Expo West Postponed Amid Global Health Crisis

New Hope Network, the company that hosts Natural Products Expo West, announced on Monday, March 2nd, that the weeklong event has been postponed due to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. It is a precautionary measure, as the week prior, confirmed cases of domestic deaths on the West coast due to the illness made news. Health officials are warning of a likely pandemic. At the same time this news was released, retailers and manufacturers alike, were opting out of Expo in succession.

With production already underway, Expo West was set to bring in more than 3,600 companies and 86,000 industry professionals from around the world. New Hope released an open letter on March 1st, stating their difficult position: "As the organizer of Expo West, we have received many calls from within this community on the impact of travel restrictions and other control measures introduced in certain countries and locations following the spread of COVID-19. We are reaching out to all our exhibitors, partners, attendees and suppliers to provide an update and further clarity about this year’s show. Many of our partners due to attend Expo West have urged us to continue with the show. Many have suggested we postpone it. The polarity of responses leaves us in a difficult position, as we do not want to upset or let down anyone in our community.

Our primary concern is and will always be the safety of our guests and colleagues. We are monitoring the situation and following the guidelines set-forth by our federal and local government and health agencies and are in close on-going contact with local Anaheim authorities.” Two days later, the company formally announced the postponement on the Expo West website: “It is now clear, despite continued advice from local government and health authorities that the City of Anaheim remains open, that the majority of our Community want the show, but they do not want it now,” therefore, plans are in the works to reschedule the show, sometime before summer, either at the Anaheim Convention Center or a different venue. More information is set to be publicly released in mid-April. New Hope also stated that they will “work with all Exhibitors and Attendees on future credits and support,” particularly to the entrepreneurs and small businesses – who are likely the most financially impacted.

The Coronavirus started late last year, in the Chinese town of Wuhan and was transmitted originally to humans via animals. Many of those initially infected frequented the Huanan seafood market in the center of the city. The virus can cause viral pneumonia - consequently, antibiotics will not work. Symptoms include coughs, fever and breathing difficulty. People with compromised immune systems are more at risk. According to The Guardian news publication, as of March 3rd, Coronavirus has affected more than 89,000 worldwide and more than 3,000 people have died. China remains the epicenter, with 80,151 cases. The virus has spread to 60 countries, with South Korea and Iran being the second and third highest affected. Over the course of the next couple months, as data is collected, we will see exactly how dangerous the virus is – the mortality rate is currently at 2%, whereas the typical flu has a mortality rate below 1%.
**Amazon's First Full Size Grocery Store Nears Construction Completion**

Amazon's first full-scale grocery store, in Woodland Hills, California, appears to be near the final stages and close to an official opening date. Planning documents and pictures filed with the city of Los Angeles, give key insights into what the store feel, look and shopping experience will be like. Though no opening date has been announced and information about the retailer has been kept well under wraps since the March 2019 announcement, public and analytical anticipation and curiously continues to mount. Amazon’s brick-and-mortar presence via Amazon Go and Amazon 4-Star locations sales have been steady but not remarkable and Whole Foods Market showed a sales slowdown at the end of 2019. The continued physical retail growth shows the experimental nature of Amazon’s physical retail presence.

From the photos, the Woodland Hills location appears to be like a conventional grocery store – numbered aisles and everyday products like canned foods, rice and boxed snacks. There are also meat and seafood counters and a freshly made food section. It is conceivable that this store will carry popular, conventional products that Whole Foods Market simply can’t (due to natural industry standards) - such as Cola-Cola, Doritos and Tide detergent. Also, it has been publicized that the store will not be cashier-less like Amazon Go (who utilize “Just Walk Out” technology, which automatically identifies when goods are taken from or returned to the shelves, keeps track of them in a virtual cart and Amazon then sends the customer a receipt and charges the customer’s Amazon account upon leaving the store).

What seems to set this store apart from the average grocery store is the pickup window and counter near the building entrance. Behind the counter is shelving and alongside the counter is a whiteboard and TV display. They are potentially preparing for pickups (customer and home delivery services) and returns. They could be trying to simplify the shopping experience, as other grocers’ online ordering systems have been deemed “cumbersome or buggy.” It has also been suggested that Amazon could be planning a cost tactic: “Maybe their biggest innovation is not going to be some physical feature as much as it’s going to be a pricing perception strategy,” said Kevin Kelley of Shook Kelley, a strategy and design firm that works with grocery stores. “If we head into a recession, they will be primed to discount products and build a connection.”

Although no public statement has been made regarding further expansion, Amazon has purchased large buildings in Studio City (Los Angeles county), Thousand Oaks (Ventura County) and Irvine (Orange County). These buildings are being repurposed – for example, the Woodland Hills location used to be a Toys R Us. Some other U.S. cities and states being considered in this supermarket expansion are Chicago, New York, New Jersey, Seattle and Philadelphia.

The Woodland Hills Amazon grocery store is located at 6245 Topanga Canyon Boulevard in a small strip mall.

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**Down to Earth Swapping Plastic For Edible Utensils**

Hawaiian chain Down to Earth is getting ahead of single use plastic ban which goes into effect in July of 2021.

A little backstory: in December 2019, the Honolulu City Counsel, voted 7-2 to pass Bill 40, which bans businesses and restaurants in Honolulu County from serving food and beverages with plastic straws, utensils and to-go containers. Disposable bags will be banned starting in 2022. These measures will encompass Honolulu County, when is the entirety of Oahu, Hawaii’s most populous island. The Big Island and Maui currently ban plastic containers, but not the rest of the plastic items.

Down to Earth has gone ahead and jump started this transition. They’ve already phased out plastic straws for paper straws, offer bio-degradable food containers, and now have edible spoons to replace plastic utensils. The utensils are an innovation from a local plant-based manufacturer called Vegco. These edible spoons, which are manufactured in India, are available for a $0.35 purchase. They’re made of wheat, oats, barely, soy, corn and chickpeas and are said to taste very similar to a hard biscuit. The two flavors available are simply salted and chocolate, and more flavors are planned. Although they will function as utensils for dining, they will eventually fall apart (25-35 minutes) after prolonged submergence in a hot soup or cold ice cream. However, being completely edible and biodegradable, these are an excellent choice for reducing the amount of plastic usage for Down to Earth consumers.

As of February 2020, around 34 states have passed or are considering measures that discourage or completely ban single-use plastics. Environmentalists are celebrating the movement, as single-use plastics contribute to climate change (via greenhouse gas emissions) and plastics account for 85% of trash found in U.S. beaches.

Down to Earth, is a six-store Natural Food Store chain with locations on Oahu and Maui island. Most recently, in 2019, they relocated their Kailua store to a location more than twice the original size.

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Mainstay Markets Opening in San Francisco

Mainstay Market is a new, small urban market and café, located in San Francisco, projected to open its doors in April 2020. Its mission is to provide customers and employees with the finest and the highest quality products at the best price. Besides featuring your everyday grocery products such as breads, cheeses, fruit, veggies, grains, packaged meats etc., they will also carry fresh cut produce, fruits and many “grab and go” items that require very little cooking. The café will provide coffee, espresso, fruit smoothies and pastries. Mainstay Market will be located at 655 22nd Street in San Francisco.

Oliver’s Market Takes A Stand Against Palm Oil

Moving forward, Oliver’s Markets, a four-store Northern California chain, will no longer be accepting new items containing palm oil in the ingredients according to Oliver’s Managing Partner Michael Moody. He is hopeful that the example he is setting will be adopted into the rest of the market.

Moody’s decision came about due to the published research that claims palm oil can’t be sourced responsibly. Palm oil farms certified as sustainable are not destruction-free and therefore, not better for the environment. An article published by The Independent in December 2018 found that deforestation in certified sustainable plantations was, in fact, higher than those not certified. Plantations with eco-friendly endorsements have allowed for higher forest destruction and are harming the animal species living there by taking over their natural habitat in Indonesia. The article cites the author of the study, Roberto Gatti, “The implication is that there is no reason for companies to claim sustainable palm oil and to use labels for certified products because, in terms of deforestation, there is no significant difference between a certified and a non-certified palm oil plantation. Both need (or needed in the recent past) the complete removal of the original tropical forest.”

The article says the “certification” of sustainable palm oil plantations is a political and economic deception to the public. According to the study published in the Science of the Total Environment journal, there is a trick to “certification”; first, an old-growth tropical forest is cut (or slashed-and-burned) for paper and pulp or valuable tropical timber trades; then a traditional, non-certified palm oil plantation is started; after a certain time the traditional plantation is “transformed” into a certified one and wins a sustainability label. The trick is that they make leverage on the absence of historical records on land use change, hiding the reality that even a certified concession was, in the recent past, a highly biodiverse tropical forest,” Prof Gatti said.

A study performed by University of Queensland in 2018 found that certified and non-certified plantations in Borneo Indonesia had the same metrics of social, environmental, and economic performance. They also found that the orangutan population decrease was similar in both, as well as the increase of poverty and wildfires.

Michal Moody is not willing to take a chance on this issue and stands with the rainforest and the environment rather than capitalism.

Oliver’s Market is a four-store independent chain in Northern California with locations in Cotati, Montecito, Windsor, and Stoney Point. Please contact Dynamic Presence’s Ben Grill at bgreill@amidpi.com for more information.

Erewhon’s New Store Opening and Member Reward Program

Erewhon, the premier natural food market in Los Angeles, new location is coming to Silver Lake, an eastern Los Angeles enclave, sometime in early summer. The expansion and continued success, specifically boomed since the current owners, Tony and Josephine Antoci, purchased this new retailer in 2011. Erewhon is finding more demand to set up new locations, all while keeping their strategic “go to market” agenda intact as they have yet to make a mistake.

The Silver Lake location will be the high-end grocery chain’s sixth Los Angeles location and it won’t be its last. “We’re going to be opening up a store every single year. We’re opening up in Silver Lake next. And then in the [San Fernando] Valley, and then who knows where,” said Erewhon V.P. of Store Development Jason Widener.

Antoci indicated there were plans in the works to expand the chain to Northern California and the East Coast. “The goal over the next five years is to have 10 to 12 stores,” Antoci said.

Along with the expansion, they have announced their membership program rewarding loyal shoppers and saving money while giving additional exposure to participating manufacturers.
Sprout’s Chula Vista Re-Grand Opening

The independent Sprout’s Chula Vista had a grand re-opening on February 4th. They also celebrated 25 years in this location. The remodel includes a new look to their outside sign and building. The inside of the store has been refreshed with artistic murals surrounding the whole store. They now have a new fresh salad bar, two new cheese display cases, 21 dairy coolers and 26 frozen coolers. They also have a very busy deli with freshly made to order sandwiches and freshly made meals to go.

The store is independently owned by Ron Cohen, who owns both independent Sprout’s in San Diego, Eastlake and Chula Vista. The Chula Vista store is 25,000 square foot and has been at this location since 1995.

The Chula Vista employees have been loyal throughout the years, which makes for a great team. John Cordova is the store manager and Vice President of Sales and has been with Sprout’s for 24 years, Dan Attaway is their Vice President of operations and has been with Sprout’s for 24 years as well. The Vitamin manager, Faye Baker has been with Sprout’s and at this location for 23 years, their grocery manager is Alex Rendon and he has been with Sprout’s for 22 years.

H-E-B Opens Kosher-focused Store in Meyerland

A long awaited 95,000-square-foot H-E-B opened in Meyerland Plaza in the Meyerland district of Houston, Texas last month. The two-story location at 4700 Beechnut St. opened to large crowds ahead of Super Bowl Sunday. The development includes two-story covered parking garage with elevators and escalators to the shopping floor. The Meyerland store replaces the former H-E-B at Braeswood and Chimney Rock that closed after sustaining significant flood damage from Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Much of the Meyerland neighborhood was damaged by flooding, but the community has since rebuilt and the demand for H-E-B’s affordable, fresh and convenient selection has returned. “This community has gone through so much and it’s a privilege to be a part of its healing and rebuilding,” says Hugh Sintic, GM of H-E-B Meyerland Market. “It’s an honor to bring this community the options it deserves.”

H-E-B has served the Meyerland community for over 25 years. The store fills a need for Meyerland’s Jewish community since Belden’s Food Market closed in January. According to Hugh Sintic the GM of H-E-B Meyerland, the store will feature products from all over the world, with an emphasis on kosher offerings. Many certified kosher items are produced in-store and approved by H-E-B’s full-time mashgich. Kosher selections include a bakery and meat market, sushi and juices, a cafe and sandwiches and dry, frozen, dairy and deli products. The store is a one-stop-shop for healthy foods and kosher products, according to store manager Levy Donin. Donin is the former leader of the Braeswood store and has been pivotal in expanding H-E-B’s kosher offerings. Signs throughout the store call out the many kosher offerings.

Specialty departments include the Fresh Meat Market, full-service seafood counter, and an extended Healthy Living department offering bulk foods, supplements, and sports nutrition. The wine section stretches for more than 195 feet with a 12-foot set of kosher wine options. The expanded beer selection has an emphasis on Texas craft and hyper local craft beer. The store also features convenience offerings, including a full line of H-E-B Meal Simple heat-and-eat options with over 50 oven-ready meals and sides made daily, plus a Sushiya counter with handmade sushi and poke bowls. Other fresh prepared food options include freshly squeezed juices, salads, sandwiches, guacamole, cut fruit, and full-service scratch bakery and tortilleria. The store has the largest assortment of Texas-made products, plus over 1,500 H-E-B Organics private label products. Curbside pickup and grocery delivery are available for Meyerland residents through the new My H-E-B app. San Antonio-based H-E-B will celebrate its 115th anniversary this year at more than 400 stores in Texas and Mexico.
Cincinnati-based Kroger is set to anchor a mixed-use development in Old East Dallas across from Dallas’ Arts District. The project is planned for a one-block site on Hall Street between Ross Avenue and North Central Expressway at the eastern edge of downtown Dallas. Kroger has owned the property since 2015 and has hired Georgia-based developer Southeastern Development to execute the project. The new $60 million development will include 375 apartments, an 85,000-square-foot grocery store and a vehicle parking garage. The project is expected to be complete in early 2022.

Kroger and Walmart lead the Dallas-Fort Worth market share, but competition is mounting as grocers continue to innovate. Downtown Dallas is an area of recent growth. Albertsons secured its first downtown Dallas location last year with an upscale Tom Thumb that anchors a multi-use development in the Uptown area. A second Tom Thumb store is planned for 2021 on Live Oak Avenue just east of downtown. Kroger announced Dallas would be the next location for its Ocado-powered automated, robotic smart warehouse. Dallas City Council provided an incentive package to bring the Kroger online grocery fulfillment center to southern Dallas. Kroger’s Dallas Division comprises 110 stores across Dallas/Fort Worth, Northwest Louisiana and East Texas.

Brookshire’s Advances Online Grocery Experience with Mercatus

Tyler, Texas-based Brookshire Grocery Co. has recruited e-commerce expert Mercatus to take online grocery shopping to the next level for their customers. Toronto-based Mercatus announced that regional grocers Brookshire’s and Weis have implemented its artificial intelligence (AI)-based AisleOne solution for online grocery shopping. Mercatus describes the platform as a “personalization intelligence engine,” that uses algorithms to make tailored product recommendations and promotions to shoppers on a one-to-one basis. The system uses data gained from each customer’s individual app usage, such as purchase history, dietary preferences and household demographics. Combined with in-store transactions and promotional redemptions, Mercatus says there is a deep well of data available for retailers to connect directly with customers.

In 2019, Brookshire Grocery launched online ordering with curbside pickup service to 100 stores across Brookshire’s, Super 1 Foods and Fresh by Brookshire’s banners. “We are excited to expand our partnership with Mercatus by adding AisleOne personalization to our online shopping capabilities and creating a more personalized, convenient and enjoyable customer experience,” said John D’Anna, chief strategy officer for Brookshire Grocery. The family-owned regional grocer operates more than 180 stores in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas, with three distribution centers. The Mercatus e-commerce platform serves several other North American grocery retailers including Save Mart Cos., WinCo Foods, Smart & Final, Piggly Wiggly and Giant Tiger.

Whole Foods Market’s Private Label Supplier of Beans and Grains Closes

Whole Foods Market experienced temporary food shortages due to the sudden closure of its supplier for private label packaged beans, grains, lentils and rice. The retailer was also affected by weather-related issues that cut the supply of fresh lettuce from California. While the weather issues will blow over, finding a new supplier of legumes and grains could take a few months. The grocer quickly stocked it shelves with brand name alternatives to its private label products. Whole Foods Market holds its suppliers to the highest ethical and quality standards in the industry, something its customers have come to trust when shopping for 365 private label products. With the increased interest in plant-based products, the unexpected out-of-stocks of beans, grains and rice is hitting Whole Foods Market hard. “Given that these items come from crops that are typically planted and harvested a year before they’re sold in our stores, it will take time for us to find a new, long-term supplier and restock these 365 Everyday Value products,” said a Whole Foods Market rep. “We expect this process to take several months as we’re committed to finding the right partner, one that adheres to our rigorous quality standards, can support the volume of production needed for these popular items, and shares our commitment to building long-lasting, win-win partnership.” Customers can find dry beans and grains in the bulk section, plus they can also try quick cook, frozen, and microwaveable 365 Everyday Value grains and rice products.

Natural Grocers Celebrates Texas Independence Day

All 25 Natural Grocers stores in the Lone Star State celebrated Texas’ Independence Day on March 2nd by offering a 10% discount on all customer purchases, a free Texas-themed small reusable bag holding a Natural Grocers brand chocolate bar and an EPIC brand breakfast bar for the first 100 customers, and a free Texas-themed phone grip ($10 retail value) for the first 500 customers with any purchase.

“Commitment to community is one of our Five Founding Principles and we are proud to celebrate Texas all the time in our Texas stores, especially on Texas Independence Day,” noted Kemper Isely, Co-president of Lakewood, Colorado-based Natural Grocers. “We are inviting Texans to enjoy free giveaways and a Texas-sized discount on our always affordable prices, including our large selection of local Texas products.”

Natural Grocers operates 156 stores in 20 states. All products are free from artificial colors, flavors, preservatives or sweeteners, or partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils. The company sells only USDA certified-organic produce and exclusively pasture-raised, non-confined dairy products, and free-range eggs. Science-based nutrition education programs with registered dietitians are available at all stores.

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WinCo Opens First Location in Tulsa

Last month, Boise, Idaho-based WinCo Foods, a 24-hour discount grocery store, opened its first Tulsa location at the southwest corner of East 71st Street and Memorial Drive in the Crossing Oaks shopping center. The employee-owned, franchise hired 200 partners to staff the 84,000-square-foot store. “Tulsa and the surrounding area lines up as a great fit with WinCo Foods,” says spokesman Noah Flesher. “We can't wait to start serving the people of the city. Tulsa is about strong community, quality of life and decent people, just like WinCo.”

WinCo prides itself on being the “supermarket low price leader” and is well-known for its 700-plus item bulk foods section offering everything from cereals, candies, beans, rice and dog food. WinCo has expanded its presence in the Southwest with new stores in Texas and Oklahoma. The retailer recently opened stores in Moore, Oklahoma City and Midwest City, and opened a $135 million distribution center in Denton, Texas.

H-E-B Gives $100 Bills to All Employees for Being Top Grocery Retailer in the U.S.

H-E-B celebrated being named the top grocery retailer in the nation by handing out $100 bills and a thank-you note to all 120,000 employees. The note read in part: “You should be extremely proud of the most recent achievement we received being recognized as the top U.S. grocery retailer by leading consumer research firm, dunnhumby, in its annual Retailer Preference Index (RPI) report.” H-E-B partners took to social media to thank the company using the hashtag #HEBProud. H-E-B beat out the previous top three grocers, including Trader Joe’s, Amazon and Costco, to be named the #1 grocer in America.

United Supermarket to Open First Store in Pecos

Lubbock, Texas-based The United Family began construction on a new United Supermarkets store in Pecos, Texas last month. The small town, which registered less than 9,000 citizens in the last census, only has two options for groceries, Walmart and La Tienda. Pecos is located on the edge of the Chihuahuan Desert in West Texas, just below New Mexico’s border. The community has been pushing for more retail options and employment opportunities. The town’s local economic development arm encouraged the competition and new jobs the United Supermarkets store will bring. The store will increase economic diversity in Pecos by bringing commensurate pricing and over 130 new jobs outside of the oil industry, the main source of employment in the city. The new 44,000-square-foot store will have a full-service bakery, pharmacy, sushi bar, deli, meat market with a butcher, a dining room and a United Express convenience store and gas station with 12 refueling positions. United Supermarkets has delivered groceries to Pecos since 2018, but this will be the first United store in the area.

The United Family is a wholly owned subsidiary of Albertsons Companies and operates five distinct retail banners including United Supermarkets, Market Street, Amigos, United Express and Albertsons Market. The company operates 95 stores in Texas and New Mexico.

Store Liquidations for Lucky’s Market

Amidst Kroger’s divestment in late December 2019, Lucky’s Market filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Monday January 16th, 2020, and is now going through the process of liquidating as many store locations as possible.

In Florida, seven stores that were slated for closure are now under contract to be acquired by Southeastern Grocers, Seabra Foods and Hitchcock’s Markets. The Naples, Fort Myers, Gainesville, Lake Mary and Melbourne locations will go to Southeastern Grocers who plan to convert to the Winn-Dixie banner. The Hunters Creek location will go to Seabra Foods, and the St. Petersburg will go to Hitchcock’s Markets. The remaining stores in Florida are set to be acquired by Aldi and Publix. Aldi will be purchasing five leases and one owned location in Coral Springs, Oakland Park, Sarasota, Vineland, Colonial Landing and Venice. Publix plans to take over leases in Naples, Neptune Beach, Clermont, South Orange- Orlando and Ormond Beach.

Co-founders Bo and Trish Sharon are now planning to purchase six leased stores down one from their original seven. These locations in Traverse City, Michigan; Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio; Columbia, Missouri; and North Boulder and Fort Collins, Colorado will operate under the Lucky’s Market banner.

With 24 for the stores under review and waiting court approval, the remaining stores that are up for sale or slated for closure in Florida, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Montana and Wyoming are in active dialog with various potential buyers.

Natural Grocer’s Annual Sales Near $1 Billion

As a grocery store, Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage has successfully provided customers with natural foods and products since 1955. It is poised to join the $1 billion club by the end of 2020. In 2019, their annual sales reached a proud $903.6 million and, as they are scheduled to open up to six new stores this year, they may be on their way to reaching the big billion!

The company has signed leases for four new locations in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington. Co-President Kemper Isely noted that “We continue to see positive results from our marketing initiatives and sustained growth in our successful Npower loyalty program…We remain confident with our fiscal 2020 outlook and continue to focus on driving profitable growth and enhancing shareholder value.”

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Natural Grocers Says Hello to Green Valley Ranch

Colorado-based retailer Natural Grocers is scheduled to open a new location at Green Valley Ranch Boulevard and Tower Road in Denver, Colorado. The grand opening will take place on March 25th, 2020 and will feature both active and passive demos, gift basket giveaways, and prizes. The new location, part of a wider development project in Green Valley Ranch, will be the neighborhood’s second major grocer, as King Soopers is currently open across the street.

Councilwoman Stacie Gilmore said that her district has experienced difficulties maintaining a full-service grocery store in the area, and "this was one of my priorities coming into my first term and we will continue to create even more opportunities for fresh food access and retail in the neighborhood. We have worked toward that goal by creating short-term solutions, supporting community-led options and taking national brands on personal driving tours - and I'm thrilled to welcome Natural Grocers to our district!"

The store will be part of Gateway Crossing Shopping Center, which is currently undergoing construction and is under review to include restaurants, a bank, medical facilities and a fitness center.

Natural Grocers, founded by Margaret and Philip Isely in 1955, currently operates 40 stores in Colorado and 155 stores nationwide in 20 states. The retailer’s net sales hit $230 million in the first quarter of 2020, which was attributed to supplement sales (boosted by in-store education programs), increased basket size and the growing popularity of its “[N]power” loyalty program, which has grown 37% from a year ago. Additional new store locations in New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington are also expected to open in 2020 or later.

Marmalade Neighborhood’s First Grocer in Decades

Salt Lake City, Utah’s Marmalade neighborhood has gone decades without a full-service grocery store. Finally, on February 6th, its residents were able to begin enjoying a fresh food market selling produce, meat, paper products and more. The new Lee’s Market, which opened in the street-level space of the 4th West Apartments at 255 North 400 West, serves thousands of nearby residents and is expected to be a go-to eatery for students, faculty and staff at West High School, right across the street.

Moments after the ribbon-cutting ceremony, students Crystal Tovar, Daniella Munoz and Andy Tran came into the store looking for snacks. “It’s a lot closer than Smith’s, where we normally go,” said Tovar, adding that the store’s loft area with tables and a television “will be a nice place to study” during her free period. After all, she explained, “if you go to the school library, you can’t have food.”

Badger’s original vision for the space was essentially an upscale convenience store, but as the project progressed, it was clear that the area needed more than that. The result is “a full shopping experience,” Badger said, “not just for the adjacent apartments but for the whole Marmalade district.” The urban outlet has a smaller footprint than other Lee’s locations, but the company has managed to squeeze almost everything shoppers might need into the 9,800 square feet of space. Besides the basics like produce, meat, frozen foods, canned items and toiletries, the store has a large section for cold drinks, a deli for sandwiches and sushi, a salad bar, and prepared meals to go. Unique to this new location, there is a gourmet cheese island with a dedicated cheese monger, a coffee bar, and a beer cave.

Shopping options are growing in an area that had once been labeled a food desert. Steve Miner, president of market development for Associated Food Stores, said the neighborhood probably hasn’t had a traditional grocery store since the late 1980’s. "It was an era where downtown was changing," he said, "and the grocery stores went away." Today, however, that section of the city is being revitalized, and apartments and condos are sprouting at a rapid rate.

The new Lee’s Market is the sixth location for the Utah-based grocery and the company’s first in Salt Lake, said president and CEO Jon Badger. Since 1981, it has been a grocery mainstay in Cache and Weber counties, with stores in Logan and Ogden, Utah.

Harmons Plunges Into Politics

On December 16th, 2019, a controversial bill in Utah State was passed which included a cut in income tax and a rise in food and gas tax. Lawmakers projected that the bill could have saved residents over $16 million in taxes, however the increase in food tax was met with resistance. Opponents feared that low-and-middle income families would be heavily affected by the change.

Among the rivals was Bob Harmon, Chairman of Utah’s beloved grocery chain, enlisted all 19 Harmons stores on a mission to gather signatures in support of a referendum campaign. Harmon’s generally stays out of politics, but the board objected to the increase sales tax on groceries, as they believe that food should be tax-free.

Through January 11th and January 21st, 2020, Harmons collected signatures in-store with associates assisting with signature witnessing. To be placed on the ballot, the referendum needed 116,000 signatures. By the end of the campaign, it had over 150,000. Their participation was not met with admiration by Utah’s Governor’s Office, which issued a statement on Thursday, January 6th, 2020, which read: “We are disappointed in Harmons actions to allow signature gathering to repeal the recently-enacted tax modernization package at their stores. As a corporate citizen in the state, they have a right to engage in the political process, but they also have the responsibility to do so in a way that elevates the public’s discourse and is based on facts and not emotion.”
Harmons Plunges Into Politics cont’d

“Harmons was huge,” said Fred Cox, a Republican former lawmaker who led the referendum effort. “We were hoping that somebody like Harmons would come on board.”

Harmons is a family owned supermarket chain located within Utah State throughout the Wasatch Front and St. George area. They provide quality food and products in store and online, with the mission to exceed customer expectations.

Natural Grocers’ Fights Against Daylight Saving

“We all take aspects of our health seriously at Natural Grocers,” comments Co-President Kemper Isely, “and we understand that even the slightest change to our routines can have an impact on our wellbeing.” For this reason, Lakewood, Colorado-based Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage is doing their part to support healthy hearts by offering the opportunity to sign a petition to end Daylight Saving Time. Statistics from a 2014 study claim that there is a 25% increase in the number of heart attacks on the Monday following Daylight Saving Time compared to the rest of the Mondays throughout the year.

The petition calls for one standard time throughout the year and asks Congress to amend the Uniform Time Act of 1966 that sets the time nationwide and to allow states the option to opt-in or out. “By removing twice-yearly time changes and supporting heart health, we will be one step closer to our mission of creating a healthier country,” states Isely.

Until Daylight Saving Time is eliminated, Natural Grocers will help their customers beat time change blues with a free “Hack Your Coffee” pop-up bar event at its 156 stores across the country on March 7th, 2020, the day before we “spring forward”. The bars will offer tricks and tips to add health-boosting ingredients to your morning beverage, such as collagen, MCT oil, cardamom and cinnamon. Additionally, there is an opportunity to win one free year of Natural Grocers private label coffee. At this event, there will be discounts of up to 40% on selected items, reward benefits and other member-exclusive features for those signed up with (N)power, their free digital coupon program.

Wegmans Again Top Work Spot

Popular family-run grocer Wegmans Food Markets once again took home top honors for workplace practices and employee satisfaction. According to Fortune magazine, the Rochester, New York-based retailer is one of the best places to work in the country. It’s great recognition for the organic, specialty focused grocery outlet but nothing new for Wegmans, the company has been named in the annual Fortune report every year since the magazine started the acknowledgements nearly 25 years ago. The company ranked number three on Fortune’s 2020 list of the “100 Best Companies To Work For”.

Wegmans was also ranked third on the list last year and took home second in 2018. For 2020, hotel chain Hilton ranked first, and Ultimate Software was second. Cisco was fourth and Workday was fifth. The rankings are created using employee surveys conducted by analytics firm Great Places to Work. Over 650,000 employees took the surveys. Wegmans has 101 stores in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts and North Carolina.

Wegmans and Instacart Team Up in NYC

New York-based grocer Wegmans Food Markets might not have a long track record in the “City That Never Sleeps,” but the successful retailer understands customer service. With its first store in the Big Apple over four months old, Wegmans isn’t just resting on name recognition in Brooklyn, but looking to mix it up with New Yorkers notorious for their fast-paced lifestyle. A partnership between Wegmans and Instacart, a California-based company working with many large-scale retailers on some day grocery delivery and pick-up service, was announced last month. According to published reports, Wegmans and Instacart have worked together since the Brooklyn store’s opening in October, offering services to a delivery radius surrounding the Wegmans store, but now will expand services to all Manhattan ZIP codes.

The Rochester, New York-based grocer plans to open a second metro New York location on June 7th in Harrison, New York, situated in Westchester County, just north of the New York City borough of the Bronx. According to Wegmans, delivery windows may be longer for Manhattan addresses, ranging from two to five hours, because of extended drive times. New York City residents can find out if they’re within the delivery area from the Brooklyn store by visiting Wegmans.com or using Wegmans mobile app. The 74,000-square-foot Brooklyn store put the retailer over the century store mark.

Wegmans currently offers Instacart online grocery delivery across its stores in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and North Carolina.

Lidl Eyes Opportunity in Garden State

There’s nothing little about the rise of a foreign-born retailer with a small name. German discount grocer Lidl appears to have found its footing in the U.S. market. The grocer with more than 11,000 stores throughout 32 countries set its sights on opening in the states, particularly along the Eastern Seaboard, several years ago and has remained committed to the mission. The company’s latest openings both occurred on February 26th in Cherry Hill and Howell, both in New Jersey. The new stores bring Lidl’s total to six in the state. The retailer also has plans for new units in Glassboro and Scotch Plains, both also in the Garden State. In total, Lidl currently operates more than 65 locations throughout Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York.
Big Y Partnership Banks on E-Business

Springfield, Massachusetts-based Big Y Foods joined a growing number of retailers across the country last month when it announced plans for a micro-fulfillment center committed to online orders. In partnership with Takeoff Technologies, Big Y will create a robotic powered facility in close proximity to a current store in Chicopee, Massachusetts to meet the rising demand in online ordering, at home delivery and curbside pick-up. According to published reports, Big Y has yet to begin on the large-scale project, and a timeline for construction and completion is also to be determined. For Takeoff, the deal with Big Y marks another win for the company which already works with other U.S. based retailers such as Sedano’s, Albertsons, Ahold Delhaize USA and Wakefern, and others abroad. The company says its artificial intelligence-enabled robots can assemble grocery orders of up to 60 items in less than five minutes, a fraction of the speed and cost of current manual-picking options. In terms of volume, the automation can pick about 800 items per hour versus 60 items for manual in-store picking, and the system can process nearly 700 online grocery orders per day and 4,000 weekly per location for a two-hour service. Big Y Foods currently operates nearly 70 supermarkets and 10 Big Y Express convenience stores throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Green Star Coop in New York Moving

Ithaca, New York-based Green Star Co-op recently announced it will shed old digs along West Buffalo Street for a much larger and accommodating space nearby. The retailer with three locations in upstate New York will be closing the West End store as it’s known and moving to an expanded space at 770 Cascadilla Street also in Ithaca. The exact dates and timing for the closing and move are subject to change as work begins.

According to Green Star Co-op leadership, the new location will allow for an expanded assortment, services and overall experience. At 16,500 square feet, the planned Cascadilla Street store will be 10,000 square feet larger than Green Star’s current store. It will also bring over 40 new jobs to the area, according to the company’s press release.

PCC Community Markets Steps Up for Central District Neighborhood

Seattle-based National Food Co-op PCC Community Markets will be stepping in to fill the retailer space previously planned for tenancy by New Seasons Market. The quick retailer change comes as a result of New Seasons sale to Good Food Holdings, announced in December 2019. Within weeks of the announcement, the Ballard location closed and was determined that the Mercer Island location would transition into a Metropolitan Market. New Seasons first expanded into Washington State in 2011.

Grocery retailer options have been long-awaited in the area, however when New Seasons had been the planned inhabitant, initial concerns were made by locals regarding displacement, gentrification and affordability. PCC CEO Cate Hardy held initial meetings with the community after the announcement was made regarding PCC’s intention and she plans to continue these conversations throughout the process. PCC prides themselves in their community involvement during new store opening projects, as this ensures the creation of a partnership with the community that is both effective and meaningful.

PCC will be recruiting employees from surrounding neighborhoods, likely resulting in roughly 100 new job opportunities. Though food affordability has been an ongoing concern of Central District residents, PCC plans to continue offering private-label staples at fair pricing and will remain competitive for common household needs such as certain meats, produce and milk. PCC is also seeking a food and beverage establishment to cohabitate in the space and are screening carefully so as to ensure that it will be beneficial to the community.

Located on the corner of 23rd and Union, the retail space is set to be 18,000 square feet and part of a 144-unit apartment building. PCC’s Central District is expected to open in the middle of 2020 with future locations in Downtown Seattle, Bellevue and Madison Valley.

Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage Opens a New Spot in Spokane

Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage opened at South Hill in Spokane, Washington on February 19th, 2020 at 2515 East 29th Avenue, with a line of people waiting outside the door. This is Natural Grocers’ second location in Spokane, with the first being on the Northside.

After Speaking with Manager Sarah Edwards, she said, “we are very pleased with the turn out for our new store opening. We had a soft opening on February 18th with the grand opening following on the 19th. Customers were standing in line both days, with over 100 the morning of grand opening.”

Grand opening festivities included numerous demonstrations and prize giveaways. Nine customers won groceries for six months, with a grand prize of $100 of store credit per week the morning of grand opening. Customers had to be present to win. Customers will also have the chance to win other prizes by drawings to be held on March 9th, with a grand prize of $500 in store credit.
Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage Opens a New Spot in Spokane cont’d

Natural Grocers offers the service of Natural Health Coach whose focus is to educate customers on nutrition and supplementation. Karmen Gregg is the Natural Heath Coach for this new store and she offers one-on-one meetings with customers, group seminars, cooking classes, staff training and support. Karmen remarked, “I worked at the Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho location for the past three years and was excited for the opportunity to open this new store.” In her spare time, Karmen is working on her master’s degree in Nutrition.

The addition of their Spokane location will be a valuable addition to their 150 stores across the United States and will continue to provide the community with access to healthy and nutritious products.

SNAP Food Program in Washington State

As part of the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP), those who qualify for food assistance can now order online through Amazon. Amazon’s grocery programs like Amazon Pantry and Amazon Fresh are now available to Washington State’s SNAP recipients to use their monthly food benefit allotment. The USDA provides a monthly stipend to those who qualify in order to ease the ability to purchase fresh nutritious food. In the past, these were referred to as Food Stamps. SNAP benefits, however, are deposited onto an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card which works like a debit card. Benefits are automatically loaded into accounts each month and can be used to buy groceries at authorized food stores and retailers.

Washington is the second state to implement this USDA pilot program, after New York. Recipients can use their SNAP card as a payment method and, even without an Amazon Prime membership, can receive free shipping on qualifying orders. The USDA prohibits using SNAP funds to cover shipping or delivery fees, so Amazon’s policy will strongly benefit consumers, allowing them to afford even more nutritious foods.

This program continues to expand as Amazon “believes the program will dramatically increase access to food for more remote customers and help to mitigate the public health crisis of food deserts.” Those who live in areas with limited grocery options can order necessities through Amazon while saving money. “People who receive SNAP benefits should have the opportunity to shop for food the same way more and more Americans shop for food – by ordering and paying for groceries online. As technology advances, it is important for SNAP to advance too, so we can ensure the same shopping options are available for both non-SNAP and SNAP recipients,” declared Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue.

In Washington, along with Amazon, SNAP recipients can also order food online thru Walmart’s website and pay with their EBT card. This is also a unique option where customers can order and pay online, then go to the Walmart store to pick up their bagged groceries. The USDA plans to eventually expand this program to Oregon, Nebraska, Alabama, Maryland, New Jersey and Iowa, according to a statement from the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service.

“The goal,” the agency said, “is to eventually have online shopping become an option for all SNAP recipients.”

Super One Foods is Taking Shape

The construction of Super One Foods in Oldtown, Idaho is progressing steadily and is scheduled to open in May of 2020. This new location will be the 16th for owner Ron McIntyre of Hayden, Idaho and will be large at 1,442 square feet. The store will boast a produce department including organic products, a full-service deli, a pizza program and 25 cent soft-serve ice cream cones. The national department will include bulk foods and spices and a kombucha station featuring local brews, while the drive-thru pharmacy will have a growler station, large selection of wine, and craft and domestic beer.

Super One Foods is operated by Miner’s Inc., a family-owned business founded in 1945. At their stores, customers can find quality products at affordable prices.

For more information, contact Presence Marketing’s Kelly Vilar at kvilar@pmidpi.com or Dynamic Presence’s Jay Jolliff at jjolliff@pmidpi.com.

Hillsdale’s Shiny New Toy: Basics Market

Basics Market is gearing up to open its fourth Oregon store in March 2020 in the Hillsdale Shopping Center in Southwest Portland. Previously occupied by Food Front, Basics will take over the 12,000 square-foot space with a new and exciting vibe. The location will offer sustainably raised meats that are locally sourced from farms that commit to sustainable practices and animal welfare. There will be also be a wide range of plant-based selections, local seafood, and cured meats!

Basics combines fresh ingredients, healthy recipes and cooking classes in their stores to make shopping easier and promote healthy eating. With their guided lessons, customers can learn how to cook at home using fresh ingredients from local producers and farmers. The chosen ingredients are organized by seasonally inspired recipes created by vetted nutritionists and award-winning chefs.

The Hillsdale location will be located at 6344 SW Capitol Highway in Portland, Oregon. The exact opening date has not been set.
**INFR A’s Corrine Shindelar Steps Down**

INFR A founder, CEO and President, Corrine Shindelar, has stepped down from her leadership role, effective March 1st, 2020. For 15 years, Corrine has led the Independent Natural Food Retailers Association (INFR A) which now supports over 240 members, has close to 400 store fronts and boasts approximately $1.6B in sales. Corrine was instrumental in the evolution of the NCG Group prior to her tenure at INFR A. Corrine helped to pioneer purchasing cooperatives that provide member services that range from programs, promotions, retail tools and in-person events that help to strengthen independents’ position in this competitive marketplace. Corrine has long been a champion of industry initiatives with her most recent energies focused on climate change with the support of the Climate Collaborative. “The Board is honored that Ms. Shindelar has agreed to continue her legacy of leadership as Emeritus President for the remainder of this year ensuring a smooth transition at all levels of the organization”, said Board Chair Cheryl Hughes. The INFR A Board has named Patrick Sheridan as Interim President/CEO.

**Peapod Midwest Closes**

On February 18th, Ahold Delhaize USA closed its Midwest Division of Peapod online grocery sales business which amounts to $97M in sales. Ahold Delhaize now wishes to focus exclusively on expanding their East Coast business for this market segment. “This was a difficult decision given Peapod’s rich history in the Midwest”, said Kevin Holt, CEO of Ahold Delhaize USA. “We know changes such as these are never easy for consumers and communities. We appreciate the loyalty of associates and customers over the past three decades”.

**Hy-Vees Randy Edeker Named New FMI Chairman**

Hy-Vee Chairman, President and CEO Randy Edeker was named the new Chairman of FMI – The Food Industry Association, at the FMI Winter Meetings in Phoenix last month. Edeker will assume his position for the 2020-21 term as Joseph Sheridan of Wakefern exits. Edeker has led Hy-Vee since 2012 and he will now lead the supermarket industry’s largest retail trade group as it moves forward under a new identity. Recent changes included the transition from Food Marketing Institute to FMI – The Food Industry Association. This rebranding aims to widen FMI’s focus from its traditional membership of grocery and other food retailers to include suppliers and other business partners.

**Price Chopper Plans Major Investments In Kansas City In 2020**

Price Chopper stores in Kansas City, which are locally owned, are planning a $54 million investment to put into new stores and remodels. With combined investments of the last two years, this will put the total three-year investment over $104 million. According to Brian Haaraqja, President and CEO of Price Chopper Enterprises, this is a great example of Price Chopper’s long-standing commitment to the serving the Kansas City community.

“As the grocery market leader, it is important for us to reinvest into the community we serve,” said Haaraqja. “We know the impact of these investments will spur growth in new areas, while also adding to the job force.”

Price Chopper is one of Kansas City’s largest employers with over 11,000 associates, Price Chopper’s investment will add over 300 new jobs. The investment will be made through a combination of efforts by the four local families that make up the Price Chopper group in the Greater Kansas City area.

**The Skogen’s Festival Foods – Expanding Their Footprint**

Festival Foods is an Independent Wisconsin Grocer that has been steadily and deliberately growing over the past 14 years. Owned and operated by the Skogen family of Onalaska and led by CEO Mark Skogen, this Operator continues their expansion into the Southeastern Wisconsin market, most recently with the purchase of a former Target in Greenfield and a recent opening, (November, 2019), in Hales Corners, just South of Milwaukee. The new Greenfield location will mark their 5th Southeastern Wisconsin store and 33rd store overall.

Onalaska-based Skogen’s Festival Foods was founded by Paul and Jane Skogen in 1946 and has 32 stores currently operating in the state, 14 of which have opened since 2006. Headquarters is split between their main offices in DePere and satellite office and Support Center in Onalaska.

For more information, contact Presence Marketing/Dynamic Presence’s Ali Young at ayoung@pmidpi.com.

**Cub “Drive for Sales” Summit a Success**

The Cub “Drive for Sales” Summit was held at the Allianz soccer field in St. Paul. Cub is embracing the opportunity to transition to new ownership after the sale of SUPERVALU to UNFI. The summit was a great opportunity to build stronger partnerships with their vendor partners in order to achieve their goal of becoming the leading premier regional grocery chain in the country and to provide their customer with the best grocery experience.

Cub was founded in 1968 and has 79 locations sprinkled throughout the Twin Cities metro area. Cub is #1 in the Twin Cities metro area holding a 23.6% market share. The future looks bright with new leadership teams, growth strategies and rapid expansion of eCommerce. They also are challenging vendor partners with cross-merchandising ideas and thinking outside the box.
Cub “Drive for Sales” Summit a Success cont’d

Cub will no longer charge ad fees except for full page overlays and during their eight event weeks. Center store is 44% of sales by category. They will continue to maximize merchandising opportunities thru cart room, pallet, grocery end cap displays, along with dairy and frozen displays.

Fresh/produce and floral consists of 13% of sales by category. Produce take pride in their triple check process to ensure consumer satisfaction. They also partner with key vendors based on their premier growing practices. The focus is on sustainability, advanced organic growing capabilities, local, reduced carbon footprint and innovation.

Meat and seafood contribute 12% to Cub’s category sales. They recognize they need to expand on organic and natural offerings while staying on trend and first to market for their consumers everyday needs.

Deli and bakery have 8% of Cub’s category sales and committed to offering high quality and evolving product lines with major focus on freshness. The goal is to be a recognized leader in meal solutions.

Finally, Cub is proud to support several local foundations and partner very closely with the local professional sports teams and University and College level as well.

For additional information please contact Presence Marketing/Dynamic Presence’s Dave Jensen at djensen@pmidpi.com.

UNFI Announces Senior Management Team Changes

UNFI has announced several changes within the Company’s senior management team. UNFI also disclosed that it has extended the employment agreement of Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Steven L. Spinner through July 31st, 2021. UNFI announced the following senior management appointments and changes:

• John Howard, who has served as Interim Chief Financial Officer since August 2019, has been appointed Chief Financial Officer, effective February 9th, 2020.
• Eric Dorne, who serves as the Company’s Chief Information Officer (CIO), Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and oversees the Company’s Integration Office and Canadian Business, has been appointed Chief Operating Officer, effective March 8th, 2020.
• Sean Griffin, currently UNFI’s Chief Operating Officer, has announced his retirement effective July 31st, 2020. Sean will focus on continuing the company’s business transformation as well as supporting other key business initiatives. He will remain with the company as an advisor until November 2020.
• Chris Testa, President and Chief Marketing Officer, will take on additional responsibilities leading UNFI’s professional services, supplier services, customer care and the Company’s Canadian division, and will report directly to Steve Spinner.
• UNFI also announced additional leadership news:
  • Paul Green, currently UNFI’s Chief Supply Chain Officer, will take on a new role as President, Fresh, where he will lead the Company’s meat and produce merchandising teams and will report directly to Steve Spinner. Paul will continue serving as Chief Supply Chain Officer (CSCO) until a successor is named.
  • Mike Stigers, currently Cub CEO and Executive Vice President, Fresh, will transition UNFI’s Fresh teams to Paul Green, once he has completed his move to his new role. Mike’s will focus on leading CUB and continuing the sale process for the Minnesota-based grocery retailer and will also report directly to Steve Spinner.
  • The company has searches underway for a new Chief Information Officer and Chief Supply Chain Officer, both of whom will report to Eric Dorne.
  • The company is also creating a new Senior Vice President, Brands role to further build its differentiated and exclusive private brands offerings and oversee UNFI corporate branding initiatives. This position will report to Chris Testa.

Threshold Enterprises Hires New CFO

Threshold Enterprises welcomed Carl Wiseman aboard January 6th as its new Chief Financial Officer. Wiseman comes to Threshold to help organize Threshold’s finance team and financial systems and processes to enable accuracy, efficiency, effectiveness, and timeliness.

“Carl is our keeper of the bottom line,” said CEO Tom Grillea. “Key areas he will address include Accounts Payable efficiencies and implementation of best practices, as well as the analysis and development of our costing strategies and protocols, to ensure we understand the underpinnings of our financial costs, performance and margins.”

Most recently, Wiseman served as CFO at a large agriculture producer in Salinas. Prior to that, he was CFO at a cloud-based SaaS startup located in Los Gatos. His extensive experience in operations will be leveraged to improve Threshold’s operational cost structures and financial performance.

“This position was a perfect match,” said Wiseman. “I’m very hands on and very strategic, but also tactical when I need to be. First and foremost, I’m here to ensure we’re capturing and analyzing all available data — buying, selling, stocking, you name it.”

From a military family, Wiseman spent the first few years of his life in Guam. When Carl was five, a massive typhoon obliterated the island, a storm so powerful it drove 300-foot boats three miles inland.

A graduate from Golden Gate University in San Francisco with a BS Degree in Finance, Wiseman also holds an MBA from Santa Clara University.
Puerto Rico Threshold Brand Expo April 19th

Exploring business opportunities and closing deals with partner retailers have never been so much fun. Mix business with pleasure when you join us at the legendary Caribe Hilton. Located between historic Old San Juan and Condado, this luxurious resort has an oceanfront pool complex, captivating ocean views, lush tropical gardens, and a bird sanctuary. Don’t miss this opportunity to showcase your products, offer deals, and grow your sales at this one-day event. For more information, visit www.thresholdenterprises.com.

KeHE Distributors and Northwest Grocers Ink Deal

KeHE announced that it has been selected by Washington-based Northwest Grocers (NWG) as their primary distribution partner for natural, organic, and specialty products.

More than 90 independent neighborhood grocery retailers across Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Northern California make up the member-owned organization focused on supporting and growing independent grocery retailers. The four-year deal allows NWG members to leverage KeHE’s national scale. The group was also highly attracted to KeHE’s dedication and leadership for specialty, natural & organic product categories, along with their emerging portfolio of innovative fresh perimeter programs.

Across the country, digitally-savvy, innovation-hungry consumers have driven the growth of independent grocers who can provide memorable in-store experiences due to their curated product assortment and quick speed to shelf with new items. KeHE’s proven track record of bringing new and emerging brands to market will increase the ability for NWG members to continue to be strong pillars of the communities they serve, while also continuing to grow in the ever-changing market. This aligns with the entrepreneurial vision of the organization.

“Northwest Grocers is known for their strategic support of their members,” Gene Carter, KeHE’s Chief Operating Officer said about their new partner. “KeHE was founded by a passionate grocer in service of the needs of other retailers. Almost 70 years later, we’re even more dedicated to serving the unique, ever-changing needs of that customer base. This partnership will allow KeHE to collaborate with the NWG team in areas like supply chain and category management to drive growth and innovation for their members.”

“Northwest Grocers provides its members with best in class support for advertising, marketing, and promotional merchandising,” said Stan Trask, President of NWG. “We are committed to bringing our retailers the best tools for supporting their natural, organic, and specialty product needs. Our partnership with KeHE unlocks the resources our independents need for an innovative full solution program that will provide them with the ability to drive sales and lead in this market.”

This new deal comes as both organizations look to the future and work to evolve to best serve their customers.

KeHE Summer Show Brings Big Product Innovation to the Big Easy

More than 750 exhibitors brought their innovative new products and consumer favorites to the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana for the 2020 KeHE Summer Show. The annual trade show, held February 4th and 5th, welcomed more than 4,500 industry professionals including KeHE retailers hungry for show deals on trending products.

“Kicking off 2020 by bringing together our retail and supplier partners to experience all the innovation in the marketplace was incredible,” said Gene Carter, KeHE’s Chief Operating Officer. “Our retailers rely on us to be their eyes and ears on both the trend of the minute and what’s next on the horizon, it’s a responsibility we’ve further embraced as we strive to be the Next Generation Distributor. Our show floor has become a true showcase of KeHE’s advanced product and trend foraging expertise. By educating our customers not only on the trends, but also how to implement them at the store level, they leave with tangible ideas and the product to execute because they could buy it right on the show floor.”

The show kicked off with the first Next Generation Innovation Faceoff where five emerging brands, not yet in KeHE’s portfolio, competed in a pitch slam competition to earn a place in KeHE’s new elevate program. Goji’s Apple Cider Vinegar Gummies took the top spot, as selected by the audience and KeHE Category Managers, making them the first brand to formally enter the new program.

“Our first goal is to create a marketplace that allows our customers to easily connect with suppliers and buy products,” said Ari Goldsmith, KeHE’s Vice President of Marketing. “By layering in elements like interactive trend education and our Next Generation Innovation Showcase, we’ve truly created a hub of innovation that resonated with all attendees. Overall sales saw a double-digit percentage increase over 2019.”

KeHE’s Innovation Gurus unveiled the second class of On Trend Award winners by surprising 15 winners on the show floor. The team sampled and evaluated more than 300 item submissions to determine the final list.

On Trend Beverages: Remedy Organics
On Trend Condiments: Beyond the Equator
On Trend Confections and Baking: The Good Bean
On Trend Convenience: RightRice

On Trend Fresh: Belle Chevre
On Trend Frozen: Caulipower
On Trend Functionality: WellWell
On Trend HBC and Personal Care: CBDfx
On Trend Mission-Based Brand: Endangered Species Chocolate
On Trend Pet: I And Love And You
On Trend Plant-Based and Sustainability: Outer Aisle
On Trend Refrigerated and Dairy: Perfectly Peckish
On Trend Snack Foods and Bars: Catalina Crunch
On Trend VMS: Orgain
On Trend Best of Show: Mammoth Creameries

Day two of the show saw the exciting continuation of KeHE’s Serving Goodness event, launched last June at the KeHE Holiday Show, where thousands of attendees volunteered to help pack 100,000 meals for families in need. The boxes featured products donated by show exhibitors and will now be delivered by the Children’s Hunger Fund to hungry families.

Following the show, the KeHE community donated more than 38,000 pounds of food products to the Second Harvest Food Bank, totaling 32,000 meals for southern Louisiana families.

The 2020 KeHE Holiday Show will be held June 17th and 18th in Chicago, Illinois. The show is invite-only. For more information, visit KeHE.com.
2020 Trends to Watch

One driver of the natural industry over the last decade has been consumer desire for healthier living, that translated into functional products across nearly all food and beverage categories. Nearly every (99%) U.S. household reports that they buy Natural or Organic products each year.

SPINS experts (Product Intelligence experts, registered dietitians and data analysts) looked at grocery and beverage trends throughout the year and assembled a panel in December 2019 to determine the trends to focus on in 2020 and products tapping into these trends. Here are trends to keep on your radar…

Grocery

Top trends to spot within the inner aisles of the grocery store (excluding fresh produce/meat/bakery). Today’s health and wellness shopper demands more, and brands are meeting their needs going beyond organic and delivering on sustainability concerns and cleaner labels.

This and That Combos: manufacturers are appealing to consumers who want to incorporate plant-based foods without sacrificing animal products completely through the creation of blended meat and dairy products. With a reduced reliance on animal-based protein, even mainstream brands have gotten in on the act.

Savvy Spreads and Sauces: even the condiment aisle is being disrupted by the need for sugar alternatives. Traditional options, like ketchup, syrups and BBQ sauces, are being overhauled to bring wellness to the forefront with cleaner ingredients and no- or less-sugar.

All about Allulose: an alternative sweetener derived from foods such as figs, raisins and maple syrup, allulose behaves like sugar in taste and texture but is lower in calories and does not impact blood glucose levels. The FDA does not require allulose to be included in total, or added sugar count on the Nutrition Facts Panel, suggesting it may be a popular option for manufacturers seeking to entice their sugar-conscious shopper.

Under the Sea: marine based products, like seaweed, are beginning to emerge as a new ingredient that delivers on fiber with little calorie contributions. Research is underway to further support the health benefits of seaweed.

Children

Children’s Health: Natural and specialty brands are winning with the health and wellness conscious parents. As millennials become parents, the push for good nutrition from the start has a firm foothold in baby and kid products.

Introducing Allergens: the introduction of allergens as early as 4 to 6 months is recommended by the National Institute of Health and the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines. As parents adhere to their guidance, manufacturers are offering specific products to aid in introduction of foods like nuts and eggs.

Tummy Troubles be Gone: as more research is conducted on the microbiome, some research points to the importance of gut health in babies and tots making this area a prime market for innovation.

Supplemental Support: melatonin, elderberry and probiotics are three of the fastest-growing ingredients in kid and baby supplements; as parents seek immunity, digestive and sleep health for their little ones.

Beverage

Emerging demand for better-for-you beverages continues to disrupt the industry. Long gone are the days when taste was the only factor driving purchase decisions. The bar has been raised for beverages – and consumers want more.

Wellness Brews: a new wave of wellness beers is hitting shores with better ingredients, fewer calories and less sugar. Beer powerhouses are making a statement with their voluntary commitment on nutrition labeling. Within this, hard kombucha is one of the fastest growing categories of the alcohol industry.

Keep Calm and Drink On: amidst an anxiety-ridden culture, drinks with calming qualities are on the rise. Popular ingredients in these beverages include chamomile, lavender CBD and L-theanine.

Modernized “Moo”: the dairy milk category is reshaping itself to compete in the modern marketplace. Dairy milk is augmenting its nutrition content by adding even more protein, removing lactose, promoting DHA/omega-3s, and increasing education around A1 versus A2 proteins. The refrigerated dairy milk category experienced stagnant growth this year, though pockets of innovation saw wins.

Food News, Policy and Research Update – By Steven Hoffman, Compass Natural Marketing

Organic Acreage and Sales Continue to Grow Worldwide

Based on data collected from 186 countries, 2018 was another record year for organic agriculture. Organic farmland increased worldwide in 2018 by 2.0 million hectares (4.9 million acres), according to the 21st annual survey, The World of Organic Agriculture, conducted by the Swiss-based Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in partnership with IFOAM Organics International and released in February 2020.

While this represents a modest increase of 2.9%, growth in global acreage has been steady for a number of years. Globally, 1.5% of all farmland is estimated to be organic. However, according to FiBL’s 2020 report, many countries have far higher shares of organic – in 16 countries, 10% or more of all agricultural land is reported to be organic.

Globally, a total of 71.5 million hectares (177 million acres) were organically managed in 2018. Australia recorded the largest organic agricultural area (35.7 million hectares, or 88.2 acres), followed by Argentina (3.6 million hectares or 8.9 acres) and China (3.1 million hectares or 7.7 million acres). North America, including Canada, Mexico and the U.S., reported 3.3 million hectares or 8.2 million acres of organic agricultural land in 2018.
Food News, Policy and Research Update – By Steven Hoffman, Compass Natural Marketing cont’d

Because of Australia, FiBL reports, half of all global organic agricultural land is in Oceania. Europe has the second largest area, followed by Latin America. Also, in 2018, 2.8 million organic producers were reported worldwide, with India continuing to be the country with the highest number of producers (1.1.5 million).

Market research firm Ecovia Intelligence, working with FiBL, estimates that the global market for organic food was more than $100 billion US. The U.S. leads the market with sales of $44 billion US in 2018, followed by Germany ($11.8 billion US) and France ($9.9 billion US).

According to the World of Organic Agriculture study, a number of major markets continued to post double-digit growth in 2018, and the organic market in France grew by more than 15%. Danish and Swiss consumers spent the most on organic food in 2018 (312 euros or $339 US per capita). Also, Denmark reported the highest market share, with organic sales capturing 11.5% of the country’s total food market.

In related news, market research firm Mercaris reports that U.S. farmers harvested nearly 3.3 million acres of certified organic field crops in 2019, beating previous estimates for every country of the region. Helping to offset a rainy growing season, the harvest was driven by 14% more organic field crop operations, reported New Hope Network. Among the report’s highlights: the U.S. organic hay and alfalfa harvest was up 8% in 2019, with 11% more certified organic farms; 13% more certified organic operations harvested corn in 2019, offsetting a decline in the number of acres harvested per operation; the U.S. certified organic soybean harvest increased 11% in 2019; and acres of harvested organic wheat grew 16% year over year as a result of expansion in the High Plains region, New Hope Network reports.

“Despite what can be fairly described as the most difficult growing season in more than a decade, 2019 was a remarkable year for organic production,” Ryan Koory, Director of Economics at Mercaris, told New Hope Network. “The addition of new organic growers suggests that 2020 could see organic production reach new record highs,” he added.

FDA Wants $5 Million Extra in 2021 Budget to Regulate CBD Products

Even though the production and sale of all products derived from hemp was made legal in the United States under the 2018 Farm Bill, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in November questioned the safety of hemp-derived CBD in dietary supplements and food and beverages, causing disruption and uncertainty in the booming market for CBD and hemp extract products. Additionally, the Trump administration in a 2021 budget plan announced in February it is asking for an additional $5 million in the next fiscal year for FDA to regulate cannabis and its derivatives, including CBD, Hemp Industry Daily reported.

The request for additional funding to regulate hemp-derived CBD products comes shortly after legislation was introduced in January in the U.S. Congress to require FDA regulators to treat hemp-derived CBD as dietary supplements, Hemp Industry Daily reported.

FDA said the extra $5 million requested would help advance regulation of products containing CBD while allowing the agency to enforce the law against companies making unsubstantiated medical claims about the products, according to Hemp Industry Daily. “New funding will enable FDA to better regulate the usage of cannabis-derived substances, such as cannabidiol (CBD), in FDA-regulated products such as dietary supplements and when used as unapproved food additives, FDA said in its budget proposal. “The initiative will support regulatory activities, including developing policy, and continue to perform its existing regulatory responsibilities including review of product applications, inspections, enforcement and targeted research,” the agency said.

Included among the activities that would be supported under FDA’s FY2021 budget request would be inspections of facilities manufacturing cannabis-derived products, additional research and funds for processing product-review applications, Natural Products Insider reported. The additional $5 million would be allocated as follows: $2 million for the Office of Regulatory Affairs; $500,000 for the Center for Veterinary Medicine; $2 million to the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition; and $500,000 for FDA headquarters.

Dietary supplement industry trade associations were cautiously supportive of the budget request. “This is a step in the right direction and is an indication that the agency has the resources to regulate the industry. However, this does not go far enough to specifically address the issue of setting safe levels of daily consumption for CBD products. Setting a safe level of consumption for CBD products is the best way to move forward with this promising new product while protecting consumers,” said Daniel Fabricant, Ph.D., President and CEO of the Natural Products Association (NPA).

NPA supports legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives that would appropriate $100,000 for the FDA to perform a Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) and set a safe level of CBD for consumers to use each day. The process would follow the same precedent as red yeast rice, which allows a natural product to contain a level of a drug ingredient that the FDA has determined to be safe, NPA said in a statement. According to the World Health Organization, CBD oil is generally recognized as safe.

USDA Hemp Program Director William Richmond, CO Governor Jared Polis, Presence Marketing/Dynamic Presence’s Tracy Miedema Among Headliners at NoCo Hemp Expo, March 26th to 28th

Move over Colorado Governor Jared Polis, USDA Hemp Program Director William Richmond, former NFL player Matt Wilhelm, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture Kate Greenberg and other confirmed speakers – Presence Marketing/Dynamic Presence’s very own VP of Innovation and Brand Development, Tracy Miedema, will be among the headliners presenting at the upcoming NoCo Hemp Expo, March 26th to 28th, 2020, at the National Western Complex in Denver, Colorado. Now in its seventh year, NoCo Hemp Expo is the world’s largest trade show, conference and gathering of hemp industry professionals under one roof. This year’s event is expected to attract nearly 20,000 visitors, say show organizers.

Initial confirmed speakers at the 2020 NoCo Hemp Expo include business leaders in the hemp and natural foods space, investors, legal and policy experts, and elite athletes, including a special appearance from celebrity soccer star Rachel Raphone, Plus, Alyssa Boston, Miss Universe Canada 2019, a prominent hemp advocate, will provide insight into the health and wellness benefits of hemp at the conference. Top government officials, including Colorado Governor Jared Polis, William Richmond, USDA’s Chief of the U.S. Domestic Hemp Program, and Kate Greenberg, Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture, will also be on hand to discuss recent rules and regulations regarding hemp. In addition, Arran Stevens, Cofounder and Co-CEO of organic and hemp food trailblazer Nature’s Path Foods, will discuss innovation in consumer products, hemp and organic agriculture, and Stephanie Karbo, Environmental Researcher with Patagonia, will discuss the company’s commitment to hemp fiber and fashion.
“The Little Shop That Could”

Thirty years into the biz of natural foods, Debra Stark, founder of Debra’s Natural Gourmet in Concord, Massachusetts, has shared her experiences in a new book, The Little Shop That Could: A Retailer’s Love Affair with Community and Food.

Yes, beans get spilled. But good for us, John Q Public learns as he reads The Little Shop that he can laugh at antics in our stores. He learns that it’s A-Okay to walk through the doors of our stores without wearing Birkenstocks. After all, this is no longer the 60’s when our customers scooped brown rice out of barrels. We’re all grown up, and life is a hoot.

Debra talks about our trade shows, companies whose dreams led them to start a chocolate company to save rain forests, and how funny it is when a customer insists on local romaine in the midst of a snowstorm. She takes on laws that mandate plastic cutting boards are safer than wood. Laws that prohibit potlucks. And topics like candidates for public office who are high on sugar from Twinkies.

Like the rest of us, Debra does not consider ketchup in the same league as celery and cauliflower.

The chapters range from growing up with a mom who made dreaded egg drinks back in the 1950s (how many of you had a mother like that?) to a chapter on the early days of her store and the annual pajama day party sale. There are chapters on ordering turkeys. The book is a romp about life, business and has darn good recipes. It’s hilarious and thoughtful.

Here’s an excerpt from the chapter called “Distractions and Taking Up Causes.”

“Stevia, Sweet Plant. Stevia gave us and many people around the country the chance to learn how our government agencies work—in this case, the FDA. Stevia afforded our shop a glimpse into the way lobbying and politics affects the food chain.

The FDA, in the early days of our store, said “No!” to stevia. Stevia, as you know, tastes many times sweeter than sugar without affecting blood sugar. It has zero calories. It’s been used safely since the beginning of time. It’s not addictive and you can’t smoke it.

It was dismaying, then, in 2007, when the FDA, under pressure from the powerful sugar and artificial sweetener lobby, issued a warning letter to Celestial Seasonings for using stevia in some of its teas. The letter said stevia was “unsafe.”

In their letter to Celestial Seasonings, the FDA stated that “enforcement action may include seizure of violative products.” The FDA did enforce a ban at the border on stevia. They detained imported food products that contained it.

The FDA publicly claimed that no evidence had been provided to them about stevia’s safety, but in fact federal records proved the FDA had received more than a thousand scientific studies. All but one said stevia was safe.

To put things in perspective, in contrast, half the studies provided to the FDA regarding the artificial sweetener aspartame warn of serious health concerns, yet aspartame is alive and well in our country.

Today, because “the people” spoke up and exercised our civic right to speak out, stevia is legal. Today some major corporations have their own versions of stevia-based sugar substitutes. One, developed jointly and introduced to the public in 2008 by The Coca-Cola Company and Cargill, is also alive and well. However, Truvia, as it’s called, uses a sweet compound isolated from the stevia plant (“Rebiana” on the label), erythritol, which is a sugar alcohol, and natural flavors. The manufacturer does not specify what those natural flavors actually are. The Coca-Cola Company filed 24 domestic patent applications for Rebiana in everything from vitamins to cereal. Coke took the stevia plant, which could not be patented, created a modified substitute they could patent, got exclusive rights to it, and started charging an arm and a leg!

The whole stevia plant does have health properties. In my opinion, the monkeyed-around-with Truvia does not. Beating the drum for our right to use stevia was like David taking on Goliath, but it was worth it. That battle was part of why our shoppers trust us.

You can find Debra on The Little Shop’s Facebook page. You can write her at debra@debrasnaturalgourmet.com. Get in touch if you want to talk about the wacky world of retail and the natural products industry, if you’re Good Morning America, if you produced the TV show, The Office, and are ready for a new hit show about health nuts, if you’re Subaru or Viking River Cruises and are dying to sponsor Eat Well Be Happy the cooking show. Of course, Debra would be thrilled if you buy her book.
Hemp Products Connect is New Hope Network’s new digital directory exclusively for the Hemp & CBD industry. This platform will serve to connect retail buyers with meaningful information to help them evaluate Hemp & CBD manufacturers and their products. For manufacturers, it will serve as a valuable tool to showcase transparency and promote their key differentiators to the B2B audience.

PACKAGES & INCLUSIONS

Application/Standards Review:
Cost: $95.00
Help us create a transparent and responsible Hemp industry that retailers and consumers can trust! Company and product details will be reviewed and approved by our team of New Hope Compliance Specialists.*

Review will include:
- Detailed feedback on product labelling compliance
- Verification of select documentation supporting relevant claims and certifications
- Review of product’s CoA to confirm that cannabinoid potency and THC levels reasonably match label claims and that product has undergone comprehensive contaminant testing (when applicable)

* Any non-compliance will be communicated to the manufacturer with details on required adjustments and opportunity to submit for re-review

Basic 365 Listing:

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<th>SKU Range</th>
<th>Cost (Before Discount)</th>
<th>Cost (40% Off)</th>
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<td>Up to 5 SKUs</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$480</td>
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<tr>
<td>Up to 10 SKUs</td>
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<td>10-15 SKUs</td>
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<td>$1,080</td>
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<td>16+ SKUs</td>
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<td>$1,200</td>
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Promote your brand and hemp products in a safe and trusted B2B environment. Showcase your key differentiators and tell your seed to shelf story to help retail buyers make decisions about hemp & CBD products to stock at their stores.
- 1-year listing on Hemp Products Connect
- Logo display
- First 100 companies to sign up for 10+ SKU package will receive personal assistance with uploading product details

ADD-ON OPTIONS

Featured Company Listing:
Cost: $750
Upgrade your Basic 365 Listing:
- Rotating featured space on the homepage with other Featured Companies
- Search priority in relevant keyword and category searches
- FEATURED ribbon in any search results
- Inclusion of videos, PDF content, resources and news

Featured Product Listing:
Cost: $750 for first SKU, $600 for each additional Featured Product Listing
- Search priority across relevant product categories and keywords
- Rotating space on homepage with other Featured Products
- FEATURED ribbon in any search results

HempProductsConnect.com Welcome Ad:
Cost: $2,500 per Share of Voice (2 SOV per month – 50% of total audience)
- All unique visitors to hempproductsconnect.com will be greeted by a large (640X480) ad before being able to access content. Ensures ad is seen by visitors to our site in a very prominent manner

HempProductsConnect.com Standard Banner Ad Share of Voice (SOV):
Cost: $1,000 per Share of Voice (4 SOV per month – 25% of total audience)
- A trusted format that when combined with newer digital ad units provides a superior user experience
- A standard Banner Share of Voice includes the following ad units as part of this monthly program: 728x90, 300x250 and 320x50 mobile
- Ads rotate throughout the entire site with advertisers having a rotating ad presence with all ad units
- Expect 25,000 impressions per month

Contact Emma.Karp@informa.com with any questions
Trader Joes’ Founder Passes Away

On February 28th, Trader Joes’ founder, Joe Coulombe died at his home in Pasadena, California, at the age of 89. He had been battling a long illness.

Born in June 1930 and raised on an avocado ranch in San Diego County, Coulombe served in the Air Force and then earned both bachelors and master’s degrees from Stanford’s business school. Following graduation, he worked for Rexall drugstore, a chain that put him in charge of launching the chain of convenience stores called Pronto. However, around this time 7-Eleven also made their launch in Southern California and were a success. Coulombe decided he wanted to start something different. In 1967, he opened Trader Joe’s in Pasadena, California, a grocery store with a specific client target and a unique ambiance. He targeted the college-educated and well-traveled—though not wealthy—consumer, who had sophisticated taste. He personally selected wines, cheeses and fine olive oils—with many products purchased directly from the wholesalers and sold as Trader Joes branded products. At Trader Joe’s, novelty met value and it was a true first. There have never been loyalty programs or sale prices on products and prices remain low. In the beginning, store publicity came by way of radio commercials and via their monthly newsletter mailer, “The Fearless Flyer.” Today the chain is popular as ever and doesn’t need much advertising, but the newsletter still goes out. Coulombe’s love of travel and adventure are showcased in the look of the store: it was (and still is) an experience in itself: a nautical theme is prevalent in murals and decorations and the staff uniform is tropical themed shirts.

In 1979, Coulombe sold Trader Joes to grocery retailer Aldi but remained its CEO until 1988, when he went to part-time as a Trader Joe’s executive. He then also served as a consultant for large companies. Since he left as CEO, there have been two other Trader Joes CEOs.

He officially retired in 2013. Coulombe and his wife, Alice, were active in their philanthropic ventures, and gave generously to organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the Los Angeles Opera and the Huntington Library, Art museum and Botanical Gardens.

In 2019, Forbes conducted a nationwide survey and named Trader Joes “America’s Best Large Employers.” Around 50,000 people at companies with over 5,000 employed were surveyed on aspects such as atmosphere, remuneration, and working conditions. They also gave a number grade on a scale of 1 to 10. Trader Joe’s average was 9.59.

As of 2020, there are 503 Trader Joe’s locations in 42 states and Washington D.C. Employees enjoy generous pay, benefits and store discounts. Coulombe’s goal was for employees to make careers at Trader Joes. In a 2011 Los Angeles Times interview, he stated that “the average full-time employee will make median family income.” The annual pay increase is between 7% and 10%. Also, benefits were recently offered to part-time employees.

He was married to his wife, Alice, for 67 years. He is survived by Alice, his three children and six grandchildren.

Milestones

A big Presence Marketing/Dynamic Presence shout out to East Conventional Account Executive Jacob Cook on the birth of his third child, Rowan Iva, on February 14th. Valentine’s Day couldn’t have been sweeter for big brother Deacon, 5, and big sister, Sloane, 2. The Cook family is overjoyed with their latest addition and adjusting to life as a party of five.

New Arrivals

New Hires

Presence Marketing

East
Amory Willcox
Retail Services Rep

Midwest
Christopher Follert
AR Coordinator

Southwest
Adrianna Vasquez
Account Executive Assistant

Dynamic Presence

East
Don Thomas
Account Executive

-rowan iva cook-
February Anniversaries

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td>Bruce Counley</td>
<td>Dynamic Presence - Southwest</td>
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Job Openings

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<td>East</td>
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<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Director of Brand Management</td>
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<td>Midwest</td>
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<td>Sales Assistant – Kroger</td>
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For more information regarding job opportunities visit [http://www.pmidpi.com/careers/](http://www.pmidpi.com/careers/) or email hr@pmidpi.com.