

Alabama Grocer

2025, ISSUE 2

Alabama Grocers Association

Looking Foward to
Our 2025 Annual
Show
PAGE 5

SNAP:
Strengthening
Communities,
Supporting Industry
PAGES 6-7

**2025-2026 AGEF
Scholarship
Winners**
PAGES 22-24A

2025 NGA Fly-In
PAGE 30



*Enriching Education and Career Development
in the Grocery Industry*



ACCELERATING

Fresh

Make the call sooner
rather than later to learn
how Associated Wholesale
Grocers can provide you a lower cost
of goods and a real chance to compete
in your marketplace today and in the future!

**TO ACCELERATE FRESH IN YOUR
STORE PLEASE CONTACT:**



**KEITH
MARTIN**

828-228-4055

keith.martin@awginc.com



**ROBERT
DILLARD**

423-715-0385

robert.dillard@awginc.com



FEATURES



JULY
13-16
2025

JULY
5-8
2026

JULY
25-28
2027

JULY
23-26
2028

Chairman's Message

Planning for the upcoming 2025 Annual Show.

President's Message

SNAP: Strengthening Communities, Supporting Industry.



2025-2026 AGEF Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to our 2025-2026 AGEF Scholarship Winners!



2025 NGA Fly-In For Fair Competition

The AGA collaborates with the NGA in Washington, D.C.

COLUMNS

Chairman's Message

Looking Forward to Our 2025 Annual Show 5

President's Message

SNAP: Strengthening Communities, Supporting Industry 6-7

Legislative Update

Election Season Kicks Off 8-10

Industry News

Kick-Off to Summer Means Alabama's Successful Tourism Season is Full Speed Ahead 14

Independent Grocers Make Their Voices Heard in Washington 15

Who Tells Your Story? 16-17

The Logic of Grocery Shopping to "Eat Well" 18-19

Association News

Tuition Reimbursement 12

Fund the Future 13

2024 AGA Annual Show Sponsors 20

AGA New Members 21A

Are You Our Next Member? 21B

2025-2026 AGEF Scholarship Winners 22-24A

2026 AGEF Scholarship Program 24B

2025 Buy Alabama's Best Day on the Lawn 26-27

2025 AGEF Golf Outing 28-29

2025 NGA Fly-In 30

Upcoming Events and Social Media Accounts 31



ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Chairman of the Board Bob Crawford <i>United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama</i>	Vice Chairman Wade Payne <i>Food Giant/Mitchell Grocery Corporation</i>	Treasurer Bill Davis <i>A & R Super Markets, Inc.</i>	Sergeant-at-Arms James Cochran <i>Buffalo Rock/Pepsi</i>
Immediate Past Chairman Harold Garrett <i>Gateway Foods</i>	Past Chairman Frank D'Amico, III <i>BTC Wholesale Distributors</i>	Secretary Bo Taylor <i>Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED, Inc.</i>	President/CEO Ellie Smotherman Taylor <i>Alabama Grocers Association</i>

VICE PRESIDENTS

Jack Carlile <i>UNFI</i>	Chris Crobby <i>UTZ Snacks/Golden Flake</i>	Jay Mitchell <i>JMBL/Mitchell Grocery Corporation</i>	Tom Sayers <i>Publix Super Markets, Inc.</i>
Alison Steineker <i>Alabama Power Company</i>			

DIRECTORS

Stan Alexander <i>Associated Grocers of the South</i>	Christopher Brown <i>Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distribution Company</i>	David Brownlow <i>Blue Bell Creameries</i>	Paul Burnett <i>Higginbotham Insurance</i>
Lucy Greer Cheriogotis <i>Autry Greer & Son's</i>	Kirk Clark <i>Mitchell Grocery Corp.</i>	Gerry D'Alessandro <i>Fresh Value</i>	Mike Hanson <i>Milo's</i>
Kyle Kimsey <i>Red Diamond</i>	Bubba Lindley <i>EDLINCO</i>	Manny Shoemaker <i>Acosta Sales & Marketing</i>	Cliff Thomas <i>Campbell's Snacks</i>
Austin Virciglio <i>Piggly Wiggly</i>	Charles Weathington <i>UNFI</i>	Boyd West <i>Associated Wholesale Grocers</i>	Paul Whitley <i>Bimbo Bakeries</i>
Stacy Wiggins <i>Rouses Enterprises</i>	Chris Woods <i>Retail Data Systems</i>		

EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS

Peter "Greg" Gregerson, Jr. <i>Gregerson's Foods</i>	James Scott <i>James Scott & Company</i>	John Wilson <i>Super Foods Supermarkets</i>
---	---	--

AGA STAFF

Julie Owen <i>Event & Education Director</i>	Patrick McWhorter <i>Legislative Consultant</i>	Laura Brittain Stubblefield <i>Membership & Communications Director</i>
---	--	--



ALABAMA GROCERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Tom Sayers <i>Publix Super Markets, Inc.</i>	Vice Chairman Jake Sim <i>A & R Super Markets, Inc.</i>	Secretary/Treasurer Don Richardson <i>Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED, Inc.</i>	President/CEO Ellie Smotherman Taylor <i>Alabama Grocers Association</i>
---	---	---	--

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Anthony Bice <i>Bunzl Distribution</i>	Jim Cetrulo <i>Don Francisco's Coffee</i>	David D'Amico <i>BTC Wholesale Distributors</i>	Blake Gillum <i>DCR</i>
Myron McCormick <i>K-V-A-T/Food City</i>	Steven Harden <i>Buffalo Rock/Pepsi</i>	Uwe von Sehrwald <i>Truno Retail Technology Solutions</i>	Don Speigner <i>UTZ Snacks/Golden Flake</i>
Andrew Virciglio <i>Piggly Wiggly</i>	Glen Wilkins <i>Walmart</i>		



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR 2025 ANNUAL SHOW



BOB CRAWFORD

President

United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama



AS WE HEAD INTO THE SUMMER MONTHS, THE AGA IS BUSY WITH PLANNING FOR THE 2025 ANNUAL SHOW.

This year, the convention will be held July 13-16 at the Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort in Destin, Florida. As always, it will be a great time for all members to spend quality time together. Highlights will include business sessions with industry leaders, an incredible exhibit hall, Best Bagger Competition, dinners and entertainment.

Please make sure you plan to attend our business sessions. I expect it to be a packed house. We have some very special guests scheduled for Monday mornings business session starting at 8:00am.

The AGA has recently endorsed Tommy Tuberville for Governor and Rick Pate for Lieutenant Governor and everyone will be interested in hearing from them on their future plans for Alabama. This will certainly be a treat.

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL SHOW WILL BE ONE OF THE BEST.

If you have not registered yet, please do so today.

In closing, summer months are a great time for all of us to focus on building the AGA membership.

I encourage all current members to reach out to someone you know personally and talk with them about our association to convey what joining can do for them. The benefits include lobbying legislative efforts on key bills affecting the food industry, our annual convention, funding \$1.5 million dollars to member scholarships and building great relationships that help strengthen our industry. I look forward to seeing you all in July and please have a safe and prosperous summer and as always, thank you for your support of the AGA. ■

Sincerely,

Bob Crawford



AGA ANNUAL SHOW

Sandestin Golf & Beach Resort

JULY
13-16
2025

JULY
5-8
2026

JULY
25-28
2027

JULY
23-26
2028



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SNAP: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES, SUPPORTING INDUSTRY



ELLIE TAYLOR

President/CEO

Alabama Grocers Association

IN THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF FOOD RETAIL AND PUBLIC POLICY, THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) STANDS AS BOTH A HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVE AND AN ECONOMIC ENGINE.

FOR TRADE PROFESSIONALS IN GROCERY, LOGISTICS, AND POLICY, UNDERSTANDING SNAP'S IMPACT IS CRITICAL—NOT ONLY FOR SERVING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, BUT FOR SUSTAINING JOBS, DRIVING REVENUE, AND SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIES.

A Pillar of Food Security and System Resilience

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, provides temporary nutrition assistance to millions of Americans—including working families, seniors, children, and people with disabilities. It serves a dual mandate: to ensure access to basic nutrition and to uphold personal dignity. SNAP is a powerful tool for fighting hunger and supporting communities.



photo courtesy of PennLive.com.

For grocers and suppliers, this translates into clear operational parameters:

- Benefits may only be used for eligible food items—excluding alcohol, tobacco, hot prepared foods, and non-food products.
- SNAP is accessible across state lines, allowing continuity of care and commerce during natural disasters or population displacement.
- Transactions are conducted electronically, ensuring traceability and efficiency.

Work Requirements & Workforce Engagement

Federal work requirements help align SNAP with broader employment and volunteer initiatives. States may also tailor their own programs, creating opportunities to partner with workforce development and community organizations. For trade professionals, this can mean:

- Collaborative hiring initiatives,
- Community volunteer pipelines,
- And greater engagement with mission-driven programs.

Driving Economic Impact: The Alabama Example

SNAP doesn't just put food on tables—it sustains the supply chain behind it. In Alabama alone:

- Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates approximately \$1.50 in local economic activity.
- 7,800 grocery jobs are directly supported by SNAP-related spending.
- The ripple effect includes over \$350 million in wages and more than \$521 million in total industry impact.

These figures underline the program's dual importance to both public health and private enterprise. Grocery retailers serve as the frontline of SNAP's delivery system, combining operational efficiency with customer service and regulatory compliance.

Policy and Reform: What's at Stake?

As lawmakers weigh proposed changes to SNAP at both state and federal levels, industry stakeholders have a seat at the table—and a voice worth raising. In Alabama, pending reforms could shift up to \$280 million in costs to the state, posing significant challenges to administrative efficiency and beneficiary access.

Smart reforms should prioritize:

- Improved payment accuracy to reduce administrative burdens
- Enhanced fraud prevention to maintain public trust
- Streamlined administration to cut red tape
- And protection of access for populations who depend on the program

Any weakening of SNAP threatens not just families—but the businesses and workers who serve them.

A Strategic Asset for the Industry

For the grocery industry, SNAP is more than a public assistance program—it's a stabilizing force and a driver of consistent, measurable economic activity. As demand patterns shift and labor markets fluctuate, SNAP provides a buffer that protects both consumer nutrition and retail resilience.

Trade professionals must remain informed, engaged, and proactive in supporting SNAP's continued success. At its best, the program represents a rare convergence of public good and private viability—a system where mission and market go hand in hand. ■

Sincerely, *Ellie Taylor*





LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

ELECTION SEASON KICKS OFF



PATRICK MCWHORTER

Legislative Consultant
The McWhorter Group

WE ARE STILL RECOVERING FROM THE SPRING LEGISLATIVE SESSION, AND ELECTION SEASON HAS ALREADY BEGUN. EVERY ELECTED OFFICE FROM STATE SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES, TO GOVERNOR, LT. GOVERNOR AND ALL OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICES, ARE UP FOR ELECTION IN MAY 2026.

UNDER STATE LAW, CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED FROM SOLICITING AND RECEIVING CAMPAIGN FUNDS, BUT THAT PROHIBITION LIFTED ON MAY 19TH SO CALLS ARE COMING IN FAST AND FURIOUS. LET'S BREAK THEM DOWN IN ORDER.

Governor

The office of most interest statewide is, of course, that of Governor. Kay Ivey has reached her limit of two full terms, and having served since the resignation of Governor Bentley, she is now the longest-serving Governor in Alabama's history. Current Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth has also reached his two-term limit in that position, and had been widely expected to be the leading candidate to move up to the top spot.

However, when US Senator Tommy Tuberville made known he was announcing to return to the state and run for Governor, Ainsworth declared he would not be a candidate. On social media he wrote, "The decision was made after lengthy discussions and prayers with his supporters, friends, and family. Kendall and I have decided that focusing on our children during their last years in high school and transitioning to the private sector makes the most sense for all of us at this time in our lives." But no one believes we have seen the last of Will Ainsworth in statewide politics.

After months of speculation, Sen. Tommy Tuberville announced he will enter the race to succeed Gov. Ivey during an appearance on Fox News' Will Cain Show. Standing in a barbecue restaurant in Auburn surrounded by family and supporters, Tuberville made his widely anticipated gubernatorial run official. "I will be the future governor of the great state of Alabama," Tuberville said. He will not run for a second term in the US Senate, leaving yet another open statewide office this coming year.



photo courtesy of wbhm.com.

His new website, coachforgovernor.com, highlights his campaign priorities, including “fighting back against woke ideology,” bringing jobs to Alabama, and improving education.

Tuberville has a Florida beach home and his residency has again been in the spotlight in the lead up to his announcement. The Alabama Constitution requires candidates to be “resident citizens of this state at least seven years next before the date of their election.” He and his wife claim a homestead exemption in the city of Auburn. Leaders of the state Democratic Party have promised to make it a major issue claiming he actually resides in a home at the beach in Florida.

The Petroleum & Convenience Marketers Association and Alabama Grocers Association are the first two in-state business organizations to endorse Tuberville.

At this point, there are no other potential candidates vying for the Republican nomination. Many expect former US Senator Doug Jones to run as a Democrat.

Lt. Governor

Yet another open seat, several candidates have announced for



photo courtesy of Yellow Hammer News.

Lt. Governor. First was current Secretary of State Wes Allen of Troy. Current Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries Rick Pate of Lowndesboro has now announced he will also seek the #2 office in the state. Pate is limited and cannot run for reelection to his current position. Rumored to be considering the race is Alabama Republican Party Chair John Wahl from rural Madison County.

Allen served as Probate Judge of Pike County then State Representative before being elected Secretary of State. Pate served as mayor of Lowndesboro before being elected Commissioner of Agriculture 8 years ago. Wahl has not served in office previously, but was appointed Chair of the Alabama Public Library Board by Governor Ivey.

The AGA has endorsed our long-time friend Rick Pate for Lt. Governor.

One notable candidate not running this time is PSC President Twinkle Cavanaugh. She ran a good race against Ainsworth 8 years ago, but opted to accept an appointment as USDA State Director of Rural Development from President Trump instead of running for office. State Representative Cynthia Almond from Tuscaloosa was appointed by Governor Ivey to replace Cavanaugh.

Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries

Three candidates have declared for this office. State Sen. Jack Williams of Mobile County has served in the House of Representative and in the Senate for two terms and is a farmer. Marshall County farmer and grocer Corey Hill, an AGA member, serves as Mayor of Douglas and is active in ALFA Farmers Federation and state politics.

continued on page 10

Corey is promising to prioritize food safety, reviving the rural crime task force, lower taxes, and deregulation if elected. Also announced is Christina Woerner McInnis of Baldwin County, whose family is in the turfgrass business.

US Senate

With a rare opening, this US Senate seat will draw any number of candidates. However, some of those, especially legislators, may not make the attempt since it would require them to give up safe seats in the Legislature.

At this point, it appears the two major candidates considering the race are current Attorney General Steve Marshall (also term limited in his current office), and First District US Rep. Barry Moore.

Marshall made his announcement to run last week in the Washington (DC) Examiner newspaper. Moore is still considering the race. US Rep. Dale Strong of Huntsville has announced he will not seek the nomination.

The most interesting speculation has centered around Auburn University Basketball Coach Bruce Pearl. He has not declared his candidacy, but he has not yet said he would not run. Some claim he would be disqualified as a GOP candidate because of past contributions to Democratic candidates.

Attorney General

We expect a fairly large field for this open seat as well.

State Supreme Justice Jay Mitchell has resigned that position and announced he will seek the GOP nomination. In his announcement, Mitchell emphasized a tough-on-crime approach, strict enforcement of immigration laws, unwavering support for law enforcement, and opposition to progressive policies.

He pledged to “lock up violent offenders and make sure they stay locked up,” and to “aggressively pursue mass deportations” of undocumented immigrants. Blount County District Attorney Pamela Blount has also declared her candidacy. And we expect Katherine Robertson, serving as current AG Marshall’s Chief Counsel, will also get into the race. ■



photo courtesy of Vastphotos.com.

Quality service is the main ingredient in everything we do.

At Buffalo Rock, every day we strive to provide quality service to our customers. It's a reputation we've built for more than a century, and a source of pride to us. We are equally proud of the communities we serve, and we stay dedicated to making them better places to live and work. The positive impact that we have in the places we do business will always be one of the most important services we offer.

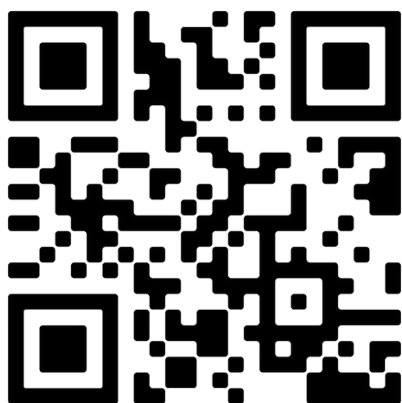


buffalorock.com



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!

**THE ALABAMA GROCERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION IS DEDICATED TO ENRICHING
EDUCATION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN THE GROCERY INDUSTRY.**

 300 Vestavia Parkway Ste. 3500, Birmingham, AL 35216
 (205) 823-5498

 jowen@alabamagrocers.org
 alabamagrocers.org



ASSOCIATION NEWS



The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation's newest event, Fund the Future is set to be a thrilling and charitable affair, offering attendees the chance to win big while supporting a great cause. The event will feature raffle packages with exciting themes such as Family, Sports, Stock the Bar, and Travel. Attendees will have the chance to participate in games like Head or Tails for a shot at winning a Louis Vuitton purse and pearls from Brombergs! The event proceeds support the Alabama Grocers Education Foundation's scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs, furthering education and career development in the grocery industry. Voices of Gratitude: Scholarship Recipients Share the Impact of Winning the AGEF Scholarship.



"I am so grateful to have received this scholarship and beyond thankful to the Alabama Grocers Association for their generous contribution. In funding my education, the lives and livelihoods of future patients are actually being supported as a result. I want to be a physician assistant that listens to people and truly cares for my patients, making them feel valued and heard." - Lucy Wills, recipient of the Parent Scholarship from Red Diamond Coffee & Tea.

"Winning this scholarship means a lot to me. I came to the U.S. 11 years ago, and since then, I've worked hard to create opportunities for myself and my family. This support not only eases the financial burden of college, but it also reminds me how far I've come and how much is possible with determination. It motivates me to keep pushing toward my goals and give back to others who are chasing their dreams like I am." - Giorgio De Francesco, recipient of the Student Scholarship from Diaz Foods.



"Winning this scholarship does not only give me financial support, but also encourages me to continue striving towards my goals. I would always go to the AGA conventions with my dad, and I would hear about the people that won this scholarship. It is a blessing to receive this scholarship from the association I have been a part of since I was a child."
- Corrin Burnett, recipient of the Parent Scholarship from Higginbotham Insurance.

For more information about our Foundation, please visit
<https://alabamagrocers.org/foundation/>.



Together our impact is great!



INDUSTRY NEWS

KICK-OFF TO SUMMER MEANS ALABAMA'S SUCCESSFUL TOURISM SEASON IS FULL SPEED AHEAD



PAUL DEMARCO

AGA General Counsel
Parsons, Lee, & Juliano, PC

AS THE SUMMER SEASON IS UPON US, ALABAMA IS PROVING TO BE ONE OF THE MOST SOUGHT OUT DESTINATIONS FOR TRAVELERS FROM AROUND THE NATION.

From the mountains in North Alabama to the Gulf Coast beaches, the state offers some of the most diverse topography in the country. The beaches in Baldwin and Mobile County attract thousands of visitors each year to play in their white sand and clear blue water, but they are also destinations for great golfing and fishing. In addition, fresh seafood brings those who want to enjoy some of the best culinary delights the state has to offer.

The summer months also will attract those that want to see higher elevations. As the state celebrates trails the next two years, hikers, bikers and those that enjoy floating down one of Alabama's many rivers will also take advantage of the great outdoor recreation. The hills and valleys that make up the southernmost peaks of the Appalachian Mountains provide some of the best trail adventures in the east coast.

Finally, the state's agritourism industry has also become a magnet for those that want to visit Alabama farms to pick fresh fruit and vegetables. All summer you can find farmers markets and grocers across the state offering a bountiful of crops just picked to take straight back to your kitchen table.

So what does the boom in tourism mean for our state? Alabama Governor Kay Ivey and Tourism Director Lee Sentell report that last year there were almost 29 million tourists who made Alabama their destination of choice. With that, they spent some \$23.9 billion. Actually four of the past five years in a row Alabama's tourism dollars have increased by almost \$1 billion. This is no surprise, as those vacationing in the state have increased 13 out of the past 14 years.

This success in tourism is important to the state's labor market as well because there are over 250,000 jobs supported by the state's hospitality industry. And \$88 million go to the state's general fund budget, which contributes to a more diverse economic impact to support state functions and agencies. Thus, tourism is a significant sector of Alabama's growing economy that both brings new visitors to the state and provides outdoor adventures for those that call Alabama home. More visitors to the state also means more customers to support Alabama businesses, so a win-win for all around.

SO THIS SUMMER WHILE YOU ARE ENJOYING WHAT ALABAMA HAS TO OFFER, KNOW YOU ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE STATE'S VERY SUCCESSFUL TOURISM INDUSTRY. ■



INDUSTRY NEWS

INDEPENDENT GROCERS MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD IN WASHINGTON



GREG FERRARA

President & CEO
National Grocers Association

EVERY SPRING, THE NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION'S FLY-IN FOR FAIR COMPETITION REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING SIMPLE YET POWERFUL: WHEN INDEPENDENT GROCERS COME TOGETHER AND SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, WE CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS.

The 2025 Fly-In was no exception. More than 125 independent operators, wholesalers, and state association partners from 38 states converged on Capitol Hill with one clear mission: to advocate for fair competition and the future of hometown grocery stores across the country. Of course, we had great representation from Alabama, which counted Ellie Taylor, Wade Payne, and Jay Mitchell as active attendees.

WHAT MAKES THIS EVENT SO SPECIAL ISN'T JUST THE MEETINGS OR THE MESSAGE — IT'S THE PEOPLE.

Our members left their stores, warehouses, and offices to walk through the halls of Congress and tell their stories. And those stories matter.

They're about feeding communities, supporting local jobs, and facing real competitive pressures from dominant power buyers that tilt the playing field.

This year's Fly-In brought together seasoned advocates and first-timers alike. Lawmakers and their staff heard firsthand about the unique challenges independent grocers face — from significant changes to SNAP and skyrocketing swipe fees to anticompetitive practices that make it harder for local businesses to compete and grow, these issues aren't just policy talking points, they impact whether a grocer can keep their doors open in a rural town or expand their business to other neighborhoods.

Of course, it wouldn't be the NGA Fly-In without a little fun. One of my favorite moments?

Watching Rep. Mike Thompson from California face off against Best Bagger National Champion Sebastian Moretti in a spirited showdown. The Congressman gave it his best shot, but Sebastian proved once again that bagging is both an art and a science. The crowd loved it, and the moment served as a reminder that independent grocers aren't just local businesses — we're community institutions with heart and personality.

Reflecting on this year's successful Fly-In, I'm filled with gratitude — for our members who show up and speak out, the policymakers who take time to listen, and the resilient, community-driven spirit of independent grocers. I hope you'll save the date and join us next year, May 19–20, 2026, in Washington, DC! ■



INDUSTRY NEWS

WHO TELLS YOUR STORY?



MICHAEL SANSOLO

Retail Food Industry Consultant

THERE'S A RECURRING THEME IN THE BROADWAY HIT MUSICAL "HAMILTON" THAT PROVIDES AN IMPORTANT—AND MAYBE UNCOMFORTABLE—LESSON FOR THE RETAIL FOOD INDUSTRY.

The theme, repeated in a number of songs, is the question about who tells your story or who controls the narrative about you, your business and your products. The point the musical makes is that Hamilton's narrative was largely told by his political rivals after he was famously killed in a duel in the early 1800s.

Those same rivals largely erased Hamilton's story despite the fact that he created many important parts of the US government and stabilized the nascent nation's financial situation. In fact, despite his face appearing on the \$10 bill, Hamilton's work was largely forgotten until the hit show opened a decade ago, suddenly making his story incredibly well known.

The story of your stores, products and services aren't near as dramatic, but they have the same challenge.

YOU HAVE A NARRATIVE YOU WANT CUSTOMERS TO KNOW WHETHER IT'S ABOUT YOUR PRICES, SERVICES, STAFFERS OR EVEN YOUR HISTORY IN THE COMMUNITY. IT'S YOUR STORY AND IN MANY WAYS IT MAKES YOU SPECIAL.

Only you don't always get to tell your story. More than ever your story is completely out of your control. Today a single blogger or influencer with a following on any one of a number of social media networks can rewrite your story in very challenging ways.

Based on their experiences with you they might disparage you in ways you cannot imagine. It's so bad that industry experts say vital information on something like food safety or product recalls can be overwhelmed by misinformation that seems so prevalent in today's society.

In other words, forces with no insight or expertise can erase your story in countless harmful ways and frankly no business can wait 200 years for a Broadway show to rebuild their legacy. And facts don't seem to matter much either. Coca-Cola was recently blamed in a false video claiming the beverage giant was firing Latino workers at a time of heightened anxiety in the Hispanic community. The video, which again is false, is blamed for impacting sales significantly.

The challenge then is to learn how to control and tell your story as best as possible so that even in the most difficult of times, your message gets told correctly.

The first step is making sure you have someone on staff or working in concert with you regularly monitoring how your company is being talked about online.

Remember that social media is largely unregulated and dynamic so this needs to be an on-going and regular effort. As the old joke goes, a lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth pulls its pants up in the morning.

You don't want to get caught flat-footed and that's why you need a monitor. That might be especially difficult for a small independent retailer or a small manufacturer, but increasingly this role is a necessity not a luxury. Find a way to get it done.

At the same time, make sure your story is told regularly in your stores, on your products and on your social media accounts (which you better have.) Make sure the story is consistent and correct so that no one can find holes in what you are saying.

Lastly build allies who can help. For everyone in Alabama, your association is a key ally who can help with education and especially with government relations. Make sure you are an active part of the AGA so that when you need help everyone knows you and is ready to help.

Also build alliances throughout the industry. Suppliers and retailers must work together with information as well as products.

Clear communication strategies are essential especially when there are problems, which sadly, there are almost always happening.

Build alliances outside the industry as well. If there's a local newspaper or television station in your area, try to make friends by offering up some interesting stories perhaps about new stores, services, eating trends or whatever else you might think up. There are many reasons we're all hesitant to reach out to the media, but building a relationship might help you dampen a damaging story or shed light on misinformation.

We all had a simple example in the recent past when egg prices skyrocketed. For many shoppers, the only narrative they heard was about retailers profiteering. Far fewer got the real details about how bird flu decimated the hen population vastly cutting the supply of eggs. Far too few stores, in my opinion and observations, even posted simple signs in the dairy case to explain what was happening. Without your voice, shoppers only heard a distorted story and in many cases they blamed you.

And remember, your story is also about good news. If your company is celebrating a milestone, talk it up. You no doubt hire a large number of local people including students. Talk up those stories as well.

Suppliers are part of this as well. Let's remember that during Covid shoppers became highly familiar with QR codes that can easily link a shopper to all manner of information including menu ideas, nutritional facts and even details on where products are sourced—an especially good way to feature locally sourced products and local farmers.

The challenge of telling your story might be one more thing to add to an enormous "to-do" list, but, more than ever, it's essential. Remember, there are countless actors out there with incredible opportunities to tell your story without you. Sure, they might say some nice things, but you need to know what they are saying, especially when it's negative.

Remember if a founding father's story can be so easily distorted, it's an issue we all need confront. It's your story: own it and tell it regularly. Especially in the age of Facebook, Tik Tok, Reddit and more. ■



INDUSTRY NEWS

THE LOGIC OF GROCERY SHOPPING TO “EAT WELL”



JENNIFER HATCHER

Chief Public Policy Officer
Food Marketing Institute

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, U.S. SHOPPERS HAVE FACED MAJOR DISRUPTIONS — FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS LIFESTYLE UPEAVALS TO RISING PRICES DRIVEN BY INFLATION AND SUPPLY CHAIN ISSUES.

**DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES,
AMERICAN CONSUMERS
CONTINUE TO ENJOY GROCERY
SHOPPING AND HAVE
KEPT THEIR PURCHASING HABITS
REMARKABLY CONSISTENT.**

FMI recently released our U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2025: The Logic of Food Shopping report – for 50 years, FMI has prioritized this consumer research – and it kicks off our 2025 series offering timely insights into grocery shopping behaviors and shoppers’ logic behind food budgets and shopping decisions.

We found that despite several years of economic uncertainty, shoppers’ attitudes and habits around grocery shopping have remained stable.

To better understand this dynamic, we further explored shopper aspirations to “eat well,” an outlook that forms the foundation for how shoppers think about value and shapes their choices about which foods to buy, how to cook and where to shop.

While every shopper has their own definition, “eating well” encompasses the needs, desires and values that guide shoppers’ decisions about what to buy, where to shop and whether something is worth its cost.

For today’s grocery shoppers, value is more than just the numbers at the bottom of a receipt. Price and quantity matter, but they go beyond these considerations. Shoppers also determine value in terms of attributes such as quality, freshness, health, nutrition and ethics.

They weigh how well products align with their personal preferences, needs and habits. Shoppers consider their own and their household’s desires for pleasure, novelty, variety and positive shopping experiences. And they balance these against convenience in both the products they use and in their shopping.

Despite the economic pressures they face, consumers overwhelmingly tell us they enjoy grocery shopping and that they are willing and able to budget in order to “eat well” based on their specific values and needs. In fact, our U.S. Grocery Shopper Sentiment Index is currently holding steady at 72 out of 100. While individual needs vary, by and large, most shoppers prioritize four things when shopping for food:

health, entertainment, exploration and convenience. Satisfying these key needs are important to shoppers, and they tailor their overall budgets and food spending behaviors to ensure they “eat well.”

Still, several factors are weighing on consumers. Most Americans (70%) say they are extremely or very worried about rising grocery prices, and 78% said they are at least somewhat concerned about the impact of tariffs on the cost of imported food and ingredients.

The analysis revealed a silver lining: most consumers (75%) report feeling in control over their grocery spending.

However, that confidence has declined in recent months, as 85% of consumers expressed confidence in control over their food spending in September 2024.

In response, shoppers report using various strategies to stretch their food budget further. Traditional methods like list-making (83%), taking household inventory (79%), meal planning (69%), and seeking out coupons or discounts (60%) remain the most common.

Shoppers try to stay committed to their goal, even if some have to make deeper compromises in response to their economic circumstances.

For brands and retailers, these findings represent potential strategies for positioning food and beverages in ways that resonate more deeply with shoppers’ values, help them feel more at ease about their spending and offer them opportunities to shift their budgets to food and household expenses.

Understanding what “eating well” means to shoppers is essential for food retailers and manufacturers to understand how shoppers optimize their food spending and how they prioritize food within their larger set of expenses, especially in a time of mounting economic uncertainty and challenge. ■

To download the U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends 2025: The Logic of Food Shopping report, visit www.fmi.org/grocerytrends.





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.....





ASSOCIATION NEWS

AGA NEW MEMBERS



Julia Cannon
Ole Mexican Foods, Inc.
jcannon@olemexicanfoods.net



Mary Alice Kline
Pinnacle Financial Partners
maryalice.kline@pnfp.com



Tommy Harber
Family Brands, LLC
tommy.harber@familybrandsllc.com

ARE YOU OUR NEXT MEMBER? ALABAMA GROCERS ASSOCIATION THE VOICE OF THE GROCERY INDUSTRY



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT LAURA STUBBLEFIELD
LSTUBBLEFIELD@ALABAMAGROCERS.ORG | 205.823.5498

OR



SCAN THE QR CODE TO BE TAKEN TO OUR ONLINE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION!

ADVOCACY



NETWORKING



ANNUAL SHOW



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



EVENTS



EDUCATION FOUNDATION



PUBLIC RELATIONS



AND SO MUCH MORE!





ASSOCIATION NEWS

2025-2026 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Anna Agan
Parent Scholarship
Campbell's Snacks



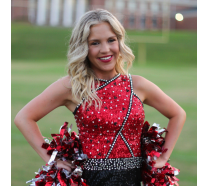
Madison Allen
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling
Company UNITED, Inc.



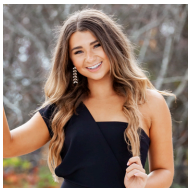
Stephen Archer
Parent Scholarship
United-Johnson
Brothers of Alabama



Jackson Bailey
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling
Company UNITED, Inc.



Kamryn Bailey
Parent Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling
Company UNITED, Inc.



Ellissa Burks
Student Scholarship
Hopper's Family Market



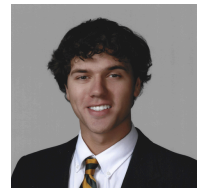
Corrin Burnett
Parent Scholarship
Higginbotham
Insurance



Amanda Bussey
Parent Scholarship
Milo's Tea



Alyssa Bussey
Parent Scholarship
Milo's Tea



Will Carlton
*Jimmy Alison
Memorial Scholarship*
W.L. Petrey Wholesale



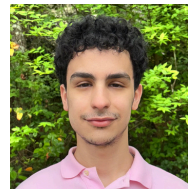
Elaina Collins
Parent Scholarship
Mitchell Grocery Corp.



Halie Crawley
Parent Scholarship
Piggly Wiggly Garrett



Samuel Cunningham
Parent Scholarship
Buffalo Rock/Pepsi



Giorgio De Francesco
Student Scholarship
Diaz Foods



Dawson Duboise
Parent Scholarship
Gateway Foodland



Emily Edwards
Parent Scholarship
Publix Super Markets,
Inc.



Katelyn Elliott
Parent Scholarship
Mayfield Dairy Farms



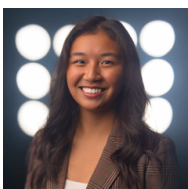
Carson Floyd
*Jack Mitchell
Memorial Scholarship*
Mitchell Grocery Corp.



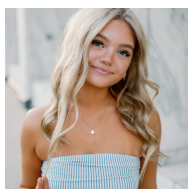
Ashlee Fowler
*Ragland Brothers
Piggyback Scholarship*



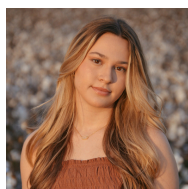
Hagen Hagood
Parent Scholarship
Gateway Foodland



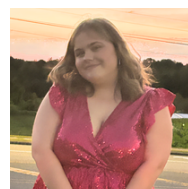
Kenli Hill
Parent Scholarship
Mayfield Dairy Farms



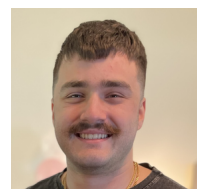
Grace Holloway
Parent Scholarship
Red Diamond
Coffee & Tea



Isabelle Howard
*Ragland Brothers
Piggyback Scholarship*



Anna Ingram
Student Scholarship
Publix Super Markets,
Inc.



Kaiden Jensen
Parent Scholarship
Associated Wholesale
Grocers

2025-2026 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



Braxton Johnson
Parent Scholarship
Johnson's Giant Foods



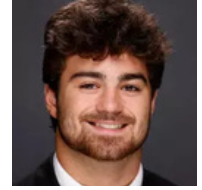
Madeline Johnson
Parent Scholarship
Publix Super Markets,
Inc.



Macie Kelley
Gateway Foodland
Piggyback Scholarship



Anne Kelly
Parent Scholarship
United-Johnson
Brothers of Alabama



Michael Lorino
Parent Scholarship
Contri Brothers Gift
Baskets and Flowers



Kylie Lovett
James L. Smotherman
Memorial Scholarship
Walmart



Conner Miller
Parent Scholarship
Buffalo Rock/Pepsi



Dennis Mitchell
Parent Scholarship
Baker Foods, Inc.



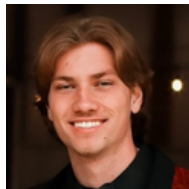
Zoe Nader
Student Scholarship
Alabama Crown
Distributing Co.



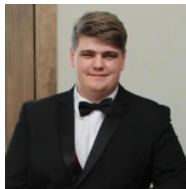
William Russell Nelson
Mary G. Hardin
Memorial Scholarship
Buffalo Rock



John O'Neil
Autry Greer & Sons
Piggyback Scholarship



Maddox Padgett
Associated Grocers
of the South
Piggyback Scholarship



Caleb Parker
Autry Greer & Sons
Piggyback Scholarship



Olivia Parker
Parent Scholarship
Allison Wholesale, Inc.



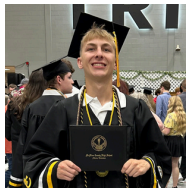
Joshua Potter
Mary Lee Hardin
Memorial Scholarship
Red Diamond Coffee & Tea



Madison Rutz
Student Scholarship
Food Outlet



Brittan Sandlin
Student Scholarship
Son's In Parish



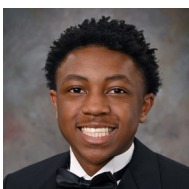
Landen Shaver
Student Scholarship
Mayfield Dairy Farms



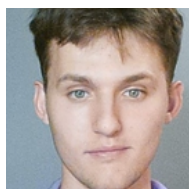
Wanda Shelby
Student Scholarship
Buy-Lo Piggly Wiggly



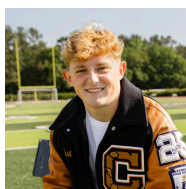
James Slay
Parent Scholarship
Red Diamond
Coffee & Tea



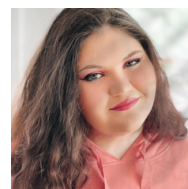
Kendall Smith
Student Scholarship
Coca-Cola Bottling
Company, UNITED, Inc.



Taylor Smitha
Student Scholarship
Buy-Lo Piggly Wiggly



Seth Stokes
Student Scholarship
Associated Wholesale
Grocers

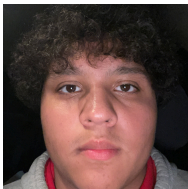


Halen Talley
Associated Grocers
of the South
Piggyback Scholarship



Kayla Terrell
Parent Scholarship
Buffalo Rock/Pepsi

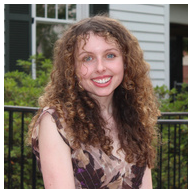
2025-2026 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



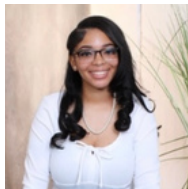
Jerry Vicente
Student Scholarship
Gateway Foodland



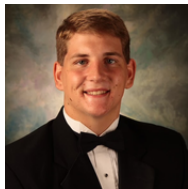
Jaycee Vinson
Piggly Wiggly of
Red Bay Piggyback
Scholarship



Lucy Wills
Parent Scholarship
Red Diamond
Coffee & Tea



Tyniyah Wills
Student Scholarship
Buy-Lo Piggly Wiggly



Jacob Woder
Gateway Foodland
Piggyback Scholarship



Isabella Woloshuk
Parent Scholarship
RJ Reynolds Tobacco



Sadie Young
Student Scholarship
K-V-A-T/Food City



2026 AGEF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



DO YOU OR YOUR DEPENDENT NEED SCHOLARSHIP MONEY?



SCAN HERE TO APPLY BEGINNING NOV 1ST



Student Scholarship



Since the Beginning



Parent Scholarship

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation (AGEF) is dedicated to enriching education and career development in the grocery industry.

APPLICATIONS OPEN 11.1.25 AND ARE DUE BY 2.15.26

FOR MORE INFORMATION: ☎ 205.823.5498 ✉ JOWEN@ALABAMAGROCERS.ORG



Proud Partner





ASSOCIATION NEWS

2025 BUY ALABAMA'S BEST DAY ON THE LAWN

The Alabama Grocers Association (AGA), the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, and the Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association (AFMPA) hosted a media briefing and sampling event for the Buy Alabama's Best campaign on Wednesday, March 19, 2025, at the Alabama State Capitol Lawn.

Speakers included Governor Kay Ivey, Agriculture Commissioner Rick Pate, AFMPA President Bubba Lindley, AGA Chairman Bob Crawford, and AGA President Ellie Taylor.



Launched in 2006, the Buy Alabama's Best Campaign was initiated by four Alabama companies, the Alabama Grocers Association, and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries to showcase Alabama-made products. Since its inception, the campaign has grown to include over 45 companies that are headquartered in Alabama or manufacture their products within the state.

Alabama's food manufacturers and producers not only contribute to the state's economy but also support local agriculture by purchasing large quantities of raw materials. These companies have a \$2 billion impact on Alabama's economy and tax base, and together with the food service industry, they employ one out of every four Alabamians.

To help promote Alabama-made products, retailers across the state will support the campaign by displaying Alabama-made products, using ads and signage, and running special promotions. Consumers will be able to identify these products by looking for the Buy Alabama's Best logo in their local grocery stores.



The campaign has also formed a successful partnership with Children's of Alabama, raising over \$855,000 for the hospital through icon sales, donations, and grants.



"We are thrilled about our partnership with Children's of Alabama," said Ellie Taylor, President of the Alabama Grocers Association and the Alabama Food Manufacturers and Producers Association. "Children's Hospital touches so many lives in Alabama, and it's a privilege to raise funds for such an important cause."



Founded in 1911, Children's of Alabama provides medical care for ill and injured children. With more than 3.5 million square feet, it is one of the largest pediatric medical facilities in the United States. The Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders treats more than 90% of Alabama's children with cancer and blood disorders and is committed to finding a cure for more than 2,000 children each year.

"Children's of Alabama is so grateful for our partnership with Buy Alabama's Best," said Grace Graffeo, Development Officer at Children's of Alabama. "Across Alabama, Buy Alabama's Best provides amazing awareness and integral philanthropy for our hospital. This partnership aids the Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders and their pursuit of being committed to a cure."

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





ASSOCIATION NEWS

2025 AGEF GOLF OUTING

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation held their Annual Golf Outing on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at Timberline Golf Club in Calera, Alabama. The event raised over \$50,000 for the Alabama Grocers Education Foundation, which provides scholarships to employees and children of employees of Alabama Grocers Association member companies. Because of the tremendous support of our members at our events, the AGEF has awarded over \$1.5 million dollars in scholarships to date.



The First Place Team was Reynolds American/Missions Foods Team. Country Bobs/Acosta Team came in Second Place and Mitchell Grocery Corporation Team took home Third Place.

The Alabama Grocers Education Foundation Golf Outing would not be as successful without the many companies that sponsored this event. Thank you to our Presenting Sponsors for this event, UNFI and Imperial Dade. A special thanks to Byars | Wright, Publix, Sunset Farm Foods, and Red Diamond for sponsoring our breakfast. Thank you to Greer's for sponsoring lunch, and to DCR for sponsoring the beverage cart. We also would like to thank Bunzl Distribution for sponsoring our goody bags.



Additional sponsors of the AGEF 2025 Golf Outing include: A & R Super Markets, Inc., AGA Health & Welfare Trust, Alabama Crown Distributing Company, Alabama Power, Associated Grocers of the South, Associated Wholesale Grocers, BK Sales, LLC, Blue Bell Creameries, BTC Wholesale Distributors, Buffalo Rock/Pepsi, Bunzl Distribution, Cane Brew, Coca-Cola Bottling Company UNITED, Country Bob's/Acosta, Designer Greetings, Don Francisco's Coffee, Federated Insurance, Gulf, J.M. Smucker/Acosta, K-VA-T/Food City, McCall Farms, Merrill Lynch, Mitchell Grocery Co., Mission Foods, Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co., Reynolds American, United-Johnson Brothers of Alabama and UTZ/Golden Flake.

The 2025 AGEF Golf Outing was an incredible success, and I'm so grateful to everyone who came out to support our mission," said Julie Owen, AGA Event & Education Director. "From the sponsors to the players and volunteers, your involvement helps fund scholarships that shape the future of our industry. It's more than just a day on the course—it's a commitment to education, opportunity, and community."

"We are proud of the thousands of scholarships our Foundation has given since its inception," said Ellie Taylor, AGA President/CEO. "AGA is happy to be a small part of furthering higher education in the state of Alabama and throughout the entire country."

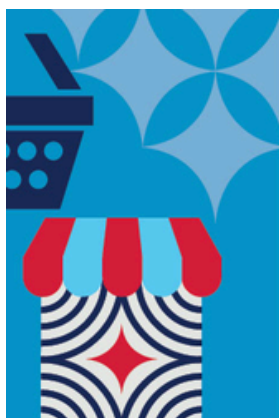
Please mark your calendars for next year's AGEF Golf Outing on April 9, 2026, at the Timberline Golf Club in Calera, Alabama.





ASSOCIATION NEWS

NGA FLY-IN



nga GROCERS TAKE ACTION
NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION

Fly-In for Fair Competition

MAY 20-21, 2025 • WASHINGTON, D.C.



On May 20 and 21, 2025, the Alabama Grocers Association collaborated with the National Grocers Association at the Annual Fly-In for Fair Competition. Our members advocated for issues concerning SNAP & the Farm Bill, Swipe Fees, and Antitrust. We extend a special thanks to Patrick McWhorter of The McWhorter Group; Jay Mitchell of Mitchell Grocery Corporation; and Wade Payne of Food Giant/Mitchell for their attendance and advocacy efforts. It is crucial to inform our legislators about the significant role of the grocery industry and its impact on Alabama. The state's grocery sector employs over 500,000 individuals, contributes more than \$1.2 billion in state and local taxes, and has an annual economic impact exceeding \$18 billion.





ASSOCIATION NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS



TAILGATE PARTY



Annual Show
Bringing Grocers to the Table

JULY 13-16, 2025
SANDESTIN
GOLF & BEACH RESORT



ALABAMA GROCERS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION
CLAY SHOOT
OCTOBER 9, 2025



October 29, 2025
The Club
Birmingham, AL



RETAILER OF THE YEAR	WHOLESALE OF THE YEAR	VENDOR OF THE YEAR
 Eric Bruce Bruce's Foodland	 Jay Mitchell JMBL/Mitchell Grocery Corporation	 Bubba Lindley EDLINCO

 Facebook.com/AlabamaGrocers

 alabamagrocers



 alabama-grocers-association

 AlabamaGrocers

**DOING MORE THAN
EXPECTED**



**WHAT YOU NEED,
WHEN YOU NEED IT,
FOR THE LOWEST COST!**

ASSOCIATED GROCERS OF THE SOUTH, INC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

**Billy Leverett
Vice President Of Sales
205/808-4821**

3600 Vanderbilt Rd., P.O. Box 11044, Birmingham, AL 35202