

# SUNDAY NEWS

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REAL ESTATE/EMPLOYMENT★★

LANCASTER, PA., SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2004

# He makes art out of fiberglass

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Once in a while Dwight Miller pauses for a moment and thinks about what he has accomplished. It is during these moments he gets a feeling of satisfaction.

He has come a long way from building sets at Sight & Sound Theatres. Now his business, tucked away on a side road in East Lampeter Township, ships his fiberglass designs across the country and around the world.

"Sometimes you don't think about it; you just do it," said Miller, president of ACI Composites Inc. 640 Hempstead Road. "When I sit down and think about it, it's mind-boggling. Who am I to have this happen?"

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*Hershey characters at Chocolate World are local company's latest work that is found around the world.*

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He's the guy who owns a five-man operation that has shipped his craftsmanship to such places as Egypt and Australia. He has not been to all 50 states, but he has worked in all four corners. Miller owns a fiberglass business that has locked up large projects like designs for 12 bridges in Tampa, Fla., and has worked on structures at the The College of New Jersey. It has also done decorative work for nightclubs, a statue of Angus Young, the lead guitarist for rock group AC/DC and characters like Bo Pilgrim for



Jack Leonard/Sunday News

Dwight Miller and David Bubb move a large Hershey Kiss into place for delivery to Hershey Chocolate World. Miller's fiberglass work appears around the world.

Pilgrim's Pride, a chicken processing company. He has also done fiberglass work for aircraft, trains and helicopters.

He completed his latest venture, which can be seen at Hershey's Chocolate World. The fiberglass artist was commissioned to do two Hershey Chocolate Bars, two Hershey's Kisses and two Reese's Peanut Butter Cups characters that will rest on top of the Chocolate World building at the entrance where the buses unload.

These are no ordinary characters. The Chocolate and Reese's bars are both 11 feet tall and more than 200 and

100 pounds, respectively. The Hershey's Kisses are 5-feet-8 and weigh 100 pounds.

Lancaster-based Architectural Sculpture Inc. did the sculpting. Foam and clay and are used to make a rubber mold for each of the characters.

Each of the characters has between 12-16 pieces. Miller made and assembled each of the pieces. He said it took about 240 hours to make the fiberglass, 160 hours to sculpt, 133 to paint and 100 assemble. He was also responsible for the installation of the characters. The project took about seven months to complete.

Todd Kohr, public relations director of Chocolate World, said ACI was highly recommended.

"You can imagine a couple of things have to work for us," Kohr said. "They [the characters] are extremely large and must fit and be durable to fit on top of the building. Because Hershey has to have things perfect, we need someone who can make them perfect, and they are. They are more than decorations. They represent the Hershey brand and our top three brands."

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### **Humble beginning**

In 1982 Miller worked at Sight & Sound putting sets together. He was a handyman doing whatever was needed around the stage. Sight & Sound started adding more scenes to shows, which meant more sets needed to be made. Miller noticed he was working a lot with fiberglass. "If I ever wanted my own business, fiberglass would be the way to go." Miller said that he remembered thinking. "Fiberglass gets into everything."

In 1992, he bought DDI Industries in Quarryville and changed the name in 1997 to ACI, which stands for architectural façades, commercial products and industrial parts. He handles all three elements in his line of work. He moved to his current location a few years ago.

"We are a custom job shop, where customers come to us for

maybe a three through six-month project and we may not see them again," Miller said. "It is never the same thing every day. There is always something new and different. It's designing and helping the customer decide what they want and need."

He advertises in Thomas Register, which has 136,000 manufacturing businesses listed in it. Some of his work comes from word of mouth, but most, he believes, comes from the Register. That's how a Georgia company was able to contact him for the work in Tampa.

Word of mouth might have helped when local company Tait Towers, based in Lititz, called Miller about making a statue of the AC/DC lead guitarist. Tate does a lot of work on stage setup and wanted the statue for the AC/DC tour. The 26-foot-high statue was shipped to Australia.



This is the fiberglass statue ACI did for the musical group AC/DC.