

Alabama Grocer

A PERFECT STORM
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EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE
PAGE 22

2022, ISSUE 1

ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

SUPPLY CHAIN SHORTAGE



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Not all independent grocers are going out of business.
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FEATURES



Labor, Supply, and a Pandemic Create a Perfect Storm

As grocers grapple with major obstacles, tech could be a bright spot.



Keynote Perspective: How to Leverage Emotional Intelligence for Daily Success

Global keynote speaker and media personality Rich Bracken’s top five tips to increase emotional intelligence every day.

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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2022 ALABAMA ECONOMIC OUTLOOK



Ellie Smotherman Taylor
President
Alabama Grocers Association

THE OVERALL STATE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR ALABAMA IN 2022 LOOKS VERY PROMISING.

Governor Kay Ivey has sent lawmakers a proposed \$2.7 billion General Fund budget and \$8.3 billion Education Trust Fund budget. That's an increase of \$300 million in the General Fund and \$627 million in the Education Trust Fund. For the 2021 fiscal year, revenues in the General Fund grew by 11.4% and 16.4% for the Education Trust Fund. It is estimated that revenue is expected to grow another 3% overall. The Governor has now called a Special Session beginning Wednesday, January 19 to handle the task of appropriating the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. It is expected that these funds will be used for pandemic-related healthcare costs, the expansion of broadband network access, water and sewer projects and to provide taxpayer relief to companies by replenishing the Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund. Look for legislative updates

each week in your Market Minute or on the Association App.

Don't forget that 2022 is an election year. All executive offices as well as all seats in the Alabama House and Senate are up for reelection. The AGA Board will make endorsements and recommendations prior to the primary run off elections that will be sent to all members. Our political action fund, SACK PAC has already given contributions of over \$88,000 to pro-business candidates up for election in November.

In a huge win for U.S. businesses, on Thursday, January 13th, the U.S. Supreme Court halted the OSHA ETS mandate for employers with 100 employees or more. The 6-3 decision by the Court in *NFIB v. OSHA* enjoins the Administration from taking further steps to implement or enforce the

OSHA ETS. There were so many issues with this regulation including the substantial cost for employers. The Association had been in talks with Dr. Scott Harris, ADPH State Health Officer and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management on the fact that at-home COVID tests administered at the office or place of employment were considered under law as medical waste. This would have been a huge burden for businesses, and we hope this will not be an issue in the future.

Another piece of good news for grocers is that the Federal Health Emergency has been extended until April 15, 2022. This means that government pandemic benefits such as P-SNAP will continue until at least May. For the state's fiscal year which runs October 1 – September 30, a total of 373,816 households and \$1,994,894,851.00 in SNAP benefits were given in the state of Alabama. This averages over \$190 million per month.



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The Voice of the Grocery Industry

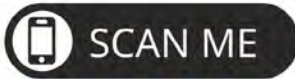
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Even with all the good financial news, as I talk to grocers all over the state, there are still significant issues due to the pandemic. Supply chain issues and labor shortages are the two of utmost concern. We continue to work with government and business entities to try to help our members on these issues and will have some educational

opportunities throughout the year. In a Brick Meets Click/Mercatus Grocery Shopping Survey, they estimate the 2021 U.S. Online Grocery Sales Total was nearly \$98 billion, which includes curbside and online delivery. We hope with legislation like our Alcohol Home Delivery Bill that was passed in 2021, we can continue to help our grocers

remain competitive in the market. Happy 2022 to all of you! Please do not hesitate to give us a call with any questions or concerns.

Best Regards,
Ellie



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ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR



Harold Garrett
Association Chairman
Gateway Foods

A LITTLE LATE I KNOW, BUT WHAT THE HECK?

I've heard it said that the best soldiers get the toughest battles and looking back on what our industry has had to battle over the last couple of years, I can see that is a true statement. The grocery industry has fought so many battles with COVID-19, regulation changes, labor issues, and cost increases just to name a few, and we're still standing! Goodbye 2021.

Here's to kicking off a great 2022! Your association has many events planned; the schedule looks like this:

- AGEF Spring Golf Outing on April 7th at Inverness Country Club
- AGA Annual Convention, July 24-27th in Sandestin
- AGEF Fall Clay Shoot on October 13th at Selwood Farms
- Alabama Food Industry Finest Luncheon on October 27th at The Club

You can stay informed on these events and all things AGA through the AGA Communities App. If you have not already done so, please download the AGA App as it is very useful in staying up to date on what is going on in our industry and within the Association.

We have announced the 2022 Year Award Winners. These awards are given each year to deserving individuals and, in this month's, magazine is a page on each winner. We will honor our Year Award Winners at the Food Industry Finest Luncheon on October 27th at The Club in Birmingham. I am humbled and honored that the membership selected me to be the Retailer of the Year for 2022. Thank you! I would like to say Congratulations to Mr. Frank D'Amico, III of BTC Wholesale Distributors for being elected the 2022 Wholesaler of the Year and Mr. Chris

Crosby of UTZ Snacks/Golden Flake for being elected as the 2022 Vendor of the Year. Both of these gentlemen have been in the business a very long time and I am honored to be receiving the awards with them.

I would also like to say a special congratulations to our President, Mrs. Ellie Taylor for being a finalist for the BBJ CEO of the Year Award! She was celebrated for all her hard work on December 9th, and we could not be prouder to have her as our President!

2021 brought us 17 new members. Let's get to know them and welcome them to the AGA Family - we are super happy to have them join. I am always proud to hear folks talk about how much they enjoy being part of such a great Association. In my opinion, we have one of the best Associations in the nation and they are always working on our behalf. As you do business with other grocery companies, encourage them to get involved with AGA. It makes a



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

difference!

Moving forward in 2022, we want to take time to recognize our member companies' successes. If you have a special event planned, new store opening, company anniversary or

special event inside your store or company, please let Katie Hunt know. She can recognize the event on our many Social Media Platforms. You can email the information to khunt@alabamagrocers.org.

Thanks again for all your support and we look forward to an exciting 2022!

Harold Garrett

JOIN US FOR THE 2022 AGA CONVENTION



**Sandestin
Golf & Beach Resort
July 24 - 26, 2022**

Look for the AGA 2022 Convention Brochures in your Inbox and Mailbox soon!

We hope you will make plans to join us for the 2022 AGA Convention in Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort on July 24-26. To book your exhibit booth at the early bird price before February 15th or to get more information, please email jbrown@alabamagrocers.org.



VIEWPOINT

THE LESSONS FROM 20 YEARS OF MORNINGNEWSBEAT.COM



KEVIN COUPE
FOUNDER, MORNINGNEWSBEAT.COM

NEVER SPIN A STORY. VALUE VALUES. LEARN.

I recently had the opportunity to celebrate the 20th anniversary of what I like to call my day job – MorningNewsBeat.com, which I launched in late November 2001.

I'm normally not the most introspective of people, but this occasion – the longest job I've ever held by a factor of more than six, probably because I have an in with the boss – did make me think about the changes I've seen during MNB's existence, and some of the thing I've learned.

First of all, let me make one thing clear – I'm no guru, make no claim to be any sort of futurist, and when I've gotten things right, it often has been as much luck as perception. Most of all, I think I'm a reasonably good guesser, and a halfway decent writer, the combination of which has made MNB a pretty long-lasting blog, at least by blogging standards, such as they are.

That's one change, by the way. When I started MNB, I never called it a "blog" because the age of my readership was advanced enough that they wouldn't think of reading a blog. An "online newsletter," though? That they would read, and, luckily enough, did. But these days, reading blogs and listening to podcasts and watching online videos isn't reserved for the young, and so I can call MNB what it is.

That's a pretty good business lesson, whether you happen to be in your business or mine – don't be hemmed in by other people's definitions of what you are and what you do. Just do it, and believe that definitions don't matter. Value and values, however, do.

Can I tell you a quick story that illustrates another business lesson from the past two decades? (I'll take that as a "yes.")

Early on, I was visiting a senior industry executive who, despite his advanced years (he probably was a decade younger than I am now) seemed to like MNB, even if he didn't really understand the form.

"Can I make one suggestion," he said.

"Sure," I said.

"I like the way it looks, but I think it would be even more impressive in color."

"Can I make a suggestion," I said.

"Sure," he said.

"Maybe you ought to have your secretary print it out for you on a color printer."

(Note to younger readers: In the early days of this century, not everyone had color printers, hard as that is to believe. Not long before that, not everybody had color

televisions. In fact, not everybody *owned* a television. If you don't believe me, go online and check it out.)

He was gobsmacked. It never occurred to him that there was actually a filter getting in between my sending the message and him receiving it. (It also never had occurred to me.) But that was a great lesson for business leaders – never assume that your message is being received in the same way that you're sending it, whether to employees or customers. There always are filters and preconceptions and misconceptions to deal with, and the person telling the story/crafting the narrative in the end has the responsibility for making sure it comes through clearly and accurately.

This is, by the way, one of the reasons I've been radically pro-transparency since the first editions of MNB. I just believe that it is when companies try to "spin" a story that they get in trouble, and that it almost always makes sense to get in front of a story rather than be seen as just reacting to it defensively.

It is why, as out-of-stocks have plagued the industry, I've argued consistently that retailers actually can turn the problem into an opportunity. Instead of trying to cover up empty shelves or leaving them bare when products don't come in, take advantage of



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the moment and use something like a QR code to allow shoppers to give you their name, phone number, email address and the name of the product they want that is not available. Then, when the product comes in, let them know, and maybe even put some aside for them. When I mentioned this idea on MNB, I got flooded with email telling me that this cumbersome, impossible, impractical, and what the hell did I know about retailing anyhow.

All of which may be valid, except that in finding reasons not to do something, people were ignoring the fact that by doing it, they would create stronger bonds with customers at a time when such connections are invaluable.

A third business lesson, if I may...

One of the things that really amazed me as I looked back on MNB's beginnings was the fact that I launched it more than five years before Steve Jobs announced the creation of the iPhone, a device that, I think it is fair to say, revolutionized both computing and communication. I have trouble remembering a time before smart phones, and for most of our kids, smart phone DNA is pretty much intertwined with their own genetic makeup.

“NEVER ASSUME THAT YOUR MESSAGE IS BEING RECEIVED IN THE SAME WAY THAT YOU’RE SENDING IT.”

About a month before I wrote the first edition of MNB, Jobs had an equally impressive unveiling – the iPod. Again, I think it is fair to say that the iPod revolutionized the way people consume content.

Sometime after that, I happened to be in Europe speaking at a retail technology conference, and I had with me a first generation iPod. I remember holding it up and describing how it offered a consumption-on-my-terms experience, and saying, “I’m not sure how, and I’m not sure when, but I’m pretty sure that this technology eventually is going to affect how we all do business.”

Got that one right. Like I said above, I’m a reasonably good guesser. I had no great insights, but some decent instincts.

In the end, the lesson here is to be open to the possibility that everything we know to be true, to be real, to be of-the-moment, can in very short order be proven to be obsolete. Seemingly disconnected innovations and trends can actually train a spotlight on needed change within even an entrenched industry and successful companies.

Sometimes it is simply a matter of definitions and imagination. And sometimes it is a matter of technology (even if it is as simple as a color printer).

But always ... *always* ... it is a matter of being willing to continually, consistently, learn.

Which is why, when I think about what I’ve learned over the past 20 years, what really gets me excited is what I’m going to learn during the *next* 20. ■



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

IT IS AN ELECTION YEAR



Patrick McWhorter
Association Lobbyist
The McWhorter Group

AS REQUIRED DURING AN ELECTION YEAR, THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE BEGINS THE 2022 SESSION EARLY.

Members will gather and begin legislating next Tuesday, January 11th and can continue to the end of April. But several of their leaders have indicated a keen interest in leaving as early as possible, since the first Primary election will be held May 24th. All 140 members of the Legislature will stand for election in 2022, along with the Governor and all other constitutional officers, congressional members, etc.

Budgets will be the primary issue for this session. Their only constitutionally mandated duty is to provide budgets for state spending, and this will be a good year for them. First on the docket will be decisions on how to spend more than \$1.5 billion in pandemic relief funds, and according to Alabama Daily News, legislative leaders say infrastructure projects — such as broadband and sewer projects — are expected to be a

spending priority.

Congress allocated \$2.12 billion for Alabama through the American Rescue Plan. The state received the first half of that money in June 2021 and has \$580 million remaining after steering \$80 million to hospitals and nursing homes and \$400 million on the prison construction plan.

The state will receive the second \$1.060 billion in May or June of this year, after the regular legislative session is finished. The state also has \$191 million allocated through the America Rescue Plan's Capital Projects Fund. Senate President Pro Tem Greg Reed said how to use the money will be one of the major issues before lawmakers in the session that begins Jan. 11. He said proposals are still being developed, but he expects money to be steered toward a combination of local

and regional projects as well as reimbursements to hospitals and other health care providers that have been hard hit during the pandemic. AGA hopes to persuade leaders to use some of this money to finally fund the Healthy Food Financing Initiative in a meaningful way.

Fights over gun permits, abortion, and gambling are sure to come up, along with transgender treatment bans. Gun permits and abortion will be hot topics for conservative members. Gambling not so much. Pay raises for teachers and state employees are expected to be high priorities. Mental health, continued criminal justice reform, and the debate over whether a law mandating children be held back if they cannot read on a third grade level (due to kick in this year) should be delayed due to the setbacks from the pandemic closures.

AGA's top priority, as approved by the Legislative Committee, is to persuade legislators to approve a bill to allow the

Continued on page 14 ►

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The Voice of the Grocery Industry

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW

sale of “RTD” (Ready To Drink) products in supermarkets. We will again be working on state legislation to add portions of federal legislation called the INFORM Act to specify the crime of shoplifting, as well as require transparency in the selling of items online that have been stolen. This is a major problem in some areas due to organized retail theft. And Attorney Paul DeMarco is working to draft legislation updating the state Food Code to adopt the federal rule on menu labeling to ensure that frivolous lawsuits are not filed on our members.

Of course, COVID continues to play a large part in this process. House leaders plan to discuss potential safety measures at a meeting with the Alabama Department of Public Health on Wednesday afternoon. Pat Harris, the Secretary of the Senate, said he expected any measures in the 35-member Senate chamber to be similar to past ones. Fortunately, Sen. Bobby Singleton successfully added an amendment to HB 103 last year, which says specifically ... “Notwithstanding the existence of a state of emergency declared pursuant to Section 31-9-8,

Code of Alabama 1975, the Alabama State House may not be closed to the public while the Legislature is in session.” At this time, no state of emergency is declared.

As always, give us a call if you have questions. 334.221.0220.

Best Regards,

Patrick McWhorter



2022 AGA EVENTS

Mark your Calendars!

- April 7 - AGEF Spring Golf Outing
Inverness Country Club, Birmingham, AL
- July 24-27 - AGA Annual Convention
Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort, Destin, FL
- October 13 - AGEF Fall Clay Shoot
Selwood Farms, Alpine, AL
- October 27 - Alabama's Food Industry Finest
The Club, Birmingham, AL

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INSIDE THE BELTWAY

YEAR-END REFLECTION BRINGS CHALLENGES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR 2022



JENNIFER HATCHER

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE

THE END OF 2021 IS RAPIDLY APPROACHING, WHICH INEVITABLY FORCES US TO BOTH LOOK BACK AT THE PAST YEAR AND ANTICIPATE THE TYPES OF EVENTS AND THEMES THAT AWAIT US IN 2022.

2021, in large part, was a continuation of many of the issues seen in 2020 related to the ongoing pandemic and the resulting supply chain challenges. While we expect to see some themes from 2021 carry into 2022, especially related to the pandemic and supply chain, there is an expectation that the policy agenda next year will start to return to more “life as normal” issues, or at least as normal as can be expected given the current environment.

As background, FMI – the Food Industry Association brings together a wide range of members across the value chain – from retailers that sell to consumers, to producers that supply food and other products, as well as the wide variety of companies providing

critical services. The past two years have been one of the most challenging times for the food industry and for the country as a whole, but it has also put the industry in the spotlight and shown its resilience.

Our workforce stepped up during the initial weeks of the pandemic to ensure that the shelves remained stocked and has tirelessly continued to do so every day since. Let’s honor our supermarket employees on the day set aside to reflect on their contributions, February 22, 2022!

The challenges of 2021 were a little different than the early days of the pandemic in 2020, but each new challenge provided

an opportunity for our industry to help communities across the country.

FMI put together a pharmacy community to engage with agencies and support their COVID-19 vaccination efforts while simultaneously elevating the critical role of supermarket pharmacies and advocating for our industry’s essential workers. As we strongly support these vaccination efforts and our ability to administer them to all ages, FMI joined other critical supply chain associations to challenge the administration’s vaccination and testing mandate out of concern that it would further enhance the ongoing labor challenges and severely disrupt an already constrained supply chain.

We also continued our efforts to extend and enhance SNAP, in particular the P-EBT program, which provides critical benefits for children out of school program as well as disaster assistance.

Additionally, we worked to preserve critical tax policies like LIFO and stepped-up basis as lawmakers eyed these types of policies as potential pay-fors for legislation like the Build Back Better reconciliation package.



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FMI worked to start a broad PBM Reform Coalition to reignite comprehensive PBM reform efforts and unite the efforts of the business community, patient advocates, and medical professionals who see PBM tactics as a threat to public health and patient care.

These are just a sample of FMI’s involvement in critical policy issues in recent months. We are currently surveying members to identify priority issues where they want to see our advocacy efforts in 2022 and beyond as well as issues they see as potential disruptors to the industry and business as we know it.

Many of the labor and supply chain challenges apparent today will continue into 2022, but we hope to see the disruptions ease over the next few months. We look to our members and the industry to keep us educated and informed on how we can help

“EVEN IN A WORLD WITH MORE AND MORE BIG-BOX STORES, CONSUMERS STILL FIND VALUE IN THEIR LOCAL INDEPENDENT GROCERY STORE.”

mitigate the ongoing challenges the food industry faces every day.

We anticipate that the policy agenda over the next year will continue to focus on supply chain capacity, the labor market, feeding assistance, pharmacy, transportation, sustainability, swipe fees, and organized retail crime as lawmakers continue the shift from pandemic response to economic and community recovery.

The impact of the pandemic will still be felt months and years from now, as shown through the many supply chain challenges and the ongoing labor shortage, but FMI continues to work closely with lawmakers and the regulatory agencies to ensure that we can address these ongoing challenges and avoid any unnecessary regulatory burdens at this critical time. None of FMI’s efforts over the past year would have been possible without the incredible engagement and expertise from our member companies and state association partners. Thank you again for your engagement and feedback, and we look forward to working with you next year! ■



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LABOR, SUPPLY, AND A PANDEMIC CREATE A PERFECT STORM

BY JESSICA LOVE DUMONT



**AS GROCERS
GRAPPLE WITH
MAJOR OBSTACLES,
TECH COULD BE
A BRIGHT SPOT.**

For California independent grocer Mollie Stone’s Markets, labor issues and out-of-stocks haven’t hit quite as hard in the last few months as they have other retailers. Although the challenges are still present, Mollie Stone’s has been able to manage them a bit better through Vori, a technology platform that helps independent grocers with inventory and order management.

“There are just so many unknowns in the landscape today that we’re looking for efficiencies and ways to be mindful of the tasks that are going on inside of the store,” said Aaron Stone, vice president at Mollie Stone’s.

Mollie Stone’s began working with Vori pre-pandemic, and having the partnership in place has been a significant benefit for the Bay Area grocery chain, which operates nine stores.

For example, if one vendor that Mollie Stone’s works with is running low, Vori allows them to look at other partners as a secondary option for fulfillment, which has helped keep shelves stocked.

“We’re transforming the inventory replenishment and management process,” said Brandon Hill, CEO of Vori. “With a simple application, a store director or manager can look at their shelves and instantly reorder from all of their primary vendors.”

Hill said Vori is 80 percent faster than other (more traditional) methods, saving staff time and helping them write better orders.

But even with the added technology – or with similar proprietary technology that larger supermarket chains may have – labor woes and supply chain backlogs are still disrupting business as usual for Mollie Stone’s and other food retailers.

In fact, these issues have created a perfect storm: not enough products available, and not enough people to keep shelves stocked.

How did we get here – and how can grocers adapt?

FMI (the Food Industry Association) has been studying supply chain, labor, and consumer demand since the beginning of the pandemic. According to one of its recent studies, demand for groceries jumped about 50 percent at the beginning of the pandemic – and as grocers saw at the time,

that demand strained the supply chain and kicked off a series of shortages that have continued to affect food retailers throughout 2021.

According to Doug Baker, vice president of industry relations for FMI, that demand has not let up.

“The way I describe it is you have this tug-of-war going on. We have increased demand – the demand has not abated yet,” said Baker.

Industry data demonstrates high consumer demand as well. According to IRI Worldwide’s CPG demand index, total CPG demand in Alabama ranked 106 for the week ending Feb. 6, 2022 – indicating elevated demand since the pre-Covid time period. For perishables, Alabama ranked 110.

Notably, however, FMI reports there’s not actually a product shortage – just a backlog in how it’s getting to shelves. For example, some products are stuck floating in ports, while other goods are waiting on land to be transported. Images of congestion at the Port of Los Angeles, which most Americans have seen at some point in recent months, illustrate the problem.

IN FACT, THESE ISSUES HAVE CREATED A PERFECT STORM: NOT ENOUGH PRODUCTS AVAILABLE, AND NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE TO KEEP SHELVES STOCKED.

Baker said that backlog has caused constraint around many different products, supplies, and components, and it changes from week to week. One day there could be a shortage of glue to seal boxes, Baker said. Another week it might be the nails needed to build pallets for product storage.

Additionally, in many cases, shortages may not be the result of something floating on

a ship. Rather, it’s what happens after it’s unloaded – when there aren’t enough people to transport goods and supplies.

“There are a lot of nuances in the information being shared, but you can trace everything back to labor,” Baker said. “And then once you get past labor, it’s whether you have the equipment in order to be able to transport things through the supply chain.”



FMI found in its research that about 46 percent of shoppers report noticing some items are not on their grocery store shelves, while 58 percent have reported concerns about food shortages for the 2021 holiday season.

All of these add up to challenges for retailers to stock food onto their shelves – which is driving them to get creative and try new brands or new suppliers. Baker said this is opening up opportunities for new products.

“Retailers are looking for new sources of supply – brands they might never have carried in their stores before, for example,” he said. “It’s great for emerging brands or brands new to the U.S.”



That rings true for grocers large and small, including Foods Etc., which operates two independent grocery stores in Northern California: one in Clearlake and one in Susanville.

According to owner Dennis Darling, Foods Etc. has used several different suppliers that it didn’t before the pandemic – especially when it comes to items like apple sauce, Cup O’ Noodles, and Lunchables.

“We’re just trying to search for anybody that’s got it,” he explained. “It’s kind of crazy the items that have been in demand that you can’t get.”

At the same time, Foods Etc. has an advantage as a small, independent grocer with the ability to buy locally.

“Being a local community store we’ve had connections with a lot of local vendors, and we buy everything that’s available to us that we can locally,” Darling said – and notes that’s what he was doing prior to the pandemic as well.

The connection Foods Etc. has to the local community has also kept its stores well staffed even as others are struggle with labor, according to Darling. The Foods Etc. location in Clearlake employs 90 people, and the Susanville location employs 75.

“I think there are a couple reasons for that,” he said. “We’re a good employer, so that’s a start. In our rural community, working at the grocery store is still a good job, so we haven’t had the labor issues that some other companies have had.”

Darling said the average tenure for department heads is about 20 years, and many staff members are local high school or college students.

Industry-wide, grocers are struggling with staffing. In its annual survey of retailers, FMI found that 80 percent of respondents said their inability to attract and retain quality employees is negatively affecting their businesses.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT VORI IS THAT IT'S MULTI-SIDED.



To offset these labor challenges, many are offering higher wages, bonuses, better benefits, flex time, skills training, and development – building on a trend that started during the pandemic when food retailers were recognizing their employees with things like hero pay and special bonuses. FMI reports food retailers invested nearly \$10 billion in premium pay and bonuses for associations amid the pandemic. They also increased their team sizes by 10 percent.

Tapping into tech

At Mollie Stone's, Stone said staff turnover is an ongoing struggle – which is one more reason why tapping into technology through the Vori platform has been helpful.

“When a new person comes on board, it's not a steep learning curve,” Stone said.

Mollie Stone's is one of many grocers that sees the benefit of this investment. According to Baker with FMI, more retailers are now focusing on technology so they can better understand consumer preferences and forecast demand.

“They're making some of the biggest technology investments in their businesses that we've seen in years as a result of the pandemic and the supply chain,” Baker said.

Based on Vori's growth, that seems to be the case. Vori is proving to more than 100 food retailers and suppliers in California that technology is one tool they can use to

adapt to an ever-changing landscape. Some of the other grocers partnering with Vori include Oliver's Market, Berkeley Bowl, and Woodlands Market.

Hill explains that technology is not meant to replace or remove workers, however.

“It's more where you might be short labor or where you can benefit from automation to do mundane tasks and free you up for more important things like customer service. Vori can automate some of those value-eroding tasks,” he said.

Hill grew up around the grocery industry. His parents have had careers in the business for more than 40 years and originally met while working at Price Chopper in upstate New York. So when Hill decided to start his own company, it was a natural fit to pursue an endeavor in the grocery space.

“We're starting right now with independent grocery, which is where our heart and soul is,” he said.

Hill noted that most large retailers and corporate grocers have the resources to build out their own technology platforms in-house. Independent grocers, however, really need a solution like Vori, and his goal is to see the platform democratize food and provide better access.

Vori offers grocers a simple application for their inventory replenishment and management process. It makes it possible for a store director or manager – or even a new employee – to look at their shelves and instantly reorder from their primary vendors. The platform also has a supplier portal that allows suppliers to take in an order and maintain their catalogue.

If a product is out of stock from one supplier – which is often the case nowadays – a retailer can go on Vori, search suppliers in their area, and use a keyword search to quickly identify product availability. That gives a store more options to access the products they need for their customers.

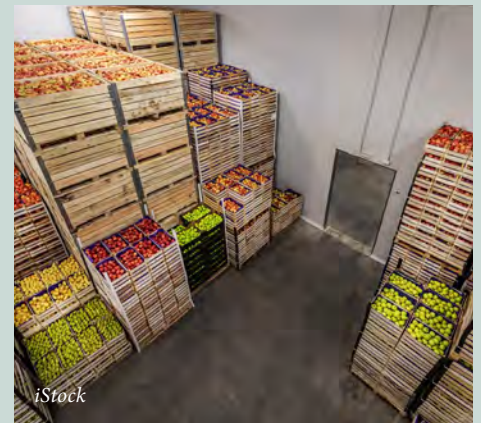
“What's different about Vori is that it's multi-sided,” Hill said. “It's not just for retailers in a silo. Now, suppliers and retailers

can talk directly, and that can prevent holes from forming on the shelves.”

Stone said the ability to source things from the local level has opened up more options for Mollie Stone's, especially because smaller grocers can be more nimble and work with multiple suppliers.

With all the issues food retailers are facing today, tech platforms like this can be a bright spot that helps them improve their business. It's also appealing to a younger generation of employees who are used to using technology in their daily lives – which is likely to be the case regardless of industry obstacles.

“People who are working for us see the enhancement that Vori has unlocked for us, and are excited about it,” Stone said. “They are excited for the innovation, which hasn't progressed to this level before, at least in our industry.”



While more grocers are embracing technology and looking for other ways to adapt to the current landscape, like trying new brands, the supply chain crisis and labor shortages will still take some time to abate.

In the short term, Baker with FMI expects to see periodic shortages on certain products, as well as continued inflationary pressures. As for when there might be some relief around supply chain and related issues, that's hard to predict.

“I wouldn't expect us to see a pre-pandemic store supply chain at all in 2022. We're going to get better, but we're not going to be out of it in 2022,” he said.

*Mollie Stone's is an investor in Vori. ■

HOW TO LEVERAGE

EMOTIONAL



INTELLIGENCE

FOR DAILY SUCCESS



BY **RICH BRACKEN**

What if I told you that listening to Prince (or your favorite artist) in the morning could help you perform better at work?

What if you could increase your happiness by simply breathing more intentionally?

What if I told you that your calendar could be an incredible weapon against anxiety and depression?

They truly are all interlinked as elements that affect your emotional intelligence.

Now, the societal fact is that most people in leadership positions will claim to have high emotional intelligence in their behavior and to “have it all together” whenever you ask them.

Science would beg to differ.

- Forbes reported that 60 percent of leaders felt “used up” at the end of the day, a key factor in burnout and low emotional intelligence.
- Harvard Business Review reports that nearly 90 percent of what sets top performers apart is due to high emotional intelligence.
- They also report that while nearly 85 percent of leaders say they have high emotional intelligence, only around 17 percent actual exhibit behavior and traits of having it.

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Continued on page 24 ►

SO, WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

I describe emotional intelligence as a dance with yourself and with others on a minute-by-minute basis. It's truly understanding your emotions (self-awareness) and what you do with them reactively (self-management) which is a dance unto itself. We are all trying to navigate how we feel and what to do with those feelings as we are bombarded by e-mails, calls, Zoom meetings, social media, and more on a continual basis.

Then add in active listening and observation of others (social awareness) and how you manage their emotions with yours (relationship management), that dance sometimes seems more like a mosh pit than ballet. The key to all of this is how you manage yourself as you will never be able to control the behavior and emotions of others. However, when you are more in tune with your own emotions and engage in empathetic

leadership and active listening, you won't have to change anyone's behavior as they'll start to change their own.

A couple of points of good news: you can increase your emotional intelligence on a daily basis and most of the ways that you can are easy and actually quite fun.

These are the top 5 ways that you can increase your emotional intelligence every single day:



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1: PROTECT YOUR CALENDAR

We often complain that there's not enough time in the day but fail to acknowledge responsibility of saying "yes" too much. If you have priorities that you're putting off, block time to address them to keep your needs met and your stress down.

Additionally, when you go from meeting to meeting to meeting with no breaks in between, the priority of needs and action items fall and you leave yourself little to no time to react and respond. Schedule time in your day, every day, just to acknowledge a project or an issue to move it forward.

2: REFLECTION THROUGH JOURNALING

The key is self-reflection. By being more aware of your day, your actions, your reactions and bringing them all into a focus of what was good and not so good, you can understand where your triggers get the best of you. Keep a journal of things, people, meetings, or any other stimulus, that sends your mood in a different direction. Put that emotional response into words then practice a new response to take back your emotional energy.

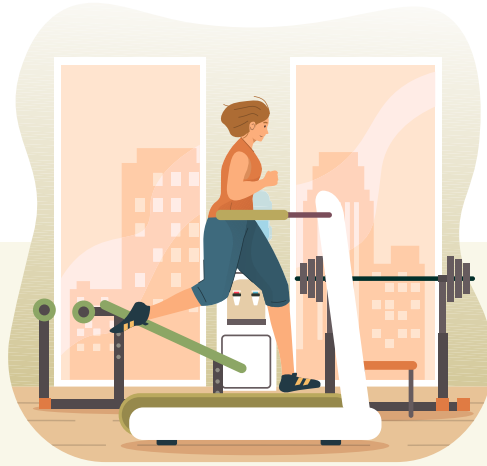


3: MUSIC IS THE ANSWER

Music has a profound effect on our mental status, so be your own emotional intelligence DJ. Build a playlist of songs that relax you, motivate you, or just make you happy and want to dance. Whenever you start to feel like you're losing control of your emotions, flip on your personal playlist. Better yet, I highly recommend making a playlist for all moods that you encounter that will help you turn the corner on a bad direction.

“When awareness is brought to an emotion,
power is brought to your life.”

– TARA MEYER ROBSON



4: MOVE YOUR BODY

In as little as 15-20 minutes a day, exercise in any form is an endorphin charger that will help you balance your energy and emotions. Whether it's to release stress or just disconnect for a while, this dedicated time will help you get your thoughts balanced and your physical well-being up. Especially as we're sitting more than normal, it's better that your body craves movement more than another dose of sugar to make it through.



5: SET STURDY BOUNDARIES

One of the most valuable lessons we can learn is how to set proper boundaries for ourselves and for how others treat us. By simply and calmly expressing yourself and limiting any damaging conversations, you're protecting yourself from unwarranted abuse and the weight of guilt and doubt that you carry afterwards. This also ties back to scheduling. Don't be afraid of taking breaks, investing in your self-care or self-education. Simply set your out of office letting people know that you'll be back in 20-30 minutes which will free you from the mental jail of having to check your phone every 2 minutes. ■

Editor's Note: Rich Bracken is a global keynote speaker, media personality, podcast host and inspirator.

He routinely works with companies, associations, and individuals across the country looking to establish sustainable change and improvement in their approach to achieving their goals. Rich is a frequent speaker and writer on topics such as emotional intelligence, leadership, goal setting and achievement, change management, and communication.

As a speaker, author, and professor of leadership, he has used his energetic, insightful and often comedic approach to influence leaders and global companies through his virtual and in-person keynotes as well as features with Fox News, CBS News, Thrive Global, Vice, Reader's Digest, Western Independent Bankers, and the Legal Marketing Association.

He also is the host of the uplifting EnRich Your Soul podcast and Inspirational Interruptions video series where he shares insight on motivation through his own experience as well as interviews with celebrities and thought leaders.

You can learn more about Rich and connect with him at richbracken.com.



OUTSIDE THE BOX

NEW RETAIL PERSPECTIVES

Meta

METaverse BY FACEBOOK

CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced Facebook’s company rebrand to Meta at its annual Connect 2021 conference in late October. The newly branded “metaverse,” which the company says is the next evolution in a long line of social technologies, will bring together Facebook’s apps and technologies under one brand to connect people, find communities, and grow business. Meta plans to combine online social experiences with projects in the physical world and beyond.



DIGITAL RESISTANCE

When gyms were closed for what felt like forever during the pandemic, many of us were catapulted into the world of at-home workouts. YouTube exercise videos replaced in-person classes and fitness companies pivoted to living-room friendly equipment. Among the new technology is Tonal at home gym, a wall-mounted screen system that combines about 150 different pieces of gym equipment into one. Tonal uses cables and digital resistance to simulate weights instead of conventional weights and dumbbells. Users can personalize workouts through artificial intelligence technology and a monthly membership. Think Lululemon’s “mirror” combined with Peloton.

Runway Ready Appliances

In their latest collaboration, high-end appliance company SMEG and luxury designer Dolce & Gabbana wrap the silhouettes of retro kitchen appliances in bold, Italo-style prints for the Italian-made “Sicily is My Love,” collection. The collection intends to tell the story of Sicilian cuisine, and the cuisine of Italy itself, according to SMEG’s website. Products include a toaster, mixer, cappuccino machine, kettle, juicer and more, running from \$650-\$850.



Protein Pizza

Vegetarians and vegans and flexitarians, oh my! Now that dietary restrictions are commonplace, gluten free and plant-based eaters will rejoice at Banza’s latest take on comfort food, the first-ever commercial chickpea-based crust available in the U.S. The pizza boasts 1.5x the protein, 2x the fiber and fewer net carbs and sodium than alternative crusts. It’s made of whole, plant-based ingredients including chickpeas, olive oil, yeast, and oregano.

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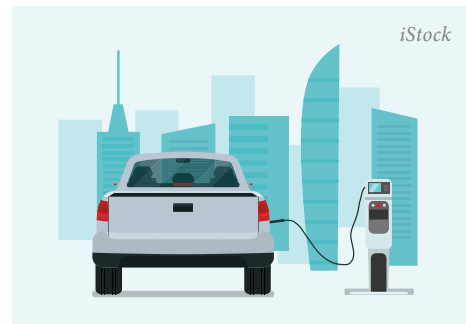


CUBED MEALS

MealCube, by emerging innovator Meepo, seeks to offer a nutrient-dense, efficient solution to world hunger and travel.

MealCubes infuse high amounts of nutrition and calories into a pack of fruit flavored cubes. Each MealCube pack contains a “meal” of four cubes containing 420 calories, 25 grams of protein, 28 grams of healthy fat, 23 grams of complex carbohydrates and 35 essential vitamins & minerals, retailing for \$5-\$7 per “meal.” The meal-replacer aims to serve the needs of travelers, athletes, healthcare institutions, educational settings, and government/military institutions.

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FORD'S VINTAGE INSPIRED EV

As the saying goes, everything old is new again. Ford's new Electric F-100 Eluminator Concept resembles a retro pickup truck, but with a modern twist. The EV, which was modeled after a heritage 1978 F-100 pickup, features all-wheel drive via two powerful electric motors. It is now available to purchase online or at a local dealer through Ford Performance Parts.

International popstar and actor Harry Styles, known to break traditional barriers with genderfluid fashion, launched his own gender-neutral beauty brand, Pleasing. At present, the line is comprised of six products including nail polishes, a dual lip balm and eye serum, and a facial serum, but more collections are to come. Celebrity-led beauty launches have flooded the market over the past few years with releases from A-listers including Rihanna, Selena Gomez, Pharrell Williams, Ariana Grande, and Billie Eilish to name a few.

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NYC's Momofuku Instant Noodles

Cult-favorite New York City-based restaurant company Momofuku by Chef David Chang has released its own line of instant noodles in collaboration with Asha. After a year-long development process, Momofuku created three flavors inspired by menu favorites at its very first restaurant location in the East Village: Soy & Scallion, Spicy Soy, and Tingly Chili Wavy. Notably, the noodles are preserved through an air-dry process instead of the fried preservation process used for most instant noodles.

Specialty Java at Home

Cometeer Coffee, the “earth’s first hyper-fresh coffee,” partnered with independent roasters across the country to extract signature coffee blends into compact capsules for at-home use. This way, coffee lovers can enjoy fresh brews from favorite specialty cafés in their own kitchens. The capsules contain 26 grams of coffee that are flash frozen at peak flavor to later be melted at home with water or milk, iced or hot. Cometeer prioritizes sustainability and uses 100% recyclable aluminum capsules as packaging.



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15 MINUTES WITH...

TRACEY PRIEST AND BRUCE MONTGOMERY



Tracey and Bruce are here to talk innovation and what they expect in 2022.

How has the pandemic impacted emerging brands?

Tracey & Bruce: The big change for emerging brands is not being able to meet in person with buyers. Everything has gone virtual. Things like ECRM conferences have become much more important, and we are more reliant on submitting through Range Me. Of course, you know, there weren't any tradeshows until September, like Expo East. So, it's been very challenging to reach buyers who are working from home. Even things like sending samples. You used to be able to send them to a corporate

office, but you can't do that anymore since they're not in the office. Even the simplest things have become a challenge for smaller emerging brands.

Another example of pandemic induced turmoil is that line reviews, new item meetings, annual planning schedules have all disrupted. The traditional calendar of meetings no longer exists – and may never come back as we used to know it. This lack of a set schedule is yet another challenge emerging brands must navigate.

Has retailers' appetite for emerging brands changed during the pandemic?

Tracey & Bruce: It has. A lot of buyers tell me they're trying to keep their core SKU's in stock. So, supply chain has been an issue, and a lot of buyers are struggling to meet with new brands or have category reviews due to these supply chain issues. It has gotten a little bit better during the past month or two, but it's still a major challenge.

The interest in emerging brands is still there for sure. However, buyers are rightfully concerned about smaller brands'

ability to execute if the larger, established brands are struggling.

How is the supply chain impacting emerging brands?

Tracey & Bruce: Even getting caps and lids for products is a problem – they're stuck on boats. If you're a small emerging brand and reliant on anything coming from overseas, you're experiencing quite a challenge.

Although, shipping within the US, where you're reliant on a truck firm to come pick up the product to deliver to a retailer, even that is quite a challenge. Supply chain is hitting retailers and brands, and we anticipate that will continue into 2022 until solutions are developed and implemented.

Emerging brands face the additional mental hurdle in the minds of buyers: "if my big brands are struggling with supply chain issues, how can small brands not be under even greater pressure?"

How has the private equity picture changed?

Tracey & Bruce: Private equity continues to look for innovative brands and companies. Big companies are not innovating – they buy innovative brands instead. If a brand is gaining traction in the market, has solid IP, and a meaningful point of difference that can be communicated to consumers – private equity will find you. Depending on the PE firm, they can bring cash, contacts, and subject matter expertise to accelerate an emerging brands growth.

What are some of the trends for emerging brands in terms of what buyers are looking for?

Tracey & Bruce: Plant-based is big. Health and wellness is big. Natural, friend of the earth are also on trend. Buyers are really looking for innovation. They're not looking for the eleventh brand of gluten-free chocolate chip cookies.

You've really got to be able to articulate to a buyer how you're different and how you compare to other brands in the category where you are competing. If you have something innovative and new, you have

a good shot. It's not about sell-in it's about sell-through, as we talk about all the time. The retailers want to know how a brand will be supported within the store. Emerging brands need to understand they need the capital to support sales once on the store shelf. And in the vast majority of cases, they will want an emerging brand to at least meet their category margin if not be accretive.

How are you thinking about positioning brands through marketing and advertising?

Tracey & Bruce: A lot of it is social media. It's Facebook and Instagram followers. It's influencers. We've worked with brands that have built followings just from TikTok videos going viral.

Demos are coming back, but they are expensive. They are effective, but expensive for emerging brands. Retailers are reintroducing demos, and in some regards, that makes sense for emerging brands. It really depends on the brand and what they can afford to do. But social media is the way to drive brand awareness. We then ask to work with the retailer to collaborate to build awareness of the brand at the store level.

Above all, the brand has to have a cohesive, integrated marketing plan: drive awareness, trial, and repeat against the consumer. This needs to be coupled with a solid plan at each retailer if you are going the brick and mortar route. It is vital that the brand "gets turning" at retail quickly. The report card at retail is generally 6-9 months – meaning if you are not hitting velocity hurdles by then – you will be getting some uncomfortable communication from the retailer. They need their shelves to be productive.

There has been a lot of talk about how privacy changes around data have added a new degree of difficulty to paid social advertising. Is that having an impact on your brand-building strategies?

Tracey: Absolutely, you need to build organically. You need to be real; you need to be authentic. It's not just about the paid strategy. A lot of it is trying to build organic communities around the brand and its story.

What do you expect for 2022?

Tracey & Bruce: For the most part, we expect retailers to return to their offices on a hybrid schedule. At the same time, I think buyers have learned they can have meetings on Zoom, Teams, or an online portal, and that might be a better use of my time. We believe that a hybrid meeting model will emerge: some in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and live or virtual trade shows. We do believe tradeshow will come back as the pandemic settles or we all learn how to safely work in the 'new normal'. UNFI and KeHE have already scheduled their shows. ExpoWest in Anaheim is on, and others. Category reviews should get back on schedule, and we have already been a part of a few reviews and we believe this will continue. As far as ECRM, there will be some in-person shows and virtual as well – this hybrid model is here for a while.

What advice do you have for retail buyers in search of innovative brands?

Tracey & Bruce: Range me is a great tool to look at. Be open to innovation and understand those small emerging brands are trying to make an impact. Whether its wellness or sustainability, the retailers who will win next year will be those open to collaborating with emerging brands and looking to be innovative. Retailers also need to truly understand that these emerging brands can't be held to the exact same playbook as a buyer's Fortune 200 suppliers. There will be some hiccups, they are not as well funded, and a buyer may need to be patient and explain things that the more sophisticated vendors have known for years. So if you are a retailer and want to be known as a place where emerging brands get a shot – you will have to be somewhat flexible.

We're still going to have supply chain issues. Nobody wins with empty shelves so if you can replace those with new innovative items that is a strategy to win. ■



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

AGA NEWS

INCREASE IN ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT



Paul DeMarco
Parsons, Lee & Juliano

RETAILERS ACROSS THE NATION HAVE SUFFERED THROUGH THE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS NOW.

Losing both customers and employees has been a struggle for these companies. Add inflation to the cost of doing business this past year, and it has been almost overwhelming. Some have survived. For others, the obstacles have been too much to overcome. Now, the country is in the midst of a crime wave like it has not seen in decades. Not only are we seeing an uptick in violent crime, but crime rings targeting retailers have become rampant. Not only is crime up, but there have even been efforts to disable the criminal justice system from tackling the problem.

Videos of smash-and-grab thefts have made the headlines. Yet, in Alabama the single incidents of theft and organized efforts have cost businesses thousands of dollars in losses. Both

large and small businesses have been affected by the increase in crime. The cost of what has been stolen is taking money away from hiring new employees and salaries. According to the FBI, these counterfeit goods have an impact of \$509 billion on the United States economy. However, it is hard to really pin down the true consequences on businesses having to compete to sell goods against those that sell stolen merchandise. There is no question that this must be addressed this year both in Washington D.C. and in Montgomery.

As we close out one year and start a new one, what can our state leaders do to help businesses? Alabama lawmakers need to aggressively tackle this problem in the upcoming regular

session by passing legislation that will specifically target organized retail theft.

Currently, Alabama does not even have a specific law that establishes shoplifting as a crime. Most of those that steal from stores are charged with misdemeanor theft charges.

It is not just solo thieves but national shoplifting rings that have targeted businesses in Alabama. After stealing goods from retailers, a lot of products are sold online. And now more than ever, products are being purchased and shipped to customers. Unfortunately, criminals are hiding behind fake accounts to sell their goods to unsuspecting consumers who buy their products not knowing they have been stolen. These items are being sold below market cost, undercutting those retailers and ultimately hurting everyone involved in the process except for the bad guys. Thus, there needs to be additional safeguards to prevent the internet from being used



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AGA NEWS

to fence stolen goods. Legislation can provide for a more transparent and accountable process so someone buying something online can confirm they are purchasing products from a reputable and credible business.

In the next session, legislators must not only give prosecutors the tools to punish those that actually steal but also go after those that receive stolen goods or participate in recruiting, funding or organizing theft rings. The legislation also has to put security checks in place to prevent stolen goods from being sold online. This is an increasingly new avenue for those breaking the law, and this must be put to a halt.

There has been a push to weaken criminal laws across the country to allow those who steal merchandise from businesses to see little or no punishment for breaking the law. Thus, those who steal are being incentivized to return right back to shoplifting again. There are advocates lobbying lawmakers right here in Alabama to do the same thing to allow these crimes to virtually go unpunished.

Yet, whether it is the brazenness of dozens of mask-wearing thieves breaking into businesses in broad daylight or the stealth approach of a single shoplifter, they must all be punished. The public should not tolerate these crimes that are hurting businesses of all sizes but ultimately cost consumers.

Alabama citizens should ask their state representatives and senators to pass this legislation to protect businesses from those who are intent on stealing their products. It is a

difficult time to be in any business, particularly as a retailer. Lawmakers can be part of the solution to help these companies succeed and overcome the nation's current crime wave.

STAY CONNECTED WITH AGA

Search "Alabama Grocers Association" in your device's app store to download and join the AGA Communities App & stay up-to-date on Alabama's grocery industry.

Follow Us On Social Media

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YEAR AWARD WINNER - VENDOR OF THE YEAR



2022 Vendor of the Year



Mr. Chris Crosby
UTZ Snacks/Golden Flake

Chris Crosby grew up in Tallahassee, FL where he attended Lincoln High School, graduating in 1981. Chris began his career with Golden Flake by running routes in 1982.

In 1984, he was promoted to District Manager. Quickly thereafter, he was promoted to Division Manager in 1985 and moved to Mobile, AL. After a year and a half, a position opened up in New Orleans, LA and Chris was promoted to Region Manager. After that, he was then promoted to Sales Manager and later Sales Manager of National Accounts and moved to Birmingham, AL. In 2015 he was asked to take over the Distributors Routes for Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri.

Today, Chris serves as the Senior Account Executive for UTZ/Golden Flake. He has served on the Alabama Grocers Association Board of Directors since 2018 and was a dedicated member of the Alabama Grocers Education Foundation Board of Trustees helping raise funds for student scholarships.

Chris has a wife, Michelle, and a daughter, Ariel. In his free time, he enjoys drag racing, golfing, and fishing. Chris is incredibly grateful for the grocery/snack foods industry and all of his wonderful customers, friends, and family.





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

AGA NEWS

YEAR AWARD WINNER - RETAILER OF THE YEAR

Harold Garrett began his grocery career by selling the Grit newspaper inside the Double Springs Piggly Wiggly. When the store got busy, he would help carry out groceries which led to him getting his first grocery job on the day he turned 15.

From 1974-1980, Harold worked for Gerald and Jean Hogan at the Double Springs Piggly Wiggly, doing everything from bagging groceries, cleaning floors, and stocking shelves, to working in the Produce and Meat Departments.

Harold took the Meat Department Manager position at the Piggly Wiggly in 1980 and remained there until the Fall of 1985, when he accepted a position with Gateway Foods, working in the meat department in Double Springs. In Fall of 1987, he left Double Spring to open and manage a new location in Belmont, MS. Harold stayed there until the Fall of 1991, and then returned to Alabama to open and manage the new location in Curry, AL.

He managed the Curry location until January of 2007 and was promoted to Supervisor. He moved into the corporate office in 2008 when he was promoted to his current position of President/General Manager of Gateway Foods.

Harold was elected to the AGA Board of Directors in 2007. He served as Chairman in 2011-2012 and is the current Chairman today. In 2009, he was named as Alabama's Food Industry Finest Retailer of the Year and won the Spirit of Alabama Award in 2014.

Harold has been married to his wife, Kim, since 1980 and they share two sons, Jon (39) and Noah (33). He is also a grandpa to his four grandchildren, Adalynn (8), Elliana (6), Jackson (4), and Liam (2).



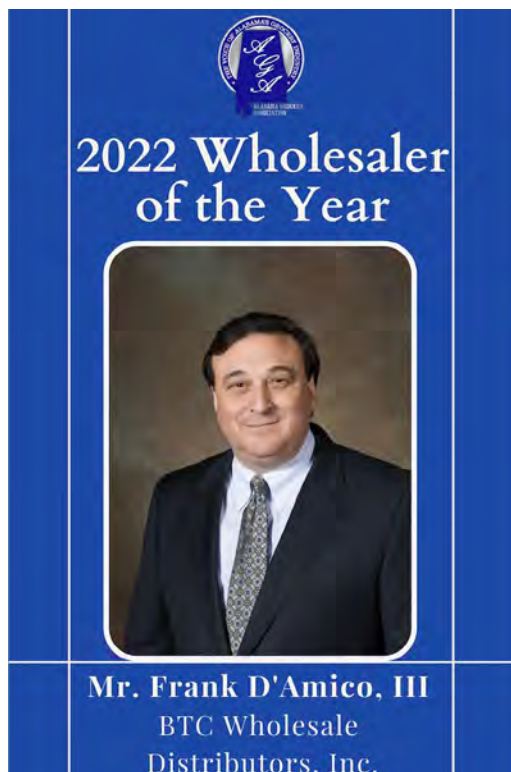


ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

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YEAR AWARD WINNER - WHOLESALER OF THE YEAR



Frank D'Amico, III was born in Birmingham, AL. He graduated from the University of Alabama 1979. Frank now resides in Vestavia, AL. He and his wife, Melinda Meloy, share three sons together – Chris (36), Michael (32), David (28) and daughter-in-law's Meredith (Chris) and Ally (David). They also have two granddaughters – Mary Rose (6) and Anna Lacey (3).

After college, Frank went to work in 1979 at BTC Wholesale Distributors, Inc. BTC is a family-owned business that was established in 1927. BTC is a wholesale distributor which services grocery stores, convenience stores and drug stores with convenience items such as cigarettes, candy, tobacco, frozen and refrigerated foods, food service, groceries and snacks. They service customers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. During his 42 years with the company, he has worked in many positions, including Sales, Sales Manager, Vice-President of Sales, Executive Vice-President and now President.

Frank joined the Alabama Grocers Association Board of Directors in 2008 and served as AGA Chairman in 2017 and 2018. He currently serves the AGA Board of Directors as Immediate Past Chairman. Frank is also a past President of the Alabama Wholesale Distributors Association and was on

the Board of the Petroleum and Convenience Marketers Association. He is a member of the University of Alabama Board of Visitors, a business school board that advises the business school. He is a member of the University of Alabama Alumni Association and Commerce Executive Society.

Frank is Vice-Chairman of the Regions Tradition, which has been an annual event in Birmingham for over 30 years. The Regions Tradition raises money for Children's Hospital and Alabama charities. He is now a past Chairman on the St Vincent's Hospital Foundation. Frank is also a founding board member of the Vestavia Hills School Foundation.

His hobbies include boating, going to the lake with his family and friends, traveling with his wife and family and attending University of Alabama football games





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

AGA NEWS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR BOARD SERVICE

Every couple years, for one reason or another, we have people that roll off of the AGA Board of Directors. We are so thankful to each and every one of them for everything they do and their dedication to the AGA Board. We would like to take a minute to honor those that rolled off during 2021.



Mr. David Bullard
Served Since 2012



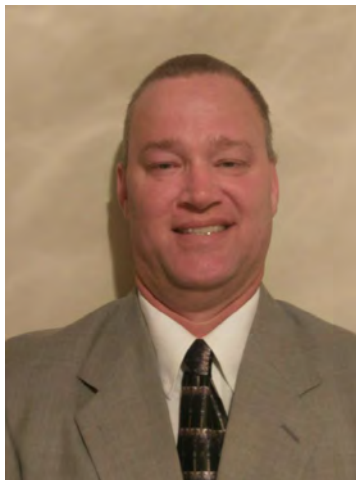
Mr. Mike Coggins
Serviced Since 2015



Mr. Mike Oakley
Served Since 2017



Mr. James Scott
Served Since 1990



Mr. Brian Smith
Serviced Since 2018



Mr. John Wilson
Served Since 2000



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AGA NEWS

WELCOME NEW AGA BOARD MEMBERS



Paul Burnett
Byars|Wright Insurance

Paul Burnett currently works as Broker and Branch Manager for Byars|Wright Insurance in Gardendale, AL. He has worked at Byars|Wright for nine years where he manages the Gardendale office along with providing insurance services for grocery retailers and supporting industries. Prior to Byars|Wright Paul worked fifteen years for Grocers Insurance in loss prevention and sales agent covering the entire southeast. He handles insurance and risk management for more independent grocers than any broker in Alabama.

Paul is also the Chief Deputy of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office Birmingham Reserve Division where he manages the day to day operations of other deputies, schedules patrol, special details and training. He has worked part time in law enforcement for 21 years and is a graduate of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Academy.

Paul has been involved with the Alabama Grocers Association for over twenty years. He has served on the Board of Trustees for the Education Foundation as Treasurer and currently serves on the Legislative Committee for the Alabama Grocers Association Board of Directors. He was the Vendor of the Year in 2019 and considers it one of his greatest accomplishments.

Personally, Paul has been married for 21 years to his wife Kristi. They have four children. He and his wife are foster parents and have had the blessing of caring for over seventeen foster children.

Gerry D'Alessandro was born and raised in Birmingham, AL. He and his wife Mikayla of 7 years live in the town of Mt Laurel. Gerry graduated from Mississippi State University with a Bachelors in Business Administration and he currently owns 9 supermarkets in the Birmingham, Alabama area. Gerry also serves on the board of the Alabama Grocer's Association. He and his wife Mikayla are actively involved with Church of the Highlands where they first met.



Gerry D'Alessandro
Fourth Ave. Supermarkets



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AGA NEWS

WELCOME NEW AGA BOARD MEMBERS



Lucy Greer Cheriogotis is the Corporate Spokesperson and V.P. of Deli Bakery for Autry Greer & Sons, Inc., Greer's Markets. She has worked at her family's fifth-generation grocery store since the age of 9. Under her leadership, the deli and bakery departments have increased in sales and profits each year, and in her role as corporate spokesperson, she has helped create a deep connection between Greer's and its customers. Lucy helps coordinate service projects in all 30 store locations and is the assistant director of the Apples for the Students Community Program. She can also be seen every Wednesday cooking on Fox10.

Lucy Greer Cheriogotis
Autry Greer & Sons

Lucy was born in Mobile, AL and attended Auburn University and Culinard. Her and her husband, Spiro have twin boys (7) and two daughters (4 and 1). Spiro also serves as District Court Judge in Mobile County. Lucy enjoys cooking, traveling, and chasing her kids. She loves meeting Greer's customers and hearing stories of those who have shopped with Greer's for generations.

I started my career on the retail side of the Grocery industry working for an Independent Retailer in North Georgia and then spending almost twenty years with Red Food Stores, a regional chain based in East Tennessee where I worked in all areas of operations and in the training department.

I began my wholesale career with Malone and Hyde which was acquired by Fleming Companies working for them in various capacities in multiple Divisions. In 2003, I joined Associated Wholesale Grocers in Business Development for the Memphis Division. My current role is Vice President of Business Development/Corporate Sales with responsibility for all new Business Development activity for A WG's 9 Divisions.



Keith Knight
Associated Wholesale Grocers

I truly enjoy the grocery business and have been blessed by the many relationships developed over the years. This is a people business and I have had the privilege and honor to work with some of the best and greatest people in the industry during my career.

I currently reside in Chattanooga, TN and enjoy spending time with family, especially, my two grandchildren. Hobbies include hunting, fishing and anything related to shooting sports.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

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AGA NEWS

WELCOME NEW AGA BOARD MEMBERS



Lynn Rushing is Regional Vice President of store operations for all Winn-Dixie stores throughout Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and the Florida Panhandle. In this role, Lynn is responsible for leading a team of more than 6,000 associates across 83 stores, offering fresh products and exceptional customer service to communities along the Gulf Coast.

Lynn started her grocery career at a young age, acquiring a genuine love for retail and an appreciation for serving others. In 2002, she joined the Winn-Dixie team holding various positions and gaining extensive knowledge in store operations and a sincere niche for developing future leaders.

Lynn Rushing

Winn-Dixie/SE Grocers

With more than 30 years of experience in the grocery industry, Lynn learned the business from the bottom up. Recognizing the importance of leading by example, she continues to play a vital role in evolving regional business growth and developing store leadership with her strong work ethic, hands-on approach and engaging demeanor. Lynn is also an advocate for community involvement, female empowerment and professional development, effortlessly using her drive to lead associates, serve customers and support those in need. Her progressive outlook is one of the many reasons she continues to thrive in the people-first culture at Southeastern Grocers.

Lynn's spirit of service transcends the walls of a grocery retail where she shares her industry expertise and passion for people to actively serve the community. Lynn holds various leadership roles on local boards for Alabama Grocers Association, where she serves on the board of trustees, and the American Cancer Society, where she spearheads fundraising efforts that have led to more than a million dollars raised for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer since 2013.

Lynn lives in Mobile, Alabama and is happily married to her husband, Lane. They have two sons, Connor and Ethan.

Jerry McCann graduated from Mississippi State. He worked for A&P for 13 years. He started as a bag boy and worked his way up to management in the office. He has been with Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co., Inc. for 33 years. He started working for PWADC in the retail department as Director Retail Operations. After 8 years he was promoted to Vice President/Director Retail Operations. In 2010 he was promoted to Senior Vice President/Director Retail operations. He was just recently promoted to President/CEO of PWADC. He is on the board of Directors for Georgia Food Industry Association, ROFDA and Alabama Grocers Association.



Jerry McCann

**Piggly Wiggly Alabama
Distributing Company**



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the Grocery Industry

AGA NEWS

WELCOME NEW AGA BOARD MEMBERS



Alison Howell Steineker
Alabama Power Company

Alison Howell Steineker currently serves as Corporate Affairs Manager for Alabama Power Company.

Alison joined the Alabama Power team in October 2016. Currently, she is responsible for relationship management of various stakeholder groups throughout the state to assist the company in meeting strategic goals and initiatives. Previously, Alison served as the Government and Community Relations Manager for the Birmingham Division and was responsible for management of government policy and external affairs between all local stakeholders. Before joining Alabama Power, she served as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) and the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce (the predecessor organization to the BBA) for over 10 years. Her tenure at the BBA expanded over several roles within the organization including Manager of Community Development, Manager of Workforce Initiatives, Director of Small, and Minority Business.

Prior to her work at the BBA, Alison served as the professional assistant to the Chief of Staff for Senator Richard Shelby in Washington, D.C. Her five years of Capitol Hill experience included constituent relations and correspondence, special constituent requests, liaison to the various Administration departments including the White House, coordination of federal judicial nominations, managed of over 140 interns, and researched federal grants for projects and initiatives across the state of Alabama.

A native of Hoover, Alison attended the University of Alabama where she achieved her Bachelor of Arts degree. In May of 2016, Alison received her juris doctor from Birmingham School of Law and was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in September 2016.

Alison is currently a member of several business, community, and civic Boards, including the University of Montevallo Foundation Board, the Alabama Grocers Association, and Vestavia Hills Civitan Club. She previously held board and leadership positions with the Shelby County Chamber, Hoover Area Chamber, Homewood Chamber, Vestavia Hills Chamber, Shelby County Big Brothers Big Sisters, and the Birmingham March of Dimes Executive Leadership Team. Alison is a proud graduate of the 2018 Leadership Shelby County class and the 2020 Leadership Hoover class.

Alison and her husband, Will, have two children, Carter and Nora.



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

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AGA NEWS

AGA 2021 YEARLY SPONSORS

To calculate the 2021 yearly total we added the total company donation for the Foundation Spring Event; Foundation Fall Event; Foundation Silent Auction Monetary Donations; Digital Magazine Advertising; Convention Sponsorship, Advertising & Exhibit Booth; the Member Only Communities App Sponsorship; EatAtHomeAlabama Website Sponsorship; Food Industry Finest Sponsorship and any other Association or Foundation Monetary Donations. We do not include the Dues, Convention Registration & Hotel or cost of items purchased at the Silent Auction. Sponsors will receive recognition in the app based on levels.

BELOW IS THE CURRENT LEVELS OF THE 2021 YEARLY SPONSORS THAT WILL BE LISTED IN THE AGA MEMBERS ONLY COMMUNITIES APP.

ELITE SPONSORS- \$15,000+





ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION

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AGA NEWS

AGA 2021 YEARLY SPONSORS

PREMIUM SPONSORS - \$10,000+

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ALTRIA CLIENT SERVICES
ASSOCIATED GROCERS OF THE SOUTH
FEDERATED INSURANCE
MERRILL LYNCH
MITCHELL GROCERY
PIGGLY WIGGLY ALABAMA DISTRIBUTING
UTZ QUALITY FOODS/GOLDEN FLAKE

CHOICE SPONSORS - \$5,000+

ALABAMA POWER COMPANY
ASSOCIATED WHOLESALE GROCERS
BIMBO BAKERIES
BLUE BELL CREAMERIES
BYARS | WRIGHT
CAMPBELL'S SNACKS
FLOWERS BAKING COMPANY
FRITO LAY
GATEWAY FOODS
POST CONSUMER BRANDS
RED DIAMOND
REESE GROUP
RETAIL DATA SYSTEMS
SUNKIST/CANADA DRY
TRUNO
UJB FAMILY OF BRANDS
WALMART

PARTNER SPONSORS - \$2,000+

AGR SUPER MARKETS
BETTER CHOICE POWER
BTC WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS
BUNZL
BUY LO QUALITY FOODS
COBBS ALLEN
COUNTRY DELITE FARMS
CRYSTAL FARMS
EDLINGO
FOURTH AVE. SUPERMARKETS
HARVEST SHERWOOD FOODS
HOUCHEMS/FOOD GIANT
ICE CREAM SPECIALISTS
JM SMUCKER
KRISPY MIXES
K-VA-T
LIPARI FOODS
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MAYFIELD DAIRY FARMS
MILO'S TEA
PICTSWEEP
RJ REYNOLDS TOBACCO
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WELLS BLUE BUNNY
WINN DIXIE
WRIGHT'S MARKET

AFFILIATE SPONSORS - LESS THAN \$2,000

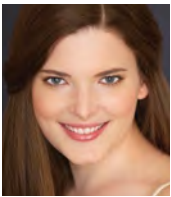
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ALINE GREETING
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BENESTAR BENEFITS (EVANS FOODS)
BENGAL PRODUCTS
CHINA DOLL
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SUNSET FARM FOODS
SUPER FOODS SUPERMARKETS
TAMPICO
THE HERSHEY COMPANY





MOMMY BLOGGER

THE UPSIDE OF INFLATION: TEACHING KIDS THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL FINANCE



KIMBERLY RAE MILLER
WRITER, ACTRESS

WITH GROCERY PRICES RISING, PARENTS ARE TURNING TOUGH DECISIONS INTO TEACHABLE LESSONS.

Every two weeks, I head to the bank and take out exactly \$510. I then divvy that money up into envelopes designated for food, gas, fun, and random unbudgeted-for expenses.

When it comes to budgeting, I'm old school. Pay cash. Spend less than you make. Don't touch your savings. I grew up in a blue-collar household; my parents knew how to stretch a dollar and weren't concerned about appearances. If we couldn't afford something, everyone knew not to ask. We never went on a vacation we couldn't drive to, and you can be sure we packed sandwiches instead of going through the drive-thru.

On the other hand, my husband grew up in a penthouse with nannies and a personal

chef. He'd traveled the world before middle school. And if he wanted something, he got it. Money wasn't discussed in his household because that was considered gauche. And yet, here the two of us are, raising two kids in the most middle of middle-class lives.

My envelopes are a mild source of embarrassment for my husband, but he's grateful that I handle the budget for the most part. And now that we're raising tiny humans, we feel a real responsibility to prepare them for the realities of personal and family finance.

While our children are still very young, we actively talk about money with them. And there is possibly no better place to teach kids about money than the grocery store.

We talk about the price of Gala vs. Fiji apples, chicken breast vs. legs, brand name vs. store brand cookies. I've recently introduced the concept of inflation to them, and while the toddler only talks about Chewbacca as a general rule, my kindergartener gets it. We've talked about how things are getting more expensive but how Mommy and Daddy aren't making more money to pay for them, which means we can either get fewer treats or do less of something else.

When I ask other moms how they were handling the rising price of food, I realized how lucky I was even to have enough room to shift money from one envelope to another. One mother told me she'd taken on another job to help offset the increase in food and gas prices and that they had opted out of a turkey for Thanksgiving because of the cost. Another mother shared that her family had cut extras like gym memberships, car washes, and lattes to save money. Others shared that they relied on meal planning to decrease food waste.

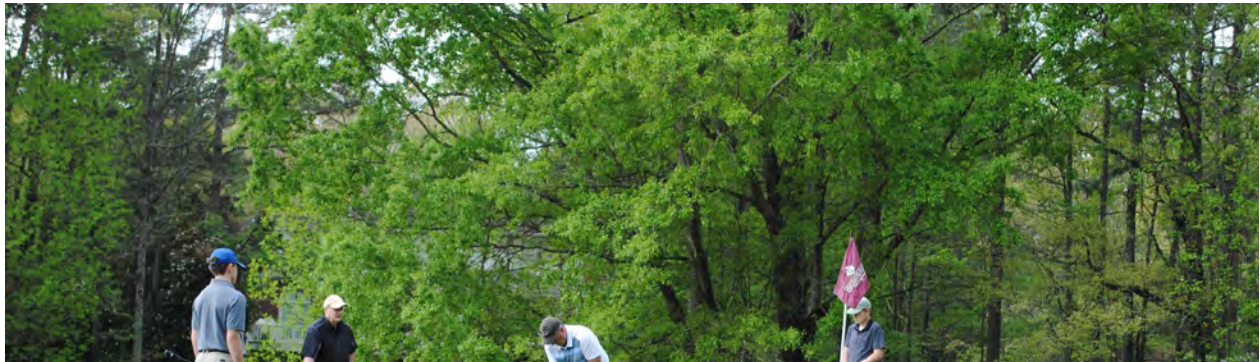
Personal finance is, well, personal. But for the most part, families are feeling the increase in prices. We're all shouldering the shifting economy in different ways. And since history has a habit of repeating itself, I will continue to use this moment in time as an opportunity to teach my kids how money works and how to best use it to take care of themselves and their future families (or Chewbacca). ■





ALABAMA GROCERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION ANNUAL SPRING GOLF CLASSIC

THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2022 AT 8:30 A.M.
Inverness Country Club - 1 Country Club Drive,
Birmingham, AL



SPONSORSHIPS

Hole Sponsor - \$1,500
(includes 4 golfers)

1/2 Hole Sponsor - \$750
(includes 2 golfers)

Breakfast Sponsor -
\$1,000 (no golfers)

Lunch Sponsor - \$1,000
(no golfers)

Lunch Only - \$100



There will be a light continental breakfast starting at 7:30 a.m. and tee off will be at 8:30 a.m. sharp.

**SIGN UP BY USING THE QR CODE
OR VISITING
ALABAMAGROCERS.ORG!**



Golf registration cut-off is March 15, 2022. No refunds will issued after this date. For any questions regarding the event or sponsorship, please email Jessica Brown at jbrown@alabamagrocers.org.

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