

BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 32, NO.2 // FEBRUARY 2021



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Carryover

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BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS
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features



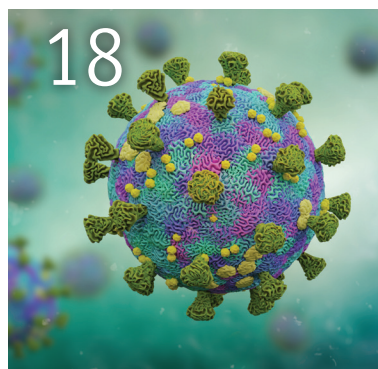
MIRF IS ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

There is still time to apply for a college scholarship through the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation. A student employed by a MIRA member company for at least six months as of January 1st, a student whose parent is a full or part-time employee of a MIRA members company for at least one year as of January 1st, or a MIRA member customer and their children are eligible.



COVER STORY // THE COVID-19 CARRYOVER

It seems like everything in the world has changed because of COVID-19, including how we shop and even the way stores are set up. For nearly a year now, retailers and shoppers have adjusted to changes as the Coronavirus swept the nation and most of the world.



COVID-19 AND STAYING IN COMPLIANCE

Standing in line at the grocery store a woman at the front of the line turns around to inform the rest of the people in line that they weren't exactly standing six feet apart. She repeats herself about three times with her voice getting louder each time. Everyone in line looks a bit puzzled and some look at each other, others down at the floor. The woman says loudly, "you're not standing on the X's. You need to stand on the X marks on the floor."



president's message

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA PRESIDENT & CEO

We're Still in a Marathon

I don't need to remind you of the COVID-19 marathon that we were unceremoniously entered into without permission. But now that we are an unwilling participant, we need to make the best of it. When you're given lemons; make lemonade.

Do your best to read the weekly (and sometimes daily) E-newsletters that MIRA sends out as a service to help our members stay compliant with the ever-changing rules and regulations that are imposed upon us by government officials. We try to keep up to date with Federal, State, and local COVID-19 bulletins.

Most businesses that receive a Notice of Violation are the result of a disgruntled employee or customer initiating the report to the regulatory authority. Therefore, it's in your best interest to comply, to the best of your ability, with the regulations imposed in your community. This is especially true regarding the presence of a written pandemic plan for your store.

Some politicians always say: "Don't let a good crisis go to waste". So, sit back and review what changes you were required to initiate because of the pandemic just might be worth saving for use in the future.

Establish a positive attitude, count your blessings, just think of people just like you who decided to invest in restaurants or bars as a career.

Look for opportunities in these unique circumstances. Some businesses are actually benefitting from the pandemic. Look around you for a niche you can fill.

And lastly, keep up to date regarding the rebate and discount programs offered to you exclusively because you are member of MIRA. The range of programs regularly changes as new programs are added. Follow the whole list on the MIRA website or call the MIRA office and we'll send you the list.

In the meantime: Stay Safe! ■

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MIRF is Accepting Scholarship Applications

Each year, MIRF awards academic scholarships worth \$1,500 each to extraordinary students

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

There is still time to apply for a college scholarship through the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation. A student employed by a MIRA member company for at least six months as of January 1st, a student whose parent is a full or part-time employee of a MIRA members company for at least one year as of January 1st, or a MIRA member customer and their children are eligible.

The program awards merit scholarships based upon student grades, financial need, and trade school enrollment. Applications are available to high school seniors, college freshman, sophomore's or junior's. Applicants must belong to one of the following ethnic groups to qualify for minority status: African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Arab/Chaldean American.

Since its inception, generous contributions have permitted the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation to distribute over \$804,000 in scholarship funds to over 500 students.

Maria Konja was a freshman in 2011 at the University of Michigan studying chemistry and medical research when she received her MIRF scholarship. Today, she is Maria McKight and is a Clinical

Infection Preventionist at a large metro-Detroit health system, a position she has been in since 2017. "In my role, I am a liaison with local health departments that perform outbreak and exposure investigations."

She also serves as a resource to hospital staff regarding infection prevention practices and policies. When she is not working, she is enjoying time with the family. "I have been married to my husband, Andrew, for two years and we have a 1-year-old son. In my free time, I like to go on hikes with my family, play with my son, and in the summers, I enjoy gardening."

Anne Elizabeth Acho-Tartoni was a recent graduate of Mercy High School in Farmington Hills and a freshman at the University of Detroit Mercy when she was awarded the MIRF scholarship. That was in 2018. Today, she is a Junior in the five-year Accounting/MBA program at the University of Detroit Mercy. "Along with going to school, I babysit throughout the week and work for The Detroit Chocolate Company," she noted. "This summer I am excited to be working for Plante Moran as an Auditing Intern. Outside of school and working, I love to spend time with my friends and cook with my grandma."

Acho-Tartoni said she and her family are grateful for the



ANNE ELIZABETH ACHO-TARTONI



MARIA MCKIGHT



The application process is open until
March 31st!



scholarship. “This scholarship allowed me to fully focus on my academic career,” she said. “As a freshman, I planned on majoring in Marketing. However, this scholarship afforded me the opportunity to expand on classes I wanted to take which ultimately guided me to switching to accounting. I am so grateful for this scholarship and MIRF for helping me receive both my bachelors and my masters within a five-year window.”

McKnight said the MIRF scholarship alleviated some of the burden of the high cost of higher-level education. “Since I attended the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, this was even more true since my cost of attendance meant I usually had to take some amount of student loans out every semester,” she said. “I’m thankful for this scholarship, because it did truly reduce the amount I needed to borrow to pay for college.”

McKnight earned a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology and a Master of Public Health in Hospital and Molecular Epidemiology, both from the University of Michigan. “There are many different situations in which scholarships are a huge to help students,” she noted. “However, the importance is vital when you consider that most students do require some amount of student loans to cover the cost of higher education. Unfortunately, for many, the repayment of student loans is a significant hardship that is often not fully comprehended until after graduation.”

The financial burden of student loan repayment could impact the student’s ability to save for a down payment on a home or buy a car for years after graduating

and McKnight also noted that scholarships allow the student to graduate, ready to move forward with the next steps in their lives without student loans hanging over their heads.

“My advice is to think critically about what aspects of a college or university are important to you and which you can compromise on to help you make a decision,” McKnight said. “You should think about your preferences for living on campus versus commuting, costs, campus size, class sizes, majors, extracurriculars and service

opportunities, and more. Taking all these questions into account, choose the college that you think truly best meets your ideal college goals.”

“Choosing between colleges can be very difficult, but it’s important to choose the school that’s best for you. Going to Detroit Mercy has given me the opportunity to stay close with my family and friends, while also being able to work,” said Acho-Tartoni. “Wherever path you choose, be true to yourself and have faith in God.” ■

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

\$1,500 SCHOLARSHIPS

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Available to Midwest Independent Retailers Association members, their employees, children and customers!

Eligibility:
A high school senior, college freshman, sophomore or junior who is:

- A student employed by a Midwest Independent Retailers Association member company for at least six months as of January 1st OR
- An applicant whose parent is a full or part-time employee of a Midwest Independent Retailers Association member company, for at least one year as of January 1st OR
- A Midwest Independent Retailers Association member company customer and their children.

Special Rules:

- Only one scholarship will be awarded per Midwest Independent Retailers Association member company.
- Applicants are eligible to win a scholarship a maximum of two times.
- All applications *MUST* be completed and submitted with transcripts by March 31st to be considered for a scholarship.**

Selection of Winners:
 Scholarship winners are chosen by a panel of educators. Winners will be notified by approximately June 1st. Winners must be enrolled as a full-time or part-time student for the fall college semester.

Apply online at aim.applyists.net/MIRF or visit www.MIRAmw.org for complete eligibility requirements and full program information.

Applications are available January 1st. **Deadline to apply is March 31st.**
 Questions? Call the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation at (800) 666-6233.





c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Curbside Pickup

With the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine in sight, everyone is hoping that by summer we will be able to get back to life as we knew it prior to the pandemic.

However, many Americans will not be going back to their previous lifestyles and shopping experiences. What this pandemic has done is spur 10 years of consumer adoption of e-commerce into six months. Many people have adopted new technologies that they might have ignored in pre-pandemic days and are now invested in these services. They are part of their ever day life and will be even after the pandemic is over. One of these new services that consumers are demanding is curbside pickup.

Curbside pickup has really become a necessity to meet consumer expectations and for the independent retailer that would like to offer curbside pickup, it can seem out of reach for them. Everyone is seeing all the large chains rolling out apps that allow ordering, payment, and curbside pickup and are wondering how they can keep up. Chain retailers have more resources to develop an app, managing the content and develop their digital space. For the independent retailer feeling out matched and wondering what to do, there is a solution available to them. It is Petrosoft's QwickServe Curbside Application. This application is designed for the independent operator and allows you to share your current promotions, let your customers order product, use the in-app payment features, get directions to your location and any other additional information they will need about your business. It is very simple for your customers to get started. First, you market your new curbside solution. Indoor and outdoor signage can be provided to you to let your customers and community know that you now offer curbside pickup. Then you simply post a QR code at the pump, register, door or anywhere there is store traffic. Consumers simply



scan the code, and it takes your customers to the app to download or they can go to the App Store. It is available for Apple and Android devices. Once they download the app, they register and choose your store and begin shopping.

The cost of the program is very economical for the independent operator. There is a monthly fee of \$49 per month and approximately \$1,000 for some hardware and a menu build. You can build your list of items within minutes by using your top selling items. For retailers that have a robust food service offering and want to include items like pizza, subs, chicken, etc., the fee is \$79 per month with additional cost for hardware and menu build. The system is incredibly simple. When your customer places an order on the app, the orders go to a tablet that pings. The store employee fills the order and waits for the customer to arrive. Once the customer has arrived you receive notification and simply take your order to their car. I do want to mention that QwickServe is an extended service to Petrosoft's back office solutions. You must be using their back office solution to be able to offer QwickServe Curbside Pickup. MIRA already has a program with Petrosoft for our members, and all MIRA members will receive a 10% discount on any of Petrosoft's services.

I have used this app and had a very good experience placing orders for curbside pickup it. It is very easy to navigate and it is a great solution for independent operators wanting to offer their customers a curbside pickup service. For information on the QwickServe Application, please call the MIRA office and our staff will be happy to assist you. ■



The Vaccine and Your Employees

“For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances.”

– ARISTOTLE

The current rollout of the vaccine has many employers wondering if they should vaccinate their employees to help give peace of mind to customers and others. The calls have been coming in at the office on the impact of mandating a vaccine for your employees. I hope this article gives you a sound reason for not mandating the vaccine, but encouraging it amongst your employees. Whatever our views are on the vaccine, our employees and customers will wonder where you stand. Having a sensible response for encouraging verses mandating the vaccine helps give folks reassurance that you have investigated the matter and have come to a rational conclusion.

This article does not replace your legal counsel, or your human resources department's advice, but it does come from me, your MIRA Government Relations Director, who has dealt with employment matters for years. It comes from the experience of directing and educating employees on their rights. Why should you encourage verses mandate?

POTENTIAL LIABILITIES WITH EEOC AND ADA

Mandating a vaccine for your employees means delving into their medical history and being responsible for the information provided. You will be required to document and securely store the reasons employees can't get vaccinated, where they were vaccinated, and what potential disability or religious exemptions excuses them from the mandate. Employees won't

be required to use your doctors or clinics and can use a third-party provider to be vaccinated so this now means the employee may need to declare an unknown disability to you.

All this new information provided to you is protected information. The employee has rights under the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), and the Civil Rights Act. You must segregate this information so that other employees may not have access to it and ensure the information provided to you is not shared.

You as an employer must show that an unvaccinated employee poses a risk to the health of other employees and customers otherwise you will be required to accommodate the employee. The EEOC states, "...significant risk of substantial harm to the health or safety of the individual or others that cannot be reduced by reasonable accommodation." You will have to find new procedures and rules to accommodate an employee that cannot be vaccinated.

ON THE CLOCK

When mandating the vaccine, the vaccine will have to be done while on the clock. You will be required to pay for the medical procedure, the time the employee needs to get the vaccine, and any other unforeseen cost associated with mandating. If an employee is injured by the vaccine, it may become a worker's compensation claim. They are on your time if the vaccine is mandated by you as an employer.

ENCOURAGEMENT

And finally, encouragement is simple compared to mandating. You won't need to document unforeseen responses from employees for not wanting the vaccine, you won't need to worry about potential side effects of workers comp or new declared disabilities because they want an accommodation. You will not have to pay for their time as they decide whether the vaccine is good or bad for them. Leave the choice in your employee's hands, so that you don't have to take on more liability or regulation. But also leave it in your employee's hands because they will appreciate you allowing them to make the decision for themselves. ■



michigan liquor report

PAT GAGLIARDI // CHAIR, MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

Revenue Sharing – Giving Back to the People of Michigan

The Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) continues to provide a significant return on investment for the benefit of all Michigan citizens. The State's billion dollar liquor business, built on consumer protection, competition and choice, is robust and thriving. Revenue sharing back to State coffers is a big part of the MLCC. The MLCC revenue sharing comes from the profit in liquor sales, specific taxes and a percentage of licensing fees.

The MLCC had an extraordinary year. In Fiscal Year 2020 (ending September 30, 2020), the MLCC reports a record of almost \$1.8 billion in sales of distilled spirits (a 17% increase over the previous fiscal year.) By law, the MLCC is the sole wholesaler of all spirit products in the state -- purchasing these products from suppliers and selling them to retailers. The wholesaling operation involved the sale of more than 10.5 million cases of spirits.

The MLCC announced a profit in liquor sales of more than \$290 million that was transferred in December to the State's General Fund for FY20 (up from \$248 million in FY19). In addition, \$138 million was transferred for state services during the year; and another \$150 million went to local schools and municipalities, for a total of \$578 million that was transferred to the State and local governments.

Over the last decade (2010-2019), the MLCC has transferred \$1.95 billion to the State's General Fund for appropriation by the Michigan Legislature to support nearly all programs and departments within state government. Primarily, state operations as a whole, are supported by the General Fund. The largest areas of spending are Health and Human Services, Corrections, Higher Education, and General Government Administration.

The MLCC values its partnership with local law enforcement agencies across the state and their policing efforts, especially enforcement of the Liquor Code to protect public health and safety. As prescribed by law, the MLCC pays 55% of its retailer's license fees and license renewal fees on a quarterly basis to counties, cities, villages or townships in which a full-time police department, a full-time ordinance enforcement department is maintained, or credited to the sheriff's department of the county in which the licensed premises are located for the specific purpose of enforcing the Liquor Control Code and Administrative Rules. For Fiscal Year 2020, \$7.4 million (55% of new and renewal retail licensing fees) went to local communities to support local enforcement of the Liquor Control Code.

As a destination state, Michigan's hospitality industry is a major sector of the state's economy. The MLCC is pleased to support it from revenue collected on the sale of spirits. By law, the MLCC allocates four percent of base price spirits that goes to the Convention Facility Development Fund to support promotion of tourism and convention business and acquisition of convention facilities. This monthly disbursement to counties is proportionate, based on liquor sales by county. In Fiscal Year 2020, the MLCC designated a total of \$71 million. This is an increase from \$60.3 million dispersed in Fiscal Year 2019.

The School Aid Fund received \$71 million from the MLCC. The School Aid Fund funds nearly \$13 billion of the \$16 billion School Aid Budget. The School Aid Budget covers the per-pupil foundation allowance, special education, at-risk programs, early childhood education, adult education, intermediate school districts, public school academies, vision and hearing screenings, school lunch and breakfast, vocational education, assessments, and the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI).

Additionally, \$2.3 million went to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services for

MICHIGAN LIQUOR
continued on next page.

michigan lobbyist report

MATT MINER // CAPITOL STRATEGIES GROUP



A 2020 Review

The 2019-2020 legislative session concluded on December 21st after a number of COVID-19 related stops and starts. The MIRA legislative team was busy working on several important packages of bills affecting its members. Below is a summary of several bills MIRA was actively lobbying during the Lamé Duck session in Michigan.

SENATE BILLS 1138-1140

MIRA opposed this package of bills that would have allowed distillers to directly sell to retailers and consumers, thus by-passing the safety measures enforced by the MLCC. These bills would have also jeopardized off-premise retailers with the increased cost of doing business and reduce the selections for consumers. The new distributors of mixed spirits would introduce split case fees. The success of the Michigan model has been the ability of retailers to split a case to have a diverse selection of product for the consumer. Creating an increase cost would make carrying these diverse selections cost prohibitive for the retailer. This package of bills was vetoed by Governor Whitmer.

HOUSE BILL 4792

This bill would have allowed an owner or operator to operate an unattended self-service motor fuel dispensing facility if the owner or operator notified the local fire department and if the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) approved the facility. MIRA opposed allowing unattended gas pumps due to several safety concerns. This bill was vetoed by the Governor in December. We expect the sponsor to reintroduce this bill again this year. MIRA will continue to push for the safety measures that were absent from the previous bill.

SENATE BILLS 781-786

Known as the “Vaping Bills”, these bills would have regulated the sale and taxation of vaping products in Michigan. MIRA had some serious concerns with a couple bills in the package, especially Senate Bill 784, which would have required a retailer to purchase ID verification machines to verify the age of customers. These machines are costly and a mandate would have placed an expensive burden on retailers who already have strict penalties for the illegal sale to minors. These bills failed to pass the House and died during the Lamé Duck session. It is anticipated that they will be reintroduced again this session. ■

MICHIGAN LIQUOR

continued from previous page.

substance abuse treatment programs for alcoholism. This revenue came from 3.5% of new and renewed licensing fees and PM Sunday Sales Fees.

The MLCC is privileged to give back to the great state of Michigan through its revenue sharing that benefits all Michiganders. We are working diligently to ensure significant revenue sharing for years to come. The future looks strong as the MLCC currently has approximately 12,200 liquor products available. This is the largest selection of

liquor among control states; almost double what the MLCC offered just eight years ago. As the 10th largest state in population, Michigan ranks sixth nationally, in the sale of distilled spirits.

Note: All figures cited in this article are preliminary and are subject to confirmation from the Office of the Auditor General. ■

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.



ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

Looking Ahead for 2021

Here's a quick synopsis of what I see for the Ohio General Assembly in 2021. Bills in Ohio don't carry over into the new year, so all the bills still pending in 2020 will have to be reintroduced. The three most important bills they will be dealing with, and will take up a lion's share of time, are the three budget bills.

TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

As with every state, revenues from gas tax have been way down and increasing the gas tax won't address the problem, in my opinion. Look for creative ideas from the legislature on how to fund roads and bridges in Ohio, separate from gas tax. We need to keep a close eye on this budget which must pass by March 30th, to be eligible for Federal funds, however, that date may be extended due to COVID-19.

GENERAL REVENUE BUDGET

The State General Revenue (GRF) bill is the two year funding for all State agencies and many other programs. The GRF is frequently used to address bills without going through the committee process, so we need to keep a sharp eye out for language in the bill that could be harmful or useful and act accordingly. Oddly enough sales tax and income tax revenues are still doing well so I don't believe we'll see massive cuts in the budget. There will be an emphasis of health care dealing with COVID-19 virus funding.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BUDGET

The third budget bill is Workers' Compensation and is usually non-controversial but with unemployment at record rates this bill will get more attention than ever.



Every 10 years, after the U.S. Census, both state legislature and congressional districts are redrawn. Currently Ohio has 16 congressmen but we are likely to lose one. The new districts are introduced as legislation and with Republicans in complete control of the House, Senate and Governor's office the one seat likely to be eliminated is Tim Ryan-Democrat from Youngstown, he is rumored to run for Governor in 2022, if his congressional seat is eliminated. Redrawing Ohio State Senate and House seats will be a new procedure but Republicans will still be in control. We have 33 Senate seats and each Senate seat is comprised of 3 House Districts, so look for some major changes by Republicans to continue to protect their super majorities. Whatever they come up with there will be those who sue and the courts will get involved although they are reluctant to get involved in redistricting.

As I said before there were many bills that did not get passed at end of legislative session in December and those bill's will be reintroduced and have to go through the committee process all over. As the movie said "The Usual Suspects" will once again be heard in the General Assembly. What is not known is how long COVID-19 will be with us and hamper the General Assembly's efforts. All in all it will be another weird year and with statewide elections in 2022, look for early campaigning after June 30th, when hopefully, the Budget passes and they go home for the summer. We at MIRA wish all our members a very successful 2021 and if you have any questions or need help, don't hesitate to contact MIRA. ■



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illinois lobbyist report

STEPHEN S. MORRILL // MORRILL & ASSOCIATES, PC

Illinois Legislative Report

ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE CONDUCTS LAME DUCK SESSION IN JANUARY

The Illinois General Assembly held a marathon five-day lame duck session from January 8th through January 13, 2021 – with the legislative activity of the 101st General Assembly concluding just hours before swearing in the newly elected members of the 102nd General Assembly.

The primary issues considered during the lame duck session were bills to effectuate and implement the four “pillars” agenda of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus: criminal justice reform, healthcare and human services reform, education and workforce development reform, and economic equity and opportunity. The Illinois Legislative Black Caucus filed their initial legislative measures on January 8th, and after significant negotiations were able to pass legislation to achieve three out of the four pillars (education, criminal justice, and economic equity).

Governor Pritzker also introduced four initiatives to address during the lame duck caucus, including: (a) legislation to decouple Illinois from recent federal income tax law changes regarding the carrying forward net operating losses; (b) legislation to correct the equity process regarding awarding and licensing cannabis dispensaries; (c) extending deadlines for COVID-19 protocols and administrative functions currently authorized by executive order; and (d) creating a new emergency housing program to provide rental assistance and allow for a temporary suspension to evictions and foreclosures during times of pandemic. None of the Governor’s initiatives were approved.

One piece of legislation that was advanced during the lame duck that impacts MIRA members was SB 54 (Feigenholtz/Zalewski) that would allow restaurants, bars, and retailers to provide home delivery services of alcohol purchases. SB 54 was approved by both chambers and now goes to the Governor for final action.

The 101st Illinois General Assembly was adjourned “sine die” on 11:59pm on Wednesday, January 13th – meaning all remaining bills were officially dead. With the inauguration of the 102nd Illinois General Assembly just hours later, the new 2021 spring session officially began and officials are working now to develop a “hybrid” model to allow the legislature to operate both in-person and remotely as Illinois continues to evolve its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ILLINOIS HOUSE ELECTS FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSE SPEAKER

During the lame duck session, the Illinois House Democratic Caucus held an initial vote to determine the election of the House Speaker for the 102nd General Assembly. Michael J. Madigan had served as Illinois’ House Speaker for almost four decades; however, the ongoing ComEd bribery scandal had led 19 members of the House Democratic caucus to publicly state they would not vote for Madigan’s re-election as Speaker – denying him the 60 votes needed for re-election.

After the first vote showing that Speaker Madigan no longer had the support of his caucus for re-election, he suspended his campaign for the leadership spot to allow his caucus to find a successor. On Tuesday, January 12th, the House Democratic Caucus chose to support Representative Emanuel “Chris” Welch from Westchester, Illinois.

On Wednesday, January 13th, the 102nd General Assembly made history by officially electing Representative Emanuel “Chris” Welch (D-Westchester) as Illinois’ first African-American House Speaker – ending the era of former Speaker Michael J. Madigan that spanned almost four-decades. During his inauguration speech, Speaker Welch stated he plans to run the House in a more inclusive, cooperative and bipartisan fashion; he supports independent legislative redistricting, ethics reforms, and 10-year term limits for holding leadership positions. He also stated that the biggest responsibilities continue to be the state budget and the State’s response to COVID-19. ■



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- Minimum order of \$800, must purchase weekly to qualify.
- We service PA, OH, MD & NY.
- 2% Non-tobacco / non cigarette rebate.
- Plus and extra 1% if purchasing energy supplements
- 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

THE COVID-19 CARRYOVER



■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

It seems like everything in the world has changed because of COVID-19, including how we shop and even the way stores are set up. For nearly a year now, retailers and shoppers have adjusted to changes as the Coronavirus swept the nation and most of the world.

There are changes made during the pandemic that are carrying over into the new year and beyond.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Most establishments open to the public have created social distancing with marks such as a big X on the ground to keep customers six feet apart as they wait in line. Some retail locations across the country are making these marks more permanent. They are using paint opposed to removable stickers. Many retailers have added plexiglass dividers between employees and customers. “We want customers to always know it’s safe to shop at the store,” said Al Jonna, MIRA board member and owner of Jonna’s Market.

STAYING HEALTHY

Some establishments are still taking the temperature of anyone who walks in the door and are requesting people fill out a COVID-19 forms that ask a series of questions. Some are conducting employee health screenings. The Food & Drug administration recommends on their website to have protocols to check employee health and personal hygiene practices within your food establishment and to follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance and practices for employee health checks and screenings. The FDA added that employers are encouraged to work with state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) public health officials to determine the safest way to reintegrate exposed workers who are not experiencing any symptoms and have not tested positive back into onsite operations. The FDA also clarified that all workers should wear a cloth mask in accordance with CDC and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance and any state or local requirements. This might force employers to monitor and deal with employee absenteeism. Is there a plan or policy for, and an adequate supply of, personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or cloth face coverings? Cloth face coverings



should only be used if PPE is not required, and changed as needed if worn. “I would say my biggest contributing factor is letting employees call off as many times as they want and no questions asked. This helps if they were to feel any symptoms whatsoever,” said Jonna.

REDESIGN OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Retail stores are typically designed to encourage customers to go deeper into the store and spend more time browsing. With COVID-19, customers wanted more quick trips, more like a grab-and-go experience for essentials. Some stores redesigned layouts to include two entrances into the store: one for quick grab-and-go items and the other entrance and side of the store for browsable items and a more leisurely shopping experience. “We continue to have strong sales inside the store. I believe that many consumers continue to be reluctant to venture out to the grocery stores and/or bigger retailers which have translated well for our business,” said Paula Hudak, Director of Retail Operations for Free Enterprises, Inc., located in Medina, Ohio. “Some of our slow-moving items have been depleted due to some limited product availability. Cleaning has always been important and we continue to sanitize surfaces and high contact areas.”

CALMING COLORS

COVID-19 has resulted in an increase in anxiety. According to the CDC, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health issues or substance abuse in late June of 2020. There is psychology behind colors, some are more calming than others. According to WebMD Cool colors – blues, greens and lavenders – can be great choices here, because they are thought to have a calming effect. The darker the hue, the more pronounced the effect is believed to be. Reds tend to increase blood pressure and heart rate and stimulate activity,” says Harrington. Blue does just the opposite. It’s predicted that in the future, more brands will adopt soft lighting and shades of blues and greens in their signage and décor to create a more calming atmosphere. Customers might not even realize the changes but will hopefully feel less anxious when they step in the store.

DRIVE-THROUGHS AND PARKING LOT PICK UPS

With the pandemic, buying online or curbside pickup increased across the nation. Some retailers, including grocers, were already prepared for the change, while others had to quickly modify to add curbside pickup areas and signage. In the future, some expert predict drive-throughs will be better integrated into physical stores with technology that enhances the ability to deliver items without customers leaving their cars.

FILTRATION AND HVAC SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS.

Some of the biggest changes to physical spaces may not be as obvious to customers but have occurred and will continue to happen. Many retailers and restaurants are improving their filtration and HVAC systems. Visible filtration systems offer a transparent look at a store’s approach to cleanliness, and updated HVAC systems can increase humidity and could potentially lessen the spread of germs. “There are better filter systems that take out germs,” said Ron Garmo, MIRA member and owner of Running Right Heating & Cooling in Livonia. “In commercial establishments, we have added filters inside and outside of the businesses. We always look to experts to guide us.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), HVAC systems of large buildings typically filter air before it is distributed throughout a building, so consider upgrading HVAC filters as appropriate for your specific building and HVAC system (consult an HVAC professional). The variety and complexity of HVAC systems in large buildings requires professional interpretation of technical guidelines, such as those provided by ASHRAE and CDC. EPA, ASHRAE and CDC recommend upgrading air filters to the highest efficiency possible that is compatible with the system and checking the filter fit to minimize filter air bypass. Portable air cleaners and HVAC filters can reduce indoor air pollutants, including viruses, that are airborne. By themselves, portable air cleaners and HVAC filters are not enough to protect people from the virus that causes COVID-19. When used along with other best practices recommended by CDC and others, filtration can be part of a plan to protect people indoors.

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

Stores are focused on protecting not only their customers, but also their employees. Many stores have already implemented plexiglass dividers between cashiers and customers, and that will likely continue in the future. Stores will find creative ways to build physical barriers between people without hurting the personal contact and service that happens in stores.

The retail world has been permanently changed by the coronavirus pandemic. Like all areas of retail, physical stores will need to adapt and evolve to keep customers coming back.

Until the pandemic is truly part of the past, many retailers will continue with COVID-19 protocols. ■

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Evolving with Staff & Customers

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

Paula Hudak is the Director of Retail Operations for Free Enterprises, Inc., located in Medina, Ohio. As a family owned and operated business for more than years, they proudly serve the communities of Brunswick, Medina, and Litchfield. Hudak has been with the company 22 years.

"We offer a wide array of traditional c-store items along with some unique selections as well," she said. "We offer branded fuels, Sunoco and Shell and pride ourselves on providing a clean and family friendly experience. We are most proud of our 1,000-square foot Beer Caves that offer a full complement of domestic, import, craft and microbrews along with a formidable wine selection and many other spirit-based products."

Hudak began working with the family-owned business as a part-time cashier to supplement her full-time income at a hospital. When the hospital downsized employees, she was one of the casualties. "The company offered me a manager position at one of the retail stores which I accepted," she said. "As I progressed in my career, I had aspirations of doing more. When the District position became available, I was afforded the opportunity to move into that capacity which I hold today."

The convenience environment is constantly changing, probably now more than ever. "We are trying to market to a moving target which is not without its challenges," said Hudak. "We pay close attention to the business and stay customer centric. We try to adapt to the changing needs and demands, so that we can continue to evolve in this ever-changing landscape."

In the last few years particularly, there have been more new companies, new products, line extensions, among other things entering the marketplace. "It is critical to balance the business with the core products that are proven, but allow for introduction of new items," she noted. "It is vitally important to understand and adhere to the quick changing legal concerns affecting some product offerings."

Hudak loves the social aspect of her job. "I love to get to know my staff and my customers and what their expectations are of us," she said. "We train our staff to treat our customers as if they are the most important aspect of our business. We, too,

communicate to our staff their importance to us and our business. You get a very short window to interact with customers, but I want it to be the best experience of their day."

Competition is fierce today and "it is absolutely necessary to treat customers not only with the respect they deserve, but have grown to expect," said

Hodak. "Additionally, when your team members feel valued, they will inherently deliver that value to your customer."

Among the challenges is the difficulty to recruit staff. The traditional model for recruiting has changed dramatically, thus forcing Hodak to employ new techniques. "Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic impacted many areas of the business necessitating a very different focus and approach," she said. "COVID-19 definitely impacted our business in many ways. Due to the many uncertainties in the beginning, we had to change some of our self-serve product offerings."

It became necessary to increase cleaning and sanitization practices to ensure a safe environment for customers, staff and vendors. The need to ensure customer mask compliance has presented some challenges, as well. Like many retailers, Hodak and team have experienced many product shortages for several reasons. Companies experienced shipping delays, the inability to get materials which resulted in can and bottle shortages. Many manufacturers had to evaluate products and eliminate some line extensions to focus on core items. "Despite many of the negative impacts, we also realized inside growth particularly in the beer and wine categories due to restrictions on bars and restaurants," she said. "We also saw a decline in gasoline sales as business shifted from brick and mortar to the virtual world."

While the retail world continues to evolve, the basic principles remain the same. "Developing great relations with your staff, your vendor partners and your customers really is the secret to operating a successful business," said Hodak. "Constantly evaluating product selections, awareness of new trends and maximizing space to sales is critically important. Participation in vendor programs and rebates such as MIRA and WAM offerings are also vital to their bottom line. While the retail environment can be challenging, it also provides many rewards." ■



PAULA HUDAK

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- 2% Non-Tobacco/Non-Cigarette
- Additional 1% on Energy Supplements (Total of 3%)
- Additional 2% on Foodservice products (Total of 4%)
- Additional 2% on Supplies (Total of 4%)

Requirements:

Customer must purchase the following categories:

- Cigarettes
- OTP
- Energy Supplements
- Supplies
- Coffee (If offered by retail operator)

Customer needs to average \$3,500 in total weekly purchases

Customer needs to purchase 12 out of the 13 weeks per quarter

Customer must maintain good credit standing

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\$1,350 Estimated Rebate*
(Annual Total Paid Quarterly)

\$2,000 Est. MIRA Member
Program Savings

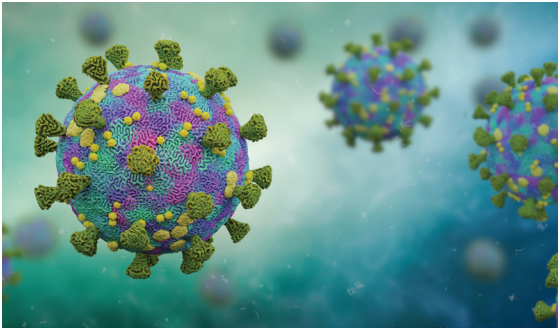
\$3,350 Total Member Benefits
PER LOCATION

* Based on \$1,000 non-tobacco purchases weekly

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COVID-19 and Staying in Compliance



■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

Standing in line at the grocery store a woman at the front of the line turns around to inform the rest of the people in line that they weren't exactly standing six feet apart. She repeats herself about three times with her voice getting louder each time. Everyone in line looks a bit puzzled and some look at each other, others down at the floor. The woman says loudly, "you're not standing on the X's. You need to stand on the X marks on the floor." One woman rolls her eyes. A child in line seems startled and confused and moves to the side against the wall. The people in line were pretty much standing apart as protocol outlines, but maybe not exactly on the X.

The woman at the front than says, "you all need to wear better masks. Those don't seem like official masks." Everyone in line has masks on covering both their nose and mouth, wearing either a cloth or paper hospital-style mask. The confusion from the people in ear shot of this woman becomes more apparent.

An elderly woman just behind this woman at the front apologizes and seems totally

frazzled even though she was more than 6 feet away from her and wearing a mask.

COVID-19 has caused many changes in life including changes in attitudes and somehow created unofficial compliance police.

The reality is that there *are* official protocols and rules to stay in compliance within the retail industry and as it pertains to COVID-19 restrictions which continue in 2021.

BE IN THE KNOW

As a retailer, you need to know how to comply with the many rules and protocols of having a liquor license, running a lottery machine, and operating during a pandemic. MIRA, your trade association, keeps members abreast to any and all compliance issues as quickly as we can.

Reading our weekly E-newsletter, visiting www.MIRAmw.org, following us on Facebook and reading the monthly *Bottom Line* magazine will keep you informed. When you don't know, ask. We are here to help. We are following government guidelines including those from the CDC. As they update us, we update you.

FOLLOW THE RULES

It's one thing to know the rules; it's another thing entirely to follow them. Create a plan and a "To Do List" of compliance issues and then executive them. This includes informing all staff and employees of the rules.

BE PREPARED FOR MISTAKES

Something always goes wrong even with the best plan and

the way to deal with that is to be prepared. Anticipate what could go wrong and how you would handle it. Whether it be equipment that is not up to par or a license about to expire, make a plan to right the wrong.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE

If something goes wrong, acknowledge it, apologize for it and fix it. Don't make excuses or defend it, just remedy it and move on. Come up with a new plan to ensure it doesn't happen again. This has been especially challenging when customers won't comply with COVID-19 protocols like wearing a mask or standing six feet apart. So, do what *you* can to follow the rules and inform your customers of them.

REVIEW AND UPDATE

Every once in a while, you need to review the laws, rules and protocols to ensure you are in compliance. Go over them with the entire staff so that everyone understands what is expected of the business. If someone is not up to date with the law or rules, then update them. Perhaps delegate this task to a staff member to review on monthly basis.

The pandemic forced many pivots and for retailers to move in directions they never imagined. The pandemic moved right into the New Year as we all did. These situations are a reminder to evaluate your operation, so your business is following all state and federal mandates. ■

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Food Safety Protocols

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

Since the pandemic began, many food establishments have opened and closed for weeks at a time and some have closed permanently. While the world copes with COVID-19, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been providing food safety measures including a re-opening checklist for previously closed retail food establishments, or those that have been open with limited service related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The checklist addresses key food safety practices for retail food establishments to consider when re-opening and restarting operations.

“This is not a comprehensive list,” noted on the FDA website. “We encourage retail food establishments to partner with local regulatory/health authorities to discuss the specific requirements for their retail food establishment prior to re-opening.”

FDA CHECK LIST FOR FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

- Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 and promote everyday protective measures.
- Ensure your premise is in good order, including fully operational utilities and equipment such as electrical, lighting, gas services, and proper ventilation; hood systems for fire prevention; garbage and refuse areas; and toilet facilities.
- Check all areas of the food establishment for cleanliness including restrooms and waiting areas, properly cleaned, stocked, sanitized, or disinfected, as appropriate?
- Check the facilities or pest infestation or harborage, and are all pest control measures functioning.
- Ensure that ventilation systems including air ducts and vents in the facility clean, free of mold, and operating properly.
- Is there increased circulation of outdoor air (as much as possible) by, for example, opening windows and doors or using fans? (Do not open windows and doors, if they pose

a safety risk to children using the facility.)

- Are high touch self-service containers and items requiring frequent hand contact removed from use, or appropriately washed, cleaned and sanitized, and changed after each customer/party is served (e.g. seating covers, table cloths, linen napkins, throw rugs, condiments such as ketchup bottles and salt/pepper shakers, and reusable menus)?

EMPLOYEE HEALTH / SCREENING

- Do you have a protocol to check employee health and personal hygiene practices within your food establishment?
- Are you following CDC guidance and practices for employee health checks/screenings?
- Have you checked CDC and local regulatory/health authority guidance for employees returning back to work?
- Is there a plan to monitor and respond to a higher than normal level of absenteeism?
- Is there a plan or policy for, and an adequate supply of, personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or cloth face coverings? Cloth face coverings should only be used if PPE is not required, and changed as needed if worn.

Check out the more detailed check list at www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/best-practices-re-opening-retail-food-establishments-during-covid-19-pandemic. ■

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STATE SPECIFIC RESTRICTIONS

Several states have specific restrictions and protocols as it relates to COVID-19. Some media outlets have reported COVID-19 restrictions in states across the country. Here are some Midwest state protocols including states where MIRA has a large membership.

ILLINOIS

Governor J.B. Pritzker has separated Illinois into regions. In mid-January, he lifted restrictions in a handful of counties, allowing some cultural institutions to reopen with restrictions, but kept indoor bars and restaurants closed statewide.

MICHIGAN

In December 2020, the State Health Department in Michigan eased some restrictions, allowing casinos, bowling alleys and movie theaters to reopen at limited capacities. Indoor dining at bars and restaurants remains prohibited until February.

OHIO

Governor Mike DeWine recently added enforcement measures to his statewide mask order in Ohio. Public gatherings were limited to 10 people and he extended a nighttime curfew through January 23rd. Officials recommended that people stay home in counties with the highest rates of virus spread and avoid travel to states with more than a 15% test-positivity rate. Restaurants and bars are open.



BWC News from CareWorks Comp

BWC BOARD APPROVES \$5 BILLION WORKERS' COMPENSATION DIVIDEND

Yes, those checks you got in the mail from the BWC were real! The BWC Board of Directors approved Governor Mike DeWine's \$5 billion dividend proposal on November 2, 2020. This is the largest BWC dividend in state history and DeWine hopes it will serve as a lifeline to businesses struggling amid the coronavirus pandemic. The dividend will be the third this year, following a \$1.54 billion dividend issued in April and a \$1.34 billion dividend in October.

Checks were distributed to employers covered by BWC in mid-December. Gov. DeWine said that the BWC "remains in a strong fiscal position thanks largely to healthy investment returns on employer premiums, a declining number of claims each year and prudent fiscal management." After the dividend is paid out, the BWC will have an approximate net position – assets minus liabilities – of \$7.2 billion.

2020 POLICY YEAR ESTIMATED PAYROLL WAS REDUCED BY 20%

Were you aware? Your July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021 Policy Year Estimated Payroll was REDUCED by the Ohio BWC by 20% in response to payrolls possibly being lower as a result of COVID-19! Employers can call the BWC at 1.800.644.6292 and adjust their 2020 Policy Year Payroll as needed up until March 1, 2021. This will ensure a more manageable True Up in the summer of 2021.

GROUP RETRO REBATES FROM 2018 & 2019 POLICY YEARS: REBATED EARLY

If your company was enrolled in CareWorks Comp's Group Retro Program for the 2018 and/or 2019 Policy Year, you received your rebates in April 2020 and in October 2020 as BWC Dividends. The Ohio BWC rebated 100% of your premium from the 2018 Policy Year in April 2020, AND rebated 100% of your 2019 Policy Year premium in October 2020. Therefore, since you already received all of your premium back from those two Policy Years, this is why you didn't receive your first 2018 plan year rebate last month, nor will you receive rebates in Fall 2021 or Fall 2022 or Fall 2023.

IMPORTANT CHANGE: 2021 OHIO SAFETY CONGRESS GOING VIRTUAL

The 2021 Ohio Safety Congress & Expo (OSC21) — sponsored by the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation — is about keeping people safe. With all the uncertainty surrounding the future of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BWC will host OSC21 totally online March 10 – 11, 2021. The virtual event offers plenty of online learning sessions and a digital expo, allowing you to learn remotely and

chat virtually with presenters and exhibitors. As always, attendance is FREE, and registration for the virtual event opens in December.

Who should attend?

Individuals with an interest in occupational safety and health, wellness, rehabilitation, and workers' compensation are encouraged to attend.

OSC21 highlights

- Learn to improve safety management programs and best practices.
- View the newest workforce safety products and services.
- Chat with business representatives, safety pros, and workers' compensation specialists.
- Connect with exhibitors to discuss cost-saving solutions.
- Keep your workers healthy and productive

Important note:

The new March 10 – 11 dates are a change from the original dates of March 31 – April 2 that the BWC announced earlier this year. Look for updates on social media using #OSC21. Mark your calendar and join the BWC online! March 10–11, 2021. ■

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Pandemic Adds New Challenges to Training Staff

What technology helps keep employees safe and showing up for work during COVID-19?

■ BY NACS ONLINE

As essential businesses, convenience stores show up every day to keep America running. We stay open, and we continue to serve our communities. Connexus has prepared a quick reference guide for convenience retailers navigating the pandemic.

THE INITIAL PIVOT

To be able to do so during COVID-19, retailers have done their best to pivot to keep their employees and customers safe. Stores have added plexiglass shields, masks are now part of the uniform, and hand sanitizer now sits at every POS station. Due to the lower foot traffic, many stores have also managed to add new cleaning procedures without adding staff, which is fortunate because, on the other hand, retailers who have needed additional staff have struggled both to hire and keep their employees due to the pandemic's extra unemployment benefits.

Let's be honest: None of us wants to be exposed to COVID-19 every day, and our store employees are no exception.

Training employees safely, with many tasks in convenience stores requiring face-to-face training, has been another new challenge this year.

Cheryl Szczesniak, executive vice president of human resources for The Spinx Company, shared the organization changed as much of its training as possible to virtual in order to safeguard employees during COVID-19.

When Spinx's leader training (based on nine core competencies) went virtual, onboarding for support staff also became

virtual. The foodservice training for Spinx still requires a hands-on approach. But the company uses task guides with QR codes (a QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that when scanned links to electronic information about the item to which it is attached) that lead to instructional videos, and foodservice employees can re-watch those videos if they forget the process.

THE SECOND WAVE

Solid communication tools are critically important, as we face another wave of COVID-19. In trying to keep teams safe, retailers have needed to quickly and efficiently contact frontline workers about any ill or quarantined co-workers to plan (and often re-plan) new schedules. Some retailers were already using apps to communicate with staff and were ahead of the game, but many chains have struggled to manage all of their communications, especially when they need to reach across multiple states.

One frequently reported solution has been to add an employee group on the company mobile app to simplify this process and then to follow up by providing extra incentives to frontline employees to use the new mobile app functionality.

With the second wave, it's also time to reinvigorate safety and cleaning procedures. Cases of COVID-19 are rising while, simultaneously, our society is facing COVID-19 exhaustion. People are sick and tired of hearing about people being sick and tired, and we grow collectively weary of all the restrictions and safety procedures.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the second wave of the 1918

flu was deadlier than the first. During October of 1918 alone, one of the deadliest months in American history, 195,000 Americans died. The very next month marked the end of the World War 1, and Armistice Day (November 11, 1918) enabled another resurgence as soldiers finally came home.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Closer to the boardroom (and many of those boardrooms are virtual right now), retailers are fighting to keep their businesses legally safe: NACS is leading a call for legislation to protect essential businesses from staying-open-in-the-pandemic liability lawsuits. Kevin Smartt, NACS chairman and CEO of Texas Born, testified before a Senate committee in 2020, "While it's extremely difficult to prove where COVID-19 was contracted, we know that some plaintiffs' attorneys will look to take advantage of the crisis and file claims against businesses who stayed open."

This pandemic has taught us that we were not as prepared as we thought, but this is not the time to quit. We are on the front lines as essential businesses, and we must hold the line to keep everyone safe. There is an opportunity now to think and talk together about how we can do things better.

Meanwhile, Ready Training Online, a training provider for the convenience store industry, has created a free course for preventing the spread of illness based on CDC guidelines. This free module covers basic techniques that can be implemented immediately to protect yourself and others from the spread of illnesses such as COVID-19 as well as the common cold and flu. ■



U.S. Convenience Store Count Stands at 150,274

The industry fared well despite an eventful year, but the number of small companies continues to decline

■ BY NACS ONLINE

There are 150,274 convenience stores operating in the United States, a 1.6% decrease in the number of stores in operation (152,720) at the close of 2019, according to the 2021 NACS/Nielsen Convenience Industry Store Count. The store count is based on c-stores that were open as of December 2020.

Convenience stores sell an estimated 80% of the fuel purchased in the United States, and the new store count shows that 121,538 convenience stores sell motor fuels (80.9% of all convenience stores), a slight 0.4% drop from 121,998 stores selling fuels the year prior.

The decrease in the total convenience store count was expected, given the overall retail contraction in the United States. The industry decline was led by a 3.1% decrease in single-store operators (92,196 in 2020 vs. 95,108 in 2019), which account for 61.4% of all convenience stores. In addition, the decrease in the industry store count was more pronounced among stores that did not sell fuel. Of the total 2,446-store decline, 1,986 did not sell fuel, compared to 460 that sold fuel.

“While pandemic-related restrictions significantly affected commuting in 2020, leading to an estimated 10% to 15% decrease in fuel demand, fuel was still an important convenience offer as customers increasingly relied on their local convenience store to bundle shopping occasions when fueling up and also purchasing fill-in grocery items and take-home meals at stores,” said NACS Vice President of Research Lori Stillman.

The decline of one-store operators continues a multi-year trend; single-store

operators made up a record 63.2% of the industry in 2017. Meanwhile, the percentage of one-store operators that sell fuel dropped to 57.1%, the lowest since 2010 (56.7%).

Despite the third straight yearly decline in stores, the overall convenience store count has increased 2.7% during the past decade. The last time the industry saw multi-year declines was 2009 and 2010, related to the economic fallout of the Great Recession.

“The sustained growth of online shopping and the long-term effects of the pandemic will continue to reshape consumer shopping routines and affect the overall retail landscape and make for extremely challenging times. At the same time, there are opportunities, especially for small retail, to implement more online offers and last mile fulfillment to provide convenience however the customer defines it,” said Andy Jones, NACS Vice Chairman of Research & Technology, who is president and CEO of Sprint Food Stores (Augusta, GA).

STATE RANKINGS

Among the states, Texas continues to have the most convenience stores (15,695 stores), or more than one in 10 stores in the country. The rest of the top 10 also

remains the same from the year prior. California is second at 12,074 stores, followed by Florida (9,619), New York (8,096), Georgia (6,574), North Carolina (5,890), Ohio (5,564), Michigan (4,855), Pennsylvania (4,698) and Illinois (4,629). California is the only state in the top 10 that added stores (+84), while New York (-393 stores), Florida (192) and Texas (161) saw the largest declines. Alaska (176) has the fewest stores in the country.

PERFORMANCE VS. OTHER CHANNELS

The decline in the convenience store count reflects the decline of all brick-and-mortar stores. Overall, retail contracted 2.1%, with the dollar store channel being one of the few channels that saw growth (+3.1%). All other major competing channels had fewer units by December 2020.

In addition are “gas station/kiosk” stores that sell fuel but not enough of an in-store product assortment to be considered convenience stores. Overall, there are 15,638 kiosks, led by 1,673 kiosks in California, 1,339 in Texas and 924 in New Jersey, a state that requires full-service fueling. The kiosk format saw a 9.4% decline over the past year and 29.2% decline over the past five years as more consumers seek out stores that have robust food and beverage offers. ■

CHANNEL	2020	2019	UNIT CHANGE	% CHANGE
Convenience	150,274	152,720	(2,446)	-1.6
Grocery	47,066	49,034	(1,968)	-4.0
Drug	41,000	41,127	(127)	-0.3
Dollar	34,215	33,185	1,030	3.1
Cigarette Outlet	10,180	11,109	(929)	-8.4
Liquor/Beer/Wine Specialty	45,473	46,381	(908)	-2.0



NATIONAL PROGRAMS

MIRA has partnered with national and regional companies to help you save money! It PAYS to be a member!

Please circle the programs you are interested in and complete the form on the back of this page!

MIRA FINANCIAL SERVICES



MIRA Merchant Services

MIRA credit card processing program. Call (800) 666-6233 today to learn more!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Coupon Redemption

Make money and save time by letting the professionals handle your coupons!

☐ I am interested in joining this program

REBATE PROGRAMS



S. Abraham & Sons C-Store Rebates

Available in MI, OH, IL, IN, KY & WI. New & current customers are eligible for 2% non-tobacco rebate.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Lipari Growth Rebate Program

MIRA members receive a 1.5% (or more) rebate on ALL Lipari purchases once you hit your growth number. Available for both c-stores and grocery stores.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



LaCroix Rebates

Growth rebate program. MIRA members can receive a 50¢ per case rebate on LaCroix flavors. Open to c-store, petroleum & small format type of accounts.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Rip-It Energy Rebates

Growth rebate program. MIRA members can receive up to 50¢ per case in rebates on Rip-It Energy products.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Socksgalore PPE Equipment Rebates

MIRA members receive a 5% rebate for ALL personal protection equipment items! Protect your customers, your employees and your family.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Detroit Beer Gifting Company Rebates

MIRA members receive a 5% rebate on Starter Kits and Greeting Card 6 & 4 Packs. Free shipping on all orders over \$100!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Velvet Ice Cream Rebates

MIRA Ohio members earn 3% annual rebates for all Velvet Ice Cream purchases. 10% discount on initial delivery for new customers!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Great Lakes Pet Treats/Five Lakes Rebates

MIRA members receive a 5% rebate on Jerky snacks and pet treat displays!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Service Station Equipment Rebates

Available in IN. MIRA members receive a 3% rebate on hanging hardware, hanging hardware conversions and canopy lights.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



UniFirst Uniforms & Supplies

MIRA members can receive a 10% rebate on all UniFirst orders. Products include uniforms, linens, rugs, restroom supplies, cleaning supplies and more!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Display Max Rebates

MIRA members can receive rebates for upgrading your store interior and improving your sales. A full service resource for interior retail store environments.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



US Energy Consultants Rebates

MIRA members receive a 1.5% annual rebate on their business energy cost. Only available in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Stop and Win! Fuel Retailer Sweepstakes

MIRA members receive a 5% rebate on the cost. The Stop and Win™ program will excite your customers with lottery-level prizes, increasing traffic to your fuel and retail business.

☐ I am interested in joining this program

YOUR PROGRAM HERE!

If you are a supplier of a product/service and would like the endorsement of MIRA, call us today at 1-800-666-6233.

Programs continued on reverse side...

DISCOUNT PROGRAMS



Blue Rhino Propane

MIRA members receive special pricing for both C-Stores and Grocery stores. Pricing is locked in for 3 years.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Smokin' Rebates

MIRA members can receive up to 10% off the POS system for tobacco rebates and loyalty reporting.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Petrosoft Software

MIRA members receive a 10% discount. A cloud-based back-office software system designed to increase operational efficiencies.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Grocery & C-Store Point Of Sale System

MIRA members receive a 10% discount on software! 10% discount applies to any upgrades for current LOC/Great Lakes Data users.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



MIRA/NACS Membership Program

This special \$40 offer allows MIRA members the opportunity to take advantage of NACS membership at an 80%-off reduced rate.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Conifer Insurance Company

MIRA members receive discounts on liability premiums: Liquor liability, general liability, commercial and workers' comp. packages.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Leanin' Tree Greeting Cards

MIRA members will receive discounted displays, free shipping on their initial order plus a 5% discount off wholesale on all orders!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Office Depot Office Supplies

Discounts and savings on all purchases! Individualized service, customized account and free next day delivery with over \$50 purchase.

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Check Casher Money Machine Discounts

Members receive discounts on purchase of the machine and earnings from each cashed check!

☐ I am interested in joining this program



Sell Your Store program

If you're looking to sell your business, take advantage of our member-to-member sales program and target the audience for your business.

☐ I am interested in joining this program

TRAINING PROGRAMS



Food Safety & Sanitation Training

Comprehensive food safety & sanitation training programs from both supermarket and convenience store retailers.



UST Owner/Operator Training

Training and certification classes for retail stations and UST operators. These sessions will satisfy the US EPA training requirements for Class "A" and Class "B" Operators.



Training for Intervention Procedures

MIRA offers TIPS training seminars, which will teach you how to sell alcohol for off-premise consumption - within the law. Special member pricing!



GHS Training

To help businesses comply and meet the mandatory employee training requirements, MIRA is providing training sessions to employers/managers.

INTERESTED IN AN MIRA MEMBERSHIP? ☐ YES! Please send me information on membership.

Please email this form to info@miramw.org or mail to 5779 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield, MI 48322.

COMPANY NAME: _____

NAME: _____

PHONE: () _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP: _____

Visit our website at www.MIRAmw.org for the most current updates and newly launched programs!

make sure to support these mira supplier members



Indicates a supplier program that has been endorsed by MIRA

Indicates supplier only available in MI

Indicates supplier only available in OH

Indicates supplier only available in IL

BAKED GOODS DISTRIBUTORS

Cateraid, Inc. (517) 546-8217
Chicago Sweet Connection Bakery (773) 283-4430
Kordas' Metropolitan Baking Company (313) 875-7246
Manini Claudio & C. SNC info@fornomanini.it

BANKING, INVESTING & CONSULTING

First Business Bank (616) 201-7177
Mercantile Bank of Michigan (248) 434-5928
The State Bank. (248) 835-4463

BEER DISTRIBUTORS

Eastown Distributors (313) 867-6900

BOOKKEEPING/ACCOUNTING CPA

UHY Advisors-MI (248) 355-1040

BUSINESS BROKERAGE

Global Petro Advisers (614) 332-8762

BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS

CLE Billboards (216) 801-9924
Comcast Business (734) 277-9731
Tamar Designs, LLC (248) 760-7211

C-STORE & TOBACCO DISTRIBUTORS

McAneny Brothers, Inc. (304) 559-1510
 S. Abraham & Sons, Inc. (616) 453-6358
 Team Sledd 1-800-333-0374
Apollo Eyewear. (630) 260-5100
Capital Sales Company (248) 542-4400
H.T. Hackney-Grand Rapids. 1-800-874-5550
Seaway Cash-N-Carry. (216) 361-5757

C-STORE MISC. TAXABLE MERCHANDISE

Detroit Beer Gifting Company (248) 396-7830
Li'l Drug Store/Associated Distributors (319) 393-0454

CCTV/NETWORK SOLUTIONS

Competitive Network Management (734) 301-3370

CHECK CASHING

Pre Paid Ventures (516) 455-2940
Secure Check Cashing, Inc. (248) 548-3020

CHIPS, NUTS, CANDY & SNACKS

Lipari Foods, Inc. (586) 447-3500
Better Made Snack Foods (313) 925-4774
D&B Grocers Wholesale. (734) 513-1715
Devon's Mackinac Island Fudge (231) 436-5356
Frito-Lay, Inc. 1-800-359-5914
Motown Snack Foods
(lays, Cape Cod, Tom's, Archway, Stella D'oro) (313) 931-3205
Sugar Foods Corporation (830) 515-0981
Western's Smokehouse LLC (503) 551-8799

CLEANING CHEMICALS, UNIFORMS, LINENS & SUPPLIES

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

COFFEE

Goodwest Industries, LLC (Bulk Cream/Iced Coffee)
1-800-948-1922

COUPON REDEMPTION/MONEY TRANSFER/ BILL PAYMENT

MIRA Coupon Redemption 1-800-666-6233
..... (405) 525-9419
DivDat Kiosk Network (248) 399-0715

CREDIT CARD PROCESSING

MIRA Credit Card Processing 1-800-666-6233

DELI & MEAT MANUFACTURERS & DISTRIBUTORS

Lipari Foods, Inc. (586) 447-3500
Concord Premium Meats Ltd. (905) 738-7979
Dearborn Sausage Co. (313) 842-2375
Premier Snacks Distributors. (248) 289-1088
Harvest Sherwood (313) 659-7300
Wolverine Packing Company (313) 259-7500

ENERGY, LIGHTING & UTILITIES

DTE Energy 1-800-477-4747
DTE Your Energy Savings 1-855-234-7335
Running Right (248) 884-1704
U.S.E.C. LLC (713) 772-0446

FOOD EQUIPMENT, MACHINERY & KIOSKS

Taylor Freezer/Broaster Chicken (734) 525-2535

FOOD MANUFACTURER

Barilla America (847) 405-7575
Nino's LLC. (847) 685-0478
Pastificio Fabianelli SPD luca@fabianelli.it

FRANCHISING OPPORTUNITIES

DCT Enterprises-Little Caesars Pizza (989) 792-0322
Jopatico-Little Caesars Pizza (989) 686-3600

GAS STATION BRANDING & MAINTENANCE

Oscar W Larson Co. (248) 620-0070

GASOLINE WHOLESALERS

Central Ohio Petroleum Marketers (614) 889-1860
High Pointe Oil Company, Inc. (248) 474-0900
Markham Oil Company, Inc. (517) 861-7366
Obie Oil, Inc. (937) 275-9966
Teer Management LLC, Exxon Mobil (810) 584-7975

GREETING CARDS

Leanin' Tree 1-800-556-7819 ext. 4183

GROCERY WHOLESALERS & DISTRIBUTORS

Lipari Foods, Inc. (586) 447-3500
D&B Grocers Wholesale. (734) 513-1715
International Wholesale (248) 353-8800
SpartanNash (616) 878-2248
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
Rolly Receipts LLC (937) 344-3242



PET SUPPLIES MISC.

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



PIZZA SUPPLIERS

 **Omni Food Concepts**   1-888-367-7829
Hunt Brothers Pizzeria (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



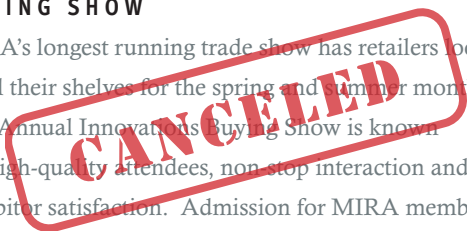


MARCH 10, 2021

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



JULY 14, 2020

MIRA'S 45TH ANNUAL MICHIGAN GOLF OPEN

A day on the course includes breakfast, lunch, 18 holes of golf and samples at every hole! Last year we sold out! Sponsorship opportunities are available.

Fox Hills Golf & Banquet Center // Plymouth, MI

publishers statement

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MIRA works closely with these associations:



Here for Michigan. Now more than ever.



Confidence comes with every card.®

At Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, we're committed to caring for Michigan and everyone who calls it home. For our members, it's a commitment to provide you with the ability to see a doctor from your home, and the option to speak to a nurse anytime you need them. Now more than ever, we will stand behind the care you need. Like we've done for 81 years. Find out more info at **[bcbsm.com/coronavirus](https://www.bcbsm.com/coronavirus)**.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



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CONTACT US TODAY AND LEARN HOW WE CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS!

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