

## Kiss Hershey Back comes full circle

The legacy of Milton S. Hershey is deeply rooted in giving back to the community. In 2008, five first-year medical students, David Baird, Clint Ellingson, Clayton Hess, Nate Hull, and Matt Nerdin came together with an idea to honor that legacy. Kiss Hershey Back is a township-wide cleanup effort where members of the community volunteer to pick up litter in Derry Township's parks, greenways and along its rural roads.

"When Clint first approached us about the idea of a trash clean-up day for the community, we were skeptical," Baird said. "I pictured a hundred people cleaning up a few roads. As the event progressed, it got bigger and bigger with more volunteers."

During the first event alone, it was estimated that 26-28 cubic yards of trash, and 8-10 cubic yards of recyclables were collected. "The underlying theme to clean up litter, plant trees, cultivate the parks and trails, and educate the community about the environment continues to persist," Ellingson said. "But overall it has remained as it was envisioned, as an opportunity to unify the community by working together to beautify the township."

Several groups have planted American Linden trees on Wood Road, at Shank Park, and at the Hershey Public Library. Said Ellingson, "I hope to come back to Hershey in ten years and see a mile long line of Linden trees marking the efforts of thousands of volunteers."

Each year, more than one million visitors flock to the entertainment and attractions throughout Hershey, and contribute to the accumulation of litter. "While an event like this truly unifies and helps beautify a community, there is still so much to be done to keep Hershey clean," Hull said.

The Kiss Hershey Back event not only beautifies the town, but provides an opportunity for students to develop a sense of belonging to this unique community. "It enriched my medical school experience to be able to work with people outside of the hospital to give back to the great town that has been our home for the last four years," Nerdin said.

This spring marked the fourth-annual event and also may mark the last time the founders participate, as they prepare to head off for residency training. The event promises to continue to leave a lasting impression within the community and on the lives of the founders as well. "KHB, more recently, became a significant discussion point in my residency interviews. It acted as a highlighter of personal attributes and made memorable the

ambition, responsibility, and leadership needed to help me stand out among the sea of qualified applicants," Hess said.

The College of Medicine opens its doors to 145 first-year medical and graduate students each year. Allowing first-year students to plan the annual event will continue to provide fresh direction and new ideas. Hess said. "We decided that each first-year class should have the freedom to make the event what they wish. We hope that each class can feel ownership of the event, just as we have, and take pride in helping Kiss Hershey Back improve with each passing year," said Hess.

— By Jen Baker



The event founders and where they went for residency are: **Back row**—Nate Hull, Diagnostic Radiology, Mayo School of Graduate Medical Education, Minn.; David Baird, Dermatology, Penn State Hershey Medical Center; Clayton Hess, Radiation/Oncology, UC Davis Medical Center, Calif.; and Matt Nerdin, Emergency Medicine, Synergy Medical Education Alliance, Mich. **Front (l to r)**—2011 event cochairs and members of the Class of 2015 Jonathan Pollock, Lindsey Zubritsky, and Britney Hacken