

Wisconsin GROCER

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Executive Vice President
for Woodman's Food Market

Leading the Charge... Women in the Grocery Industry pg. 18

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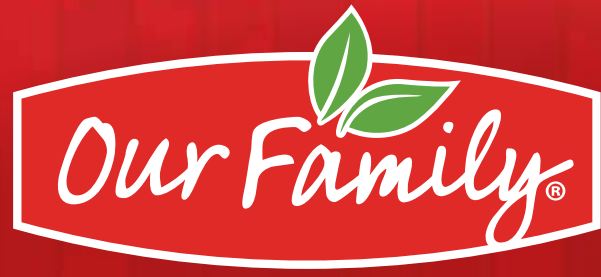
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The President's Perspective

Brandon Scholz
President and CEO, Wisconsin Grocers Association

A "Prime" Look Back

Think back to 2017 to one of the biggest stories that stopped the grocery world almost dead in its tracks.

Amazon bought Whole Foods. The WGA phones and emails lit up like a Christmas tree. It was the proverbial NCIS "Gibbs-slap" across the back of the head. People said the grocery business as we knew it was coming to an end.

Talking with one of our WGA grocer members brought the news home another way. Their financial advisor said it was time to sell the stores because Amazon/Whole Foods was going to take over the grocery biz.

Slate Magazine said, "In 2017, Amazon entered the grocery business by tossing Whole Foods in its shopping cart. Amazon spent more than \$13 billion to buy this 40-year-old supermarket chain known for its organic merchandise and, at times, its sky-high prices. In the grocery world, the purchase was a cataclysmic event."

One of the concerns was the presumption that Amazon would expand the Whole Food format quickly and technology would help Whole Foods leapfrog over other grocers. But after five years, the prevailing thought from grocers and experts in Wisconsin and around the country was that it didn't happen, especially in the food and food service areas - deli, food prep and hot bar.

As of July, Amazon has halted the rollout of its Amazon Fresh grocery stores "as the company figures out how to better differentiate them and improve their economics", said CEO Andy Jassy. Amazon recorded a \$720 million impairment charge in Q4, with Amazon Fresh and Amazon Go accounting for the bulk of that amount. He said Amazon decided to close some stores with low growth potential but

did not say how many will shutter under the banners.

So, what happened? There are many opinions and lots of speculation, including my own. For starters, the grocery industry doesn't cater to whims. Turning a grocery store into a redemption and fulfillment center isn't really a grocery store model that works.

Many think Whole Foods wasn't the chain that it was prior to the Amazon acquisition. Could

“When the glare wore off the new “shiny penny”, not much had changed.”

it be that the Amazon imprint changed the Whole Foods culture, and the chain lost their mojo and funky spirit? Did it become more of a corporate entity reflecting the Amazon way of doing things? Some were surprised that Amazon didn't go out and scour the grocery biz and bring industry experts to help integrate the transition.

It could be that as Amazon tried to move into Amazon Fresh and move heavily into the online grocery business that they lost focus of what the brick-and-mortar business did for their grocery customers. Others suggest that they were not able to expand their customer base beyond those who shopped at Whole Foods. And they didn't get rid of the "Whole Paycheck" moniker for their everyday and eclectic customers.

When the glare wore off the new "shiny penny," not much had changed. Whole Foods customers were still the same. There didn't seem to be a focus or concerted effort to bring in new customers. Whole Foods, known for local foods, store sampling and more importantly a sense of community, seemed to have drifted away from local and main street.

While Amazon has announced store closings and a hard re-evaluation of where they go next, they aren't out pricing caskets and head stones.

Don't count the mother of Prime out. Amazon has access to capital, resources, and assets that even many behemoths don't have. They sunk \$13 billion in at the beginning and have invested more money since then. It's too early to tell what's next for Amazon and the grocery industry.

The grocery industry will be watching for what comes next. And there will be something, maybe something big. For sure, Amazon will retool, reinvent, and try the next entry into grocery biz.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in The President's Perspective are solely that of the author and do not reflect in any way the official position of the Wisconsin Grocers Association, the board of directors, members, sponsors and related business entities.

IN THESE PAGES...

Working to help educate opinion leaders, Marketing & Events Coordinator, [Lauren Barnes](#), writes and distributes a new custom communication for opinion leaders called Fun Facts. Purely educational, the eNewsletter helps educate readers on non-legislative issues about the grocery industry. [Contact Lauren, lbarnes@wisconsin-grocers.com](mailto:lbarnes@wisconsin-grocers.com) for more information.

Keeping members connected, VP of Events, [Kris Neilson](#), updates members on the WGA's events including golf outings, and the upcoming Innovation Expo. Check for advertising and networking opportunities in the Vendor Insider, a bi-weekly eNewsletter. [Contact Kris, kris@wisconsin-grocers.com](mailto:kris@wisconsin-grocers.com) for more information.

[Mike Semmann](#), VP of Government Affairs distributes the Government Affairs Report (GAR) bi-weekly during the legislative sessions and shifts into a Campaign & Politics Report during the "off season". This report contains timely information on issues important to the industry and also relevant updates on what is happening in the Capitol and state government. The GAR averages a 30-40% open rate reaching over 1000 industry professionals. [Contact Mike, msemmann@wisconsin-grocers.com](mailto:msemmann@wisconsin-grocers.com) for more information.



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Michael Semmann,
Vice President of Government Affairs

Personal Property Tax Repealed

The Wisconsin Personal Property Tax has been repealed. WGA extends its gratitude and appreciation to the entire membership for its unwavering dedication and efforts to repeal the Personal Property Tax in Wisconsin. Your collaboration and commitment have been instrumental in achieving this significant milestone, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the business landscape for grocers. Your tireless advocacy, willingness to engage, and commitment to the well-being of our community are noticed by elected officials. By alleviating the burden of Personal Property Tax, you helped to open doors of opportunity for businesses to thrive and flourish. Thank you for being champions of economic growth.

The Personal Property Tax is a tax paid by businesses on items such as furniture and other tangible items. Over the course of the past several decades, the Personal Property Tax revenue shrank and currently makes up a very small part of the state's budget. With the repeal of the tax, the state will provide an estimated \$174 million to local governments, according to the Department of Revenue; a relatively small amount compared to the gross statewide property taxes totaling \$12.5 billion in 2022.

Repeal Takes Effect on January 1, 2024

Prior law generally required personal property to be assessed and taxed for purposes of the property tax, but numerous categories of personal property were exempt from taxation. The new law repeals Wisconsin's remaining personal property tax, beginning with property tax assessments as of January 1, 2024, which will be the property taxes levied in December 2024 and due in 2025.

Two Bills to Accomplish the Repeal

The first bill (Assembly Bill 245/Act 12) included a provision that repealed the state Personal Property Tax through statutory language. The Act exempts most items that had been defined as "personal property" from the personal property tax, and reclassifies certain other items as real property for purposes of property taxation.

That new law will also increase state aid to counties and municipalities by more than \$1 billion and was part of a deal to boost funding for the state's K-12 education system. It also makes several technical changes related to the repeal of the Personal Property Tax, such as providing a process whereby manufacturing establishments located in this state that do not own real property in this state may continue to claim the manufacturing income tax credit. In addition, beginning in 2025, the act requires DOA (Department of Administration) to provide aid to local taxing jurisdictions in an amount equal to the taxes that were levied on items of personal property based on assessments as of January 1, 2023.

The second was the state budget bill (Senate Bill 70/Act 19) which simply provided funding for the new policy.

WGA (Wisconsin Grocers Association) Chairman Jim Hyland of Roundy's, Inc. was very complimentary of the industry effort that spanned many legislative sessions. "WGA members should be proud of your association. We stayed on course and helped lead the way on grassroots and policy advocacy. It showed the value of your association and that legislative accomplishments can yield tangible results."

Champions of the Repeal:

WGA thanks key members of the legislature who played important roles to ensure passage of the legislation.



Sen. Duey Stroebel
(R-Saukville)



Sen. Dan Knodl
(R-Germantown)



Sen. Mary Felzkowski
(R-Irma)



Sen. Howard Marklein
(R-Spring Green)



Rep. Mark Born
(R-Beaver Dam)



Rep. Tony Kurtz
(R-Wonewoc)



Rep. John Macco
(R-Ledgeview)

WGA Vice President of Government Affairs Mike Semmann stated, "This is a once in a generation policy outcome. It's a testament to the vision and hard work of the membership and to the dozens of business groups who supported this tax change. WGA thanks the bill authors, legislative leaders, and administration who understood the need to modernize Wisconsin's tax code."

State Budget Includes an Increase in Sales Tax Retailer's Discount

WGA also lobbied for and led a coalition on a provision that was included in the budget increasing the sales tax retailer's discount rate from 0.5% to 0.75%, and increasing the maximum discount a retailer may claim per reporting period from \$1,000 to \$8,000. The new law specifies that these changes would first apply to sales and use taxes payable on the first day of the third month beginning after publication of the bill (October 1, 2023).



Members of the PPT
(Personal Property Tax)
Coalition and Rep. **Tony Kurtz**
and Sen. **Mary Felzkowski**



Governor
Tony Evers
holding
the signed
legislation



Governor Evers with
WGA's **Mike Semmann**

Background:

A business owner selling taxable goods or services acts as an agent of the state of Wisconsin by collecting sales tax from purchasers and passing it along to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. It's the business owner's responsibility to manage the taxes they collect to remain in compliance with state and local laws. Failure to do so can lead to penalties and interest charges.

Under current law in Wisconsin, retailers are provided a "retailer's allowance" of .5% of the sales taxes they collect (capped at \$1000 per filing period) to help offset the costs they incur in collecting the tax. Credit card fees, labor costs, utility costs, and other business costs all go into the total overall costs. Increasing the discount rate allows retailers to recoup part of the administrative costs associated with acting as the sales tax agent for the state of Wisconsin.

Champions of the Sales Tax Discount



Sen. Dan Feyen
(R-Fond du Lac)



Rep. Terry Katsma
(R-Oostburg)

Sales Tax Discount History: Tax 11.95 - Retailer's discount

• **January 1, 1983, until December 31, 1992:** 2% of the first \$10,000 of sales and use tax payable during the retailer's tax year, 1% of the second \$10,000 of sales and use tax payable and 0.5% of the sales and use tax payable in excess of \$20,000 each year;

• **May 1, 1988:** The requirement that county tax be remitted by dealers to the registering state agency was repealed effective May 1, 1988, pursuant to 1987 Wis. Act 141;

• **January 1, 1993, until January 1, 1997:** The amount of retailer's discount for returns filed for periods ending on or after January 1, 1993, and before January 1, 1997, was 0.5% of sales and use tax payable on retail sales, pursuant to 1991 Wis. Act 269;

• **January 1, 1997:** The amount of retailer's discount in sub. (1) became effective for returns filed for periods ending on or after January 1, 1997, pursuant to 1995 Wis. Act 280;

• **October 1, 2009:** The limitation of the retailer's discount to \$1,000 per reporting period became effective for taxes payable on and after October 1, 2009, pursuant to 2009 Wis. Act 28; and The provision prohibiting the retailer's discount on those returns filed by a certified service provider

who receives other compensation became effective October 1, 2009, pursuant to 2009 Wis. Act 2.

• **October 1, 2023:** The amount of the Retailer's Discount increases to .75% with an \$8,000 cap per reporting period.

Budget Vetoes on Income Tax and School Spending Overshadows Work of Legislature on Grocer Items

The tax cut Governor Evers signed (vetoed) in the budget received the majority of attention by the media and legislature, but the new spending measure still contains several positive items for grocers. Republicans are making the case the vetoes will result in less than a 1 percent reduction in the net taxes

...continued on page 14

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Wisconsinites pay this year, compared to the 15.1 percent cut under the GOP plan, according to a document created by the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

The vetoes trimmed the \$3.5 billion income tax reduction over the two-year period down to \$175 million by eliminating the top two income tax rates brackets that Republicans had proposed.

The overall savings is approximately \$36 for those who will see a reduction but would have been \$573 under the GOP plan. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the state is expected to have slightly more than \$4 billion in surplus at the end of the 2024-25 fiscal year as a result of the vetoes.

The Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA) recognizes the work of the legislature and Governor Evers on a state budget that provides funding for tax policy modernization, infrastructure investment, and housing opportunity for Wisconsin.

"This budget helps Wisconsin's grocers and all retailers in a tangible way, both now and in the foreseeable future," said Mike Semmann, WGA Vice President Government Affairs. "Retail food stores of every shape and size are facing increasing complexity in the marketplace. The budget dedicates funding to modernize select tax policies and provides investment in infrastructure which will sustain commercial confidence."

WGA appreciates the bipartisan leadership of Governor Evers, Republican Co-Chairs of the Joint Finance Committee, and individual lawmakers who worked diligently on workforce issues and to minimize inflationary pressures in the Wisconsin's economy. Several key areas of the budget stood out for Wisconsin grocers and convenience stores.

Funding for the Personal Property Tax Repeal:

The elimination of this tax as old as statehood, is a signal to businesses small and large that the legislature and Governor Evers are taking steps to clarify

and streamline Wisconsin's tax code to reflect a more modern way of doing business.

Sales Tax Allowance (Discount): The budget recognized, for the first time in 40 years, the increased costs retailers are facing related to a business owner's responsibility to act as the sales tax agent for the state of Wisconsin and provided relief to more than 100,000 retail businesses.

Transportation/Infrastructure: The increase in transportation funding will help amplify private investment in retail stores and warehouses to keep a critical component of the supply chain operable.

Housing: The \$525 million included for workforce housing will enhance economic development in communities all over the state through household formation, which has a positive correlation to the grocery industry.

NGA FLY-IN



NGA Fly-In Yields Progress

Mick Kneeland of Viking Village summed up the 2023 National Grocers Association Fly-In, "I absolutely recommend grocers attend the Fly-In. I felt prepared and the speakers were top notch." Mick attended the Washington, D.C. Fly-In and was awarded the trip through Pam Coy at Viking Village in Reedsburg and the Wisconsin Grocers Association. With a solid industry reputation, Mick has been a strong advocate for grocers before local and state officials in Wisconsin. This was his first opportunity to lobby in Washington and on Capitol Hill and he made the most of his time.

The National Grocers Association annual event focused on key legislative and regulatory items including swipe fees and the effect of monopoly business practices, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and the Farm Bill, and 2024 political impact in Washington, DC.

Independent grocers and their wholesalers play a crucial role in communities across the nation. However, Swipe Fees and the unfair advantages of certain players can skew the marketplace. NGA discussed how the anti-monopoly movement provides an opportunity

for grocers to fight the two major credit card players and level the playing field. Assistant Attorney General Johnathan Kanter joined the conference to address anti-trust policies. Kanter has been a key official at the Department of Justice in the food and agriculture payments sector.

The Farm Bill negotiations are happening concurrently with the debt ceiling fight and during the Fly-In, NGA explored how SNAP is on the chopping block and other relevant themes to keep this program working to favor customers and the grocery industry.



Wisconsin grocers network and listen to speakers during the conference.



Ted Balistreri - Sendik's Food Markets, and Kristin Popp, Woodman's, prepare for meetings on Capitol Hill.



Grocers standing tall on the Capitol steps.



Wisconsin **Congressman Tom Tiffany** (R-Minocqua/Wausau) took part in the Congressional Best Bagger demonstration with NGA's 2023 Best Bagger, **Karli West** of Macey's and **Rep. Burgess Owens** (R-Utah). Congressman Tiffany recently signed on to Credit Card Swipe Fee Legislation. **Please call him and say thanks!**
DC Phone: (202) 225-3365.



NGA holds a press conference to discuss Swipe Fee legislation.



Amy Niemetscheck, Certco, Inc. discusses the grocery industry.



Meeting **Congressman Derrick Van Orden** (R-WI-3) (Center).

Wisconsin attendees included **Ted Balistreri**, Sendik's Food Markets, **Kristin Popp**, Woodman's, **Mick Kneeland**, Viking Village, and **Amy Niemetscheck**, Certco, Inc.



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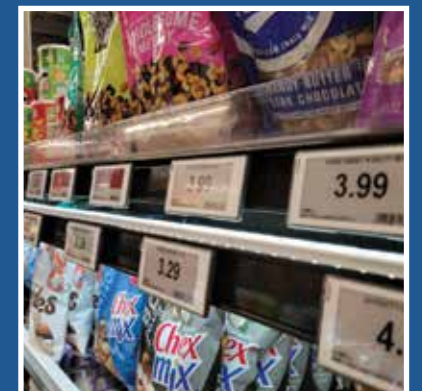
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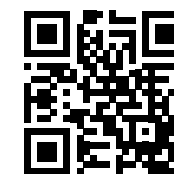
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LEADING THE CHARGE

Meet some of the standout stars – women in the state’s grocery industry – who are leading the way for a successful future of the industry.



Written exclusively for the Wisconsin Grocer Magazine by Maura Keller, Keller Ink

When you think of the women who work within the grocery industry, what comes to mind? Knowledge? Certainly. Experience in their field? Definitely. Determination and fortitude in an industry that is challenging and evolving? Absolutely. Women encompass a growing segment of this male-dominated industry and have earned accolades aplenty from those both inside and outside of the grocery world.

Take **Kristin Popp**, for example. As Executive Vice President for Woodman’s Food Market, Popp supports Woodman’s team across the corporation’s nineteen stores located in Wisconsin and northern Illinois. She oversees and supports most functions of the company for the big picture, identifying opportunities and ensuring Woodman’s is functioning at peak performance, both operationally and financially.



“I work directly with our operations team to ensure our stores are fully supported and meeting standards and expectations, oversee all functions of our corporate teams and seek opportunities for the company to increase efficiencies as we look forward, while maintaining the foundation of our success,” Popp says.

Originally, Popp began working at Woodman’s to “get through college” after being offered a spot from the waiting list of applicants.

“I thoroughly enjoyed learning more about the business and knowing what we do really makes a

difference in the communities we are a part of. Learning the ‘ins and outs’ of the grocery industry – as well as everything and everyone it takes to make it operate and run smoothly – you really have no idea,” Popp says. “Then, watching everything pull together to provide the service and the nutrition our guests are looking for is beyond rewarding. We are truly at the heart of our communities and being a part of that motivates me to continue supporting our teams for success.”

Popp stresses that she has been blessed by a team that has provided opportunities for her and is in support of her advancement. She also believes significant progress has been made as an industry to provide growth opportunities for females, but she’s often reminded there is still work to be done. “I do believe the industry as a whole is ready and hungry for providing support to women, but we need to continue to find ways to provide females the unique support they require, different from their male counterparts, to allow everyone to work together most effectively,” Popp says. “I often hear individuals say we need to support females, but I would challenge you to look within your organizations to see how you are actively doing that.”

In addition, Popp strongly believes in the importance of networking for all individuals in the industry, not just females. “Because there are fewer females in the industry, the ability to connect with others provides a safe space and the ability to develop connections with others who may be sharing similar experiences,” she says. “Learning, support, motivation, contributions, to name a few, are some of the keys to my success and much of that has come from the individuals I have met through networking events I have attended.”



She also sees many females in the grocery industry gravitate to the opportunities where they are most comfortable and may know someone else attending. “There are so many great options available if you are willing to take that leap into the uncomfortable – it truly will open so many doors if you are vulnerable enough to lean outside of your comfort zone,” Popp says. “The rewards of doing so have afforded me so much towards my development and my success.” The NGA Show is one such opportunity in which Popp has found a lot of value, as well as attending webinars, attending the Executive Leadership Development Program at Cornell University, and participating in some personal professional coaching.

“I think it is important to determine your values and priorities and intentionally invest your time, which is so limited, in ways that align,” says Popp, who also has the privilege of leading the Women Grocers of America organization and feels they have made great leaps in support of females at all levels within the industry.

“We have moved the organization to what was once more of a social club to a now professional network of females in independent grocery,” Popp says. From highlighting a woman of the year and scholarships to

monthly education opportunities and network groups for both executive females and one for emerging females in the industry, Women Grocers of America are continuing to create and build ways to attract, retain and support females through their careers in independent grocery.

She also recently participated in the National Grocers Association (NGA) Fly-in For Fair Competition where she participated in visits on Capitol Hill with representatives in Washington, DC to discuss current matters affecting the independent grocery industry.

“It was a very impactful experience and one I would recommend to others,” Popp says. “I learned so much during the event and had the ability to connect with key leaders who can have a meaningful impact on relevant topics.”

In the broader community, Popp has been instrumental in bringing the “Girls on the Run” program

“The ability to have an impact or influence on our future leaders is beyond rewarding and inspires me to continue making a difference.”

to her local school district, a program that inspires young girls of all abilities to recognize their individual strengths while building a sense of connection in a team setting.

"The ability to have an impact or influence on our future leaders is beyond rewarding and inspires me to continue making a difference. You never know how you impact or influence someone and being a role model and cheerleader for our next generation is important to me," Popp says. "I want my daughters to grow up with limitless opportunities and helping guide our youth down that path is a passion."



FOLLOWING HER PASSIONS

When **Tegan Counihan** was three years old, her parents purchased their first grocery store. As moms and dads often do, Counihan was told she could "do anything she wanted" when she grew up, but her passion always came back to grocery.

"I continued working for them and learning the industry until 2016 when I purchased my first location in Lodi, Wisconsin from my parents," she says. Today, Counihan is in business with her sister, Tanya Haessly, and brother-in-law, Bryce Haessly. They now own four locations in the Madison area (Poynette, Lodi, Waunakee, and Belleville).



In her long-term industry experience, Counihan sees the industry opening more to women, however it is still a very male-dominated industry at the top. "We work hard in our organization to make sure we offer opportunities to everyone and work with our team to promote from within," Counihan says. "We have a 50/50 split for store managers - half women, half men."

In addition to taking several classes on marketing, leadership, and entrepreneurship, Counihan participates in local networking events and holds board

positions at the Waunakee Chamber of Commerce and for the Piggly Wiggly Owners Association, of which she is the only female board member.

"I do not currently participate in networking events solely for women. While it is important to network with women, I also feel if we are asking for equality, we need to be present in networking events not typically regarded for women," Counihan says.

In addition, Counihan says that women in the industry also need to embrace leadership opportunities as they become available. Although Counihan sees more leadership opportunities surfacing for women, in a male-dominated industry women need a lot of encouragement to move forward at a higher level. "In our organization you see Tanya and I as the leaders, as well as Bryce. If you are a female looking to advance, you have a role model of what you can do, and what your career can become. I'm still growing, but I am a lot farther than I was 10, even five years ago," Counihan says. "Women are strong leaders, and we need to train as equal, we need to train as equals, if not more. Growing up, my mom would tell me 'The person next to you is just as good as you are. If you want to win, you'll need to work twice as hard.' That is true for women in these roles. We need to train hard and keep learning and training. Exceed expectations."

"Women are strong leaders, and we need to train as such. If we want to be seen as equal, we need to train as equals, if not more."

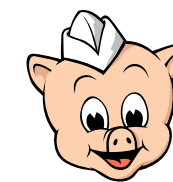
When not running several successful grocery stores and serving as a board member, Counihan embraces community service and political action opportunities throughout the community, including working with schools to create a career day and partnering with a few other local organizations on a mentoring program, as well as attending WGA's Grocers in the Capitol Days.

"I have loved my career in the industry - learning new things and the opportunity to lead others have been my biggest passions. The people I've helped. Leading with love," Counihan says. "I wanted many different careers when I was younger, being a grocery store owner fills quite a few of those callings. I am excited



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for the future because it is up to me. The work I put in it's my decision. The lessons I learn, it's my decision. The example I set it's my decision. The legacy I leave, it's my decision. We've come so far, but still have so far to go. That is the exciting part."



PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

Rachel Wohlfeil, who owns Piggly Wiggly in Watertown, WI together with her husband Brian, first embarked on a role in the grocery industry when she was 16 years old. After earning an accounting degree in college, Wohlfeil went on to work in various positions at Bed Bath & Beyond for the next 20 years. "When we found out that the Bed Bath & Beyond location that I was working at was going to close, the opportunity came about to purchase the Piggly Wiggly. So, I embarked on that journey with my husband," Wohlfeil says.



From her experience, Wohlfeil sees women as very prevalent and relied on in the grocery industry.

"I have seen the management of retail stores evolve from just a few women in management positions to quite a bit more," Wohlfeil says. "As for further advancements, women need to keep showing that

they are capable and striving to be their best in any career path they are taking."

Having a work-life balance can be challenging for women, who often juggle work and family responsibilities. This balance has always been important to Wohlfeil and her husband.

"I have been blessed to work at two jobs that have been great about working around the hectic schedule of my children's various activities," Wohlfeil says. "When I leave work, I am able to focus on my family. There is nothing work related that is more important than my family."

Wohlfeil has been in management positions and really

enjoys teaching and seeing other employees grow.

"I still see women succeeding and growing into top management positions and I think that is great," Wohlfeil says. "We have a few women in the store now that have stepped up to the plate in their management positions and want to keep advancing. One of them is currently enrolled in the WGA Leadership Institute. I enjoy seeing these employees driven to be the best, and I want to do all that I can to help them succeed."

When not supporting her employees' professional growth, Wohlfeil also enjoys interacting with customers, connecting with the regular people who shop at the store and learning their names.

"Also, we have wonderful employees that work here, this is like a second family. I am looking forward to seeing the growth of our employees whether at the store or at another job," Wohlfeil says. "My husband and I want to provide an environment that shows employees that we genuinely care and want to see them succeed. I am also excited to see the growth of the community and to see how our involvement will positively impact those around us."



A STRONG ADVOCATE

In **Diane Guerrero's** role as executive director of business development at Associated Wholesale Grocers (AWG) in Kansas City, KS, her primary focus is to grow new business for AWG throughout the Midwest and South-Central United States.

"I began my career in the grocery business during high school and college, working on the retail side for Fleming and Supervalu." Since then, she has spent over 25 years working in a variety of capacities including general manager for Roundy Pick N Save' buyer procurement, promotion manager, category manager, retail business consultant for Supervalu; and business development manager, director, and executive director for AWG."



problem solving. These opportunities can range from operations management, finance, procurement, information systems, technology, sales, and marketing to executive leadership roles."

Guerrero sees networking opportunities as extremely important and an integral part of the overall success of women in the grocery industry.

As she explains, the networking opportunities specifically for women might be somewhat sparse, however networking in the industry as whole are extremely abundant and highly encouraged. Plenty of great people are willing to share, help and support eager talent.

"I have been fortunate to work in an industry that I love. The biggest benefit and most rewarding are the personal relationships developed along the way," Guerrero says. "My passion is working with independent stores, family owners and stakeholders in the business. I am enamored by their motivation, dedication and commitment to their businesses and families. Networking is key to developing these relationships."

In addition to networking, Guerrero is a very strong advocate for educational opportunities for women. In fact, "continuous improvement" is her motto.

"The valuable skills and knowledge learned from both formal institutions and industry-related educational



"Career advancement opportunities in the grocery industry are limitless as more and more women over the past few decades have moved forward in leadership positions," Guerrero says. "Women are exceeding expectations, adding fundamental value and strength, providing creative innovation for

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training are paramount," Guerrero says. "To me, this is what will set you apart from the top performers. Throughout my career I have always taken advantage of opportunities to take a class, sign up for a workshop, or learn a new role on the job. It keeps me motivated, relevant and growing. Be compassionate, conscientious, and courageous. Embrace technology, innovation, and continuous improvement in everything you do. Stay relevant, grow, and embrace the digital future."

Early on and throughout her career, Guerrero has always gravitated to management opportunities, starting out at a very young age as department manager and moving quickly to operations management and general manager. She has held a variety of management and leadership roles ever since.

"I have been very fortunate to work under many strong leaders throughout my career and am especially grateful for these opportunities," Guerrero says. "The leadership opportunities for women are abundant and limitless - ranging from operations management, finance, procurement, information systems,

technology, sales and marketing to executive leadership roles.”

Representing regional markets has provided Guerrero with opportunities in government affairs through several state associations; trying to make a difference with common causes and political issues impacting both the retailer families and the local communities. She is currently on the board for Wisconsin Grocers Association and active participation in affiliations with IFRA, IRMA and IGIA.

“Working with the state associations has provided me opportunities in government affairs, impacting and trying to make a difference in political issues affecting both grocery retailers and wholesalers,” Guerrero

says. “Political representatives do not always realize the ramifications of rulings and laws on local businesses. We need more industry advocates on both the state and local levels.”

Guerrero is also enamored with advancing technology as it continues to evolve and change the way the industry goes to market.

“Advanced technology provides better tools with improved data to make better decisions,” Guerrero says. “Technology and advanced automation have reduced expenses and improved efficiencies through the entire supply chain. I look forward to working and seeing future benefits and possibilities on the horizon.”



A Discussion with NGA Chairman and Sendik's Owner, Ted Balistreri

Recently, the family celebrated the life of Ted (Salvatore) Francis Balistreri, father of Ted, Nick, Patrick, and Margaret (Soda). “Dad was affectionate and had a great attention to detail through years of working. He had such a vast amount of experience,” according to CEO Ted Balistreri.

A commitment to quality and service has been the hallmark of Sendik's for 97 years, and the future looks bright. Opening in 1926, Sendik's has been a prominent grocery store to all those in the Milwaukee area. The Sendik's brand, highlighted by the recognizable red bag, has developed a loyal following in all 18 stores. Throughout the highs and lows of the business, the Balistreri family has been the cornerstone and the driver of the independent, community-focused grocery chain.

The family's dedication to service with a high degree of detail continued when Ted was asked to serve on the National Grocers Association (NGA) Board of Directors 15 years ago and he is now serving in his second year as NGA's Chairman. Wisconsin Grocers Magazine contributor, Lauren Barnes, sat down with Ted to discuss what it's like running a family business, key drivers in the grocery industry, and about his experience as Chairman.



Wisconsin Grocers Association: What was the process to becoming the NGA Chairman?

Ted Balistreri: About 15 years ago, I was asked by then President and CEO of the NGA, Peter Larkin, to serve on the NGA Board of Directors. At some point, he asked if I would serve in an executive board position. Three years ago, I was asked by the current President and CEO of NGA, Greg Ferrara, to serve in the capacity of Vice Chair and that position leads to the Board Chair position. I am currently serving the second year of a two-year term. Coming off of the pandemic years, it is great to see the industry getting back together. The NGA Show in Las Vegas last February had a near record attendance. In Washington, NGA is dealing with some very significant political and regulatory issues related to the health of the independent grocery sector. Working alongside other independent, family-run grocers and getting a chance to tell our story has been very gratifying.

a committed staff whose sole focus is to advocate for the best interest of independent grocers. My main contribution is providing strategic vision for the organization and advocacy might. Generally speaking, politicians like to hear the experience of community businesses like ours versus industry lobbyists.



WGA: What are some of your day-to-day duties?

TB: We are fortunate the NGA is a very well-run professional organization with



WGA: Do you have the chance to travel in this position? Where is your favorite place to go?

TB: I travel three or four times a year for this position. I always enjoy going to Washington, DC. I don't care how many times I have been there, being present at our nation's capital and seeing all the monuments is always exhilarating. I have had the opportunity to visit historic places and get a behind the scenes look at the inner workings of how laws are made.

WGA: How are you enjoying being Chairman?

TB: It is a great honor to serve in this capacity helping, what I believe to be, the most fascinating segment of the food distribution business. Independent, family-owned grocers are the most down to earth, innovative and entrepreneurial business people I know. We care deeply about our team members and our communities. To hold the position of Board Chair of the organization whose sole focus is to advocate for this segment of the industry is humbling and a professional highlight.

WGA: What is your vision for the NGA?

TB: We are currently in the middle of a strategic planning process for the organization. I would like us to continue growing and strengthening our membership. At the same time, we must continue our work



advocating for a level playing field with our bigger, well-funded, competitors in order to keep family-owned grocers in our communities. Our work advocating for enforcement of antitrust laws is critical to our efforts. What is so interesting about this effort is that no one is arguing that big chains have not violated the law.

WGA: Looking at Sendik's, what are some key factors to running a closely held, family run business?

TB: I believe that one of the most important factors to running a family business is alignment of the family on the key issues of growth, commitment, and management philosophy. Businesses, family or otherwise, that do not have alignment on these key areas will have a difficult time being successful.

WGA: How would you describe the ideal company culture and what you are trying to accomplish at Sendik's?

TB: I believe the ideal company culture is based on shared values that promote trust and teamwork. The culture has to rally around a shared belief that we are all in this together working toward the same goal. This requires a great deal of humility by the company leaders and a great deal of commitment from all team members.

WGA: How do you all contribute to keeping and improving the company culture?

TB: Culture is like the invisible hand in your organization that tells team members how to act when management is not present. We contribute to keeping and improving our culture by constantly enforcing our values and core expectations at the individual team member level. This allows team members to really understand the business and what we all need to do and how we need to behave to be successful.

WGA: Where do you see the Wisconsin grocery industry going?

TB: Wisconsin is blessed to have a very healthy



independent grocery sector. We must continue to support and advocate for the policies and initiatives that keep family grocers in our communities.

WGA: What are the key drivers of the grocery industry right now?

TB: Lately, the operational drivers of business have been changing rapidly due to the pandemic. Luckily, it appears that supply chain issues are getting back to normal. We are now dealing with inflation and labor availability. I suspect these issues will sort themselves out in the next 12 to 24 months.

WGA: Has the rate of change accelerated?

TB: Most definitely. The pandemic forced change to happen at a very fast rate.



WGA: Are there any specific lessons you learned from your dad?

TB: One of the big lessons we learned from him is that change is a constant. You have to continue to reinvent yourself, what you're doing, and how you are going to market. I use the example that he would be done with one remodel of the store and then start the next one almost right after he finished the most recent one. I think the lesson there was to keep

investing in the business constantly. So even when you think you can't afford it you have to keep pressing ahead and keep making those changes. That was a huge lesson we learned from him.



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Three digestible bites to grow daily dietary fiber intake



Written exclusively for the Wisconsin Grocer Magazine by Emilie Williamson, RD, CD and Corporate Affairs Manager for Roundy's Supermarkets



As shopping habits change, Wisconsin grocers are ready, providing solutions for food away from home (FAFH) and traditional food at home (FAH). A recent USDA report, "Dietary Quality by Food Source and Demographics in the United States, 1977 - 2018," highlights there may be nutrient gaps, specifically in fiber. Addressing the fiber gap are three Wisconsin nutrition experts who share their tips on how to increase this important nutrient in your dietary intake.

"Fiber is a type of carbohydrate found in plants (fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes) that our body cannot digest or absorb" said Aryn DeGrave, MS, RD, CLC, CD and corporate registered dietitian for Hy-Vee grocery stores.

"For example, peach skins, strawberry seeds, or the skin of beans.



Fiber is essential for our body to process waste and plays many important roles."

"In general, it can help maintain digestive health, regulate blood glucose (sugar) levels and keep you feeling satiated throughout the day" added Casey Wing, RDN, CD and Digital Content Specialist for Skogen's Festival Foods.

The USDA recommends 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 Calories, which FAH is lagging with 8.4 grams and FAFH is less than half at 6.87 grams. To quantify, Wing notes that one cup of raspberries contains a whopping eight grams of fiber, double that of a cup of oatmeal.



First Bite - Make a Plan:

"After you've done your grocery shopping, make it a point to do all your produce prep-work before putting it away. If you like to have vegetable sticks available for a quick snack, plan to wash, peel, chop, and store those veggies in a sealable container. This will save you time and energy throughout the week. If you'd rather not do the prep-work, pick up Hy-Vee Short Cuts for a pre-washed and cut-up fruit or vegetable option," shares DeGrave.



Becky Kerkenbush, MS, RD-AP, CSG, CD, FAND and Past-President of the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics suggests stocking your pantry with high fiber meal-ready staples, including whole grain pasta, brown or wild rice, quinoa, lentils, beans, and legumes (dried or canned). Including snacks: popcorn, nuts, seeds, and hummus with whole grain crackers.



Second Bite - Ready for the Road:

"Produce items that are inherently on the go and offer a good amount of fiber too, include apples, bananas and oranges," said Wing, "Others, like berries, carrots, broccoli, and cucumber only require a little preparation."



"Whether you're going on a day trip with the family or packing a lunch for work, consider investing in a good lunch box or cooler and ice pack," said DeGrave, "This will increase the likelihood of eating what you've packed, decrease food waste, and increase the nutrient density of your meals. For day trips, I pack mini cucumbers and carrot sticks to pair with my cheese curds as an easy fiber-rich car snack."



Third Bite - Find, Celebrate, and add more:

Kerkenbush highlights canned pumpkin, avocado, flax seed, and popcorn as lesser-known sources of fiber and can be part of, served on top of or as snacks.



Swapping and topping! DeGrave suggests whole-wheat buns and Beanitos (for tortilla chips) for tailgates. Along with vegetable toppings for burgers, cowboy avocado salsa (or bean dip) with chips, and a veggie tray with your favorite dip.

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to highlight talented nutritional professionals (and WGA members) in Wisconsin. They help bring nutrition to the forefront and, by following their knowledgeable advice, you will have a positive impact on your long-term health with only a few small changes.

Contributors



Aryn DeGrave, MS, RD, CLC, CD and corporate registered dietitian for Hy-Vee grocery stores.



Becky Kerkenbush, MS, RD-AP, CSG, CD, FAND and Past-President of the Wisconsin Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



Casey Wing, RDN, CD and Digital Content Specialist for Skogen's Festival Foods.



A NEW COURSE FOR A DAY OF PLAY

Take a quick look at what happened this year at the Northern Golf Outing

By WGA Marketing and Events Coordinator, Lauren Barnes

The Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA) kicked off the summer by hosting the Northern Golf Outing. Eighty-five golfers came out to play at Stevens Point Country Club (SPCC), a first-time course for the WGA. Kicking off the day Brandon Scholz and WGA Chairman Jim Hyland announced the Altria Big Putt and Nate Weitz from Trig's ended up closest to the pin. The golfers were ready to play and SPCC Golf Pro Andrew Krugler sent them golfing at 10 am.

We were lucky to have a bright and sunny day with little cloud cover. Players were able to take a chance at a Hole-in-One on two holes, but closest to the pin was the best shot. Krugler set up plenty of hole challenges for our golfers to take a chance at winning. The SPCC course had its fair share of traps, water hazards, and bends to challenge the players. The outing also saw the return of Federated Insurance's "Beat the Pro" with Tommy Lucca.

Out on the course golfers found vendors sampling their products, like Brew Pub Pizza, Crazy Fresh/Russ Davis Wholesale, Gumz Farms, Kemps, Old Dutch, and Plethora Trading LLC. Coolers were also set up across the course with beverages from Reyes Coca-Cola, Molson Coors, and Anheuser-Busch.

After the golfers completed their round, they were welcomed to the air-conditioned bar and dining area. Players had the chance to try their luck at Prairie Farms Joker Poker. Dinner was served buffet style thanks to Lipari, Plethora Trading LLC., and Russ Davis Wholesale. WGA President Brandon Scholz finished the day by announcing all the winners from the giveaways. The grand prize winner of the trip to Appleton for the Innovation Expo from Zone Mechanical was Chris Rosi from Vizance. Thanks to Krueger Wholesale Florist, everyone was able to bring some roses home with them.



For team photos, go to the WGA website <https://wisconsin-grocers.com/northern-golf-outing/>. Use password: Golf2023

The full recap of the Northern and Southern Golf Outings will be in the Fall/EXPO issue of the Wisconsin Grocer Magazine.

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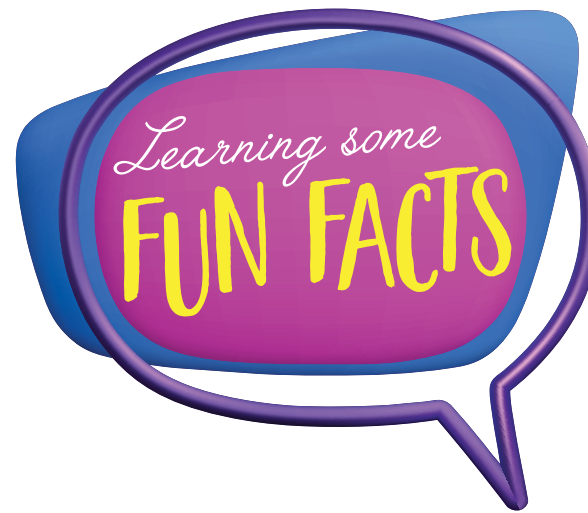
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Opinion Leaders are learning more about the Grocery Industry

Written by WGA Marketing and Events Coordinator, Lauren Barnes

Grocers are important to every community; we want to make sure opinion leaders know that. That is why we started a bi-weekly newsletter to all Wisconsin opinion leaders, Fun Facts. Fun Facts was created to help educate opinion leaders about the grocery industry. Each newsletter is a quick and easily digestible piece about the grocery industry. Each fact is packaged into an infographic. To accompany the graphic are links to learn more about the topic.

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THE HISTORY OF BRAT FEST

1983
Tom and Margaret Metcalfe wanted to show their appreciation to their customers. They set up a grill in the parking lot and started selling Brats for 50¢ every Memorial Day weekend.
Tom Metcalfe (1955-2006)

Volunteers for Charity
As attendance grew for Brat Fest the Metcalfe's needed more help. They started a volunteer program where an organization could volunteer and part of the proceeds would go to their charity.

1999
After selling 35,000 brats Tom asked his supplier what they thought. They replied "well, that's more than Oktoberfest, more than Brat Days, and more than County Stadium... we think you're the World's Largest Brat Fest". Then the name was born.

2004 - Breaking the World Record
Right in their parking lot at Hilldale they broke the record by selling 189,432.

2005 - Today
Realizing they needed more space the Metcalfes moved the World's Largest Brat Fest to Willow Island at the Alliant Energy Center. Now the 3-day weekend event includes free music and plenty of activities.
Amanda, Tim, and Kevin Metcalfe

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Name-Brand v.s. Store-Brand

What are the differences between Store-Brands (aka Private Labels, Generic) and Name-Brand products? How are shoppers deciding what to buy?

Most major food manufactures are creating products for multiple brands.

Some shoppers may think that there is a loss of nutritional value when choosing a store-brand but the ingredients are almost identical.

On average store-brands cost 40% less compared to their name-brand counterparts with some products even providing a larger quantity.

During the pandemic most shoppers were purchasing "trusted name-brands", but now with rising costs shoppers are switching back to store-brand.

73% of consumers will stick with store-brand products when the economy cools down. Only 9% say they will switch back to name-brand.

There are two product categories where shoppers are sticking to name-brand, pet food/treats and alcoholic beverages.

"Of the 70 store-brand products in our test, 76 percent tasted just as good as the name brand." - Amy Keating, RD

We have sent out facts about the Ocado robot system being used in Kroger's delivery system, the History of BratFest, how credit card swipe fees affect grocers, and Name-brand vs Store-brand.

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 Kwik Trip, LaCrosse

August 15th



WGA Board Meeting
 Center For Dairy Research, Madison

September 20th



**WGA Foundation
 Leadership Institute**
 StoreMasters, Pewaukee

October
 17th & 18th



WGA Innovation EXPO
 Hilton Appleton Paper Valley/FCEC

December 6th



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 Location TBD



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Around the State



Lauren Barnes,
Marketing & Event Coordinator

Member HAPPENINGS

Rising to the Ranks of Ownership - A long-time employee takes on ownership to build on BPI's long-standing legacy.

Steve Mueller and Pat Feely have been at the helm of BPI for more than 30 years. They've built a company that has become an industry leader in its field, and they're proud of what has been accomplished



as a team. It is important for both of them to communicate their gratitude to their customers. Clint Tornow is the new owner and President of BPI. Matt Bennett was promoted to VP of Operations.

Happy 60th Anniversary!

Lipari Foods CEO Thom Lipari and President and COO John Pawlowski

took a moment to celebrate Lipari's 60th anniversary. The company, which was started by Thom Lipari's father, the late Vincent "Jim" Lipari, is an independent "perimeter of the store" distributor, delivering a wide range of quality bakery, deli, packaging, seafood, meat, specialty grocery, international specialty, foodservice, confectionary and convenience food and

beverage products to more than 11,000 customers in 28 states. The business remains family-oriented, with Thom Lipari's three sons involved in different departments. Jimmy Lipari is SVP in charge of category management; Chris Lipari, VP of sales, is based in the Chicago area; and Matt Lipari is VP of financial planning and analysis. Thom Lipari's sister, Lori, joined the company in 1974 and serves as an EVP. Lipari is a WGA member and has been a long-time support. Over the years, Don Symonds and Nick Lenzi served on the WGA Board, and now, Marissa Smoyer, VP of Events serves on the WGA Board of Directors.

97 Years In The Grocery Business

If you visited a Sendik's store in May you would have found everyone celebrating. Tom Balistreri opened the first Sendik's fruit and vegetable market in 1926. Next was their 1st flagship store in Whitefish Bay in 1949 that expanded into groceries, dairy, deli, bakery, and wine and spirits in 1975. Now siblings Ted, Patrick, Nick, and Margaret are the 3rd Generation of the family to run Sendik's and run 18 stores.

Congrats on 97 years!



Grocers in the COMMUNITY

Jahnkes Receives Award for Supporting Fire Department

Beaver Dam Fire Chief Michael Wesle recently presented Jan and Dan Jahnke, owners of Jahnke's Piggly Wiggly in Juneau, with the "Lifetime Honorary Members" award for their continued support of the Beaver Dam Fire Department. On September 8th, 2022, they donated \$10,00 from an August register round-up, brat fry and silent auction, for a dive team communications system.



PAW-some! Sendik's Food Market's first animal welfare campaign was a PAWS-some success!

Sendik's guests rounded up their totals at the registers, bought crazy straws, and bought their favorite pet supplies to help our furry friends at local humane societies. Cause for Paws raised over \$42,000 in just six weeks! Their post on Facebook: Big thanks to the Wisconsin Humane Society, Humane Animal Welfare Society - HAWS of Waukesha, and the Washington County Humane Society for swinging by every store in their county over the course of the campaign to educate our guests on the adoption process.



Roundup Recap in Watertown

The Watertown Piggly Wiggly held multiple roundups resulting in \$7,800 donated! The roundup money was donated to three organizations: Watertown Breadbasket Food Pantry, Jefferson County Human Services, and Watertown, WI Police Department D.A.R.E Program. **Nice job on the roundups!**



Pictured Left to Right: Misty Grommish, Amy Hanson, Brian and Rachel Wohlfeil



Pictured left to right: Rachel and Brian Wohlfeil and Stacy Schroeder



Pictured left to right: Brian Wohlfeil, Nikole Blomquist, Eliza White-Pentony, Taylor Schultz, and Darcy Lalimo

Store HAPPENINGS

New Store!

New Store Coming!

South Madison residents could be shopping in a new, full service 24,000-sq. ft. grocery store by the end of 2023. The City of Madison has reached an agreement with Kristie Maurer to open her new store, Maurer's Urban Market, located in the new building currently under construction at the corner of South Park Street and Cedar Street. The grocery store will be the anchor commercial tenant in the \$42 million, six story redevelopment.



Maurer's Urban Market says it will provide everyday staples, plus offer a large selection of fresh produce, meat and seafood, and a robust deli/bakery.

"As a second-generation grocer, I am beyond excited to be branching out on my own and creating a local, woman-owned grocery store. I would like to thank the City of Madison and the Rule/Movin' Out team for their diligence and commitment to this project. I cannot wait to design and create a store that represents the neighborhood and my passion for food. I love the fact that this store will help bring healthy food options to the neighborhood and inspire a generation of healthy living," said Kristie Maurer.

Store Sold!



Congrats to Mike "Sal" Sarvello on the acquisition of Freedom Food's in Freedom, WI from Larry and Ginny Westenberg. This new location becomes the fourth Sal's Food's

location supplied by SpartanNash in Menominee, MI. Sal's Food's other locations are in: Black Creek, WI, Wausaukee, WI and Green Bay, WI. Congrats to Larry and Ginny on the sale. After thirty-five years owning the store, Larry will be easing into retirement while he continues to serve as the store's meat cutter.

Kewaskum Pig Changes Hands On February 26th

Aaron and Amy Laatsch's officially took over ownership of their local Piggly Wiggly. Prior to being named

owner, Aaron Laatsch was a longtime manager of the store and worked in what has been the family business. "I just wanted to thank everyone for coming today. It's a very important day for us and for our family to keep our tradition going for almost 150 years in business. Prior to the Laatsch family taking



over the Piggly Wiggly, it was owned by Aaron's cousin Mike Geidel. Both Aaron and Mike can trace their lineage to Nicolas Marx who opened a grocery store and saloon in Kewaskum in 1876. In 1976 Harold and Eleanor Marx sold the business to their daughter Judy and her husband Bill Geidel (Mike's father). "I want to thank Mike Geidel for helping make this such a smooth transition," added Laatsch. "And for all the leadership he's shown us over the years to prepare us for this moment." Altogether, Aaron and Amy's ownership keeps alive a five-generation family tradition (from Marx to Geidel to Laatsch).



Stores Sold, New Banners Coming
Hansen's IGA Market is pleased to announce that

Frank's Piggly Wiggly stores in Elkhorn and East Troy will be joining the Hansen's IGA Market family. "The new locations have a lot to offer, but our dedication to customer service will remain the same," says Nick Hansen. "This expansion will allow us to continue to serve the citizens of Elkhorn and East Troy and the surrounding communities with quality products, friendly employees, and community involvement". "We are completely committed to being a strong, locally run independent grocer in the Elkhorn and East Troy area," Greg Hansen said. "The Elkhorn and East Troy locations will allow our entire organization to expand and give us the opportunity to provide even more quality products, value, personal service, and convenient locations to all customers." Hansen's IGA Market currently operates twelve grocery stores.

Work ANNIVERSARIES

146 Years!



Pictured left to right: Steve Palmer, Heidi Kraemer, Jake Swanson, Nick Brock and Jeremiah Falck, Not pictured: Ron Brock

146 Years!

Badger Inventory is celebrating their collective team's work anniversaries in March! This is what 146 total years of experience in the inventory business looks like! Badger Inventory Service, a long time WGA member has provided high quality inventory services to retailers in Wisconsin and Northern Illinois since 1986 when Badger Inventory Service was formed Ron Brock and Steve Simer.

42 Years!



42 Years!

Congrats to Larry Alsum, Owner and CEO celebrating 42 years at Alsum Farms & Produce. Larry's role has evolved over the years. When Larry first started, he bought and sold produce. Once CEO, he stayed involved in the farm operations and coordinated the supply of potatoes from the network of farmers in Wisconsin and around the U.S. to ensure a steady supply of produce to pack and sell. He also enjoyed the various building projects at the Friesland packing shed and farm operations at Arena and Grand Marsh.



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