

# BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 31, NO. 10 // OCTOBER 2020

Holiday Shopping  
in the Pandemic

pg 16

■ “High Five” Turkey Drive Giving Families in  
Need a Thanksgiving Dinner // PAGE 04

■ The Business of Politics // PAGE 22



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## columns

**02** PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE  
Prepare for the Worst, Hope for the Best

**06** C-STORE NEWS & VIEWS  
Foodservice – Where Do We Go From Here?

**08** PETROLEUM NEWS & VIEWS  
Cold Weather Sales Opportunities

**10** MICHIGAN LIQUOR REPORT  
Parents: Talk to Your Kids About the Dangers of Underage Drinking and Fake IDs

**12** OHIO LOBBYIST REPORT  
Everything Old is New Again

**14** GOVERNMENT RELATIONS REPORT  
Politics and the Art of Winning

## departments

**18** RETAILER SPOTLIGHT  
Creating the Recipe for Success in the Meat Business

**20** STAFF SPOTLIGHT  
Focused on the MIRA Membership

**24** EXPRESS LINES  
Industry-Wide Items of Interest

**26** SUPPLIER DIRECTORY  
Your Resource for Products and Services

**28** MIRA CALENDAR  
Upcoming Industry Events

# BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS  
VOL. 31, NO. 10 // OCTOBER 2020

## features



### "HIGH FIVE" TURKEY DRIVE GIVING FAMILIES IN NEED A THANKSGIVING DINNER

Every year, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation (MIRF) has pledged to put a turkey on the Thanksgiving table of more than 6,000 families throughout Michigan, Ohio and Illinois that may not otherwise enjoy this special meal.



### COVER STORY // HOLIDAY SHOPPING IN THE PANDEMIC

The Holiday season has arrived in the retail industry and many businesses are preparing for consumer trends. How and what customers are shopping for have shifted due to COVID-19 and so grocers have pivoted into those directions.



### THE BUSINESS OF POLITICS

Members in the food retail industry not only have to know their own industry, they are often thrust into the business of politics as issues at all levels of government often affect their bottom line.



# president's message

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA PRESIDENT & CEO

## Prepare for the Worst, Hope for the Best

As we plod our way through the year 2020, not only do we have the problems related to the COVID-19 virus pandemic to deal with, but the last minute ads by political rivals concentrating on the short-comings of their opponent can result in physical depression. Don't let it get you down. Count your blessings. Be your own cheerleader.

It looks like some of the effects of the COVID-19 virus will be with us well into the future. So, plan accordingly. Plan on customers who will be working from home far into the future. Susceptible populations staying home and doing fewer activities outside the home, means more meals prepared at home.

Recreational vehicle sales are through the roof. For that segment of the population having concerns about being in crowded confines, fewer trips on airplanes. Those folks will be traveling by car rather than flying.

Some college students are "deferring" attending the fall 2020 semester, until they see how the virus unfolds on their campus. That should mean more employees available for you to choose from.

Upgrade your "compliance" signage. We all thought this "thing" would be over by now. Well it's not, and some of the instructional and informational signage is getting a little raggedy. Neat, readable signage catches the customers eye and leads to better compliance.

Develop a relationship with a reliable supplier of COVID-19 prevention items, both for use by your employees and for sale to your customers. Sick employees can't work, and sick customers don't buy anything. Help keep them well.

Ohio's Governor just signed into law a bill that would "hold-harmless" people who would allege they contracted COVID-19 at your Ohio store. Provided of course that the store followed generally accepted rules and procedures to prevent spread of the virus. MIRA is supporting similar legislation in Illinois and Michigan.

Some good news in Michigan for frontline workers who worked during the shut-down. The state of Michigan will financially support those workers who are or will be studying towards an associate's degree or certificate through the *Future for Frontliners* program. See the article on page 24 of this magazine or visit [www.michigan.com/frontliners](http://www.michigan.com/frontliners).

Be positive and pro-active.

Remember to vote on November 3rd.

MIRA keeps working to help our members every day. ■

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# 2020 and beyond.



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## “High Five” Turkey Drive Giving Families in Need a Thanksgiving Dinner

The Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation is giving out more than 6,000 Turkeys to families in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING\*

Every year, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation (MIRF) has pledged to put a turkey on the Thanksgiving table of more than 6,000 families throughout Michigan, Ohio and Illinois that may not otherwise enjoy this special meal.

Since 1980, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation and its members have provided Thanksgiving turkeys to needy families and each year the list of charitable groups asking for turkeys grows. There are more requests than we could ever fill. We need your help. Thanksgiving is a time to reflect, give thanks, and help those who are less fortunate.

MIRF looks to members

and the community at large to help support this much-needed program. This year, the event will be held on Thursday, November 19th and Friday, November 20th.

“Members can get involved by participating in the “paper turkey retail promotion” which provides turkey hand cut-outs that your customers can purchase. Every \$15 you raise buys 1 turkey towards the charity of your choice,” said Andrea Hesano, MIRA Events and Publications Assistant. Members can also donate their time or products to be handed out with the turkeys. “We could always use a helping hand, as well if anyone wants to join passing out the turkeys and supplies.”

If you would like to participate, please complete the form on the next page!

Many organizations and individuals volunteer for the program such as Blue Cross Blue Shield, DTE, Pepsi, Coke, Frito Lay, Prairie Farms, Lipari, Faygo and more.

A \$200 donation to the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation Turkey Drive will provide turkeys for 10 families. When you consider that each turkey serves about 12 people, that equals enough Thanksgiving turkey for 120 people.

“This has been a crazy year for everyone and even harder on those that are struggling to get food on the table,” said Hesano. “If there’s anything that can be donated, it would be greatly appreciated. Now is a crucial time to help those in need.” ■

*\*Writers with Epiphany Communications and Coaching are content creators for Bottom Line.*



# High Five TURKEY DRIVE

## RETAIL & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

*Help us raise money at your registers  
and give back to the charity of your choice!*

Your business can generate a significant donation for Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation's Annual High Five Turkey Drive by participating in our paper turkey program! Paper turkeys are a fun, simple way to raise funds while sending a message to your customers and the community that you care about feeding the hungry. Best of all, 100% of the money you raise will go toward purchasing turkeys for a charity of your choice!

Here's how the paper turkey program works:

- Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation will send you a starter package which includes a poster to place in your store to raise awareness and turkey hand cut-outs.
- Place the paper turkeys at the register and have your cashiers encourage customers to buy a paper turkey for a suggested donation of \$1, \$5, \$10 or even \$20. **Every \$15 you raise buys you one turkey towards your charity.**
- The purchaser can sign the High Five paper turkey and we encourage you to display it prominently in the store. Paper turkeys can be displayed on walls, windows, or hung from the ceiling to generate maximum awareness.
- Program runs from **September 15th – November 11th.**



If your business is interested in selling the High Five Paper Turkeys to benefit the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation High Five Turkey Drive, call Ricki Wines at (800) 666-6233 and we will mail you a starter packet! Please complete the form below and fax to (248) 671-9610 or email to [rwines@MIRAmw.org](mailto:rwines@MIRAmw.org).

**YES! I want to sell High Five paper turkeys to raise money for families in need!**

All donations are tax deductible. MIRA Tax ID# 38-3457246

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PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_



## c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### Foodservice – Where Do We Go From Here?

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has rocked the foodservice category in convenience stores. Previously, foodservice was a category where many retailers were looking to invest and make an impact by improving their offerings. Prior to the pandemic, 85% of c-store operators said that foodservice was a strategic priority for their company and 83% said they were investing in foodservice operations. Many retailers have had to rethink their previous strategy and determine how they will want to move forward as we prepare to move into a post-pandemic environment. It is the perfect time to rethink foodservice strategies and hit the reset button. You have a unique opportunity to reinvent yourself to your customers. I would encourage every retailer to do that over the next several months.

Here are some suggestions that can help you relaunch your foodservice programs:

#### CUSTOMER SAFETY

Customer safety is the top priority when it comes to meeting consumer expectations in foodservice. I have said it over and over the last several months, retailers and consultants across the board are all saying it and the numbers speak for themselves. Nearly half (46%) of consumers said improved cleanliness and sanitation is the top change they want c-stores to make. Your messaging must embody food safety. That will only be done through cleanliness and how a product is packaged or served. People need to be confident no one has touched the product. Retailers also need to prioritize safety over ease and portability.

#### STREAMLINE YOUR MENU

It is also a good opportunity to streamline your menu and focus on what you are selling. Concentrate on the

menu items that fit the new safety standards. Do not try to capture every food trend that is in the market. Focus on what consumers are already buying and offer a similar item. You can get the benefit of what others have invested a lot of money and research into without spending any of your own money. You will also want to retrain your staff on equipment and food preparation of these items. I know many retailers will say my customers will experience menu fatigue after a period. However, you can incorporate Limited Time Only (LTO) items into your menu offering. This is a proven technique that makes your menu look fresh and attractive without adding dozens of items. Hot and spicy flavors are a great way to get started when selecting LTO's.

#### DO NOT FORGET ABOUT VALUE!

Consumers are also looking for value, especially in these uncertain economic times. You can capitalize on this with bundles and promotions, even if you are scaling back your menu. For example, bundle breakfast sandwiches with coffee or bundle chips, drink, and a sandwich at an attractive price point. This will increase the overall market basket size and keep consumers coming back. These bundled promotions cannot be these best secret in the store. Consumers must know what you are offering. They should be offered with a robust sign program supporting these bundles and promotions. You should have pump toppers, window signs and signs immediately when you enter the store. This investment into signs will make all the difference in this area.

If you are a MIRA member and not using S. Abraham & Sons, Team Sledd or McAneny Brothers as your c-store supplier, I strongly urge giving them opportunity to discuss what they can do for you. As I said, you have a unique opportunity to reinvent yourself to your customers when it comes to foodservice. They can help you reinvent your foodservice offering. Their foodservice programs are specialized for the c-store retailers. This is just one of many reasons MIRA has partnered with these distributors. Please contact the MIRA offices and we will be happy to facilitate a meeting. ■



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- Plus an additional 2% if purchasing foodservice products
- Plus an additional 2% if purchasing supplies

***Customer must purchase these categories to qualify:***

- Cigarettes
- Smokeless & other tobacco
- Energy supplements
- Coffee

*Subject to pre-qualification by McAneny Brothers*



# petroleum news & views

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA PRESIDENT & CEO

## Cold Weather Sales Opportunities

**T**raffic volume is increasing after the spring and summer lock-down. Slowly, but surely, customers are getting back on the road. So, it's time to stock up on inventory for wintertime sales opportunities. Whether you sell fuel or repair cars, the cold, winter weather provides extra sales opportunities for your business. While the repair garage members take advantage of the cold weather sales, I've noticed the c-store and gas station retailers are squandering these opportunities. While you might not have a garage full of tools, there are some functions you can perform for the motorist, and make some extra money doing so.

### WINDSHIELD WASHER FLUID

Make sure you have an adequate supply of windshield washer fluid available for sale. Offer to "install" the fluid for the customer; this service could be the "deal-maker". On inclement weather days this item is a must on your "suggestive selling" list. Keep a couple gallons right on the counter at the cashier on messy days.

### WINDSHIELD WIPERS

Windshield wipers tend to be one of the mystery parts of a car. Most wiper blade packaging has detailed, easy to understand, installation instructions. Offer to install the wipers. Practice on your own car. This is more often than not the "deal-maker". Keep an adequate stock on hand, in a highly visible area of the store. Wiper blades are a great profit booster, also.

### DE-ICER FLUID

De-icer fluid to aid in thawing frozen car locks is another item that you need to keep in your inventory, for those days when the weather changes dramatically from relatively warm and wet to very cold and dry. Or, for those customers who wash their cars on very cold days, and suffer from frozen door or trunk locks. Graphite to keep the locks lubricated is another shelf item not to be overlooked.

### JUMPER CABLES

A couple sets of jumper cables are a handy item to have available for stranded motorists. I suggest you clearly mark the item and inform the customer that this item is not returnable. Otherwise,

the cables will get used; and, then returned for a refund after the disabled vehicle has been started.

### SNOWBRUSH, ICE SCRAPERS

Failing to maintain an adequate inventory of snowbrushes/ice scrapers is inexcusable. It seems most every motorist misplaces last winter's snowbrush, and is a potential candidate for a replacement. Keep a selection of at least two different choices of snowbrushes for the customer.

### GLOVES AND HATS

Another item that customers lose with the change of seasons is gloves. A rack of several varieties of utility style gloves are a must. Keep them displayed in sight for all customers. Contractors are great potential customers for these items.

### PRE-MIXED ANTIFREEZE COOLANT

Pre-mixed, ready to install, anti-freeze is another shelf item that you need to keep in inventory. Customers who are low on coolant can install the premixed version of antifreeze without fear of improperly mixing antifreeze with water. Offer to "install" the anti-freeze if you are adequately staffed. In any case warn the motorist to add the coolant to the overflow reservoir only, not directly to the radiator, and **DO NOT REMOVE THE RADIATOR CAP** unless the engine is "stone cold"! A hot engine can have a cool radiator that will spray the customer with scalding fluid when the radiator cap is removed. Whenever the cap is removed, it needs to be done slowly and carefully to avoid being scalded.

### SALT

Don't forget to inventory thawing salt for your own use and for sale. This is an impulse item that many customers, whether driving or walking to your store, find themselves in need of at the most inappropriate times. Keeping a supply of salt on hand is also handy for your own use on those days when icing problems present themselves on your driveways.

### COVID RELATED ITEMS

The virus is still with us and customers still need masks and sanitizer. Be sure to have at least a small supply of COVID-19 prevention items available as impulse sales.

These are a few of the sales and profit opportunities that you cannot overlook. Not all customers are buying at the "big box" stores, and not all customers are prematurely prepared for inclement winter weather. You're convenient. Therefore, you need to be prepared to satisfy their immediate, unexpected need. ■

A photograph of three diverse people (two men and one woman) sitting at a table in a cafe, smiling and looking towards the left. The man on the left is holding a coffee cup. The background features exposed brick walls and industrial-style pipes.

# A FORCE FOR GOOD

Strong communities are the foundation of a healthy, thriving environment for all people. That's why you can count on DTE Energy to support local organizations that are having a real impact. We are proud to partner with MIRA.

**DTE**



# michigan liquor report

PAT GAGLIARDI // CHAIR, MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

## Parents: Talk to Your Kids About the Dangers of Underage Drinking and Fake IDs

**W**ith students starting their college academic year either on campus or online, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) urges parents to talk with their kids about the dangers and consequences of underage drinking and use of fake IDs to obtain alcohol. Parents have the most influence when it comes to whether or not their student will drink alcohol.

As many parents send their young adults off to college, I urge parents to talk to their kids about how underage drinking and use of fake IDs are risky, dangerous and poor choices that can have lifelong consequences.

Especially now with COVID-19, all students must think twice about attending social gatherings, especially those that involve alcohol, whether it's inside or outside, these gatherings have been found to be super spreaders of the virus. When alcohol is involved, inhibitions are relaxed and good judgment is compromised when it comes to social distancing and wearing masks – that we all must do to stop the spread of coronavirus.

Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States as those aged 12-20 drink 11% of all alcohol consumed. Additionally, underage drinkers consume more drinks per drinking occasion than adult drinkers.

According to Michigan's alcohol epidemiologist, Patrick Hindman, of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, although alcohol use among youth in Michigan is trending down since the late 1990s, it remains above 25%.

"Young people in Michigan are still drinking in excess with White and Hispanic youths the highest at 28% and 26%, respectively. There has also been a concerning increase in binge drinking among underage females in Michigan. Finally, it's important to remember that any drinking by those under 21 years is considered excessive," Hindman said.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the first six weeks of freshman year are a vulnerable time for harmful and underage college drinking and for alcohol-related consequences because of student expectations and social pressures at the start of the academic year. The problem of underage drinking can intensify with unstructured time, widespread availability of alcohol, inconsistent enforcement of underage drinking laws, additional stress and uncertainty due to the coronavirus pandemic, and limited interactions with parents and other adults.

Parents have a powerful influence with their kids. Research shows that students who abstain from drinking often do so because their parents discussed alcohol use and its adverse consequences with them.

Parents can help reduce underage drinking in several ways:

- Discuss reasons not to drink, including the legal and physical risks of alcohol and underage drinking: DUI arrest, alcohol overdose, violence, unsafe sexual behavior, unintentional injuries, academic failure, and other adverse consequences.
- Emphasize that no matter how easily available alcohol is, underage drinking represents a risk

### RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

#### COLLEGE DRINKING - CHANGING THE CULTURE

[www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)

#### HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT ALCOHOL

[www.responsibility.org/prevent-underage-drinking/talking-to-kids-about-alcohol](http://www.responsibility.org/prevent-underage-drinking/talking-to-kids-about-alcohol)

#### MADD –MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

[www.madd.org/the-solution/power-of-parents](http://www.madd.org/the-solution/power-of-parents)

#### CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION

[www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm)

**MICHIGAN LIQUOR REPORT**  
*continued on page 24.*

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# ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

## Everything Old is New Again

**M**y article last month dealt with the FBI filing charges against Ohio House Speaker Larry Householder and 4 other lobbyists. To bring you up to date, all five accused have pled not guilty and so far there have been no other arrest by the FBI or any other names mentioned under the investigation. When this story first broke and the FBI held a news conference to outline the charges, most everyone thought these people were guilty, but now that attorneys have had a chance to look over the charges, many now think all five may be found not guilty. Mr. Householder is still a member of the General Assembly and he's up for reelection in November with only write-in candidates opposing him, so it's almost a certainty that he will be reelected.

Some members think he should resign or be removed, but others point out that in America you have the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. To be continued.

On the legislative front, after a conference committee report was agreed to, both the House and Senate passed HB 606. This would provide immunity from lawsuit by those claiming they got the coronavirus

from an essential worker. The Governor, for some reason, waited the entire 10 days after receiving the bill before he signed it on September 14th, which means the effective date of the bill will be December 15th, and the immunity will last through September 30, 2021. The original language of this bill came from MIRA, thanks to Juan Escareño and was given to Representative Jay Edwards who then sent it on to the Speaker who had Representative Diane Grendell introduce the bill. It's unclear if the House and Senate will be in session prior to the elections in November but there will be a lame duck session after the elections. Lame Duck means the legislature has two months to pass bills before December 31st, midnight, after that all bills still pending are dead.

Ohio is a Home Rule state, which means local governments can pass legislation without approval from General Assembly, the only caveat is if the state legislature passes a bill that has language saying the bill is for the good of the state, then local governments can't override. The city of Bexley just outside Columbus has a law pending that would outlaw all flavored vapor cigarettes. MIRA sent a letter to all members of Bexley City Council opposing this bill as being unfair to businesses within the city limits. MIRA is a member of a tobacco coalition that will do everything possible to stop this type of legislation before other cities consider the same type of legislation. ■





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# government relations report

JUAN ESCAREÑO // MIRA DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## Politics and the Art of Winning

*“The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-suffering, and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god; he is no part of a state.”*

– ARISTOTLE

The quote from Aristotle is my favorite of his because it captures the essence of living in society. We are meant to be in a society comprised of others. We are reliant on others in society. Our association is reliant on your membership. Your store is reliant on your employees and customers. No man is an island to himself.

We are in need of each other, hence why MIRA has existed since 1910. The founders of this prestigious trade association knew that they needed each other to protect the industry from outsiders attempting to impose rules, laws, and practices that would hurt their livelihood. We exist with the understanding that as a collective we can and will protect the family businesses you have worked hard to build.

The politics or rather, the government relations work of this trade association labor for your benefit best when you are personally engaged in the effort with us. You are not expected to participate in weekly meetings or in every fundraising event for our political action committee. Your engagement is based on your needs and ability. The levels of engagement are:

1. A donor to our PAC Fund
2. Participate in the PAC Committee to organize events
3. Read the weekly MIRA newsletter
4. Foster relationships with your local and national elected officials

As no man is an island, I challenge you over the next few months to take one of these four levels of engagement and act upon it. When we act in unison and speak as once voice, the voice of all of us is amplified and makes a bigger impact on our targets. Our voices will drown out the chants of people trying to impose more rules and regulations upon your business. We can act together to move the dialogue on things import to us like bottle returns, tobacco laws, and liquor regulations.

Our strength for the last 120 years has been our unifying voice and with today's pandemic our voice must continue to echo within the halls of our state capitols. As Aristotle points out, "...he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god..." We are neither beast nor gods but creatures in need of others. The necessity is self-evident but lost in the daily hustle of our lives. You wake every morning with the goal of putting out the daily fires and distractions. I don't challenge you to forget those daily hurdles, but to see that some of our daily hurdles can be resolved through collective action. Collective action for your good and ours.

The art of winning in politics is having the most relationships and money. The act of knowing our elected officials allows for the dialog necessary for them to understand your challenges. MIRA uses your PAC donations to help facilitate the building of relationships with elected officials. We win as a trade association when you as a retailer support our events and donate to our PAC fund. If your commitments at your business prohibit you from doing 3 of the items I listed, I strongly encourage you to participate through donations. ■



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# Holiday Shopping in the Pandemic

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING\*



**T**he Holiday season has arrived in the retail industry and many businesses are preparing for consumer trends. How and what customers are shopping for have shifted due to COVID-19 and so grocers have pivoted into those directions.

When it comes to the holiday season, certain products are commonly found on the dining room table. “Holiday prime rib in our meat department as well as our deli display items are well known including our handcrafted dips, bakery rolls and eggnog,” said Tom Baumann, vice president of operations for the three-store grocery chain, Ric’s Food Centers, started in Isabella County.

Recent Acosta research finds that 43% of consumers worry that the pandemic will soil holiday celebrations, while 23% expect the holidays to be pretty much business as usual, with most of the remaining 27% unable to even think that far ahead given all the current pandemic stress.

There are expected items to be in short supply including, “baking needs and spices,” said Baumann.

Other grocers are anticipating to be able to stock up on certain items. “We will be carrying the usual products for baking that we normally do,” said Phil Kassa, co-owner of Heartland Marketplace. “We’ll have a large selection of hams, turkeys, roasts, lamb and other meats that are a holiday favorite, including ethnic specific items for each group. We’ll have the usual party and dessert trays.”

COVID-19 has changed the way people shop. Since the pandemic, prepared food has been on the decline inside grocery stores. “People have more time now to plan and prepare meals,” said Baumann. “The basket dollars are way up. People are making less trips to the store. The daily sales are more consistent today. The 3 to 7 p.m. rush hour is not what it was prior to the COVID-19.”

There are still unknowns with the virus that is expected to impact the holiday season. “The challenges this year is knowing whether families and friends will be getting together because of the Coronavirus,” said Kassa. “We are ordering more than previous years, because we feel people will be traveling less. At the same time we are buying smaller turkeys and lighter weight hams, because less people will be getting together.”

Prepared foods slowed considerably at the beginning of this pandemic, but they have been slowly coming back. “The biggest challenge is that our stores have lost the lunch crowd because so many offices have shut down, and more people are preparing their lunch from home, or going to fast food drive-thru,” said Kassa.

Many grocers and suppliers anticipate a different holiday season this year. “I believe there will be fewer large family gatherings and more stay-at-home family meals,” said Baumann. “I think more and more customers are enjoying cooking at home with increased home time. I think more young people are spending more time in the kitchen than watching sports.”

Families are filling the pantry more than eating out. “Because of COVID-19, more people are cooking at home, and we are selling things we haven’t sold in years, and things they see on the cooking shows,” said Kassa. “People are making less shopping trips to the stores, but when they shop, they are shopping a lot. We’ve seen our average sale per customer go up dramatically, and at the same time our customer count has gone down sharply.”

At Heartland Marketplace, they are emphasizing customer service to help bring goodwill with their customers. “We are hoping more people will be eating at home and travel less. We are anticipating sales increases over previous years,” said Kassa. “We are also anticipating the COVID-19 hysteria will be a lot less on November 4th, the day after the election. The media has made this pandemic a political issue in my personal view.”

Food retailers do have serious challenges. Since COVID-19 hit the country, keeping businesses properly staffed has been difficult. During the holiday season, many retailers hire additional staff known as seasonal workers to help fill customer demands. This year, that is becoming even more difficult. “Our biggest challenge today is employees, there just aren’t qualified people filling positions that are open,” said Kassa. “We are working with less employees and making necessary adjustments to best serve the customer.” ■

*\*Writers with Epiphany Communications and Coaching are content creators for Bottom Line.*



## Creating the Recipe for Success in the Meat Business

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING\*

**W**hen customers walk into Eastern Market of Canton, they are greeted by all employees inside the store at the time with the phrase, “Welcome to Eastern Market,” said in unison.

“When customers walk in and don’t hear us say it, they actually walk back out of the store and back in just to hear us saying our signature greeting,” said Marvin Jarbo who has owned and operated Eastern Market of Canton since 2009. “That greeting has really become our trademark.”

That style of welcoming customers to the store is part of Jarbo’s business philosophy. “We pride ourselves on offering quality products while providing the best customer service. That is really what our success has been built on. It is the recipe for success.”

Jarbo employs 13 people at the 3,000-square-foot store. They sell locally raised beef that is hormone free, grass fed, with no antibiotics and is Michigan raised cattle. “We support the state of Michigan,” said Jarbo. “This is my passion. I love what I do. People truly appreciate you in this business.”

Jarbo used to own three liquor stores with his brothers and father, but left those businesses to do what he enjoys most. “When you own liquor store, people ask for cigarettes and a pint of liquor. There is no satisfaction in that. I spent 16 years in San Diego, California and that is where I learned to cut meat. Our family owned super markets and I wanted to get back into that business.”



Although he is no longer in business with his brothers, his father George, 75 still works with him. “He breaks cattle,” said Jarbo. “I love working with my dad. We have been partners my entire life and we will be partners forever.”

Jarbo relishes in the love people have for preparing great meals. “People love food,” said Jarbo. “Food really is the way to someone’s heart. I love making our customers happy. They come in and tell me how great their Sunday family meals were because of our products. There is nothing better than providing quality products that make others happy.”

Included in the specialty meats he offers, Jarbo sells Wagyu beef by pre-order only. “It is very pricey, so we only sell by the order,” he said. “It costs about \$30 a pound, but it is delicious. At the end of the day, people get sick of hormone injected meats. They are looking for healthier options.”

The store also has a full-line of produce, a large selection of Boar’s Head meat and specialty salads.

Jarbo is planning to take over an existing business in Plymouth and expand it. “A renter in one of our plaza’s plans to retire, so I am going to take over the business and remodeled into a 6,000 square-foot store similar to Cantoro Italian Market.”

The business is currently named Pure Pastures, but Jarbo is thinking about a name change.

Jarbo is married and he and his wife Noora have three school-aged boys. “We golf together whenever we can,” said Jarbo. “My boys love to golf.” ■

*\*Writers with Epiphany Communications and Coaching are content creators for Bottom Line.*

### RETAILER: EASTERN MARKET OF CANTON

**Location:** Canton, Michigan

**Employees:** 13

**MIRA Member Since:** 2019

**Slogan:** “Quality products and the best customer service is the recipe for success.”



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## Focused on the MIRA Membership

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING\*

**M**ary Ann Yono spends her day connecting with MIRA members on the countless issues they come across in their respective businesses. She has worked at the association for seven years originally hired in the Business Development and Membership Department. “My job consists of acquiring new members from retail stores, gas stations, supermarkets, liquor and party stores, convenience stores, among other things. My job also consists of assisting and retaining current members,” said Yono. “Some of the issues, for instance, range from guiding them on how to obtain certain licenses for their liquor, food stamps, and various other licenses and keeping the members informed and updated regarding the new COVID-19 crisis so that they can make any necessary changes.”

Many members know Mary Ann by name as she has built business relationships with members throughout the years. “What I love most about my job is being sociable and having that personable interaction with the members and helping them with what they need, especially with any issues or crises that may arise in their stores,” said Yono. “I always tell our members that you can reach me any time and I will gladly take care of any problems and find the best possible solution.”

Like many industries, COVID-19 has brought multiple problems into the food retail industry. “The association and its members are learning to adjust to the COVID-19 rules and precautions,” said Yono. “Members are learning to cope and deal with problems of supply and demand, as well as the threat of many small businesses closing. It is a tough time and I am here to assist, guide, and support with whatever the member needs. Adjusting to the “new normal” seems to be the biggest challenge in this industry, but our members are resilient and will overcome this difficult time.”

As we move into the New Year, Yono is hopeful. “Looking into 2021, I am hoping for a solution to COVID-19. This will affect the world, my personal



life and MIRA. Hopefully, a solution comes soon and saves all of the small businesses that are struggling,” she said. “Another hope for next year would be that every non-member is better informed on the value that MIRA brings and how we are beneficial to them.”

Along with coping with COVID-19 while continuing her commitment to the membership at MIRA, Yono has much to celebrate even though the logistics have changed. She and her husband Nabby of 38 years are ecstatic about seeing their two children marry this year. “Nabby and I are very proud of our two children,” she said. “My daughter, Ashley, is a Nurse Practitioner and works for an Orthopedic Surgeon at Beaumont Hospital and assists in trauma surgery. My Son, Justin, works for The Jonna Group at Colliers International, which is a commercial real estate

**STAFF SPOTLIGHT**  
*continued on page 25.*

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## The Business of Politics

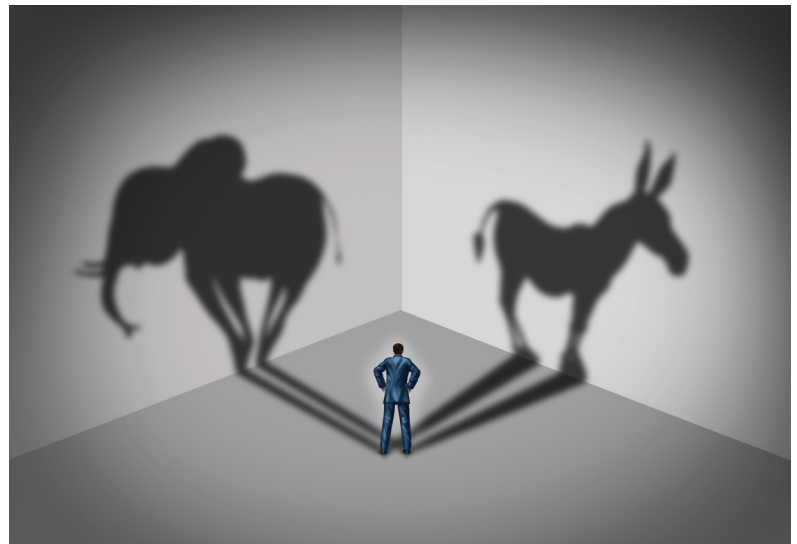
■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING\*

Members in the food retail industry not only have to know their own industry, they are often thrust into the business of politics as issues at all levels of government often affect their bottom line.

“Being politically active is as important to a business owner as it is to a citizen,” said Matthew D. Miner, Chief Executive Officer, Capitol Strategies Group. “Our system of government is built on the actions and involvement of its citizens. As a society, those who show up and speak out are most likely to achieve the desired results for their community.”

As a business owner, explained Miner, there are more layers involved in securing a productive and safe business environment, in addition to communities. “Working with government at the local, state and national level almost becomes an obligation as a business owner,” said Miner. “Government touches so much of our lives and can have a profound impact on how we live. Shaping policy at all levels can help secure a stable future and bring certainty on a number of important issues that affect our businesses.”

Over the years, MIRA has experienced many reasons to get involved in politics. “I would argue that getting involved as a collective in politics with like-minded individuals is paramount to a successful business,” said Juan Escareño, Director of Government and Community Affairs. “A



collective brings everyone with similar interest together to amplify their voices. The voices of independent retailers working in unison to build relationships with the elected officials creates opportunities to impact laws and regulations.”

There are several issues important in the food industry that affect MIRA members on the local and national levels. “Finding stability and continuity in our laws and regulations is paramount to survival in the business community today during this COVID-19 crisis,” said Miner.

Before this pandemic hit, there were very few factors that could affect the industry to the point things got out of our own control. “When COVID-19 hit, the ability to open our doors for business was immediately in jeopardy,” said Miner. “The overwhelming flurry of executive actions that closed down businesses immediately took a great toll on our economy. No longer was the success or failure of business resting solely on the shoulders of the business owners,

the government began shutting down industries barring them from continuing commerce.”

Predicting what the government will do or if the virus will continue to spread leading into 2021 is difficult to gauge. “The continued pandemic hangs over the heads of retailers on a daily basis,” said Escareño. “In the next few months, the focus will be on tax increases to make up for the falling revenue caused by the shutdowns.”

Throughout the decades, many members have had strong relationships with elected officials and the association has reached out to many on the local, state and national levels to discuss various concerns. “Forging relationships with elected officials at all level of government is extremely important for business owners,” said Miner. “Policymakers are confronted with a wide array of issues to tackle when creating laws and regulations that govern their communities. It cannot be expected that these

**THE BUSINESS OF POLITICS**  
*continued on page 25.*



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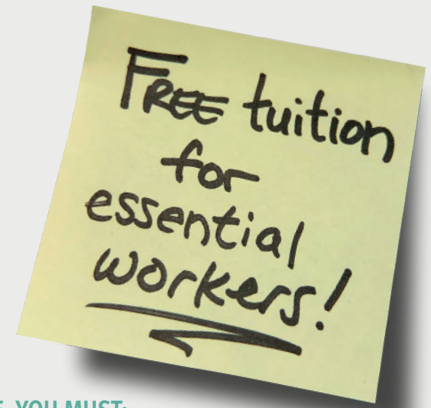
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MICHIGAN //

## Futures for Frontliners

Futures for Frontliners is a scholarship program that pays for frontline workers to attend your local community college tuition-free



Futures for Frontliners is a state scholarship program for Michiganders without college degrees who worked in essential industries during the state COVID-19 shutdown in spring 2020 (April 1st – June 30th). This scholarship provides these frontline workers with tuition-free access to local community college to pursue an associate degree or a skills certificate, either full-time or part-time while you work.

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Learn more at [www.michigan.gov/frontliners](http://www.michigan.gov/frontliners). ■

## MICHIGAN LIQUOR REPORT

*continued from page 10.*

and a bad choice that has long-term, serious consequences.

- Reinforce ways of knowing how and when to say “no” to alcohol.
- Talk about the risks of obtaining fake ID to buy alcohol: fine or arrest; identity theft -- for fraudulent purposes that could result in criminal activity impacting a student's credit, scholarship, obtaining employment.
- Keep the lines of communication open and reach out regularly via text or phone.
- Stay alert for possible alcohol-related problems.
- Learn about the school's alcohol prevention and

emergency intervention efforts.

- Ensure your student knows the signs of alcohol overdose or an alcohol-related problem, and how to help.
- Emphasize that drinking alcohol is never the way to deal with stress, problems or to feel socially acceptable.

The MLCC's high priority areas of enforcement to protect public health and safety includes upholding Michigan law that prohibits the sale of alcohol to minors.

“We are committed to working closely with bar and restaurant owners and retailer licensees to ensure they are doing all they can to refuse to serve alcohol to minors,” said MLCC Commissioner GERALYN LASHER.

In 2019, more than 2,100 businesses holding a liquor license

in Michigan passed controlled buys as reported by the MLCC in partnership with local law enforcement agencies to reduce illegal liquor sales to minors and thwart underage drinking. This represents an 82 percent compliance rate among licensees checked and documented for not selling alcohol to minors.

“Most importantly, we need parents to talk early and often to their kids about the dangers of alcohol,” said MLCC Commissioner DENNIS OLSHOVE. “Parents must emphasize that they absolutely do not approve of underage drinking.”

*It is the mission of the MLCC to make alcoholic beverages available for consumption while protecting the consumer and the general public through the regulation of those involved in the importation, sale, consumption, distribution, and delivery of these alcohol products. ■*



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

*continued from page 20.*

firm specializing in investment properties. September was a big month for our family as Nabby and I celebrated the weddings of both of our children to their significant others, Jimmy married our daughter Ashley and Kayla married our son Justin.”

Yono is no stranger to hard work. At a young age, she worked at her dad’s grocery store Big Top in Detroit on West Warren and Vinewood. “My dad owned the store for more than 50 years and this gave me a great understanding about what the members go through day-to-day,” she said. “My father instilled in me the values of hard work and how to treat

customers with utmost respect. For the majority of my life I have been in sales.”

Yono later worked for the renowned Kosins Men’s Clothing in Southfield for 38 years and styled some of the best dressed men in Detroit, including Chuck Daly the championship coach of the Detroit Pistons, the Mayor of Detroit Coleman Young, auto executive Lee Iacocca, The Temptations, many people in the music and entertainment industry. “Harry Kosins, my mentor, owned one of the best clothing stores in Michigan and was very influential in teaching me how to be a salesperson,” she said. “I was the first woman to become a salesperson in his store, which was predominantly run by men and I was consistently one of

the top ranked salespeople.”

She attributes her position at MIRA to more than a chance meeting with former President and CEO, Auday Arabo. “I am a believer that a coincidence is a blessing in disguise,” said Yono. “If I had not bumped into Auday at a charity event for Breast Cancer, then I do not believe that I would have been at MIRA. Auday and I had a conversation at the event and he suggested that I should apply for MIRA, considering that I have an outgoing personality. This was not a coincidence, but rather a blessing that allowed me to work for this company and I am forever grateful.” ■

*\*Writers with Epiphany Communications and Coaching are content creators for Bottom Line.*

## THE BUSINESS OF POLITICS

*continued from page 22.*

individuals are industry experts on the businesses they are regulating, that is why businesses must step up and forge relationships with these leaders and be the subject matter experts guiding them as they forge public policy.”

Members do have opportunities to build these relationships “Participating in the work of their trade association,” said Escareño. “Getting involved in the political action committee of the association is the structured way to get involved in politics. It connects you to other retailers and gives you an opportunity to work with the lobbyist and staff of the association engaged in the government relations work that occurs every day.”

As we head into the presidential election, MIRA members are wondering how these elections will affect the industry. Every four years our country puts its performance and top leader up for evaluation. “The results of these elections can have a profound impact on our daily lives,” said Miner. “Taxation and regulation are the two biggest issues that impact most Americans. It dictates what we take home financially and how we act as business owners. Constraints on either issue can radically change our lives and the lives of those we employ.”

The year 2020 has come with pandemic, riots and political divisiveness. “This year our presidential election is a visible dichotomy between the two parties,

the likes of which hasn’t existed in decades,” said Miner. “Couple that with a pending pandemic and the lines between the two parties is even further apart. Ronald Reagan summed it up best, “Are you better off today than you were four years ago?” The first candidate to receive 270 Electoral College votes will indicate how Americans felt about the person in the Oval Office during that period.”

Predicting what 2021 will look like is not easy task. “It’s still too early to see where this will lead for our industry but I believe it will impact the level and longevity of the current regulations enforced on retailers for the pandemic,” noted Escareño. “Just vote and encourage your employees to vote.” ■

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 **Borden Dairy**  ..... (216) 214-7342  
 **Lipari Foods, Inc.** ..... (586) 447-3500  
 **Prairie Farms Dairy Co.**  ..... (248) 399-6300  
Cedar Crest Dairy, Inc. .... (616) 797-1103  
LaLa Branded Products (*Lipari*) ..... 1-866-648-5252  
Harvest Sherwood ..... (313) 659-7300

## MONEY ORDERS

 **Retailers Express Money Orders** ..... 1-800-666-6233

## OFFICE SUPPLIES & PRODUCTS

 **Office Depot** ..... (855) 337-6811

## PAPER PRODUCTS & PACKAGING SUPPLIES

Cartotecnica Cambianese Srl .....  
daniele@cartotecnicaCambianese.it


## PET SUPPLIES MISC.

 **Great Lakes Pet Treats** ..... (810) 715-4500

## PIZZA SUPPLIERS



 **Omni Food Concepts**   ..... 1-888-367-7829  
Hunt Brothers Pizza ..... (615) 259-2629

## POINT OF SALE & RETAIL TECHNOLOGY

 **Great Lakes Data Systems** (*LOC Software*)  
..... (248) 356-4100 ext. 107

 **Petrosoft LLC** ..... (412) 306-0640  
BMC-Business Machines Company ..... (517) 485-1732  
Success Systems ..... 1-800-653-3345


## PRINTING, PUBLISHING & SIGNAGE

 **Saxon, Inc.**  ..... (248) 398-2000  
Ahearn Signs, Inc. .... (734) 699-3777  
CLE Billboards ..... (216) 801-9924  
EGI Solutions ..... (586) 978-9630  
Fisher Printing ..... (708) 598-1500  
Pace Custom Printing. .... (248) 563-7702


## PRODUCE DISTRIBUTORS

Anthony Marano Company ..... (773) 321-7500

## PROPANE

 **Blue Rhino** ..... (989) 345-0170  
Pinnacle Propane Express ..... (847) 406-2021

## REAL ESTATE

 **Sell Your Business Program** ..... 1-800-666-6233  
Trade World Consulting ..... (614) 332-8762


## REFRIGERATION SOLUTIONS (COMMERCIAL)

Cooler Fabrications ..... 1-800-396-1480  
Raves Cooler Doors ..... (248) 887-0648  
Sprint Business ..... (248) 893-8017

## RETAIL CONSULTING

White Knight Marketing. .... (901) 494-1352

## RETAIL FIXTURES, DISPLAYS & FLOORING

 **Display Max** ..... (810) 494-0400  
Mitchell's Flooring ..... (248) 887-4864

## REVERSE VENDING MACHINES & SERVICE

UBCR, LLC. .... (248) 529-2605

## SECURITY, SURVEILLANCE & MORE

Netco Services ..... (248) 850-2228

## SODA POP, WATER, JUICES & OTHER BEVERAGES

 **Coca-Cola Refreshments** (*Metro Detroit program*)  
..... **Metro Detroit**  (313) 868-2008  
..... **Belleville**  (734) 397-2700  
..... **Flint**  (810) 237-4000  
..... **Cleveland**  (216) 690-2653

 **Faygo Beverages, Inc.**  ..... (313) 925-1600  
Amica Tea LLC ..... (312) 796-7445  
Boom Boom Energy ..... (313) 722-2221  
Monster Energy Company ..... (800) 426-7367  
Pepsi Beverages ..... **Detroit** 1-800-368-9945  
..... **Howell** 1-800-878-8239  
..... **Pontiac** (248) 334-3512  
..... **Cleveland** (216) 252-7377  
..... **Twinsburg** (330) 963-5300  
Smart Life LLC ..... (248) 466-0770

## TOBACCO ALTERNATIVES

Bumble CBD ..... (216) 854-0090  
E-Alternative Solutions ..... (904) 843-3731  
Grinds Coffee Pouches. .... (412) 414-3155  
Swisher International ..... (904) 607-7405

## TOBACCO COMPANIES & PRODUCTS

Altria Client Services ..... (513) 831-5510  
Fully Loaded, LLC ..... (877) 728-2547  
R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company ..... (336) 741-0727  
Xcaliber International ..... (918) 824-0300

## UNIFORMS, LINENS, WORK WEAR & SUPPLIES

 **Detroit Chemical & Paper Supply /**  
**1st Impressions** ..... (586) 558-8805  
 **UniFirst Corporation** ..... (888) 256-5255 ext. 232  
Socks Galore Wholesale ..... (248) 545-7625

## WASTE DISPOSAL & RECYCLING

 **Midwest Recycling**   (*Clothing recycle boxes*)  
..... (313) 304-9099  
Commercial Waste Systems (*Cardboard recycling buyers*)  
..... (219) 663-5678  
Stamper Facility ..... (586) 228-6500

## WINE & SPIRITS COMPANIES

 **Benchmark Beverage Co.** ..... (734) 744-6132  
Cheurlin Champagne ..... (312) 929-2699  
Cornerstone Wine Distributor ..... (586) 839-2552  
Endless West ..... (313) 590-7491  
Heaven Hill Distilleries ..... 1-800-348-1783  
Luxco ..... (313) 333-4637  
Proximo Spirits ..... (810) 278-0599  
Remy Cointreau USA ..... (248) 347-3731  
Tenute Delogu ..... info@tenutedelogu.com  
Tito's Handmade Vodka ..... (248) 885-3424  
Wise Men Distillery ..... (616) 805-7003

## WINE & SPIRITS DISTRIBUTORS

European Wine Imports of Ohio, LLC ..... (216) 426-0979  
Great Lakes Wine & Spirits ..... 1-888-860-3805  
Lagnappe Beverage ..... (773) 358-2344  
RNDC of Michigan ..... 1-888-697-6424

## FOOD RESCUE / FOOD BANKS

### MICHIGAN

Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank  
..... (616) 784-3250  
Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank -  
Benton Harbor ..... (269) 983-7229  
Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank -  
Cadillac ..... (231) 779-0056  
Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank -  
Ishpeming ..... (906) 485-4988  
Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank -  
Sault Ste. Marie ..... (906) 632-0348  
Food Bank of Eastern Michigan ..... (810) 239-4441  
Food Bank of South Central Michigan .. (269) 964-3663  
Food Gatherers ..... (734) 761-2796  
Forgotten Harvest ..... (248) 967-1500  
Gleaners Community Food Bank ..... (866) GLE-ANER  
Greater Lansing Food Bank ..... (517) 908-3680  
Kalamazoo Loaves & Fishes ..... (269) 343-3663  
The Manna Food Project ..... (231) 347-8852  
Western Upper Peninsula Food Bank ... (906) 482-5548

### OHIO

Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank .... (330) 535-6900  
Cleveland Foodbank ..... (216) 738-2265  
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### ILLINOIS

Central Illinois Foodbank ..... (217) 522-4022  
Eastern Illinois Foodbank ..... (217) 328-3663  
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River Bend Foodbank ..... (563) 345-6490  
St. Louis Area Foodbank ..... (314) 292-6262  
Tri-State Foodbank ..... (812) 425-0775





## NOVEMBER 19 & 20, 2020

### MIRF'S "HIGH FIVE" TURKEY DRIVE

As the holiday season approaches, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation turkey drive committee has pledged to put a turkey on the Thanksgiving table of over 6,000 needy families throughout Michigan, Ohio and Illinois that may not otherwise enjoy this special meal.

*Michigan // Ohio // Illinois*



## JANUARY 23, 2021

### MIRA'S 105TH ANNUAL TRADE DINNER & BALL

Join over 800 leaders in the food, beverage & petroleum industries at this one-and-only black tie gala. Delight in fine cuisine, dancing and entertainment and engage with colleagues and friends to celebrate the strength and vitality of MIRA and the members it serves.

*Penna's of Sterling // Sterling Heights, MI*

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