

# NEWS RELEASE



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## Minnesota Grocers Association Celebrates Industry at its Champions Luncheon

St. Paul, MN. – April 22, 2024 – The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) hosted its Champions Luncheon on Tuesday, April 16 at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel, Eagan, MN. This event showcases from, farm to fork, the Minnesota food industry’s positive impact on our communities. The afternoon highlighted the pride and tremendous accomplishments of those engaged in all aspects of the Minnesota food industry.

The 2024 MGA Industry Ambassador Award was presented to Donald Ericson. This award is presented to an individual who goes above and beyond to elevate the grocery industry. They utilize their voice to capture what is great about the grocery business, its workforce, its products, and the passion within it. Donald Ericson is the co-founder of the Facebook Public Group ‘Grocery Store Fanatics’ and embodies all that is great within the grocery industry.

“The MGA is so proud to recognize the dedication and passion of Donald,” said Jamie Pfuhl, MGA President. “Donald has enthusiasm for all things grocery. He and his dear friend, Liz Nerud, visit stores daily and bring their welcoming smiles and ever-present joy wherever they go.”

The food industry of Minnesota works to provide food to Minnesota tables. The Minnesota Grown program announced the winners of its Retailer of the Year Contest in partnership with the MGA and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. This annual contest showcases the importance of bringing local products to market. Commissioner Thom Petersen presented the awards. The winning individual store entries were selected based, by region, on a variety of criteria including the number of Minnesota Grown products and how they were promoted to customers. This year’s winners include:

- Northwest: Hugo’s Family Marketplace, East Grand Forks
- Northeast: Chris’ Food Center, Sandstone
- West Central: Elden’s Fresh Foods, Alexandria
- Southeast: Nilssen’s Foods, Zumbrota
- Southwest: Mackenthun’s Fine Foods, Waconia
- Twin Cities: Kowalski’s Market, Grand Avenue
- People’s Choice: Festival Foods, Hugo

The MGA’s annual Bag Hunger Campaign is a state-wide campaign coordinated annually by the MGA that engages Minnesotans in the fight to end hunger in their neighborhoods. The 2023 campaign donated more than 1.5 million meals across the state, and in the last 15 years has provided over 44 million meals to hungry families in Minnesota.

The Bag Hunger Campaign awards Silver Plates to companies that create in-store displays and promote ending hunger. These companies receive awards and cash donations to their local food charity partner. A total of \$16,500 will be donated to local charity partners across the state.

- Best Creative Partnerships:
  - Hugo’s Family Marketplace and Russ Davis Wholesale
  - Kowalski’s Market and Russ Davis Wholesale
  - Lunds & Byerlys, Post Consumer Brands, and Prairie Farms Dairy
- Best Campaign Execution Silver Plate, Teal’s Market
- Best Innovative Marketing Silver Plate, Knowlan’s Super Markets, Inc.
- Best Community Hunger Support Silver Plate, Mackenthun’s Fine Foods

The Bag Hunger Campaign Champions were also highlighted:

- Aldi, Inc.
- Chris' Food Center
- Cub Foods
- Super One Foods/Miner's, Inc.
- Rush Foods, Inc.

The event was concluded with an engaging and lively presentation from Michael Sansolo, Retail Food Industry Consultant. He provided great insights into today's workforce challenges. The audience was provided insights on food industry trends and ways to stand out in today's marketplace.

"We are so proud to have the diverse community of the food industry in one room", said Jamie Pfuhl, MGA President. "It's great to acknowledge and celebrate our peers. Together, we learn to be the best we can be for the communities we serve and the entire state of Minnesota."

*The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) is the only state trade association that represents the food industry of Minnesota from farm to fork. We are a legacy organization, having served the industry for over 125 years. We have over 300 retail, manufacturer, and wholesale members supporting nearly 1,300 locations statewide. Our member companies employ over 150,000 union and non-union Minnesotans. We actively advance the common interest of all those engaged in any aspect of the food industry as a leader and advocate in government affairs.*

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