

Family-Owned Business Awards 2025: Heritage's Dairy Stores turned one cow into a 32-location chain



This photo from 1982 shows four generations of the Heritage family of Heritage's Dairy Stores: Back row, from left: Skeeter Heritage Sr. and Skeeter Heritage Jr.; front row, from left: Grandpop Skeets Heritage and Skeets Heritage.

HERITAGES DAIRY STORES

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From its humble beginnings on a family farm in West Deptford, New Jersey, Heritage's Dairy Stores has grown into a 32-location convenience store chain known for its chocolate milk, fresh sandwiches and community-first values. For CEO Skeeter Heritage Jr., the company's strength has never been about size. It's about people, relationships and purpose.

“It really did start as a dairy farm with a single cow,” Heritage said. “My great-grandfather was delivering milk to friends and neighbors. From there, we just kept building.”

The original Heritage's store opened in 1957, introducing the convenience store model to New Jersey. It became an early adopter of selling milk in gallon jugs and focused on simple, daily staples like bread, packaged meats and candy. The core philosophy, however, has remained unchanged for four generations.

“My grandfather believed people are the most important part of our business,” Heritage said. “And through serving others, we will achieve success.”

Location: Thorofare, New Jersey

Number of generations the company has been passed down through: 3

Number of employees: 640

Year founded: 1957

That belief stuck with him. Although he didn't initially plan to run the company, his father made him a promise early on. He never guaranteed a leadership role, only the opportunity to earn one.

From the farm to the service team, Heritage worked across departments and eventually managed a store while attending college. What began as a part-time job became a calling that blended family values, community impact and entrepreneurial drive.

“I fell in love with it,” he said. “My dad threw me into tough situations because he knew I could handle it. That's what developed my approach.”

In 2019, Heritage officially took over as CEO, succeeding his father. Today, he works alongside four of his siblings who each play a role in the business and believes succession planning isn't just about title changes. It's about real-world experience, patience and earning the trust of the team.

"Managing a store gives you the best view of the business," he said. "We make sure the next generation works their way up."

That philosophy of learning by doing is reflected in every part of the company. In addition to its convenience stores, Heritage's Dairy Stores operates a wholesale company, a construction and service team and an in-house employee development program focused on both professional skills and personal growth.

To support this growth, the company has invested in modern inventory and point-of-sale systems that enhance efficiency and customer experience. Many corporate staff have been with the company for decades and promotions from within are common.

"I love our people. That's what motivates me," Heritage said. "We've done life together. Births, deaths, buying homes. That's real loyalty."

That sense of commitment has helped Heritage's weather economic downturns and periods of transition. Heritage credits the company's resilience to a shared purpose, strong faith and deep roots in the community.

"I'm not trying to build an empire," he said. "I just want to provide for my family, help others do the same and have a positive impact."

With \$71 million in revenue last year and more than 600 employees, the company continues to grow, guided by the same values that started it all.

"Even if we're just a small part of someone's day, I want it to be a good one," Heritage said. "We sell sandwiches and coffee, but it's always been about more than that."