

Our Friend Mickey

James S. Calvin, President
New York Association of Convenience Stores



Mickey Jamal, whose company is profiled in this month's issue of *Griffin Report*, is one of the smartest, scrappiest, sunniest convenience store operators you will ever meet.

Born in Amman, Jordan, Mickey came to the U.S. in 1969. He and his wife Kay opened their first location at Chestnut and Main streets in New Paltz NY in 1981, and "Chestnut Petroleum" was born.

As it grew, Mickey's brothers Sam, Sal and Cal joined the company. In 2004, NYACS named the Jamals one of "New York's Foremost Convenience Store Families." Today, Chestnut has dozens of direct-op and dealer locations in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Mickey has served on the NYACS Board of Directors since 2001, including a stint as Chairman. During that time, I have come to know him as a friend and colleague, and admire him as a business and civic leader.

Beneath the unassuming, friendly demeanor is a shrewd entrepreneur who is constantly working on the next deal. Ask him sometime about all the businesses he owned in the past – real estate, restaurants, bakery distribution, etc. – and how he met Kay.

Perpetually on the go, Mickey's always where the action is – cheering at the Super Bowl, riding in the pace car at a NASCAR event, sport fishing off the Florida Keys, dining at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, strolling the beach in San Juan. And if you want to meet some movers and shakers at the NACS Show, tag along with him for a few hours. He knows *everybody*.

Yet back home in New York, he remains deeply committed to his serving his industry and his community. Two examples stand out:

- In 2004, we held our annual Fall Conference at West Point, not far from Mickey's home in Highland NY. Since it was the first time NYACS had held an event that far south, he was determined to ensure its success. So he threw a huge party for our attendees at his charming home overlooking the Hudson River on a warm September evening. It was one of the most memorable NYACS occasions ever. He sprang for a catered outdoor dinner, a tent, a band, you name it. He went a step further by taking the initiative to hang "Welcome NYACS" banners at his C-stores along the route to and from West Point.

- In the weeks following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Mickey worked tirelessly throughout the Hudson Valley to calm fears and prevent his fellow Americans of Islamic faith from being unfairly targeted by narrow-minded people looking for somebody to blame. Without being asked, he became a bridge between the Muslim community and the general population, urging communication, understanding and restraint.

Mickey Jamal is one of those caring, hard-working, fun-loving, successful people who make the convenience store industry so special. I'm proud he is part of our NYACS family.

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