Childhood Friends Bring High-Protein Ice Cream to Meijer

At Meijer, we love celebrating local businesses with deep community connections, and the story of Paul Reiss and Michael Meadows hits especially close to our West Michigan roots. These lifelong friends from Hudsonville, Mich., are the creators of Protein Pints, a high-protein, low-sugar ice cream now available in Meijer stores.

But their connection to Meijer goes back even further than their 18-year friendship.

Paul's parents both worked for Meijer, and his grandparents knew Fred and Lena Meijer personally. Launching their product with their hometown grocery retailer is special for these two entrepreneurs.

Paul and Michael first met on a Hudsonville school bus when they were 5 years old, and their friendship quickly grew with their shared sense of humor. Years later, their passion for soccer and weightlifting led to the creation of Protein Pints.

"We were trying to get a ton of protein to support our nutrition goals, but most protein options didn't taste good, and ice cream wasn't exactly the healthiest choice," Paul said. "We thought, why not combine the two? It was a win-win – delicious ice cream that fit our nutrition goals."

In 2022, they started experimenting in their kitchen and developed a recipe with 30 grams of protein per pint, just five grams of sugar per serving, and all-natural ingredients.

"Every flavor comes from real ingredients like cocoa, strawberry puree, or mint extract," Michael explained. "There are no artificial flavors or colors, so it's something you can feel good about eating."

Their big break came at the West Michigan entrepreneurial pitch competition Start Garden 100, where they connected with the Meijer team and learned more about how to become 'retail ready'. There was immediate potential in their product and our team guided them through the process of launching in our Grand Rapids Bridge Street Market.

"Meijer has been with us every step of the way," Michael said. "From helping us understand the logistics of retail to mentoring us on scaling up, the support has been incredible. I remember how exciting it was when we first got their feedback. It was some of the most positive we'd ever received. They really saw the potential of what we could become."

Thanks to their hard work and our strong partnership, Protein Pints is making a monumental leap in 2025, expanding from 14 Meijer stores to 187 locations across the Midwest. Customers will soon enjoy their beloved flavors like chocolate and peanut butter chip, along with the highly anticipated new flavor additions like mint chip and cookie dough.

Protein Pints employs six full-time and three part-time team members, with plans to grow. Currently based in East Lansing, the company is working on opening a headquarters in Grand Rapids in the near future. This move reflects their commitment to building their business in the community that has supported them.

Paul and Michael have supported their West Michigan community from the start. Over the summer, they handed out more than 12,000 samples at local races, farmers markets, and nonprofit events, sharing their ice cream with the community that raised them.

"Having Meijer as our first retail partner is incredibly meaningful to us," Paul said. "We've been shopping here since we were kids, and the chance to bring our product to Meijer shelves feels like we're coming full circle."

Additional assets available online: Photos (3)

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