

The Journal

Arizona Food and Beverage Industry
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2025



2025 Leadership Awards Banquet

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The 2025 U.S. Government Shutdown

The 2025 US government shutdown, which began on October 1st, lasted 43 days and became the longest in American history, deeply affecting millions of people across the country. It ended on November 12th, after Congress reached an agreement and President Donald Trump signed the funding bill into law. One of the most tangible impacts was the delay in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, commonly known as food stamps, causing uncertainty and hardship for vulnerable households.

The shutdown commenced when Congress failed to adopt a new budget at the start of the fiscal year. Both Republicans and Democrats offered budget proposals, but neither could garner enough support in the Senate. Efforts to negotiate short-term “continuing resolutions” repeatedly collapsed along party lines, and the Republican-led House largely remained inactive during the impasse.

While debates raged in Congress, over 600,000 federal workers were furloughed, and essential operations across multiple sectors—including nutrition programs, air travel, and museums—were suspended or sharply curtailed.

The Effect on SNAP Benefit Delays and Legal Battles

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits are typically funded one month in advance, shielding recipients from the immediate effects of short shutdowns. However, the length and political gridlock of this shutdown exhausted advance appropriations, and by late October, the Department of Agriculture announced that November SNAP benefits would not be distributed. This triggered lawsuits from over two dozen states and sparked a flurry of court rulings.

A federal judge initially ruled that the government must distribute full November SNAP benefits. However, the Supreme Court subsequently paused that directive while legal arguments continued. This left most states in limbo, awaiting clarity on whether and when they could issue payments. As a result, millions faced delays, and the timing for November benefits remained unclear in many states.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs allocated \$1.8 million in emergency funding from Arizona's federal relief resources, targeting food banks and community programs statewide. Additionally, Hobbs initiated the "Food Bucks Now" program, providing \$30 vouchers for purchasing fresh produce at participating farmers markets and local grocery stores. These efforts helped mitigate immediate food insecurity and supplemented assistance for Arizona SNAP recipients while the administration worked to implement full benefit distribution in the face of ongoing federal uncertainty.

How the AFMA Community Stepped Up to Help

During the ongoing 2025 federal government shutdown, Arizona retailers, suppliers and local organizations actively mobilized to support residents impacted by the suspension of SNAP benefits. With nearly 900,000 Arizonans – including 300,000 children - relying on SNAP each month, the sudden halt in federal funding prompted a coordinated response among food banks, businesses, nonprofits, and community leaders. Efforts included increased food and monetary donations to support those that needed assistance.

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FIPAC

*Arizona Food Industry
Political Action Committee*

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FIPAC is not affiliated with any political party and is non-partisan.

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Platinum Level	\$ 1,000
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Our industry is stronger together. Thank you for your contribution!

For additional information, please contact AFMA President Lisa Bednar at 602.252.9761 or
LBednar@afmaaz.org. Return form to AFMA 120 E. Pierce St., Phoenix, AZ 85004



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Every dollar donated goes to political contributions

WHAT IS FIPAC?

The Food Industry Political Action Committee is a non-partisan political organization intended to promote the business and policy objectives of the Arizona retail food industry. FIPAC collects voluntary personal contributions from people interested in food retail issues.

These funds are used to support candidates that understand the needs and challenges of Arizona's evolving food industry.

WHY DO WE NEED FIPAC?

PAC's support political campaigns. Campaigns elect people who make decisions that affect every aspect of our industry every day. Our overriding goal is to insure the needs of Arizona retailers, their suppliers and associates are recognized and understood at our state capitol.

FIPAC supports candidates regardless of political affiliation and is non-partisan in its support.

- Happy Retirement -

DAN TENNESSEN

AFMA valued members, August 28, 1975 marked the official start of my career in the grocery industry. Looking back now, 50 years later, I could never have imagined the friendships, opportunities, and experiences this path would bring me. For the past 16 years, I've had the privilege of being part of AFMA, which gave me the chance to remain connected to the industry I love and to continue serving customers and colleagues who have been such an important part of my life. This journey has been so much more than a career – it has been a community, a family, and a source of great pride and joy. I am deeply grateful for the support, kindness, and trust so many of you have shared with me over the years. As I now fully step into retirement, I carry with me countless memories and lasting friendships. Thank you all for being such a meaningful part of my life and my 50-year career in this industry. With the mindset of a grocery guy, but the schedule of retirement, my very best to you all.

- Dan Tennessen -

*The AFMA Team wants to
congratulate you, Dan, on an
amazing career.
Thank you for all you have
done for our industry!!*



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Sierra Tijerino

Retail Management Certificate and Bachelor's Degree Pathway



Sierra Tijerino aspires to take her career at Safeway to the next level. Tijerino, an AFMA Professional Scholars scholarship recipient, recently earned her Retail Management Certificate (RMC), and is now enrolled in Scottsdale Community College's (SCC) Bachelor's in Business Administration program.

Cherie Phipps, Founding Director of the Retail Management Certificate Program shared, **"Across the nation, the RMC program has successfully prepared more than 7,000 graduates for management positions. Employers benefit directly from the higher level of self-confidence and engagement displayed by graduates. And graduates gain even more than promotion opportunities – they also gain a pathway to a degree to continue their education."**

Arizona's leading retailers—including Albertsons/Safeway, Bashas' Family of Stores, Fry's Food Stores, Sprouts Farmers Market, and Whole Foods — support the RMC, ensuring it stays relevant to the workforce's evolving needs. Phoenix College and South Mountain Community College (SMCC) have been designated 'Premier Colleges' for their outstanding student support services and tuition assistance partnerships with employers.

Dr. Bruce McHenry, Business Faculty at SMCC and long-time member of Arizona's Retail Management Certificate Advisory Committee stated, **"We believe in this program! We are proud to offer the Retail Management Certificate Program, the Retail Management Associate's degree and now multiple Bachelor's degree programs at our sister Colleges that will allow our students to achieve these stackable credentials to quickly advance in both their education and career pathways."**

Tijerino, who is currently a deli operations specialist overseeing 19 delis, including all operational aspects, aspires to become a sales manager and eventually manage all marketing categories. In reflecting on her transition from the RMC to the Bachelor's program, Tijerino shared, **"SCC accepted all 24 credits from the Retail Management Certification, which was awesome!"** This seamless transfer of credits highlights the stackable design of the program.

"An advantage of our workforce driven programs that is not often highlighted, is that the student and the employer reap the benefits of the program every day!" stated Dr. Jamie Martin, Dean of Career and Technical Education programs at SCC. **"Students immediately bring what they learn in class to the workplace. The benefits of the program are evident long before degree completion."**

Tijerino's achievement is a testament to the power of employer connected programs, showcasing how motivated students can leverage accessible, industry-backed education to accelerate their careers and academic goals.





ARIZONA FOOD MARKETING ALLIANCE

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**Terry Morrison - Chairman -
Crescent Crown Distributing**

Terry Morrison serves as Senior Vice President of National Accounts for Crescent Crown Distributing, LLC, where he leads all sales to corporate retail customers across the company's Arizona and Louisiana markets. His responsibilities span both On- and Off-Premise sales, as well as oversight of the Category and Space Management teams.

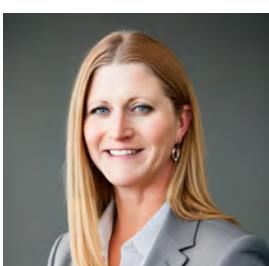
Terry joined Crescent Crown in 2009 after a successful career with Miller Brewing Company, where he held multiple sales and distributor management roles in Texas, Florida, and Arizona. A graduate of Texas State University with a degree in Business Administration, Terry has contributed his expertise to several industry and nonprofit boards, including United Cerebral Palsy, St. Mary's Food Bank, and the National Beer Wholesalers Association. He is also a Scottsdale Charro and an active volunteer at Horsense. In 2015, Terry was honored as Supplier of the Year by the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance. Outside of work, he enjoys the outdoors, golf, hunting, fishing, ranch work, and traveling with his wife, Christine.



**Sabrina Dominguez - Vice Chair -
Bashas' Family of Stores**

Sabrina Dominguez is the Executive Director of Human Resources for Bashas' Family of Stores, a division of The Raley's Companies that includes Bashas', Bashas' Diné, Food City, and Eddie's Country Store. She joined The Raley's Companies in 2016 and moved to Bashas' headquarters in Chandler in 2022, first serving as Director of Human Resources Integration before advancing into her current role.

As Executive Director, Sabrina leads Bashas' people strategy and is deeply committed to fostering a workplace culture that enriches the lives of team members through meaningful development and growth opportunities. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in business from California State University, Stanislaus, and maintains a Professional in Human Resources—California certification from the HR Certification Institute. Passionate about expanding access to higher education, Sabrina is an active member of Women and Philanthropy, an Arizona State University Foundation program supporting research and scholarship grants.



**Lisa Bednar
Arizona Food Marketing Alliance**

Lisa Bednar is the President of the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (AFMA), where she leads the organization's mission to support and advocate for Arizona's retail food and beverage industry. She joined AFMA in 2022 as Director of Community and Education, bringing with her more than 20 years of industry experience, including a distinguished 21-year career with Hensley Beverage Company.

Lisa holds a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from the University of Nevada, Reno. Throughout her career, she has remained dedicated to strengthening Arizona's workforce and expanding opportunities for professional development. In her role at AFMA, Lisa is especially passionate about ensuring that employees of member companies can access the robust educational programs and resources offered through the AFMA Education Foundation, helping to cultivate talent and support long-term industry success.



Shayla Cole
Arizona Food Marketing Alliance

Shayla Cole is the Director of Community and Education for the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance, bringing more than 15 years of experience in mass media, public relations, broadcast journalism, community engagement, sales, and marketing. An accomplished communicator, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Journalism from Arizona State University. Before joining AFMA,

Shayla served as the sole member of a key department within a business-to-business food wholesale distribution company, where she managed a wide range of responsibilities with agility and leadership. In addition to her professional role, Shayla is the CEO and Founder of Welcome Mama Bear, a supportive community created to offer resources and shared experiences for mothers. Deeply committed to service, she also volunteers as a Chapter President within the Arizona State University Alumni Association, further strengthening her ties to the community and her ongoing commitment to education, connection, and empowerment.



Natalie Murphy
Albertsons/Safeway

Regional Learning Manager for Albertsons Safeway. In Phoenix since 2003, she supports professional and personal development for associates developing their skills in the grocery industry. In addition to supporting internal training and development, she also works with the Western Associate of Food Chains (WAFC) to provide additional education through the Retail Management Certificate Program. She was elected to the AFMA Scholarship Foundation Board in 2023.



Debbie Roth
Retired - AFMA

Retired after 37 years as Vice President and General Manager of the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance, she was also Editor of The Journal and founder of AFMA's Education Foundation. Debbie is a graduate from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Science Degree in History and Certification for Secondary Education. She was honored as an AFMA Legend in 2024 and currently serves as Trustee Emeritus on the AFMA Education Foundation Board of Trustees.



Karla Ramirez
Circle K

Human Resources Director for Circle K, Grand Canyon Division. Karla began her career in 1992 right out of high school and has since held positions of Administrator, Executive Assistance and Community Relations Manager. In August 2022 Karla celebrated 30 years with Circle K. She is proud to share the passion of her and her daughter's alma mater; Arizona State University. Karla is continuing her education in D&I and Occupational Psychology.



Donna Tanori
Fry's Food Stores

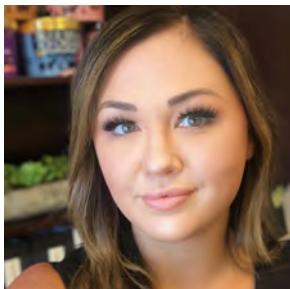
A passionate leader with more than 36 years of experience in the Human Resources field. She has been the Human Resources Leader for Fry's Food Stores since 2008, overseeing several departments including Recruiting and Training, Total Rewards, Payroll Benefits and Associate Relations. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Business from Arizona State University. Donna has been a member of the Foundation Board of Trustees since 2017.



Michelle Taylor
Sprouts Farmers Market

Joined Sprouts Farmers Market in 2017 as a Human Resource Benefit Analyst and has since been promoted to Benefits Manager. In her current role she remains passionate about providing the appropriate tools and resources for employees to grow their careers in the grocery industry.

Michelle received her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the American Military University and was elected to the AFMA Scholarship Foundation Board in February 2022.



Taylor Avery
Blue Bell Creameries

Taylor Avery is a Branch Manager for the Blue Bell Creameries distribution center in Tucson, AZ. Taylor oversees all sales and distribution of Blue Bell ice cream in Southern Arizona as well as acts as a Key Account Manager for Kroger.

Taylor joined Blue Bell in 2013 after graduating from The U of A with a B.S. in Retailing and Consumer Sciences. Taylor is passionate about the grocery industry and her community and previously served on the Sunshine Acres Children's Home Advisory board in Mesa, AZ.



Adam Salgado
Heritage Grocers Group Foundation

Adam Salgado serves as President and Executive Director for Heritage Grocers Group Foundation, overseeing all charitable, philanthropic and community engagements for the organization. Adam served as Chief Marketing Officer for Heritage Grocers Group where he oversaw brand, PR & communications, digital marketing, e-commerce, and loyalty for all banners, comprising 115 stores in six states. In addition to serving on the AFMA Education Foundation Board, he serves as Chair for the CGAEF. Adam graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in marketing and received an MBA from Fordham University.



Jim Nygren -
Retired - AFMA

Jim began his retail journey as a bagger at King Soopers in Denver, CO. He graduated from college with a BA in Elementary Education and the goal of teaching.

In December 1968 he was drafted into the US Army, serving 3 years active duty.

When discharged from the Army, Jim returned to King Soopers as part of the Veterans Reemployment law and began a real career path in retail. He retired in 2017 after a 53-year career with the Kroger Company. Throughout his career with Kroger, Jim was involved in educational activities as part of his HR responsibilities. Working with the Western Association of Food Chains (WAFC) and University of Southern California (USC) on their Food Marketing Management program. Jim was one of the founding members of the AFMA Education Foundation and currently serves as Trustee Emeritus. Jim has been a member of the Foundation Board of Trustees since 1996. Currently, residing in Gilbert, Arizona with his wife Lee.



Dr. Renée Shaw Hughner
Arizona State University

Dr. Hughner is an Associate Professor of Agribusiness in the W. P. Carey School of Business at ASU. Her research broadly focuses on food marketing, with particular attention to consumer behavior, health, nutrition, and education, especially as they relate to food labeling.

Her work has been published in several leading academic journals. In addition to her research and teaching, Dr. Hughner is an active mentor and advisor to students. She has advised numerous student teams and organizations, including the Produce for Better Health's Formula 5 Marketing Competition, the National Agri-Marketing Association's annual marketing plan competition, the International Fresh Produce Association's Career Pathway Program, and the National Grocers Association's Collegiate Case Competition. Dr. Hughner has also served as Chair of the NGA Food Industry University Coalition (FIUC), a committee dedicated to strengthening connections between the independent food retailing sector and academia. She currently serves on the policy board of the Journal of Macromarketing and the editorial review board of the International Journal of Food and Agribusiness Marketing. She has been a member of the Education Foundation Board of Trustees since 2013.



Ring in the Holidays with New Arizona Lottery Scratchers® and Fast Play™ Games

Festive tickets and the new Merry Millions promotion give shoppers more ways to play - and retailers more reasons to celebrate

The Arizona Lottery is celebrating the season with its brand-new lineup of Holiday Scratchers and Fast Play tickets: eight festive games that give shoppers a fun, easy way to share the joy of play. **With prices ranging from \$1 to \$20, and more than \$80 million in total prizes**, these limited-time games are the perfect way to boost sales and excitement during the busy holiday season.

“Giving the gift of Arizona Lottery tickets is a holiday tradition for many of our players,” said Alec Thomson, Executive Director of the Arizona Lottery. “We’re excited to bring back a fresh lineup of Scratchers and Fast Play tickets, and to add even more excitement with the Merry Millions promotion. Sharing new games like these adds a little extra sprinkle of festivity to our favorite time of the year.”

This year’s lineup includes something for every type of player, from quick-play options to premium prize opportunities:

- **\$10 Triple Red 7’s**
- **\$20 Cash Countdown**
- **\$2 Snowflake Doubler (Fast Play)**
- **\$10 Merry Money Match (Fast Play)**
- **\$1 Happy Holidays**
- **\$2 Winter Winnings**
- **\$3 One Word Crossword**
- **\$5 Candy Cane Cash (peppermint-scented)**

The holiday festivities don’t stop there though. Through the Merry Millions Player Club promotion, players can now enter eligible Holiday tickets for a chance to win a progressive jackpot that grows daily until it reaches \$1 million. This promotion also features \$150,000 in monthly prizes, including one \$100,000 winner, one \$25,000 winner, one \$10,000 winner and 30 winners of \$500 each.

For retailers, the holidays are an ideal time to spotlight holiday sales. Fresh and fun designs make these tickets perfect for stocking stuffers, greeting cards and gift exchanges - all proven drivers of impulse purchases. Displaying these new tickets front and center and reminding customers about the Merry Millions promotion can help increase basket size and repeat visits throughout the season. Additionally, every ticket sold supports Arizona state programs benefiting higher education, economic and business development, environmental conservation and health and human services.

Holiday Scratchers and Fast Play tickets are available now at Arizona Lottery retailers statewide. To learn how you can take advantage of these seasonal best-sellers, contact GrowYourSales@azlottery.gov.

Must be 21 or older to purchase or redeem tickets. Scratchers® is a registered service mark of the California Lottery. Gambling problem? Call 1-800-NEXT-STEP (1-800-639-8783) or text NEXTSTEP to 53342. Please Play Responsibly™.



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It's never too early to be merry! Sell Holiday Scratchers® to spread holiday cheer all season long—and Santa didn't forget your gift! As a retailer, you'll earn 6.5% commission on every sale.

Sell Today

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to learn more.

Must be 21 or older to purchase or redeem tickets. Overall odds vary by game. All sales are final. In accordance with ADA, these materials may be made available in an alternative format. Gambling problem? Call 1.800.NEXT STEP (1.800.639.8783) or text NEXTSTEP to 53342. Please Play Responsibly™. Scratchers® is a registered service mark of the California Lottery.





AFMA's 2025 Leadership Awards Banquet

AFMA's President Lisa Bednar opened the 2025 Leadership Awards Banquet with gratitude and pride for the Arizona retail food and beverage industry. She began by welcoming the many colleagues, partners, and friends in attendance. Lisa highlighted the tremendous work AFMA member companies do both in stores and behind the scenes to strengthen Arizona communities.

This year's banquet honors three distinguished leaders: **Todd Newman of Circle K (Retailer of the Year)**, **Tim Kelly of Shamrock Farms (Supplier of the Year)**, and **Frank Cannistra of Albertsons/Safeway (Hall of Fame inductee)**.

Lisa also announced a new award this year. The Emerging Leader Award celebrates rising talent within the industry. This year's finalists were Davis Carpenter (Acosta), Russell Peace (Fry's Food Stores), and Obed Sanchez (Heritage Grocers/Los Altos Ranch Market). **The winner - Russell Peace**. AFMA would like to congratulate Russell and all his achievements.

In attendance, Phoenix Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien, who officially welcomed everyone to Phoenix. Representing Arizona Lobbying, Trish Hart and John Rittner and their guests: Ben Henry, Director of the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control; Paul Brierley, Director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture; Brandt Smith, Deputy Director of the Industrial Commission of Arizona; Arizona State Senator T.J. Shope and The Arizona Lottery Executive Director Alec Thomson.

Lisa recognized supporters of the silent auction, which funds AFMA Education Foundation scholarships. Since 1997, the Foundation has awarded \$2.5 million in scholarships and tuition reimbursement, with a new Legacy Scholarship established this year by the Arizona Lottery.

Guests kicked off the evening by exploring 15 incredible sampling tables, each one showcasing the newest and most exciting drinks hitting the market. The energy kept building with our brand-new Mystery Grab Bag, and thanks to our amazing partners at Breakthru, RNDC, and Hensley, every bag was packed with holiday cheer and crowd-pleasing goodies.

AFMA scratchers had everyone buzzing especially with five grand prizes of \$562 Circle K gift cards, generously sponsored by Altria! Poppi turned every table into a celebration with colorful swag, and the return of our beloved red envelopes took the excitement even higher. Each envelope was valued at over \$100 per guest, filled with exclusive VIP coupons.

AFMA looks forward to an incredible new year ahead and sends warm wishes for a joyful, safe, and wonderful holiday season to all.





Altria
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Distribution Company

**Thank You to ALTRIA for Generously
Donating **FIVE \$562**
Circle K Gift Cards, to Celebrate all 562
Stores in Arizona!**



AESMA









Did Someone Say Mystery Bags?!

Our suppliers absolutely outdid themselves this year—thank you for going above and beyond with your incredible donations! Our guests walked away with bags bursting with festive holiday drinks, and if you're ever unsure what to bring to your next party... these amazing suppliers have you covered! With over 300 bottles donated, we are beyond grateful. Huge thanks to Breakthru Beverage, RNDC, PepsiCo and Hensley Beverage Co. for making this such a fantastic success!



~ SILENT AUCTION ~

Thank You for Supporting the 2025 Silent Auction!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to and participated in this year's Silent Auction. Thanks to your generosity and the many wonderful donations, we raised over \$18,000 in support of the AFMA Education Foundation.

Guests enjoyed the opportunity to stroll through the auction area, explore featured items, and place bids throughout the evening all in the spirit of supporting education.

Since 1997, the AFMA Education Foundation has provided over \$2 million in educational support to AFMA member company employees and their families. Your continued support at the Silent Auction and \$\$\$ for Scholars Golf Tournament makes this mission possible and truly meaningful.





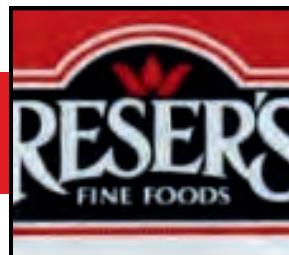
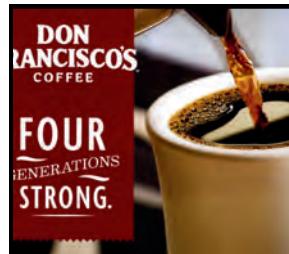
TABLE SAMPLES

We couldn't have asked for better sampling tables at this year's banquet! A huge shout-out to all our incredible suppliers and independent brands for giving us a true taste of the holidays. Your generosity and creativity made the night unforgettable!



RED ENVELOPE

Thank you to our amazing suppliers for packing our Red Envelopes with unbelievable goodies! Your generosity made this year's giveaway a huge hit and a guest favorite once again. This years envelope was worth over \$100 in Free Product!!





AFMA Recognition

- Todd Newman -

Retailer of the Year

The Arizona Lottery congratulates Todd Newman, Commission Vice Chair and Director of Marketing at Circle K, for being recognized as Retailer of the Year at the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (AFMA) Leadership Awards Banquet.

The AFMA Leadership Awards celebrate excellence across Arizona's food and retail industries, recognizing individuals and organizations who demonstrate exceptional leadership, innovation, and commitment to their customers and communities.

Todd's recognition highlights his outstanding partnership with the Arizona Lottery and his pivotal role in expanding our retail presence statewide. Under his leadership, Circle K has consistently delivered top-tier sales performance, implemented creative promotional strategies, and enhanced player engagement through exclusive offerings like the upcoming Circle K Cash for Gas Scratcher®.

The Arizona Lottery is a proud member of the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance, and we value our shared mission to strengthen relationships with retailers, celebrate success, and champion the businesses that help keep Arizona's economy thriving.



**It's Just
Right.**



*Hype Up the
Holidays with Bar-S*

[BarSFoods | Bar-S.com](https://BarSFoods.com)

The Arizona Diamondbacks
are proud to celebrate

**TODD
NEWMAN**

as the Arizona Food Marketing
Alliance's Retailer of the Year!



The Arizona Diamondbacks
are proud to celebrate

**TIM
KELLY**

as the Arizona Food Marketing
Alliance's Supplier of the Year!



FRY'S FOOD STORES INVESTS \$65,000 TO FIGHT FOOD INSECURITY DURING HUNGER ACTION MONTH



Project Rising Hope, Cottonwood (\$5,000): These funds will support this organization's mission to provide access to fresh, nutritious food for families in the Cottonwood area through their weekly food pantry operations.



Community Gardens of Tucson (\$15,000): With this grant, local efforts to revitalize community gardens will expand, ensuring more Tucson residents have access to fresh, nutritious food options.



Native Seeds Search (\$10,000): This donation will help preserve Indigenous growing techniques and crops to ensure communities have sustainable access to fresh, wholesome food.



Tiger Mountain Foundation, South Phoenix (\$10,000): This investment will directly support the organization's vital work in revitalizing community gardens, cultivating job skills, and strengthening the South Phoenix community by increasing access to locally grown, healthy food.



Northern Arizona University's Louie's Cupboard (\$25,000): This significant donation will bolster the campus food pantry's mission to provide consistent, nutritious food to students, staff, and faculty through regular distributions.

September marked "Hunger Action Month," a nationwide initiative aimed at raising awareness about hunger in the United States and inspiring individuals to take action in support of those in need.

In alignment with Kroger's Zero Hunger | Zero Waste social impact plan, Fry's Food Stores is proud to announce \$65,000 in donations to nonprofit organizations across Arizona. These funds are dedicated to expanding access to healthy, nourishing food for those in our community facing food insecurity.

"Hunger Action Month is a time for Fry's to stand alongside our neighbors to spotlight the issue of food insecurity and support the organizations working tirelessly to nourish Arizona families," said Monica Garnes, president of Fry's Food Stores. "We're deeply grateful for the opportunity to partner with these statewide nonprofits in building a healthier Arizona through access to fresh, nutritious food."

These contributions were made possible through Fry's Food Stores and Kroger's Zero Hunger | Zero Waste Foundation, as part of their ongoing commitment to combat hunger and reduce waste in communities via Kroger's Zero Hunger | Zero Waste social impact initiative.

Since 2019, Fry's has donated more than \$16 million to support a wide range of local charities, sustainability projects, and programs aimed at addressing food insecurity across Arizona. In 2024 alone, Fry's provided \$1 million, equivalent to over 16.3 million meals—to organizations statewide, helping families gain better access to nutritious food. Among the many partners Fry's supports are Kitchen on the Street, St. Mary's Food Bank, Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, Flagstaff Shelter Services, and Yuma Community Food Bank.



As the holiday season approaches, Fry's Food Stores remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting Arizona communities through its annual Holiday Food Drive.

Running from November 1 through January 4, this campaign is part of Fry's ongoing effort to fight hunger and bring comfort to families during this special time of year.

Throughout the drive, Fry's invites customers to make a difference by donating non-perishable food items or by contributing monetary donations at checkout. Every donation, big or small, goes a long way. Each \$1 and \$5 donation helps stock the shelves of local food banks, ensuring that struggling families have access to essential staples. A \$10 donation allows The Salvation Army to provide a turkey to a family in need, offering not just a meal, but the chance to gather and celebrate the season.

As we come together to experience the magic of the holidays, Fry's encourages everyone to embrace the spirit of giving. Together we can help create a season filled with warmth, joy, and hope for everyone.

Visit your local Fry's and be part of making sure every Arizonan can celebrate the holidays with full hearts and full plates.

Donate today!

Holiday Food Drive

11/1/25 - 1/4/26



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Barriers and Opportunities for Imperfect Produce

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Fresh produce waste represents one-third of total U.S. food losses.^[1] Selling cosmetically imperfect produce is one of the ways to reduce fresh produce waste. While grocery stores often reject imperfect produce, the number of alternative sellers, such as Misfits Market, Hungry Harvest, and Too Good to Go is rising. The existence of those companies suggests an undiscovered demand for such produce in the market. To shed light on potential opportunities and barriers for imperfect produce, we interviewed thirteen fresh produce supply chain actors, who provided important industry insights.

Among others, they identified the lack of consumer acceptance due to a negative perception of cosmetic defects as a major barrier to selling imperfect produce through common channels. Another obstacle they observed are consumers' high expectations with regard to flavor and freshness of cosmetically damaged produce. Consumers also lack knowledge of production, which limits their understanding of the differences between harmless aesthetic flaws and actual disease spots or scars on produce. In addition, social media can influence consumers to demand "everything perfect," which fosters unrealistic expectations.

Due to high-quality standards set by retailers, a substantial amount of fresh produce waste occurs before reaching the point of sale. Food processors can play a significant role in reducing food waste, however, they often offer smaller pick-up windows and pay less to growers compared to retail outlets. This begs the question whether it could be profitable to sell imperfect produce at food retailers. From the retail perspective, dealing with produce of lower quality grades is costly and time-consuming. As imperfect produce is usually sold at a lower margin, offering it to consumers may present a challenge to profitability. To better understand this, we surveyed over 1,000 produce shoppers across the U.S. Our findings reveal that offering produce of higher and lower quality at the same time in the grocery store would likely decrease retailer revenue and potentially profit.



With regard to opportunities for imperfect produce, the surveyed professionals mentioned engaging consumers in product repurposing. For example, retailers could reframe the narrative for specific uses – "Perfect for banana bread" – and engage food influencers in marketing campaigns. Imperfect produce could also be redirected to market outlets with lower appearance standards, such as discount retailers and nonprofit food rescue organizations. Several interviewees also mentioned the role of government, for example, educating children by introducing imperfect produce in school lunch programs. In addition, participants suggested to enforce tax-incentive-based donation policies to make donating surplus produce more financially viable for growers and retailers. They also proposed to provide subsidies to help grocery stores and food banks manage the associated costs of transportation and storage of imperfect produce. Overall, our research shows that while there are many barriers to introduce imperfect produce to market, it is important to continue the discussion of potential market avenues considering the economic and environmental impact of cosmetically damaged produce.



Funding for this Project (Opportunities for Imperfect Food: Analyzing Preferences Along the Agri-Food Value Chain) was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through grant #22023-67023-39107. Its contents are solely responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA. Contact us to receive our working papers:

(1) Akter, H., Grebitus, C., & E. Stoliarova: Imperfect Produce: Barriers & Opportunities, (2) Stoliarova, E., Grebitus, C., & T. Richards: Imperfect Produce, Food Waste and Food Retailing.

[1] Buzby, J. C., Farah-Wells, H., & Hyman, J. (2014). The estimated amount, value, and calories of postharvest food losses at the retail and consumer levels in the United States. USDA-ERS Economic Information Bulletin, (121).

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BACIC BEVERAGE ALCOHOL COMMUNITY INFORMATION COUNCIL

BY MARK MILLER

BACIC started in 2006. The 501(C)(3) represents the Beer, Wine and Liquor Wholesalers and their business partners across Arizona. Their goal is to educate and encourage students to wait until they are 21 before consuming any liquor products.



It was so fun watching the World Series this October. Most of the fans in the ballparks had a cold beer in their hands and a stressful look on their face. A ball game is always the best place to enjoy a cold beer.

When I started in the beer industry, it was a simple business. Very few packages and not many brands. Light beers were not even a thing until the middle 1970's, and the sales started slowly. No one even knew what a hand-crafted beer was. The beer industry did not even look at the liquor and wine brands as competitors.

When you stepped into your favorite watering hole, the bartender was mixing or reaching for what you always asked for, and most customers were loyal and predictable. Most bars felt like an episode from the TV show Cheers. My favorite line from the show was coach asking, "What's shaking Norm", and he said, "Both chins and all four cheeks".

Until 1984, most alcoholic products were consumed in bars and restaurants. In 1980, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, "MADD" started to campaign to raise the drinking age to 21. The deaths on the streets and highways in the U.S. from drunk drivers were rising most years. That all started to change in 1984 when the national drinking age to consume any alcohol was raised to 21 years of age.



In the mid 1980's, most of the beer, wine, and liquor companies started to include Don't Drink and Drive messages in their print and TV advertising. They have continued to support the Don't Drink and Drive message for over 40 years. The grocery, convenience and independent stores in Arizona and across the U.S. have spent time training their employees and also invested in technology to check IDs to ensure that those buying alcoholic products are over 21 years of age.



Raising the nationwide drinking age to 21, having support from parents and teachers, lowering the BAC level to .08 for DWI charges, more state enforcement from police and liquor control departments, stronger and higher penalties for driving under the influence, and the messaging from the beer, wine and liquor companies have all contributed to drunk driving deaths going down from approximately 28,000 in 1980 to just under 13,000 in 2023. The numbers are still too high.

Even with the reductions in drinking and driving, the alcohol industry still wanted to do more to reduce underage drinking. In 2006, the Arizona liquor wholesalers, major beer, wine and liquor companies started the Beverage Alcohol Community Information Council, BACIC. The Arizona Restaurant Association, (ARA) helped to manage the 501(C)(3) until 2023.



BACIC started "Own Up", and the message was taken to high schools across the greater Phoenix area. The goal was to spend time with the students and convince them to pledge to wait until they were 21 before drinking any alcoholic products. The message was well received and worked until 2020. Then COVID changed everything.

Most of the schools across Arizona were closed and moved to virtual classrooms. When the schools did finally reopen, they were very restrictive on who could come onto campus. The Own Up message and the good work that BACIC accomplished ran into more roadblocks.

The Arizona Restaurant Association and their members had a hard time during COVID. ARA decided they needed to focus on helping their members recover and asked the board members of BACIC to look for another charity to take the lead.

The BACIC board members were also members of AFMA and knew that they had the same goals in helping to reduce underage drinking. In the summer of 2024, AFMA took over managing the charity and pursuing their goals.

In 2024, I retired as President of AFMA and volunteered to take over as Chairman of the Board. Working with the current AFMA President, Lisa Bednar, we decided to look for organizations that were already in place and had the same goals.

Lisa and I reached out to Ben Henry, the Director of the Arizona Department of Liquor License Control (AZDLLC) to discuss the BACIC goals. He introduced us to Jessica Valadez, AZDLLC Prevention Specialist. Jessica has been extremely helpful as well and offered to make connections with organizations across the state with similar goals.

Jessica introduced us to an organization called VIVE 18. We partnered with them for an event in Prescott in September. They had over 120 high school students from across the state for 2 days. The presenter and owner of VIVE 18, Jake White, did a good job of presenting our message. Jake had a banner printed that he asked the students to sign and asked them to wait until they were 21 before drinking any alcoholic products.



BACIC plans to partner up with VIVE 18 in December for another event in the Phoenix area. We are also working on another program for Spring 2026 focusing on alcohol-free proms and graduation events.

Even if you do not drink any alcoholic products, you are benefiting from beer, wine, and liquor companies and their wholesalers. They pay so much of their profits to taxes at the state and federal levels. They offer good paying jobs that contribute to our state economy. Their company cultures encourage their employees to give their time and money back to those in need.

You are probably thinking that after 40 years in the beer and beverage industry, I might be a little prejudiced. (Yeah Maybe); but I still know good people and good companies when I see them.

Thank You



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FOOD CITY



Food City has wrapped up another successful year of its annual Hatch Chile Recipe Contest, a summer tradition that invites Arizona home cooks to showcase their creativity with Hatch chilies during the limited harvest season.

The 2025 contest ran from August 29 through September 12, with participants submitting a recipe and photo online. Winners are being announced following a statewide call for entries. Prizes included \$500 for first place, \$300 for second place, and \$200 for third place. Contestants were required to be Mi Club loyalty members (free to join), making this a truly community-centered celebration.

Winners of the 2025 Hatch Chile Recipe Contest:

First Place: Darlene of Peoria – Hatch Tortilla Brunch Bake

Second Place: Claribel of Chandler – Hatch Chile Flan

Third Place: Sommer of Phoenix – Hatch Chile Mole on Hatch Corn Muffin

The contest highlights the central role Hatch chilies play in Arizona households each summer—from roasting events outside of grocery stores to recipes passed down through generations. Food City, with its 46 locations statewide, also brought the season to life through in-store roasts and chili-inspired specialties across departments.



April 16, 2026

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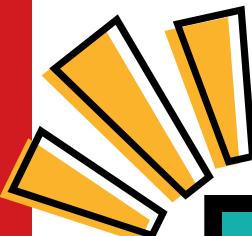
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This fun and casual networking afternoon is the perfect way to connect with fellow retailers, distributors, and industry partners outside the office.

Whether you're aiming for a strike or just rolling for fun, you'll enjoy great conversations, laughter, and the chance to strengthen professional relationships in a relaxed atmosphere.

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