Mars Applefest History
1985 - 2026





In the early 1980s, the owners of Treesdale Farms, Mars PA [1] had more apples than they could sell. Since they needed to find a home for the apples, the apples were donated to the Mars Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber put the apples in a large crate on the corner of Pittsburgh Street and Grand Avenue, where citizens of Mars could pick apples as they wished.

In 1984, five local business owners met and decided it was time to turn this into a tradition, but they knew they could not stop at just apples. Those five businesses were Grady's Candies (Carol Grady), Mars Medical Clinic Pharmacy (Larry Hibbs), Jennings Carpet, Mars Hardware and Mars Realty (Jim Lascher). They wanted to feature apple pie, apple cider, apple turnovers, apple dumplings, and anything else that could be made from apples. [2] The Chamber of Commerce subsequently developed to be known as the Mars Business Association.



Thus, in 1985 Jim Lascher, President of the Mars Business Association, led his fellow Martians to launch Mars Applefest. The festival's main goal was to generate business and awareness for the town of Mars. Mars having its own flying saucer in the town square just wasn't enough.

When Treesdale Farms yielded their last apple harvest in 1990, apples were consequently purchased to be resold during Applefest. The festival grew from a fledgling community event with a few vendors and support from town businesses, to what today is a major event in southern Butler County, PA. [3]

Jim guided Applefest for 18 years, but stayed involved for an additional 4 years. Gail Carpenter (2003-2008) rose to the occasion to Chair Applefest for 5 more years, where attendance and vendor participation continued to grow and draw attention to Mars. [4]

In 2009, when the Mars Business Association concluded as an organization, the Mars Ministerium took over under the direction of Reverend Gary Weston. [5]

In 2010, there was an agreement that Rich-Mar Rotary [8] would assume the management of the event. Jack Kimbell, General Manager for Treesdale Country Club was president of the Rotary Club for this transition. [6]

Since 2010, the Rotarians of Mars and Richland, PA, dedicated volunteers, have organized and supported this wonderful community event. Today, with direction from the Rich-Mar Satellite Club and assistance from Rich-Mar Main Club and the Appalachian Mission Satellite Club, Mars Applefest continues to dominate the Fall Festival scene.

In 2023, 2024 and 2025, with 150+ vendors, Applefest drew between 9,500 to 10,000 attendees. In 2026 we are hosting 205 vendors. Those are big accomplishments for this wonderful community event. [7]

Proceeds from Mars Applefest sustain Rich-Mar Rotary's 3 clubs and their specific civic missions to include Rotarian International programs. [9]

Rotary International Initiatives
Polio Eradication
Build-A-Chair Tanzania
Honduras Hope Mission
Hospital Albert Schweitzer
Bethany Christian Services
ShelterBox
Water From Clay
Dream Big Honduras
Hearts 4 Haiti

Local Charities and Inspirations
The Lighthouse Foundation
Inspired Hearts & Hands
Harvest Street Mission
Hosanna Industries
MHY Family Services
Pine-Richland Youth Center
North Hills Cares
North Hills Community Outreach
YMCA Camp Kon-O-Kwee Spencer
YASU (Young Adult Survivors United)
The Appalachian Mission Trips
Adams Township Park Rotary Pavilion
Rotary Youth Leadership Awards (RYLA)
Rotary Outstanding Vocational Award (ROVA)
Dictionaries for Children
College and Vocational Scholarships

The Rotary Clubs in our area are part of Rotary International [8], an organization devoted to solving real worldwide problems with real commitment and vision. The original goal is to eliminate Polio universally.

We invite you to bring family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors to Mars Applefest. There is always a Martian waiting to greet you, to share in this vibrant community event. Check us out at www.marsapplefest.com

1. http://www.treesdale.org/editor_upload/File/The%20History%20of%20Treesdale%20Farms.pdf
2. https://www.butlereagle.com/20061010/mars-festival-grows-out-of-an-apple-crate/
3. https://www.butlereagle.com/20071005/mars-applefest-gets-even-bigger-better/
4. https://www.butlereagle.com/20081006/mars-applefest-bakes-up-pride/
5. https://www.butlereagle.com/20091001/festive-event-mars-applefest-under-new-management/
6. https://www.butlereagle.com/20101004/applefest-draws-crowd-to-mars/
7. https://www.butlereagle.com/20251005/applefest-a-draw-even-for-those-out-of-state/
8. http://www.rich-mar.org/
9. https://www.rotary.org/en



