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MSU is Everywhere Summer 2005



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Jones Soda labels showcase Sparty

By [TOM KELLER](#)

The State News

After being named last year's number one mascot, Sparty has something else to cheer about - his picture on thousands of bottles of soda.

MSU and Jones Soda Co., a Seattle-based beverage maker, came to an agreement in December to feature pictures of Sparty, the Universal Cheer Association's 2004 Mascot of the Year, on a series of bottles.

About 60,000 bottles of the soda, in green apple and cream soda flavors, will feature six different labels with pictures of Sparty around campus.

Jones Soda representatives will be handing out samples of the soda from 1-3 p.m. Monday in the basement of the International Center.

A percentage of the sales will go toward the Sparty Mascot Program, which is run by the MSU Student Alumni Foundation. The program arranges bookings for Sparty and maintains the mascot's costume.

"It's a win-win situation," said Paul Wirries, Jones Soda regional manager for Michigan. "SAF needed to raise money and we decided that Sparty was pretty cool."

Matt Warpinski, vice president of marketing for SAF, said the group expects to make about \$2,000 from the agreement.

MSU is the first university to have this agreement with Jones Soda, said Gene Mezo, Jones Soda sales manager for Michigan.



TOMMY ANDRES • The State News

Cream Soda and Green Apple Jones Soda Co. bottles featuring Sparty are now available at Sparty's Convenience Stores and Lansing-area Meijer stores.

The company has since been contacted by other universities, including the University of Notre Dame and The Ohio State University, but has yet to arrange any similar programs.

"This is a test case for the country," Warpinski said.

Mezo said the decision to make Sparty the first collegiate mascot on a Jones Soda bottle was an easy one.

Michigan, and the MSU campus, have been some of Jones Soda's most consistent consumer bases, Mezo said.

The state of Michigan accounts for 20 percent of all of Jones Soda's carbonated beverage sales for North America, and Case Hall's Barista Café alone sells about 2,000 bottles a week - more than any other location in the world, Mezo said.

"MSU is the most Jonesed-out campus in America," Mezo said. "The amount of sales we get out of this campus is unreal."

MSU's colors also align with consumers' tastebuds - cream soda and green apple are the two most popular Jones Soda flavors in North America, Mezo said.

The soda will be available at several locations in the area, including all 19 Sparty's Convenience Stores, Union Central Store and Spartan Bookstore on campus.

Lansing area CVS Pharmacy, Meijer, 7-Eleven and Marathon Gas Station stores will sell the soda off campus.

Some local retailers said they expect the soda to sell quickly now that students are back on campus.

"We won't even put it in the cooler - we'll just sell it warm," said Cathy Estrada, assistant store manager at Union Central Store.

Wirries said that only about 30,000 bottles of each flavor will be produced, and then the labels will be retired to preserve their status as a collector's item.

But Jones Soda still owns the patent, so another line of Spartan soda in the near future isn't out of the question.

"As long as it's still fun, we want to keep doing it," Wirries said.

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