

Alabama Grocer

2024, ISSUE 3

Alabama Grocers Association

**Thank You for a
Fantastic 34th Show**
PAGE 5

**Food Industry
Entangled in
Political Rhetoric
for Upcoming
Elections**
PAGE 6

**2024 Annual
Show Recap**
PAGE 23

**2025 Annual
Show Theme**
PAGE 31

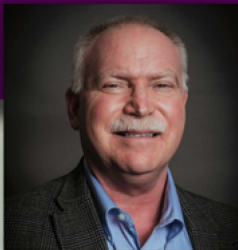


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FEATURES



Chairman’s Message

Thank You for a Fantastic 34th Show.

President’s Message

Food Industry Entangled in Political Rhetoric for Upcoming Elections.



2025 AGA Annual Show Theme

There’s No Party Like a Tailgate Party!



2024 Annual Show Recap

Cultivating Community Within Alabama’s Grocery Industry.

COLUMNS

Chairman’s Message Thank You for a Fantastic 34th Show	5
President’s Message Food Industry Entangled in Political Rhetoric for Upcoming Elections	6
Legislative Update Summertime Blues	7-9
Industry News Labor Day Traditional Kick Off to Campaign Season in Alabama for November Elections	12-13A
Oh, Oh, Oh, the Impact	14-16
Shoppers Feel in Control of Their Grocery Spending	18-19
High Level Gathering a Must for Independent Executives Preparing for the Road Ahead	20-22A
Association News AGA New Members	10
2024 Food Industry Finest Luncheon	11
2025 AGEF Scholarship Program	13B
NGA Summit Dates	21B
AGEF Clay Shoot	22B
AGEF Tuition Reimbursement	26B
2025 AGA Annual Show Theme	31
2024 Annual Show Diamond & Four Star Sponsors	32
BAB Food Product Expo	33
2023 AGA Yearly Sponsors	34
Upcoming Events & Social Media Accounts	35
2024 Annual Show Recap Spirit of America Award	23 24
Spirit of Alabama Award	25
AGEF Fund the Future	26
Business Sessions	27
Exhibit Hall	28-29
AGEF Best Bagger Competition	30



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

THANK YOU FOR A FANTASTIC 34TH ANNUAL SHOW



BOB CRAWFORD

President

United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama



AS WE START CLOSING OUT SUMMER AND HEADING INTO FALL, I WANTED TO TAKE A MINUTE TO THANK EVERYONE FOR A FABULOUS 34TH ANNUAL SHOW AT THE BEAUTIFUL SANDESTIN RESORT.

Once again, Jack Carlile, our Convention Committee Chairman, his committee, and the entire AGA staff did a wonderful job this year. I am sure everyone enjoyed the Business Session speakers. It was informative to hear from Congressman Robert Aderholt about issues affecting our industry, as well as learning from all the other speakers each day.

The exhibit hall was best of class and I wanted to thank all exhibitors for making it so special this year. I hope everyone enjoyed the receptions, dinners, awards, and best bagger competition. The entertainment, games and prize drawing were a big hit.

I thank all of the companies that sponsored to help make this so much fun for all while raising a new record for our AGEF Scholarship funds. Congratulations to all of the 2024-2025 AGEF Scholarship Winners!

I hope you and your families enjoyed the event and got to spend time with old friends and form new relationships that are truly helpful to your business. I would also like to extend a special thank you to all of our retail members, manufactures, brokers, wholesalers, and members for attending this year.

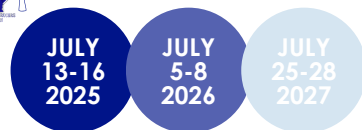
Please save the date for the 2025 Annual Show to be held on July 13th -16th at Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort.

Looking forward, as we get back to school, cooler weather, and a spirited football season please make sure to participate in our 2024 AGEF Clay Shoot. It will be held on Thursday October 10th at Selwood Farm. This year, we will be adding an exciting game and prizes. For those of you have attended before, thanks and see you there. For those of you who have never attended or are think about it, I encourage you to come join the fun. I am humbled and honored to serve as your Chairman. ■

Sincerely,



AGA ANNUAL SHOW
Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FOOD INDUSTRY ENTANGLED IN POLITICAL RHETORIC FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS



ELLIE TAYLOR

President/CEO

Alabama Grocers Association



AS WE HEAD TOWARDS THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS, THE FOOD INDUSTRY UNFORTUNATELY FINDS ITSELF ENTANGLED IN POLITICAL RHETORIC.

Despite offering quality food products at competitive prices with a slim net profit margin of 1.6%, grocery stores are puzzled by comments made by presidential nominee Kamala Harris regarding price gouging, considering the industry's minimal profit margin. Inflation has affected all consumer goods pricing – including gasoline and clothing. Despite this inflationary period, the food industry has worked hard to keep prices low and America fed.

Increases in food prices are driven by dozens – if not hundreds – of factors. The prices we pay for groceries are visible in supermarkets, but behind the prices are

contributions of numerous diverse industry sectors, all of which contribute to the process by which food travels from farms to homes. When evaluating prices on labels context is key.

Grocery shoppers can rest assured that a cost increase is not related to increased profits, and instead due to a spike in costs due to labor, lower capacity production, commodity prices, energy costs and even transportation demands.

According to FMI's U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends Report, more than two-thirds of consumers say they are very or extremely concerned with food inflation across all ages and income levels.

79% of shoppers say getting a good deal is a top or high priority for them. The recent USDA Food Price Outlook suggests a minimal increase in food-at-home prices for the upcoming year, indicating a manageable inflation rate of 1% for 2024 and an estimated .07% for 2025. This should reassure consumers that food prices are stable in the upcoming year. When addressing consumer inquiries in your store, emphasize the industry's commitment to providing quality food at affordable prices. With the conclusion of the November elections, let's hope the political rhetoric surrounding food prices will also subside. ■

Sincerely,



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

SUMMERTIME BLUES



PATRICK MCWHORTER

Legislative Consultant
The McWhorter Group

IN POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT, SUMMER IS A TIME OF TRAVEL TO CONFERENCES, ETC.

Of particular note, Alabama House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter has been selected to serve as Chair of the Southern Legislative Conference. During a big election year like this one, party nomination conventions and campaigns add excitement to the mix, and this year is a doozy.

THE DRAMA THAT HAS UNFOLDED WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WITH THE SITTING PRESIDENT BEING SHOWN THE DOOR AND HIS VICE PRESIDENT TAKING THE NOMINATION OF THEIR PARTY, IS ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS.

What appeared to be a runaway victory in the making for former President Donald Trump is now neck and neck.

In Alabama, it is a routine congressional election season, with a couple of major exceptions. The federal courts redrew the First and Second Congressional Districts, placing two incumbents against each other in the First. Second District Rep. Barry Moore defeated First District Rep. Jerry Carl in the new First. And in the open Second District, Democrat Shomari Figures and Republican Caroleene Dobson face each other in a race that could decide the balance of power in Congress.

Figures comes from a political dynasty in Mobile. His mother, State Senator Vivian Davis-Figures, has been a Democratic leader in



the Senate since replacing her deceased husband Michael Figures (Shomari's dad). Michael served as Senate President Pro-Tem before his passing. Shomari has been in Washington for years, serving in high positions in both the Obama and Biden Administrations. Most of his time has been in the US Justice Department.

Caroleene Dobson is a complete newcomer to politics.

continued on page 8

Born on a fifth-generation cattle farm in Beatrice Alabama, she graduated from Harvard University and Baylor University Law School and now practices law with the Birmingham-based Maynard Nexson law firm, while living on the family farm. The district is very close to an even split between Democrats and Republicans, so expect a hotly contested race with lots of money spent. Good for the state's economy.

Alabama's state sales tax on groceries won't be cut by another one cent this year. The Alabama Department of Revenue (ALDOR) has officially announced that Alabama's state sales tax on food will remain at 3% on September 1. "If there is sufficient growth in the state Education Trust Fund for the next fiscal year, then the state rate will be reduced on September 1, 2025," an ALDOR spokesman said. "Local governments can, by resolution or ordinance, reduce their sales and use tax rate on food by 25 percent if there is sufficient growth in their local general fund."

Lawmakers reduced the 4% sales tax rate on groceries by 1% last September. The Alabama Legislature has been relatively quiet up to this month, recovering from an extremely contentious 2024 session which saw yet another defeat of gambling and lottery legislation that sucked all the air out of other issues. It failed by one vote in the Senate. But after returning from the national conferences, the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee began their work and it started with a bang.

Sunset is a process whereby a great number of Boards and Commissions established by the Legislature are periodically reviewed for their effectiveness and continued relevance. It has been a humdrum process for many years, but recently, legislators have increased their attention.

Last year, the Massage Therapy Licensure Board was terminated, and recreated under the Alabama Board of Nursing. This year's focus appears to be the Alabama Board of Pharmacy and the

Alabama Board of Dental Examiners.

Several dentists spoke out against the Alabama Board of Dental Examiners during a public hearing for conduct one described as "predatory" and "secretive," with a recent finding of a number of instances of the board acting outside its authority. Covering the period from Oct. 1, 2019 to Sept. 30, 2023, a recent report from the Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts found several incidents of noncompliance, including the issuance of waivers for which the board did not have authorization for, not properly documenting public meetings as is required under open meeting laws and procurement issues, such as purchasing vehicles without following open bidding guidelines.

The Alabama State Board of Pharmacy (ABOP) was subjected to a nearly two-hour grilling by lawmakers after a recent report that found multiple "significant problems" with the board's operations and perceived retaliatory practices against licensees.

continued on page 9

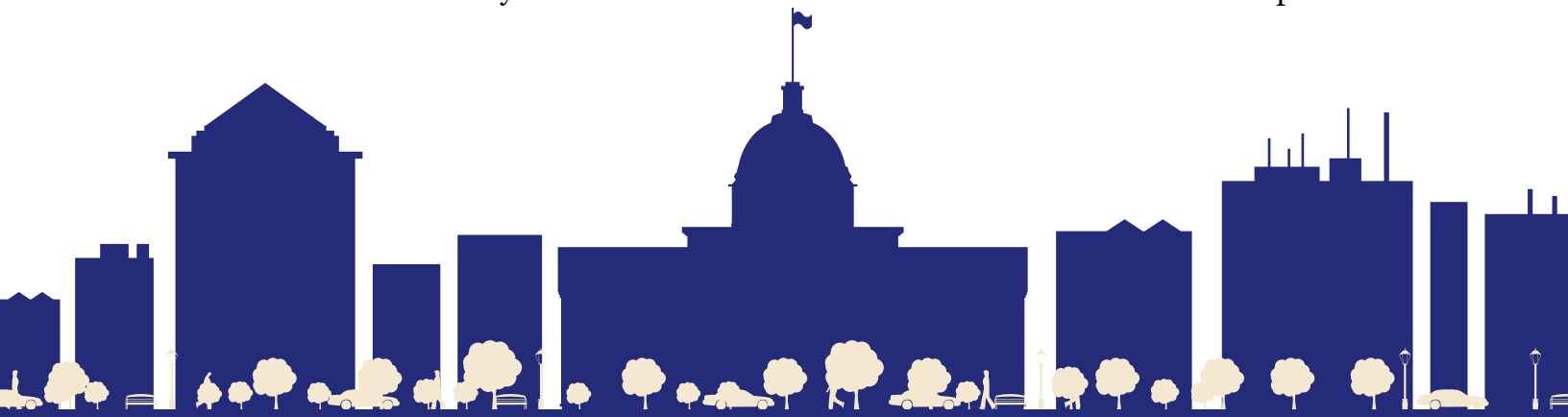
At the meeting, multiple lawmakers, advocates, and lawyers noted that the report did not paint a flattering picture of ABOP. The report from the state examiners found several instances of “significant issues” with ABOP, including how it reported income, over-fining, levying non-specified fees, charging non-licensed entities, meeting minutes that are inconsistent with board actions, violations of Alabama’s Open Meetings Act, failure to file oaths of office with the secretary of state’s office, failing to deposit receipts promptly, violating the state’s open-bidding rules, inaccurate invoicing, overpaying vendors over the contracted amount, and unlawfully procuring supplies and services. One attorney representing a Birmingham pharmacist, told of their experiences, telling the committee the state’s Attorney

General had to intervene to override the ABOP and restore his license. Attorney Joseph Kreps, who boasted of representing people before the board for nearly 20 years, gave the most impassioned and fierce condemnation of ABOP, accusing it of lining its pockets through punitive and arbitrary fees and fines levied against pharmacists. “The pharmacy board’s funds are hidden from view,” Kreps said. “In 2023, licensing fees collected by this agency hit \$4.4 million, with nearly \$4 million of that spent on administrative salaries and benefits alone. These board members are paid. They are making a fortune being on this board. It’s wrong. They pocketed a combined \$325,000 in salary and per diem payments, and travel expenses were more than \$210,000.

They extort \$1 million annually from these licensees through unlawful fines and junk fees. Late fees surged almost 1,500% from 2013 to 2022.” Of another case Krep said, “That is extortion.”

Sunset Committee member Sen. Keith Kelley emphatically stated that if this report had come against a less significant board, it would have been “lights out” meaning the legislature would likely vote not to renew that agency. “Whenever I look at this, to say I’m concerned is an extreme understatement,” Kelley stated.

The Sunset Committee will hold at least two more meetings during the fall to consider other board renewals, then prepare their recommendations to the full Legislature. Stay tuned. Their decisions on the future of the Pharmacy Board could have great ramifications for many of our members with pharmacies. ■





AGA NEW MEMBERS



Dale Lowry
Dale's Foods
dales280@gmail.com



John Hart
Diaz Foods
john.hart@diazfoods.com



John Smith
L&S Food Market Inc.
landsjk@yahoo.com



Terry King
RSA America LLC
terry@rsaamerica.com



Kevin Wise
ZenWTR
kevinwise@zenwtr.com

FOOD INDUSTRY FINEST LUNCHEON

OCT. 30, 2024
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
THE CLUB



**RETAILER
OF THE YEAR**

Kamal Constantine
Piggly Wiggly Gulf Coast



**WHOLESALER
OF THE YEAR**

Charles Weathington
UNFI



**VENDOR
OF THE YEAR**

Don Richardson
Coca-Cola Bottling
Company UNITED





INDUSTRY NEWS

LABOR DAY TRADITIONAL KICK OFF TO CAMPAIGN SEASON IN ALABAMA FOR NOVEMBER ELECTIONS



PAUL DEMARCO

AGA General Counsel
Parsons, Lee & Juliano, PC

LABOR DAY MEANS THE FALL ELECTION SEASON WILL REALLY BEGIN IN EARNEST.

The November 5th election is just around the corner, which means the candidates are about to spend all of their campaign funds to get out the vote. And with over registered 3.8 million voters in the Alabama, there is a lot of work to do in the coming weeks.

THERE IS ONLY A LITTLE MORE THAN SIX WEEKS LEFT FOR THESE CANDIDATES TO PERSUADE VOTERS THAT THEY ARE THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB OR THAT THEY HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO BE RE-ELECTED TO THE CURRENT POSITION THEY HOLD.

Republicans have held true power in Alabama since 2010 when the Alabama Legislature flipped and Republicans took the majority in both the House and Senate after over 136 years of rule by Democrats. And if history is any indication, at least two-thirds of those votes will be straight ticket votes. In 2020, there were over 2.3 million total ballots cast. There were 1,563,943 votes that were straight ticket. Of those straight ticket voters, 967,157 were Republican and 596,786 Democrat.

Thus, when you add it up about 67 percent of Alabama voters stick to their party candidates when they go to the polls.

With this year's high stakes presidential race at the top of the ticket, you can absolutely count on another significant straight ticket vote in Alabama's elections.

Across Alabama's 67 counties there will also be plenty of local, state and federal races. Of course, it is a forgone conclusion that Donald Trump will win Alabama's nine electoral votes just as he did in the last two presidential elections in 2016 and 2020. Even with the presidential pick a sure thing for the former president, there will be a long ballot for consideration on Election Day. Thus, some voters may feel it is not worth it to take the time to vote, but Alabama citizens still have important races to pay attention to that they will have to decide as well.

continued on page 12

And while there will be none of the Alabama's executive or legislative branch officials to consider, there will be lots of local judges, circuit clerks and other county leadership positions to vote on at the polls. Actually, some of the most important elections we vote on are those local officials who administer and make decisions in the judicial branch. Now more than ever with the spike in violent crime we need a judiciary that

ensures that public safety is an integral part of the job they do when handling cases involving those accused of violent felonies. Whether it is setting bail or a decision on determining the sentence for someone convicted of breaking the law, we need good men and women who can sit on the bench and administer justice. Thus, it is up to the electorate to do their homework and select

qualified judges to serve on the bench.

Thus, gear up for mail, billboards, radio and television ads by candidates as they make their last sprint to Election Day and pitch for votes to cross the finish line on November 5th. ■

Paul DeMarco is a former member of the Alabama House of Representatives and serves as the general counsel for the Alabama Grocers Association.



2025 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



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INDUSTRY NEWS

OH, OH, OH, THE IMPACT



MICHAEL SANSOLO

Retail Food Industry Consultant

THE RETAIL FOOD INDUSTRY, MORE THAN MOST ANY PART OF AMERICAN LIFE, IS IMPACTED BY EVERY TYPE OF SOCIETAL TREND.

Just consider demographics. Every emerging ethnic or immigrant group brings new foods, new family dynamics and even new holiday celebrations that cause the food industry to source and stock various new products throughout the store.

It's an endless challenge but one that also invigorates stores with exciting new products and cuisines.

But sometimes these emerging issues also bring unforeseen challenges that can impact sales in important ways. And with that in mind, retailers in Alabama (and across the country) need to consider the potentially massive impact from two new drugs—Ozempic and Wegovy—developed for diabetics that have quickly turned into weight loss magic.

It's near impossible to miss the ads and the incredible promises they both make and seem to deliver.

These new drugs, classified as GLP-1 use something called semaglutide, seem to have the ability to reduce an incredible array of cravings.

continued on page 15





As Scott Galloway, a noted professor and commentator on market trends, talked about in recent podcasts, Ozempic and Wegovy can impact everything from overeating to drug and alcohol use to gambling and even overuse of social media.

In discussing the two drugs, Galloway notes that the impact will be felt by airlines suddenly lighter planes due to thinner customers to surgeons performing fewer knee replacements again thanks to thinner patients.

Major Wall Street analysts agree, suggesting that widespread use of the drugs could so significantly reduce national obesity that gross domestic product could actually increase by 10% thanks to a healthier population and workforce.

And it will certainly impact the food industry.

Supermarkets as we know are filled with an incredible array of healthy options for every meal and snacking occasions. However, stores also offer a wide range of indulgence items such as desserts and sugar sweetened everything.

While some industry critics and dietary zealots blame the industry for the nation's obesity issue the reality is that consumers themselves are incredibly free to make better choices. But many do not and blaming the industry seems a convenient way to avoid personal responsibility.

And that brings us back to Ozempic and Wegovy and the reality that as these drugs move into wider use there is bound to be some significant impact on the retail food industry, with some categories suffering far more than others and nearly

continued on page 16

everything impacted by a large percentage of Americans suddenly wanting to consume far fewer calories.

THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE INDUSTRY WOULD SEEM TO BE FAIRLY SIMPLE. GIVEN THE WIDE AVAILABILITY OF HEALTHY PRODUCTS IN THE STORE AND THE PRESENCE OF NUTRITIONISTS AND DIETITIANS IN MANY COMPANIES, THE FIRST STEP LOGICALLY WOULD BE TO EMPHASIZE STRONG NUTRITIONAL HABITS TO SHOPPERS.

Even if many shoppers obtain prescriptions for these drugs, those same people will still be eating, albeit in lesser amounts. It would make sense for the industry to get ahead of this trend by reinforcing the healthy story sooner rather than later.

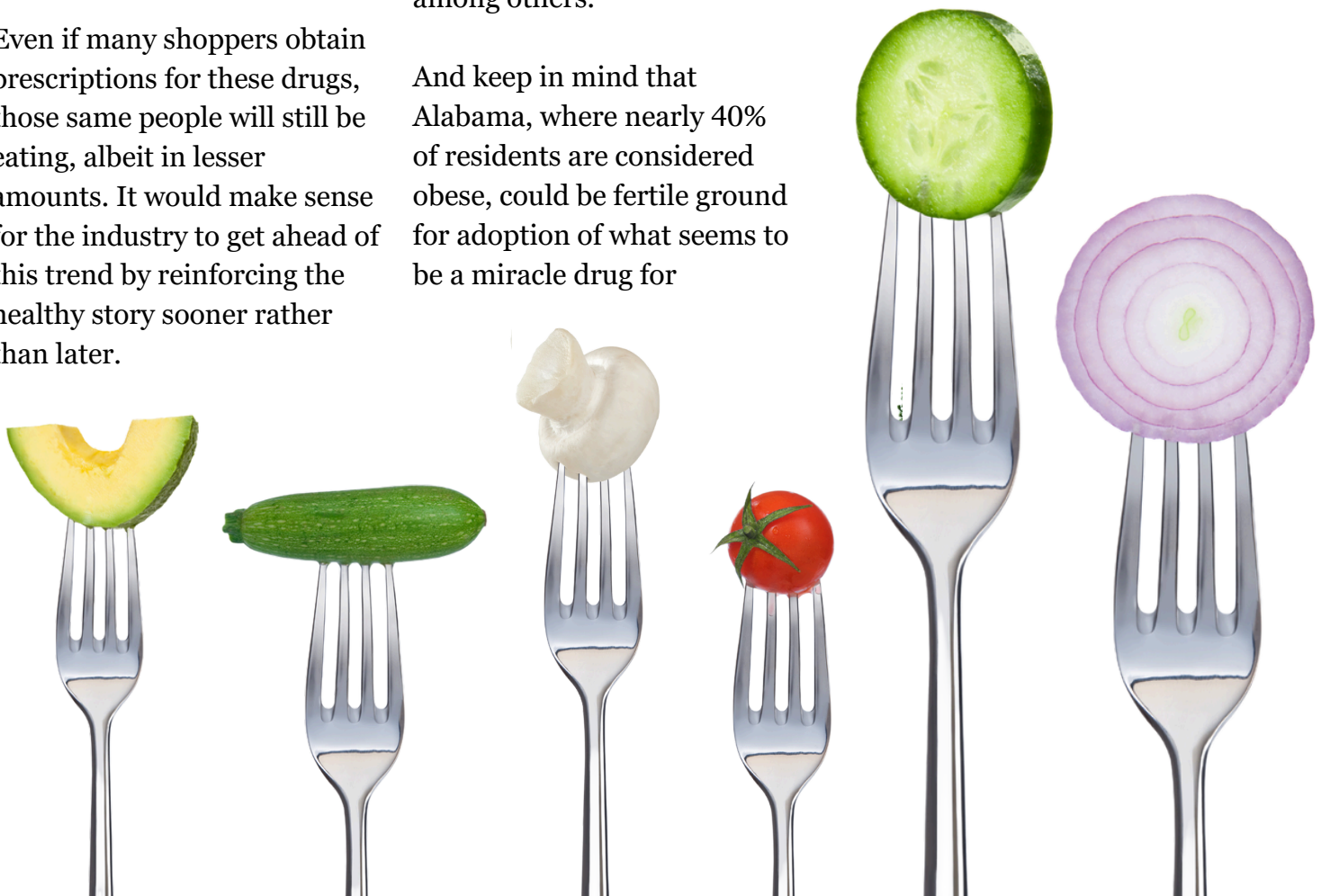
One additional point of connection would be linking in-store pharmacists, who are filling the prescriptions, to all the dietary information in the store to help shoppers understand the choices they face and make.

It's possible of course to consider this issue and dismiss it out of hand, questioning how large an impact two drugs could possibly have. But consider how quickly trends have developed in recent years from social media to smart phones to eating trends such as the low-carb or paleo diets, among others.

And keep in mind that Alabama, where nearly 40% of residents are considered obese, could be fertile ground for adoption of what seems to be a miracle drug for

countless people who have tried and failed at losing weight.

In other words, this issue could very quickly hit the food industry (food-at-home and restaurants) in Alabama. Again, we can't accurately know whether there will be broad enough use of the drugs to truly impact the industry, but the prudent course, it would seem, would be to start thinking now about the potential impact and how you can better communicate healthful issues to be ahead of this trend as much as possible. ■





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Out-of-pocket maximum:

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OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open Enrollment is February - March, 2025.

WEBSITE

For benefit information, frequently asked questions, how to enroll and more, visit www.AGABenefits.com



SCAN ME!

Scan the QR code to be taken directly to the AGA Benefits website.



INDUSTRY NEWS

SHOPPERS FEEL IN CONTROL OF THEIR GROCERY SPENDING



JENNIFER HATCHER
Chief Public Policy Officer
Food Marketing Institute

AS SUMMER COMES TO A CLOSE AND FAMILIES RETURN TO A MORE NORMAL PATTERN OF SCHOOL AND WORK OBLIGATIONS, IT IS A CRITICAL TIME TO EXAMINE HOW THIS SHIFT IMPACTS THEIR SHOPPING BEHAVIORS.

This is especially important in the current economic environment in which food-at-home inflation has largely cooled but prices themselves remain elevated from their pre-pandemic levels.

Recently, FMI, The Food Industry Association, released the fourth installment in our five-part series exploring U.S. grocery shopper behaviors and attitudes. The “Return to Routine” report reveals that consumers are adapting their shopping strategies to be more flexible to keep control of their grocery spending heading into the fall. The report provides a crucial snapshot of how shoppers are finding value and evolving their grocery shopping habits.

WHILE SHOPPERS REPORT CONTINUED CONCERNS REGARDING INFLATIONARY PRESSURES ON FOOD AND OTHER SPENDING CATEGORIES, 83% OF AMERICANS FEEL THEY HAVE AT LEAST SOME CONTROL OVER THEIR GROCERY SPENDING – WITH 40% INDICATING THEY FEEL THEY HAVE A LOT OF CONTROL.

This is welcome news, despite the fact that concern with rising food prices is persistent, widespread and more acute than for other goods and services.

Consumers continue to say their primary store for purchasing food does an excellent job of meeting their needs and have demonstrated over the last year that they are effectively managing their grocery budgets despite higher prices.

Shoppers report their average weekly household grocery spending has held steady during the past 18 months (\$163). In addition, 63% of shoppers say they continue to look for deals and adjust their mix of food stores, products and brands to manage their expenses. In fact, a full 92% of shoppers report having made at least one adjustment in their grocery shopping in response to rising retail food prices.

continued on page 19



The good news for retailers is that grocery shoppers tend to see their food stores as allies in supporting their financial success, and very few choose a primary store that they think is working against them. This is perhaps the reason why so many shoppers continue to enjoy the grocery shopping experience, with 40% either liking or loving it compared to the 11% who consider it a chore.

FMI's U.S. Grocery Shopper Sentiment Index – a measure of attitudes towards grocery shopping in general and feelings about the shopper's current primary store in particular – remains high

at 68 out of 100. The fact that the index has stayed consistent since before the COVID-19 pandemic – all through the supply disruptions, shift to online, and price inflation of the past several years – speaks to shoppers' continued appreciation of their primary store's partnership and their enjoyment of the process of procuring food and nourishment for themselves and their families.

As shoppers return to their routines retailers can support customers making this transition by providing

product offerings that prioritize value and convenience while still creating opportunities for discovery and exploration. Even though consumers may be settling back into normal patterns of life, they continue to look for ways to maximize their grocery budgets while at the same time making their lives easier. ■



To download the U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2024: Return to Routine report, visit www.fmi.org/grocerytrends. This report is part of a five-part U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends series this year.



INDUSTRY NEWS

HIGH-LEVEL GATHERING A MUST FOR INDEPENDENT EXECUTIVES PREPARING FOR THE ROAD AHEAD



GREG FERRARA

President & CEO
National Grocers Association

AMID AN ELECTION YEAR FILLED WITH UNCERTAINTIES, POLITICAL DIVIDES, AND CONTINUED ECONOMIC PRESSURES, INDEPENDENT GROCERS MIGHT FEEL CHALLENGED IN DELIVERING SERVICE AND VALUE TO THEIR CUSTOMERS.

The Executive Conference and Public Policy Summit, scheduled for Oct. 28-30 at The Fairmont in Washington, D.C., is designed to help grocers meet these challenges head-on.

This annual event aims to help independent owners and operators, executives and their leadership teams gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace through in-depth forecasts on the future of the industry and outlooks of emerging economic and business trends. It also provides a chance for independent retailers to strengthen their relationship with trading partners throughout the supply chain, from wholesalers to CPG manufacturers.

The summit's high-impact education and networking will include sessions ranging from trends and technology to the future of policy to the state of our industry. Plus, NGA's relationship with policymakers on Capitol Hill allows for the unique opportunity to meet with federal representatives and help give voice to the issues affecting your business.

"IT WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH OTHER INDEPENDENT RETAILERS TO IMPACT THE FUTURE OF GROCERY," TIM LOWE, PRESIDENT OF NORTH CAROLINA-BASED SUPERMARKET OPERATOR LOWES FOODS, SAID AFTER ATTENDING LAST YEAR'S SUMMIT.

"Hearing from panels of industry professionals sharing their insights was informative and inspiring. The keynote speakers were spot on and highly informative. But the highlight of the event was when we had the opportunity to head to Capitol Hill to speak with our representatives in Congress."

Here's a peek at the content in store for summit attendees: - "Navigating the Future: State of the Independent Grocery Industry," a comprehensive overview of the current landscape and future outlook of the grocery industry, with a panel of industry leaders led by Scott Moses of Solomon Partners.

continued on page 21

- “Engaging the Hispanic Shopper: Strategies for Success in the Fastest Growing Consumer Markets,” including the importance of product assortment, merchandising and marketing that resonate with this diverse community.

- “Leadership Insights: Navigating the Future of Independent Grocery,” an exclusive panel featuring top executives sharing their perspectives on leading in a rapidly changing industry.

- “Harnessing AI for Success: Transforming the Grocery Industry,” a dive into how AI technologies are revolutionizing various aspects of retail operations, from inventory management and customer service to marketing and personalized shopping experiences.

- “Digital Evolution”: Redefining the Modern Grocery Experience,” a guide through the digital tools and strategies that are reshaping the grocery landscape.

“Snacking Revolution: Emerging Trends and Driving Growth,” with insights into how these trends are influencing product innovation, merchandising strategies and in-store experiences.

- “Unlocking Insights: Findings From The NGA-FMS Financial Benchmark Report for Independent Grocers,” offering a deep analysis of the financial health and operational efficiency of independent grocery sector.

- “Powering Growth: Mergers and Acquisitions in the Independent Grocery Sector,” exploring the dynamics of M&A activity within the independent grocery sector.

- “High Highs and Low Lows: The Global Economy and Shifting Input Costs in the Grocery Industry,” with a focus on how changing input costs are reshaping the landscape.

We’ll also have a B2B session that offers a special opportunity for retailer and wholesaler executives to connect with some of the leading suppliers and solution partners in the industry.

Keynoting the summit this year is the renowned Politico bureau chief and senior political

continued on page 22



The banner features the NGA logo on the left, followed by the event title "Executive Conference & Public Policy Summit". Below this, it specifies the location "WASHINGTON D.C." with a location pin icon and the dates "OCTOBER 28 -30, 2024" with a calendar icon. The right side of the banner contains a collage of images showing various attendees, including a woman speaking at a podium and several people in a panel discussion.

columnist Jonathan Martin, who will help you make sense of today's politics. As the summit convenes, the 2024 election will be about a week away. Martin will bring an insider's perspective as he explains the potential impact on policy on your business. Additionally, we are honored to have Dr. Peter Cressy join us to speak on the strategic approach to leading in times of change and crisis.

A retired U.S. Navy rear admiral and currently the Washington Presidential Library's Director of Executive Leadership Programs at Mount Vernon, Dr. Cressy will offer a look back on some of history's greatest leaders, including Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Churchill, and the lessons they offer for today's business leaders.

It's all part of NGA's ongoing efforts to provide independent grocers with the tools they need to succeed amid a dynamic, often volatile, economic and political environment. And it's all available to NGA members. Learn more at ngaexecconference.com. ■

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Who will be the winners?



2024

Annual Show
RECAP



Bringing Grocers to the Table



SPIRIT OF AMERICA AWARD

Established in 1982, the NGA Spirit of America Award honors key industry and community leaders in the areas of community service and government relations on behalf of the independent supermarket industry. NGA has proudly presented this award to distinguished individuals who serve the grocery industry and the public interest, including Presidents George H.W. Bush and Gerald Ford.

“We were thrilled to present Congressman Aderholt with the Spirit of America award, recognizing his unwavering commitment to our nation’s values and his tireless efforts in championing the causes that matter most to our community,” said Ellie Taylor, AGA President and CEO.

Greg Ferrara, NGA President and CEO, added, “Congressman Aderholt has been instrumental in legislative efforts supporting the industry. We are thankful for his continued leadership and dedication to championing policies benefiting the grocery sector.”

A graduate of Birmingham-Southern College, Aderholt continued his studies at Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law, graduating in 1990 before beginning his career in public service.

In 1996, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he has served for over two decades. He has held several key positions, including chairing the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies.

In addition to his work in Congress, Aderholt has been a staunch supporter of numerous initiatives to bolster the food industry and improve food security across the nation.





SPRIT OF ALABAMA AWARD

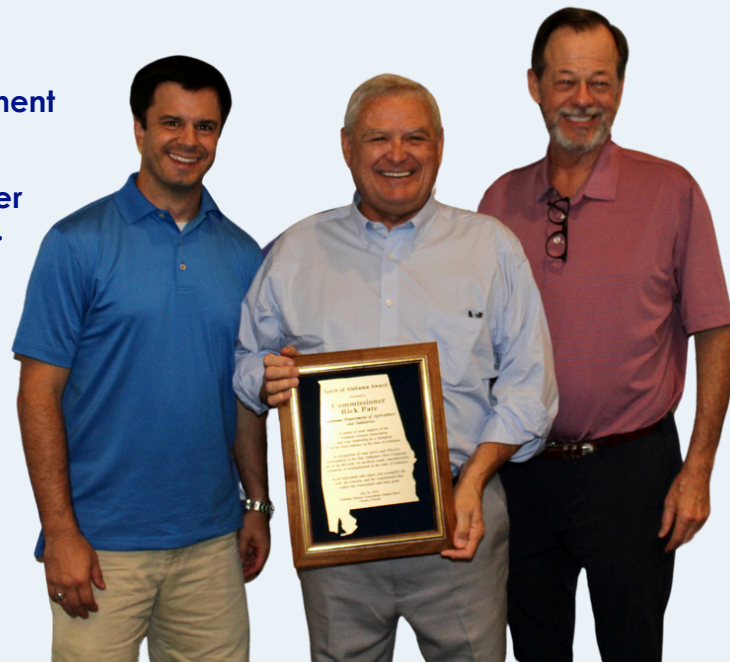
The Spirit of Alabama Award is a special recognition presented to individuals who have made significant contributions to the Alabama Grocers Association (AGA) and demonstrated exceptional leadership as advocates for the food industry in Alabama. Recipients are recognized for their contributions to advancing the AGA's mission, promoting the grocery industry's growth, and advocating for policies that benefit both businesses and the community.

This year's winner is Agriculture Commissioner Rick Pate. Pate grew up working on his family's cattle and poultry farm in Lowndes County. In 1978, he received his degree in ornamental agriculture from Auburn University and in 1982, he started Pate Landscape Company, which has been profitable and award winning.

Pate was elected Commissioner of Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries in 2018 out of four in the Republican primary. He was re-elected in 2022 without Republican or Democratic Party opposition.

Pate understands the role of the grocery industry and its importance to the economic development of the state of Alabama. State laws and regulations have a direct impact on our member companies and he works tirelessly with the grocery industry as a partner to better the entire agriculture community in Alabama.

Pate has worked to promote local food and business in Alabama. He advocates protecting food safety while removing unnecessary barriers and regulations that restrict small business's ability to make a profit. During Commissioner Pate's term as Agriculture Commissioner, he has brought Alabama numerous programs and funding, such as the Cares Act Money, Local Food Purchasing Agreement, A Healthy You Healthy Farm, Sweet Grown Alabama, and the Alabama Farm to School Program.





AGEF FUND THE FUTURE

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation's (AGEF) first ever Fund the Future Event was held Monday night at the Welcome Dinner, which raised over \$36,000 for their scholarship fund. This event is a night of impact to further education and career development in the grocery industry.

This year the AGEF awarded 51 scholarships valued at more than \$49,000 and to date has awarded more than \$1.4 million in total scholarships. "To me this scholarship represents opportunity above all else," said Ethan Parker who was a recipient of the Jack Mitchell Memorial Scholarship. "An opportunity to further my education and thus better myself and the life that I hope to live and through this betterment I hope that I will be able to later spread the growth by learning to help others better themselves and in-turn help my community. This chance to help others by helping myself is the reason that I am so grateful for the opportunity given to me by this scholarship and why it holds so much meaning."

Tickets were sold to win raffle packages, such as the Alabama package, sports package, travel package, golf package, and stock the bar package. Each package was valued at over \$5,000. Mardi Gras beads were also sold for attendees to play Heads or Tails to win a beautiful diamond necklace or Rock, Paper, Scissors to win rare bottles of bourbon. Attendees concluded the Welcome Dinner and danced the night away with the New Orleans Ramblers.



TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

ALABAMA GROCERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Are you looking to grow your career through college courses and professional development?

Apply for the Alabama Grocers Education Foundation Tuition Reimbursement! Funds are available year round!





BUSINESS SESSIONS

The Monday Business Session included Keynote Speaker, Congressman Robert Aderholt with a National Legislative Update; Dr. Glenn Richey, Auburn University, on Revolutionizing the Grocery Industry with AI Innovations; and an Artificial Intelligence Panel including Matt Ellis, Instacart; and Dan DelGiudice, Hyer.

The Tuesday Business Session included Dr. Bruce Bright, On Target Leading, Generational Gap Seminar; an overview of Alabama's Retail Organized Theft Laws with Deputy Director Trisha Mellberg Cater, Alabama District Attorneys Association, and Jeff Bradley, Alabama Office of Prosecution Services; and lastly Rebecca Henshaw, OC&C Strategy Consultants, outlined Retention in the Grocery Frontline.

Thank you to all of our speakers and attendees for making our 2024 Annual Show Business Sessions a great success. We hope that through these sessions, you gained invaluable industry insights, practical strategies for business growth, and the opportunity to network with thought leaders and peers alike.



**CONGRESSMAN
ROBERT
ADERHOLT**
National Legislative
Update



**DR. GLENN
RICHEY**
Revolutionizing the
Grocery Industry with
AI Innovations



**DAN
DELGIUDICE
& MATT ELLIS**
Artificial Intelligence
Panel



**DR. BRUCE
BRIGHT**
Close the Gap! Make
Your Connections
Count by Using Energy,
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**DEPUTY
DIRECTOR
TRISHA MELLBERG
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Organized Retail Theft



**JEFF
BRADLEY**
Organized Retail Theft



**REBECCA
HENSHAW**
Fighting What's
Different Differently -
Retention in the
Grocery Frontline



EXHIBIT HALL

On Tuesday, the exhibit hall was filled with more than 60 booths with vendors and wholesalers from all aspects of the grocery industry. The exhibit hall theme was Mardi Gras Party, where exhibitors went all out to bring the spirit of Nola down to Florida! Special thank you to Imperial Dade, for being our exhibit hall sponsor this year. We could not of done it without you!

Congrats to Gulf Distributing who won best decorated double booth and Blue Bell Creameries who won best decorated single booth the AGA Annual Show Best Decorated Booth Competition.





Scan here to see all the pictures!





AGEF BEST BAGGER COMPETITION

The Alabama Grocer's Education Foundation hosted the Alabama Best Bagger Competition at their 34th Annual Show at the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort in Destin, Florida.

The AGEF hosted Marisol Lopez of Food City, and Julian Pagan of Publix Super Markets, Inc., who won their store competitions and qualified to compete for the state title. Lopez placed second and received a \$500 cash prize. Pagan was crowned the winner, with the Best Bagger Competition trophy and \$1,000 cash prize.

Pagan will compete in the National Grocers Association's Best Bagger Championship in 2025 in Las Vegas. The national winner, in addition to taking home "bagging rights," will be awarded the \$10,000 grand prize. The runner-up will receive \$5,000, while third and fourth place contestants win \$1,000 and 5th place wins \$500.

Congratulations Marisol and Julian and thank you to Bunzl Distribution and Data Cash Register (DCR) for sponsoring and judging this great event. We could not of done it without you!



Annual Show

Bringing Grocers to the Table

JULY 13-16, 2025
SANDESTIN
GOLF & BEACH RESORT



TAILGATE PARTY





ASSOCIATION NEWS

AGA WISHES TO RECOGNIZE OUR DIAMOND AND FOUR STAR SPONSORS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE 2024 ANNUAL SHOW

★ ★ FOUR STAR SPONSORS ★ ★



DIAMOND SPONSORS





BAB FOOD PRODUCT EXPO

The Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association held their annual Buy Alabama's Best Food Product Expo at Children's of Alabama on August 22nd, 2024, kicking off their September promotion. Alabama based companies showcased their products and offered samples to retailers from across the state and the Children's of Alabama employees.

The Buy Alabama's Best Campaign formed in 2006 when four Alabama companies, the Alabama Grocers Association and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries saw a need to identify products that were made in Alabama. Today, Buy Alabama's Best has grown to over 35 companies that are either headquartered in Alabama, or produce, manufacture or make their products in our state.



Retailers and wholesalers are a vital part in communicating the mission to the Alabama consumer in letting them know what products are made, manufactured, produced, or headquartered here in the state of Alabama. The sales of Alabama products contribute significantly to the state's economy, amounting to a \$2 billion impact and along with the food service industries, employ one out of every four Alabamians.

Since 2006, the Buy Alabama's Best Campaign has donated over \$855,000 to help fight childhood cancer including the sponsorship of the Buy Alabama's Best Kitchen. Retailers and the entire grocery industry in Alabama are proud to be a part of this worthwhile program.

For a complete list of Buy Alabama Best participating companies, visit www.buyalabamasbest.org ■



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Columbia Southern University	Perfect Hydration	Wells Enterprises, Inc.
Dirt Road Gourmet	Pictsweet	Wright's Market
Dutch Farms	Post Consumer Brands	



ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

**ALABAMA GROCERS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION
CLAY SHOOT
OCTOBER 10, 2024**

**October 30, 2024
The Club
Birmingham, AL**

RETAILER OF THE YEAR	WHOLESALER OF THE YEAR	VENDOR OF THE YEAR
Kamal Constantine Piggly Wiggly Gulf Coast	Charles Weathington UNFI	Don Richardson Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED

**ALABAMA GROCERS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

**GOLF OUTING
APRIL 3, 2025
TIMBERLINE GOLF CLUB**

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Bringing Grocers to the Table

**JULY 13-16, 2025
SANDESTIN
GOLF & BEACH RESORT**

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