

# BOTTOMLINE

**USA 2 GO**  
**LIQUOR LOTTO WINE**



**USA 2 GO CREATES A BRAND OF  
CONVENIENCE WITH A MODERN-DAY  
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

KEVIN BAHNAM, OWNER

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The recent 2024 Lipari "Savings Across the Board" Food show showcased over 13,000 items and 800 Booths at a packed Suburban Collection Showcase event.



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Scan now to connect with MIRA on social media.



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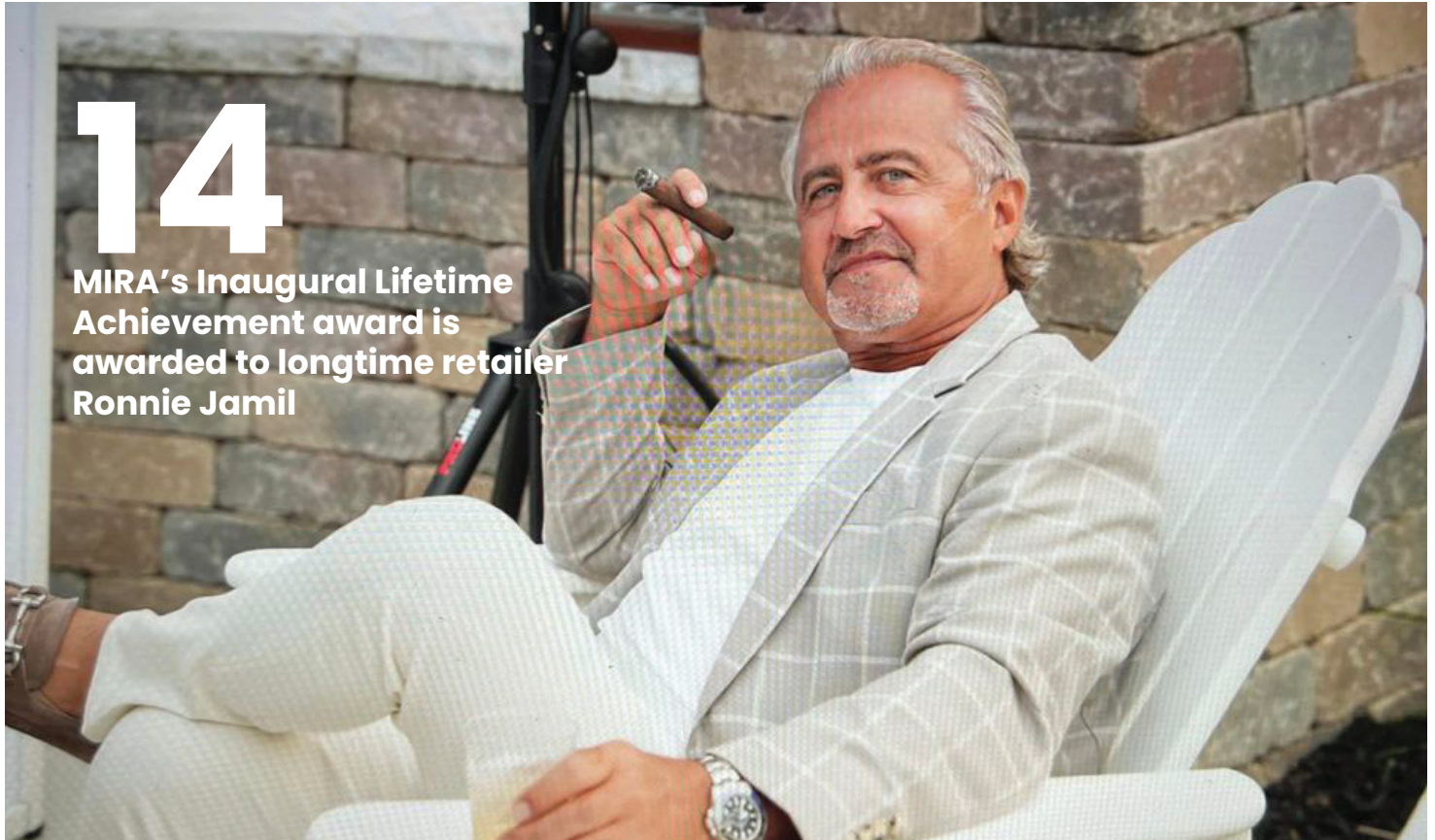
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# 2024 Food Pantry Grant

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Blue Cross Complete of Michigan and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation are proud to collaborate to address food and nutrition insecurity.

This grant opportunity will provide equipment and resources to increase the capacity of local food pantries to provide access to nutrient-rich, fresh-food options to clients. Our goal is that all clients visiting these pantries have access to healthy choices, such as milk, cheese, fruit, vegetables, yogurt and cottage cheese.

The application deadline is June 21, 2024. Please review the [application website](#) for complete grant details and eligibility information.



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan is a nonprofit corporation and independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.  
Blue Cross Complete of Michigan LLC is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation is a nonprofit corporation and independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.  
\*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Cross Complete don't own or control the application website.



**BOBBY HESANO**  
MIRA CHAIRMAN



# MIRA Can Help Improve Your Bottom Line

This first quarter of 2024 has seen MIRA racking up some mileage as President & CEO, Bill Wild, and his staff have spent time on the road meeting, connecting, and collaborating with our members and various stakeholders within the industry.

The MIRA team recently held an after-hours Regional Roadshow in Cleveland Ohio to meet with our membership in that area, share information about MIRA's latest programs and services, and introduce potential new members to the association. Check out page 6 for a full recap.

We have missed face-to-face interaction over the last few years because of the COVID-19 pandemic and what we have been seeing this year is nothing less than an industry comeback!

That was very evident at the recent food shows where MIRA was onsite.

MIRA manned a booth at the packed Sherwood Food Distributors Buying Show at the new Soho Grand Banquet & Event Center in Westland, Michigan. Bill and I connected with retailers, checked out all the latest products, and shared information about MIRA with the attendees.

The MIRA Team was also on site for the Lipari Foods "Saving Across the Board" Food Show at Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, Michigan. MIRA team members staffed a booth and met with current members, vendors, and suppliers and talked with many others about the benefits of the MIRA membership. The show featured more than 15,000 items, more than 800 booths, and more than 1,200 brands. Check out photos and a full recap on page 26.

Bill also stopped at Schoolcraft College, where he participated in a panel discussion hosted by the Livonia-Westland Chamber of Commerce with the chamber's president, Dan West, on Bridging AI and Business. AI is here to stay and will only become more relevant as time passes, so we must understand what it means to our industry.

At the event, Bill talked about how AI is affecting the independent retailer industry and noted how this technology poses a wonderful opportunity for students who will soon enter the workforce. Check out page 16 for more details.

MIRA was also hosted by a couple of our members, including new member Priority Waste, where we held our April Board of Directors meeting, at their amazing new corporate offices in Clinton Township, Michigan. Our goal is to connect with current and new members and connect those members with services so they can grow their businesses.

Our team also made a stop at Reyes Coca-Cola Bottling. Bill was accompanied by VP of Government Affairs, Jerry Griffin, when he toured the Reyes Coca-Cola Distribution Center in Flint, Michigan. Reyes General Manager, Ken Hebert, serves on the MIRA Board of Directors.

While the staff is always at the office to answer your calls and questions, we are making a concerted effort to engage our members throughout the Midwest and to increase our membership. We can only do that by staying connected to current industry issues, communicating with members and prospective members, and collaborating with industry leaders.

We want to provide as many opportunities as possible for our members to network, engage with the association and stay abreast of what is happening inside the industry with the singular goal of helping you improve your bottom line. ■

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<b>Brent Jamil</b>	Gas-N-Goods
<b>Marvin Jarbo</b>	Eastern Market of Canton
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<b>Bryan Morrow</b>	Pepsi Co.
<b>Marissa Smoyer</b>	Lipari Foods

## EMERITUS DIRECTOR

<b>Clifton Denha</b>	Wine Palace
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## MIR FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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<b>Clifton Denha</b>	Treasurer, Wine Palace
<b>Vanessa Denha Garmo</b>	Secretary, Epiphany Communications: Coaching & Consulting
<b>John Denha</b>	8 Mile Foodland/Huron Foods
<b>Paul Elhindi</b>	Corner Market
<b>Khalil Rahal</b>	DTE
<b>Nabby Yono</b>	Arab-American Chaldean Council

## STAFF & CONSULTANTS

<b>Bill Wild</b>	President & CEO
<b>Jerry Griffin</b>	Vice President of Government Affairs
<b>Kelli Petty</b>	Director of Events & Membership Engagement
<b>Taylor Thornsberry</b>	Comptroller & Human Resources
<b>Mary Ann Yono</b>	Business Development
<b>Catherine Denha</b>	Events & Publications Coordinator
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<b>Burt Kassab</b>	Corporate Counsel, Kassab Law Group P.C.
<b>Matt Miner</b>	Michigan Lobbyist, Capitol Strategies Group
<b>Terry Fleming</b>	Ohio Lobbyist, TC Fleming & Associates
<b>Tamar Pszenyczny</b>	Graphic Designer, Tamar Designs, LLC
<b>Vanessa Denha Garmo</b>	Magazine Writer, Epiphany Communications: Coaching & Consulting
<b>UHY-MI</b>	Certified Public Accountant



## 2024 LEGISLATIVE DAY *celebrating Independent Retailers Week*

Join us as we visit with members of the Michigan legislature to discuss issues of importance to MIRA's members.

Meet and greet your district representatives and senators!

***FREE event open to all members!***

**June 12, 2024 • 9:00 am**

Capitol Strategies Group  
110 W. Michigan Avenue, Suite 600  
Lansing, MI 48933

RSVP to Jerry Griffin  
MIRA Vice President of Government Affairs  
(248) 671-9600  
[jgriffin@miramw.org](mailto:jgriffin@miramw.org)



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Promotional item in MIRA grab bags (*sponsor supplies items*)

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Recognition on MIRA website & social media platforms

Promotional item in MIRA grab bags (*sponsor supplies items*)

# MIRA's Cleveland Regional Roadshow is Officially in the Books

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

“This inaugural event, while not perfect, was successful in many ways,” said Bill Wild, President & CEO. “First, it allowed our Ohio membership to interact with MIRA staff and learn more about our membership programs and services. Secondly, it proved to be a format where members could network and meet MIRA business partners who administer several of the association’s most popular rebate, discount, and service programs. The focus was on helping our members improve their business’s bottom line.”

Bob Thomas, Executive Vice President of Resourcing Edge, shared insights with members on his new MIRA program, which offers business owners cost-effective solutions for HR, employee benefits, worker’s comp, and payroll. The MIRA office will soon take part in this new program to streamline its human resources department.

Members also heard from Louis Mosca, COO and Executive Vice President of American Management Services, a new MIRA Business Partner, who shared proven strategies to enhance margins and boost profits. These strategies, which have been successfully implemented by small businesses nationwide, can potentially increase a business’s profits by 3%. Mosca is a regular content contributor to MIRA’s *BottomLine* magazine.

MIRA’s Regional Roadshows are a new concept the association started this year. It is an event that brings MIRA’s services and programs directly to members. While MIRA has a lot of events that our suppliers, wholesalers, and distributors will attend, MIRA’s Regional Roadshows are events specifically designed for our retail members. “I wanted to add more retailer-focused events and I chose to kick off this event in Ohio simply because we have a lot of retailers in Cleveland, and I have not had a chance to meet many of them yet,” added Wild.

This roadshow was like an after-hours mini-trade show concept with plenty of food and beverages. Many MIRA business partners set up booths to share new services and programs. The event was not just a ‘meet and greet’, but a unique opportunity for our members to network, interact with MIRA staff, and learn more about the advantages of the membership.

“In Cleveland, we focused on the existing membership, which consists of nearly 400 members in the Greater Cleveland area. In the future, we will invite not only existing members but also prospective members to our recruitment list and turn it into a membership drive as well,” said Wild.

Resourcing Edge, American Management Services, Borden Dairy, Conifer Insurance, Great Lakes Data Systems, Pepsi, Sedgwick,

and Team Sledd were sponsors of the event. Their support was instrumental in rolling out this new MIRA initiative. “We are grateful for their partnership and commitment to our association” said Wild.

“It was our first roadshow, and you never know what to expect,” said Wild. “We didn’t have the large attendance we had hoped for, but the members who attended were excited about what they learned. We even signed up some new members!”

With every first event, there are things you learn that help you improve. “This was also the first event MIRA’s new Event & Publication Coordinator Catherine Denha managed, and she did an excellent job,” added Wild. “I learned a great deal from this first roadshow, which we will build upon,” said Denha. “Our members gave us insightful feedback, and we look forward to improving what we started for the greater benefit of our members.”

Although Wild is planning more On the Road events, scheduling will be difficult as MIRA already has a full event schedule for 2024. “I would like to do another one of these events on the west side of Michigan, maybe the Grand Rapids area,” said Wild. “Most of our events are in southeast Michigan, and we do well there. We have many retailers on the state’s west side, and we want them to meet with our staff, so Grand Rapids, Michigan, may be the next stop.” ■

## THANK YOU SPONSORS!





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- CONNECT WITH YOUR BUYERS
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- MOVE YOUR BUSINESS FORWARD
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## 25<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL FALL FOOD & BEVERAGE INNOVATIONS BUYING SHOW

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2024**

SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE  
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MIRA buying shows bring together the best companies serving the food, beverage and petroleum industries.

*Why should you exhibit?* The MIRA buying shows offer your company the opportunity to meet and sell to thousands of buyers in 7 hours. We attract more retailers than any other holiday show in the State of Michigan, and they will be coming to YOUR booth!

*Who attends MIRA Buying Shows?* The MIRA buying shows are attended by industry leaders, buyers and retailers from: Convenience Stores, Grocery Stores, Liquor Stores, Drug Stores, Gas/Service Stations and Bars/Restaurants.

***For booth sales, sponsorship opportunities and ticket information, please contact Jackie Gordon at (248) 671-9600 or [jgordon@miramw.org](mailto:jgordon@miramw.org).***



## MICHIGAN LOBBYIST REPORT

MATT MINER  
CAPITOL STRATEGIES GROUP

# First Quarter Michigan Legislative Recap

### SPECIAL ELECTIONS

As predicted, the first quarter of the legislative session was quiet. Democrats in the House of Representatives were down two members elected to mayorships in Warren and Westland, respectively, which put membership in the House at 54-54. This paralyzed the chamber from moving any challenging legislation until the special elections were held on April 16th. So, who won those elections? Macomb County Commissioner Mai Xiong won the special election for the 13th House District, filling the seat vacated by former Rep. Lori Stone last November, and Westland City Council Member Peter Herzberg won the special election for the 25th House District, filling the seat vacated by former Rep. Kevin Coleman. Adding these two members restored the House Democrat's majority in the chamber to 56-54.

### BUDGET PROCESS MOVES ALONG

While policy matters largely stood still in the House and Senate during the first quarter, the budget process moved along in earnest, with an expected completion date in late June. On February 7th, the Governor presented her Executive Budget to the Legislature with funding increases

across the board. The Legislature has begun deliberating the Governor's proposal and has taken testimony from interest groups that seek changes or affirmation of the expenditures over the past month.

MIRA continues to push for a line item in the Department of Health and Human Services budget to combat Food Deserts in Michigan. This appropriation would create a grant program for small convenience stores and grocers to upgrade equipment in their stores to supply greater access to fresh food options for the public. Senator Sylvia Santana has been a critical ally to MIRA in seeking this appropriation. Stay tuned for further developments as the budget process moves along.

### BOTTLE RETURN HOURS REQUIREMENT HEARD IN THE HOUSE

Stores would be required to accept cans and bottles being returned for deposits during regular business hours under a bill debated in March during a House Regulatory Reform Committee meeting. House Bill 5421 would require retailers to accept containers for deposits from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. or during all open hours. Rep. Julie Rogers (D-Kalamazoo), the bill sponsor, came to the House Regulatory Reform Committee

with images of different retailers in her district accepting containers for deposits during limited hours.

Rogers said most retailers are accepting containers returned for the deposit as required. But, since there is no hour requirement currently, others are taking advantage of the gray area in law. Lawmakers and those representing the industry said behavior changed during the coronavirus pandemic when retailers were prohibited from accepting containers, and it hasn't returned to normal. Jerry Griffin, MIRA VP of Government Affairs, said MIRA opposes the bill and that there is fatigue among consumers in returning containers for deposits. He said individuals would prefer to put their cans and bottles in their recycling bin, with their other recyclables.

Rep. Matthew Bierlein (R-Vassar) also voiced concern about smaller stores that do not have machines that take back cans and bottles. He said they must count them by hand and store them until they are picked up. Sometimes, they need to be picked up regularly, he said.

Since the meeting in March, House Bill 5421 has yet to receive further consideration from the committee. ■



# FRUITY MEETS FIZZY

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## OHIO LOBBYIST REPORT

TERRY FLEMING  
TC FLEMING & ASSOCIATES

# Gloves Remain Off With Ohio House Republicans

The primary elections are over and the fight between two factions of House Republicans continues. There were 11 contested races and on the face of it, it appears that the group trying to upend the current Speaker came out ahead with four wins against incumbent members who supported the current Speaker. One of those losses was Representative Brett Hillyer, a strong supporter of MIRA, sad to see him lose.

Speaker Stephens - while regretting the loss of good men - said he won four seats, but they face strong opponents in November. The first thing those opposing Stephens did after the election was trying to take control of caucus money raised for candidates.

They went to court once and lost but they are trying again. All this makes passing legislation harder than usual. Results of other primary races had only one surprise other than the previously mentioned House races.

The three-way contest between Republicans Bernie Moreno, Matt Dolan, and Frank Larose was predicted to be a battle right up till election day with polls showing Dolan and Moreno in a neck-and-neck race but the endorsement by Donald

Trump for Moreno not only carried the day but carried it big. Moreno won by 16 points and now faces Democrat incumbent Sherrod Brown in November.

While Ohio may be a Red State, Brown will be a very formidable candidate. This race could decide control of the U.S. Senate and the money that will flow into Ohio. MIRA was part of a huge win when the General Assembly overrode the Governor's veto of language that gave the state sole authority over flavored tobacco and other tobacco products, but opponents didn't wait long as several Ohio Cities are going to Court to claim that the bill overrode Home Rule in Ohio.

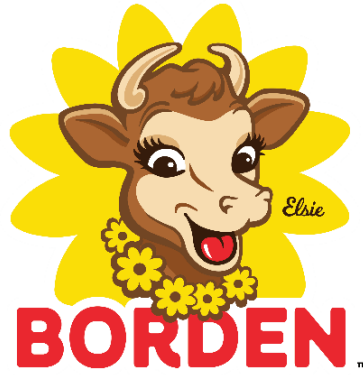
While Home Rule is in Ohio's constitution there is a provision that would allow the state to overrule Home Rule for the good of the state and this is an issue that would pick winners and losers when one county bans the sale of these products, but a neighboring county doesn't. Governor DeWine didn't waste any time either, in his State of the State address he asked the legislature to pass a bill banning flavored tobacco statewide. The response from Republican members was tepid at best. He also asked that the nonuse of seat belts be a primary offense. Currently, you must be pulled over for another purpose and if the

seat belt is not buckled you can be charged with a misdemeanor. That brought the same response as the tobacco ban; quiet. The rest of the Governor's state of state focused almost exclusively on children's issues. Taxes were also being discussed by Republicans, floating language that would prohibit property taxes for homeowners over 70. Democrats pointed out that the loss of revenue to governments would be irreplaceable. Also under discussion was the elimination of income tax but the problem remains what would you replace it with? Speaking of property, a bill is being introduced that would prohibit foreign nationals from owning land in Ohio.

Eight years ago, the then Speaker of the Ohio House was arrested by the FBI along with four others for accepting bribes from First Energy for 60 million dollars. After several years, the speaker was found guilty and is currently serving 20 years in prison. One of the four originally arrested committed suicide. Now some 8 years later Ohio Attorney General has indicted the same group on state charges while the FBI continues to say they're not finished looking at others. The result, another suicide, this time by a former Public Utilities Commissioner.

Seems as if this will never end. ■

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## COMMUNICATIONS CORNER

VANESSA DENHA GARMO  
FOUNDER, EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS:  
COACHING & CONSULTING



# Create and Communicate Your Retail Brand

Retail branding plays a pivotal role in shaping how customers perceive a store. Kevin Bahnam featured in this issue’s cover story (page 20) invested time and funds into creating his USA 2 GO brand. We share insight from him and his director of marketing in the story. Ronnie Jamil, who is receiving MIRA’s Inaugural Lifetime Achievement award, also talks about the importance of creating a niche in the industry which he and his son Brent have done with their stores Gas and Goods.

When it comes to creating a brand, it’s not just about selling products; it’s about creating a memorable experience. Let’s delve into the world of retail

branding and explore strategies to build a strong brand that you can easily communicate with and that will resonate with your customers.

### WHAT IS RETAIL BRANDING?

Retail branding involves intentionally shaping your store’s perception in customers’ minds. It’s the deliberate steps you take to evoke positive feelings and encourage customers to see your retail business in a certain way. Your brand is more than just a logo; it’s the story you tell—the core truth that connects with people. I often ask my clients: What’s Your Story?

We all have a story to tell and in business, we should be telling it on all our platforms: websites, blogs, social

media, marketing materials, bulletin boards, radio, and TV.

### KEY DIFFERENCES: RETAIL BRANDING VS. PRODUCT BRANDING

**Retail Branding:** Focuses on the entire store experience. It’s about creating an identity for your store, both online and offline: consistency, social media presence, and a smooth shopping journey matter.

**Product Branding:** Concentrates on individual products. It’s about the look and feel of a specific item. While retail

COMMUNICATIONS CORNER  
*continued on page 38*

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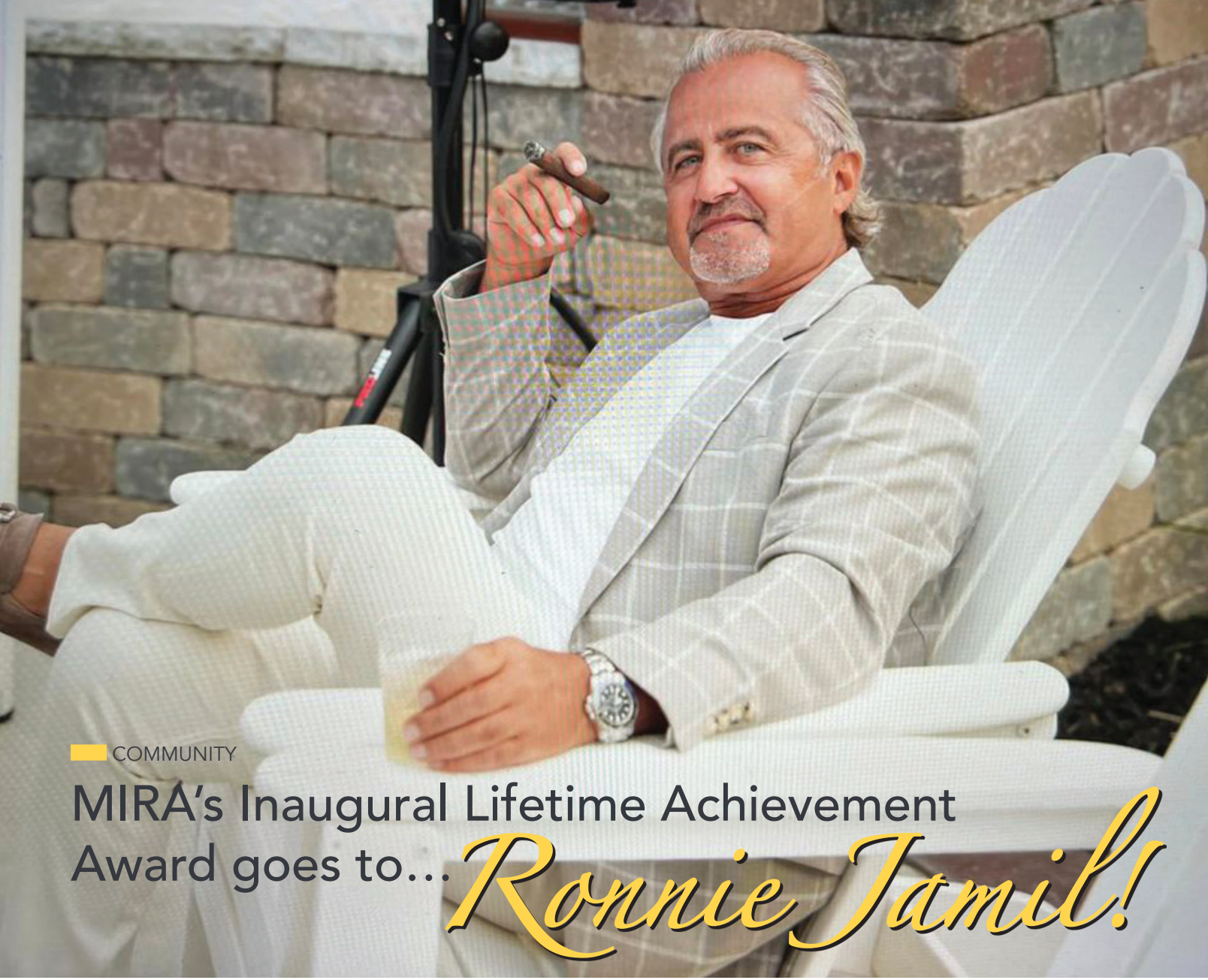
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COMMUNITY

# MIRA's Inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award goes to... *Ronnie Jamil!*

BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

**A**mong his friends, he is known as "Delta" because, after more than four decades in the food retail business, Ronnie Jamil is enjoying some downtime and family time by vacationing – a lot! "My friends call me Delta because I am always on a Delta flight," said Jamil. "With the help of my son, I have more time for myself. I play golf and travel a lot. I spend a lot more time with my wife."

That was not always the case. Like many entrepreneurs, Ronnie worked his business six to seven days a week while volunteering his

time to improve the industry; and his fellow independent retailers have taken notice.

For the first time in its 114-year history, MIRA is presenting a member with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ronnie Jamil is a longtime member of the association and former Chairman. He will be presented with the inaugural award and honored at the 2024 MIRA Chairman's Dinner, on May 9th at Shenandoah Country Club in West Bloomfield, Michigan.

"Looking back 40 years, I am proud to be part of the business retail community and of developing all types of relationships with people from the retail, wholesale, and supply

industries," said Jamil. I am proud that I maintained relationships with many of those same people over the last 40 years."

Bobby Hesano is one of those long-time friends. The two not only share a similar background in food retail and a passion for business but Ronnie and Bobby have become family through the marriage of their children, Brent, and Maegan.

"Ronnie has not only made a significant impact in the industry as an independent retailer but has also made a positive difference within the MIRA association," said Bobby Hesano, Chairman of MIRA. "Through his leadership style and forward-thinking

“Ronnie has not only made a significant impact in the industry as an independent retailer but has also made a positive difference within the MIRA association.

Through his leadership style and forward-thinking approach, he not only took his business to the next level but helped us move the association forward during challenging times. It's an honor to recognize him.”

– BOBBY HESANO, MIRA CHAIRMAN

approach, he not only took his business to the next level but helped us move the association forward during challenging times. It's an honor to recognize him."

Bill Wild is not only the president and CEO of MIRA, but a former small-business owner himself, and he knows all too well the demanding work and dedication that goes into running a business. "As an association with a 100+ year history of amazing entrepreneurs, it is an honor to create and award this new Lifetime Achievement award," said Wild. "Ronnie Jamil exemplifies the spirit of this award as a business owner who started in humble beginnings, worked hard to build a successful business, volunteered his time to help the industry, and is now grooming his son to take over and take the family business to the next level."

After graduating from Southfield Lathrup High School in 1980, Ronnie attended Lawrence Technology University, where he studied accounting and finance but dropped out one year shy of graduating to work full-time in retail.

"While in college, I used to patronize a store in Berkley," he said. "I thought it would be a nice store to buy for the family. It was a little hole-in-the-wall store at the time. I talked to my two brothers, who owned a store in Pontiac where I worked. I continued going to school until 1984 then I decided to focus on expanding that store and growing the business; that is how I became a retailer for life."

Not too long after, the Jamil brothers purchased Bella Vino in Farmington Hills, which they later sold in 2022.

"I started to move our business in a different direction," said Ronnie. "I realized that gas stations had more opportunities, more profit centers, and the gas pumps brought more customers into the store. We bought our first gas station in 2002 and, two years later, bought another one in Brighton, Michigan."

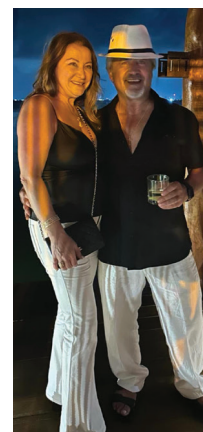
The original store bought in 1982, is still in the Jamil Family and is owned by Ronnie's brother Wasim and nephew Vincent. "That store is an icon in Berkley," said Jamil. "Everyone knows *Mug and Jug*."

Seven years ago, Ronnie's son Brent joined him in business. They own four gas stations they branded under the *Gas and Goods* name; they are convenience gas stations with a full line of liquor, beer, wine, and food sections that Brent was instrumental in integrating into the businesses.

Over the last four decades, Ronnie has reflected on what he loves about the industry. "What is not to like in the party store business? The name itself says party, so I got to taste many nice wines and spirits and taste them with many customers in the industry. It's just been a fun business to be in."

However, the business has challenges. Maintaining a workforce is one of the biggest. "We hire young people, and they move onto other jobs, which is great, and we want that for them, but the revolving door of employees poses challenges for us. It isn't easy to find enough employees. We also deal with growing

■ **RONNIE JAMIL** continued on page 17





**FOR THE  
HUSTLE**



competition from big box stores and chain stores. Our profit margins are slim, but it's still a great business to be involved in."

During the time working together, Ronnie has shared countless stories and sound advice with his son. "I always tell my son to try it and not be afraid," said Jamil. If you fall, get back up and try it again, and try it better. Treat people with respect like you want to be treated. No matter what level of position they are in, a starting position, or a top manager, treat them the same way. That person, that merchandiser, may be the owner of a company you will be dealing with one day, and he will remember the way you respected him."

Ronnie is not only receiving a lifetime achievement award but is passing on a lifetime of knowledge. "My dad has taught me everything," said Brent Jamil. He taught me how to be a good leader, how to treat people, how to be disciplined, and to do the right thing at all times." He may get upset with me at work on occasion, but once we go home, everything is back to normal."

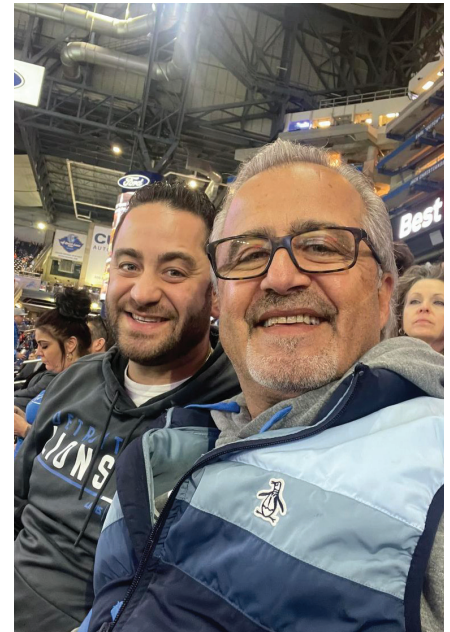
Ronnie and Brent are not just father and son but respected business partners. "I love growing our businesses together, learning new things together, and sharing ideas," said Brent. "He also corrects me and helps me take things to a new level. He is my advisor. He reassures me. He has been in this industry for a long time. Often, he knows the answer to something but won't give it to me. He encourages me to continue to learn and try new things and be more independent."

Brent is not only following in his father's footsteps in business but also with MIRA, currently serving on the Board of Directors. "I know Brent will serve the organization with integrity and respect," said Ronnie. "One day, he may be the Chairman just like his dad was."

Over the last four decades, the industry has become increasingly more complex and complicated, "but it also challenges your entrepreneurship. People like my son who are social media savvy are taking the business to another level," said Ronnie Jamil. "The competition is making the business tougher. At the gas station, we have major chains coming in, like Sheets, which are extremely aggressive. That is why stations like ours must have a niche. We added food to the business model. We are also growing our spirits section as well as beer and wine. Total wine is coming in with very progressive pricing so it's important that every business has to have a niche to separate themselves from the competition."

As a longtime MIRA member, Ronnie also served as MIRA's Chairman in 2004-2005 and recently joined MIRA's legislative committee. "MIRA has a lot of benefits that people don't see besides the hard benefits of the rebates and discounts and getting membership services," said Ronnie Jamil. "MIRA has a lot to offer, but the soft benefits that many members don't see are the most valuable. Government relations and lobbyists do so much for us. They work on issues members don't see. I know sometimes it's a long shot, but they are always working for us, fighting for things to help the retailers, especially the independents."

Ronnie and his wife, Wafaa, have three adult children. He stays close with MIRA Chairman and Owner of D & B Grocers, Bobby Hesano, as they share three grandchildren. Brent and Maegan have three kids. His daughter is Brittany, married to Remy Jonna, and has three kids. Their daughter Sabrina is a nurse practitioner. ■



▲ RONNIE WITH SON BRENT WHO IS NOW A MIRA BORAD MEMBER

▼ RONNIE WITH HIS WIFE WAFAA AND THEIR THREE CHILDREN AND SIX GRANDCHILDREN





# Bridging AI and Business: Navigating Artificial Intelligence

*MIRA President & CEO, Bill Wild, discusses how innovative retailers are incorporating AI into their business operations*

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

**B**ridging the gap between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and business is a critical endeavor, and the Livonia-Westland Chamber of Commerce prompted the conversation at a recent panel discussion in April at Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Michigan.

"There are many ways we can discuss AI, but we wanted to provide practical examples of how three industries are using AI so you can learn more about the technology," said Dan West, President & CEO of the Livonia-Westland Chamber of Commerce. "Today is about painting the picture so this technology is better understood, hopefully supporting your understanding of how you can use AI in your respective organizations."

West referenced a report that analyzed the AI industry and concluded that "2024 is a big year for the proliferation of AI use for businesses," said West. "Currently, 35% of businesses globally use AI, and an additional 42% are exploring AI use. At the top for the use of AI in business is customer service. 56% of companies use AI to answer customer service questions."

“ Artificial Intelligence is not just the future; it is already woven into the fabric of our daily lives, shaping industries, healthcare, and more.”

– QUOTE GENERATED BY AI

Generative Artificial Intelligence generates text, images, videos, and other data to use generative models, often responding to requests. "Businesses also use generative AI for creating reports," said West. Research shows that AI can save workers as much as 2 ½ hours of work per day.

In his welcoming remarks, West applauded the students from six high schools in Livonia and Westland who attended the event, including students from Wayne Memorial High School, Westland John Glenn, Clarendville, Livonia Franklin, Livonia Churchill, and Livonia Stevenson High School for their interest in learning more about how AI can be an asset for businesses.

As a panelist, MIRA President & CEO, Bill Wild, shared insight from the retail industry perspective. Stan Tilinein, Manager of Systems

Integration, joined him from AlphaUSA, which represented the manufacturing industry, and Christopher Beam, AI Team Leader from Detroit/Oak Park/Redford Service-Learning Academy represented the use of AI in education.

Murray Feldman, business editor and host of *The Feldman Report* from WWJ News Radio 950 facilitated the panel discussion. Before the event, Feldman asked AI to give him an opening statement, which he read.

"Artificial Intelligence is not just the future; it is already woven into the fabric of our daily lives, shaping industries, healthcare, and more. Today, we will explore transformative technology's incredible potential and considerations."

He shared another statistic: one out of every five jobs today can be done by AI.

**BILL WILD WITH MAURICE EVANS, CEO OF ELITE GROUP, AND A NEW MIRA MEMBER ►**



He posed the first question of the morning to MIRA President Wild, asking how independent retailers were using AI and if they were taking the lead from the big box stores and chains around the country.

"We are taking small steps, said Wild. "In the last couple of years, most of our retailers have been doing simple things with AI, like writing emails or job descriptions. As they become savvier, I expect to see the early adopters to follow the lead from the big box stores who are using AI to forecast trends and manage inventory."

Wild furthered explained that AI allows for personalized shopping recommendations and better product optimization. "I'm sure most of us have already experienced recommendations or digital coupons being pinged to your phone while walking through a grocery store, this is an example of AI that more and more retailers are utilizing to drive sales.

Wild also gave an example of a more advanced form of AI that many of his members are beginning to use or plan to use soon.

"The average consumer drives about three miles to their regular grocery store and less than a mile to a favorite convenience store," said Wild. "AI now allows retailers to geofence within that space and begin to accurately predict the shopping behaviors of those shopping at their stores. Every consumer has a digital footprint and smart retailers will begin to optimize their inventory to offer more of the item's their customers are purchasing from other stores."

Weighing in on manufacturing, Tilinin added, "We are in the infantile stages of bringing AI to life, but when using ChatGPT or driving a self-driving car, you need mountains of data that is fed into a system or network that is reviewed and incorporative. With manufacturing, you develop downtime. In the simplest terms, manufacturing is making products you supply to your customers on time with quality. You start to see gaps

and issues daily and want to analyze and understand them. We are working on a process to examine the work centers that manufacture these products. We are looking at individual downtimes, such as when the press is moving, when it is not, and why. We can prioritize and fix it to reduce downtime and increase the number of products made. Right now, when we review things, it is usually the day after. When you create automation and the system to flag things before they happen we can work on issues preemptively. We are developing that right now."

Meanwhile, from an education perspective, Beam shared his thoughts on AI: "AI can truly revolutionize education, but the hard part is we have to break things down into stages," he said.

AI is new, but you cannot implement it quickly in education without an understanding of the ramifications and how to use it in the curriculum. Administrators are learning to understand AI, how to use it, and how it can cut down time so teachers can spend more time with the students. "Instead of spending five to six hours on lesson plans, teachers can hone in on the needs of the classroom," said Beam.

AI is fast-moving, so people in various industries are slowing it down to understand it better. "We can bet that one year from now AI will have changed so much and be different than what we are seeing today," said Wild. "Right now, it is relatively cheap, enabling us to understand it better. Right now, there is a lot of fear that AI will begin to eliminate jobs and, in some cases, it already has. A visible example is when you shop at a grocery store today, you may see only one employee moving around checking over six or more different cashierless checkouts. So, while it is replacing jobs that are typically performed manually by employees it is also creating jobs managing, implementing and maximizing the results of these new AI platforms."

Like all industries, there are also bad players in the AI industry, and the technology can be used

to harm, such as the threat of hackers using AI to hack into a database to steal personal data or even using AI to create a voicemail mimicking your voice. Feldman played a phone message using his voice, informing the audience that he was in financial trouble and needed help. He played the recording for the audience. It was AI-generated.

The technology development is moving at a rapid rate. "More than 70% of the executives in the country believe that this technology is moving faster than the workforce can incorporate, according to a top technology consulting firm," said Feldman, "and two out of three say they are increasing the spending needed in all skill areas and 75% say they recognize the importance of boot camps and on-line certification as alternatives to traditional academic degrees."

"That is the exciting part for the students in the room," said Wild, directly addressing the high school students, including students from his alma mater, John Glenn High School in Westland. "This technology poses an amazing opportunity for students who will soon enter the workforce. Being an expert in AI technology will open the doors for students to enter almost every segment of every industry. The C-Suites of America are full of executives that don't know how to use this technology but will soon be spending billions to hire those that do." ■

# USA 2 GO CREATES A BRAND OF CONVENIENCE WITH A MODERN-DAY CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING



“

I saw the opportunity that was considered disruptive at the time. We set out to create a brand and a larger footprint and offer various products beyond the norm in the c-store and gas station business. We want to create an experience for people who visit USA 2 GO Quick Stores that is much different than they were used to.”

- KEVIN BAHNAM, OWNER

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It was the 1990s, and Kevin Bahnam was looking for other business opportunities to allow him to exit the movie rental business he had been operating for a few years.

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**T**hrough some associates, he learned about the petroleum station industry. When he ventured into that business, he approached the concept with a specific vision. He wanted to combine the nostalgia of the traditional liquor store and gas station experience with the newer one-stop-shop model of convenience stores (c-stores), which offer a complete line of spirits, beer, wine, cold beverages, and food. In Bahnam's words, "It's convenience at another level."

"I saw the opportunity that was considered disruptive at the time," he said. "We set out to create a brand and a larger footprint and offer various products beyond the norm in the c-store and gas station realm. We want to create an experience for people who visit USA 2 GO Quick Stores that is much different than they were used to."

When Bahnam was exploring and researching the local gas industry markets, the paradigm was already a 30 to 40-year-old model. "We wanted something fresh, modern, and attractive," he said. We started to look at the 5 to 6,000-square-foot facilities. We wanted a strong independent brand with our logo and color schemes. We also wanted to be known for offering items our competitors did not stock."

At that time, very few stores were built with the fieldstone-facing architecture that is common in European and Middle Eastern gas station models. Bahnam adopted this style for his USA 2 GO locations.

The timing for this new concept worked for Bahnam. It was 2003 and alcohol was now being sold at fuel stations. The laws in Michigan were changing. "We took advantage of it."

The first USA 2 GO store opened in Commerce Township, a smaller location than the other stores in Bahnam's 25-store portfolio in Southeast Michigan. Nearly all his stores have a full line of spirits, beer, and wine. His second USA 2 GO station opened in New Hudson.





Bahnam is a big believer in brand development and hired an outside firm to establish the company logo and identity.

“Our brand is just as critical when they look at our operations.”

USA 2 GO is the c-store brand, and the gasoline side varies at each location.



A few years into his new venture, Bahnam started to add food service by cobranding with Wendy’s and Tim Hortons. These businesses operate adjacent to his USA 2 GO fuel stations and c-stores.

“Co-branding was very big,” he noted. “Operators like us were looking for food partner companies as tenants or opportunities to build next to existing businesses. We realized this was an important area of growth.”

His first co-brand was with Wendy’s at his Commerce Township location. A few years later, Bahnam contacted Tim Hortons Café and Bake Shop to become franchisees. He and his team started building new stores with Tim Hortons as their primary food offerings, including fresh coffee, breakfast, and snacks throughout the day. “That allowed us to be more focused on the beverage side of the business,” he said.

Bahnam is a big believer in brand development and hired an outside firm to establish the company logo and identity. Each USA 2 GO has a fuel provider brand partnership, which varies from store to store. USA 2 GO is the c-store brand, and the gasoline side varies at each location with companies such as Shell, Mobil, Marathon, and Sunoco.

“The fuel partner is less critical than the USA 2 GO brand. The characterization of the gas station brand is important but secondary to the USA 2 GO brand,” said Bob Kolen, Sales and Marketing Director who has been with

the company for 11 years. “When we promote our business, it is USA 2 GO.”

Each fuel brand partner depends on the area and what flagship stores are available. “They operate like other franchises,” said Bahnam. It also depends on proposals from the oil companies. Some companies are more aggressive than others, providing us with the opportunity for the most attractive offer.”

Over the years, Bahnam has created strong relationships in the petroleum industry.

“Our brand is just as critical when they look at our operations.”



...more customers are looking for healthier food options. We are adding complete food sections in our coolers, offering items like hummus, fruit, salads, and more nutritious snacks and drinkable items.”

They began to build an average of one store per year. Some were complete buildouts from the ground up, while others were existing businesses that Bahnam remodeled. “In the last five years or so, we purchased several locations and rebranded them,” said Bahnam. “It all depends on the opportunities within the marketplace. Remodeling a store is usually more challenging because you are dealing with preexisting conditions.”

We must be creative with our ap-

proach because when purchasing an existing business, it often hinders our ability to copy our prototype model. So, we handle remodeling store by store. “Some may need only minor renovations while others may be a complete teardown and rebuild,” said Bahnam.

Business has challenges. Like many since 2020, Bahnam’s team navigated around the COVID pandemic, which resulted in many supply chain disruptions. “Gas prices fluctuate, and so do our margins,” said Bahnam. “You could be making a lot of money one day and very little to nothing another

day. Sometimes, with gas, you barely break even. It’s a very volatile business. There is not a lot of consistency.”

In the food, petroleum, and alcohol beverage industries, there are many regulations that owners must comply with regularly. “There are both state and local municipality issues. Each local community approves sites and no two have the same process” said Bahnam.

Like many businesses, the labor shortage has been an ongoing challenge, especially since COVID-19 in

2020. The cost of labor and goods has increased tremendously over the last four years.

A common misconception about gas prices is that gas station owners want higher prices, which is false. “We want the gas prices to be lower,” said Bahnam. “Consumers will spend more money in the store. Many people live on fixed incomes and specific budgets, and if they pay higher prices at the pump, they spend less inside the actual store buying other items.”

Fuel offers pennies on profits. “We don’t work on percentages in gas,” said Bahnam. “Most people don’t understand it. Our business is not the fuel.”

There is also a misconception that convenience stores gauge customers. “We are very competitive inside the store,” said Kolen. “We don’t have 25 to 30% more items than other stores. There is a price for convenience because we are not buying in volume like big grocery stores, but we are not gauging consumers.”

USA 2 GO Quick Stores has branded its model on spirits, beer, wine, and joint food ventures. It also offers lottery. “We also offer food in kiosks that is prepared onsite, such as pizza,” said Kolen.

Bahnam added a commissary kitchen at his headquarters in Wixom. They prepare sandwich wraps, wedge sandwiches, chicken wings, and other meals.

Looking back at the last twenty years, Bahnam can see his vision come



to fruition. He believes every entrepreneur needs a vision and the willingness to pivot when necessary. “We must be ready to deal with the changes we face daily and yearly. Who saw COVID-19 happening?” Bahnam asked. “In business, you learn to adapt and to pivot when necessary.”

Typically, Bahnam doesn’t look 20 years down the road. He creates goals for his business and takes life one day at a time with a growth mindset. After two decades in the industry, they are developing a new look, which they will roll out in 2025.

“We have based our new developments on customer feedback, trends, our own experiences, and assessing how to improve things,” he said. “For instance, more customers are looking for healthier food options. We are adding complete food sections in our coolers, offering items like hummus, fruit, salads, and more nutritious snacks and drinkable items.”

USA 2 GO currently has over 200 employees. The business has been a proud MIRA member since the first store opened. “MIRA gives us a voice in the industry,” said Bahnam. “They fight for us in DC and Lansing and other states. We must look at the big picture. We all want to be successful. We are all in this together. If the industry sinks, we all go down.”

MIRA’s work in government relations and providing members with up-to-date industry news has been bene-

ficial. “For the smaller independents, there would be tremendous value in MIRA membership if they took advantage of it,” said Kolen.

“For us as Chaldeans, there is a significant advantage of a second generation coming into this space,” said Bahnam. “Most of us in this business are not current regarding technology. Having young blood coming in, taking advantage of the sophistication of the market, would improve existing operations,” said Baham. “The technology can take what we established to the next level.”

Technology is instrumental in business success. “From the point of sale to the back-office operations, everything is digitalized, and technology is a significant part of day-to-day operations,” said Bahnam.

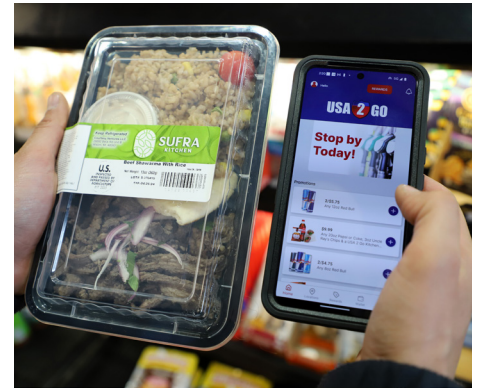
“Technology reads the fuel available at our sites,” said Kolen. “Technology tells us what is purchased, sold, and needed for restocking at any time.”

Bahnam, Kolen, and the team are closely monitoring Artificial Intelligence. “We still need that human element in business,” said Bahnam. “We are selling restricted products, so we must monitor things carefully.”

“We operate with strict integrity,” said Kolen. “We are very transparent with our teams, and our vendors appreciate our honesty and how we do business.”

That leads properly into Bahnam’s business philosophy, rooted in his

“Our online marketing has allowed us to reach different consumers and a broader customer base. We are truly developing the next generation of customers.”



faith. “We operate by the Golden Rule,” said Bahnam. “Do to others as you would want them to do to you.”

In his free time, Bahnam is known to hit the greens and golf with friends, but he is also known for his work in ministry with his master’s degree in theology and as a speaker.

Bahnam’s faith is woven into the entire fabric of his life. When necessary, he can focus his attention on philanthropic projects and ministry. In 2001, he co-founded the Eastern Catholic Re-evangelization Center (ECRC), a lay ministry designed to evangelize the Christian faith to the community.

“We also believe in giving back to the communities where our stores are

located, said Bahnam. “We are entrusted with much, and business also has a spiritual side. We believe we are called to give back and help others in need.”

Bahnam and his wife, Reem, have four grown children. His oldest son, John, works with him in the marketing department. His son, Mark Anthony, works part-time while currently studying business.

So, whether customers visit USA 2 GO on the way to or from work, they are increasingly more relevant to today’s shoppers, given the demands of modern-day living. The stores appeal to many people, from moms on the go, construction workers for a hardy lunch and snacks, to the young hip-

ster looking for the latest craft beers. As branded, “USA 2 GO Quick Stores offer a selection of foods, fresh snack items, cold refreshments, and household goods, which allow shoppers to pick up pantry staples—or even dinner—while filling your tanks.”

They have a very active customized Loyalty Mobil App, Online Delivery, and food service partners at most locations. “Offerings in the stores are consistently being adjusted to meet current trends and specific needs of the local customer,” said Kolen. “Our online marketing has allowed us to reach different consumers and a broader customer base. We are truly developing the next generation of customers.” ■





BEFORE...



...AFTER

CITYSCAPE  
architects



BEFORE...



...AFTER

SPOTLIGHT

# ARE YOU BUILDING OR RENOVATING YOUR BUSINESS? CITYSCAPE IS HERE TO HELP

*Cityscape Architects advise clients from building selection all the way through grand opening*

BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

**B**uilding or renovating a retail building is an expensive venture. Waiting to engage an architect until *after* the property is under contract is the most frequent and significant mistake business owners make in the design and construction process.

That observation comes from the experts at Cityscape Architects.

For 25 years, their team has been designing commercial buildings for clients in retail, restaurants, fast food, banks, offices, dealerships, and clinical spaces. Their pre-purchase due diligence, evaluating facilities for viability *before* a deal is signed, ensures the facility is a great fit to help your retail space become profitable earlier. Less money spent on

construction and permitting means profit from sales arrives earlier.

Cityscape creates early conceptual documents to obtain building cost estimates. "We create drawings to expedite municipality and zoning approvals so you can get to construction and grand opening quickly," said Darryl James, Director of Business Development.

Cityscape serves small business owners locally and multinational brands nationwide. Among their clients are MIRA members like USA 2 GO, featured on this issue's cover. "Cityscape Architects was proud to join MIRA looking to gain exposure to retail business owners to whom we provide professional services. If you sell tires, but no one knows you sell tires...you won't sell many tires," said James. "Cityscape develops long-term relationships with our clients as problem-solving consultants. We do not just chase a project. We're proud that over 90% of our business is through repeat clients. "

Cityscape's Michigan clients include V's Barbershop, Posh Salon, Symmetry Management, T-Mobile, Busch's Fresh Food Market, Little Caesar's, Domino's, Multiple stores at Somerset, Leo's Coney Island, Cat Cora, Dairy Queen, Wendy's, Comerica Bank, Mission Veterinary Partners, & nearly every Automotive Brand.

"Cityscape Architects exceeded our expectations with the design work and construction documentation for our upscale barbershop," said Caroline Milam, owner of V's Barbershop." Their meticulous attention to detail, proactive problem-solving approach, responsiveness, and professionalism were exceptional. Their strong rapport with the city building department significantly eased the permitting process, making it much easier for us. We highly recommend Cityscape for any architectural project and are

confident in their ability to deliver outstanding results."

As architects who put clients first, Cityscape does not have a signature look; instead, they highlight their clients' brands. "No matter the project typology, we roll our sleeves up and work with our client to understand the specific must-haves, needs, wants, and code requirements and develop a functional, durable, and beautiful facility. Customer experience is king," said James.

According to John Free, Cityscape's Director of Design, "Your building talks to your customers before you do, sending a message before arrival through point of sale. Well-designed retail spaces continue that conversation to convert browsers into loyal customers."

For your next building project, invest early in an experienced architecture firm that is responsive and excited about the project, involved from pre-purchase through grand opening, and focuses on designs that get you the most bang for your buck. When interviewing an architectural firm before a property purchase, Cityscape recommends asking specific questions of a firm, including:

- Is the building/space a good fit for my project?
- Are there significant zoning, code, or infrastructure hurdles that will be a challenge?
- How much experience do you have designing a project like mine? What deliverables will you be providing?
- Does your fee include Civil, Structural, Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering?
- Is construction administration included? "Is there an additional fee for answering questions and providing clarifications/drawings as construction progresses?"
- What isn't included in your scope?

## SURPRISES DURING CONSTRUCTION COST TIME AND MONEY

Cityscape Architects reduce client's client risk and cost at every design and construction stage.

## MISSION

Design profitable and efficient buildings for each client. Cityscape Architects handles all design aspects, including equipment coordination and all engineering consultants, so you can focus on running and expanding your business.

## SCOPE & SERVICES

We provide architectural services and have long-standing relationships with other sub-consultants, so we can also be hired to take care of civil, structural, and MEP engineering, geotechnical services, food service consultation, etc. Invest a tiny bit early in building due diligence to avoid significant costs later.

## PROGRAMMING

Cityscape flushes out all building requirements and knows what questions to ask to meet all building needs. We create blueprints and models using 3D Lidar scanning technology & can verify lease areas.

## CONCEPT PLANNING AND DESIGN

Cityscape creates a variety of space arrangements so you can decide what will work best for you and your customers. We use 3D views to show what it will look like before building a single wall.

**To learn more about Cityscape visit [www.cityscape.us](http://www.cityscape.us)**



## EVENT RECAP

# Moving Around the Board to Connect and Collaborate at the Lipari Food Show

BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

This past April, Suburban Collection Showplace was transformed into a large interactive Monopoly board with large Monopoly money and board pieces hanging from the ceiling at the *Lipari "Saving Across the Board" Food Show*.

Attendees packed the aisles, where vendors displayed a variety of products. More than 8,000 retailers from 34 states sampled barbecue sauces, cheeses, ice cream, sausages, pizza, salad dressings, fried chicken and so much more as they ordered new products for the upcoming summer season.

## MOVING AROUND THE MONOPOLY BOARD

The giant food show was one of the many stops MIRA has made while on the road this year and for MIRA and it was all about collaboration.

"Collaboration is a key part of our growth strategy," said Bill Wild, MIRA President & CEO. "MIRA is committed to supporting those who support us. We are a business association, and it is all about

helping each other in business. By learning more about what products Lipari offers, we can relay that message to our membership base when our staff are recruiting members. This partnership has been well established and continues to work today. MIRA members are eligible for a Lipari rebate program that rewards growth and has returned hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to members who take part." See page 32 for details.

MIRA team members staffed a booth stocked with tons of information about membership benefits and upcoming events and passed out free copies of the latest issue of *BottomLine* magazine.

"It is important for MIRA to be at this show to support Lipari," said Wild. "Thom Lipari and his company have been a great supporter of MIRA over the years and played an instrumental part in the association's growth. We hope that we played, at least a small part, in the growth of his organization over the years."

"Lipari Foods values all of our association partners. Supporting associations, like MIRA, which advocate for our retailers is important to us," said

Marissa Smoyer, Director of Events for Lipari Foods and a member of the MIRA Board of Directors. "The Lipari show is a great space for Lipari and MIRA members to meet and discuss their needs and action plans for issues affecting the independent retailer community."

## INVITED TO PLAY

The *Lipari "Saving Across the Board" Food Show* was an exclusive event hosted by Lipari Foods, a Michigan-based food distributor. It allows retailers and specialty foods businesses to sample and view products, and a vast majority of MIRA retailers are also loyal customers of Lipari Foods.

"The turnout has been phenomenal," said Tom Lipari, CEO of Lipari Foods. "It feels like the grocery industry is back. The enthusiasm for growing business, new items, and innovative ideas is refreshing after the last few years. I think we are past the pandemic and the COVID hangover. I think the economy is back on track."

Lipari Foods booked more than 2,400 hotel rooms in 34 hotels in the metro Detroit area to accommodate the largest show in Lipari history. There

were more than 800 booths with 15,000 items on display including 1,000 new items this year.

The Food Show takes effort from almost every department within the company. "From encouraging vendor participation, creating marketing pieces, pulling product for the show, transportation, and staffing, it takes many departments to make the show a success each year," said Smoyer.

The challenging work paid off. "The attendance is overwhelming; we have about 20 to 30% more people than we had last year," said Tony Franchi, Senior Vice President of Sales at Lipari Foods. "People are excited to get out. It is great feeling our customer's enthusiasm, and to see them excited about the industry, the new products, and learning more about the changing consumer trends. Last year, we had about 700 booths; this year, we have more than 800. Our customer and supplier base has expanded. "During the pandemic, many manufacturers stopped making new products but are now back in it. We have brought in a lot of new companies."

One of the consumer trends that came out of the pandemic was the desire for quick and easy. "There is a lot of interest in grab-and-go and fresh salads," said Lipari. "There are so many new products coming out across the board. We have a new program for making fresh salads as if you made them at home. That is what today's consumer wants. They want convenience, they want quick, and they want healthy options. Those who used to cook realize they don't have to anymore, and the younger generations in the workforce today don't want to cook, so they are going for salads and grab-and-go items."

### **RETAILERS AND VENDORS WERE ENGAGED IN THE GAME**

The show also allowed retailers to network and reconnect. "This show allows us to interact face-to-face with our retailers who we otherwise might not see elsewhere," said Wild. "It is also great to see the new

products, and it's exciting to see how much of this industry segment has grown over the years."

There was an energized vibe in the room. "The Lipari Food Show is bigger than the Annual Boat Show, which I thought was the biggest event at the Suburban Collection," said Wild. "It is a fun event, and what's nice is seeing the retailers interact with each other. It's like a big family reunion. Inflation is coming down, and the economy is picking up. Our members are starting to see more traffic in their stores."

Retailers moved up and down the aisles, looking for ideas and the latest items. "It's a great show. We are discovering new things. It's a big crowd. We have buyers who purchase most of the products, but we attend the show to get innovative ideas. Customers ask for a lot of grab-and-go, and we are making more prepared foods," said spouses Al and Grace Jonna, owners of The Picnic Basket in Plymouth. "Here at the show, there are great marinades we can use to prepare foods in-house, like for our popular chicken kabobs."

For Joe Gappy, specialty items are of great interest. "Every year, seasons change and products change, and we are limited on space, so we have a challenging time bringing in new products," said Gappy, owner of Price Valley Market. "If we bring in new products, it's usually products for our ethnic clientele, which is hard to find at American Shows. We got some great new packaging ideas for our product displays at this show."

"This is a great show. I love it," said Isaac Savaya, owner of Ishtar Market in West Bloomfield. "They have exciting new products. I wait for the show every year. I get deals and come up with ideas for the store which is an international market. We cater to Americans, Europeans, Chaldeans, Arab Americans, Russians, and Polish customers, basically customers from all different ethnic backgrounds."



**THOM LIPARI**



**THE MIRA TEAM**



**BILL WILD WITH MIRA BOARD MEMBER JOHN DENHA**



**BILL WILD MEETING WITH MIRA MEMBER MUGG & BOPPS**

"This has been the best show I have seen in several years. They have brought in a lot of new products, and they are getting on track," said Mike Kassa of White Lake Supermarket, who has been in the food retail business for more than 50 years. "Early on, these food shows were great because you got to see and taste products for the first time. These shows got a little stagnant coming out of the pandemic, but this Lipari show is different. They are bringing in new products. It's a much better show."

The show was elaborate as well as engaging. "It's a big show, and you need about three days to see it all," said Louie Attisha with his wife Nikki, the owner of Harbortown Market in Detroit. "We are looking for products that will make my life easier," said Nikki. "Grab-n-Go foods and salads that taste good and look good on display inside our deli counter. Salads and sandwiches are popular at our store. We attend this show to find the latest items and to get new ideas."

Retailers and vendors alike considered the Lipari Food Show a remarkable success. "It's been a great show this year; there is lots of traffic

and orders. There has been a ton of sampling," said Sarah Jackson from Heartisan Foods, who is attending the show for the second year. "We cannot keep up with putting our cheese out. They buy our products for sandwiches, hamburgers, grilling foods, charcuterie trays, mac and cheese, and picnic basket items. We are typically busiest in the 4th quarter of the year, but we still get a lot of business in the summer."

"This is a best-in-class event," said Tom Niccoli of Cheese Merchants. "Consumers are looking for new concepts and new products. We are doing very well this year with new items. We also have plant-based mozzarella for vegans and parmesan cheese, which are extremely popular. Fresh mozzarella is exceedingly popular for pizza and salads, and the retailers here love the product."

Gauging the industry trends is what many vendors do at food shows. "This show is one of the best food shows around. The product and décor are just fantastic," said Joan Hawker, owner of Hawker and Associates. "We service c-stores and grocery stores. Our products did well during the pandemic and continue to do

well. When we sell to Lipari, we get it in on time for selling to retailers. We believe in having the best and staying ahead of the game. New York Style Pizza and Detroit Style Pizza are exceedingly popular."

Pizza is one of many popular summer products. As the temperature rises this summer, customers also look for the perfect cool-down snack like a tasty scoop of ice cream, and there were lines at the Guernseys booth. "The show is going very well. There is so much traffic, and people here want to try everything," said Sheri Smith with Guernseys. "Chocolate syrup and hot fudge are popular in our toppings lineup this year. Detroit Grand Slam and our new Southern Butter Pecan ice cream are popular items. Detroit Grand Slam is expresso base, caramel ice cream with dark chocolate, and espresso beans."

Another new picnic and party product is charcuterie trays. "The show is phenomenal. We all talked about the pandemic and the downtime; it now feels like we are back. We can feel the energy. You can feel the excitement. There is a great vibe here," said Justin Hurley of Smithfield. "Everybody is talking with us about the challenges they are experiencing with labor.



So, they are asking for products to help them with labor issues. So, freshly sliced deli products are popular because they reduce the need for employees to slice meats. They want pre-packed and ready-to-go items. We have the margarita line and dry specialty items, and Charcuterie has exploded.”

Many vendors filled dozens of orders and ran out of samples at the Lipari Food Show. “The show is an unbelievable success. The customers were amazing. Our signature items are sweet-pickled beats and sweet hot bread butter, carrots, and asparagus. They bought everything. Charcuterie boards are so popular. New items this fall are sweet and hot peppers,” said Mary Safie, owner of Safie along with her cousin, Theresa Pavone. “Our location at the show was a success for us. We saw customers from 38 states. It was a very productive show for us!”

### HIGHLIGHTING THE PLAYERS

It wasn’t just retailers checking out the new products. Many were capturing the moment, like Jason Carr. “It’s astonishing here, the sheer volume of vendors, suppliers, stores, and brands under one roof. I’ve never seen Suburban Collection Showplace at capacity and with the overflowing parking I saw today,” said Carr. Host of the popular Facebook podcast *Jason Carr Drive*, Carr was there capturing on-video commentary from vendors and retailers. “They are busing people in, and it’s elbow to elbow. Every conceivable food item, specialty item, meat, bakery, and confection are here. If you find it at your mainstream grocer or specialty store, chances are those items are here at this one trade show. I walk up and down the aisles in this giant convention space, and all I see are hopeful faces, local independent startups and retailers, and mom-and-pops hoping to get distribution for their products. If I put a word on it, it is optimism.”

For the Lipari team, it’s more than just selling products. “I love seeing the customers at the show,” said Lipari. I get to see our customers and interact with them. There are people I have been doing business with for forty to fifty years, and I am also meeting our new customers. My message is, “Keep buying and keep growing the industry.” ■

**Save the date!**  
**Lipari Food Show**  
**APRIL 9, 2025**  
 Suburban Collection Showplace  
 Novi, Michigan



# MIRA MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

– REBATES –  
\*Excludes IL



# Growth Rebate Program

**1.5% Rebate\* on ALL purchases once you hit your growth number!**

## Grocery Stores

Must meet average weekly sales of \$500 per grocery store

## Convenience Stores

Must meet average weekly sales of \$500 per convenience store

### Details:

- Growth calculated against same quarter from prior year
- Rebate paid on everything from dollar one, once growth is achieved
- Rebate is calculated on customer's cost from Lipari Foods, not retail price
- Payouts will be sent quarterly from MIRA
- All existing Lipari customers may qualify

**TO SIGN UP FOR THIS PROGRAM PLEASE CALL MIRA PRESIDENT BILL WILD AT (248) 671-9600 OR COMPLETE THIS FORM AND EMAIL TO BWILD@MIRAMW.ORG.**

MIRA MEMBER ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

LIPARI CUSTOMER ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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

NAME OF STORE: \_\_\_\_\_

STORE LOCATION: (If you have multiple locations, attach store list)

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Exclusions and Rules: Excludes special order items. Some customer exclusions apply. Cannot be combined with any other Lipari rebate program. Channel of trade defined by Lipari classifications. Program not available in Illinois.

ASK THE MEMBER

MIRA caught up with members at the Lipari Food Show to ask:

# What products are you looking to highlight in your business this spring/summer season?



"Many barbecue sauces, salsas, marinades, and everyday snack items. Our customers are into boating, picnics, and going to campgrounds, so they are looking for items when they enjoy the outdoors during this time of year." - **AL & GRACE JONNA** // THE PICNIC BASKET

"Our customers are more fiesta party goers who love hosting events on the weekends at their homes, so they buy the weekend foods for their parties. Also, our hot products are geared towards our clientele that looks for Hispanic foods and snack items." - **JOE GAPPY** // PRINCE VALLEY MARKET



"The number one product for us is pizza. Our customers like the grab-and-go pizza. Salads are an important product for my business. We buy bulk salads from Lipari and sell them in our deli section. I sell more potato salad from Lipari in the summer than all my other salads throughout the rest of the year." - **MIKE KASSA** // WHITE LAKE SUPERMARKET

"My customers are always looking for new items from the Middle East. These items are hard to get. Especially for summer, customers are looking for meats like tenderloins and steaks. Our customers also buy a lot of nuts for their picnics. They go to parks and snack on seeds and nuts in the summer. They also love our fresh breads. They love them for their picnic outings. Our bread is extremely popular. Our produce is a hot seller in the spring and summer. Our customers make a lot of Iraqi salad, which includes beats, tomatoes, and cucumbers, so our produce is trendy in the summer."

- **ISAAC SAVAYA** // ISHTAR MARKET



"Some hot items are prepared salads and cheese and crackers that look good on display. When our customers head to Belle Isle, they come into our store and buy sandwiches and salads. They also buy a lot of cold drinks and ice cream." - **NIKKI & LOUIE ATTISHA** // HARBORTOWN MARKET

"We have an in-house bakery, and we are looking at frostings and donuts. We are also looking at Chester Chicken to bring into the store for picnics, boating, and barbecues. We are looking at sauces to go with grilling. We are just looking at the large variety of products for the summer months."

- **JOHN DENHA & MINA YOUSIF** // HURON FOODS & DELI



"Salads and beverage items like lemonade are popular in the summer. We also are looking at barbecue sauces." - **RAMY SHEENA**



■ WHERE ARE THEY NOW

# MIR Foundation Scholarship Recipient Enjoys Career Success

■ BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

When Annie Acho Tartoni graduated with a master's degree in business administration, she had a prominent role in the graduation ceremony. She posted on LinkedIn, "I was honored to be selected to carry the School of Business banner and represent the graduate students as the top of my class. I am truly grateful to the University of Detroit Mercy for my academic experience and endless opportunities."

Shortly after graduation, she started her new position at Plante Moran in Assurance.

In 2018, she was one of MIRA's Scholarship Recipients. "Winning the MIRA scholarship was an honor," said Acho Tartoni. "It meant that my handwork and dedication paid off and that I could achieve even more because of this gift."

She graduated from Mercy High School as Vice President of the International Thespian Society, four-year Student Council Representative, Link Leader Commissioner, Latin Club Officer, Lacrosse Captain, and Student Director. She was also a member of the National Honor Society, a Mercy Mime, and an Irish Dancer. She was also crowned Miss Malta 2018, representing the United States and Canada. While in High School, Annie volunteered at Beaumont Hospital Post Operation, Our Lady of Sorrows, and the University of Michigan's MPACT program.

After graduating from Mercy High School in 2018, Acho Tartoni attended the University of Detroit Mercy as part of a 5-Year MBA Program. She received her bachelor's in accounting in 2022 and a master's in business administration in 2023.

At Detroit Mercy, she was Valedictorian Candidate and graduated Summa Cum Laude and was also the recipient of the Dean's Leadership Key and Emerging Leader Pin and Medallion.

"I am extremely grateful for my college experience," she said. "I could balance work and school while staying involved in school and church activities."

She is also grateful to have been awarded a MIRA scholarship. "The scholarship provided to me expanded my opportunities and helped me continue my education at Detroit Mercy," she noted. "I am grateful that the MIRA community believed in my potential and supported me in my endeavors."

She looks back at the scholarship luncheon with fond memories. "When meeting the members of MIRA, I felt supported and connected to the generous donors in the community," she said. "It was also a great way to meet other scholarship recipients and hear their stories and accomplishments."

She is an audit staff member at Plante Moran in Southfield, Michigan. Following an internship with Plante Moran in July 2022, she accepted the offer for a full-time position shortly after.

"What I enjoy most about my work is my connection with our clients. Being the person I am, I love client interaction and helping clients firsthand achieve their goals," she said. "The advice I would give is to get involved in whatever interests you. Participating in student organizations and other activities will expand your connection base and help expand your horizons."

As much as she loves her career, Acho Tartoni



loves her family even more. "Family is everything to me, next to my faith," she said. "Outside work, I spend most of my time with family and friends. I look forward to weekly Sunday dinners with my grandparents and going out with friends. I am also involved at Shenandoah Country Club and was voted Chairwoman of the Young Adult Committee. I love being part of a team and enjoy being involved in the Chaldean Community."

Although she admires many people, she looks to her mom, Stephanie Acho, her grandparents, Ron and Rita Acho, and her siblings, Michael, and Mary Katharine Acho Tartoni, as her true heroes. "I am extremely blessed to have them in life and to be able to grow and learn from them. I owe everything to them."

As she proudly states, faith plays a significant role in her life, so she shares a favorite quote her grandparents shared with her. "I try to live by it daily," she said.

"Work as if everything depends on you. Pray as if everything depends on God" -St. Augustine

Like many career-minded professionals, Acho Tartoni has set goals for herself. "In the short term, I will continue to grow within my accounting career at Plante Moran," she said. "In the long term, I will continue to grow mentally, spiritually, and physically to be the best version of myself that I can be." ■

# 16TH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

JUNE 18, 2024

DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB, DETROIT, MI

Every year the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation awards academic scholarships in the amount of \$1,500 each to extraordinary and deserving students who will be attending, or are already attending an accredited public college, private college, university or trade school. Scholarship recipients have an opportunity to meet and network with donors and contributors during the Annual Scholarship Luncheon.

Since its inception, generous contributions have permitted the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation to distribute over \$1 million in scholarship funds to the employees and family members of member businesses, their customers, and financially disadvantaged youth.

*Sponsoring this event will truly make a difference in the lives of these students, and together we work to enhance our next generation of leaders.*

*Keynote Speaker:*  
**Kenneth R. Dallafor**

Kenneth R. Dallafor is a Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan executive vice president and president of the Blue Cross Health Plan Business division.



Dallafor is responsible for providing strategic leadership and executive accountability of Blue Cross's Health Plan Business division, which includes sales for Michigan commercial and individual lines of business as well as Blue Care Network and LifeSecure.

From 1982-1992, he played professional football for the Michigan Panthers, Detroit Lions, San Diego Chargers and Pittsburgh Steelers. Today, he is a member of the Detroit Lions Legends Club.



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## MIRA GIVES BACK

*The Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation, established in 1999, provides college scholarships and promotes education for the families of MIRA members and staff. The Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation also participates in industry research and other projects related to the food, beverage, and petroleum retail industries.*

### ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation is known for its scholarship program, which is designed to reinforce the importance of education among its member companies and future generations. MIRA believes its support for educational growth will continue to strengthen the voice for independent food, beverage, and petroleum retailers in the Midwest.

Every year, a committee of educators evaluates applicants according to academic merit, participation in extracurricular activities, and community involvement. Over the years, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation has distributed more than \$1 million in scholarship funds to the employees and family members of MIRA member businesses, their customers, and financially disadvantaged young adults.

For more information on eligibility criteria, visit [www.MIRAmw.org/foundation/scholarship-application](http://www.MIRAmw.org/foundation/scholarship-application).

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We encourage MIRA members to volunteer their time and resources to sponsor Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation programs as an extension of your involvement in our community. We are grateful for the donations made by MIRA members and friends. You can help with financial contributions, fundraising activities, and volunteering in any of the Foundation's education, charitable, and humanitarian projects.

MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS FOUNDATION  
EIN# 38-3457246 is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions to the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation are voluntary and tax deductible.

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5779 West Maple Road, West Bloomfield, MI 48322.  
T: (248) 671-9600 • F: (866) 601-9610 • [www.MIRAmw.org](http://www.MIRAmw.org)

# Meet Catherine Denha

BY EPIPHANY COMMUNICATIONS: COACHING & CONSULTING

Catherine Denha, known to her family and friends as “Cat,” grew up in an entrepreneurial family. Her grandfather, Mike Denha, 90, is a long-time grocer and MIRA member. He bought his first business in 1965 with his cousin Sabri Denha.

Mike’s son, John, Catherine’s father, spent his weekends and summers working in the family business before he eventually became partners with his father and brothers Jeff and Chris, in the family’s business ventures. Their primary companies have been in the food and retail industry.

with the planning of events, social media content, and other marketing initiatives.

“I think my degree has served me in this role because the classes were so broad in school,” said Denha. “It touched on all different types of marketing, such as social media marketing, digital marketing, search engine marketing, and so on. I was able to take something away from all those marketing strategies. Interning here for three summers also helped me with my role today.”

Before taking this position at MIRA, Denha worked with her brothers at their mortgage company. At 14 years old, while attending Marian High School, Denha worked as the receptionist at MIRA,



**CATHERINE DENHA**  
MIRA EVENTS & PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR  
(248) 671-9600 | [C DENHA@MIRAMW.ORG](mailto:C DENHA@MIRAMW.ORG)

communicating with the MIRA Board of Directors, and making necessary calls to members and MIRA business partners.

She loves hanging out with friends and family in her spare time and traveling to warm climates. “I love catching up on TV shows, watching the Lions, and walking outside when the weather is warm.”

Her short-term goals are to continue networking through MIRA, learn everyday skill sets, balance work, and prioritize essentials. Her long-term goal is to create a career here that aligns with her goals.

“I am always looking for opportunities to grow here.”

She is also very focused on promoting MIRA. “I want people to know the type of advocacy work MIRA is involved in daily for our members,” said Denha. “We constantly represent retailers in legislative matters. One of the benefits people don’t realize we have is our rebate program. We send thousands of dollars quarterly to retailers as part of our rebate, coupon, and discount program.”

“I have learned so much in the short time I have been here...By nature, I can handle whatever tasks come my way in a day, and I love adapting to new opportunities; they challenge me and help me grow.”

“What I love most about MIRA is the incredible work it does in support of Independent Retailers,” said Denha. “Being the daughter and granddaughter of small business owners, I grew up with an entrepreneurial mindset. Being a part of a team that specifically helps independent retailers has been an incredible experience.”

A recent Oakland University graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Marketing, Denha is the new Events and Publications Coordinator for MIRA. In her role, she assists President & CEO, Bill Wild,

interning during summer breaks.

“I have learned so much in the short time I have been here,” she said. “I am constantly learning. When I started, I was doing something completely different than what I am doing now. By nature, I can handle whatever tasks come my way in a day, and I love adapting to new opportunities; they challenge me and help me grow.”

With her calm and confident demeanor, Denha connects with MIRA members daily. Her work varies daily but often involves checking emails, working on events,

MIRA STAFF continued on page 38

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# Meet Taylor Thornsberry

In just a few weeks on the job, Taylor Thornsberry has a solid understanding of MIRA's advantages to its membership and is looking for opportunities to share the value with others. "The benefits of MIRA far outweigh any expenses incurred for membership," she said. "Not only do we give back hundreds of thousands of dollars through our rebate and discount programs, but we also put on many events throughout the year for our members to network and connect with sponsors."

Thornsberry is the association's new comptroller. "I like the different events we put on for our members and sponsors and being a part of it from start to finish,"

that you understand yourself and can communicate with others. The old way is not always the best, and I am learning what works for me and what doesn't regarding system functionality and reporting."

She earned her undergraduate degree in Business Administration and Master's in Accounting from Eastern Michigan University. "I also worked as an accountant for a few years, which gave me a solid basic understanding of how to operate the financial sector for MIRA," she said.

On any given day, Thornsberry is entering bills that need to be paid, writing checks, creating invoices for customers, receiving payments, entering payroll, reconciling accounts, developing, and



**TAYLOR THORNSBERRY**  
**COMPTROLLER & HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**(248) 671-9600 | TTHORNSBERRY@MIRAMW.ORG**

"My short-term career goals are to learn as much as I can about MIRA and provide a new perspective on the financials and how to improve our bottom line. My long-term career goals are to find my place in the organization and gain confidence and knowledge to improve our association and help our members better."

she noted. "This is also the first time I have worked for a non-profit, and I enjoy prioritizing our customers as our main focus and providing them with different resources and programs to help them succeed."

She is still in the learning phase of her job but has ascertained a great deal of information in just a few short weeks. "I have learned not just to follow what was previously done," she said. "Sometimes, it is best to trail your path and create systems

reviewing financial statements, renewing memberships, and paying rebates.

Taylor is also leading a new financial software implementation and is part of the team working on the launch of a new modern MIRA website.

She started her career as a staff accountant at a CPA firm in Troy. She then transitioned from public accounting to private accounting by working as the sole accountant at a magnet and conveyor shop in Livonia, where she performed

accounting functions ranging from receivables and payables to payroll and financial statement creation.

"My short-term career goals are to learn as much as I can about MIRA and provide a new perspective on the financials and how to improve our bottom line," she said. "My long-term career goals are to find my place in the organization and gain confidence and knowledge to improve our association and help our members better."

When the workday ends, Thornsberry enjoys taking walks with her dog Bear, a Pitbull she rescued. She also spends time watching movies and TV with her boyfriend. "I also try to put time aside every week to see my friends and family and catch up over dinners," she said. "I enjoy reading books and renovating my home. I like finding new ways to organize and keep my home clean and aesthetically pleasing. I also enjoy traveling, although I haven't yet knocked many destinations off my long wish list. I hope to put some time aside every summer to visit one place I haven't seen yet." ■

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branding targets a main market, product branding goes deeper, targeting specific submarkets within the audience.

### WHY INVEST IN RETAIL BRANDING?

Here are some compelling reasons to put effort into creating a unique retail brand.

#### Stand Apart from the Competition:

A strong retail brand helps you differentiate from competitors. This is opportunity to define yourself. When I was growing up my dad owned a business in Detroit at 7 mile and Southfield Road. It was a convenience store and known in the neighborhood. What set us apart from other stores was that we did not have bulletproof around our counters. We had a TV on playing whatever Detroit sports team was playing. On the counter near the front office was a plant gifted to my dad when he re-opened the business after a horrific fire. That plant grew and the vines were stabled across the office throughout the ceiling of the store. The customers loved it. We created an engaging and friendly atmosphere.

My father knew almost every customer by name and their family members. He prepared daily lunch for local police at no cost. I heard “Hi Sam” hundreds of times a day by various voices that walked through the door.

My dad created a brand that was reflective of his kind and welcoming personality at a time when “brand identity” wasn’t even discussed.

**Build Trust and Loyalty:** Consistent branding fosters trust. When customers

recognize your brand, they’re more likely to choose you over others. Our customers trusted my dad.

**Enhance Customer Experience:** Retail branding isn’t just about visuals; it’s about the entire shopping journey. From store layout to customer service, every touchpoint matters. Our store was always cleaned from the front counters to the backroom storage. Our bathroom floors shined. Cleanliness was a priority for my father. Weekly, I not only had to dust and face the shelves, but I often had to take every product off the shelves and scrub them and dust off every product.

**Attract Your Target Audience:** A well-defined brand appeals to the right people. Understand your audience and tailor your brand accordingly. Our customers loved Detroit sports and playing games on a TV while they waited in line attracted customers. It was an added special touch and enhanced our identity.

### STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A STRONG RETAIL BRAND

#### Understand and Adapt to Trends:

Stay informed about current trends, especially those that resonate with your target audience. Gen Z and Millennials, for instance, are influenced by styles, colors, and music trends.

#### Stay Consistent with Your Branding:

Whether online or in-store, maintain a cohesive image. Use the same visual identity across products and platforms. Your colors, logos and marketing merchandise should be consistent.

#### Take Advantage of Technology:

Leverage digital tools to enhance the shopping experience. Interactive kiosks, personalized recommendations, and seamless online integration can set you apart.

**Use Social Proof:** Encourage customer reviews, testimonials, and user-generated content. Positive social proof builds credibility. Think 3rd party validators. Share your story so others can tell it.

**Invest in Good Design:** Visual aesthetics matter. From your logo to store layout, prioritize design elements that align with your brand identity. Both Kevin Bahnam and Ronnie Jamil have made major investments in their brand.

#### Nurture Customer Relationships:

Engage with your customers beyond transactions. Personalized interactions, loyalty programs, and excellent customer service go a long way.

Remember, your retail brand isn’t just about what you sell—it’s about the emotions, memories, and connections you create. It’s about how people feel inside your business and when they leave. My dad was known as a friendly store owner. He always had a smile on his face and kindness to share. I know he left an impression and a legacy. Think about your identity and craft a brand that leaves a lasting impression! ■

*Vanessa Denha Garmo is a leadership development coach, communications strategist, and founder of Epiphany Communications: Coaching & Consulting*



*Sprite*

*Chill*

CHERRY LIME

# Warehouse Safety

You may have seen, over the years, an increase in warehouse operations in your area. This is due to the industry's significant growth since 2011. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), warehousing and distribution facilities have experienced a surge in employment from 668,900 to 1,713,900. The study included industries in warehousing and distribution centers, mail/postal processing and distribution centers and parcel delivery/courier services. Unfortunately, the increase in employment has also shown an increase in employee injuries.

From 2017 to 2021, the average incidence rate of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses and the average days away restricted or transferred rate (also known as DART) were significantly higher than the private general industry rate. The Private Industry Rate showed a recordable case rate of 2.76 and a total DART rate of 1.6. The warehouse industry average showed a total recordable case rate of 4.17 and a total DART rate of 3.64. Check to see how your Injury and DART Rate compare.

With the increase in injuries, it is essential to ensure you have implemented the appropriate safety programs and trained employees on hazard identification and resolution. To get an idea of what those warehouse hazards are, OSHA performed several inspections over the years and came up with the following areas of concern: powered industrial vehicles; slip, trip, and fall hazards; blocked aisles/means of egress; heat hazards; and ergonomic hazards. Although

this is only part of the list, it can help provide a starting point for identification of hazards in your organization.

Here are some potential solutions to those hazards:

## 1 Powered Industrial Vehicles (PIV's) Hazards

- All employees operating PIVs must be adequately trained.
- Never exceed the rated load of the PIV and ensure it is stable.
- Watch for pedestrians and observe the speed limit.
- Use horns at cross aisles and obstructed areas.
- Never, ever give rides to passengers.

## 2 Slips, Trips and Fall Hazards

- Train workers on fall protection systems and ensure they are appropriately used.
- Keep floors and aisles clear of trip hazards such as cords, pallets, boxes and hoses.
- Ensure spills or wet areas are cleaned up as soon as possible.
- Ladders should be inspected before use and always used properly. Do not allow ladders to be used as platforms or placed on boxes, barrels or pallets to obtain additional height.

## 3 Blocked Aisles/Means of Egress Hazards

- Fire extinguishers, eye wash/safety shower stations and electrical boxes should always remain clear and

accessible. Best management practices suggest three feet of clearance.

- Ensure exit doors are kept clear in the event of an evacuation.
- Check emergency lighting for proper functionality.

## 4 Heat Hazards

- New and returning workers should gradually be acclimated into the workplace to build a tolerance to the heat.
- Provide breaks that include water or electrolytes and cool/shaded areas.
- Train workers on the symptoms and dangers of heat hazards, such as heat stress or heat exhaustion and the steps to take for proper medical assistance.

## 5 Ergonomic Hazards

- Ensure employees understand proper lifting techniques and weight limitations.
- Review and train employees on the need for material handling equipment to assist in lifting objects. Train employees on the signs and symptoms of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs). MSDs include injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger and epicondylitis.

Employers can create a secure environment that promotes employee well-being and enhances overall operation efficiency by prioritizing warehouse safety through training, communication, and proactive measures. Regular reviews and updates to safety protocols are essential to adapt to changing circumstances and technologies.

If you need help identifying potential hazards in your workplace, please contact Andy Sawan, Risk Services Specialist at Sedgwick at [andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com](mailto:andrew.sawan@sedgwick.com) or (330) 819-4728. ■



# sedgwick®

MIRA MEMBER  
EXCLUSIVE  
– DISCOUNTS –



## A fast, safe and convenient alternative to filling and selling propane tanks!

### MIRA MEMBER\* PRICING:

Exchange Price:  
\$13.39

Purchase Price:  
\$47.00

\*If you are already a Tank Traders® customer, we will adjust your cost to these rates.

*From fill to till and back again, we oversee the entire product lifecycle to serve you better. By controlling our operations, we're able to ensure that every tank is:*

- Inspected, cleaned and refurbished by qualified personnel
- Delivered on time by licensed drivers
- Decommissioned and recycled for scrap metal at the end of its life

*As a participating retailer, you'll:*

- Expand your product line to include propane sales
- Eliminate the need for specialized training and certified propane attendants
- Increase repeat business and return consumer traffic
- Earn extra revenue without losing indoor shelf space
- Provide a new service for customers that encourages repeat business
- Offer an environmentally friendly recycling service at no charge
- Eliminate the need for your customers to wait for tanks to be filled

1

### Account Set Up

We will walk you through the application process, obtain licensing on your behalf where applicable, and get you all set up so that you can start selling propane.

2

### Training & Displays

Once you're all set up, we'll train your staff on the program and its benefits and outfit your store with a 24-tank, or larger, storage display cage, promotional signage and marketing collateral.

3

### Away You Go

Finally, our logistics team will fill your cage and coordinate regular propane deliveries based on your sales volumes in order to maximize your stores' propane sales.

— REBATES —  
Available in KY, MD, OH, PA, VA & WV

SCAN FOR MIRA  
MEMBER EXCLUSIVE  
PROGRAM DETAILS:



# MIRA MEMBER EXCLUSIVE

# INNOVATORS -- NOT -- IMITATORS

## Take Advantage Of MIRA'S Group Buying Power With The Region's Top Retail Convenience Distributor



Special MIRA Program Available

# Team Sledd

CONVENIENCE DISTRIBUTOR

## Your Retail Partner!

[www.TeamSledd.com](http://www.TeamSledd.com)



On time. Every time.  
All the time.

### Details:

New & current customers are eligible for the following rebates:

- 1% Non-Tobacco/Non-Cigarette
- Additional 2% on Energy Supplements (Total of 3%)
- Additional 2% on Foodservice products (Total of 3%)
- Additional 3% 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 & 7 day EFT

### • TOTAL VALUE TO YOU •

**\$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

For more information on Team Sledd, call the office at **800.333.0374**  
or E-mail Sheila Reilly at **SReilly@TeamSledd.com**

# MEMBERSHIP – MARCH & APRIL 2024

Welcome these new and recently renewed MIRA members!

COMPANY  
CITY, STATE . . . . .MEMBER SINCE

**7 Mile Express Inc (Detroit Wine & Liquor)**  
Detroit, MI . . . . .07/27/1992

**8 Mile Foodland**  
Southfield, MI . . . . .05/21/1998

**All Seasons Market**  
Ann Arbor, MI . . . . .08/24/2016

**Altria Client Services**  
Columbus, OH . . . . .06/14/1985

**Boulevard Convenient #4003**  
Garfield Heights, OH. . . . .07/11/2013

**Brighton Gas & Goods**  
Brighton, MI . . . . .11/27/2007

**Broadway Shell**  
Grove City, OH . . . . .10/14/2020

**Carnegie BP**  
Cleveland, OH . . . . .05/03/2013

**Convenient Food Mart #3039**  
Painesville, OH . . . . .07/11/2013

**Express Food Mart**  
Cleveland, OH . . . . .11/17/2020

**Farmer John Food Center**  
Detroit, MI. . . . .12/08/2004

**Five Brothers Market**  
Pontiac, MI . . . . .09/13/2022

**Flanagan's Car Care**  
Delphos, OH . . . . .06/22/1999

**Freel's Market**  
Tawas City, MI. . . . .07/25/2009

**Glory Supermarket**  
Highland Park, MI . . . . .12/27/2005

**Grand Party Store**  
Brighton, MI . . . . .11/23/2011

**Haggerty & Joy Mobil**  
Canton, MI . . . . .09/30/2009

COMPANY  
CITY, STATE . . . . .MEMBER SINCE

**Handy Mart**  
Garden City, MI. . . . .04/30/2010

**Haywards Liquor**  
Belleville, MI . . . . .06/26/2012

**HMR Petroleum**  
Mount Vernon, OH. . . . .12/31/2014

**Howell 2 Go**  
Howell, MI . . . . .10/19/2021

**IAK Petroleum**  
Sterling Heights, MI . . . . .07/27/2015

**Ishtar Ethnic Food**  
West Bloomfield, MI. . . . .03/23/2012

**Jerry's Food Market**  
Wyandotte, MI . . . . .05/28/2002

**Lakeview Party Store**  
Waterford, MI. . . . .09/19/2013

**Liquor Palace**  
Detroit, MI. . . . .06/24/2010

**Marathon on the Square**  
Wadsworth, OH. . . . .03/05/2013

**Marv's Meats**  
Brighton, MI . . . . .10/25/2016

**Miles Supermarket**  
Cleveland, OH . . . . .01/26/2021

**Mound Fuel**  
Warren, MI . . . . .10/17/2006

**O'Briens Supermarket**  
Ecorse, MI. . . . .10/30/2009

**Pellston General Store**  
Pellston, MI . . . . .05/06/2015

**Pontiac Foodland**  
Pontiac, MI . . . . .03/26/2009

**Rodriguez Supermarket**  
Grand Rapids, MI. . . . .01/11/2018

COMPANY  
CITY, STATE . . . . .MEMBER SINCE

**Roseville Party Store**  
Roseville, MI . . . . .09/30/2009

**Sahara Restaurant**  
Oak Park, MI . . . . .08/17/2011

**Sai Convenient Food Mart**  
Garfield Heights, OH. . . . .09/28/2021

**Sam's Grab & Go Deli**  
Parma, OH . . . . .08/04/2021

**Select Wine Shop**  
Ferndale, MI . . . . .04/16/2015

**Shurfast Food Mart (Sawka Enterprises)**  
Cadiz, OH . . . . .04/25/2014

**St. Clair Gas**  
Cleveland, OH . . . . .03/07/2008

**Sunes DM Goods & Grocery**  
Drummond Island, MI. . . . .06/13/2017

**Superior BP**  
Cleveland, OH . . . . .07/29/2019

**Surfside Convenient Food Mart**  
Eastlake, OH . . . . .01/01/2016

**Tamar Design's, LLC**  
Farmington Hills, MI. . . . .03/09/2009

**Teer Management LLC- Exxon Mobil**  
Grand Blanc, MI . . . . .07/27/2018

**The Beer Depot**  
Ann Arbor, MI. . . . .08/24/2016

**Tito's Handmade Vodka**  
Plymouth, MI . . . . .03/06/2020

**Torminos Pick & Go**  
Milan, MI . . . . .04/13/2018

# MEMBERSHIP

Please Support These MIRA Business Partners



Logo indicates an exclusive membership program that has been endorsed by MIRA!

- ☑ Supplier only available in MI
- ☑ Supplier only available in OH
- ☑ Supplier only available in IL

## ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES

Cityscape Architects  
(313) 398-4416

## BAKED GOODS DISTRIBUTORS

Kordas' Metropolitan Baking Co.  
(313) 875-7246

## BANKING SERVICES/ATM

Huntington Bank  
(810) 869-5074

## BEER DISTRIBUTORS

Eastown Distributors  
(313) 867-6900

## BOOKKEEPING/ACCOUNTING CPA

UHY Advisors-MI  
(248) 355-1040

## BUSINESS & MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS/ PUBLIC RELATIONS/STREAMING

Citadel FM  
(647) 802-1852

Comcast Business  
(734) 277-9731

Tamar Designs, LLC  
(248) 760-7211

## C-STORE & TOBACCO DISTRIBUTORS

S. Abraham & Sons, Inc.  
(616) 453-6358

Team Sledd  
1-800-333-0374

Capital Sales Company  
(248) 542-4400

CC Mevape Reload LLC  
(214) 680-4102

H.T. Hackney-Grand Rapids  
1-800-874-5550

Seaway Cash-N-Carry  
(216) 361-5757

## C-STORE MISC. TAXABLE MERCHANDISE

Novelty, Inc.  
1-800-968-7249

Lasting Impressions Promotions Inc.  
(734) 641-2800

Pure Mitt LLC  
(231) 330-2554

## CHECK CASHING

Check Casher Money Machine  
1-800-333-0374

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

Eden Snacks  
(248) 670-1766

Frito-Lay, Inc.  
1-800-359-5914

Motown Snack Foods  
(313) 931-3205

## COMPLIANCE TRAINING

Underground Storage Tank  
1-800-666-6233

## COUPON REDEMPTION/MONEY TRANSFER/BILL PAYMENT

MIRA Coupon Redemption  
1-800-666-6233 or (405) 525-9419

## CREDIT CARD PROCESSING

MIRA Credit Card Processing  
1-800-666-6233

Card Network  
(248) 546-6772

National Merchant Solutions  
1-888-864-3480

## DELI & MEAT MANUFACTURERS & DISTRIBUTORS

Lipari Foods, Inc.  
(586) 447-3500

Harvest Sherwood  
(313) 659-7300

Kowalski Sausage Co.  
(313) 873-8200

Wolverine Packing Company  
(313) 259-7500

## ENERGY, LIGHTING & UTILITIES

Running Right  
(248) 884-1704

DTE Energy  
1-800-477-4747

DTE Your Energy Savings  
1-855-234-7335

## ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING

BLDI Environmental Engineers  
(734) 838-0008

Phoenix Environmental  
(734) 449-1266

## FOOD EQUIPMENT, MACHINERY & KIOSKS

Taylor Freezer/Broaster Chicken  
(734) 525-2535

## GAS STATION BRANDING & MAINTENANCE

OWL Services  
(248) 620-0070

BLDI Environmental Engineers  
(734)-838-0008

## GASOLINE WHOLESALERS

CFX Management  
(937) 938-5156

Markham Oil Company, Inc.  
(517) 861-7366

Teer Management LLC  
(810) 584-7975

## GREETING CARDS

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

## GROCERY WHOLESALERS & DISTRIBUTORS

T.I. Spices, Inc./Amal Distributing  
(586) 790-7100

D&B Grocers Wholesale  
(734) 513-1715

Denha Group Distribution  
(586) 464-7615

P&L Food Wholesalers  
(734) 451-2760

SpartanNash  
(616) 878-2248

UNFI West Region  
(262) 942-3387

## HOTELS, CONVENTION CENTERS & BANQUET HALLS

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

## ICE PRODUCTS

Home City Ice  
1-844-443-8423

Taylor Ice Co.  
(313) 295-8576


## INSURANCE SERVICES: COMMERCIAL


CBIZ Insurance  
(216) 525-7163

Conifer Insurance Company  
(248) 559-0840 (Liquor Liability)


Canopy  
(313) 662-3522


**INSURANCE SERVICES:****HEALTH & LIFE**

BCBS of Michigan   
(313) 448-2756


Blue Care Network   
(248) 799-6300

**INSURANCE SERVICES: WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

Conifer Insurance Company   
(248) 559-0840

Sedgwick   
1-800-837-3200 ext. 7188

**JANITORIAL PRODUCTS/CLEANING CHEMICALS**

Detroit Chemical & Paper Supply   
(586) 558-8805

**LEGAL SERVICES**


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

John J. Doyle, Attorney  
(517) 204-7721

Kassab Law Group, PC  
(248) 538-2200

Michigan Tax Appeal Service  
(248) 392-4342

**LIQUOR SHELF TAGS**

Saxon, Inc.   
(248) 398-2000

**LOTTERY**

All-Star Gaming  
(855) 772-4646

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


**MONEY ORDERS**

Retailers Express Money Orders   
1-800-666-6233


**OFFICE SUPPLIES & PRODUCTS**

Office Depot   
(855) 337-6811

**PAYROLL SERVICES**

ConnectPay Payroll Services   
(248) 594-6900

**PET SUPPLIES MISC.**


Cost Less, Inc.   
(810) 715-4500


**PIZZA SUPPLIERS**

Omni Food Concepts   
1-888-367-7829

Hunt Brothers Pizza  
(615) 259-2629


**POINT OF SALE & RETAIL TECHNOLOGY**

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

Petrosoft LLC   
(412) 306-0640

BMC-Business Machines Company  
(517) 485-1732

**PRINTING, PUBLISHING & SIGNAGE**

Saxon, Inc.   
(248) 398-2000


Lasting Impressions  
(734) 641-2800

Pace Custom Printing  
(248) 563-7702

**PRODUCE DISTRIBUTORS**


Anthony Marano Company  
(773) 321-7500

**PROPANE**

Tank Traders Midwest   
(877) 429-5797


Planet Propane  
(248) 647-0000

**REAL ESTATE**

Sell Your Business Program   
1-800-666-6233


Global Petro Advisors LLC / Elevate Next Home  
(614) 332-8762

**REFRIGERATION SOLUTIONS (COMMERCIAL)**

American Refrigeration Manufacturer   
(248) 747-2045

Raves Cooler Doors  
(248) 887-0648

**RETAIL FIXTURES, DISPLAYS & FLOORING**

Display Max   
(810) 494-0400


**REVERSE VENDING MACHINES & SERVICE**

UBCR, LLC  
(248) 529-2605

**ROOFING: COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL**

Technique Roofing Systems  
1-800-653-1631

**SODA POP, WATER, JUICES & OTHER BEVERAGES**

Faygo Beverages, Inc.   
(313) 925-1600

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

Garden Food Distributors  
(313) 584-2800

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

**TREE & ARBORIST SERVICES**

Horton's Tree Service  
(734) 422-1634

**TOBACCO ALTERNATIVES**

Swisher International  
(904) 635-9477


**TOBACCO COMPANIES & PRODUCTS**

Altria Client Services  
(513) 831-5510


PMI Global Services Inc.  
(810) 923-9732

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company  
(336) 741-0727

**UNIFORMS, LINENS & SUPPLIES**

UniFirst Corporation   
(888) 256-5255 ext. 232

**WASTE/GARBAGE DISPOSAL**

Priority Waste   
(586) 228-1200

EZ Waste Removal  
(216) 377-1323

**WEB DEVELOPMENT**

KreativMedia  
(248) 721-9919

**WINE & SPIRITS COMPANIES**

Borg Vodka Water  
(614) 345-8074

Cornerstone Wine Distributor  
(586) 839-2552

Dos Toros LLC  
(419) 576-4500

Hard Truth Distilling Co.  
(812) 720-4840

Luxco  
(313) 333-4637

Proximo Spirits  
(810) 278-0599

Tito's Handmade Vodka  
(248) 885-3424

**WINE & SPIRITS DISTRIBUTORS**

Great Lakes Wine & Spirits  
1-888-860-3805

RNDC of Michigan  
1-888-697-6424

Learn how to become MIRA endorsed and promote a program to MIRA members!

Bill Wild, MIRA President & CEO  
(248) 671-9600  
Bwild@MIRAmw.org

# EVENTS

## 2024

### LEGISLATIVE DAY

**JUNE 12, 2024**

**LANSING, MI**

Join fellow MIRA members at Michigan's Capital in Lansing to celebrate "Independent Retailers Day" and meet with legislators from your district. *Sponsorship opportunities available.*

### MIDWEST INDEPENDENT RETAILERS FOUNDATION'S 16TH ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON

**JUNE 18, 2024**

**DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB, DETROIT MI**

Every year, the Midwest Independent Retailers Foundation awards academic scholarships to extraordinary and deserving students in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. Help the MIR Foundation invest in the leaders of tomorrow. *Sponsorship opportunities available.*



### 48TH ANNUAL MICHIGAN GOLF OPEN

**JULY 17, 2024**

**FOX HILLS GOLF & BANQUET CENTER, PLYMOUTH MI**

An unforgettable day on the course includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, cigars and 18 holes of premier golf and product samples all over the course. THIS IS THE GOLF OUTING YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT! Always lots of celebrities, sports stars, and networking. Sign up early as this event sells out every year. *Sponsorship opportunities are available.*



### 19TH ANNUAL OHIO GOLF OUTING

**AUGUST 27, 2024**

**SHALE CREEK GOLF CLUB, MEDINA OH**

Join us on one of Ohio's finest courses includes breakfast, lunch, dinner, cigars, and PLENTY of product samples. This is a great networking opportunity with fellow retailers and industry suppliers and vendors. *Sponsorship opportunities available.*

### 25TH ANNUAL FALL FOOD & BEVERAGE INNOVATIONS BUYING SHOW

**SEPTEMBER 24, 2024**

**SUBURBAN COLLECTION SHOWPLACE, NOVI MI**

As Michigan's largest liquor show, retailers come from miles away to see, sample and buy a wide variety of new products. Admission for MIRA members is free. Must be 21 years or older to attend this show. *Sponsorship opportunities available.*

**FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL MIRA EVENTS VISIT [WWW.MIRAMW.ORG](http://WWW.MIRAMW.ORG).**



### PUBLISHERS STATEMENT

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We want to share your stories and industry news. Email us news about your businesses, projects, marketing successes and whatever else you have in the works that others in the industry would find newsworthy. If you are on social media, follow MIRA on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Also, please share with us your ideas, concerns, and questions that we can follow up on.

**CONTACT:**

**T: (248) 671-7600**

**F: (866) 601-9610**

**E: [info@MIRAmw.org](mailto:info@MIRAmw.org)**

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*MIRA works closely with these associations:*





# MIRA'S BUSINESS INSURANCE PARTNER

PROUD TO SERVE ALL MIRA MEMBERS AS THE **EXCLUSIVE** ENDORSED INSURANCE PROGRAM



LIQUOR LIABILITY



GENERAL LIABILITY



COMMERCIAL PROPERTY



WORKERS' COMPENSATION

SCAN FOR MIRA MEMBER EXCLUSIVE PROGRAM DETAILS:



MIRA MEMBERS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE UP TO A **10% DISCOUNT!**\*



\*10% discount is subject to minimum premium requirements



Conifer Insurance Company

SCAN TO REQUEST A QUOTE!



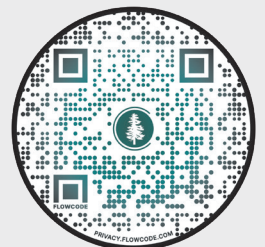
**OPEN** the camera on your phone



**AIM** it at the QR code →



**TAP** the banner that appears



SCAN FOR MIRA  
MEMBER EXCLUSIVE  
PROGRAM DETAILS:



Health insurance  
**YOU CAN FEEL GOOD ABOUT.**

**READY  
TO HELP**



With the largest network of doctors and hospitals, coverage for mental health, an easy-to-use mobile app, a 24-hour nurse line and the MIBlue virtual assistant, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are ready to help you feel your best — without the stress.

Learn more at [MIBluesPerspectives.com/ReadyToHelp](https://MIBluesPerspectives.com/ReadyToHelp)