

BottomLine



THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS // VOL. 32, NO. 12 // DECEMBER 2021

**Government Initiatives,
Mandates and Bills
Affecting MIRA Members**

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BottomLine

THE VOICE OF MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS
VOL. 32, NO. 12 // DECEMBER 2021

features



SUPPLY SHORTAGE AND THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Customers driving around and shopping at local stores, shouldn't be surprised to read reports of supply shortages and rising products prices. There is a major kink in the supply chain causing a shortage on the shelves and sticker shock among shoppers.



COVER STORY // GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES, MANDATES AND BILLS AFFECTING MIRA MEMBERS

It's been nearly two years since a global pandemic began to spread, forcing lockdowns and affecting businesses. Today, independent retailers are still trying to recover.



MIRF'S ANNUAL TURKEY DRIVE A FEEL-GOOD EVENT

MIRF, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation, hosted its 41st Annual High Five Turkey Drive at the Motown Snack Foods warehouse. Volunteers, many from DTE, gave away thousands of turkeys, milk jugs, drinks, fresh produce, and small clothing items.



president's message

EDWARD WEGLARZ // MIRA PRESIDENT & CEO

Have You Planned For Next Year?

By the time you receive this edition of *Bottom Line* the holidays will be in full swing. Both 2020 and 2021 have been mostly trying years. Mostly because there were so many changes that had to be implemented on-the-fly. Some of those changes have stuck while others faded into the winter night sky. But remember, we still must continue to move forward, or we are going to get run over by progress. Keeping that in mind the time has arrived to plan for the future.

The end of the calendar year is the appropriate time to make those plans. I always suggest that whether you are a family, a small business, or a large business, planning for the future is of utmost importance. The old adage, *no one plans to fail, but many fail to plan*, is as true today as it ever was; perhaps even more important.

Schedule a meeting to plan ahead when your situation is stable, and you can evaluate without emotion. Then, write down your plans and objectives for the next one, three and five years. Your plans for the near term need to be more specific and measurable while your longer-term plans can be more general, but in all cases the objectives need to be measurable.

When the business climate becomes chaotic that's when you need to refer back to your business plan and objectives for guidance. The plan that is conceived and established during calm, routine times should serve as your "security blanket" when times are tumultuous. That's the time to use your plan to determine if the decision will lead to your pre-planned objectives and get you back on course.

Addressing objectives, now is the appropriate time to decide upon or expand alternative profit centers for your gas station operation. For the most part, the refiners have divested themselves of their retail holdings. Speedway has been sold to 7-11 Stores. Fuel sales dropped significantly in 2020 and started to claw their way back in 2021. But volumes have not regained their pre-COVID-19 levels yet. And, with some employers promoting working-at-home those volume days of 2019 and earlier may be gone forever. And other, non-traditional fuel retailers, continue to enter the marketplace. Every grocery chain and big box store seems to have added gas pumps to their offerings and use gasoline as a loss-leader to attract customers. The momentum of that trend shows no signs of letting up.

Hence, you need to explore other profit centers for your operation. And if you are lucky enough to already have alternative profit centers that produce more than adequate returns on investment, then figure out how to optimize it to an even greater extent. If you are not complimenting your operation with an alternative profit center, start researching today!

Whether it's adding offerings to your c-store, adding expanded food service, or upgrading your vehicle repair operation, start to evaluate additional products and services and start to promote and sell. Keeping up-to-date products and services for your customer are more important than ever today. Seek the help of your c-store supplier. Ask what products are moving well at other locations. Visit and talk to other businesses in your trade area to see what you might be able to cross-merchandise with them. Or determine what product or service they could possibly outsource to you! Explore any and all unorthodox situations, who knows what may develop!

Then, incorporate those new offerings when planning for the future objectives. That'll give you something to aim for each and every day. And, lastly, share the plans and objectives with your employees so, as a team, you can produce favorable results. Your employees can't help meeting your objectives if you keep them out of the loop.

And while you're at it..... Enjoy the Holidays!!! ■

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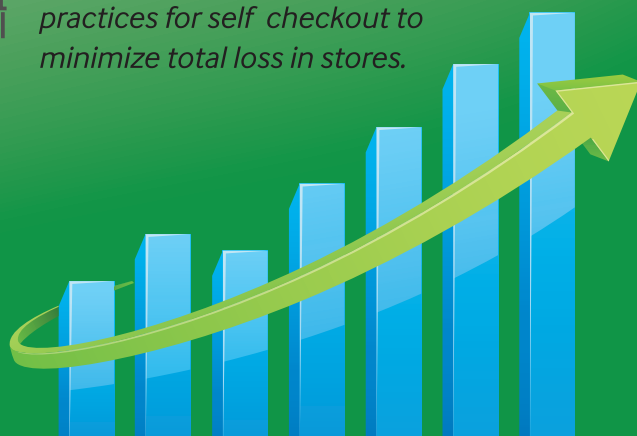
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Supply Shortage and the Supply Chain



■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

Customers driving around and shopping at local stores, shouldn't be surprised to read reports of supply shortages and rising products prices. There is a major kink in the supply chain causing a shortage on the shelves and sticker shock among shoppers.

Although it's impacting retailers at the local level, the solution is at the federal level.

"There is not much that can be done on our end to make this work. This is mostly an international shipping issue," said Matthew D. Miner, Chief Executive Officer at Capitol Strategies Group in Michigan. "One could encourage locally sourcing more products, but that doesn't work for every product and is often the more expensive route."

Terry Fleming, MIRA's Ohio lobbyist with TC Fleming & Associates, explained that the State government has its hands tied when trying to deal with three huge issues for MIRA members; high gasoline prices, supply issues and lack of workers. "These are all problems that can only be solved at the federal level, our members should let the Ohio

congressional delegation know how these three issues have such a negative impact on business," said Fleming. "The lack of supplies and lack of workers are related issues."

Due to COVID-19, many people were out of work and the government began to pay people who had lost their jobs and needed income. This resulted in thousands of jobs available and there just wasn't enough people to fill those spots. "When President Biden was asked about this he replied 'pay them.' Well, why work for money lower than the free money they received from Government?" said Fleming.

"This loss of workforce eventually crept over into supply chain; there aren't workers to load trucks or to drive them resulting in long delays of essential items to retail. Only a national outcry demanding the government stop closing down pipelines, stop paying people not to work and investigate supply issues to make sure people aren't taking advantage the situation."

Meanwhile, the bottlenecks continue at the ports. In mid-October, it was reported that there were nearly 80,000 shipping containers stacked in various configurations at the Port of Savannah — 50% more than usual.

The steel boxes in Savannah were waiting for ships to carry them to their final destination, or for trucks to haul them to warehouses that are themselves stuffed to the rafters. *The New York Times* reported that some 700 containers have been left at the port, on the banks of the Savannah River, by their owners for a month or more.

In Long Beach, California, also in October, officials were trying out an unusual tactic to ease congestion at the city's port. It is

one of the busiest and most backlogged in the country - stacking shipping containers to record heights.

A lack of storage space for containers is one of the major gridlocks at the ports in California (Long Beach and Los Angeles). Empty containers are piling up at truck yards, outside warehouses, and parking lots near the port. Some empty containers are stuck on the backs of trucks because they have nowhere else to go.

Later in October, *Yahoo News* reported that while shipping containers were piling up in California, China was suffering a shortage. There was a deal presented to expand operations at the Port of Los Angeles in hopes of ending the logjam of ships waiting to unload. The supply chain squeeze has caused climbing prices and delays in delivery that are threatening the U.S. economy and holiday shopping.

As of the November, California ports were buried under 40-foot high shipping containers, but across the sea Chinese businesses are begging for them.

The Washington Examiner reported that experts believe the issue will persist into 2022 as a result of the pandemic. When the United States re-opened, the demand for imported products increased, but major exporting companies like in Asia, remained closed. This put a dent in the supply chain. Added to the problem was temporary closures at ports and factories because of COVID-19 outbreaks. In addition, the lack of shipping capacity combined with the high demand, affected products ending up on store shelves. It is also being reported that infrastructure issues also contributed to the inefficiencies.

As MIRA lobbyists noted, it's a federal issue and other experts predict that it could take months, if not, years to solve. ■

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c-store news & views

JIM GREEN // MIRA VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Modern Oral Products

Large convenience store chains do a good job managing all the various categories within their stores. They have dedicated category managers that focus specifically on the categories where they specialize. They have access to data and create plan-o-grams which reflect all the top selling items within the region. These plan-o-grams are then implemented into all their stores. However, that does not mean they always have the best product selection for consumers at each location. Many independent retailers have paid close attention to the Other Tobacco Category (OTP) and have been on the leading edge when it comes to adding new products, taking risks, and increasing the number of sku's to meet the demands of local consumers. They understand the importance of having specific items for these specific consumers and the consumer loyalty and repeat purchases that come with stocking those items. Convenience stores that take chances in the OTP category will more than likely be the ones that capture a bigger piece of the volume that becomes available in various markets. This is one area where independent retailers can have a distinct advantage over large retailers in their market.

It is very important to make sure you are aware of all the growing trends in the OTP category. The modern oral products like ZYN, on!, Velo and Rogue have really exploded. I'm sure many of you already aware of this but might not be sure why that is happening. More than 70% of adult tobacco consumers in the United States have expressed interest in modern oral products. Many adult smokers are looking for smoke-free alternatives and some adult dippers are looking for spit-free alternatives. These products are spitless which makes

them more discreet than moist smokeless, they are noncombustible with a perceived health advantage to cigarettes, and they come in flavors.

There is some disagreement around what segment of the OTP category that these products should be categorized. MSA and Altria categorize them as smokeless products. Others categorize them as alternative tobacco. I agree with Joe Teller from Swedish Match in that these products should be with nicotine pouches. When looking at the data Joe Teller has assembled around the nicotine pouch category, it is very revealing as to why every retailer should be looking to expand the space and number of sku's offered at their stores. The nicotine pouch consumer has a dramatically high trip frequency of 131 per year or 2.5 times per week with a basket of \$25. When doing the math that comes out to an annual spend of \$3,284 per year for this consumer! This is 2.4 times higher than your average shopper that spends \$1,355 annually. When looking at these numbers it is easy to see why it is so important for retailers to focus on attracting these high value consumers. If you could attract 30 new nicotine pouch consumers to your store next year that could add \$100,000 in annual sales and assuming a 28% average margin that would be \$28,000 of incremental gross profit!

I realize most retailers are selling many of these sku's on their back bar. Far too often retailers only carry what they deem to be the top selling sku's. I urge each retailer to expand the space and added more products and flavors. I would ask every retailer "What is your strategy in 2022 to attract new consumers and grow sales?" This is a perfect opportunity to implement a simple strategy that can have big results.

It is worth expanding and letting consumers know you have a wide variety of products! Become a destination for these consumers in your market. This is one category were appealing to just a few potentially new customers really can have a dramatic impact on annual sales. ■

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michigan liquor report

PAT GAGLIARDI // CHAIR, MICHIGAN LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

Providing Retailers “Teachable Moments”

The Community Report showing results for the first round of mystery shops for the *Michigan Alcohol Responsibility Program (MI ARP)* conducted on behalf of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) recently went out to all retail licensees in the college towns of Ann Arbor and East Lansing.

The MI ARP, administered by the *Responsible Retailing Forum (RRForum)*, works with alcohol beverage licensees, their industry partners, and local stakeholders to promote the responsible sale, service, and consumption of alcohol in college communities.

The MLCC received a funding grant award for the MI ARP from the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association (NABCA) of which the MLCC is a member as a state regulator. NABCA provides such grants to support efforts toward protecting public health and safety and strengthening responsible and efficient alcohol regulatory systems.

One important component of the MI ARP is providing alcohol licensees with responsible retailing resources, *including feedback on actual staff ID-checking conduct* as observed by young, legal-age mystery shoppers. If staff asked for and checked the shopper's ID, the licensee received a Green Card to display, showing that it acted as a responsible retailer. Failure to check IDs resulted in a Red Card. Licensees also received information on responsible retailing Best Practices included in the Community Report.

The mystery shops for this program year were held in September and October. In Ann Arbor, 36 of 44 retail licensees checked IDs – an 82% pass rate. In East Lansing, 26 of 27 retail licensees checked IDs – a 96% pass rate. Results were provided in aggregate and no specific licensees were identified. The MLCC congratulates all licensees who are doing their part by checking IDs conscientiously.

The principal goal of this mystery shopper program is to provide licensees **“teachable moments”** in preparing to pass a compliance check.

Since 1997, compliance rates have steadily risen to a current level of 86% of licensed businesses checked by MLCC's Enforcement Division who refused the sale of alcohol to a minor. The MLCC's goal is to increase that percentage by providing ongoing education about best practices when it comes to safely selling and serving alcohol.

By design, the program is not punitive. The MLCC is not here to punish people. Rather, the program is being used as an

educational, teaching method for licensees, their managers and employees. The MLCC is here, however, to license retailers and establishments who are *consistently* compliant with the law that prohibits the sale of alcohol to minors.

Preventing the underage sale of alcohol and protecting your liquor license involves reminding managers and staff every day to check IDs every time, just in case. The RRForum research with a large national chain showed clearly: stores whose managers remind staff all the time of the need to check IDs and the importance of refusing underage sales, have the very best compliance rates.

Make sure managers and staff are trained to be ever watchful and vigilant for the use of false identification (altered ID); IDs that are used that don't truthfully identify the user (IDs of other people not the holders); and third party purchasing by those of age who hand over the alcohol to the minor -- by watching for suspicious activity in and around your licensed store or establishment.

Work to strengthen staff “buy-in.” Simply *telling* staff not to sell alcohol to a minor is not as effective as *explaining why* preventing underage sales is important to business, the community and to them as well.

Provide written policies for employees relative to ID checking as well as any tools and technology to make their jobs easier. Support managers and employees through positive interaction with them. Post large reminder signs “We Check ID” or birthdate signs by cash registers. If your business passes a compliance check with MLCC or law enforcement, reward all the staff for a job well done.

Without staff “buy-in,” all the signage, training, and technologies to verify the age of a customer and authenticity of the ID may go for naught. You will not achieve what you intended to do -- not sell alcohol to minors.

The safe sale and service of alcohol allows the industry to expand. In Michigan, our industry has more than doubled within the last 10 years to a record \$1.92 billion in state spirit sales to retail licensees for fiscal year 2021. Safety is good for business.

Thank you for making this another successful year at the MLCC that benefits all Michiganders. On behalf of the MLCC Commissioners Lasher, Gonzales, Olshove, Toma and yours truly, along with the entire MLCC staff, I wish our customers, licensees, suppliers and distributors the happiest of holidays. As always, we urge consumers to celebrate responsibly and never drink and drive. Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and happy 2022. ■

The mission of the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) is to make alcoholic beverages available for consumption while protecting the consumer and the general public through regulation of those involved in the sale and distribution of these alcohol beverage products.



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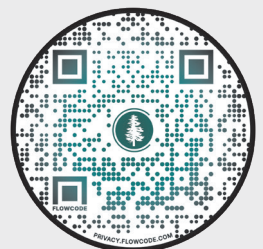
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government relations report

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

To Regulate or Not to Regulate, That is the Question

“There are hundreds and thousands of clever, self-sacrificing officials in government offices who pass their lives in helpful work. But the most helpful work they can do is to stand on one side, and not act as a buffer between the men who are themselves producing and the community which is receiving.” – G.R.S. TAYLOR

I find some regulation necessary, but most of it an overburden on the retailer and the worker. I agree with the regulations regarding our food system. I want access to good and healthy food that hasn't been tampered with like in the days of Upton Sinclair's, *The Jungle*. Upton Sinclair wrote, “This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat will be shoveled into carts and the man who did the shoveling will not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one.” We are far from those days thanks to his book and the influence it had on our food safety.

Other regulations I believe are good for society and consumers are most of the workplace safety rules on wages and hours. A man deserves to work in a safe environment while knowing he will take home a decent wage to provide for his family. Again, not all regulation is bad.

But then we get the overburden regulation laid upon our independent retailers by regulators and legislators. E.g., bottle returns in Michigan. Who loves returning their trash to the store after consuming the product? Or in Cook County, who

loves city officials dictating the working conditions between the employer and the worker? Not only are they tying the hands of the employer, but they are stripping the worker of an opportunity to negotiate his schedule.

Without a trade association there to advocate and educate our regulators and legislators, it would be death by a thousand cuts otherwise.

Which brings me the new proposed regulations regarding vaccinations. The federal government in its wisdom wants to force employers with more than 100 employees to mandate vaccinations on their employees. Every inch of new regulation that we allow the federal government to impose on our retailers, gives the federal government new powers that it will never relinquish. We will allow the federal government more power to regulate your relationship with your employees. We will allow the federal government more power to force harsher and more costly regulations when health and safety are used as the guise. The foot will be in the door and the states will no longer set the rules for workplace safety and health code regulations.

The bureaucrat will have greater power in your day-to-day operations for the sake of public health. A one size fits all regulation will be imposed on everyone. The vaccine mandate for employers with more than 100 employees was only temporary but once it became permanent, it would have applied to every employer, regardless of size. I am grateful that the federal courts have put a stop to these overreaching regulations.

So regardless of your beliefs on the vaccination, celebrate the courts stopping this regulation from being imposed on you. We are almost 2 years into slowing the curve but powers we granted our local governments hasn't subsided. The federal government wants to take part in this expansion of powers because once we allow it, they will never relinquish them. ■



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ohio lobbyist report

TERRY FLEMING // TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

Elections, Vaccinations, Guns and Drawing the Lines

The Ohio General Assembly finally released a new map for the states 15 congressional districts, we lost one due to census data that showed a very slow rate of population increase. The map immediately was challenged by democrats and democratic groups as being unconstitutional and, like the state legislative district map, will end up in the Ohio Supreme Court. All this must be settled by February 2022, when candidates are required to file for the May 2022 Primary. Whatever the end result is, the lines for both congress and State legislative seats will only be in place for 4 years instead of the usual 10. This is due to a ballot issue that passed in 2015, requiring two minority votes from the commission to draw the maps, but they did not get those two votes.

Meanwhile, the arguments over vaccinations for COVID-19 still rage on with conservatives pushing legislation that would prohibit both government and private businesses from requiring employees to “be vaccinated or be terminated”. The liberals want just the opposite and the moderates in the middle want restrictions to apply only to government and let private businesses make their own rules. So far, no bill on either side has moved in the Assembly and is unlikely to do so.

Guns are also back. A bill was introduced to do away with the requirement that gun owners have to have a permit for concealed carry, but I doubt this bill will move.

Another very conservative bill dealing with abortions is being introduced that mirrors a bill recently passed in Texas which pretty much does away with all abortions. This piece of legislation may pass.



Another headline issue is within the school system. School boards are requiring masks, vaccinations, and are having history teachers teach critical race theory. The Ohio General Assembly overruled the State School Board on the critical race issue and made it clear they will not approve mandatory vaccinations. Another school issue is gender bathrooms which many schools already have, but look for legislation to prohibit gender bathrooms soon.

Meanwhile, elections were held on November 2nd, and there were two special congressional races, one in the Cleveland area and one in Southern Ohio. As expected, democrats won easily in the Cleveland area and republicans easily prevailed in the Southern part of the state. So until January 2023, the congressional delegation will remain 13-3 republican. I doubt any major business issues will come up for rest of the year.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all MIRA members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. ■

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illinois lobbyist report

STEPHEN S. MORRILL // MORRILL & ASSOCIATES, PC

A 2021 Holiday Gift: MIRA Efforts in Illinois May Present Opportunity for Grocers to Combat Food Deserts

Since late 2020, and throughout all of calendar year 2021, MIRA began a partnership with the South Suburban Managers and Mayors Association (“SSMMA”) to develop state and local tax incentives for small and mid-sized grocers to combat food deserts in the Chicagoland metropolitan region.

In addition to supporting SSMMA’s proposals at the state level, MIRA developed a model tax incentive for local governmental units – with the expressed goals to:

- Assist MIRA members in either expanding locations, renovating existing stores, or re-locating a store to the Chicagoland region; and

- Address local community needs (and eliminate food deserts) that result in: (a) increased access to healthy food; (b) increased healthy food consumption; (c) reduced obesity rates; (d) increased food security; (e) improved health outcomes; and (f) improved local economy (creates/retain jobs, monies spent in local community).

MIRA and SSMMA developed a proposed tax incentive program that would cost \$15M-\$20M for local governments to operate and maintain – with the funds envisioned to attract or retain grocers in food deserts. The joint proposal developed would provide a 10% property tax deduction to retain existing stores (for expansion or renovation purposes) and a 15% property tax reduction for new stores that locate into a food desert. Further, the local government may provide additional funds for the following categories: (a) defray costs of building or renovation improvements; (b) upgrading HVAC systems; (c) augment employee wages with specific emphasis on new hires that reflect diversity of Cook County; and (d) mobile food/delivery expansion targeted to underprivileged communities.

At a minimum, MIRA estimates such incentives – if funded at the \$15-\$20 million level – would, at a minimum, benefit four to five Illinois stores.

Cook County will receive over \$1.0 billion in federal ARPA funding, and the 2022 Cook County budget has dedicated a portion of that funding to address food deserts as part of its public health initiatives. Through our joint advocacy work with SSMMA, the food desert tax incentive proposal developed by MIRA has been accepted for possible inclusion within the Cook County ARPA funding budget. MIRA and SSMMA continue to work with invested stakeholders (e.g., local county legislators, Cook County Department of Public Health, and third-party advocacy groups) to have Cook County, Illinois join Baltimore and Prince George County, Maryland, in providing successful food desert incentive programs. ■



– DISCOUNTS –



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Government Initiatives, Mandates and Bills Affecting MIRA Members

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

It's been nearly two years since a global pandemic began to spread, forcing lockdowns and affecting businesses. Today, independent retailers are still trying to recover.

The logistics of running a business during the pandemic were complicated. Costs rose. Employers began to purchase personal safety equipment for employees and customers to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Stocking up on cleaning products became a challenge. "Their workforce has, in many cases, dwindled, as employees have left for other opportunities for a variety of reasons, such as fulltime positions with benefits or work that requires less contact with the public," said Matt Miner with Capitol Strategies Group, MIRA's Michigan Lobbyists. "On top of that, costs have risen dramatically. Customers can't afford to purchase as much product as before and profit margins have shrunk."

Like many other states, MIRA members in Illinois were deemed essential businesses and were required to remain open during the periods of forced lockdowns of other Illinois businesses. "While there was a slight uptick in sales, it was not enough to offset the steep costs and learning curve of the different COVID-19 protocols by state and local governments," said Curt Fiedler with Morrill & Fiedler LLC, MIRA's Illinois Lobbyists. "While COVID-19 protocols have been more consistent, Illinois grocers continue to have additional regulatory burdens placed upon them that increase the cost of doing business."

The pandemic in Ohio, like other states, has caused real hardship to small businesses with loss of income and a decrease in the workforce. "The state government in Ohio declared convenience stores/service stations to be essential business and thus stayed open while many others were forced to close and others went out of business," said Terry Fleming, with TC Fleming & Associates, MIRA's Ohio Lobbyists. "Ohio government has passed legislation to help those





businesses that started up in January 2020 with economic incentives and have relaxed some of the reporting requirements during the pandemic. As this pandemic goes into 2022, it's our hope that government does not mandate masks for all workers. We believe that should be a decision made by each business independently."

The Michigan Legislature and the Governor's Executive Office have addressed several issues throughout the pandemic at the behest of independent retailers across the state. "In the initial stages of the pandemic, MIRA petitioned the Governor to shut down bottle returns at stores to stop any potential spread of the virus through these returns," said Miner. "MIRA's staff was also consulted on numerous orders to help combat the spread of the virus throughout the last 18 months. There are several bills still working their way through the process that we are keeping an eye on."

Illinois has recently enacted legislation to make curbside and delivery options easier for Illinois grocers. "However, the State has still to address the biggest concern in the \$5 billion deficit in its unemployment insurance fund that - if not addressed through use of federal ARPA funds - will lead to a significant tax increase to all Illinois businesses," said Fiedler. "In addition to the unemployment insurance issues, Illinois needs to refrain from enacting further regulatory burdens, such as scheduling mandates like *Fair Work Week* and instead invest in strategies to enhance healthy food access throughout the State."

Next year, is an election year in Ohio, with all 99 House seats up and 17 Senate seats in addition all state-wide offices, Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Auditor of State and Treasurer of State are up as well as Ohio's 15 congressional districts. "Here in Ohio, we believe it will be a great year both legislatively and regulatory. I believe the Biden administration at federal level is of far greater concern than at the state level," said Fleming. "Mandates for who has to wear masks and who needs to be vaccinated will continue to be a hot button issue in 2022. While we don't expect Ohio to be very active on tax increases or business regulations MIRA will continue to monitor and respond as needed

to any and all legislation and regulatory issues that could negatively impact MIRA's Ohio members."

Next year is also a major election year in Illinois. All executive officers including the Governor and every member of the Illinois General Assembly are up for re-election. In 2023, many major local governments will hold elections - including Cook County and Chicago.

"MIRA members should be engaged in supporting elected officials who strongly support small businesses and policies that will lessen burdens to allow them to operate," said Fiedler. "This means developing relationships with local officials and grassroots support from their customers as well."

In Cook County, MIRA has partnered with the South Suburban Mayor's and Manager's Association to advocate for the creation of new tax incentives for small and mid-sized grocers to locate or expand in food deserts. "The proposal seeks to use \$15-\$20 million to provide tax incentives (e.g., reduction in property taxes, monetary assistance for construction/remodeling, etc.)," said Fiedler. "The joint proposal is currently in final review to be included within the 2022 county budget as a priority and be funded with federal ARPA money."

Recent mandates have affected MIRA members. "The vaccine and testing mandate shouldn't affect our smaller businesses too much, as they are unlikely to meet the employee threshold, but our suppliers and distributors will certainly have some issues," said Miner. "A portion of the workforce is unwilling or unable to get the shot, so there will be an increased cost as these businesses will have to cover the testing costs for the unvaccinated. They may lose more workers and may be struggling finding employees to replace them. With the mandate on hold for now, there is hope that it will be struck down."

Currently, the mandates in Illinois remain some of the strictest in the nation. "This includes indoor mask mandate for all - including those fully vaccinated," said Fiedler. The primary issue with the ongoing mandates is the continued issue of finding persons to fill open positions." ■

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



Longtime MIRA Member Develops Their Own Potato-Chip Line

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS AND COACHING*

For the fifteenth year in a row, Motown Snacks has donated its warehouse to MIRA for its Annual Turkey Drive. The warehouse has served as the venue for the drive since 2006.

For Jim O'Shea, participating in the Turkey Drive is personal. "It might be more of a selfish reason," he said. "Seeing the faces of those less fortunate literally light up as the turkeys and food being loaded into their vehicles is so rewarding, knowing they will have food on the table during the holiday season."

O'Shea does not operate the business by himself. He gets help from his son, also named Jim O'Shea. The younger Jim sat outside the office with his dog, Rusty, watching cars pull through the warehouse. Many volunteers took a quick break to come and meet the younger O'Shea and his furry friend.

Motown Snack Foods has been a MIRA member since 2003. "What I like about being a MIRA member is the ability to personally interact with other suppliers, distributors and manufactures to provide insight in finding solutions to the ever-changing challenges faced on a daily basis," O'Shea said. Motown Snack Foods carried top-of-the-line, name brand snacks like Kettle and Takis. Its newest addition, Motown Munchies, is a little closer to home.

The company recently developed their own potato chip line called Motown Munchies. They offer a 2oz bag for \$0.99 and an 8oz bag for \$1.99 retail. "We



believe it to be the best value in the marketplace," O'Shea said.

On their Facebook page, reviewers rant and rave about the new flavors. One commenter said, "Love these chips! To me... they taste like how Better Made's used to taste back in the day. Great crunch... not greasy...perfect seasoning. Yummy!"

Another Facebook user said they became addicted to the Motown Munchies Salt and Vinegar flavor. "The salt and vinegar chips are amazing, but BEWARE. They are addictive and VERY strong. . I ate too many and they burned my mouth to a fare-thee-well! Soooo good, though."

Motown Snack Foods was founded in October 2003 after negotiating with Jay's Foods for distribution rights of their products in southeastern Michigan. "After several years and numerous sleepless nights, we were able to develop the business to the point of being able to purchase a 47,000 square foot building where we currently reside," O'Shea said.

Motown Snacks has 24 routes servicing the tri-county area. "We try to provide the best service and selection of products for them. While not always successful, trying to educate our sales people to take off their "blindners" and actually communicate with store management to see what their needs are, not what they think they are."

He is definitely a family man. "I'm thankful to my wonderful and lovely wife for understanding my work doesn't always end at 5 p.m.," he said. "She always has dinner ready when I come home. On the rare occasion it isn't, there's always hamburger helper!" O'Shea joked. ■

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

RETAILER: MOTOWN SNACK FOODS

Location: Detroit, Michigan

Founded: 2003

MIRA Member Since: 2003

Slogan: "Your one stop shop for all your salty snack food needs."



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MIRF's Annual Turkey Drive a Feel-Good Event

Dozens of volunteers met on a brisk November morning to give away mounds of food.

MIRF, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation, hosted its 41st Annual High Five Turkey Drive at the Motown Snack Foods warehouse. Volunteers, many from DTE, gave away thousands of turkeys, milk jugs, drinks, fresh produce, and small clothing items.

Last year, the COVID-19 pandemic left MIRF hanging. Usually, companies like DTE and Blue Cross send more than a dozen volunteers each, but because of strict COVID-19 policies, they had to avoid the event altogether.

This year, DTE came back, though it required all of its volunteers, who numbered around 20, to wear masks, use gloves, and have access to hand sanitizer.

Not everyone there was sent by corporate. Many volunteers came directly from food companies, like Jamie Steinman, who represents Prairie Farms.

Holly Francis, another volunteer, doesn't do any business with food. She works for a payroll service called ConnectPay, which made a cash donation to the drive.

Ed Weglarz, MIRF Chairman, was there to supervise the handing-out of turkeys

and the rest of the food. He was in high spirits, he said, because the event was going so well and serving so many people.

The drive does not directly service those in need. Instead, it offers free food to organizations like churches, foundations, nonprofits, senior centers, city halls, medical facilities, and even a police department. Those organizations then connect with needy families and pass the food on.

Though they got their volunteers back, in general, food was in short supply this year. Ken Schulte, MIRA director of business development and vendor programs, said many businesses had to donate less food this year or couldn't donate at all.

"Donations were on the lower end this year because of supply and demand issues," he said. "That is the biggest difference between this year and last."

Frito-Lay, for example, used to donate tons of palates full of chips. This year, they were nowhere to be found, and MIRF simply couldn't make up for it.

On the upside, Schulte said, MIRF had no trouble collecting monetary donations or acquiring turkeys this year.

In fact, it was easier to get money this year than in the past.

In total, MIRF gave away nearly 6,000 turkeys to 70 different organizations. There's always more to do, though, as they say there's a long waitlist of people who they can't give food to.

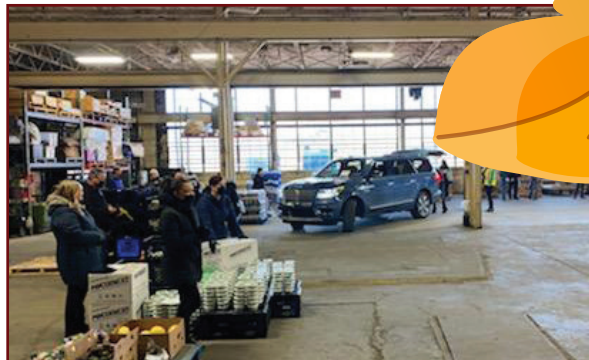
In Ohio, MIRF gave away 400 Turkeys. The effort was led by MIRA board member Paul Elhindi. The Turkey Drive in Ohio was very successful," said Elhindi. "Wayne Dawson from Channel 8 Morning Show was on site helping and Channel 8 did a story."

Schulte gave a special thanks to Sherwood Food Distributors for delivering all the turkeys for free. Without the company, he said, they might not be able to pull it off. "They give us their trucks, their gas, their drivers," he said.

"It's just a great event. This is probably one of the most heartfelt events," he said. "This isn't a gala. It's not a golf outing. We're helping people, and that's what makes this event stand out." ■



VOLUNTEERS AT THE MICHIGAN TURKEY DRIVE



OHIO DRIVE



MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL *High Five* TURKEY DRIVE

The Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation warmly thanks these sponsors who provided goods and services to our 2021 Turkey Drive!



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2021: Expressing Gratitude

We caught up with staff and volunteers at this year's Annual High Five Turkey Drive to ask them:
What are you most grateful for as we head into a New Year?



"I'm most grateful for the vaccines. More and more people are getting them every day. I'm supposed to be in Cabo right now, but my wife tested positive. So, I'm thankful more and more people are getting the vaccine."

– JAIME STEINMAN // PRAIRIE FARMS



"I'm most grateful for my two wonderful children and my husband. We're all healthy and that's very important."

– HOLLY FRANCIS // CONNECTPAY



"I'm thankful that I can help out in the community and make sure everyone's safe and healthy."

– ALPANA BAJPAYEE // DTE



"I'm thankful that we get opportunities to help other people."

– KAILYN JOHNSON // DTE



"I'm grateful for doing well in school and my grandmother guiding me to the right places. And I'm grateful for my friends."

– DIANA SHARP // SHRINE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



"I'm grateful that we're all here together and we're all able to give back. We're just getting together for the first time in a while and it's amazing, it's beautiful, and there's nothing you can take for granted." – MARK JONES // DTE

"For the past 15 years, DTE volunteers have supported MIRA's annual turkey drive to distribute food to families in need during the Thanksgiving season. MIRA is a great organization, and DTE is proud to be involved in such a worthy cause." – ANGELA WADE // DTE

"I'm grateful that my family is well and alive. I'm grateful for all of the things that God has given us to appreciate." – LINDA SHARP // DTE



"I'm grateful for my family, my friends and my health. I feel very fortunate to be able to celebrate the holidays with family this year, since we didn't get together last year. I'm also grateful for this Turkey Drive and so glad I can be a part of helping those in need."

– TAMAR LUTZ // TAMAR DESIGNS, LLC

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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Premium Coffee Trends to Watch

Here are the top five consumer need states fueling innovation in the specialty coffee category



■ BY NACS ONLINE

Consumers are expecting more and more c-stores to offer the kind of coffee drinks they can't reproduce at home.

Specialty coffee falls into the hot dispensed beverage category, and like most foodservice categories, "hot dispensed beverages struggled in 2020 because of shutdowns due to COVID-19 and decreased store traffic," said Jayme Gough, research manager, NACS. "Hot dispensed beverage sales fell 32.2% from 2019 to 2020, and gross profit dollars per store annually were down 34.4%."

But when customers did pour coffee, many poured specialty brews. Despite last year's disappointing sales, specialty coffee made up the second largest percentage of hot dispensed beverage sales (38.4%) in convenience stores.

But what types of premium coffee are driving the trend? Flavorchem, a supplier of coffee extracts including cold brew concentrates, shared with *Beverage Daily* the five trends that are fueling premium coffee innovation.

COLD COFFEE

According to Statista, cold brew coffee sales are expected to reach \$1 billion by 2025. Cold brew can be seen as healthy to consumers, and there are many different flavors and a range of formats, for example, nitro.

NACS Magazine explored premium coffee in "Craft Coffee Haven" in the September 2021 issue and cited a stat by the National Restaurant Association that although hot coffee remains the most popular choice for 47% of java fans, cold brew coffee is the fastest-growing coffee drink, with sales increasing by 4.6% year over year.

The younger generation especially loves cold coffee, with 40% of 18 to 24 year-olds wishing their local c-stores had more cold coffee offerings, according to Jeff Ulrich, strategic account manager, BUNN, an American manufacturer of dispensed beverage equipment.

WELLNESS

Consumers are looking to "healthify" everything they can, and Mintel found that coffee is no exception. They found that 30% of coffee drinkers are interested in coffees with added health benefits, such as immune and cognitive support supplements or adding more protein or probiotics to their cup of joe.

SUSTAINABILITY

Consumers expect coffee companies to care about

the sustainability practices surrounding their business because they care. Sustainability practices can include fair trade, humanitarian rights, upcycling, eco-friendly packaging and more.

NACS Magazine found that Gen Z especially expects transparency in the foods and beverages they consume. "Sustainability is a big buzz word right now, and 73% of consumers say they'd change their coffee consumption habits to ensure their coffee was sustainable," said Scott Reed, communications and data specialist for BUNN.

PLANT-BASED

Plant-based is having a major moment in the food and wellness space, and it's influencing the coffee industry as well. Customers want their alternative plant-based milks and creamers to go into their premium brew. With so many varieties, hemp, macadamia, cashew, walnut, to name a few, choose a few of the basics (almond, oat, soy) and alternate as customers' request.

EXOTIC TASTES

When travel was heavily restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers traveled through their food, and now the habit has stuck. Coffee brands are now showcasing coffee beans from countries such as Indonesia, Ethiopia and Guatemala, as well as including global flavors such as matcha and chai. ■

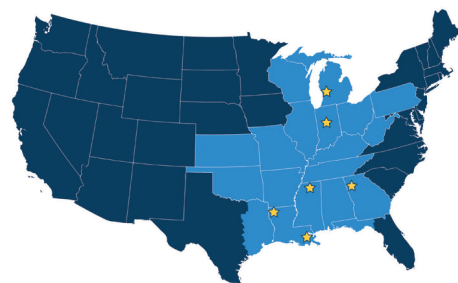


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Motown Snack Foods

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La Preferida, Inc. (773) 254-7200

HOTELS, CONVENTION CENTERS & BANQUET HALLS

Penna's of Sterling. (586) 978-3880

Suburban Collection Showplace (248) 348-5600

ICE CREAM SUPPLIERS



Prairie Farms Ice Cream Program **M**

..... 1-800-399-6970 ext. 200



Velvet Ice Cream Co. (740) 892-3921

Blue Bunny Ice Cream (616) 453-6358

Pointe Dairy Services. 1-800-858-7707

ICE PRODUCTS



U.S. Ice Corp. **M** (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 **M** (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



Sedgwick **O** 1-800-837-3200 ext. 7188

LEGAL SERVICES

Cummings, McCloy, Davis & Acho, PLC. (734) 261-2400

Kullen & Kassab, PC (248) 538-2200

Willingham & Cote, PC (517) 351-6200

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas!



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IGT Global Solutions (517) 272-3302
Michigan Lottery (517) 335-5648
Ohio Lottery 1-800-589-6446

MILK, DAIRY & CHEESE PRODUCTS

 Borden Dairy  (855) 226-7336
 Lipari Foods, Inc. (586) 447-3500
 Prairie Farms Dairy Co.  (248) 399-6300
Harvest Sherwood (313) 659-7300
Pointe Dairy Services 1-800-858-7707

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 Retailers Express Money Orders 1-800-666-6233

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 Office Depot (855) 337-6811

PAPER PRODUCTS & PACKAGING SUPPLIES

Rolly Receipts LLC (937) 344-3242

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 ConnectPay Payroll Services (248) 594-6900




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 Great Lakes Pet Treats (810) 715-4500

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Hunt Brothers Pizza (615) 259-2629

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..... (248) 356-4100 ext. 107
 Petrosoft LLC (412) 306-0640
 Success Systems/Smokin' Rebates .. 1-800-653-3345
BMC-Business Machines Company (517) 485-1732


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 Saxon, Inc.  (248) 398-2000
Ahearn Signs, Inc. (734) 699-3777
EGI Solutions (586) 978-9630
Pace Custom Printing (248) 563-7702

PRODUCE DISTRIBUTORS

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 Tank Traders Midwest (877) 429-5797
Planet Propane (248) 647-0000

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 Sell Your Business Program 1-800-666-6233

REFRIGERATION SOLUTIONS (COMMERCIAL)

Raves Cooler Doors (248) 887-0648


RETAIL FIXTURES, DISPLAYS & FLOORING

 Display Max (810) 494-0400






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UBCR, LLC (248) 529-2605

SECURITY, SURVEILLANCE & MORE

 Defense Alarm Systems (586) 777-7222
Netco Services (248) 850-2228

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 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

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

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E-Alternative Solutions (904) 843-3731
Swisher International (904) 607-7405

TOBACCO COMPANIES & PRODUCTS

Altria Client Services (513) 831-5510
R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (336) 741-0727

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Commercial Waste Systems (Cardboard recycling buyers)
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Midwest Recycling (Clothing recycle boxes) (313) 304-9099

WINE & SPIRITS COMPANIES

Benchmark Beverage Co. (734) 744-6132
Cornerstone Wine Distributor (586) 839-2552
Endless West (313) 590-7491
Heaven Hill Brands (248) 885-5664
Luxco (313) 333-4637
Proximo Spirits (810) 278-0599
Tito's Handmade Vodka (248) 885-3424
Wise Men Distillery (616) 805-7003

WINE & SPIRITS DISTRIBUTORS

Great Lakes Wine & Spirits 1-888-860-3805
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 -
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Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank -
Cadillac (231) 779-0056
Food Bank of Eastern Michigan (810) 239-4441
Food Bank of South Central Michigan .. (269) 964-3663
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The Manna Food Project (231) 347-8852
Western Upper Peninsula Food Bank ... (906) 482-5528

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Cleveland Foodbank (216) 738-2265
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Mid-Ohio Foodbank (614) 277-FOOD
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Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley
..... (330) 792-5522
Shared Harvest Foodbank (513) 874-0114
The Foodbank, Inc. (937) 461-0265
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





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HUSTLE





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Penna's of Sterling // Sterling Heights, MI



FEBRUARY 23, 2022

**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 10, 2022

HISTORY BOOK VOL. 2 SIGNING

Celebrating 110 years of the Midwest Independent Retailers Association! We will have a book signing with long time members, past presidents and chairmen. Meet, greet, and join us for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres.

Shenandoah Country Club // West Bloomfield, MI



MAY 20, 2022

**MIRA'S 3RD ANNUAL CHICAGO METRO
GROCERS GALA**

With a "Saturday Night Fever" theme, enjoy fine cuisine, network, dance and enjoy live entertainment with more than 500 industry leaders. Black tie recommended.

Sponsorship opportunities available.

The Empress // Addison, IL

publishers statement

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