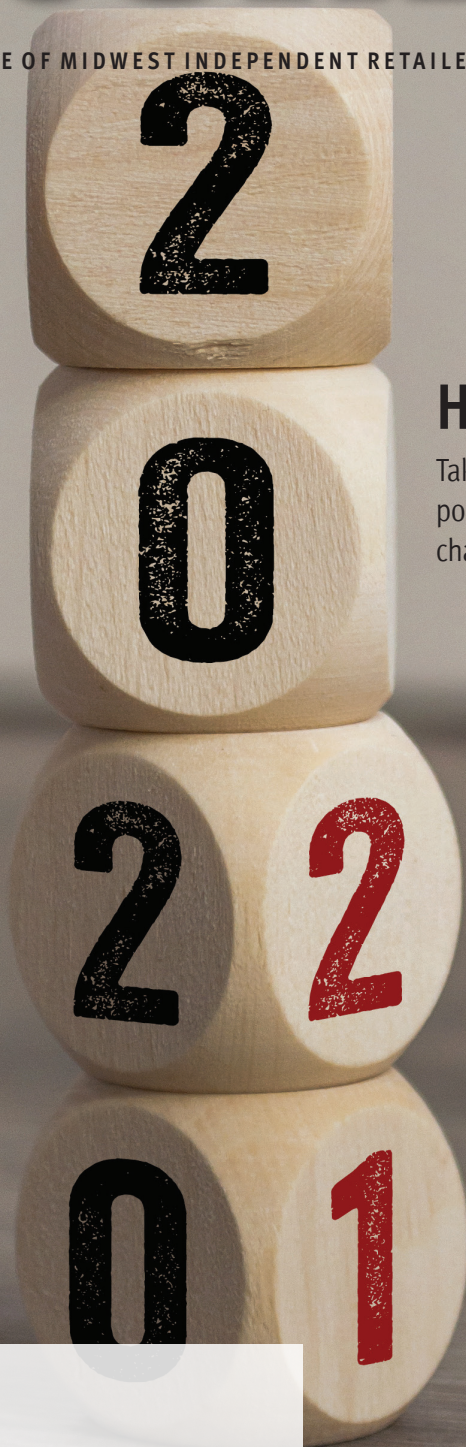


BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 32, NO.1 // JANUARY 2021



Hindsight is 2020

Taking a look back at the COVID-19 Crisis, the political climate, unrest in the country and changes inside the association

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■ Spreading Christmas Cheer in a Chaotic Year // PAGE 20

■ MIRA Members Coping with Pandemic Panic // PAGE 23



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BottomLine

THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS
VOL. 32, NO. 1 // JANUARY 2021

features



COVER STORY // HINDSIGHT IS 2020

The year 2020 started out relatively like a normal year. COVID-19 was hitting China and other parts of the world but for the most part the United States was not affected at the start of the new year, or at least that is what was believed to be true.



SPREADING CHRISTMAS CHEER IN A CHAOTIC YEAR

One MIRA member wanted to do something for families who have been couped up and coping with the COVID-19 crisis so he planned an event at his business. Mike Mitchell and team hosted “A day with Santa and his elves” at Road Trip Oasis in Perry Michigan.



MIRA MEMBERS COPING WITH PANDEMIC PANIC

As the supply and demand chain for the grocery industry could get more challenging during these winter months and into this new year, MIRA members are coping with the pandemic panic.



president's message

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA PRESIDENT & CEO

Time to Put 2020 Behind Us and Reset for 2021

By the time this issue of Bottom Line reaches you the year 2020 will be fully behind us. The year 2020 has been the most roller-coaster year in my long memory but, I ask you to consider subscribing to my axiom that states: "Things are never as good, or as bad, as you first think they are!" That's how we must look at the year 2020.

Most of MIRA's membership was open business during the COVID-19 lockdown, because they were considered "essential businesses". And except for gas stations, where volume was down as much as 50% because customers were working from home, most member stores were able to stay in business. It wasn't a cake walk by any stretch of the imagination facing employee shortages, sanitizing requirements and protocols, and short deliveries of sale-able products. But at least you were open and had traffic in your stores. For that you had to be grateful compared to many other businesses.

For all practical purposes bars and restaurants were shut down. From what I observed the restaurants that tried to stay open with "carry out" service only were experiencing "death by a thousand slices". We all know that there are fixed expenses that need to be covered, and you can't hire half of a chef. Be glad you aren't in the bar or restaurant business.

It's a little late, but get ready for 2021 with revised planning. One year ago I asked you to make a plan which was sabotaged by the universal pandemic and you had to switch gears into survival mode. Now that the vaccine capable of fighting the COVID-19 is being distributed, plan to restructure your business for a slow but steady reopening of the US economy. Safety precautions will still be promoted and a portion of the population will still be cautious about reinserting themselves into the economy. And some employees will continue to work from home cementing curb-side pick-up and home delivery habits learned during the pandemic.

Accommodating the newly acquired habits of the consumer will be the key to future success. Attempting to retreat to the business plan of 2019 and before is a recipe for failure. Now more than ever you need to have your finger on the pulse of the customer whether that customer visits your store, or communicates online, or uses whatever platform rises from the ashes of 2020 and becomes the preferred method of communication. Being aware of the "new normal" and reacting to the "new normal" will give you a leg up on the competition. Put together a plan for the new year so you have an idea of your objectives, even if those objectives are a little fuzzy right now.

At MIRA we are facing the same challenges. We need to modernize to better serve you in the new decade. The popular platforms will enable us to provide important information faster than current methods, so we need all your contact information. As always, that information will be confidential and not shared outside the association.

I feel obligated to mention a development in my personal life that some of you are aware of. My beloved wife, Merriam, died mid-November after a very short battle with lung cancer. She always defended MIRA/AFP/SSDAMI member stores against any criticism and was proud of the association. I ask you to please honor her memory by remembering her in your prayers. ■

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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.

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Moving the Association Forward in 2021

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

As the world leaves behind one of the craziest years most people have ever seen, the Midwest Independent Retailers Association (MIRA) is looking ahead to 2021. The staff is focused on moving the association forward.

“We are moving passed one of the most chaotic years our industry has faced or anyone has faced for that matter,” said Ed Weglarz, MIRA president and CEO. “Our team has their eyes on our members and programs that will assist in keeping them not only in business but succeeding.”

MIRA has plans in place for this New Year which includes staying up on trends. “We have to look at anything that could negatively impact our retailers while continuing to support members through these hard times,” said Ken Schulte, MIRA Director of Business Development.

Meanwhile, Juan Escareño, MIRA Director of Government Relations, is taking a three-prong campaign to expand community relations in each primary state. “These relationships with community partners have been helpful during the pandemic to reach decision makers and potentially bring new sources of revenue to the association for unique pilot programs,” he said. “It’s too early to know what the

new normal will look like with the vaccine rolling out now and folks hoping it will end the stay-at-home orders. But, I anticipate the safety procedures put in place during this pandemic will continue to give people a sense of security.”

The MIRA team is arming themselves with information to ensure all members are compliant, safe, and healthy. “I want to continue to build awareness of the programs MIRA has to offer its members and help them get qualified and signed up for them, especially the c-store distributor programs,” said Jim Green, MIRA Vice President of Program Development. “Our average member is earning \$523.03 per quarter, approximately \$2,100 per year on the c-store wholesale programs.”

Besides the rebates that S. Abraham & Sons, Team Sledd and McAneny Brothers offer, they have unique services and solutions that help independents make more money and compete in a more chain-driven environment.

The term ‘new normal’ has been floating around since the pandemic hit the United States. “Not too sure what the new normal is,” said Schulte, “but I see the industry continuing to be challenged, adjusting the way they do business and to ensure that their employees are retained.”

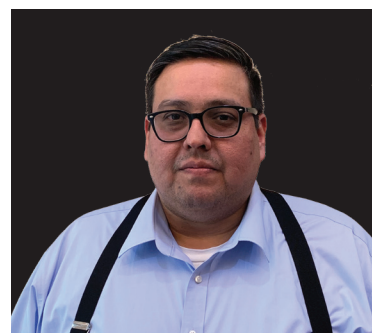
Schulte believes being innovative and creative is



ED WEGLARZ



KEN SCHULTE



JUAN ESCAREÑO



JIM GREEN



essential to success using tools like virtual meetings and emails to communicate.

Meanwhile, it is believed that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the landscape of retailing for the foreseeable future, at least for convenience stores. “Consumers have a different mindset today and expectations when it comes to food safety and food service,” said Green. “Those dynamics won’t change post COVID-19. Also, the speed in which retailers are adopting and integrating digital platforms in their business model will only continue to grow. This was always a growing trend, but the pandemic was the catalyst that saw the adoptions of this move at warp speed. We, at MIRA, need to find solutions and programs that can help our members in these specific areas.”

Challenges for 2021 are anticipated included continued changes and unexpected circumstance. “Being able to adjust quickly is going to be the biggest challenge,” said Schulte, “being proactive versus reactive is key.”

Finances could also be a challenge in 2021. “I anticipate the budget shortfalls caused by the shutdown edicts will put pressure on legislators to look at gas taxes, increased regulations on retailers, and an increase in the labor shortages we have come to expect this year,” said Escareño.

Some of the challenges could be solved with technology and in some cases the technology could

be the challenge. “There are so many technology solutions in the market, picking the one that is the most economical, has the most application for a stores specific needs and has enough flexibility to be useful as a retailer model, may evolve and approve,” said Green. “Many of these technology solutions offer some nuances that appeal to different slivers of retailers. Each one can help members in a slightly different way so finding universal solutions that appeal to majority is a challenge.”

The New Year is an opportunity for new plans and reinvention. “Retailers have to adapt to the new normal,” said Green. “Those that embrace it and market it will build long term consumer loyalty.”

The new partnerships and relationships with MIRA is promising. “I see that more retailers will look to us for guidance due to all the things we do to protect them, i.e. compliance, resources, etc.,” said Schulte who continued with advice for retailers. “Don’t wait, be proactive and anticipate change because its coming whether you want it or not. PLAN! Make a 30/60/90 day plan due to everything that has come our way and is still to come.”

“A positive is regulators and decision makers seeing retailers as essential businesses,” said Escareño. “This will create new opportunities to educate our customers and legislators on the importance of keeping a vibrant independent retail environment going.”

The speed of change is also a challenge. “COVID-19 kicked that into over drive,” said Green. “It’s more important than ever to read, learn and listen to what is taking place in the market. I would urge everyone to sign up for the daily updates from NACS, CSP and Convenience Store News. Spend 20 minutes per day reading what is happening in the industry. It will provide ideas on what to implement in your store and maybe, more importantly, it can keep you from making a mistake that can cost money and customers.”

MIRA staff offers advice to members. “Do what is right for your employees and they will stay at your side when the going gets tough. Most employers have done so and it shows when they can man the frontlines,” said Escareño.

Green is focused on developing programs that can help members by adding value for them and saving them money while Schulte is focused on growing MIRA’s membership and retaining membership so that the industry knows the association’s value.

“Change is going to continue to happen even after the pandemic is over,” said Green.

“Retailers need to know the facts! Use MIRA as that resource,” said Schulte.

“I am focused on ensuring laws and regulations coming down the pipeline in 2021 won’t negatively impact our members,” said Escareño. ■

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



c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Modify Your Offering

Last month I wrote about the value of category management and utilizing the expertise of the MIRA convenience store distributor partners. The article primarily focused on getting the mix correct for the various categories you offer focusing on the items and brands that meet consumer demands. It generated some great questions and feedback, so I thought I would expand that topic this month by talking about some trends that have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic in which convenience store retailers can easily modify their selection to meet demands of consumers.

Over the last fifteen years I have encouraged convenience store operators to continuously take a hard look at their grocery sections and the amount of space they allocated in their stores. Almost without exception, most retailers could easily shrink their space allocated to the grocery category and the number of items freeing up valuable space for growing categories like snacks, meat snacks, bag candy, etc. However due to the pandemic, retailers should potentially look to expand their grocery category instead. There is an opportunity to be a grocery destination and retailers should explore finding space for essential grocery items. Multipack beverages and family-size items have been doing very well. Retailers should explore increasing the number of family-size items, take-home meals and multipack beverages. If you decide to do this, then start promoting those items. Consumers need to know about it for you to be successful with it. I would also urge retailers who decide to add more of these products to take a hard look at their retail margins on these items. Do not let your default category margin percentages determine the retail price point for these

items. These are categories that you would expect to make 40%. On these items, I would suggest a 20% to 25% margin. Although you will offer convenience, you will still be competing with other channels of trade for these potential customers. This strategy can create more foot traffic and increase the average number of items consumers put in their baskets. Some very large chain retailers are even moving beyond the ambient items. I have recently learned about some that are expanding frozen and refrigerated items, which includes items like ground beef. The retailers implementing these types of strategies have determined that purchase behavior has gone through a sea-change amid a pandemic and will likely alter pre-COVID-19 trends well past 2020.

Another category for retailers to consider, especially if you have already expanded your essential grocery items and are having success, is fresh produce and fruit. The pandemic has more people trying to eat healthier and are cooking at home. Also, convenience stores have fewer shoppers congregating, which is appealing to shoppers trying to social distance. I recently learned that grocery and big box retailers account for \$61 billion in produce sales. Before COVID-19 struck, fresh produce sales in convenience stores totaled about \$242 million a year. I was astonished by this opportunity that presents itself to convenience store retailers. Move beyond apples and bananas. You can easily get started with processed produce in to-go packages and expand as sales start to grow.

I want to be clear in that I am not suggesting that every convenience store in America should implement these strategies. It is not something that will be universally successful across the entire convenience store industry. These recommendations are targeted towards retailers in which this makes sense. Convenience stores that services large communities or rural locations would be ideal. I would not recommend it if for a store that services interstate or highway traffic. I would also recommend talking to your customers to see if they would like you to add some of these items. It is always a good idea to hear from them when considering making changes. ■

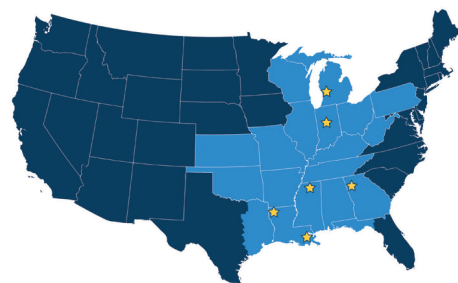


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government relations report

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

Legislative and Public Policy in 2021

“The commandments of the law are these; live honorably, harm nobody, and give everyone his due.”

– ULPIAN

What will 2021 bring to us? I will share what our focus on the government and community relations front will be in 2021 for each of our key states.

In Chicago, we are launching a pilot program with select grocers to increase their SNAP redemptions in the produce aisle. We have finalized an agreement with a non-profit on the Southside of Chicago called The Experimentation Station to kick off the Illinois version of double up food bucks. Every SNAP/EBT customer that purchases produce in a participating store will be awarded a voucher to purchase more produce from the store. This will increase the visibility of the store with customers and our federal elected officials charged with the Farm Bill. Each state already has this opportunity to tap into the extra funds allocated by the federal government. We will work with our community partner to ensure our member stores in Chicago and the surrounding region are the first to pilot this program.

What we are doing in Chicago is the direction of our work in 2021. We will formulate programs that will increase the opportunities to make your store stand out from the big box chain down the street. You are far more nimble and able to cater to the unique needs of your communities. These programs

won't create a financial bonanza for you, but it will give you something else to attract and retain new customers. With this focus, it will put your store and your commitment to excellence at the forefront.

The second largest budget item for the federal government is the Farm Bill. This bill helps give some of your customers the chance to buy food for their families. I'm not here to discuss the merits of such a program but to use the resources available in such legislation to help you. If we don't take the initiative, the big box chains will use it and lock it up for themselves. If you think this can't happen, look at on-line SNAP today, only the big box stores in our states have been able to use it. On-line sales result in larger baskets and bigger returns for the big box stores.

Creating new programs will result in standing out from the guy down the street. Here in Detroit, I have talked to grocers who want the program after seeing customers go down the street to the competition. I want to ensure the playing field is level, hence why we are working on the pilot program from the ground up. This work is a continuation of our commitment to our members founded on our pillars. The first being government relations and community outreach.

With this new year, not only will we tackle new frontiers but continue our mission to protect your interest. I quoted the Roman jurist Ulpian to remind me that this work is contingent upon everyone benefiting from this work we do in MIRA. In 2021 let us venture out of our comfort zones and tackle the year with courage and a determination to make it a great year for you, for me, and for our customers. And with all this said, we will be more vigilant to ensure that our elected officials and regulators recognize the work you did in 2020 to keep us safe and fed during a pandemic.

May 2021 be a prosperous and healthy year for you and your family. ■



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ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

End of a Dreadful Year

First, I want to apologize to all MIRA members for not wishing you a Merry Christmas and hopefully a much better New Year. With the vaccines soon to be available perhaps we can get back to normal in early 2021. The Ohio House of Representatives had a number of members test positive to COVID-19 and it threw a wrench into getting things done in a lame duck session. As of this writing they were looking at being in session the week between Christmas and New Year's so they could finish up all work for this General Assembly and get ready for next year. Legislation does not carry over into a new General Assembly in Ohio; All bills not passed must be reintroduced in 2021. A quick reminder that next session Republicans will have a 25-8 majority in the Senate as Republican Senator Stephanie Kunze won the recount in her race and in the House Republicans will have a large 64-35 majority.

There are a number of bills that MIRA was following and we will update you in next month's issue of any changes, but as of this writing, here is the status:

- HB 71 deals with cigarette minimum pricing requiring wholesalers to justify any increase in cost to retailers and preventing retailers from buying cigarettes at below wholesale cost. The bill is pending in Ohio Senate.
- HB 172 would do away with third mailing for tow truck operators for vehicles under \$3500 impounded, it would also allow storage facilities

to obtain title to vehicles ordered by police to be impounded. This bill is currently waiting for a vote from the Senate.

- HB 237 would allow S liquor permit holders to ship liquor to customers. This bill is pending.
- HB 621 would allow all businesses, not just essential businesses, who adhere to State health rules to stay open during pandemics or natural disasters. This bill is pending.
- SB 55 would make first offense of health violations a warning. This bill is pending.
- SB 257 would establish tax credits for businesses that install electric recharging stations. This bill is pending.
- SB 301 would give authority to Attorney General to set rules on distribution and pricing in times of pandemics and natural disasters. This bill is pending.
- SB 303 would provide civil immunity and civil liability for health care during pandemics and disasters. This bill is pending.
- SB 237 would allow liquor permit holders to stay open during normal business hours in pandemics or disasters. This bill is pending.
- SB 382 would allow businesses to make decisions on wearing masks at their facilities. This bill is pending.

We all have been through terrible times in 2020, a very troubling year indeed. While MIRA had a very successful 2020, let's hope that 2021, will bring not only success but a return to reality and we pray that those who had to shut down in 2020 will recover in 2021. ■

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illinois lobbyist report

STEPHEN S. MORRILL // MORRILL & ASSOCIATES, PC

As 2021 Looms on Horizon – Uncertainty Remains

On November 20, 2020, Illinois Governor JB Pritzker announced he was imposing stronger COVID mitigations to ensure every region can “bend the curve” a second time in anticipation of a second COVID surge during the fall and winter months. The additional mitigation measures are contained within Executive Order 2020-73 (see: www2.illinois.gov/Pages/Executive-Orders/ExecutiveOrder2020-73.aspx).

The following guidelines (see: www.coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-mitigation-plan), provided greater detail on the Tier Three mitigation measures, and included items such as: (a) closing in-door dining at restaurant and bars; (b) restricting social gatherings to 10 people or fewer; and (c) imposing a 25% capacity cap on most businesses; however, Illinois grocery stores and pharmacies may operate at up to 50% capacity.

Such mitigation measures are very similar to the “stay-at-home” order Illinois imposed in March through May of 2020; measures responsible for the cancellation of the 2020 spring and fall legislative sessions. There is no firm timeline on when the Governor may be able to loosen any of the current Tier Three mitigations – he has only stated that the timing will be dependent upon the rate of improvement in the metrics of the COVID positivity and hospitalization rates.

It is expected that Illinois will continue to be under Tier Three mitigations when the new Illinois General Assembly begins its 2021 spring session on January 13th. Typically, the spring session schedule is released at the end of the fall veto session; however, the current

COVID mitigations and announcement of a COVID vaccine have injected uncertainty in discussing the upcoming 2021 spring session schedule.

GROWING ILLINOIS BUDGET DEFICIT DOMINANT 2021 ISSUE

On November 3, 2020, Illinois voters rejected the “Fair Tax” constitutional amendment to change Illinois’ income tax structure from a flat tax to a graduated tax. The current FY21 budget was predicated, in part, on the additional revenues from the voters approving the amendment; however, the now failure of the amendment leaves the current Illinois budget with a \$3.6 billion deficit. Additionally, state reports indicate the backlog in unpaid state bills will increase to more than \$7 billion and Illinois’ unfunded pension liabilities are now \$141 billion.

Combined with the economic toll from the COVID pandemic, it is unclear how the Governor and Illinois General Assembly will address this revenue shortfall – both in this current fiscal year and the next; however, Governor Pritzker and other officials have indicated that they will look at “all options” including: (a) additional cuts to state budget operations; (b) additional borrowing from the federal government; (c) increasing the current income tax rates; (d) potentially expanding state sales tax to additional services; and (e) removing existing tax exemptions.

Addressing the budgetary issues plaguing Illinois will be the primary legislative issue during the 2021 spring session. Other significant legislative items likely to be considered during the 2021 spring session include: (a) reform initiatives from the Illinois Black Caucus focusing on: criminal justice; education and workforce development; economic access, equity and opportunity; and health care and human services; (b) comprehensive energy reforms to transition Illinois toward 100% renewable energy; and (c) pandemic response measures to assist COVID-19 response and possible future pandemics. ■

Wishing everyone a very Happy New Year.



We sincerely
THANK YOU
for your
continued
business
and support.

- The Abbo Family





michigan liquor report

PAT GAGLIARDI // CHAIR, MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

Lives and Livelihoods – MLCC Protecting Public Health and Safety

Happy New Year! As we look forward to 2021 with great optimism, we have the opportunity to reflect on all that we've learned over the past 12 months. We realize the huge impact COVID-19 had on lives and livelihoods.

Despite the pandemic, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) had an extraordinary year, with a record \$1.8 billion in sales for fiscal year 2020. Off-premises licensees remained open all year, accommodating the huge shift in consumer trends of more people drinking at home. Conversely, about 5,000 of the state's 7,000 on-premises licensees had to shutter their bars and restaurants last March to help prevent the spread of COVID.

"This pandemic has taken a toll on all of us – from schoolteachers and students to frontline workers and caregivers, we are all feeling the effects of COVID-19. Business owners are no exception," said Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. "But the state has an obligation to protect the public health and welfare, and the emergency public health orders and the associated closures are needed to save lives. My office is working closely with the Commission as it exercises its duties and we are prepared to act to ensure the state upholds its responsibility to protect the lives of our residents."

Above all else, it is the mission of the MLCC to protect the health and safety of the public. We know that indoor gatherings are the greatest source of spread of the virus. More than 200 COVID cases were traced to Harper's Bar in East Lansing over six days last June. As of mid-December, there have been more than 437,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Michigan, resulting in more than 10,700 deaths. Recent statewide daily case counts are averaging well above 6,000; the daily death toll is at alarming levels; and there is the growing risk of hospitals becoming overwhelmed. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to constitute an epidemic in Michigan.

The Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) has issued emergency orders that prohibits indoor gatherings to help curb the spike. Licensees are incurring multiple violations of such orders that include allowing non-residential, in-person

gatherings; providing in-person dining; failure to require face coverings for staff and patrons; and failure to prohibit patrons from congregating. Within the last three months, the MLCC has issued Emergency Suspension Orders of the liquor licenses and permits for 21 establishments located throughout the state for violations of executive and emergency orders due to the pandemic, with more being issued almost daily.

During "normal times" the use of Emergency Suspensions by the MLCC are generally infrequent. To put this in perspective, over the last seven years (not including the recent Emergency Suspension Orders) there have been approximately 15 such notated suspensions, due to various causes. Other types of suspensions ordered by the MLCC can be as a result of a violation (including failure to appear at a violation hearing), a penalty hearing under MLC 436.1903, or a Show Cause hearing ordered under R 436.1925.

The MLCC is taking action pursuant to the Administrative Procedures Act that provides that "If the agency finds that the public health, safety or welfare requires emergency action and incorporates this finding in its order, summary suspension of a license may be ordered effective on the date specified in the order or on service of a certified copy of the order on the licensee, whichever is later. . ."

Our Enforcement team is working diligently to ensure that licensees are compliant with the MDHHS emergency orders. Any licensed establishment that is in violation of such orders will be held strictly accountable and risk suspension or revocation of its license.

The MLCC is keenly aware of the incredible sacrifices that bar and restaurant owners have made this year. However, our priority is to enforce emergency orders, knowing that these orders are targeted and they are temporary. The loss of a spouse, parent, grandparent, child, sibling or friend, is permanent.

It will take many months to see a positive result of the mass COVID vaccination effort currently underway. We are not out of the woods yet and we must stay vigilant toward keeping ourselves healthy and protecting the lives of others. We all want 2021 to be a great comeback year – especially for our small businesses. They are the backbone of our economy.

On behalf of the MLCC Commissioners and entire staff, we wish you a safe, healthy and prosperous new year.

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. ■



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HINDSIGHT IS 2020

Taking a look back at the COVID-19 Crisis, the political climate, unrest in the country
and changes inside the association





The year 2020 started out relatively like a normal year. COVID-19 was hitting China and other parts of the world but for the most part the United States was not affected at the start of the new year, or at least that is what was believed to be true.

The January 2020 cover story was the legislative focus in three states: Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. The issue also included articles about the scholarship program and what were supposed to be upcoming trade shows but COVID-19 forced the cancellation of our events. “Like everyone else, we had to pivot and adjust to what was being referred to as a new normal,” said Ed Weglarz, MIRA president and CEO. “I am not sure what we would have done differently if we would have known what 2020 would have ended up being. Hindsight is 2020 but, in this case, it’s more of a blur.”

COVID-19 CREATING CHAOS

The April issue was the first time MIRA started to cover the COVID-19 crisis in *Bottom Line*. As the MIRA Director for Petroleum at the time, Ed Weglarz addressed the virus in his monthly column. He wanted to remind members that the association was keeping the members abreast of changes due to the pandemic in the weekly email newsletter. He continued to offer support and calm in the midst of what was becoming a very chaotic year.

Terry Fleming, MIRA’s Ohio lobbyist, penned his article on the how the virus was causing a setback in the Ohio primary. Governor DeWine was the first to order all bars and restaurants closed. He later added movie theaters, bowling alleys and gyms. Other states did the same including those in the Midwest such as Michigan and Illinois, impacting the food and beverage industry. The virus changed the Ohio primary from March 17th to June 2nd.

In this April issue, “Coping with the Coronavirus” was the cover story. Schools and churches closed and airlines couldn’t keep up with the cancellation requests. At this point, MIRA had cancelled all upcoming events. While many businesses like restaurants closed, the food

industry saw an increase in sales. Matthew Loussia from Value Wholesale commented on a 50% increase in his business. Stores were quickly running out of staple items like toilet paper, soap, water and sanitizers.

That same month, MIRA featured another COVID related story regarding delivery and pick-up systems in place at stores so shoppers could avoid going inside the store to shop. Door-to-door deliveries started to increase.

In the May issue, COVID-19, once again, became the cover story. The entire issue heavily focused on the pandemic with articles that included keeping employees safe and whether or not to close a business in the middle the pandemic. An article also featured a story about keeping employees and customers safe during pandemic. Jim Green, MIRA Vice President of Program Development, penned his column on how retailers could make consumers feel safe; while Juan Escareño, MIRA Director of Government Relations focused on how MIRA was handling the pandemic inside the association.

MIRA’s Michigan Lobbyist, Matt Minor titles his article “Michigan versus COVID-19”, while our Ohio lobbyist, Terry Fleming, talked about Ohio tackling the Coronavirus. During this time, many store owners were debating on whether or not to keep their doors open and MIRA covered a story on encouraging members to open at their own risk. “We are telling members to use their own discretion,” said Auday Arabo, then president and CEO of MIRA. “There is no wrong way or right way as long as you are following the Center for Disease Control (CDC).”

In the May 2020 issue, *Bottom Line* featured an article on how businesses are helping with the COVID-19 crisis. MIRA members Matt and Brian Loussia of Value Wholesale were using their facilities and a 3D printer to print face shields for first responders. Many people in the community volunteered their time to help make the masks. Meanwhile, grocers around the country were checking temperatures of customers before they walked into the stores.

The Coronavirus coverage continued in June with columns from Ed Weglarz and Juan Escareño. Weglarz focused on gratitude and Escareño talked about what the industry might look like after the pandemic.

In May, Ohio state officials were issuing plans to

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reopen 90% of the state's economy during the pandemic. Restaurants and bars reopened in May and began to open across the country, yet in the fall of 2020, just before Christmas, states started to close certain businesses again including restaurants.

RIOTING AROUND THE COUNTRY

In the September issue, Juan Escareño gave readers an overview of the unrest while commenting on agitators across the country, particularly in Ohio, Michigan and Illinois. He touched on how MIRA was working with legislators on issues affecting members. Riots in Chicago, did have an adverse impact on the industry and businesses, some were looted and others burned. In Detroit, the Police Chief had a strong hold on the unrest and thwarted any major rioting or looting.

POLITICS AND THE ELECTIONS

MIRA lobbyists were writing about elections and giving previews of what was to come. Matt Miner in Michigan talked about the pivotal issues in the September issue. Meanwhile, Terry Fleming talked about political unrest in Ohio and an FBI arrest of the Speaker of the House. In the October issue, a feature article focused on the business of politics and why it's so important for the association and the members to build relationships with political leaders on the local, state and national levels.

In the November issue, we covered how the industry will move pass the Supreme Court Ruling in Michigan stating that Governor Whitmer executive orders after April were unconstitutional. However, she started to use orders by the Department of Health and Human Services to continue closures of business and schools.

CHANGES IN AT MIRA

In the midst of shutdowns and unrest around the country, changes were happening within the association that really had nothing to do what was going on around the globe. The sale of Benchmark Beverage Company also resulted in the change of leadership. In the June issue, it was announced that after almost 11 years serving as the president and CEO of MIRA, Auday Arabo would be leaving the association as he accepted the position of the president and CEO of Benchmark Beverage Company acquired by LKI, a Lippi Family-owned investment company. Ed Weglarz,

Vice President of Petroleum was transitioning into the president and CEO position, replacing Arabo. "We are truly excited about the purchase of the company," said Arabo. "It shows the evolution of the company which has experienced more than 100 percent growth year after year since its inception four years ago."

A feature article in the June issue elaborated on this transition with Arabo leaving for Benchmark and Weglarz taking over as MIRA's president and CEO. "Auday accomplished a lot at MIRA and is leaving the association in great shape, providing a spring board for us to expand and grow," said Weglarz.

"Ed was at the association when I arrived and we have worked side-by-side for nearly 11 years in implanting promised growing the associate," said Arabo.

Meanwhile, many MIRA staff, members including board members offered their own commentary on both Arabo and Weglarz. "Auday's biggest accomplishment was getting MIRA back to profitability, creating a Chicago board and last but not least, Benchmark Beverage Company," noted former Chairman John Denha.

"Ed brings a great deal of experience, being in business for himself and being part of our association and Auday's partner for such a longtime," said Phil Kassa, former chairman of the board.

Despite the pandemic, MIRA was still able to continue certain programs like the scholarship program. The Annual Scholarship Luncheon was canceled but the association still honored students and gave out scholarships. The golf outings also took place, but in a COVID-19 restricted format. Many of the sponsors didn't send golfers to participate and the buffet lunch was handled by staff plating dishes.

The Annual Turkey Drive also looked different because of the pandemic. Once again, our sponsors would not allow staff to participate because of the virus. There were less volunteers, but the event unfolded smoothly and nearly 5,000 families were given turkeys for the Thanksgiving holiday.

As the world tries to move beyond the pandemic and into a New Year, MIRA staff are hopeful. "We are going to continue to work on behalf of our members and pivot as we need to," said Weglarz. We will focus on our successes, expressing gratitude while managing challenges. We are here for our members." ■

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

Spreading Christmas Cheer in a Chaotic Year

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

One MIRA member wanted to do something for families who have been couped up and coping with the COVID-19 crisis so he planned an event at his business. Mike Mitchell and team hosted “A day with Santa and his elves” at Road Trip Oasis in Perry, Michigan. “Adhering social distancing and wearing masks, Santa and helpers distributed gifts to local kids,” said Mike Mitchell. “We really didn’t know what to expect. We put together packages with candy and toys for more than 100 kids.”

It all started when Cari Mitchell bought her husband Mike a Santa suit. “My cousins and everyone else involved really rolled with it,” said Mike. “They were absolutely incredible and did a phenomenal job.”

Santa’s (Mike Mitchell) helpers included Denise Markham, Mitchell Markham, Amelia Bradley, Christine Peek, and the staff at Road Trip Oasis. They all donated their time.

“It’s not only a local business but it is a truck stop for the passersby drivers; we planned the event for our local families but if someone stopped by from out of state or the area, we gave them gifts too.”

They gathered the names of the children and called out their names via a radio system. “It made so many people happy including those driving by,” said Mitchell.

Mike Mitchell and family have been in the food retail business for several years and this location is one of their businesses.

“We really wanted to do something to bring joy as we close out what has been a chaotic year for so many people,” said Mitchell. “We went into the event not knowing what to expect because we have never done this before and so we had no idea if we would end up with 10 kids or 100 kids.”

They followed COVID-19 protocol. “We did the



MIKE MITCHELL (SANTA) AND HIS HELPERS



best we could with what we had to work with and the parents and kids were great,” said Mitchell. “We hope to do it differently next year as we hope we won’t be living with a pandemic.”

MIRA also donated snack items for the gift bags. “We would 100% do it again,” said Mitchell. “It was a great success.”

When Mike is not working and being a fill-in for the real Santa, he is spending time with his children and grandkids. “I can’t wait to see my own grandkids. This was our part to bring joy and happiness to those who haven’t had any all year. So many parents told us this was their kids only chance to see Santa.” ■

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- Smokeless & other tobacco
- Energy supplements
- Coffee

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Taking a Look Into and Planning for 2021

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

During the pandemic, many MIRA members saw an increase in business. “This was primarily due to the fact that restaurants were closed for a good portion of time and that people were not traveling,” said Ed Weglarz, MIRA president and CEO. “Customers stayed home even during times they would normally vacation. They also stocked up on items such as paper and cleaning supplies, and our members saw an increase in sales.”

Like the association, the members are also preparing for 2021 and moving their businesses forward. “Our plans for 2021 is to look into updating refrigeration throughout the store to be much more energy efficient,” said Norman Yaldoo, owner of University Foods in Detroit. “Updating equipment would help in bringing in new and healthy innovative products to market; our customers are always looking for healthier options, the latest products, and University Foods is determined to deliver.”

The phrase “new normal” floated around in 2020, but not all people think it’s a permanent normal. “We don’t anticipate the ‘new normal’ to last thru 2021,” said Yaldoo. “We hope we can get back to normalcy by mid-2021. We will continue to keep in place a safe working and shopping environment for our employees and our customers and our vendor partners.



NORMAN YALDOO INSIDE HIS STORE, UNIVERSITY FOODS IN DETROIT

We will continue to adhere to the protocols from the CDC, the state and local government.”

However, some challenges are expected. “I believe we will continue to face allocation and product shortages due to the pandemic heading into early 2021,” said Yaldoo. “This has effected the grocery industry and every aspect of the supply chain including retail. We will also continue to face lack of employees due to the government extension of unemployment benefits slated to run thru April 1, 2021.”

Despite any obstacles, there is hope in 2021. “What I see as positive things for 2021 and beyond is that the grocery industry is the most essential business during

the worst disaster/pandemic in modern American history,” said Yaldoo. “We have learned a lot from this past year. This industry will always thrive no matter what pandemic hits us.”

Yaldoo’s advice for others in the industry is that focusing on the business is essential for success. “Stay the course in difficult times. Take care of your customers and your communities,” said Yaldoo. “They will keep coming back.”

His focus is also on new innovations. “We have to reinvent ourselves to stand out and provide the best customer service we have always provided that the big guys don’t.” ■

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MIRA Members Coping with Pandemic Panic

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

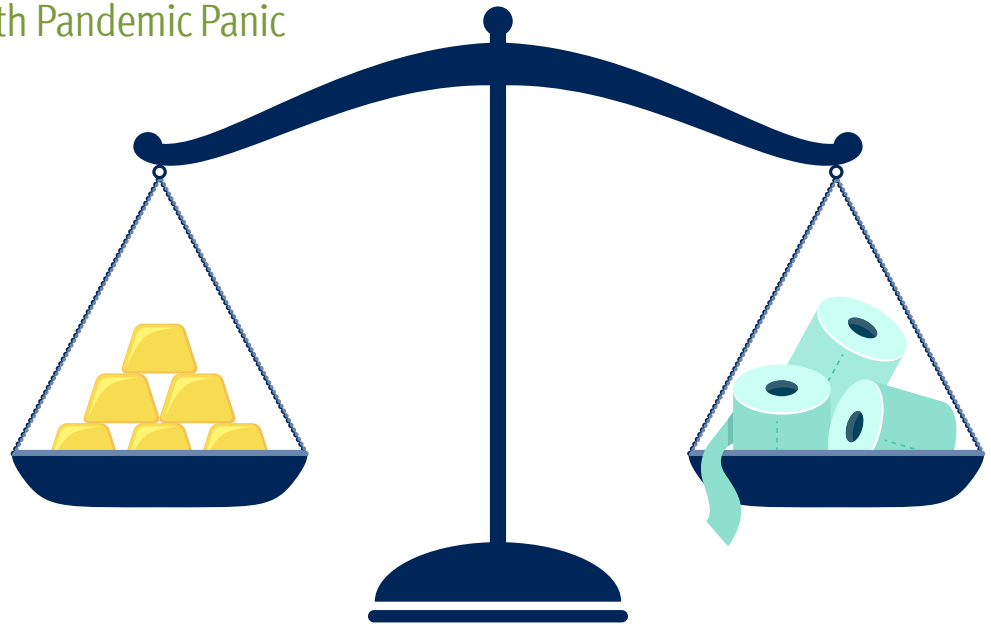
As the supply and demand chain for the grocery industry could get more challenging during these winter months and into this new year, MIRA members are coping with the pandemic panic.

“We saw this last spring and we are seeing it now with our members,” said Ed Weglarz, MIRA president and CEO. “This is a simple supply and demand issue and the suppliers can’t keep up with the demand and many of the grocery store shelves are empty.”

The disturbance in the supply chain is because customers are purchasing products in high quantities. “We can’t keep up with the paper supply demand,” said Phil Kassa, co-owner of Heartland Marketplace and MIRA board member. “The pandemic is, once again, leading to product shortages such paper towels and toilet paper.”

The product shortage also means that sales or products specials are not available and “customers automatically think you are price gouging and that is not true at all,” said Kassa. “No one is offering specials on any products. The products are in high demand, so the cost goes up and we are forced to charge a higher retail price and sometimes just to break even.”

Not only is there a product shortage but many retailers and some suppliers are short staffed. “We are down more than 20 employees in our Farmington Hills store and are seeing similar shortages in our other locations,



said Kassa. “Many of our suppliers are dealing similar issues. They don’t have the staff to fill the orders from their grocers and convenience store owners.”

Although local D&B Grocers Wholesale & Distributor has managed with their staff levels, they are struggling with keeping stores supplied. “As for our staff, we have been blessed with the team that we have. We have not had very many negative situations,” said Bobby Hesano, president of D&B Grocers Wholesale & Distributor. “They have been true warriors, especially our drivers who are out in the stores facing many challenges daily.”

Shortages for the most part are due to the panic buying of the retail customers. “They are buying several month’s supply even if they don’t need it for immediate consumption. Having said that, it has caused a shortage on some items like paper products, disinfectants and cleaning supplies to say the least,” said Hesano. “These manufactures have built inventory and worked

on logistics but the panic is an unknown quantity and it is hard to know for certain what the demand will be.”

There has been a lot of news coverage on manufactures gearing up and asking people to not panic but to no avail. “We have brought in significantly more product than we normally do, however, we continue to struggle to stay in stock. Under normal circumstances we would be able to handle a nominal surge of demand but not with what is going on now,” said Hesano. “As Phil said, the panic buying is causing the shortage and the shortage is driving up prices. Supply and demand is a real concept!”

“We are living in unprecedented times,” said Weglarz. “We can assure the public that our independent grocers all throughout Michigan, Illinois and Ohio will remain open and have as much food and supply as we can get our hands on from our various suppliers.” ■

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Gas Stations Eye an EV Future

Convenience retailers and EV charging providers shared practical advice for the market in a Crack the Code Panel

■ BY KEITH REID // NACS ONLINE

Electric vehicle fast charging: “Why now? Why not now?” That point was made by Brad Petersen, director of retail fuels at Kum & Go, a retail chain with more than 500 stores in 11 Midwestern states. “Yes, the new EV sales are not drastic in numbers—less than 2% of the vehicle fleet—but we know it’s coming, and we want to be prepared for it and offer fuel to all of our customers, whether that be gas or charging.”

Petersen was speaking at the NACS Crack the Code Experience session: How to Succeed in the EV Market, presented back in November.

The well-rounded panel featured representatives from Future Fuel Strategies, National Car Charging LLC, Smart Electric Power Alliance and EVgo, in addition to Kum & Go.

As covered in the session, there are three basic EV charging options. The first involves an electric vehicle manufacturer

such as Tesla establishing a charging network to support vehicle sales. The second involves an independent third party, such as EVgo, that will essentially partner with a retailer through a rental agreement (or with a municipality or commercial fleet) to support its charging network. The third model involves retailers working with a company like National Car Charging to set up and operate their own charging infrastructure.

Supporting a third-party network is painless to the retailer, but the retailer ends up giving away control in such areas as pricing, which can conflict with retailer goals. At the same time, the third party assumes the bulk of the risk, as well as most of the headaches with adding EV charging, in exchange for that loss of control.

The charging technology of choice, at least in retail applications, is DC fast charging. These chargers dramatically reduce the amount of time required to give a vehicle a decent charge to get

back on the road. The panelists noted that the ideal site focuses on having a charging experience as close to liquid fuels as possible, while also providing opportunities for the customer to take advantage of store profit centers.

The inside sales opportunities ramp up with charging times that, while getting shorter all the time, are still longer than those for the average fuel customer.

Working with a utility is also a partnership with EV charging. The panel offered a range of “dos and don’ts” and made it clear that each utility will likely have a slightly different relationship than the next.

It was noted during the discussion that it can cost eight times as much to do an EV retrofit as it does with new construction. With that in mind, even retailers that are not ready to pull the trigger immediately should be making these considerations with new site construction so that adding EV charging will be relatively painless when the decision to proceed is made. ■

QSR Breakfast Goes Belly Up

The pandemic put the brakes on the morning meal for fast-food chains

■ BY NACS ONLINE

The coronavirus pandemic has pulled down the once-bright spot of fast food—breakfast. The morning meal’s upward trajectory has fallen to the slowest part of the day, as many still work and attend school at home, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

Chains with strong breakfast offerings such as IHOP and Dunkin’ have begun shuttering hundreds of locations, while McDonald’s and Burger King have registered weak sales for breakfast items. The trouble with breakfast is that fast-food chains designed its offerings for on-the-go consumers. With the pandemic continuing to keep students and workers at home, breakfast has shifted back to the dining room table.

Packaged breakfast items, like cereal and ground coffee, have skyrocketed recently after years of so-so sales. “We are in a position to own breakfast,” said Carlos Abrams-Rivera, U.S. president at Kraft Heinz Co., which sells Maxwell House coffee, Philadelphia cream cheese and Oscar Mayer bacon.

McDonald’s CEO Chris Kempczinski said in July that breakfast had been dragging during the pandemic, especially as competitors added new morning items. Wendy’s debuted a new breakfast menu with real egg sandwiches nationwide in early March, but the lockdown orders shut

millions of Americans at home. As a result, breakfast transactions plummeted 54% in April compared to a year earlier. While breakfast has recovered, the morning daypart is still 10% under last year’s levels, according to the NPD Group.

Wendy’s didn’t let the pandemic stop its breakfast rollout, and now the a.m. meal accounts for around 7% of sales, which is about what the company anticipated pre-pandemic. “We are confident that we can continue to grow this business into the future as more and more people fall back into their daily routines,” said Todd Penegar, president and CEO. ■

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T.I. Spices, Inc./Amal Distributing (586) 790-7100
UNFI West Region. (262) 942-3387
Value Wholesale Distributors (248) 967-2900

HISPANIC PRODUCTS

La Preferida, Inc. (773) 254-7200

HOTELS, CONVENTION CENTERS & BANQUET HALLS

Genoa Banquet Center (517) 545-1000
Penna's of Sterling. (586) 978-3880
Petruzello's (248) 879-1000
Suburban Collection Showplace (248) 348-5600

ICE CREAM SUPPLIERS

Prairie Farms Ice Cream Program
..... 1-800-399-6970 ext. 200
 Velvet Ice Cream Co. (740) 892-3921
Blue Bunny Ice Cream (616) 453-6358

ICE PRODUCTS

U.S. Ice Corp. (313) 862-3344
Arctic Glacier Premium Ice. 1-800-327-2920
Home City Ice (513) 598-3738
Taylor Ice Co. (313) 295-8576

INSURANCE SERVICES: COMMERCIAL

Conifer Insurance Company (Liquor Liability) (248) 559-0840
Bisson Agency - Farm Bureau Insurance. (248) 590-2116
Canopy (313) 662-3522
Globe Midwest/Adjusters International (248) 352-2100
Insurance Advisors, Inc. (248) 694-9006

INSURANCE SERVICES: HEALTH & LIFE

BCBS of Michigan (313) 448-2756
 Blue Care Network (248) 799-6300
Business Benefits Resource, LLC. (248) 482-8282

INSURANCE SERVICES: WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Conifer Insurance Company (248) 559-0840
 CareWorks 1-800-837-3200 ext. 7188

LEGAL SERVICES

Bellanca Beattie, PC (313) 882-1100
Cummings, McCloy, Davis & Acho, PLC. (734) 261-2400
Dawda, Mann, Mulcahy & Sadler, PLC (248) 642-6961
Denha & Associates, PLLC. (248) 265-4100
Kullen & Kassab, PC (248) 538-2200
Lippitt O'Keefe Advisors, LLC (248) 646-8292
Willingham & Cote, PC (517) 351-6200

LIQUOR SHELF TAGS

Saxon, Inc. (248) 398-2000

LOTTERY

All-Star Gaming (855) 772-4646
IGT Global Solutions (517) 272-3302
Michigan Lottery (517) 335-5648
Ohio Lottery 1-800-589-6446

MILK, DAIRY & CHEESE PRODUCTS

 **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
Tank Traders Midwest (877) 429-5797

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

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
Lagniappe 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
The Foodbank, Inc. (937) 461-0265
Freestore Foodbank (513) 482-4500
Mid-Ohio Foodbank (614) 274-7770
SE Ohio Foodbank & Kitchen (740) 767-4500
Second Harvest Food Bank of Clark, Champaign and
Logan Counties (937) 325-8715
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio
..... (440) 960-2265
Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley
..... (330) 792-5522
Shared Harvest Foodbank (800) 352-3663
Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank ... (419) 242-5000
West Ohio Food Bank (419) 222-7946

ILLINOIS

Central Illinois Foodbank (217) 522-4022
Eastern Illinois Foodbank (217) 328-3663
Greater Chicago Food Depository (773) 247-3663
Northern Illinois Foodbank (630) 443-6910
Peoria Area Food Bank (309) 671-3906
River Bend Foodbank (563) 345-6490
St. Louis Area Foodbank (314) 292-6262
Tri-State Foodbank (812) 425-0775





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



MARCH 10, 2021

MIRA'S 35TH ANNUAL INNOVATIONS BUYING SHOW

MIRA's longest running trade show has retailers looking to fill their shelves for the spring and summer months. The Annual Innovations Buying Show is known for high-quality attendees, non-stop interaction and exhibitor satisfaction. Admission for MIRA members is free. Must be at least 21 years old to attend this show.

Andiamo Warren Banquet Center // Warren, MI



MARCH 27, 2021

MIRA'S 3RD ANNUAL CHICAGO METRO GROCERS GALA

Enjoy fine cuisine, network, dance and enjoy live entertainment with more than 500 industry leaders. Sponsorship opportunities available.

The Empress // Addison, IL



JUNE 15, 2021

MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS FOUNDATION'S 13TH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

Every year, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation awards academic scholarships in the amount of \$1,500 each to extraordinary and deserving students in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. Help the MIR Foundation invest in the leaders of tomorrow. Tickets and sponsorship opportunities available.

Detroit Athletic Club // Detroit, MI

publishers statement

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