

# 40 UNDER 40

THE **Griffin Report**  
of the Northeast  
A Shelby  
Publication

The Griffin Report's Top 40  
Grocery Industry

## RISING LEADERS

# Griffin Report Continues Its Annual Series: 40 Under 40 In All Channels

by Mike Berger

Who are the food leaders of tomorrow? What are they thinking, and what led to their success?

An offshoot of *The Griffin Report's* popular "Women of Influence" feature each February, 40 Under 40, which starts here and runs through page 30 of this issue, identifies the leaders of tomorrow.

They may be family members or rising executives whose talents and optimism have led to recognition.

This feature begins with the grocery channel this month and continues to convenience stores in October, food service in November and organic-natural, big box, club and drug in December or January.

Nominations are made through our contacts and our own personal outreach to companies; we don't divulge who made the nomination.

Of the 42 people chosen who replied in the grocery segment, eight 40 Under 40 candidates came up in the family's operations and chose the food business because of a family member's experiences in the trade. Here are some excerpts describing their decision to follow in their parents' footsteps, the impact of their parents' mentoring and their advice for others to follow.

**Zach Hampton**  
*Marona's Market*

"John and Agnes Marona, my aunt and uncle, owned Marona's Market since 1956. I

grew up watching them in the store. It is their example that taught me to appreciate and respect the customers as well as the team of employees. Uncle John had passed before I got involved with the store, yet I reference him in many of my decisions. He always put the customers and community first. Aunt Agnes taught me to be patient and to focus on the big picture. She said the small daily dramas would work themselves out. She is still my sounding board today at 92 years old.

"My advice is to listen to your customers and your employees. They have the perspective and daily experience to know what the needs really are. Provide them with the tools and information, so they can do the best work possible—set them up for success and appreciate their hard work. Always have the ability to acknowledge when something is wrong and not working. Never be afraid to make a change."

**Jesse Amoroso**  
*Amoroso's Baking Co.*

"My parents—their work ethic has taught me that persistence and dedication can create great opportunities and successes in life. They always made sure I woke early to take advantage of the day, and to devote the time necessary to accomplish whatever my goals are. They have also continually urged me to evaluate situations before acting on them, which is something I still work on daily. Specifically, at Amoroso's, my pop always challenges me

Please see page 30



### AIMEE ALLEN

Late July Snacks

**Title:**  
VP of Sales-Eastern  
Grocery

**Years with company:**  
Five months

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Bachelor of arts in marketing; minor in psychology, Bryant College

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My parents were tremendous role models in terms of work ethic and showed me I could have anything I was willing to work for.

My former boss, Jimmy Davolio, continues to be a mentor and advocate for my career development and success. He recognized my drive and talent and also challenged me to become better. Having the support of someone with outstanding business acumen and industry knowledge has proven invaluable to my growth.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The ability to learn and grow from challenging situations. I have found it important to learn from all decisions, whether they worked out perfectly or not so well. There have been times where I realized the way I handled a conflict or challenge was not ideal, but instead of letting it define me, I made it right and learned from it. Being a top employee or manager comes as much from knowing what not to do. It is important to make decisions based on the best information available

and owning the decision. Listening to others and learning from all resources as well as from my own experiences has made me a better person and a more successful leader.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Treat every job like it's important and never underestimate your role on a team. Part of my success is from wanting to be the best at every position I've held, from waiting tables and bagging groceries to managing a sales team. Treat people with respect. I have found that disagreements and challenges can be overcome as long as you can respect other opinions. It is a small industry and small world. Building relationships based on respect is vital for networking and growing.

**Hobbies:**

I have three children ages 11, 9 and 8 years old, so life outside of work is all about family. My husband and I are also heavily into fitness and run a functional fitness facility out of our garage.



### JESSE AMOROSO

Amoroso's Baking Co.

**Title:**  
Vice President

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor of arts in urban real estate and development, University of Pennsylvania (2008); co-chair, NextGen Baker for the American Bakers Association; board of directors for the Independent Bakers Association; board of directors for the Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia; chair-

man, Young Friends of Children's Scholarship Fund Philadelphia; Friends' Central School Alumni Board.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My parents. Their work ethic has taught me that persistence and dedication can create great opportunities and successes in life. They always made sure I woke early to take advantage of the day and to devote the time necessary to accomplish whatever my goals are. They have also continually urged me to evaluate situations before acting on them, which is something I still work on daily. Specifically, at Amoroso's, my pop always challenges me to look at things a different way to evaluate how various alternatives enable a collaborative solution to any problem or issue. I was also very lucky to have met Paul Ridder, president of Tastykake, early in my baking industry career. Paul has been a true

mentor in every sense; he has been a sounding board, an advisor, and a great friend. Lastly, our family has had a partnership with the Mulloy family, which has given me four brothers in business to lean on in any situation. I am forever grateful for all of the people that have helped me along the way, and who continue to do so.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Problem solving and project development. I enjoy addressing various issues and working in an industry that is so hands-on and brings enjoyment to people's everyday lives.

Also, to have the opportunity to conceive an idea and see it through to completion is the most rewarding aspect of being in food manufacturing—transforming an idea into a finished product. I consider myself a people person, so I also enjoy meeting all of the various types of people in the industry, from individual proprietors to corporate buyers and executives to suppliers.

## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS

**ALEX BALOGA**

Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association (PFMA)

**Title:**  
VP of External Relations

**Years with company:**  
Two and a half

**Education, professional/volunteer groups:**

Bachelor of arts from West Virginia University; currently pursuing certification in the Certified Association Executive (CAE) program.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I have been fortunate to work with a few people I would consider mentors. Those individuals have helped push me to grow and given me the opportunities and support I needed to succeed.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Being able to work with a lot of great people, including our members, our team at PFMA, industry partners and elected officials and their staff.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

Hard work, taking on new challenges, support from family, friends and colleagues and showing respect to the people I work and interact with.

**Hobbies:**

Exercising, movies, traveling and sports 🏈

**BOB ZIEGLER**

Sheila G's Brownie Brittle

**Title:**  
National Field Director

**Years with company:**  
Two

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Graduated from the University of Michigan

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I have been fortunate to learn from many amazing people throughout my career, but if I were to mention two, they would be Ken Sadowsky and Chris Pruneda. Ken, also known in the beverage industry as "The Beverage Whisperer," introduced me to the food and beverage world and gave me my initial connection to vitaminwater, where I was able to learn the

building blocks of what makes a great brand. Ken has been a constant source of knowledge and support for me throughout the years.

At vitaminwater, I met Chris Pruneda, and we have had a close working relationship for over 10 years now, as we have helped build field organizations at brands such as vitaminwater, Pirate's Booty and, most currently, at Sheila G's Brownie Brittle. Among many things, Chris has taught me the power of field marketing and how driving trial can accelerate the tipping point of a brand.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The thrill of my job comes from taking an emerging brand and building the distribution points and the loyal consumer base until you see it reach critical mass and go mainstream. We're on the verge of seeing this happen with Brownie Brittle. I love speaking to consumers and they tell me where they first tried the brand or how their friends told them about it and then they tried it, and fell in love. I take pride in knowing I played a small part in building some of the top CPG brands in the market.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The key factor to my success thus far has been my commitment to go the extra mile for the brands I am involved in. When you are involved in startup brands, there is no such thing as punching a clock. You do whatever it takes to get the job done, which is even more reason to love what you do.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Don't be afraid to try different roles in different fields. A big part of finding your passion is finding out what you don't want to do. Also, when in doubt, ask, because that is how you learn. The people in positions above you were not afraid to ask the key questions which helped get them where they are today.

**Hobbies:**

When I am not busy building the Brownie Brittle brand, I sing in a band called Skyfactor. To me, the creative process of writing music is similar to creating a great brand—you need to follow your passion, listen to your instincts and try to touch as many people as possible with your work. 🎵

**NICHOLAS BERTRAM**

Ahold USA

**Title:**  
SVP of Merchandising Strategy & Support

**Years with company:**  
Two

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor's degree in marketing and an MBA;

serves on the boards of directors for Pennsylvania's Chamber of Business & Industry and the American Red Cross of Central Pennsylvania.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My grandfather, George Bertram Jr., remains my most important mentor. Working in the family business, I picked up his work ethic and desire for perfection.

Joanne Glasser taught me how to cast vision and the value of being inspirational.

Jerry Spencer taught me how to be a retailer, how to give direct and constructive feedback, and the importance of digging deep into details.

Daniel Hatfield showed

integrity and loyalty. I am lucky to have family members, peers and leadership within my organization who have taken time out of their busy schedules to devote to me and my development.

I would not be successful if it weren't for their coaching and guidance. Most recently, Bill Artman, SVP of perishable merchandising, and Lora Dikun, SVP of human resources, have devoted time to teach me how to serve as a better business partner to our company leaders.

**What makes your job exciting?**

I get to work with amazing team members and senior leaders of the organization while attracting and networking with fantastic external talent. Each day I learn more and more about our diverse business space and the innovation happening in the industry. I love nothing more than seeing a candidate we hired receive a promotion or recognition for their success.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

After graduating from

me how to live my values regardless of the environment I was in.

**What makes your job exciting?**

It's great to be part of a company that has a strategy that is working today and simultaneously positioning us for the future. Working with such a talented team stretches me each day, which I find very rewarding.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Relationships always come before results, so put the proper energy into connecting with your stakeholders. Don't look for quick wins; instead, seek to add value that stands the test of time. Find a way to have fun; laughter is the one universal language. 🎉

college, I took an entry-level role with Giant Eagle. I was relentless on becoming a recruiter for the company. I didn't have any experience at the time and was not selected the first few times I applied for the role. A former leader gave me some advice on how to get in front of the right people more often. He assigned me to projects to get the exposure I needed. The management team took a chance on selecting me for the next opening we had. If it wasn't for the advice and the new leader taking a chance on a determined young professional, I would not have gotten the experience, relationships or exposure I needed to be successful in future roles.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Being determined is one thing, but setting realistic goals is the key. Always have the courage to try new things and raise your hand to accept a new challenge. Seek guidance from peers and leaders who know the space better than you do. Long-tenured team members are fantastic resources. 🙌

**JESSICA VOYTKO**

Giant Eagle Inc.

**Title:**  
Manager of Executive and Diversity Recruitment

**Years with company:**  
11

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor's degree from Gannon University; involved with PA Women Work Mentor Program and YouthWorks! organizations.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I am a second-generation team member at Giant Eagle and must thank my mother for guiding me down this path. She has taught me the importance of a strong work ethic,

## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS

**JON BEAULIEU JR.**

Bozzuto's Inc.

**Title:**

Category Merchandising Manager-Bakery

**Years with company:**

Four, having served as processed meat buyer, dairy buyer, deli buyer and category merchandising manager-bakery. Total of eight years in the industry.

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Degree in sociology, Eastern Connecticut State University.

**Who are your mentors and****how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I am honored to be part of this list of dedicated, hard-working people and also delighted to be working for such a remarkable company during this acknowledgement.

I have been extremely privileged to have such a large surrounding of developed, successful and organized leaders. Each individual has given me different perspectives and ways of learning and the tools I need to succeed and get the job done efficiently and accurately, and I honestly cannot thank them enough. There are too many names to list, but I do know for sure that without any one of them I wouldn't be where I am today.

**What makes your job exciting?**

I enjoy the fast-paced environment and always being on my toes, and this is without a doubt one of those settings. I also enjoy being part of a well-developed team striving to turn this already growing

company from outstanding to exceptional.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I have always been taught that failure is not an option and success is no accident. Hard work, perseverance, learning, listening, studying, sacrifice and determination is the best recipe you can have when achieving any goal in life.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

If you're going to work, work hard. If you're going to speak, speak up. If you're going to stand, stand out. If you're going to start, finish.

**Hobbies:**

Skiing, golfing, traveling and boating with my beautiful wife Cheryl, and our dog, Riley. 🐕

**PERRY JAMES BLATT**

Village Supermarket Inc.

**Title:**

Director of Dairy & Frozen Operations; also a third-generation family member/owner in charge of the company's corporate giving policies.

**Years with company:**

13

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor of arts, Lehigh University; MBA, Cornell University Johnson School; involved with N.J. Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity, Valerie Fund.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in career development?**

As part of a family-owned and -operated business, I've been lucky to grow into the business while working with my grandfather, several cousins and uncles. Each, in their own way, helped introduce me to the grocery business, bring me along and teach me a great deal over the years. Several store managers and district managers within the Village Family have also played key parts in my development over the years while helping "raise" me in a supermarket family. They've assisted by not only providing me with knowledge, but doing so in a way that gave me the confidence and the comfort to ask questions.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The nature of most any business is change. And it's no different in the supermarket world. From product development and innovation to how

we engage our customers and associates, it's all about change. Staying on and ahead of trends in all aspects of our business is important to staying ahead of the competition. I think the business strategizing, along with working with highly motivated and engaged individuals, is what really keeps my job fresh and exciting.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Slow things down. Email less and have more conversations with people. Focus on the bigger picture and try your best to keep things in perspective. Create a work/life balance and do your best to keep a positive outlook at home and in the workplace. And always treat your co-workers with respect and rely on their experience to help you make the right decisions. 🐕

**SARAH BRADY**King's Food Markets/  
Balducci's Food Lover's Market**Title:**

Category Manager

**Years with company:**

Two

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Master's degree in management, labor and employee relations, Rutgers; certification in supply chain, also from Rutgers.

**What makes your job exciting?**

At King's and Balducci's, knowledge of specialty

foods and upcoming trends are vital the business. The most exciting part of my job is when a food trend I have brought to the customer transforms the category and my business. It takes a lot of research and some trial and error to find a food trend that's new and relevant to our customer. Our customers are smart. They want what is good for themselves and their families. They expect us to be out in front of a trend. When you meet their expectations, they will keep coming back to that category, and the growth compounds. That's when you know you've been of value to your customer.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

Balance has been the greatest factor in my success, both personally and professionally. When facing a decision I use all available data to learn as much as I can while balancing what I understand to be our customer's needs,

values and expectations. This balance of "half art and half science" allows for flexibility in my decision-making.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Always speak up for what you know is right for yourself and for the business you run. Your opinion may not be widely accepted at first and that's OK. You can be open-minded but still stand firm. The grocery business is evolving, and your fresh perspective is key to your company's success. Stay true to yourself. Early in my career I was told that I was perceived as "nice". This was considered a weakness. The grocery industry has a reputation of being poorly behaved and I have seen it firsthand. I can only treat people how I would want to be treated. You can be respectful and still be an advocate for your business.

**Hobbies:**

For me, long distance running and hot yoga are an absolute must! They just clear my mind and make me happy. 🐕

**ALEX CEKALA**

Willow Tree Poultry Farm Inc.

**Title:**

General Manager

**Years with company:**

Seven

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor of science, Babson College; board of directors, Attleboro YMCA.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My greatest mentor has been my father and president, Wally Cekala.

He has ingrained in me a strong work ethic along with the ideals of appreciation and generosity. He has trusted me with great responsibility at the company at an early age and supported me every step of the way. My colleagues have also been mentors sharing their experience and expertise. I'm only able to learn and grow with their guidance. I would also like to thank my wife for her perspective from outside of the food industry and for listening to all the "chicken talk."

**What makes your job exciting?**

The variety in my job is very exciting. I enjoy being involved in all aspects of the business from sales to production and from quality to accounting. It allows me the opportunity to interface with great people both inside and outside our organization and the ability to learn every part of the business. The interconnections are fascinating.

In addition to this, I

love hearing from our loyal customers and their passion for our brand. Good food brings people together.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

We have great products and great people. That's the foundation for success. I received an incredible opportunity as a third-generation owner/manager, and that only motivates me more. I'm motivated to learn something new every day and use that knowledge to make a positive impact. Success requires hard work and an appreciation for the process.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Get involved early, talk to everyone and ask many questions. Business is complicated and takes collaboration to succeed. Opportunities always exist if you ask enough questions.

**Hobbies:**

I love boating and New England summers on the water. I also enjoy skiing and cooking. 🐕

40 UNDER 40

FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



**KATIE COLLETT**  
PepsiCo

**Title:**  
Director of Retail Sales

**Years with company:**  
12

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Graduate, Seton Hall University; member of Network of Executive Women MNY Chapter; Executive Sponsor of the Women's Inclusion Network within PepsiCo; dedicated to helping women gain personal and

professional independence through various not-for-profit organizations.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My most influential mentor was my mother, Liz Collett, who was in the consumer packaged goods industry for 25 years. She emphasized the importance of understanding other people's needs and keeping things simple. She often explained that there is a resolution to every problem.

**What makes your job exciting?**

There is endless opportunity in this industry. We can always find a new way to capture a consumer or improve distribution and sales. Even when things are good, they could be better. Working for one of the largest CPG companies in the world allows

for ongoing training and development to keep up with evolving consumer and customer needs. I see something new every single day.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The key factor has been a relentless need to over-deliver expectations. I focus on things that will have the biggest impact on the business and avoid wasting time on things that won't.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Always take the time to understand every possible role in your respective organization. Even the largest companies all operate as a team. When you can understand the strengths of each team member, it makes winning that much easier. 🍌



**JAMI CUDDY**  
Tyson Foods

**Title:**  
Customer Development Manager

**Years with company:**  
Five

**Education:**  
Bachelor's, University of Arkansas; MBA, University of Iowa.

**Who are your mentors?**  
My parents have been fantastic mentors and a wonderful support system throughout my career.

They've always encouraged me to trust my intuition and have supported my decisions to seek out opportunities that I'm passionate about. I'm also extremely blessed to have multiple mentors within Tyson, who have taken the time to invest their knowledge, wisdom and experiences to consistently challenge the way I approach situations. My first boss at Tyson, Bob Harris, once gave me the invaluable advice that, "Building relationships in this industry will define your future success as a leader in this organization. Always be mindful of how you react to situations and seek to understand first and foremost." This mindset has always stuck with me as an impactful way to approach my TEAM; although, it can be extremely difficult at times!

**What makes your job exciting?**  
My job is always chang-

ing, as the needs of both my customers and organization continue to evolve. I work with a fantastic TEAM, both internal and external, who continually challenge my thought process and the way we approach the business, which definitely keeps my job exciting and keeps me continually engaged. The one thing that is always consistent with my job is change!

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Seek out colleagues and mentors who love to teach...their experiences and what they learned from those situations is invaluable. My mentor, Karen Pennell, once said, "What is the point in figuring out something the hard way, if you can learn it from someone who has already experienced it and collaborate on a better approach beforehand?"

**Hobbies:**  
Traveling the world and spending time outdoors. 🍌

**40 under 40**

*Here's to our very own Meredith McGrath*

*Employee Owned*

**Redner's**

**Serving Our Local Communities Since 1970**

## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



**TYLER DODD**  
Hormel Foods

**Title:**  
Sr. Customer Executive

**Years with company:**  
Five

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Bachelor degree from The University of Northern Iowa in Marketing. Special Olympics Coach and

Ambassador for Hormel's Young Professionals Enterprise (HYPE).

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Previous managers Mark Eaton/Steve Jensen/Paul Gillis/Scott Moore, along with Katie Berner. Each provided key learnings from their respective roles ranging from retail at store level to category analytics, as well as front line sales.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The variety of responsibilities I get to be involved in. In my role at Hormel, I help manage the promotional plans, logistics, financial budgets and the delicate balance of our

corporate and customer needs.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I, along with many other Hormel employees, benefit from our company's focus on employee development. We invest a great deal of time and resources to continually evolve as professionals through structured training seminars.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Work hard and have fun! Take time to get to know the people you work with on a personal level.

**Hobbies:**

Golf, attending sporting events, coaching Special Olympics, spending time back home in Iowa with my two nieces and nephew. 🏡

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I am very open and receptive to the constructive criticism that I have received, though this can sometimes be hard to hear. I think being open to feedback, and also willing to take action to adjust myself based on the feedback, has only helped me in my career. I believe this has allowed for me to move up within my company.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

To listen. Being part of the Millennial generation, it seems everything is so fast paced that we forget to slow down and listen to what others are saying. It is something that takes time to learn, but it is important. Always remember to listen first, then react.

**Hobbies:**

Traveling. Most recently I traveled to France and Switzerland. I also love to read. 📖



**ERIN FINE**  
Tops Markets

**Title:**  
Category Merchandiser-Warehouse Beverage, Peanut Butter/Spreads and Candy

**Years with company:**  
11 years with the company, three years in the category merchandiser position. I started as a part-time employee in high school.

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Bachelors of business administration with a major in managerial marketing from Kent State University.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I have had a few great mentors that I always go to for their experience, and for a new perspective on a situation. One of my mentors has always told me to make sure that I ask for help. If you are not sure regarding a situation, or new to it, ask your peers to get their perspective. Another mentor has told me to focus on the numbers. You cannot argue with them.

**What makes your job exciting?**

I love to see what is new in the industry. When I have new item presentation, for either seasonal programs or just new items for the shelf, it is always exciting to see what manufacturers are coming up with. We might not always be able to bring the product in, but seeing something different always makes the job interesting.



**BILL FENNER**  
Russell Stover Candies, Inc.

**Title:**  
National Account Manager

**Years with company:**  
Nine

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
MBA from The College of Saint Rose, Albany, New York.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Many people have played a critical role in the pathway of my career. Amy Kiley, formerly of Russell Stover, guided me and enabled my first management opportunity within the organization. Amy was

also pivotal in my expanded management role on the account side of the business. Without Amy's support, I would not be where I am today. Amy is driven and focused on the end results and has enjoyed a very successful career both inside and outside of Russell Stover. Patrick Kennedy, currently our Northeast regional sales manager was a guiding force when I was the New England division manager for Russell Stover. Pat took me under his wing, and provided the best support a manager could to a new DM. His knowledge, professionalism and experience were paramount to my development as a DM, and set a great example of what qualities a team leader should exhibit to be successful. Brian Lorence, our sales director and Bill Baer, our director of national accounts (my current boss), have also been instrumental in my continued growth within the organization. Both are quality people personally and professionally and have been extremely supportive of my career, allowing me to expand my knowledge base of the industry.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The world of confection is ever changing, and the need to stay current with the market allows for constant innovation. Nothing stays the same for too long in this business, and the need to strategize and come up with solutions to key issues are critical to our success and that of our customers. Working on the account end of the business has allowed me to see all aspects of what it takes to produce, sell and evaluate our products and come up with winning strategies on a customer-by-customer basis. Having the opportunity to work with so many different departments within the company, and the great people we have within each, in addition to serving our customers with a quality product truly make this an exciting position. We would not be where we are today without our customers, and I would be remiss not to mention how proud I am to have had the pleasure to meet and work with so many wonderful people in the grocery/drug channels of our business. 🏡



**EILEEN FORSYTH**  
Taylor Farms New Jersey

**Title:**  
Account Manager

**Years with company:**  
Three

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing from Saint Joseph's University.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Jennifer Watts-deLehman has been my biggest mentor over my time at Taylor Farms. With the expertise she has from 25 years in the produce industry, she has taught me how to best work through everyday situations and then develop strategies to manage them both internally and externally with the customer.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The most exciting part of my job is working with our culinary team on new product development. This year alone we have already launched 12 new items for one of the customers that I work with. It is always exciting to take something from the planning stages and see it come to life on the production line and then on the store shelf. It is even more exciting when it becomes a big seller for the customer and sparks conversation on social

media.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The biggest factors to success that I've gained at Taylor Farms are the ability to be flexible, stay organized and prioritize. There are always many competing projects and priorities, and in order to satisfy our customers' needs, organization is key. In addition, flexibility and adaptability are especially important in the fast paced produce industry since we work with short shelf life and highly perishable items.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

No matter what you do, be passionate. For me, it has made the challenges of everyday work more exciting and ultimately more fulfilling.

**Hobbies:**

I enjoy music, traveling with family and friends and am currently training for my first half marathon. 🏡

“Being part of the Millennial generation, it seems everything is so fast paced that we forget to slow down and listen to what others are saying. It is something that takes time to learn, but it is important. Always remember to listen first, then react.”

**ERIN FINE**  
Tops Markets

40 UNDER 40

FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



**CORY FRENCH**

Price Chopper Supermarkets

**Title:**  
Store Manager

**Years with company:**  
12 years; started when I was 15 years old!

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Graduated from SUNY College at Oneonta in 2009 with a BS in business and economics.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Over my 12 years, I have worked in many facets of the organization, and I have had the privilege to

work alongside many great leaders within the organization. This would include Lee French, Jason Kennedy, Jim Collins and James Carlson Jr. They have allowed me to learn and adapt to the best characteristics from each of them and develop my professional style.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Seeing the success of those who work closely with me is what gives me the greatest excitement. Knowing that I have empowered others, like my mentors have empowered me, is very rewarding. Also, every day is a new challenge. Not a day goes by where I am not learning something new or adapting to the plan I had in place for the morning.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I have continuously worked for Price Chopper my entire career in both the main office and predominantly store operations. The core fundamentals that

I have learned from both sides of the business have allowed me the opportunity to understand the functions of grocery retail. I am proud to note that I grew in the business; my father works for the organization as well. This has allowed me to have a plethora of knowledge available to me at all times!

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Find a peer that you can partner with to learn from their successes. Do not hesitate to ask many questions and learn from others; listen intently and react accordingly. Also be very proactive in whatever you do. Be known as the person who completes the task without being asked. Always look to do more than what is expected.

**Hobbies:**

I enjoy spending time with my girlfriend, Renata, family and friends. I also love to play golf (though not very well!) and basketball and enjoy spending time outside during the summer doing landscaping. 🏌️🏀



**ZACH HAMPTON**

Marona's Market

**Title:**  
President and Owner

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Undergraduate degree, Alfred University. Graduate program, Boston Architectural College. Member of Millbrook Business Association.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

John and Agnes Marona, my aunt and uncle, owned Marona's Market

since 1956. I grew up watching them in the store. It is was their example that taught me to appreciate and respect the customers, as well as the team of employees. Uncle John had passed before I got involved with the store, yet I reference him in many of my decisions. He always put the customers and community first. Aunt Agnes taught me to be patient and to focus on the big picture. She said the small daily dramas would work themselves out. She is still my sounding board today at 92 years old.

Al Gioiele was instrumental in educating my team and me about the grocery industry. His ability to prioritize the knowledge and tools that we needed to develop our business was truly impressive. With his assistance, we gradually remodeled our equipment, in-store merchandising and our ordering/tracking systems, as well as our product mix. With that knowledge, we were able to grow our sales substantially over the past 5 years. With that growth also came improved customer's satisfac-

tion and experience.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Maintaining and growing a grocery store that has been part of the Millbrook community for over 100 years has been exciting. Having the opportunity to work with an amazing team of employees, who truly care about the success of the store, as well as our customer's experience.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

Marona's Market's success has come from improving and changing a small existing market while maintaining the community market experience of years past. We have focused on the customer and their needs.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

My advice is to listen to your customers and your employees. They have the perspective and daily experience to know what the needs really are. Provide them with the tools and information, so they can do the best work possible. 🏡



**MELISSA LEIGH GERLACH**

Anheuser- Busch Inbev

**Title:**  
Senior Key Account Manager

**Years with company:**  
18

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
BS in mass communications from Towson State University.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I have had many mentors over the course of my career, both internally

and externally. My first mentor was Jennifer Moran, who I worked for in the on-premise side of the beer business when I first started. She taught me about time management, the importance of maintaining good relationships with customers and that you must enjoy your job in order to excel at it. After all, our motto is "Making Friends is Our Business" at ABI. My current boss, Joe Russo, leads by example and maintains close ties to all of the retailers his direct reports call on. I also learned the most about my current role from my peers (many of whom are now directors in our company): Jay Barber, John Driscoll, Beverly Stukas, Ryan Becker and others. They all taught me the basics as well as the art of presentation and "the close" when selling to chain accounts.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Managing accounts requires a varied skill set, and I am required to do a lot of internal selling to

achieve the objectives I've established during our annual planning cycle with my accounts. Managing deadlines with regard to pricing, promotion and cross merchandising keep me very busy. I find that working with my independent wholesaler system is the part of my job that is the most exciting. Their teams execute my strategy everyday in the stores, and without them, none of my planning would matter!

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I am a team player with great communication skills. I think I'm also very good at planning ahead and meeting deadlines, which customers are often pleased about! And I take the initiative to assist with mentoring new talent as they join our company. This is always appreciated by senior management.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

I tell new employees in our sales organization that they should do their best to ask questions and listen intently. 🏡



**DOUGLAS HEFFEL**

Acosta Sales and Marketing

**Title:**  
Customer Business Manager:

**Years with company:**  
10

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
BA in political science focusing on international relations, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

"If I have seen further,

it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

I have had the great fortune of having many mentors in my career thus far. However, two men stand out. The first would be Julian Lacourse from Market Basket. It was through his positive encouragement and dedication that I started in the industry. He instilled in me the great importance of the customer, without which, we wouldn't be here. My other mentor would be Jim Concannon (JC), from Acosta. JC took the time to show me all of the intricate workings of our industry. Both of these men helped me to lay a strong foundation on which to build.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Our industry is so dynamic. We can never stand still or we would be left behind. We always need to be reassessing our approaches and making sure that our goals as brokers mirror those of both our client and customer partners.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I would have to look back at the people I have surrounded myself with. Acosta has some extremely talented people that I have had the ability to work collaboratively with. It is through this collaboration that I have seen myself succeed.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Make sure you listen. Listen to your clients, customers and industry veterans. Also, get out in the field. We are a retail-based business. The surest way of getting the pulse of what's actually going on is to get out from behind your computer and see firsthand what's happening in the stores.

**Hobbies:**

I have three young sons, so it's a little difficult to find time for hobbies. However, I have been a beekeeper for about 10 years and find that both rewarding and tasty. 🐝

## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



### JOSHUA KARNS

Karns Quality Foods

**Title:**  
Director of Human Resources

**Years with company:**  
Two

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

MPA with an emphasis in HR management, Pennsylvania State University; BA, Colgate University; Founder of Friends of Governor Stable (a nonprofit rock climbing education and land management organization).

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My biggest mentor has

been my father, Scott Karns, CEO of Karns Quality Foods. For my entire life, he has been demonstrating in big and little ways what it means to run a successful business.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Every day is different. Every time the phone rings, there's a chance I will be presented with a new challenge that I have never considered. As the second-to-last stop (before the CEO) in managing a workforce of over 1,000 associates, the excitement comes from the challenges. Some days, I focus on how to recruit and retain top talent in a labor market that is hotter than it has been in years. Other days are spent pouring over data to determine how to get one last bit of productivity out of our labor dollars.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

My graduate school education and professional experience before I came to Karns Quality Foods have been integral to my success. Prior to joining the family

business, I moved through four different professional positions in four different organizations and gained responsibility on each step of the journey. By the time I arrived at Karns, I was seasoned. I'd seen how other organizations operated. I was ready to take the best practices from all over and apply them to our business.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

My advice is to never stop learning. Education is a process, not a product. Learning new skills is essential to staying relevant in a workplace that will continue to undergo rapid change.

**Hobbies:**

I make music with my wife, play pretend with my son and run for mile after mile along the banks of the scenic Susquehanna River. 🏃

Industry Council, member.

Kalmar Nyckel Foundation, board of trustees.

The Grand Opera House, board of directors.

Kenny Family Foundation, board of directors.

Better Business Bureau of Delaware, board of directors.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Bernie Kenny and Rich Kenny inspire me to nurture family at home and at work and serve the community by providing high quality food at the best pricing. They emphasize the importance of cooperation over competition, never giving up and always giving back.

**What makes your job exciting?**

People and food! The always changing competi-

tive landscape in our business is a challenge I really love to take on, and I work with people who feel the same way.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I love what I do, and I'm continuously inspired by my family and colleagues in the ShopRite/Wakefern family.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Pursue your vision relentlessly.

**Hobbies:**

Hiking, backpacking and skiing 🏔️



### LAUREN KEENAN

Hapco Farms

**Title:**  
Account Manager

**Years with company:**  
14

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor of science in marketing and management with a concentration in international business from the University of South Carolina.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I've learned a lot from each person in my office, and have learned that everyone has his or her own "style" of conducting business. I've learned the most from observing our CEO, Andrew Pollak, and Senior VP of Sales and Marketing Eric Scannelli. Both have provided invaluable advice for any situation that arises.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Every day, I walk into a new situation; the markets and produce industry are ever changing. It can be stressful, but also very rewarding!

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The family atmosphere and caring from coworkers

at Hapco has helped me to have a sense of consideration that extends to the company as a whole, our customers, our farmers and my coworkers. I feel genuine compassion for how my decisions during my day-to-day activities affect the "spiderweb" of other people and companies involved. Additionally, the relationships that I've formed with the people I've met along the way have helped me to grow.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Learn all facets of the business so that you truly understand the roles and how each affects the overall business and the other roles. Travel often to see the farms and stores/customers. Learn what makes them "tick." Ask questions!

**Hobbies:**

Zumba, travel, swimming, attending fairs/festivals/concerts 🎵

**What are you most proud of in your career achievements to date?**

Improving alignment and communication between field sales, the customer, Oscar Mayer headquarters, customer service, supply chain, demand planning and transportation. I spearheaded this initiative by reaching out to subject matter experts across all levels of the organization. As a result, the improved connectivity led to significant improvements.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The people whom I work with come from diverse backgrounds. Besides business, we talk about our families and our passions. We're a supportive team and constantly learn from one another.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Understand people and build your network. Get involved with professional organizations that complement your profession. It's a point of differentiation that can give you a competitive advantage.

**Hobbies:**

Cooking, traveling, dancing and anything musical. 🎵



### BRIANA LEE

Kraft Foods Group

**Title:**  
Associate Manager of Category Leadership

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

BS in marketing, cum laude, 2009, University of Maryland, College Park. Network of Executive Women (NEW)—Committee Lead.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

In addition to my parents, who provided a strong foundation, I've been fortunate to have mentors throughout my career. My first professional mentor was Regenia Stein, a Kraft Foods corporate vice presi-

dent. I contacted Regenia through Network of Executive Women (NEW) when looking for a job after college. She circulated my resume and was the catalyst to my Kraft career. Over the past six years, our conversations have progressed from an entry-level sales rep sharing milestone accomplishments to an account manager navigating corporate cultures.

Cameron Sadler, Nabisco regional vice president, was my first manager and mentor when I moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. Cameron invested in people. She included me in meetings, paired me with other mentors and involved me with NEW Carolinas. She understood my career ambitions and positioned me well when Kraft split in 2012.

My most recent mentor is Brett Cannon, Kraft customer business lead. With 30-plus years of industry experience, he has vast knowledge to pass to the next generation of leaders. Brett challenges people to think strategically and take ownership. He taught me to over-prepare for meetings, anticipate questions and always recognize those who help you.



### MELISSA KENNEY

Kenny Family ShopRites of Delaware

**Title:**  
Director of Marketing

**Years with company:**  
15

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Studied Psychology and English at the University of Delaware (BA in progress, so close!).

Delaware Retail Food

# 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



**RAQUEL MELLO**  
Hapco Farms

**Title:**  
Sales

**Years with company:**  
Four

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Bachelor's degree from Bryant College and Master's degree from Northeastern University

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Gary Kosofsky and Domenic D'Antuono from my early career at Stop & Shop—I was able to learn the produce industry and procurement replenishment. Since then, working with Eric Scannelli, who has 20 plus years on the sales desk, has taught me the other side of the business. I have been able to gain an immense amount of guidance from all three of these gentlemen that has taught me the importance of communication and customer service. They have taught me the importance of building relationships with members on all sides of the industry from peers, other vendors and, most importantly, customers.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The ever changing challenges of nature and how it affects the produce industry in supply and demand. I'm inspired when faced

with these challenges to develop solutions that best benefit my customers while providing them with excellent service and top quality products.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The exposure to so many aspects of the business, including procurement replenishment, merchandising, retail and now sales, has allowed me to see the business from all sides of the industry and has prepared me for the position I am in today and for the growth I will continue to have in the future.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Build positive relationships with all who surround you and maintain integrity in your relationship, because your name is all you have in this business.

**Hobbies:**

Cooking, reading and spending quality time with my daughter, Alina 🐾



**MEREDITH MCGRATH RD, LDN**

Redner's Markets

**Title:**  
Corporate Dietitian

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

I am a member of the American Dietetic Association and involved in dietetic practice groups that support my area of practice: Food & Culinary Professionals (FCP) and

Dietitians in Business and Communications (DBC). I have also served as the Nominating Chair for the Lehigh Valley Dietetic Association and have a Bachelor's degree in nutrition from the University of Pittsburgh.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I am fortunate to work for an employee-owned company that believes in retention, so there are many veterans that are willing to share their expertise. I have great mentors on all areas of the spectrum that have taught me how to survive and be successful in this industry. They are great role models and are always willing to give feedback and advice. When employees love their jobs and the company they work for, they are happy to see others succeed.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The thing that makes my job the most excit-

ing is that it is uncharted territory! The role of the supermarket dietitian is forever evolving and is unique at each retailer. I get to be creative and innovative and develop programs that best meet the needs of Redner's. One minute I can be writing the new issue of HealthCents, get called in to meet with a vendor to set up a sampling program and then head back to the warehouse to check on a delivery of product. No day is ever the same, or predictable for that matter!

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

When I started in the grocery industry, I had to start at square one. I was used to the medical field, and this was a bit different! I had to ask a lot of questions. I spent time with individuals in accounting, purchasing, the warehouse and at store level so I could learn the operation as best as possible. The more I knew how things worked, the easier it was for me to do my job. 🐾

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to Aimee Allen and all the 40 under 40 nominees

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## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS

**BRENT MERTES**

Weis Markets, Inc.

**Title:**

Regional VP for Maryland and Southern Pennsylvania.

**Years with company:**

Four. 24 years in the industry.

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Studied business management at Catonsville Community College.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I was fortunate to have a number of mentors during my career. They helped

me both personally and professionally. My father had more than 30 years in the grocery industry and helped me develop into the leader I am today. From as early as five years old, I spent time with him in his stores, and he still provides guidance to me to this day. Larree Renda, former EVP, Safeway, was also a tremendous influence on my career. She taught me the importance of work life balance at the highest levels of an organization and modeling the behavior you want from your team.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Our associates and their development are what make the job exciting. Identifying individuals and helping them realize their talent to add value to the organization. Watching individuals grow and move up in the organization is the most rewarding part of my job. In addition, working in a diverse and competitive market adds another challenge to staying current and relevant with our customer

Innovation Committee.

Professional: National Grocers Association, Government Relations Committee and PFMA.

Board Positions: Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and the Northeast Family YMCA.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My father, Rich McMenamin, has guided much of my professional and personal development. With unwavering support, he backed all my initiatives, including my decisions to move to New York City post college to work at the New York Post and then return to school for my MBA. And through each opportunity, my dad helped me find strength when there were setbacks and confidence from those learning experiences. Dennis Murray, our VP of operations, is another patient mentor who sits with me to discuss every aspect of the grocery

base. The daily demands we face in retail make every day a different challenge for me and my team.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The team that has surrounded me throughout my career has been the key to my success. From my early days as a part-time employee to my current role, I learned that you cannot be successful without a strong team around you. Investing in your team to help them develop makes you a better leader and helps produce stronger results.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Be proactive with your own development. Take control of your professional development by setting weekly and monthly goals. Retail is constantly changing, and if you stay humble and focus on self-improvement, you will add value to your own role as well as to those on your team.

**Hobbies:**

In my free time I love to travel with my family. 🏠

industry. I am incredibly grateful to be able to observe him at work each day. Lastly, my brother, Sean McMenamin, has taught me that focus and drive often lead to success.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The food industry is incredibly dynamic. Every day, or even every hour, you are wearing a different hat in this business. And that's because our business touches so many people in so many different ways. We must understand the latest consumer trends and buying habits along with the regulatory environment, digital advances and customer and associate dynamics, to name just a few. There is never a dull day in our world.

I find the shift right now into the digital world of food shopping to be very exciting. I'm proud that we are able to help our ShopRite customers take advantage of even more savings with digital coupons and a good digital experience via ShopRite from Home, Mobile Scan, and ShopRite Delivers. 🏠

**BILL MCGILL**

Acosta Sales &amp; Marketing

**Title:**

Team Leader

**Years with company:**

Seven

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Bachelor's degree in marketing from Bentley University

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted****you in your career development?**

I have been extremely fortunate to have several great mentors throughout my career at Acosta who have provided me with candid feedback, invaluable career advice and set a daily example of what it takes to succeed in the CPG industry. I'm also incredibly grateful for my father, Bruce McGill. He has taught me what it means to work hard, stay motivated and, most importantly, stay true to your values above all else. This foundation has served me well at Acosta, and I'm lucky to work for a company that shares these same principles.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Our business is constantly evolving and every day presents new and exciting opportunities to deliver winning solutions for our clients and custom-

ers. My job allows me to work across a wide array of channels and categories; gaining constant exposure to new innovation and category insights from some of the top CPG companies in the industry. I'm continuously learning and always looking forward to what's coming next.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Welcome constructive feedback, and be constantly seeking out ways you can improve your performance. Set short- and long-term goals, and work with your organizational leaders to ensure you're aligned and on track. Bring passion to what you do, and learn from your mistakes!

**Hobbies:**

Spending time with my friends and family; especially my wife Ashleen and our one-year-old daughter, Finley. I also enjoy mountain biking, skiing and watching the Patriots. 🏠

**BRIA MCMENAMIN**

McMenamin Family ShopRite

**Title:**

VP of finance and marketing

**Years with company:**

Seven

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

James Madison University, BBA, and University of Notre Dame, MBA. Co-vice chairman of the Private Label and Retail Technology committees and chair of the Customer Experience sub-committee at Wakefern. Member of the Digital Commerce &

Innovation Committee.

Professional: National Grocers Association, Government Relations Committee and PFMA.

Board Positions: Greater Northeast Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce and the Northeast Family YMCA.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My father, Rich McMenamin, has guided much of my professional and personal development. With unwavering support, he backed all my initiatives, including my decisions to move to New York City post college to work at the New York Post and then return to school for my MBA. And through each opportunity, my dad helped me find strength when there were setbacks and confidence from those learning experiences. Dennis Murray, our VP of operations, is another patient mentor who sits with me to discuss every aspect of the grocery

industry. I am incredibly grateful to be able to observe him at work each day. Lastly, my brother, Sean McMenamin, has taught me that focus and drive often lead to success.

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**HEATHER THOMPSON PAQUETTE**

Hannaford Supermarkets/Delhaize America

**Title:**

VP Retail Operations, Eastern Division

**Years with company:**

16

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

BS in business finance, University of Southern Maine. Member of the board of directors, March of Dimes and Boys and Girls Club.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My boss, Bob Schools, took a risk 10 years ago

and hired me onto his leadership team. He has shared his extensive retail knowledge with me, advised and coached me, and demonstrated his confidence in me, ultimately naming me VP. My biggest lesson from Bob is to spend time with your people, and invest in them. They will in turn work hard for you. This is not an individual contributor business; success is achieved only through hiring the right talent and building a strong team.

**What makes your job exciting?**

I absolutely love the people part of our business. We have amazing associates at all levels of the organization—dedicated, driven, smart and loyal. Our associates represent our organization and bring our brand to life for our customers. Sometimes, I like to walk stores and just watch associates interact with each other and the customers. It's retail magic for me.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I moved for my company three times to learn the various markets we do business in. While this was

challenging personally, it was extremely valuable to understand our customer, associate, and market needs. As I progressed in my career, I was able to speak more broadly about the needs of our business. It has given me stronger credibility and better experience than I would've had staying in one market. I encourage other young leaders to take this risk, and I believe they will find it rewarding.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Find work that you are genuinely enthusiastic about. There is nothing that competes with a candidate that loves what they do and wants to contribute at a higher level. There will always be challenges and hard days. If you pick the right field that you enjoy, you will have the happiness and commitment to stay in and get through these hard days. Work hard, and make sacrifices for your organization.

**Hobbies:**

My kids (five and seven years old) are full of energy and they keep my husband and me very busy. Our new way to channel their energy is running as a family. It won't be long before they are faster than us! 🏠

# 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



### NICOLE PERANICK

Daymon Worldwide

**Title:**  
Director, Global Consumer Strategy-Culinary

**Years with company:**  
10 months

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

I hold a B.S. degree in international business with honors from The Dolan School of Business of Fairfield University and a Grand Diploma in pastry arts from The French Culinary Institute.

I have also attended The Wharton School and UCLA for executive education, the Universidad de Sevilla in Spain and the International School of Economics in Holland.

I have been an active member of the Women's Business Development Council (WBDC) and New York Women's Culinary Alliance. I am also affiliated with major academic societies, including Beta Gamma Sigma (National Business Honor Society) and Sigma Iota Rho (National Honor Society for International Studies).

In my "spare time," I am an active participant within my local food entrepreneur community, serving as a mentor for new start-ups to help navigate the industry and grow their businesses.

**Who are your mentors and how they have assisted you in your career development:**

Most of my mentors are sourced from home. My older brother, Joe, guided me into a career in CPG brand marketing, where I gained a solid foundation in business management and brand building. Through my parents, Nick and Diane, I developed my passion for food and baking and, with their mentorship, became a pastry chef, aspiring to create my own baked goods company. Inspired by my husband, Andrew's, innate professional drive, I built a successful business and was able to parlay this experience into my current role, which is a perfect marriage of my brand management and culinary backgrounds. At Daymon, I feel fortunate to be able to also call my manager, Shilpa Rosenberry, my mentor, who offers a wealth of both industry and professional knowledge to realize my potential within this business. I am truly indebted to these five individuals. Thanks to them, I can say with sincerity that I truly love my work and am excited about the future. 🍷



### SOPHIA PRICE

Imperial Distributors, Inc.

**Title:**  
Space Management Supervisor

**Years with company:**  
Two

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

I have been extremely grateful for the team at Imperial and their consistent willingness to assist me as I grow with the company. My current boss, Kevin Cooley, has given me many opportunities that have challenged me and

helped me excel in the space management department. He recognized my strengths early on at Imperial and has helped me along in my development. Rob Mezzadri, in his current role of manager of retailer and promotional pricing and in his previous role of category manager, has also been a key part in my development. He has always taken the time to explain things that fall outside of my space management role, which has allowed me to better understand how the company operates from a higher level. The investment of time that everyone here at Imperial has spent training me and bringing me along has been greatly appreciated.

**What makes your job exciting?**

At Imperial, I'm challenged daily to think critically. With such a wide variety of customers here at Imperial, I find most projects to be unique and exciting. It is extremely

rewarding to dedicate time to these challenging projects and then actually see them implemented out in the field.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

My success at Imperial comes from the abilities of our team when we work together efficiently. There are so many different roles and departments within this company, and each one is critical to achieving positive end results. With the assistance of our team here, I have been able to learn how each part of this company comes together, which has made me better understand and deal with the day-to-day challenges that we all face together.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone. You will be surprised at how much you can learn and the impact you can have. The road to success begins with your willingness to be resilient and adaptable whilst thinking outside of the box. 🍷

# Congratulations

to our colleague,

## SOPHIA PRICE

Space Management Supervisor

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## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS

**BRETT RAVITZ**

Ravitz Family Markets,  
ShopRite

**Title:**

VP of Merchandising

**Years with company:**

13

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Vice Chairman of ShopRite grocery committee, Ravitz Family Foundation board member, Camden County Police Foundation board member, National Foundation for Celiac Awareness (NFCA) advocate.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

In my professional career, my father, Steve Ravitz, has played a major role as a mentor. He always does right, is a firm believer in giving back to help those in need, and has a 110 percent commitment to our cooperative. These are all qualities that I strive to meet on a daily basis.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The grocery business is always changing. If it's not a commodity or item-based fad or trend, it's the marketplace in general that's shifting. I am a competitive person, so trying to stay on top of it all in an attempt to stay current and fresh gets me excited. That is my motivation!

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

First and foremost, my wife Lauren. She is an amazing mother to our two children, Hailey and Jordana. Without her, I could never accomplish anything. In a family busi-

ness, it's hard to move forward without partners. And my two older brothers, Jason and Shawn, are more than just partners. They have supported me and enabled me to grow into my position at our company.

Wakefern Food Corp. is also a key factor in the successes I have had. Without Wakefern's support for what we do as a family-run company, I would never be where I am today. Through the many committees that I have sat on, to the leadership role I hold on our grocery committee, as well as the many other formal and informal interactions I have had with Wakefern staff at all levels, I have certainly benefited.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

My advice for upcoming professionals in this business is to make sure you love what you do, because food is everywhere! That means there's a lot of opportunity and a lot of competition.

**Hobbies:**

Playing hockey and coaching youth soccer. Reigning fantasy football champion! 🏒

and processing space. I also currently serve on the Board of the National Poultry & Food Distributor's Association. I am affiliated with 'Team For Kids' and completed the 2014 TCS NYC Marathon on their behalf.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My dad has been the most impactful mentor in developing my career. Nebraskaland is a family business which my dad began 25 years ago. Starting at a young age he would bring me in to help make deliveries, work in the warehouse and perform any other odd jobs. More recently we have been working together on the day to day business, which gives me the opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on a normal basis.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The most exciting part

of my job is the variety of challenges that come up each day. We receive one million pounds of meat each morning and ship one million pounds out each night. There are many logistical intricacies that go on each day to ensure we provide a service level we can be proud of. On a daily basis, we overcome the encounters associated with just-in-time inventory, over the road trucking, changing commodity markets, and our customers' special needs.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

The key factor in my rise to success has been being surrounded with strong business partners and co-workers.

**Hobbies:**

I thoroughly enjoy physical activities of any type. I believe it is a great way to relieve stress, stay healthy and find balance. Running, golf and tennis are the sports I spend most of my time enjoying. 🏌️

**TOM QUINN JR.**

Wise Foods Inc.

**Title:**

Account Development  
Manager

**Years with company:**

Three

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

I graduated from Assumption College in 2009 with a Bachelor's degree in English with a concentration in writing and mass communication. After my time as an undergraduate, I continued to further my education at Assumption and graduated with my

Master's degree in school counseling in 2011.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

First and foremost, my parents have always put me in a position to succeed, and I cannot thank them enough. My father, Tom, has worked for Pepperidge Farm for 25 years, and I have had many business conversations with him about the ins-and-outs of the food industry. Working at Wise, Vice President of Key Accounts Jimmy Davolio was very instrumental in helping me learn more about the business. Jimmy was a great mentor and offered support while challenging me on a daily basis to answer the question, "What's next?"

**What makes your job exciting?**

There is never a dull moment in this business, and each day presents new challenges. The best part,

**ROBERT SCHNEIDER**

Saratoga Chips

**Title:**

Regional Sales Manager,  
Northeast

**Years with company:**

Three

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

B.A. in Strategic Communication from The Ohio State University, 2010. Snack Food Association.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My biggest business mentor is my Dad, who provided me with great insight into what it takes to succeed in CPG sales, passion for the products you

sell, great communication skills and commitment to learn from your mistakes. I also learned a great deal from my first two supervisors at CROSSMARK, David Deo and Walter Schoen. David taught me the value of organization and having a plan to get through the day, and Walter Schoen's engagement with clients and customers showed me how to be an excellent broker. Finally, my current boss, Joe Gordon. He's an awesome person to work with, and he's really helped me identify my weaknesses and improve my management skills.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Selling a relatively unknown brand in a high volume, uber-competitive category like Salty Snacks is an enormous challenge. Even to this day, new accounts often show some resistance to adding "another niche brand" to an already crowded category, but once we are given a chance, we continue to exceed sales expectations and deliver growth. I love developing strategies for turning "no's" into "yesses".

for me, is the daily interaction with people and customers of all different levels. Having the ability to create and sell products/promotions that help to build our brand and drive sales is exciting.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I am able to sell a great product in Wise Snacks. It is a much-loved brand, and I am lucky to represent it every day. Additionally, I love the business and will settle for nothing less than a successful outcome.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Create a good plan, take risks and most importantly, "Don't be afraid to fail." Without the courage to try new things, you will never know what you can achieve.

**Hobbies:**

Boston sports fan, playing Men's League ice hockey, attending country music concerts, vacations on Cape Cod, and spending time with friends and family. 🏒

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I think I'm easy to work with, and I have strong communication skills. I also have been very fortunate to work with amazing people that make my job easier, especially today at Saratoga Chips. Finally, I'm very adaptable, and I work extremely hard to address weaknesses and never make the same mistake twice.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Get a daily planner and commit to using it. I cannot overstate the importance of organization and having a plan for the day. It makes you more effective and eliminates the stress of worrying about stuff "falling through the cracks". Also, don't be afraid to make mistakes; it's part of learning how to work in the real world. The trick is avoiding the same mistakes again and again. If colleagues see you address what you did and grow from it, it can really speak volumes about your character and potential.

**Hobbies:**

Golf, Ohio State Buckeyes football (The Champs), and I collect vinyl records. 🏌️

## 40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS



**LIAM SLAVIN**  
Robinson Fresh

**Title:**  
Senior Sales Executive

**Years with company:**  
Three

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Saint Joseph's University, BS, food marketing.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

The faculty and alumni at Saint Joseph's

University's Academy of Food Marketing have been an influential presence throughout my career. I have also been fortunate enough to work with industry leading family-owned companies such as Procacci Brothers and Del Campo Supreme, where I experienced, hands on, how product gets from farm to fork. My current employer, Robinson Fresh, fosters a company-wide culture that encourages continuous development and professional coaching in order for employees to develop their career paths and ultimately achieve professional success.

**What makes your job exciting?**

As someone who bores easily doing the same thing day after day, I'm proud to say that there is never a boring day in my job! There is always a new problem to solve, connection to be made, or something to

learn, which keeps it interesting. The great part about working within business development at Robinson Fresh is the opportunity to create new relationships and sales opportunities. Although I lean on the support of Robinson Fresh's account management team to continue to develop relationships further while I focus on pursuing new opportunities, it's satisfying to still have the opportunity to nurture and stay connected to these accounts.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

My greatest strength is my ability to immerse myself in different projects that I am passionate about. Once I am committed to a project or goal, I have an unwavering dedication towards going after my objective. I apply this same attitude and drive to my personal development. 📌



**KATIE STROHECK**  
KeHE Distributors

**Title:**  
Director Customer Insights & Growth Solutions

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Western Michigan University, Food & Consumer Packaged Goods Marketing program, alumni, Network of Executive Women.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My informal mentor has been an outstanding advocate for me during my career in the food industry.

Her high expectations, professionally and personally, have pushed me to become better in work and life. She is willing to take on tough positions, believes in second chances and is extremely open to continued education, constructive criticism and direct feedback. As a previous boss, she constantly challenged me and extended trust. She is honest, hard-working and dedicated, which is what I continue to strive towards.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Every day is unlike the last. Each retailer acts differently, and no category performs in a similar way. Working in a particularly innovative, fast-paced environment, as a natural and specialty sponsor, keeps me engaged and excited. I enjoy stimulating our industry to think differently when it comes to natural and specialty. The blurring of channels has caused us to compete more effectively in order to meet our consumer's needs. Creating ways in which we can capture those consumers through thought-provoking assort-

ment and merchandising tactics is another fulfilling part of what I do every day. Consumer behavior is shifting quickly, and I am inspired to serve to make their lives better.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

Dealing with ambiguity has played a key role in my career development thus far. As the industry continues to change, organizations must adapt to their surroundings. My willingness to transform with the industry and support organizations as they adjust has kept me relevant. In addition to that, career ambition has also played a key role. I've marketed myself for opportunities and communicated my career plan. That is very important for leaders at all levels of an organization.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Be confident, continue learning, remain humble, challenge yourself, embrace change, support others, and seize opportunities.

**Hobbies:**

Fitness, running, Better For You cooking and traveling. 📌



**BETH STARK**  
RDN, LDN  
Weis Markets

**Title:**  
Manager, Lifestyle Initiatives

**Years with company:**  
Six

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
BS from The Pennsylvania State University; ARAMARK Metro New York Dietetic Internship Active member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the Food

Culinary Professionals Dietetic Practice Group and Supermarket RD subgroup.

Past board member for the Lehigh Valley and Central PA Dietetic Associations. Currently volunteer as a board/steering committee member for the Ta Ta Trot, a local breast cancer charity 5K.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My former director, who hired me, helped me understand not only the supermarket setting but also how a retail dietitian fits into it. In addition, as someone who works closely with our pharmacy department, I've been fortunate to work with our pharmacy VP who has been extremely supportive of our entire Lifestyle Initiatives team. I've also connected with dietitians from other retailers who were generous with their insights and advice.

**What makes your job exciting?**

The fast pace of food retail and the ever-changing field of nutritional science requires me to be on my toes with respect to the latest trends in retail and nutrition. There is always something new. It's an interesting combination.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I like to learn new things, take on different responsibilities and seek out growth opportunities. It's helped me succeed in my previous and current positions. Prior to working at Weis Markets, I worked as a clinical and outpatient dietitian, so needless to say, I had a lot to learn as a retail dietitian.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

When you are in a new role, don't be afraid to ask questions and take chances; listening and learning helped me grow as a professional. 📌



**JACQUELINE STUPPIELLO**  
Key Food Co-Operative Inc.

**Title:**  
Grocery Merchandiser

**Years with company:**  
Two

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**  
Saint Joseph's University, Haub School of Business. Graduated from the Academy of Food Marketing with a Bachelor's degree in business administration.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

My parents have always been my mentors in making

decisions with my career. They know me better than anyone and keep me grounded. Additionally, my bosses at Key Food, Paul Sfraga and Bob Vorlicek, have been the biggest assets to me career-wise. Having mentors with such extensive experience in the grocery industry is an advantage. They give me the autonomy to manage my own desk but are constantly guiding me on making better business decisions.

**What makes your job exciting?**

I am working for one of the fastest growing retailers on the East Coast; it is exciting to be part of their success. The New York market is unlike any other market and is constantly changing, so there are always new challenges to overcome. On the merchandising team, you are making fast decisions that ultimately affect all retail operations; it is exciting knowing you are working with the stores to help them drive their business.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to**

**success to date?**

The key factor has been perseverance. I set a goal and know it will take a lot of hard work, long hours and making mistakes to achieve it. When you want something bad enough, nothing will stand in your way. You have to put the times of discouragement aside and remember what you are trying to accomplish. Once you succeed in doing something you once thought was unattainable, you realize you can do anything you put your mind to.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Believe in yourself. You have the power to do great things if you put your mind to it. Challenge yourself. By taking yourself out of your comfort zone you are expanding your range of knowledge. Be comfortable with mistakes. There is always pressure of having everything work out perfectly; some of the greatest lessons I have learned in my career came from making a mistake and learning from it. Work Hard. Starting off in the business, make sure you establish yourself as a hard worker; people notice and appreciate the drive in an individual. 📌

40 UNDER 40

## FOOD INDUSTRY RISING LEADERS

From page 14

to look at things a different way to evaluate how various alternatives enable a collaborative solution to any problem or issue.

"Knowledge is power—always strive to become more educated as there is always something new to learn. Remember that there are always different approaches to any project. My grandfather also taught my family that nothing is beneath you in business. I was afforded the opportunity to gain respect from others in our organization by working from the ground up in various departments and capacities to understand not only our business, but also the daily environment in which our associates operate."

**Alexander Cekala***Willow Tree Poultry Farm*

"My greatest mentor has been my father and president, Wally Cekala. He has engrained in me a strong work ethic along with the ideals of

appreciation and generosity. He has trusted me with great responsibility at the company at an early age and supported me every step of the way. My colleagues have also been mentors sharing their experience and expertise. I'm only able to learn and grow with their guidance. I would also like to thank my wife for her perspective from outside of the food industry and for listening to all the "chicken talk."

"Get involved early, talk to everyone and ask many questions. Business is complicated and takes collaboration to succeed. Opportunities always exist if you ask enough questions."

**Joshua Karns***Karns Quality Foods*

"My biggest mentor has been my father Scott Karns, CEO of Karns Quality Foods. For my entire life, he has been demonstrating in big and little ways what it means to run a successful business."

"My advice is to never stop learning. Education is a process, not a product. Learning new skills is essential to staying relevant in a workplace that will continue to undergo rapid change."

**Daniel Romanoff***Nebraskaland*

"My dad has been the most impactful mentor in developing my career. Nebraskaland is a family business, which my dad began 25 years ago. Starting at a young age, he would bring me in to help make deliveries, work in the warehouse and perform any other odd jobs. More recently we have been working together on the day-to-day business which gives me the opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on a normal basis."

**Melissa Kenny***Kenny Family ShopRites of Delaware*

"Bernie Kenny and Rich Kenny

inspire me to nurture family at home and at work and serve the community by providing high-quality food at the best pricing. They emphasize the importance of cooperation over competition, never giving up and always giving back."

**Brett Ravitz***Ravitz Family Markets, ShopRite*

"In my professional career, my father, Steve Ravitz, has played a major role as a mentor. He always does right, is a firm believer in giving back to help those in need, and has a 110 percent commitment to our cooperative. These are all qualities that I strive to meet on a daily basis."

"My advice for upcoming professionals in this business is to make sure you love what you do, because food is everywhere! That means there's a lot of opportunity and a lot of competition."

**Bria McMenamin***McMenamin Family ShopRite*

"My father, Rich McMenamin, has guided much of my professional and personal development. With unwavering support, he backed all my initiatives, including my decisions to move to New York City post college to work at the New York Post and then return to school for my MBA. And through each opportunity, my dad helped me find strength when there were setbacks and confidence from those learning experiences. Dennis Murray, our VP of operations, is another patient mentor who sits with me to discuss every aspect of the grocery industry. I am incredibly grateful to be able to observe him at work each day. Lastly, my brother, Sean McMenamin, has taught me that focus and drive often leads to success." 📌

Congratulations  
Alex!



40  
Under 40

Septina  
John  
Steve  
Apple  
Davey  
Walt  
Clara  
Kathy  
Luis  
Lisa  
Donna  
Jann  
Debbie

**JONATHAN VERNO**

Unilever

**Title:**

Category Management Manager

**Years with company:**

12

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

Elmira College, Bachelor of science

**SCOTT WILDERMUTH**

General Mills

**Title:**

Customer Account Manager

**Years with company:**

Three

**Education, professional associations, volunteer group affiliations:**

degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing and management.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development:**

I am very fortunate to have had some great mentors spanning from my first day on the job all the way to today. Those that have supported me not only taught me about the consumer packaged goods industry and how we work with customers, but also provided me their insight and guidance on what it takes to be successful. They've acted as an invaluable "guide check" who I could bounce ideas off of and ask tough questions of for an outside-in perspective. Most importantly, their honesty and transparency were key in providing me the constructive feedback I needed to help further develop my skills and expertise throughout each step of my career.

Wake Forest University, Feed My Starving Children.

**Who are your mentors and how have they assisted you in your career development?**

Throughout my time at General Mills, I've met impressive people around every corner. And each of them has left an imprint in my development in one way or another. However, one of my first managers, Lorna Haynes, was able to show me the ropes and further develop my strengths. I give her a lot of credit for my success so far in my young career.

**What makes your job exciting?**

Seeing success is always exciting! But when you work hard managing a portfolio of 700 items, you realize how important food is to people. It brings families together, it nourishes people and it's fun. That's the

**What makes your job exciting?**

It is always fun to be asked by someone the question "what do you do?" and answer in the context that I basically work in the art and science of how they shop at their local retailer for soap, food or ice cream. Category management is a healthy blend of quantitative analytics combined with qualitative efforts that drive the creation of objective strategic category recommendations. The tools and resources available to help build these recommendations are impressive when you step back and observe just how robust and interesting some of the category, shopper and consumer insights are and how they translate to actual sales trends. These sales trends can now be measured, analyzed and even visualized in ways that weren't even possible a few years ago, which caters well to the "techie" side of my personality. 📌

best part of my job, knowing that what I'm doing impacts people.

**What has been the key factor in your rise to success to date?**

I give a lot of credit to my family: Nancy, Paul, Alex, and Ali, for the support they've provided as I've moved around the country and for the work ethic they fostered in me. They've also taught me that success can mean a myriad of things and that finding what drives you will lead you to the promise land—whatever that is for you.

**Advice for upcoming professionals:**

Work hard to achieve your goals, both professionally and personally; make sure that the personal part of that never slips and becomes secondary. The happier you are, the easier it will be to achieve your professional goals. 📌

