BOXED IN...
The Reality is Both a Dream and Nightmare

FEATURE:
The Pandemic, Brown Box and Food Industry

GOVERNMENT:
State and Federal Updates

NOTABLE & QUOTABLE:
Industry Efforts, Awards and Contributions

ASSOCIATION UPDATE:
Our 2020 Award Winners
During good times, it’s easy to keep a steady hand. But when life throws curve balls like the world has never seen, those steady hands can become shaky rather quickly. At Associated Wholesale Grocers, we have thousands of examples of strong, steady hands keeping grocery stores running, true purveyors of hope for our communities. And there are thousands of steady hands at AWG supporting those ESSENTIAL pillars of communities in the 28 states we serve. We’ve been constantly tracking how our industry is changing long before the current crisis and we’re focusing even closer on how the current situation will change things even more.

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BOXed In...

Has the Pandemic Been a Blessing or a Curse?

(Or BOTH?)

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ON THE COVER:
The treasures and trials of being “Boxed In”

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For information on becoming an Ohio Lottery retailer, please call the Sales Department at 216-774-5680 or visit our website at www.ohiolottery.com/eApplications.

Lottery players are subject to Ohio laws and Commission regulations. Please play responsibly.
As an optimist, I always look for opportunity in every challenge. And as I’m sure you’ll agree, 2020 and Covid-19 has certainly presented a number of challenges for us retailers. From the great toilet paper shortage of March 2020 to keeping our employees energized after a long and tough spring and summer, 2020 has certainly been a challenging year! And, as we approach our “typical” busy season, I don’t believe there is a calming time in our near future.

We are blessed. Most grocery retailers are enjoying increased sales, higher customer counts and larger average baskets – the silver lining of the pandemic (at least for us). Other retailers and businesses haven’t fared as well and are still struggling. Meanwhile, our grocery consumers have (somewhat) adjusted to eating more meals at home. And while part of Ohio still shelters in – either by working from home or in a business not yet recovered from the shutdowns – this often equates to more than dinner at home, including breakfast and lunch as well!

But with every positive comes challenges. For the food industry it includes everything from product, to storefront, to customer experience. To address these challenges, retailers have stepped up to the plate and adapted how we service our customers. We are doing more online ordering, curbside pickup, in some cases home delivery. We have put up sneeze guards, worn gloves, worn masks, cleaned and cleaned some more. We have continued to keep our doors open, provide fresh, healthy and safe food to our customers, and serve as a foundation of business within our communities. Our teams have stepped up, and despite more time than ever spent in their “retail boxes” we have met these challenges and proven our importance as front line providers.

And all the while, your association has risen to the challenges they faced in 2020. At the height of the pandemic, OGA provided valuable communications surrounding COVID and was the source of information for our industry. They pivoted their thinking and still managed to bring us safely together either virtually or in some cases in-person. They worked to bring us an at-home industry celebration when it wasn’t deemed safe for us to gather with their Brown Box Celebration. They continued to represent our interests in legislative and regulatory/agency activities.

Additionally, it is my honor to announce that our President and CEO of the Ohio Grocers Association, Kristin Mullins, has been recognized by the National Grocers Association as the winner of the Association Leadership Award. This award is recognition of the work Kristin and her team at the OGA do each day that benefits all of us. Their work during the ongoing pandemic has been appreciated by all.

So, I hope all of you will take a step back from our busy busy retail lives and realize how blessed this industry is. We have not been closed down, we have seen increased sales, we have even safer cleaning protocols in place and we still have the support and resource of an outstanding trade association. If COVID-19 had to happen, I’d rather be working through it rather than stuck waiting for it to end.

I, everyone at Buehlers, and the staff at OGA wish for you a busy, profitable and safe 4th quarter!

-Mike Davidson

OGA Chairman

Welcome to Our Newest Members...

Stoodt's Fresh Market
Maamos Kitchen Meal Kits
Union Supply Group

Membership Truly Has Its Privileges: ... and Much More!

- Exclusive Web Content and Resources
- Training and Compliance
- Latest Government and CDC Alerts
- Exclusive Partner Program Savings
**Governor Signs Civil Immunity Protection Legislation into Law**

A bill that would provide liability protection for certain businesses and entities during the COVID-19 pandemic was recently signed into law by Governor DeWine. In addition to the Senate changes earlier this year, the legislature made two last-minute changes: one extends the provisions of the bill through September 2021; and the second stripped the emergency clause because the House didn't have enough votes to pass the bill with an emergency clause. The problematic workers' compensation provisions that the Senate removed during their process stayed out of the final version as well. OGA actively supported the legislation and offered testimony and letters of support. Our legislative partner, CivicPoint, recently helped provide further information and guidance on the new law. For additional questions please contact Kristin Mullins.

**Auxiliary Container Regulation & Alcoholic Ice Cream Bills Clear the Legislature**

After years of advocating for commerce uniformity, the Ohio legislature approved House Bill 242, legislation that will regulate the use of auxiliary containers and place a one-year moratorium on any such regulations at the local level. This is a big win for retail food establishments to have consistency across the state over the next year. While we preferred a more permanent solution, we believe this will allow our industry time to continue to have conversations about the importance of commerce uniformity with legislators and interested parties. Special thanks to members for your advocacy in urging legislators to pass House Bill 242. The bill now heads to the Governor for his signature. In another win for the industry and state liquor agencies, the House and Senate also approved House Bill 160, which regulates the sale and use of alcoholic ice cream and also contains new potential opportunities for select state liquor agencies. Contained within the final version of House Bill 160 is language that allows select and eligible state liquor agencies to offer full pours of cocktails and spirituous liquor within an agency location, giving customers a new opportunity to sample spirits while they shop. House Bill 160 also awaits the Governor’s signature and with an emergency clause in it, will go into effect immediately upon signing.

**OGA at the Statehouse**

During 2020, CivicPoint partnered with the Ohio Grocers Association to monitor and advocate for issues, both regulatory and legislative, impacting members and the retail food industry as a whole. Some of our key accomplishments include:

- Tracked over 90 bills and resolutions that impact the association and the retail food industry.
- Monitored and advocated for pending legislation, House Bill 669, that if passed, would allow grocery stores with liquor agencies the opportunity, with DOLC approval, to sell and deliver spirituous liquor to consumers.
- Advocated for pending legislation (mentioned above), House Bill 160, that would allow select and qualified liquor agencies to offer full pours of cocktails while customers shop in their stores.
- Successfully advocated for passage on House Bill 606, which would extend civil liability protections for Ohio’s grocers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- Successfully advocated for passage on House Bill 242, that would establish uniform standards pertaining to the regulation of auxiliary containers in Ohio.
- Worked with the Department of Agriculture to make sure retailer’s voices were heard during the rollout of the Ohio Hemp program and its regulatory guidelines.
- Supported legislation, House Bill 197, that provided immediate resources and flexibility for Ohio retailers and consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

OGA encourages all members to stay update on all the legislative and regulatory issues we are tracking. You can always find a full list of bills we are monitoring on OGA’s website: www.ohiogrocers.org.

If you have questions or comments on any state or federal issue, please contact Kristin Mullins OGA President and CEO, at (614) 442-5511 ex. 7110 or kristin@ohiogrocers.org
Despite Uncertainties, Independents Mean Business

The United States is poised to elect a president at a time in the nation’s history when Americans seem more divided and more uncertain than ever about their future. A pandemic has gripped the country for six months, setting a robust economy on its ear, and has contributed to a surge of political unrest nationwide.

Grocery retailers have strived to bring stability to daily life, and independent supermarket operators are uniquely equipped to monitor the pulse of their communities. The current pandemic has illustrated the agility and resiliency of independent grocers.

The independent supermarket industry continues to experience ongoing and unexpected challenges as it works tirelessly to feed the American public. To help grocers continue to meet these challenges, NGA urges quick and decisive action on several key actions that, at this writing, were awaiting action in a deadlocked Congress.

Support for Our Supermarket Superheroes

The bipartisan AG CHAIN Act (H.R. 6841) and FRNT LINE Act (S. 4213) provide an exclusion from gross income taxes and temporary payroll tax relief to essential food and agriculture workers. The industry’s ability to meet our customers’ needs would not be possible without the dedicated and talented frontline workers who show up to work every day to move product and keep store shelves stocked. While most grocers have increased pay and provided bonuses to their employees, the federal government should also recognize these individuals’ sacrifices.

Liability Protection

The SAFE TO WORK Act (S. 4317) would help ensure grocers are protected if they made their best efforts to comply with federal, state and local guidance. Despite being designated as essential businesses, grocers are under threat of frivolous litigation simply for remaining open during the pandemic. Congress must protect essential businesses from unnecessary liability exposure provided these businesses took reasonable steps to comply with the guidance from the CDC or other health authorities.

Incentivizing Work

Congress should consider modifying the unemployment insurance (UI) program by adding a cap on total unemployment benefits at a certain percentage of the applicant’s previous compensation level, as an alternative to the current policy of offering additional benefits that have shown to be a disincentive to continuing or returning to work.

Better SNAP Access

To help grocers better serve consumers, NGA urges expanding access to the SNAP online purchasing program by providing grocers with technical assistance to help in implementing an online program and deferring expensive startup costs for retailers that lack capacity and resources necessary to get online. Additionally, Congress should consider emergency funding to help shore up the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, formerly known as the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program, a popular program that increases the purchasing power of SNAP customers when they buy healthy fruits and vegetables.

CBD Regulation

To help retailers fulfill the growing demand for cannabidiol (CBD) products, NGA actively supports the regulation of CBD as a dietary supplement. Removal of CBD and hemp-derived products from the Controlled Substances Act has led to the quick growth in business and consumer interest, and CBD products have flooded the marketplace in a variety of forms, such as tinctures, pills, lotions and oils. Many independent food retailers have responded to this demand and are experiencing growing sales, but others are deterred because of the lack of legal clarity surrounding CBD products. NGA supports common-sense FDA regulation of CBD products. Classifying CBD as a dietary supplement will ensure product safety for consumers while providing grocers with much-needed regulatory certainty.

Supporting Essential Businesses and Their Frontline Workers

Support from our lawmakers, regardless of political party, on these key issues will allow independent grocery operators to better fulfill their mission as essential businesses in feeding their communities, whether in times of crisis or normalcy. The Buckeye state is one that always plays a critical role in key elections of our nation’s leaders. Make sure your voice is heard. To get involved, visit grocerstakeaction.org

Greg Ferrara is President and CEO for the National Grocers Association and a contributor to our Federal Update gferrara@nationalgrocers.org
YOU’RE THE EXPERT IN YOUR MARKET. WE’RE THE EXPERT IN OURS.

Whether it’s energy procurement, a renewables project assessment or simply wanting to ensure your energy plan maximizes value, Premier Power Solutions has you covered.

Ohio Grocers Association members can achieve budget certainty and cost savings when a smart energy strategy is in place.

For more information about the OGA Energy Program visit PremierPowerSolutions.com/OGA-Energy-Program

Or to get started today, call Ryan Foster, Vice President of Sales and Business Development at 330.316.0344.

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Optimize Your Energy Strategy: Predictive Analysis

Over are the days when energy budgets were just about buying electricity or natural gas “at the best price.” Technological advancements today provide a heightened awareness of energy usage, energy fuel types, and sustainability. To optimize your energy usage and budget spend, today’s commercial energy strategies must dig deeper to uncover insight that goes well beyond low-cost commodity procurement. Understanding your energy data can open new opportunities for energy and cost-efficiency. It pays to turn your focus to the energy initiatives and solutions that will provide the greatest positive impact. Gaining insight into your unique energy usage and consumption across the entire organization will enable data-driven decisions and help to improve efficiencies. The answer lies in the data – through the targeted analysis of your energy consumption over time. This is what we call your “load shape” or “load factor.”

How Your Load Shape Impacts Your Energy Costs

Your load shape is the curve that is formed by your consumption of energy for a specified period. This is typically over a 24-hour period, although seasonal load shapes can also be relevant depending on your location and weather patterns. When a supplier prices your electricity, they are doing this based on your load shape. Your load shape impacts what you get for a commodity price, your capacity costs, and other ancillaries. If you implement strategies that change your load shape (reduce your hourly load) during the more expensive hours of the day, you can significantly reduce your energy costs. It is also important to note that you’ll need to have the right type of electricity supply contract in place to be able to benefit from these strategies.

A common mistake that many organizations make is looking at energy efficiency, procurement, and sustainability as independent silos. Doing this can create long-lasting, unnecessary, and costly mistakes. If you want to experience measurable, financially rewarding change, it’s time to break open those silos and take a more holistic approach. Leveraging an integrated analysis of all three key driving factors will provide the greatest insight.

The Integrated Energy Optimization Approach

Cost-effective energy management requires an integrated approach to optimizing all three driving factors that have historically been managed in silos.

- **Energy Procurement**: How your company buys power
- **Energy Efficiency**: How your company uses energy to power operations
- **Sustainability**: How you use resources to manage your carbon footprint

Conducting a forward-looking analysis that incorporates a variety of energy options allows you to prioritize, plan, and execute an optimized energy strategy. Once you understand the potential cost savings and sustainability benefits of certain actions, you can then take a deeper dive into your operation, facilities, and energy usage data to develop a road map. Each of the actions you undertake will have an impact on the economics of subsequent actions (remember our load factor example above) so it’s a good idea to evaluate energy efficiency, demand response, and distributed generation applications together with an overall energy procurement strategy.

*With your roadmap in hand, you can make better-informed decisions and source energy procurement and management solutions with confidence.*

Introducing Commercial Optimizer

Large organizations are benefiting from an integrated, data-driven approach to energy procurement and management—and you can too. If your organization is ready to break through the silos for access to greater insight, you don’t need to hire an energy management team or invest tons of capital to do so. Premier Power Solutions has developed the Commercial Optimizer. This innovative analytics tool provides the data you need to understand which energy solutions and projects you can modify—and in what order of priority—to achieve your company’s financial and sustainability goals. Commercial Optimizer uses your organization’s unique and specific data to produce customized results.

*Whether your results call for energy efficiency, renewables, demand response, different supply contract structures, or all the above, Premier Power Solutions can be your trusted energy consulting team to analyze and source your ideal solutions. Contact us today to request your Commercial Optimizer consultation.*

For more information, please contact Premier Energy’s Ryan Foster, at (330) 316-0344 or find out more about OGA’s Energy Program online at www.PremierPowerSolutions.com/OGA-Energy-Program.
OUTLOOK: 2020 INDUSTRY

Out-Of-The-Box Thinking For Our Own “Boxes”

The changing state of the world today – from civil unrest, to pandemic concerns, to a volatile economy – has taught businesses (and people) everywhere the need to adapt and adjust. Beyond the typical adjustments that need to be made, retailers will need to employ some “out-of-the-box” thinking to ensure the success of their own “box” (store).

We already know that if retailers haven’t implemented some sort of online shopping solution, delivery method or curbside pick-up, they are behind the curve. Similarly, enforcing safety protocols within stores and adjusting operations to accommodate the pandemic are a necessity of doing business and not an exception. Dealing with changing restrictions on food service, sampling, hot and cold deli cases and salad bars presents additional challenges where operators need to keep “fluid and flexible,” and successful handling often requires non-traditional thinking.

Technology is Changing Every Aspect of Operations

Don’t confine yourself to the thought that technology begins and ends at the check stands in stores. Delivery methods, supply chain solutions, ingredient analysis, private labels and “customized” meal options are all part of fast-growing trends considered to be part of the technology arena.

Don’t be dismissive of new ideas in these areas that may seem absurd or insignificant on the profitability scale. Drone delivery and driverless options have moved from science fiction to science fact, as their consideration for use has become more of a “when” than an “if.” Click-and-collect has become a core capability for many retailers and developing omnichannel options is essential for retailers to remain competitive. Five years ago, “omnichannel solutions” were considered a passing fad not likely to last long. Robots are currently being used for order fulfillment and item picking with some systems achieving an accuracy rate above 95%, and are being considered for widescale implementation in larger retail chains, versus store-based micro-fulfillment. The thought of robots being used in the food industry had always seemed like something futuristic, but its time is now.

Stores are the Core

The physical store is becoming a platform for innovation testing and will always be the core for determining customer experience and satisfaction. Electronic shelf labels (ESLs) are becoming more widespread, and cashierless checkout are already in use in pilot stores. Much of the innovation happening in food retail is invisible to customers. They only know that their store or online experience is “better” – their products fresher, or their promotions, deals and coupons more relevant and valuable. And staying “better” requires innovative thinking.

With shelf-edge technology and no-wait checkouts improving the customer experience, personnel still remain at the center of operational success – both from the logistic or administrative standpoint as well as the service arena. Good customer service and employee “visibility” in stores remain among the most recognized and appreciated features for consumers. Courteous and respectful employees create a very favorable experience for customers, and even the simple sight of an employee stocking a shelf or cleaning a cart actually creates highly positive responses.

Embracing Partnerships

Any type of change – particularly if it is widescale or intrinsic to the operation – requires significant investment (whether that investment is time, money or both). Local sourcing for food innovation and partnering with challenge or disruptor brands can help smaller retailers stay competitive on the product front. Looking into technology partnerships with startups specializing in food retail, or considering becoming a pilot program for innovators can also defray costs when considering tech changes and programs. The role of the successful smaller retailer is to find like-minded operations in intersecting fields with similar goals and a willingness to think outside the box.

Editor Chris Schweitzer can be reached for story ideas and features at design@ohiogrocers.org.

Content reference includes:
Progressive Grocer 2020 Innovation Outlook and Retail Trends Impacting Grocers in 2020

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TASTES SO GOOD

its gotta be

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When a Pandemic Makes You Think OUTSIDE THE BOX

Online ordering, two-hour order fulfillment, curbside pickup...what’s next, drone delivery?

“All the adversity I’ve had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you.”

– Walt Disney

One thing that remains strong and stable throughout times of adversity and change is the innate ability of human beings to overcome and adapt – and become stronger through their experience. Often, these adaptations are made from thinking that stretches beyond the norm – thinking outside the box.

Our Industry Endures

We may not realize it (as Walt Disney indicates), but looking back at the past several months, the food industry has been overcoming challenges that are making it stronger than ever. Manufacturers have created ways to adapt production to meet demand. Warehouses have implemented new ways to maximize space and optimize storage. Wholesalers and distributors are streamlining logistics and developing more efficient delivery systems and methods. And, of course, retailers have adjusted operations to accommodate demands on their operations and service. And all of this has been done while making sure best practices for health and safety are being followed for their workforce and their clientele. Meeting that responsibility alone is a massive accomplishment.

What Doesn’t Kill You Makes You Stronger

Did Dad or Grandpa ever throw that little philosophical gem at you? At the time, the very last thing you probably needed were words of wisdom instead of solutions to your problems, but for those retailers surviving the trials of this pandemic, many of the challenges being met are making their operations better, leaner, faster and stronger.

Statistics across the country show massive increases in retail food sales, with those increases staying pretty stable, even after months of accommodating and adjusting to a “new normal.”

...or Smarter

Adjusting to this new norm often results in a smarter workforce implementing innovative solutions and imaginative practices. A “just-in-time” philosophy is beginning to replace stockpiling in stores. Concentration on supplying fresher foods and foods with simpler ingredients has been the result of a more customer-driven approach to operations. Serving sizes are being adjusted to accommodate the desire to keep food safer and the consumer confident with their purchase. Private label and store brands are playing a larger role in stores, and items like meal kits answer the consumer need for good food, easily prepared and provided on-demand. Delivery schedules have adjusted to accommodate store demand for smaller batches of a larger variety of products, provided more frequently.

We rise to meet these challenges – in ways that continue to set precedent and resonate throughout the industry and even into others. We continue to think “out of the box” while keeping our own “boxes” safe and strong.

BY THE NUMBERS

Grocery share of food sales

- Off-premise consumption increased by 53.5% versus 22.8% same time last year

Grocery sales on the up

- Online vs. in-store sales

Average cart size on the rise

Billions of dollars (expected to grow as much as it did last year to $143 billion

Statistics taken from the articles: "HomeResearch Center: 52 Important Food Ingredient Trends" and "SpendMeNot: "21+ Grocery Shopping Statistics"
Meeting Our Own Challenges
As many of you are aware, our Association has been hit hard by the pandemic and its effects on every one of our planned events, including our biggest: the Brown Bag Celebration. Like our industry, we responded out of necessity, and converted our in-person Celebration to an in-home “boxed” one – literally putting outside-the-box thinking into a box for our members!

The new kits have proved to be a great success, and we’ve learned from the experience. We plan on implementing many of these new ideas into upcoming and ongoing events. But doing so never could have happened without industry support, and for that we are grateful. Once again, we’d like to thank those contributors to our BOXed Celebration:

PLATINUM:
SpartanNash

GOLD:
Altria Group, Inc.
Bob Evans Farms, Inc.*
Federated Insurance
Reynolds American

SILVER:
American Seaway Foods
Associated Wholesale Grocers
Castellini
Coca-Cola Bottling Company
Laurel Grocery Company
Merchants Distributors, Inc.
The J.M. Smucker Co.

BRONZE:
Buehler’s Fresh Foods
Careworks
CareWorks Comp
Consolidated Employer Services
FlowersFoods
Illuminating Technologies Inc.
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Pepsi Beverages Company
Perry’s Ice Cream Co., Inc.*
Sunrise Foods Inc.*
Velvet Ice Cream Company*
Wholesale Beer and Wine Assn. of Ohio

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Dave’s Supermarkets - Saltzman
Fazio Mechanical Services, Inc.
G & J Pepsi Cola Bottling Co.
Gateway Recycling
Houchens Food Group, Inc.
Joshien Paper & Packaging
Mettler Toledo
Ohio Council of Retail Merchants
Schwebel Baking Co
United Dairy, Inc.
Utz Quality Foods, Inc.

OTHER: (*Includes Sampling)
Hirzel Canning Co./Dei Fratelli
IGA USA, Inc.*
Lipari Foods, Inc.*
Gia Russa*
Muirfield Energy, Inc.
Premier Power Solutions
Fruit Growers Marketing Assoc.*
Glier’s Goetta*
Gold West Food Group*

*Nearly 1000 Celebration kits were sent to membership!
If you haven’t received a Brown BOX Celebration kit, let us know and we’ll send one to you!

Industry Statistics: 2020 Data Analysis and Market Share*
Statistics for Every CUSTOMER in 2020*

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Every one of our members is special and has an incredible story to tell. The Member Spotlight is OGA’s way to feature members with an opportunity to tell more about your organization, its services, or any notable happenings within your business and your team. Companies featured will appear in OhioGrocer as well as on our website and in social media.

Spotlight on Cooper Farms

“More Than a Workplace” is more than a perfect motto for Cooper Farms, a company covering a Farm to Fork operation with multiple locations, including hatcheries, feed mills, farms and processing plants throughout Northwest Ohio. Started in 1938 as a turkey farm by Virgil and Virginia Cooper, the business has been family-owned and run since, with the next generation of children – Diane, Jim and Gary – currently handling ownership of the massive operation.

From its start, with Virgil’s 300 turkeys, the company has always been a workplace centered on its team-is-family philosophy, and that philosophy has worked well, as Cooper Farms operates with a team of more than 2,000 employees and over 400 farm families. The incredible output of responsibly-raised animals and quality-driven products and services tells the tale of their amazing growth: 15 million poult’s hatched, 200,000 breeder hens, producing over 266 million live-pounds of turkeys annually, 28,800 sows, over 700,000 piglets weaned, more than 200 million live pounds of hogs per year, 5.4 million laying hens, 7.6 million pullets, producing over 115 million dozen table eggs per year. Then there’s the 22 million bushels of corn purchased yearly, the 200,000 tons of soybean meal purchased annually, and the production of more than 1.2 million tons of feed annually. The numbers are staggering, and such success couldn’t be done without a strong commitment to the people responsible, and sound practices put in place.

Focus On Your People and Create Success

With a company culture focused on its people, Cooper makes sure that every employee is recognized and rewarded for their efforts and service. They teach and train employees in an encouraging environment full of personal enrichment opportunities as well as opportunity for growth within the company itself. Employees become family and jobs become careers, as friendships build along with longevity and success.

Nowhere better can that success be seen than during the current Coronavirus pandemic and the response taken by Cooper Farms and its team. In order to stay up with food industry and operations demands, employees re-worked schedules, logged extra Saturdays, and maintained higher levels of production than they had ever seen in the past. To compensate for the extra effort, employees were paid early or in advance, lunches were bought on a weekly basis, turkey roasts were held and give-aways like slabs of ribs and extra days off helped keep morale strong and people engaged.

A Commitment to Community

Commitment extends beyond the team to the community. From sponsorships to volunteering, Cooper Farms, the Cooper family and the team members can be found taking part in hundreds of community organizations and events each year. The Cooper Family Foundation works with organizations to provide funds for projects, and over the years they have provided much-needed funding to area fairgrounds, first responders, Boy Scouts, 4-H, FFA and schools to name only a few. The family has a true dedication to bettering the community. Cooper Farms donates thousands of pounds of meat and eggs to area food banks and organizations each year. During this time, in particular, they have increased their donations to ensure people in most need were provided for during the pandemic.

Cooper Farms continues to dedicate itself to safe food processing, responsible animal care, dedicated waste reduction and recycling, and environmental care with natural power solutions. A focus on high-quality products versus commodity-based sales ensure premium quality, Supporting that with quality service and customer care ensures success. And that success provides dedication to slow, steady growth with priorities set on team, customers and community.

Giving back to its people and its community is not just good business, it’s the right thing to do. And Cooper Farms seems to be doing things just right.

For more information about Member Spotlight or other Member Features, please contact Shane Schaefer, COO, at shane@ohiogrocers.org or visit www.ohiogrocers.org/membership-spotlight.
Events Go Virtual

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc on the well-being of organizations as well as calendars worldwide, more organizations are turning to online events and virtual experiences to maintain best practices for health and safety. OGA is considering a wide array of virtual events, including a few to close out 2020.

Virtual Silent Auction

To effectively put a bow on our Brown BOX, the Association went completely virtual with its Silent Auction offering, providing members (and non-members alike) the opportunity to view a wide variety of Auction items online and place a bid. Different from typical online auction apps, the 2020 Brown BOX Virtual Silent Auction allowed bidders to compete against one another by seeing competitive bids and who placed them! Bidding closed on October 23rd, and items ranged from Apple Air Pods to Columbus Blue Jackets tickets. Special thanks to our contributors and donors – results of the Auction will be provided in upcoming Weekly Checkouts, so stay tuned!

Fall Conference

For the first time ever, OGA’s Annual Fall Conference went completely virtual, featuring an education program focused on HR around the pandemic. Besides presentations from Jamie Richardson (White Castle VP of Government Relations) and Matt Austin (Austin Legal Principal) virtual “roundtable rooms” allowed for lively and constructive interaction among attendees. The success of this virtual format (with some tweaks and adjustments) will allow hybrid-style events in the future once pandemic protocols are finally released. A replay of the Education Sessions will be available – stay tuned for upcoming emails with details.

Congratulations Scholarship Winners

The Ohio Grocers Association and the Youngstown Area Grocers have established complementary Tuition Reimbursement and Scholarship Programs to provide financial support to those members’ employees and their dependents enrolled in college or continuing education programs. Various scholarship and financial aid opportunities are available to those who qualify.

We are pleased to announce this year’s winners:

Prince Kalala (Jungle Jim’s International Markets): Ohio Grocers Foundation Scholarship, University of Cincinnati – Major: Finance, International Business and Entrepreneurship

Ryan Klusak (Shaker’s Marketplace): Ohio Grocers Foundation Dodds/Buchanan Legacy Scholarship, Cuyahoga Community College – Major: Graphic Design

Ian Mumford (Bassett’s Market): Ohio Grocers Foundation Scholarship, Bowling Green State University, Firelands – Undecided Major

Sydney Wonov (Buehler’s Fresh Foods): Buehler’s Putting People First Scholarship, The Ohio State University – Major: Human Nutrition

Blake Pearsall (Buehler’s Fresh Foods): Buehler’s Putting People First Scholarship, Kent State University at Stark – Major: Economics

In addition to the above-named scholarships, other scholarships are available as well as Tuition Reimbursement and financial assistance for continuing education. For more information – and a streamlined application process – go to the Foundation section of the OGA website. Information including scholarship deadlines, amounts and eligibility criteria can also be found at that location. Owners and managers can also find materials suitable for posting in your stores to promote this opportunity to your supermarket superheroes.

If you have any questions or comments on any Association or Foundation issue or event, please contact Kristin Mullins, OGA President & CEO, at (614)442-5511 ext. 7110 or email kristin@ohiogrocers.org.
A full lineup of products delivered from your trusted dairy.

Headlined by America's #1 branded milk.

High standards guaranteed by an exclusive 5-Point Purity Promise.
BWC Issues Another $1.5 Billion for Ohio Employers

The Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation Board of Directors approved Governor Mike DeWine's proposal to send Ohio employers up to $1.5 billion in dividends to ease the impact of COVID-19 on Ohio's economy and business community…the second since the pandemic started.

Why is BWC Giving a Dividend?

BWC is issuing a dividend of up to $1.5 billion to ease the financial pressures your organization may be experiencing amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This is our second dividend of this magnitude this year, following Gov. DeWine's order that his agencies do everything they can to mitigate COVID-19's impact on Ohioans. Even after the dividend, the net position of the State Insurance Fund for injured workers remains strong due to investment returns, declining injuries and decreasing reserves.

Easing the Pandemic Burden

BWC will start sending checks to up to 200,000 private and public employers in its system in late October after first applying the dividend to any unpaid balances. The dividend follows a similar dividend in April, where the average check size was $8,500.

“Thank you to the BWC Board of Directors for approving a second round of dividends for Ohio employers,” said Governor DeWine. “The pandemic continues to impact businesses across Ohio, and we hope that this next round of dividends provides financial relief.”

The dividend equals 100% of the premium employers paid in policy year 2019. As in prior years, the dividend is possible because of strong investment returns on employer premiums, a declining number of claims each year, and prudent fiscal management.

Of BWC’s $1.54 billion dividend in April, $1.35 billion went to private employers and $184 million went to local government taxing districts, such as counties, cities, townships, and school districts.

How Much Will Employers Receive?

BWC defines the private employer dividend as 100% of billed premium for eligible employers for the policy period of July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. BWC will apply the percentage to the blended premium amount. BWC defines the public employer dividend as 100% of billed premium for eligible employers for the policy period of Jan. 1, 2019, through Dec. 31, 2019. BWC will apply the percentage to the blended premium amount.

BWC will mail dividend checks to eligible employers in late October and early November.

Eligibility Criteria

BWC defines eligibility as follows.

- State Insurance Fund employers (private employers or public employer taxing districts only).
- The employer must have reported payroll greater than zero for the applicable policy period.
- The employer must have been billed premium for the applicable policy period.
- Employers must have completed their payroll true-up for policy year 2019 as of Oct. 2, 2020.
- The employer must be in an active, reinstated, combined, cancelled – business sold, or debtor-in-possession status or, in a lapsed status with a lapse date of Jan. 1, 2020 or later as of Oct. 2, 2020.

Eligibility was based on an employer’s status (active, lapsed) with us as of Oct. 2. BWC will not make changes to eligibility after this date.

For more information, please contact CareWorks MCO's Jodie Napier at Jodie.Napier@careworksmco.com, call 1-888-627-7586 or visit online at www.careworksmco.com.
We get people and organizations back to health, work and productivity.
AWARD WINNERS: PINNACLE

The OGA Pinnacle Awards recognize overall excellence in retail operations, and are the highest awards given by the Ohio Grocers Association. The criteria are based on: creativity, merchandising, innovation, human resources, community relations and overall successful operation. Winners receive an award and video recognition in this year’s Brown BOX Celebration.

Small Operator Winner: Eikenberry’s Foodliner

On Thursday, January 23rd, the Ohio Grocers Association presented its prestigious Pinnacle Award to Mark and Gretchen Davis and Eikenberry’s Foodliners. Eikenberry’s Foodliners received the Pinnacle Award for Small Operators (single-store retailers).

“The Pinnacle Award represents the best retailers in the grocery industry,” said Kristin Mullins, President/CEO of the Ohio Grocers Association, “Eikenberry’s Foodliners is a perfect example of industry excellence, and Gretchen and Mark Davis are great examples of ownership concerned for both the industry and the community. On behalf of OGA and our Board of Trustees, we’d like to congratulate Eikenberry’s and Mark, and are proud to provide them with the 2020 Pinnacle Award.”

It was an honor well-received. “Gretchen and I are honored to receive this award on behalf of Eikenberry’s,” states Mark Davis, “This is certainly a team effort, as our fabulous staff and wonderful customers make it a joy to come to work, thanks to all of you. Thanks also to all our vendor partners and SpartanNash in particular.”

Eikenberry’s Foodliners celebrated its 90th birthday in October 2019, and much of their longevity is attributed to a dedicated staff of employees and a family atmosphere. “We have staff who have had great grandparents working here,” said Mark, “and so many loyal customers that they end up as extended family, too!” Eikenberry’s was started by Gretchen’s grandfather, Myron, in 1929.

Large Operator Winner: Buehler’s Fresh Foods

On Tuesday, January 21st, the Ohio Grocers Association presented its prestigious Pinnacle Award to Dan Shanahan and Buehler’s Fresh Foods. Buehler’s Fresh Foods received the 2020 Pinnacle Award for Large Operators (multi-store retailers).

“We are honored to be able to present Dan Shanahan and Buehler’s Fresh Foods with an award that exemplifies the excellence they show every day,” said Kristin Mullins, President/CEO of the Ohio Grocers Association, “Buehler’s is a wonderful example of the best in the grocery industry, and Dan is a great example of leadership involved in both the industry and the community. On behalf of OGA and our Board of Trustees, we’d like to congratulate them, and are proud to honor them with the 2020 Pinnacle Award.”

“On behalf of all our employees we are very thankful to receive this year’s Ohio Grocers Association Pinnacle Award for Large Operators,” said Dan Shanahan, President & CEO of Buehlers, “We are great admirers of Kristin Mullins, her team, and the job they do for Ohio grocers which makes this award even more meaningful.”

Buehler’s Fresh Foods grocery store was founded in 1929 by E.L. Buehler and his wife, Helen. The family moved the business in 1932 to Wooster, and, after four generations, grew to 13 stores serving the northeast Ohio market. In 2017, Buehler’s became an ESOP (employee stock ownership program) with the belief that selling to their own employees was the best way to assure the continuation of the innovative and creative spirit which made the chain a benchmark for independent grocers.

Nominations for 2021 Pinnacle Awards (including Associate of the Year and Patriot Award are currently being taken through November! For more information, contact Shane Schaefer at shae@ohiogrocers.org.
AWARDS: ASSOCIATE & PATRIOT

Much like the OGA Pinnacle Awards, which recognize overall excellence in food industry retail operations, the Associate of the Year Award recognizes excellence from our Associate members. The criteria are based on: creativity, merchandising, innovation, human resources, community relations and overall successful operation. The winners received an award and video recognition in the OGA Brown BOX Celebration.

Associate of the Year:

SpartanNash

The most progressive wholesale grocery distributor and retailer in the Midwest, supporting independent grocers, and military commissaries and exchanges is this year’s Associate of the Year. SpartanNash is a Fortune 400 company and the fifth-largest food distributor in the United States. They are a leading distributor of grocery products to U.S. military commissaries, and currently operate more than 155 corporate-owned retail stores in nine states, and distribute to more than 2,100 independent locations throughout the country.

Food Distribution

SpartanNash not only strives to be the best wholesale food distributor possible, but also does all it can to make their supplied independent retail customers the best retailers in the business. In addition to a quality product mix, the company’s numerous value-added services and innovative programs assist their customers in all areas of the retail business, including the expertise to help gain and maintain a competitive edge.

Grocery Retail

SpartanNash corporate-owned grocery retail stores feature a wide selection of private and national brand products. Their private brands cater to the needs of consumers — offering quality, value, natural and organic products, health and beauty care items and more. SpartanNash brands have been shown to live up to, and sometimes surpass, national brand quality.

The Patriot Award is given to an individual or member company who has demonstrated a steadfast commitment and significant investment to the Ohio Food PAC, the political action committee of the Ohio Grocers Association. The winner of the Patriot Award is recognized for their service and commitment to the Ohio Food PAC over the years. They are active participants of the political process and highlight the importance of advocating on behalf of the retail food industry.

Patriot Award Winner:

Ron Graff, Jr.

Ron Graff, Jr. has been involved in the grocery industry all of his life, and much of his success in the industry – as well as his community and political involvement — can be associated with his father, Ron, Sr. (who himself won the Patriot Award in its inaugural year - 2015).

Ron, Jr. is currently the VP of Store Operations of Columbiana Foods, Inc. and has been part of the grocery industry with his family their entire lives. He continues to serve on the Ohio Grape Industries Board and had been a very active member of the Youngstown Area Grocers Association. Closer to home, Ron has served as OGA Board Chairman in addition to time spent on the Board as Government Affairs Chair. His commitment to the food industry is matched only by his activism in the political arena, always advocating for the industry and its members. Nationally, he continues to serve on the National Grocers Association Government Affairs Committee.

Ron has long represented the industry in Washington during the NGA (and OGA) Day in Washington as well as locally during our Statehouse events and Legislative Receptions, and is an active member of the Ohio Food PAC.

If you have any questions or comments on any Association or Foundation award, criteria or nominations, please contact Shane Schaefer, COO, at (614) 448-1629 or by email: shane@ohiogrocers.org.
What’s Hot:

Buehler’s Fresh Foods Announces Collaboration With BrewDog Brewery
Wooster, Ohio-based Buehler’s Fresh Foods has collaborated with BrewDog Brewery to craft a new special edition mango-pineapple flavored India Pale Ale named Aloha Shoppers IPA. The product is now available at all 13 Buehler’s locations throughout Northeast Ohio and Buehler’s North Court Beverage in Medina.

SpartanNash Adds Contactless Payment
As part of its continued efforts to ensure the well-being and safety of its family of associates, customers and communities during the coronavirus pandemic, 155 SpartanNash-owned stores in nine states now offer contactless payment options. Contactless payment options include tap-to-pay credit cards, Apple Pay, Android Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay, Garmin Pay, Fitbit and Bronco and are designed to add convenience for store guests by increasing the speed to check out as well as increased safety and sanitation by reducing the number of touches during the checkout process.

Community Outreach:

Grocery Worker’s Relief Fund
The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted communities across the United States, causing business and school closures, health concerns, and staggering need. To show appreciation to grocery workers for their frontline contributions during this health crisis, Kendall-Jackson has partnered with United Way Worldwide, pledging $2 million through August 2030 to create the Grocery Worker’s Relief Fund. The fund is administered by United Way Worldwide and provides emergency support to grocery workers to ease their financial challenges. Beginning October 1, 2020, eligible grocery workers in the United States can apply to receive up to $250 in the form of a cash card. Find out more at unitedway.org/cause-marketing/grocery-workers-relief-fund.

Moving Up & Moving On:

Giant Eagle Re-Opens “Dark” Stores
Giant Eagle is reopening one of its two “dark” stores to in-store shopping. The Garfield Heights, Ohio, store had been closed in April to customers and served as a microfulfillment location with curbside pickup only to accommodate increased e-commerce orders due to the pandemic. The Garfield Heights location will continue to offer curbside pickup between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Heinen’s Reopens Flagship Store
Cleveland-based Heinen’s has re-opened its downtown store in the former Cleveland Trust Building, operating with some restrictions. Tom and Jeff Heinen said in a statement. “Due to a variety of factors, we have made the difficult decision to not reopen the Rotunda space at this time.” On offer, for now, will be fresh produce, groceries, packaged prepared foods, sushi, seafood, meat, wine and beer. Hours for now are listed at 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

Awards and Recognition

OGA President Awarded National Leadership Award
OGA’s own President/CEO, Kristin Mullins, has been awarded the National Grocers Association Leadership Award by NGA President Greg Ferrara at the October OGA Board Meeting. NGA’s Association Leadership Award is presented to a state association executive who has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and support of the independent grocer.

Velvet’s NEW FLAVORS

Velvet Ice Cream Releases Seasonal Favorites Sure to Sweeten the Holidays!
Pumpkin Pie, Cinnamon and Peppermint Stick are back in coolers for a limited time.
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