

# Hill & Valley seeking name recognition across the country

## Formerly Nancy's Pies, it's the largest producer of no-sugar desserts

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When people browse in the bakery section of a Hy-Vee grocery store, they'll probably see packaged fruit pies with labels that say, "No Sugar Added."

Underneath those words, people may see the Hill & Valley brand.

The Quad-Cities can boast about Rock Island's Hill & Valley Inc., formerly Nancy's Pies. The company, at 3915 9th St., is the largest producer of sugar-free and no-sugar-added desserts in the country.

The 120-employee company was sold last year to Circle Peak Capital, a New York equity investment firm. Hill & Valley officials are striving to go beyond the accomplishment of being the largest producer of those products and become a leading brand that customers recognize, company president Scott Florence said.

For example, when some people go to a store to buy laundry detergent, they prefer Tide.

When people want to buy sugar-free or no-sugar-added products, the company hopes customers, especially diabetics, seek Hill & Valley.

"Our goal is to make a brand identifiable enough for consumers to trust and enjoy," said Brian Gustaitis, chairman of Hill & Valley's board of directors. He replaced company founder George Coin.

Circle Peak Capital identified diabetics as a fast-growing category in the American demographic, Mr. Gustaitis said. Hill & Valley wants to fulfill those consumers' needs, he said.

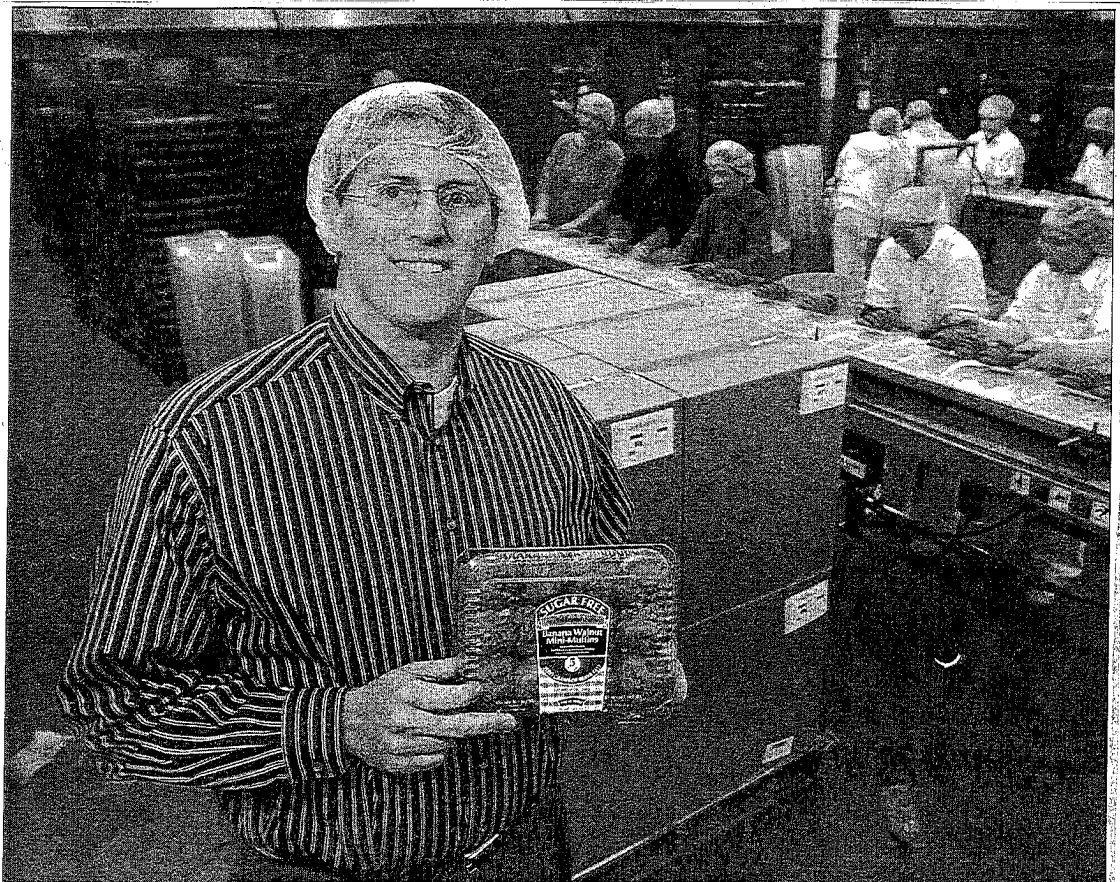
Diabetes is a disease in which a person's body cannot produce or properly use insulin, according to the American Diabetes Association. Insulin is a hormone that helps the body break down sugar, starches and other food into energy sources.

About 21 million people in the United States — or about 7 percent of the population — have diabetes, according to the association.

The company always has kept its customers in mind since Mr. Coin, and his wife, Nancy, started the company in 1987. They retired recently.

Their son-in-law Mr. Florence has been company president for the past few years. He is also an investor in Circle Peak Capital.

Even with the company being sold, Mr.



Todd Mizener / staff

Scott Florence, president of Hill & Valley Inc. in Rock Island, became president of the company, formerly known as Nancy's Pies, in 2002. He was retained as president of the company when Nancy's Pies was sold in August 2005 to Circle Peak Capital, a New York-based equity investment firm. The company's name was changed to Hill & Valley Inc., and existing employees were retained. The commercial bakery is the largest producer of sugar-free and no-sugar-added bakery products in the United States.

Florence said the company doesn't feel substantially different. It's just that the owners are not at the plant on a day-to-day basis, he said.

Circle Peak Capital brought more focus to Hill & Valley, Mr. Florence said.

Mr. Gustaitis said he wants to continue to make Hill & Valley a great place to work, as well as maintain and improve

the quality of its product.

The company began bringing in groups to taste-test new products a year ago.

One group of church women are very vocal, said Sharon Kerns, Hill & Valley customer and sales support administrator. The ultimate compliment is when someone says, "I didn't even tell this is

sugar-free."

The plant makes 10,000 pies a day, Mr. Florence said, adding that the plant offers about 200 items.

Hill & Valley pies, muffins, cookies, cakes and brownies are sold at Hy-Vee grocery stores, Super Wal-Marts, Super Targets, Meijer, Kroger and Supervalu across the nation.