award recipients include Bonnie Quill, CDME, President & CEO, Mat-Su CVB (Alaska); Marc Garcia, CATP, President & CEO, Visit Mesa; and Martha Sheridan, President & CEO, Greater Boston CVB. Winners represent DMOs with budgets of less than \$1 million, \$1–3 million, and \$3 million or more.

"I am extremely honored to receive this award, but more important to share this recognition with my Alaska DMO partners," said Quill. "Alaska is a collaboration of leaders who partner together to strengthen our destination. I have to acknowledge the many opportunities and leadership experience Alaska tourism has blessed me with."

Garcia said it's "such an honor to

be recognized for leading a vision that unites my personal drive to increase awareness for accessibility and inclusion and serves to support a giant gap in the visitor industry."

"My personal experience having a child diagnosed on the autism spectrum drove me down this path, but witnessing the community's embrace of the programs we set in motion to ensure we did the right thing has been the real award," he said. "None of what we were able to develop and elevate at Visit Mesa would have been possible without

an engaged board of directors, our outstanding team at Visit Mesa, and the unrelenting support of my family to keep going."

Sheridan said: "Being recognized by one's peers is truly the highest honor you can receive. I am humbled to be the recipient of this prestigious award and grateful for the amazing career I have in the destination marketing space."

For more information about the DI Hall of Fame or the Destination Organization Leadership Award, visit www.destinationsinternational.org.

NOCC Logo

continued from page 4

peaks of the Crescent City Connection Bridge, which has spanned the Mississippi River for over 60 years.

"This is a new design for a new era," said Michael J. Sawaya, President of the Morial Convention Center. "The city is bouncing back, and we are thrilled to host conventions and other events that are already having a positive impact on local businesses."

However, the new logo also retains elements from the previous version, paying tribute to both the convention center's namesake—the city's first African-American mayor,

Ernest N. Morial—and to the city of New Orleans.

Designed by Creative Services Manager Eric LeBlanc the logo aligns with the facility's new "Built to Host" marketing message. It will have a phased rollout starting with digital and electronic assets such as web pages and email signatures, followed gradually by paper and physical assets.

The debut of the new logo coincides with Morial Center sustainability upgrades, interior and exterior modernizations, and plans to develop 39 acres of adjacent riverfront property already in progress. These projects are all part of a \$557 million Capital Improvement Plan.