



NEWS RELEASE

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Grocers Recognize 2024 Award Winners, Hall of Fame Inductee and New Chair

St. Paul, MN – July 29, 2024 - The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) has a long-standing tradition of honoring the best of the best by annually presenting awards to those in the industry who demonstrate excellence, have made significant contributions, and are highly respected by their peers. This year's award winners are a testament to the vitality of the grocery industry in Minnesota. The awards were presented on July 28, 2024, at the association's annual conference in Brainerd, MN. This is the state's premier event showcasing the pride and tremendous accomplishments of those in the Minnesota food industry.

The 2024 Outstanding Grocer Award was presented to Kris Kowalski Christiansen of Kowalski's Companies, Inc. Her journey in the grocery industry began at age 16 when she started as a part-time cashier, joining her parents, Mary Anne and Jim Kowalski, in opening their first store on Grand Avenue in St. Paul. Since 1990, she has been with the company full-time and has served as Chief Executive Officer since 2015, guiding Kowalski's Markets through continued innovation and growth.

Kowalski Christiansen is an active member of the MGA and has served on the MGA Board of Directors and Executive Committee since 2008, including as chair from 2018-2020. Her leadership and creativity in ensuring continued growth and promoting civic engagement exemplify what it means to be an outstanding grocer.

Michael Koehler, Director of Retail Strategic Regional Accounts of Blue Bunny/Wells Enterprises was honored by the MGA with its 2024 Outstanding Vendor Award. This award is given to those who show innovation in customer support, excellence in customer service, as well as involvement in the MGA. Just like so many in this industry, Koehler began his career in the industry at 16 years old, working as a bagger at a grocery store in Winona, MN. His sales career started while attending college at Winona State. From there, he progressed from Sales Representative to Customer Category manager. For the past 17 years, Koehler has fashioned a successful career at Wells Enterprises, recently being promoted to his current position.

Koehler's qualities have endeared him to numerous friends and close associates throughout his career and have undoubtedly contributed to his successful career. Koehler serves on the MGA Vendor Leadership Committee. This committee was formed in 1998 to advance the interests of the association's vendor partners through engagement and partnership opportunities. His qualities as a great person and respected colleague demonstrate why he was honored with the 2024 Outstanding Vendor Award.

Jamie Pfuhl, President of the Minnesota Grocers Association was inducted into the MGA Hall of Fame in recognition of her outstanding service and exemplary contributions to Minnesota's food industry. For the last 27 years, Pfuhl has dedicated herself to the MGA and advancing the common good of the state by advocating for the entire food industry. This honor coincides with her August 30, 2024 retirement.

Pfuhl has led the MGA as President for more than 19 years and her list of successes in that time are extraordinary. Her efforts have been vital in strengthening the MGA's commitment to consumers, careers, and the community. As a respected industry leader, she has contributed to a variety of committees, boards, and task forces, advocating on the diverse challenges for industry at state and national levels. Pfuhl has spent many years serving on the Minnesota Food Safety Task Force, she has been a member of the Food Marketing Institute Government Relations Committee, and she served as Chairperson of the Food Industry Association Executives Board of Directors in 2014 and 2015.

She is a true champion of the food industry of Minnesota. Her passion for upholding the reputation of the MGA and its members has been unparalleled. The MGA is grateful for her steadfast dedication to the industry and for shaping the MGA into the strong organization it is today. This induction into the MGA Hall of Fame is a well-deserved acknowledgment of her outstanding career.

The MGA is also pleased to announce Doug Winsor of Jerry's Enterprises, Inc. in Edina, MN was named Chair of the Minnesota Grocers Association. He took over the position on July 28, 2024, from Chris Quisberg of S & R Quisberg, Inc. in Baxter, MN.

The Minnesota Grocers Association (MGA) is the only state trade association that represents the food industry of Minnesota from farm to fork. We are one of the oldest trade associations in the state, celebrating over 125 years of advancing industry. We have over 300 retail, manufacturing, 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 retail food industry as a leader and advocate in government affairs.

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