

# ALEX LEE INK

*a magazine for alex lee employees*



**Alex Lee**

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Whether it's an interesting angle on your job, an illuminating look at what your department does, a profile of an interesting co-worker, or something else you think *INK* readers would appreciate, we'd like to hear about it. Please contact the *INK* journalist for your company and share your ideas.

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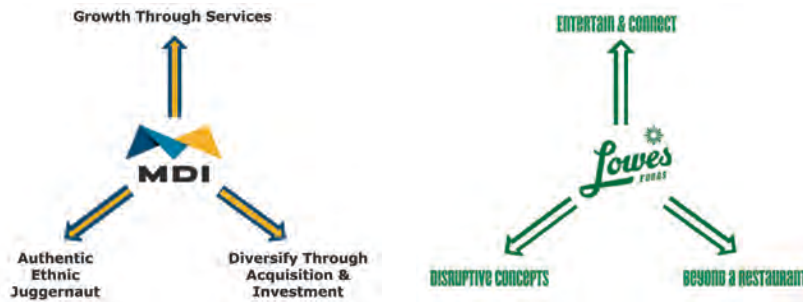


# A MESSAGE FROM BRIAN

**BRIAN GEORGE, PRESIDENT & CEO OF ALEX LEE, INC.**

**FOR OVER 90 YEARS**, Alex Lee has continued to grow and improve. I believe we owe this continued success to the following things: 1) our people 2) our core values 3) keeping a long-term strategic focus.

**BY STAYING FOCUSED ON OUR STRATEGIES**, we continue to drive innovation.



**TO DELIVER ON THESE STRATEGIES**, we have worked to position Alex Lee for growth. We have a strong balance sheet that allows us to continue to invest in our business for the long term.

**WE ARE INVESTING IN AUTOMATION** at MDI to expand capacity and improve the quality of deliveries to stores as well as improving efficiency. We have also announced a perishables expansion at MDI that will provide additional capacity for perishable foods, where many of our retail customers are seeing significant growth.

**WE ARE MOVING TO SCALABLE TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS** that allow us to have multiple facilities within our supply chain that are using the same systems. The recent multi-warehouse capabilities we implemented are just one example of moving to systems that can support a much larger business.

**WE ARE BUILDING NEW STORES.** Lowe's Foods has announced several new stores for the coming year with the next one scheduled to open in Pittsboro, NC, this summer.

**WE ARE ON THE BRAND JOURNEY** with W. Lee Flowers, creating a unique experience for our KJ's Market stores. Many of you have been involved in this ongoing work, and I am excited to see this unique brand come to life.

**WE ARE WELL POSITIONED FOR AN EXCITING FUTURE.** You have all been a part of getting us where we are, and you will be a part of taking us into the future. Thank you.

# Building Success Stories Opportunities at Alex Lee

ALEX LEE'S CULTURE IS DEEPLY TIED TO THE OPPORTUNITIES IT OFFERS TO ITS EMPLOYEES TO GROW AND ENRICH THEIR CAREERS. THESE OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE SCHOLARSHIPS AND TUITION ASSISTANCE, ALEX LEE UNIVERSITY, AND THE COMPANY'S JOB SHADOW PROGRAM. EMPLOYEES CAN ALSO ACCESS LINKEDIN LEARNING, WHICH HAS MORE THAN 3,500 CLASSES AND VIDEOS AVAILABLE ON A WIDE VARIETY OF TOPICS.

THE SCOPE OF THE ALEX LEE ORGANIZATION ALONE AIDS IN PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES. ITS FAMILY OF COMPANIES INCLUDES MDI, LOWES FOODS, W. LEE FLOWERS, SOUTO FOODS, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE RETAIL STORES.

BEGINNING AS A SMALL BUSINESS BY LEBANESE IMMIGRANTS MORE THAN 90 YEARS AGO, ALEX LEE IS A SUCCESS STORY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. NOW, IT OFFERS A WAY FOR EMPLOYEES TO WRITE THEIR OWN SUCCESS STORY. IN THE LATEST INSTALLMENT OF THE "OPPORTUNITY" SERIES, **PAIGE VANCE** AND **SKYE TOWNLEY** SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.



PAIGE VANCE

## PAIGE VANCE

BRAND & SERVICES MANAGER, MDI

When I joined MDI — I've been here five years as of May 7 — I joined as a social media specialist. I was hired to do a dual

role with shopper marketing and Facebook. I was also doing a lot with loyalty. We soon realized that there were a lot of customers who wanted that, so I transitioned into marketing and loyalty.

I feel very fortunate to have come into a department that had a lot of room for new growth. At the time when I joined the digital marketing department, it was a three-person team without a lot of customers using mainly digital coupons and e-commerce. Now, the fact that we have a 20-person team is really a testament to everyone's hard work. We've grown the need for a larger team and expanded our services, and I think all of that has given me more opportunity, which I'm very thankful for. I've worked very hard, and it's been nice to see the company's growth firsthand. The same with our customers. The number of customers we have in e-commerce, digital coupons and all our other services has grown at least 10 times what it was in the beginning. It's been really nice to see that.

When I joined MDI, they were going through a really large transition phase — ramping up private label, in-store rewards, loyalty programs — so there was a lot of opportunity to work cross-functionally with other departments. I was able to do these really large marketing campaigns. Sometimes I was doing things outside my comfort zone, which was great. That's the beauty of marketing — there's a lot of trial and error, seeing what works and what doesn't. MDI does a really good job of letting people work cross-functionally, which is good for growth from within.

The grocery industry has gone through so much change in the past few years, but MDI does really well with change management. We're all aware of everything MDI is working toward, and that's really powerful. There's a lot of value to being able to change on a dime. There's also a lot of special projects to be inclusive of everyone. Origami Studios is an example — MDI knew I had a background in broadcasting, media, and film. It's cool how they trusted me to take on something as big as Origami. It's more than giving promotions — including people, utilizing their skills, and knowing what people want to do makes them want to stay. It fosters inclusivity. MDI's great for that.

I grew up in Hickory, so I knew this was a very good place to work. I always wanted

*"Including people, utilizing their skills, and knowing what people want to do makes them want to stay. It fosters inclusivity. MDI's great for that."*

to work for a privately-owned company; I just really value that. I value all the things that Alex Lee stands for. For me, it's more than a paycheck. It's about being passionate about food, passionate about people, passionate about serving. All of us having that common ground, I think, is very important to our success.



SKYE TOWNLEY

## SKYE TOWNLEY

BUSINESS ANALYST -  
SUPPLY CHAIN, PROJECT MIDWAY, MDI

Alex Lee has 100% given me opportunity for career growth. I started off my career as a selector in perishables in the warehouse, then I went to loading trucks. After that, I went to clerical in the perishables office, then I transferred to transportation and was the transportation systems coordinator over there. Two years later, I became a logistics specialist, controlling outbound logistics for the whole warehouse. Two years after that, MDI posted business analyst roles for Project Midway. I applied and got the role as a business analyst for supply chain. I've been working a lot with analytics and processes for our business once the automation goes live. I'm also a senior at UNC Pembroke, finishing my degree in Operations Management.

My role now was a huge change of pace, going from logistics to this. You have a goal in sight at the warehouse, whether it's picking a ticket or loading a truck, you know where the end is. With this role, the goal is months away or years away. It was a learning curve in the beginning for sure, but I'm really happy with my progress. Every job I've had, I've jumped in headfirst

and caught on easily. For this role, I jumped in headfirst, but realized very quickly where I needed to improve. It was a culture shock, but also great for my growth. Helping to develop the processes for a system that's cutting-edge has been great.

I've been with the company for 19 years in November. I've been fortunate enough to really enjoy what I do. Through COVID, through hurricanes, through ice storms, we've done a lot of great things for people.

When I came into the company, everyone was super helpful — all the supervisors and my co-workers were doing everything they could to make sure I succeeded and had the tools I needed. Selection is manual, but it's nuanced — not everyone can do it. You can't be reactive; you have to have a plan. But within nine months, I was training people in produce.

When I got my transportation systems coordinator job, Paul Miller and Eddie Huff were really instrumental in me going back to school. They would change my schedule if I had a class conflict. With this role now, I've grown the most, but I would say the transportation systems coordinator job was the catalyst. I would say the role I have now has infinite growth possibilities.

I've had a lot of mentors over the years. **Sean O'Keefe** took a leap of faith on me for this role. He made me do homework after my job interview! I had to bring in a written SOP (standard operating procedure) and an essay to test my technical writing skills since there is so much writing involved with this role.

There's a lot ... **Paul, Eddie, Billy Long, Mike Harris, Lane Chandler, Michael Doller,** and **Doug Raby. Lee Saunders** really believed in me, as well. **Tracy Turner**, also! I don't want to leave out Tracy.

*“Through COVID, through hurricanes, through ice storms, we've done a lot of great things for people.”*

— **Kristi VanCamp**, Contributor





# GATEKEEPERS: THE GUARDIANS OF DATA

## PEOPLE, PROCESSES, AND TECHNOLOGY

Ensuring confidential information remains confidential requires an overlap of three key areas: people, processes, and technology. In fact, those elements represent the foundation of a framework that has existed since the 1960s — a model designed to help organizations assess and improve performance.

The idea behind the framework is that all three overlapping components must be aligned and properly balanced for an organization to achieve and maintain a successful workflow. Not long after it was introduced, the framework was adopted by the security community. To this day, it is one of the most widely used for information technology management as well as workforce management.

It's also a perfect model for cybersecurity and the effort every organization makes to defend data. Let's review each component and what they mean for you and Alex Lee.

**PEOPLE:** These are the individuals at every level of an organization who must make smart decisions, protect the access they've been granted, and maintain security through their actions. Even though the "people" element is considered the first pillar of the framework, people are also the last line of defense when it comes to identifying and mitigating cyberthreats.

**PROCESSES:** These are the procedures and policies that define how things are done. They include how passwords should be created, which personal devices employees are allowed to connect to networks, and how to report security incidents. It's your responsibility to understand what those policies require and follow them at all times.

**TECHNOLOGY:** These are the systems, hardware, and software that support people and processes. While most employees have no control over the technologies an organization uses, they do have control over how they use that technology. Simple examples include locking workstations when not in use, storing portable devices securely, and never bypassing any security controls.

The people, processes, and technology framework provides a simple way to understand how the three most crucial components of an organization work together to achieve a common goal: protecting data, systems, and, more importantly, people.

## THE GATEKEEPER'S PLAYBOOK

In a literal sense, the term "gatekeeper" refers to someone who monitors and controls entry points to buildings or properties. It's a concept that's as old as time but still applies to modern-day work environments, particularly where security is concerned. In that regard, gatekeepers are the individuals who control access to people, data, and systems. They're equipped with the know-how to identify threats and maintain a security-first mindset that reduces mistakes that endanger data privacy. Here are five strategies every gatekeeper needs in their playbook:

**FOLLOWING POLICY:** Policies are designed to prevent data leaks and maintain the security of employees, clients,

customers, and business associates. Your commitment to following those policies eliminates unnecessary risk and keeps everyone's private information safe.

**USING COMMON SENSE:** If something sounds off, if it's too good to be true, or if any scenario seems far-fetched, then react accordingly. When you have doubts, don't ignore them. Follow your instincts and never assume someone is who they say they are.

**THINKING BEFORE YOU CLICK:** Phishing attacks attempt to mislead people by creating fraudulent scenarios intended to steal data or money. You can spot these attacks by looking out for common warning signs such as urgent or threatening language, poor grammar, or unexpected links or attachments.

**MAKING A PERSONAL PLEDGE:** By making a pledge to view security as a personal matter, you enter a mindset that recognizes confidential information as the representation of someone's livelihood. Remember, we all have personal information that gets collected by a large number of organizations. Thus, we all have something to lose when security efforts fail.

**REPORTING INCIDENTS IMMEDIATELY:** A security incident includes any event that could lead to unauthorized access to data, systems, or members of an organization. In a perfect world, security incidents would never occur, but the growing cyber landscape offers a different reality. By reporting incidents immediately, you help reduce the damage they could cause.

To find the latest information on IT Security, please visit <http://security.alexlee.com>. **Information Security is everyone's responsibility.** Thank you for all that you do to keep our customers, data, and systems safe and secure. **To submit requests for IT Security topics you would like to see covered, contact [jonathan.williams@alexlee.com](mailto:jonathan.williams@alexlee.com). Please report any security incidents to the Alex Lee Service Desk at 828.725.4466 or extension 54466 or [itservicesdesk@alexlee.com](mailto:itservicesdesk@alexlee.com).**



# Download Your My Alex Lee App Today.

Available to All Alex Lee Employees.



## HAVE YOU DOWNLOADED MY ALEX LEE?

*Mobile App Puts Everything Alex Lee in the Palm of Your Hand*

Our own mobile app, My Alex Lee, launched approximately one year ago and continues to gain popularity as a convenient, single source of anything related to your work life. This includes access and information to:

- Work schedule and pay
- Important resources and links
- Health benefits and wellness
- Financial benefits
- Company news, including Stronger Together, Powered by MDI, Alex Lee INK, employee engagement events, safety news, and other current news
- Employee recognitions
- And more!

If you haven't yet downloaded My Alex Lee, follow these instructions for the quick and easy process:



1. Scan the QR code or search the Apple App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android) for the My Alex Lee app to download.
2. Install and open the app.
3. As a **first-time user**, you must select the option to log in.
4. After creating your log-in credentials, opt to ALLOW notifications when you first access the app.

Additional information:

- My Alex Lee works on all devices. The app uses a small amount of space – around 20 MB.
- Once the app is installed, you will not need to update or install new versions.
- If you are having log-in issues, contact [app@enspire.com](mailto:app@enspire.com) or go to Human Resources.

We are constantly updating and adding, so check the app often!

– *Kristi VanCamp, Contributor*

# Alex Lee HANDS ON HEALTH



## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

No matter your employment (full-time or part-time) or benefit status (enrolled or not), Alex Lee offers many mental health resources for you. Mental health is unique to everyone, which is one of the reasons why we offer a wide variety of options to meet you where you are, all easily accessible. Take advantage of these wellness resources ... because every day is a mental health day.

### Resources for Living®

This website offers a wealth of resources and is available to everyone. Services are always free and confidential. Resources for Living offers tools, webinars, articles, free financial and legal advice, and caregiver resources:

- Six free counseling sessions per issue per year.
- Certified counselor to answer first call.
- Free 30-minute legal consultation and 25% off future fees.
- Free 30-minute financial consultation.

- Information on eldercare and childcare, relocation, and identity theft resolution.
- Available to all full-time and part-time employees, dependents up to age 26, and members of their household.

Access [www.resourcesforliving.com](http://www.resourcesforliving.com) with username “alex lee” and password “eap” or call 1-833-699-1481.



- Chat or live televideo therapy with a licensed behavioral health professional.
- Six free weeks of unlimited chat therapy per issue per year.
- Communication with therapist through the secure TalkSpace mobile app.
- Open to all ages 13 and older.
- Available to all full-time and

part-time employees, dependents up to age 26, and members of their household.

Access through [www.resourcesforliving.com](http://www.resourcesforliving.com) then click on Services > Talkspace Online Therapy > Get Started with Talkspace. Set up your account, then download the app and log in.



- Self-assessments, articles, videos, eLearning, programs, daily quotes, mood trackers, spiritual-/faith-based resources, and a community-based portal.
- Available to all full-time and part-time employees, dependents up to age 26, and members of their household.

Access through [www.resourcesforliving.com](http://www.resourcesforliving.com) then click on Services > MyStrength > Visit MyStrength website. Set up your account, then download the app and log in.



- Measure your mindset with four simple questions, get immediate feedback matched to a color and level, and track your history.
- Tips, articles, and videos on a variety of topics to help you maintain a positive outlook.
- Available to all full-time and part-time employees, dependents up to age 26, and members of their household.





# Getting emotional support just got easier

## EAP Aetna Resources For Living<sup>SM</sup>

### NEW BENEFIT ENHANCEMENTS EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2023

#### Benefit Enhancements

- NEW Designated Toll-Free Number
- Clinical First Answer-Speak with a Clinician Immediately
- Telephonic Counseling
- EAP Counseling Visits – Increased from 3-Sessions to 6-Sessions per Issue
- Talkspace – in addition to Chat Therapy, you now have the option to schedule Live Televideo and Telephonic Counseling

#### Make time for self-care, even when life keeps you super busy. Set and work toward your personal goals.

All employees, household members and dependents living outside of the household up to age 26 have up to 6 EAP sessions per issue per year. Services can be accessed face to face, televideo and newly added options through Talkspace.

#### Getting Started

- **NEW TOLL-FREE NUMBER\***  
**833.699.1481**
- **ResourcesForLiving.com**  
**USERNAME: alex lee**  
**PASSWORD: EAP**

\*EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2023

Access at [www.mindchecktoday.com](http://www.mindchecktoday.com) and create your own account.



- Talk to a doctor by phone or video 24/7.
- Zero-dollar co-pay or co-pay reimbursed to Health Savings Account.

- Behavioral health services offered at \$0 co-pay; see a therapist or psychiatrist when you need it.
- Available to those enrolled in medical benefits.

Access [www.teladoc.com](http://www.teladoc.com) through the Teladoc mobile app or call 1-855-TELADOC (835-2362).



- Eight-week emotional well-being program at two sessions per week.
- See a therapist once per week and a behavior coach once per week.
- Available through face-to-face, phone, and online video.
- Available to those enrolled in medical benefits.

Access by calling 1-844-330-3648.

*Don't forget that these resources are a few taps away through your My Alex Lee mobile app!*

– *Byron Lawton & Kristi VanCamp, Contributors*

ALI

## ATTENTION ALL ALEX LEE EMPLOYEES

# SmartBen is Now Alight Worklife™

Our SmartBen benefits enrollment platform has been enhanced with a new employee experience, and a new name, Alight Worklife.

The Alex Lee Alight Worklife link will be  
<https://worklife.alight.com/alexlee>

Starting **June 22, 2023** all employees must use the new link to login to Worklife. The current SmartBen link will no longer be available.

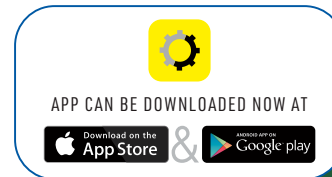
How to login to Worklife:

**Username:**

Enter **ALI** plus your **6 digit employee ID**; if your ID is only 4 or 5 numbers, add one or two zeros in front of your ID number to make 6 digits

**Password:**

Enter your **8 digit DOB (MMDDYYYY)** plus the **last 4 digits of your Social Security Number**



# HOTLINE

## HAVE THE FEELING SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT?

Maybe an unacceptable behavior,  
treatment or even misconduct?



## IF YOU ARE AWARE OF A PROBLEM, DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL TODAY.

All calls are completely anonymous.

**844-986-1412**  
or use the internet for reporting  
<http://alexlee.ethicspoint.com/>

ALI



# SEVENTH ANNUAL SPARK TANK

*Innovation in Action*

On April 28, Alex Lee held its seventh annual Alex Lee Spark Tank event. Spark Tank is an action-learning competition for participants in our Enterprise Leadership Program, an accelerated leadership development program within Alex Lee.

This year, our 25 participants were broken into six teams, with each team challenged to come up with a new business idea or venture that would help rapidly accelerate growth at one of the Alex Lee companies. They then pitched their idea to a panel of executive leaders, including our company presidents **Tim Lowe** and **Michele Azar**; Alex Lee president and CEO **Brian George**; and our CFO **Andrew Almquist**. Each team received feedback and fielded questions on the pitches and business plans they presented on the spot, much like what you would see on the popular TV show “Shark Tank.”

All six of our teams did an amazing job. Our judges were extremely excited about the amount of thought, creativity, and energy each of the teams put into preparing and presenting their pitches. Of the six teams, the top three were selected. Our next step is to formulate a possible experiment and pilot of their ideas.

## OUR TOP THREE TEAMS

1) Team “Ready, Set, Supper,” consisting of **James Lamb**, **Audrey Amoroso**, **Jessica Cribb**, and **Nathan Hux**. The team was coached by **Mike Merritt**. They answered that age-old question, “What’s for dinner?” with a program that would give our guests three options to solve that dilemma.

2) Team “Spiced Right,” consisted of **Ryan Mikeal**, **Gabe Willison**, **Melissa Shillinglaw**, **Shawn Sleep**, and was coached by **Josh Fisher**. They presented a program that would offer guests the opportunity to have their choice of protein that was seasoned and prepped on-demand while in-store. This



would lean into other in-store brands, such as Spice Bazaar, and could grow into other areas, like Pick & Prep.

3) Team “Cheer All Year,” consisted of **Angie Ledford**, **Kevin Willis**, **Dustin Marshall**, and **Brandi Goodin**, and was coached by **Amanda Peralta**. Their idea, built off the success of our Cheer Box program, expands our offerings to more products, with a focus on private label. The program expansion also includes theme boxes around gifting holidays and events throughout the year. A future state of this idea could include expanding the program to KJ’s Market and our independent retailers.

While these three teams were selected as winners, we are very proud of everyone who participated in this year’s Spark Tank. We are excited to continue Alex Lee’s culture of innovation and the possibilities that will follow.

— **Dana Rice**, Contributor



## ALEX LEE RETAIL 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

*The Secret Is in the Sauce*

On March 29 and 30, 425 members of the Alex Lee Retail store and support teams gathered in Greensboro, NC. The purpose was to celebrate last year's accomplishments and plan for the next year. The focus was on gaining efficiencies with standard operating procedures, removing friction, and growing sales. The teams participated in scavenger hunts and trivia as they experienced the type of "Wow the Crowd" events that we execute in our stores each week. With catering by the culinary team and fun events, such as wine-pairings and hot-sauce testings, the participants really did get a taste of how we can serve our guests and differentiate our stores with experiences. A huge "thank you" to **Debbie Williams, Ashley Hartman, Jill Magee, Brette Hearn, Mike Merritt, Joe Marchesiello, and Dustin Marshall** for their work in planning the event.

— Kelly Davis, Contributor





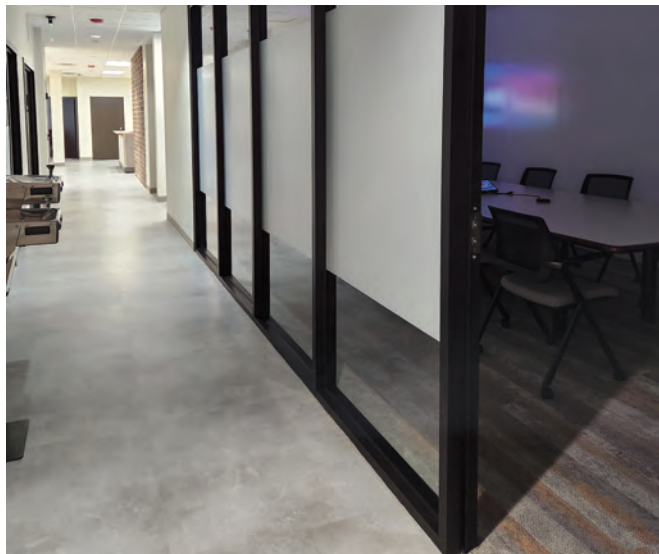
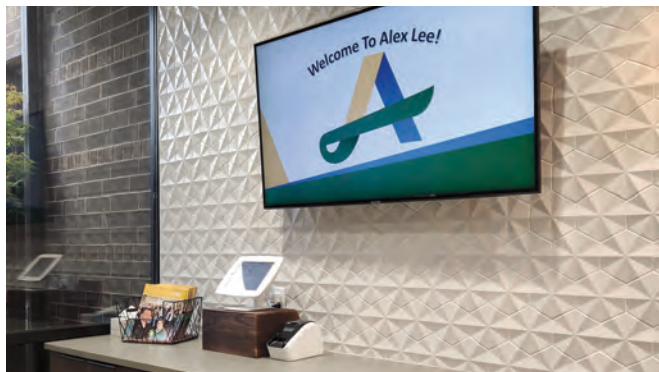
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## ALEX LEE OFFICE RENOVATION COMPLETED!

The Alex Lee office has undergone a renovation! Four years ago, the Alex Lee office began a renovation project to update our second floor and first floor break room. In February of this year, we broke ground to complete the rest of the building's update, including our first floor workspaces and our guest lobby. In addition to a modernized environment, features of our first floor renovation include moving our IT Service Desk into the main area of the building, new furniture featuring sit-to-stand desks for everyone, glass store-front windows on many of our offices, and an improved and more inviting experience for our office guests. Stop by and visit our new space!

— Dana Rice, Contributor



ALI



# A MESSAGE FROM MICHELE

MICHELE AZAR, PRESIDENT OF MDI

**AT ALEX LEE, WE’VE PLACED “FAMILY” AS ONE OF OUR LIVING VALUES** — it signifies how we treat each other, our business partners, and our retail and wholesale customers. For MDI, “family” extends to our independent disruptors. It’s how we serve them, how they operate, and how they support their communities. It’s in this cooperative spirit, an “all-in” effort, that we fulfill our mission and purpose — TOGETHER.

**OUR MISSION:  
CUSTOMERS ARE THE FOCUS OF EVERYTHING WE DO!**

**OUR PURPOSE:  
WE SERVE INDEPENDENT DISRUPTORS**

It’s the perfect time to highlight our mission and purpose as we recognize our core focus this July: celebrating our customers. By treating them like family — giving them all the support they need to succeed for years to come — we enable them to flourish. At MDI, as is for all of Alex Lee, growth is our only option.

Our customers’ success stories serve as more proof points to living “family.” B&T Food Fresh, Grant’s, and Carlie C’s are three among many examples of how MDI is here to support our independents, taking them from good to thriving:

**B&T FOOD FRESH — joined MDI in 2017 with 1 store; currently has 5 stores:** Lifelong best friends and owners John Triplett and Clark Brunson started their first business together in 2013. They now successfully operate 5 grocery locations with plans to grow. John and Clark are dedicated to fostering their community’s vibrancy and the well-being of its residents.

**GRANTS — joined MDI in 2003 with 1 store; currently has 20 stores:** Grants has prospered under the leadership of Ron Martin, Ronnie Cruvey, and Randle Grant. They are deeply invested in supporting and serving the communities in their operating areas of western Virginia, southwest Virginia, and Ohio. Their stores are critical resources to areas that would otherwise be food deserts.

**CARLIE C’S – joined MDI in 2000 with 15 stores, currently has 33 stores:** The history of Carlie C’s speaks to a deep-rooted LOVE for community, employees, friends, and family. Today, Mack and Zada McLamb, along with their children, Ariel and Zack, continue the tradition of delivering great service

and quality products. Each of their stores is a pillar in their communities.

By listening to our independents and equipping them with the exact resources they need, we give them opportunity to elevate their business to being the store of choice. Building loyalty creates a strong tie to the community and opens a dialogue between the independent and the needs and wants of the people they serve.

Case in point, Mike Long of Long’s Pic Pac in Pineville, KY, set a goal to sell 500 of their famous Big Kahuna sandwich to support a local venue. In the end, they surpassed their goal, selling 572 sandwiches and generating \$6,000 worth of revenue! Long’s success in his community is a perfect example of how treating customers as our family can translate into wins for everyone.

We create a cooperative spirit when we work together for the good of our customers — we’re acting as one for our mission and purpose. This was especially illustrated in the recovery and reopening of MDI independent Gwen Christon’s store, Isom IGA, after July 2022’s devastating floods.

As a part of our family, we wanted to do everything to see Gwen not only survive this tremendous hardship, but come out of it better than ever! I’m excited to report that we celebrated the grand reopening of Isom IGA this past April. Gwen is now owner of an improved and redesigned store that is the pride of the community. Already the town’s gathering place, it will doubtless remain so for many years to come. And we’ll be there every step of the way. Read more about Gwen and her inspiring journey on page 18.

Another place where the importance of family is illustrated is our new Souto Foods website. Family holds a central role in Hispanic culture, and Souto Foods is an authentic reflection of that. The new website was thoughtfully designed to tell the Souto Foods brand story: an energetic, passionate company that is dedicated to treating their employees and customers like family. This is one of the reasons why MDI and Souto Foods have formed a compelling and successful partnership. By operating on the same values, we know we will always act for the good of our employees and our customers.

Treating our people like the family they truly are is a guiding value. It’s also one of our founding ones. Alex and Lee George were dedicated to acting in the best interest of *both* their employees and customers. It’s why the sense of family is pervasive in our organization today, and it’s how we realize our remarkable successes. You — our Alex Lee family — are AMAZING!

MDI



# WAREHOUSE EXPANSION UPDATE

## POWERED BY MDI

These past few months have seen incredible strides in coming closer to our 2023 go-live date of our warehouse expansion and automation. The spring’s extensive testing and the ensuing ramp-up will ensure a smooth a start as possible to our full automation operations. Our diligent work now will allow us to continue to serve our customers during this transformative change.

This work coincided with another milestone achievement also designed to better serve our customers: the integration of W. Lee Flowers’s wholesale operations into MDI’s wholesale operations. Our expansion and automation coupled with our multi-warehouse capabilities all lend to best serve our customers by offering a larger variety of products, improving the quality and efficiency of service, and increasing the space for our overall warehouse operations. These advantages will further the excellence of our service to our current customers while providing opportunities to take on new customers. This all translates to the growth of our business and benefits everyone in the organization.

Although testing is ongoing throughout the entire automation process, our most comprehensive work has been on the

Rapid Pick System (the mezzanine within the automation environment), as it will be first to go live in the automated space. The Rapid Pick System and the 14 RapidPals (the machinery that will build customers’ mixed-case pallets) are the two components that make up the Automated Mixed Case Palletization operation.



### Perishables Expansion Progress

Last July we announced plans to expand MDI’s perishables capacity. Ambient space freed up from the automated expansion will be converted to chilled warehouse space, allowing us to offer the best to our customers in variety and quality of fresh product. A lot of our most recent work has been on installing insulated walls and roof of the future chilled space. With this installation on track, the perishables expansion is set to hit its 2024 completion date. *Look for monthly updates on our exciting growth and innovation in our Powered by MDI newsletters, now within the My Alex Lee mobile app.*

– **Kristi VanCamp**, Contributor

MDI



# Believe, Achieve, Motivate!



MDI's BAM! is an employee-driven initiative that encourages peers to nominate those who they see as deserving of recognition. BAM! nominees are employees who are seen driving MDI's four initiatives: Reigniting the CORE, leveraging the warehouse, integrating W. Lee Flowers, and accelerating multicultural. A BAM! winner from each department (warehouse, transportation, and office) is typically chosen each month. These are the BAM! winners for February, March, and April:

## FEBRUARY

**WAREHOUSE:** **Frank Martorana** caught an inefficiency in VNA (pallet racking). By correcting this issue, Frank saved everyone down the chain an immense amount of time. Thank you, Frank, for your attention to detail — it really paid off!

**TRANSPORTATION:** **Deanna Rudisill** went above and beyond to assist drivers with our recent employee engagement survey (Glint). Due to her efforts, the Transportation Department substantially raised its participation numbers. Thank you, Deanna, for ensuring everyone's voice is heard!

**OFFICE:** **Heriberto Cruz** realized Spanish-speaking new hires were unable to follow the warehouse orientation. On his own time, Heriberto translated the orientation materials into Spanish so our new hires could follow along. Amazing initiative! Thank you, Heriberto, for your consideration. You're an incredible asset to the team!

## MARCH

**WAREHOUSE:** While **Tristan Stevens** was training a new hire, he noticed that a pallet in an overhead reserve slot was unsafely stacked. Thanks to his keen observation, the pallet was restacked and wrapped. Thank you, Tristan, for keeping an eye out for your fellow employees!

**TRANSPORTATION:** **Travis Soots** went above and beyond to help a fellow driver during an emergency. When another MDI driver's trailer caught fire, Travis pulled over and jumped into action, trying to put out the fire. He then helped his fellow driver disconnect the trailer from the tractor and pulled the tractor away in the nick of time to save it from the fire. Travis, thank you for bravely lending a vital hand in this emergency!

**OFFICE:** **MDI's Customer Service Team** collectively received a BAM! Award in recognition of the hard work and dedication they demonstrate every day. Each team member has worked diligently and remained undeterred by challenges. Thank you all for being there for us and our customers!

## APRIL

**WAREHOUSE:** **Trinity Holloway** located a pallet that was placed into the wrong pick slot and reported it to supervision. The pallet was then fixed before any of the wrong merchandise was shipped. Thank you, Trinity, for always keeping a watchful eye out in our operations!

**TRANSPORTATION:** The **MDI Garage Team** had 400 trailers to get compliant and on the road in a very short period of time. This accomplishment illustrates how incredible this department's teamwork truly is. It makes the impossible possible. Way to go, everyone!

**OFFICE:** **Robin Saunders** lent a tremendous amount of work and support building out the requirements of the new driver vacation system. She was instrumental in its successful completion. Thank you, Robin!

## UPRIGHT AND TIGHT WINNERS

**Carter Nichols**, Grocery  
**Brian Bouttavong**, Perishables

*Remember, if you would like to nominate someone, you can go directly to your supervisors or fill out a BAM! card at the stanchions located around the offices and distribution center. A small gesture of recognition can make someone's day brighter!*

# Souto BAM! Winners



Souto Foods BAM! is an employee-driven initiative that encourages peers to nominate those who are deserving of recognition. Nominees come from every department within the company.

## MARCH: Juan Diaz

Olga Berdua

Bryan Vo

Fernando Baidal

Jaquelin Martinez

Katy Mejia

Fernando Paulino

Laura Gonzalez

Alex Garcia

German Fuentes

Cecilia Cruz

Jose de Paz

Seri Cordero

Esmir Tabakovic

Leonardo Gimenez

Luis Reyes

Angel Ortiz

Raul Luna-Boza

Samantha Velasquez

Felicia Gonzalez

Adolfo Vasquez

Carolina Poveda

Sebastian Souto

Chiquinquira Huerta

Julian Ramirez

Luztor Castellanos

Isabel Gonzalez

Karolina Cabrera

Valerio Mateo

Liliana Arteaga

Nelly Osejo

Jose Resendiz

Daniel Contreras

Luis Sanchez

Maria Martinez

**APRIL:** Laura Gonzalez

— **Kristi VanCamp**, Contributor

## CUSTOMER PROFILE

# FROM DEVASTATION TO CELEBRATION

## *Isom IGA Reopens!*

**WHEN KENTUCKY ENDURED** heavy rains and record flooding in the summer of last year, Isom IGA suffered heavy losses to its building. At first glance, it was nothing but devastation — a loss that would be unrecoverable. Standing in front of what remained of her business, Gwen Christon called **Alan Atwood** (her MDI retail counselor) for help, for direction, for the strength to get past the moment. The store was under water and the view was unrecognizable. So, it seems a chapter in the town of Isom's life would close ... but that was not the case.

**BARE BONES:** The call Gwen made set in place a chain of events nine months in the making. First, teams from MDI showed up to help Isom IGA's team empty out the store. Equipment was removed, all product had to be thrown away, and mud had to be shoveled out of the store. But more was needed to be done. Due to water damage, the dry wall and ceiling tile had to be removed. The floor had to be pulled up. When extensive flood damage has occurred, everything is removed from right above the highest water level to ground. From eight feet and below, the store was nothing but a shell. Only the physical structure holding up the building itself remained. The inside view was a giant skeleton, and you could run your fingers along the bones.

Everything was empty; now it was time to re-establish the store to its former glory. Expert team members recommended and helped procure replacement equipment, including freezers, registers, and shelving. Everything had to be purchased again, right down to the mops, brooms, and light bulbs. The store received a fresh coat of everything. Shelves were rebuilt, restocked, and retagged.



**KEEPING ISOM ALIVE:** During this time, Isom IGA employees would have been out of work. However, the PuroClean team hired and trained employees to do part of the clean-up and restoration, so they would continue to receive a paycheck in their time of need. In the end, Isom IGA was able to retain *all* of their employees. In the interim, Isom residents would need to drive 20 or more minutes in opposite directions to find another grocery store — quite a drive when considering most of us have options within five minutes of our homes. Gwen organized community support events as often as possible. She had food giveaways and food baskets and supported major holidays like Halloween, Back to School, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. She refused to let the spirit of her store and her town fade. Isom's presence on social media stayed focused on the reopening they were working toward so that the community knew they would soon return. Toward the end of the recovery, teams were working 12 to 14 hours a day every day of the week to make sure they completed the reopening date.

Alan had missed Gwen's original call because he did not recognize the number; she couldn't call from the store because it was un-

der water. He immediately checked his voicemail and called her back. And he still has that voicemail over nine months later. His support helped get Isom IGA through these long days of recovery. He recently shared the voicemail with Gwen's son, Simon. As Simon listened, he had to turn away and gather himself. After taking a moment, he thanked Alan for sharing the call with him.

**GRAND REOPENING:** It was no April Fool's joke on April 1, 2023, when Isom IGA opened its doors to the public once again, ready for business. The community was there before they could even unlock the doors. Residents poured in to show their support, purchase groceries, or even to eat breakfast. This story has been covered nationally from the start to the end. Support has come from all directions. "From devastation to celebration," said **Stewart Boyer** during a meeting highlighting the journey of Isom's return with the MDI team. This was a challenge that many willingly shouldered, and everyone was glad to see it through. In the end, it's a new beginning.

— **Jason Yount**, Contributor

# THE FUTURE OF TRAINING IS HERE

*In Virtual Reality*



**MDI TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CONTRACTED** with Roundtable Learning to create a realistic, fully immersive Warehouse Order Selector training course that uses virtual reality technology.

Research indicates that using immersive reality for training can increase employee retention by up to 85%. Immersive learning experiences, like those molded in virtual and augmented reality, captivate learners while providing a no-risk way for them to practice the skills and behaviors they need to do their jobs successfully.

From March until May, employees were introduced to the technology and tried it out before the pilot program was launched.

## **MARCH: VR PREVIEW DAY HELD IN THE CAFETERIA**

Employees were able to learn about this new, innovative approach to training. Lunch-goers could put the headset on and experience the virtual warehouse first-hand.

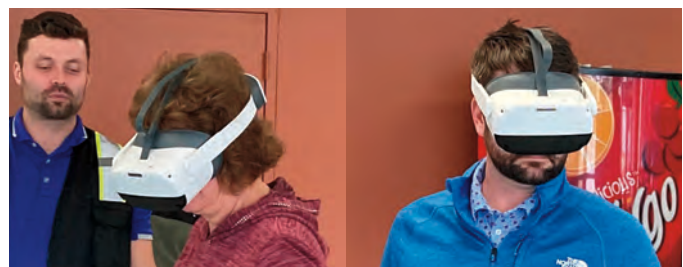


## **APRIL: VR ORDER SELECTOR TRAIN-THE-TRAINER**

Employee Experience Trainers received an orientation to the virtual reality system at the training facility in Lincolnton, NC. This included hands-on training in the virtual environment and classroom training to use the administrative portal.

## **MAY: VR ORDER SELECTOR TRAINING PILOT PROGRAM LAUNCH IN LINCOLNTON**

Virtual reality becomes part of the training rotation on day one (MDI orientation, jack safety/operation, VR order selector). New selectors gain experience with the call-response from the Vocollect system by identifying aisles and slots, checking digits, and stacking various perishable products in the virtual warehouse.



Virtual reality is quickly becoming a practical and valuable tool for us, and we are continuing to look at future uses of this technology, such as a recruitment tool at hiring events, high school, and college job fairs. A “thank you” goes out to our warehouse and Employee Experience teams who worked to test and implement this program prior to launch.

— *Bea Ashe, Contributor*



# A MESSAGE FROM SEBASTIAN

SEBASTIAN SOUTO, PRESIDENT OF SOUTO FOODS



**AS WE ENTER THE LAST QUARTER OF OUR FISCAL YEAR,** it is amazing to recap some of the most impressive advancements we have achieved during 2023. The company is showing continuous, aggressive growth, and it's also evolving every day. Proof of this is the launch of our new website! We are ecstatic with the results and how our brand is represented at a higher level. So many people were involved from our team and the enterprise, and we extend our gratitude for the hard work and effort during the whole process and successful launch.

## SUMMER FESTIVAL

During the month of May, we had our second Food Festival, another milestone for our organization, showing caring passion and love for what we do. Words are short to describe the time, the effort, and the work put into our show. It's extremely wonderful and very rewarding to hear our vendors and customers' comments. Amazing execution! We want to thank the unseen heroes in our warehouse for working long

hours to get all those orders ready for our customers. More than ever, we are committed to delivering best results and continuous improvement.

## OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

As part of our operational excellence goal, we continue to reach new records in our warehouse, pushing greater volumes, increasing productivity, and, most importantly, people's engagement. Nothing is more rewarding as a leader than to feel our people's commitment, attachment, and sense of ownership for the company.

## MORE SALES TO COME

Growth is in our DNA, and as the end of the year is approaching, we can project another amazing year of revenue growth and market presence. Looking forward to 2024, we are developing new revenue streams and new areas to serve that will accelerate the rotation of products in our warehouse while reaching capacity.



MDI

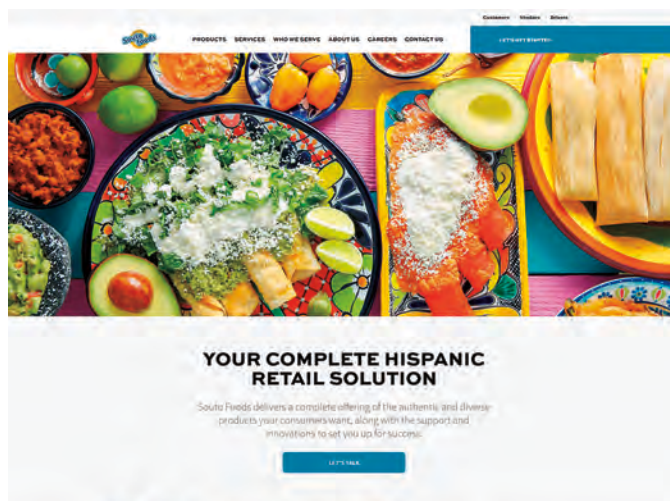
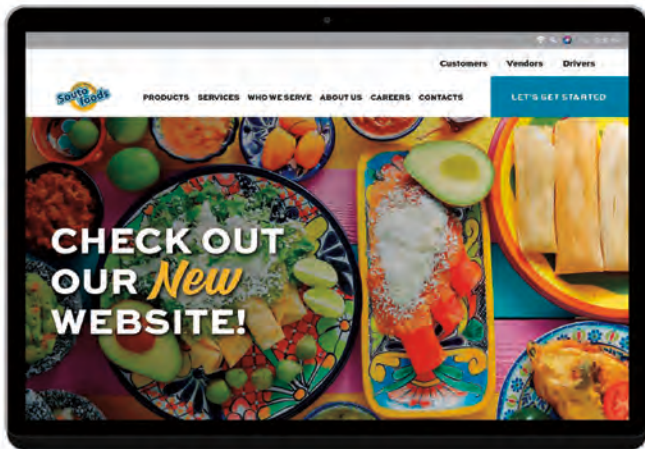


## SOUTO FOODS SUMMER FESTIVAL 2023

Souto Foods held its second-ever food festival to welcome in the summer months on May 18 in Duluth, Georgia. Like the first, the event was an amazing success — a hit with customers and vendors. More than that, it was a celebration of Latin culture and what it values most: food, family, and friends. We can't wait to see everyone again in September!

— *Lindsay Childers, Contributor*





# INTRODUCING SOUTOFOODS.COM

*Website Celebrates Culture, Passion, and Partnership*

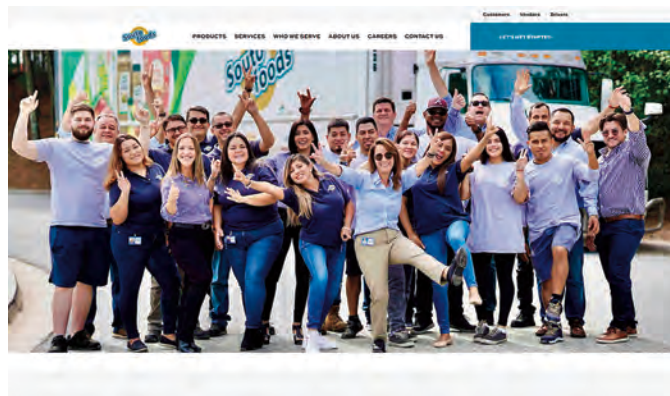
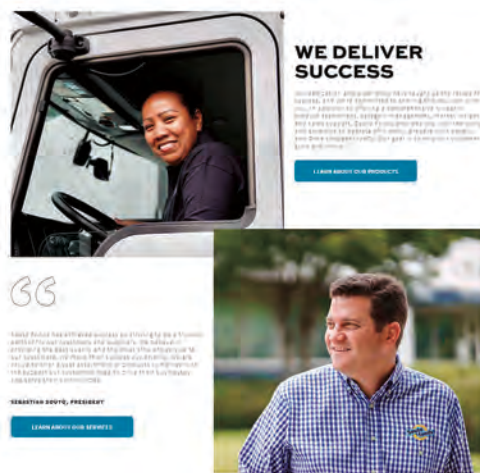
As another step forward in our enterprise-wide commitment to digital transformation, Souto Foods is proud to debut their redesigned website. An all-new and improved **SOUTOFOODS.COM** launched in April. The site was modeled after MDI's brand site, launched last year, and offers the same functionality and a consistent user experience.

Visitors to **SOUTOFOODS.COM** will find updated content and fresh photography that tells the Souto Foods brand story. One of the main goals of this project was to upgrade the site to better express the key brand messaging and help scale Souto Foods for growth. The new website tells a story of a company with a colorful history, a vast portfolio of authentic and diverse products, employees who are treated like family, and an ongoing commitment to being a partner in their customers' success.

The site's navigation includes pages detailing Souto Foods's products, services (including many that are powered by partnership with its sister company, MDI), coverage area, history, and career opportunities. Additionally, there are pages with information for both current and prospective customers and vendors, as well as for drivers delivering to Souto Foods. Photos on the website feature Souto Foods employees and customers, conveying the strong relationships that make the Souto Foods brand special and unique. Souto Foods was proud to partner with our own Origami Studios for all site photography.

We are excited to promote the new website, which positions Souto Foods as a complete Hispanic retail solution within the Alex Lee family. Check out the new site today!

— *Lindsay Childers, Contributor*



MDI



# A MESSAGE FROM TIM

**TIM LOWE, PRESIDENT OF LOWES FOODS**

**YOU HAVE HEARD ME SAY MANY TIMES** that sales are reasonably close to oxygen. This is because sales are how our guests let us know how we are doing; they vote with their wallets. So, we measure our success with our guests through our growth. Growth allows us to open more stores, provide opportunities for our hosts, and impact our communities in meaningful ways. Over the past several years, we've been fortunate to see our retail business grow substantially with the transformation of the Lowes Foods brand, the acquisition of KJ's and IGA stores, and the addition of former Bi-Lo stores.

**FOR CONTINUED GROWTH**, we must focus on three things: eliminating friction, developing our selling culture, and strengthening our foundation through our standard operating procedures (SOPs). Let's take a minute and look at why something like SOPs are so important to support our growth.

**IT IS DIFFICULT TO BE SUCCESSFUL** if we do not understand what it is that helps us win. As our teams grow, tribal knowledge just doesn't cut it. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are how we document and share best practices. When processes have been thoughtfully developed, thoroughly tested, and proven to work, we can then use them rather than spending time to "reinvent the wheel." In other words, SOPs leverage the learning of others so we don't make the same mistakes over and over, in multiple locations.

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES APPLY** to all areas of our retail business. Some examples include managing inventory to maintain accuracy for our computer-generated ordering systems, following food safety practices, or practicing good sampling techniques to drive sales.

**STRONG SOPs ALLOW HOSTS**, existing and new, to get things done without wondering how to find the answers. They can also support career development by making it clear how to be successful in each role.

**ULTIMATELY, STRONG SOPs ENABLE GROWTH** for our hosts and our company. Leveraging best practices supports our priorities: Safety, Friendliness, Show, and Efficiency. It also helps us deliver the experiences our brands promise to the communities we serve.

**THIS YEAR WE WILL CONTINUE** to refine our SOPs and adopt them to the way we do business—you could say we are going to embed them into our DNA. To do this, it will require all of us. So, adopt the SOPs in your day-to-day activities. This will help you know what success looks like and will allow us to deliver consistency and excellence to our guests. If you do not know what the SOP is, ask! If you cannot find it, or you believe one does not exist, let your store leaders know so we can get that for you. Together we will create a foundation of operational excellence that will allow us to win and grow through our most treasured asset, you.



THE  
BEER DEN  
BREWS

OUR VERY OWN  
CRAFT BEERS



**T**HIS CRISP AND REFRESHING INDIA PALE ALE IS CRAFTED WITH CHINOOK, CITRA AND AMARILLO HOPS. SHOWCASING TROPICAL FRUIT NOTES, THIS HOPPY BEAST OF A BEER IS ACTUALLY QUITE EASY TO LOVE. BE OUR GUEST AND DISCOVER THE MAGIC INSIDE THIS ALE (NOT SO OLD) AS TIME!



**A**H, BUT REMEMBER FAINT HEARTS NEVER WON FAIR LADY, AND FAINT BEER DOESN'T EITHER. ROBIN HOOD IS EASY DRINKING WITH A MALTY BACKBONE AND A CRISP HOP FINISH. GATHER YOUR MERRY MEN (AND WOMEN) AND ENJOY THIS MEDIUM-BODIED LAGER WITH TOASTY, CARAMEL-LIKE FLAVORS.



**A**LL MAGIC COMES WITH A PRICE, DEARIE, AND THE ALLUREMENT OF THIS SOUTH GERMAN STYLE HEFEWEIZEN IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD THREAD. RUMPLESTILTSKIN IS BREADY WITH NOTES OF BANANA AND CLOVE FOR A FRUITY AND PHENOLIC FLAVOR WITH A SPELL-BINDING ALTED WHEAT FINISH.



**C**ALYPSO WAS A FIERCE AND BEAUTIFUL SEA GODDESS WHO CAPTURED THE HEART OF SAILOR DAVY JONES, GIVING HIM BOTH THE FLYING DUTCHMAN SHIP AND THE TASK OF FERRYING THE SOULS OF THOSE TO DIED AT SEA TO THE WORLDS BEYOND. LIKE THE TROPICAL TIDES SHE RULED, CALYPSO WAS LOVED AND FEARED BY SEAFARERS, AND THE GOOD FORTUNE SHE BESTOWED AS ALLURING AS THE NOTES OF MELON, PASSIONFRUIT AND MANGO IN THIS MEDIUM-BODIED HAZY IPA.

LFS





## BEER TO BOVINE

### *Spent Grain Turned into Cattle Feed at Local Farm*

Each week, Lowes Foods Brew Master Joe Quattlebaum and his team mill and mash fresh grain for a new batch of beer. Typically on Thursdays, it allows guests at #264 in Simpsonville, SC, to see the process in action. This is home to our Beer Den Cavern, where we brew our own beer to be served onsite and test out new recipes for retail. The Beer Den at #264 packs every night, but especially on Thursdays for half-price pint nights.

At the end of this process, nearly 500 pounds of nutrient-rich spent grain remains. Joe and Andy collect the grain to be picked up by Kevin, a local farmer who operates a farm that has been in his family since 1965. With eight cattle just three miles down the road, you can hear the excitement from the barn when he backs up his trailer. After he scoops out one of the two barrels, Kevin lets the cattle out and they quickly trot to the trough, budging their way to the grain. Very happy and healthy cattle, indeed.

At Lowes Foods, we grow community. We're proud to support local farmers

and producers, and this is just one way we can directly support a farm in our community and keep useful materials out of the landfill. What's the impact? Each week, 400 to 500 pounds of spent grain are kept out of the landfill (that's over 10 tons per year); the cattle are happy; and we are supporting our community.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Lowes Foods has four different beers that are sold in our stores year-round and four seasonal selections, exclusively at Lowes Foods. All are sold with the Beer Den label.

This summer's seasonal brew is Juno, a Kolsch-style ale, which is a traditional German-style of beer utilizing ale yeast fermented at cold temperatures. Joe describes it as "a clean and crisp beer. With the addition of lemon and lime, this becomes an even more refreshing beverage for the hot summer months."

Each of these flavors were perfected at the Cavern and are now brewed with assistance from Foothills in Winston-Salem, where they're brewed and canned in large quantities for our Beer Den guests.



A rotating selection of Lowes Foods-exclusive, small-batch brews are served at the Beer Den in Simpsonville, including some host and guest favorites. When asked what his favorite beer is, Joe responds, "the one in my hand." Perhaps a good answer from our Brew Master. Now, grab your favorite beer and toast to our community!

— *Kimberly Heaton, Contributor*

# The Power of Leadership Support in Wellness Initiatives

Alex Lee HANDS ON HEALTH



**LOWES FOODS IS LEADING THE WAY** to high engagement in the 2023 Alex Lee, Inc., Hands on Health Well-being initiatives. Through the end of May, 67% of eligible hosts and spouses covered under an Aetna medical plan have registered for or completed their Quest Biometric Screening.

A fundamental ingredient to success is leadership support for the well-being programs offered. **Brandon Greene**, SVP Host Experience, serves as the executive champion on the Hands-on-Health Well-being Team and consistently works to highlight host well-being as one of the keys to becoming “famous for people.” Brandon shared, “We strive every year for higher engagement in these programs, as it helps every host be the healthiest version of themselves.”

During the past few years and through the pandemic, Alex Lee has encouraged leaders to prioritize mental and emotional well-being by initiating the creation of a resource guide for mid-level managers. This resource guide offers leadership something to rely on when helping their frontline hosts. In addition, the organization has recently committed to providing a new training from Resources for Living (EAP) for all division and store leadership called, “Shifting the Culture: A Leader’s Role in Mental Wellbeing.” This training aims to help directors, managers, and supervisors be more prepared to address mental health stigma, learn about signs of distress, discuss suicide and prevention, encourage self-care, and provide resources to hosts in need.

At the most recent Alex Lee Annual Retail Meeting, held on March 30 at the



Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, leadership further demonstrated their support for wellness with some friendly competition. During the activity breaks, Lowes Foods directors and managers were challenged to compete in stationary bike races. For the event, Aetna Wellness managers Kristine White and Katherine Onken rented “sLEDgehammer” bikes from Rock the Bike, an innovative wellness company based out of California. The “sLEDgehammer” bikes were hooked up to LED light towers and, as the riders pedaled, the “sLEDgehammer” converted 100% of the riders’ muscle power into light. This illuminated the tower from bottom to top, much like the old familiar fair activity of ringing the bell by swinging a hammer. Pedaling felt harder as more light stages turned on. The rider who was able to sustain the highest wattage level for three seconds and make their tower completely light up ahead of their opponent was the winner.

**Jason Ramsey**, EVP of Merchandising, was the first to brave a race against Kristine, which he won, showing the rest of the leaders they had nothing to fear. Jason was followed by several others to race and win, including **Joe Marchesiello**, **Chad Friel**, and **Hans Steckly**, leading to suspicion that the bike Kristine was riding was rigged to



lose. **Joey Webb** and **Donny Yow** raced each other a few times for best of two out of three races. Lowes Foods President and CEO **Tim Lowe** even got in on the fun, racing Aetna Health Coach for Lowes Foods, Carmen Purdy. Aetna Account Manager Johanna Russo, Aetna Nurse Health Coach for W. Lee Flowers Tammy Meyer, and Aetna Clinical Health Services Leader Faith Royal-Paul joined Kristine, Katherine, and Carmen to help educate retail leaders about the many wellness programs and resources available to them through the Hands on Health Well-being initiative.

Alex Lee’s Hands on Health Well-being programs continually prove, both in and out of the industry, that successful well-being is made possible through leadership support and participation. From the pivotal collaboration with Lowes Foods Host Experience teams to our ongoing partnership with leaders across the organization, we are reaching new levels of success together every day. Despite any challenges we may face, one theme always rings true: No one does wellness like Alex Lee!

— **Kristine White** and  
**Katherine Onken**, Contributors

# Y'ALL YOU'RE A LOCAL LEGEND



*Mike Lynn,  
Store Director,  
Store #273*



*Katrina Michelsen,  
Beer Den/Boxcar,  
Store #199*



*Jacqueline Thomas,  
Front Porch,  
Store #182*

**MIKE LYNN** has managed to achieve 109% on Mystery Shops, record wine sales, and has maintained Fresh Department and Center Store standards. He consistently maintained operational excellence with strong partnerships across all teams while his store was temporarily understaffed. Mike has a positive demeanor and leads his teams with empathy and high standards. We are thankful Mike is a part of the Lowes Foods family!

**KATRINA MICHELSEN** has been doing a phenomenal job in Store #199 since coming on board. She is an amazing artist (displaying her art on our signs around the store), great with her announcements, awesome with her guest service and interactions, and willing to help anyone at any time. She is also one of the top hosts when it comes to Mystery Shops and guest experience. When Store #199 was short-handed in Pick & Prep, Katrina went out of her way to help the department in any way she could. She has also helped out on the Front Porch and even in the backroom with inventory prep. She has an amazing attitude every day and wants the best for her hosts, guests, and store. She is a blessing for the Boxcar and for Store #199 Monkey Junction!

**JACQUELINE THOMAS** has been with Lowes Foods Store #182 almost a year now and she has continued to soar in her every role. She began as a cashier, then a Guest Service Lead, and is now in the cash office opening and closing the office. She comes to work every day with a smile on her face and ready to brighten the day. Our hosts and guests compliment her daily. We are lucky to have her on our team!



# A MESSAGE FROM CHRIS

**CHRIS VAN PARYS, PRESIDENT OF W. LEE FLOWERS AND COMPANY**

**BEING FAMOUS FOR PEOPLE** isn't something we just say — it's who we are and how we interact with each other, and it's how we live out our leadership culture. One of our touchstones at this year's Alex Lee Retail Annual Meeting was all about recognition. About taking the time to catch people in the act of doing great things and recognize what they uniquely bring to their leadership efforts.

**AT LOWES FOODS AND W. LEE FLOWERS**, we each have a version of Y'ALL, a.k.a. "You're A Local Legend." At MDI and Souto Foods, we have the BAM! recognition: "Believe, Achieve, Motivate." I'm happy to share that over the last two years, as both programs have matured, we've seen these recognitions used across all campuses and

TEAMS ... as it should be! Great work, awesome leadership, and extra efforts are all around us.

**OUR CHALLENGE**, and one that I remember from early in my career, is to "celebrate the leadership behaviors that you want to see more of." At the time, it sounded very simple and, frankly, it is. If you want to see more of something, then recognize and celebrate it when it happens. Given how much positive change is happening in our company right now, we'd rightly call this a target-rich environment.

**SO, A FEW CHALLENGE QUESTIONS TO OUR TEAMS:** 1) Are you on the lookout for GREAT leadership? 2) Are you celebrating it with Y'ALL and BAM!

card recognitions? 3) Are you taking the time to make it personal, specifically calling out what each host or employee brings to their leadership efforts? 4) Are you reaching across campuses to find the owners of efforts we all see and feel?

**WHAT WOULD HAPPEN** if we all, 16,000-plus strong, took the time to recognize those around us? Just think what we could do, if we all committed to writing at least one Y'ALL or BAM! card each week. More than 1,600 opportunities to recognize excellent results, extra efforts, and great leadership. I can tell you the positive feelings that come from being both the leader recognizing the efforts and the leader receiving the recognition is amazing.



WLF

# MULTI-WAREHOUSE CAPABILITIES GO LIVE

*Alex Lee and W. Lee Flowers  
Take the Next Big Step in  
Integrating Their Wholesale  
and Retail Systems*



It was only a few months ago that Alex Lee and W. Lee Flowers celebrated their next milestone in becoming stronger together — the integration of MDI's and WLF's wholesale systems and processes. This monumental achievement was aptly titled "Big Bang." The name is indicative of the expansive efforts of teams across all companies, and the tireless work and dedication required. Migrating one company's wholesale operations to another so that the business "speaks one language" was a complex undertaking that touched on all departments; from accounting to transportation, standing up our multi-warehouse capabilities was an "all-in" effort.

Our single "language" encompasses:

- Order Management and Inventory Allocation — Aligned across MDI and WLF.

- Vendor Deal System — Aligned across MDI and WLF.
- Category Management — Aligned across MDI and WLF.
- Product Procurement (Fresh and Center Store) — Aligned across MDI and WLF.
- Logistics and Routing — Aligned across MDI and WLF.
- Pricing — Aligned across MDI, Lowes Foods, and WLF.
- Centralized Customer Service function — A united group to answer all questions regardless of the servicing warehouse.
- Accounting and Finance — Aligned across MDI and WLF.

Training on new systems, tools, and standards of operating procedures also brought teams closer together as they shared learning and coached each other. They honed the ability to work cross-functionally, no matter the company, location, or department. "Stronger together" leveraged the size and breadth of our talent while also building a strong support system for all of us.

## WHY MULTI-WAREHOUSE?

Here are just a few advantages our multi-warehouse capabilities bring:

- Expanded variety through centralized order management and inventory allocation that can be fulfilled through multi-warehouses.
- New tools — Symphony Procurement will help TEAMS to plan and create supplier orders while accounting for supplier, warehouse, and transportation restrictions. This reporting will reduce warehouse out-of-stocks and allow for increased productivity. Procurant will allow suppliers to coordinate produce/fresh orders and rapidly respond to fast-changing market conditions. The Cams Prospero software system creates transportation's primary, web-based routing and dispatch solution. This gives W. Lee Flowers better visibility of routed truck loads and driver availability, which allows us to maximize our fleet capabilities.



- Improvement to wholesale practices and the expansion of the Quality Control TEAM.
- Creation of new safety programs and protocols for the W. Lee Flowers campus.
- An increased visibility to vendor promotions and deals, which will be communicated to the sales TEAMS to plan and execute at retail.
- The ability to leverage marketing programs. This, along with the increased visibility to vendor promotions and deals, will bring our retail store guests the best product offerings at the best price.

The alignment of wholesale operations is foundational to our organization's growth as we now have the support of multiple warehouses and resources for new business. Speaking a single language also reduces friction in the integration process.

Most importantly, bringing multi-warehouse to life proved how much stronger we truly are together.

*For continual updates on Alex Lee's and W. Lee Flowers's integration, see our monthly Stronger Together newsletters, now available in the My Alex Lee app.*

— **Kristi VanCamp**, Contributor

# YEARS OF SERVICE



**Bryan Lund**  
45 YEARS, MDI  
*Human Resources Gen.*



**Keith Mayberry**  
45 YEARS, LFS  
*Corporate*



**Billy Brown**  
40 YEARS, MDI  
*Supervisor 1*



**Steve English**  
40 YEARS, MDI  
*Lift Truck Operator*



**Tracy Turner**  
40 YEARS, MDI  
*Mgr. Inventory Control*



**David Bryant**  
35 YEARS, ALI  
*Service Desk Analyst 1*



**Matt Bunker**  
35 YEARS, LFS  
*Corporate*



**Bobby Dalke**  
35 YEARS, MDI  
*GM/HBC Specialist*



**Karen Dickey**  
35 YEARS, ALI  
*Store Sys. Project Leader*



**Christopher Elliott**  
35 YEARS, MDI  
*Router*



**Michael Lingerfelt**  
35 YEARS, MDI  
*Supervisor II*



**Angela Ledford**  
30 YEARS, MDI  
*Operations Mgr.*



**Billy Long**  
30 YEARS, ALI  
*Supply Chain Tech. Lead*



**Philip McCasin**  
30 YEARS, MDI  
*Driver*



**Rickey Adams**  
25 YEARS, MDI  
*Checker*



**Sabrina Atchley**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Store #165*



**Curtis Brayford**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Store #199*



**Vicki Cauble**  
30 YEARS, ALI  
*Sr. Applic. Prog./Analyst*



**Angela Ellis**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Corporate*



**Joel Glidewell**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Corporate*



**Mike Matthews**  
25 YEARS, MDI  
*Driver*



**Jimmie McKinney**  
25 YEARS, MDI  
*Accounts Receiv. Assoc.*



**Bonnie Miller**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Store #216*



**Cornelius Haynes**  
25 YEARS, MDI  
*Receiver*



**Matt Phillips**  
30 YEARS, LFS  
*Store #218*



**Rhonda Plunkett**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Store #189*



**Debra Williams**  
25 YEARS, LFS  
*Corporate*



**Robert Yount**  
25 YEARS, MDI  
*Receiver*

## MDI

**Angelica Carson**, 25 years, *Warehouse Admin.*

## LFS

**Mark Allred**, 45 years, *Corporate*  
**Gary Largen**, 45 years, *Store #145*  
**Preston Rogers**, 40 years, *Store #239*  
**Lisa Royal**, 35 years, *Store #250*  
**John Sapp**, 35 years, *Corporate*  
**Kendra Matthews**, 30 years, *Store #222*  
**Kimberly Peace**, 30 years, *Store #239*  
**Brandon Roney**, 25 years, *Store #228*  
**Terry Warren**, 25 years, *Store #812*  
**Warren Grundman**, 25 years, *Corporate*

## WLF

**Mack Hilburn**, 50 years, *Kj's Market IGA Loris*  
**Michael Long**, 45 years, *WLF Retail Office*  
**Henry Williams**, 40 years, *W. Lee Flowers Office*  
**Jonathan Lampley**, 35 years, *Kj's Market IGA Dillon*  
**John Williams**, 35 years, *Kershaw IGA Foodliner*  
**Richard Milford**, 25 years, *W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Makeitha Rose**, 25 years, *Camden IGA Foodliner*  
**Sherby Williams**, 25 years, *Kj's Market IGA Dillon*  
**Corey Wilson**, 25 years, *W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*

YEARS OF SERVICE

## ALI

**Glenn Greeson**, 20 years,  
*Lead Applications Architect*  
**Adam Phillips**, 20 years,  
*Senior Store System Specialist*  
**Dana Rice**, 20 years,  
*Director Trainer & Strategy*  
**Robert Vipperman**, 15 years,  
*Chief People & Strategy Officer*

## MDI

**James Annas**, *Equipment Mech III*, 20 years  
**Ricky Black Jr.**, *Trailer Mech II*, 20 years  
**Walter Bowman**, *Buyer*, 20 years  
**Janet Canipe**, *Sr Applic Programmer/Analyst*, 20 years  
**Timothy Goetz**, *Dock Manager*, 20 years  
**Bobby Isaac**, *Driver*, 20 years  
**Birly Lee**, *Facility Maint Tech II*, 20 years  
**Antwan Little**, *Dock Coordinator*, 20 years  
**Christopher Pitts**, *Dispatch Supervisor*, 20 years  
**Trex Tagnani**, *Driver*, 20 years  
**Esteban Vallejo**, *Lift Truck Operator*, 20 years  
**Bryan Ward**, *IT Prod Owner/Net Lead*, 20 years  
**Hunter Yang**, *Modified Work*, 20 years  
**Patrick Adams**, *Driver*, 15 years  
**Stanley Barnes**, *Lift Truck Operator*, 15 years  
**Marc Buhmaster**, *.Net Project Leader*, 15 years  
**Angela Calloway**, *Receiver*, 15 years  
**Jose Hernandez**, *Lift Truck Operator*, 15 years  
**Ruben Rojo**, *Utility Warehouse*, 15 years  
**Jeffrey Smith**, *Battery Changer*, 15 years  
**Austin Vang**, *Associate Buyer I*, 15 years

## LFS

**Pamela Blöse**, 20 years, *Corporate*  
**Christopher Brantley**, 20 years, *Store #226*  
**James Cordeiro**, 20 years, *Corporate*  
**Sheila Dotson**, 20 years, *Store # 266*  
**Gregory Harrah**, 20 years, *Store #175*  
**Melissa Jones**, 20 years, *Corporate*  
**Amanda Shelton**, 20 years, *Corporate*  
**Jennifer Sugalski**, 20 years, *Store #266*  
**Timothy Aaron**, 15 years, *Store #245*  
**Edmund Albert**, 15 years, *Store #236*  
**Lori Blackwell**, 15 years, *Store #179*  
**Justin Coldren**, 15 years, *Store #179*  
**Amanda Davis**, 15 years, *Store #207*  
**Patricia Dehart**, 15 years, *Store #235*  
**Sarah Dillard**, 15 years, *Store #149*  
**James Hunter**, 15 years, *Store #158*  
**Stephen Lail**, 15 years, *Store #245*  
**LaKeisha Little**, 15 years, *Corporate*  
**Jennifer McDowell**, 15 years, *Store #203*  
**Casey Poole**, 15 years, *Store #121*  
**Cheryl Reed**, 15 years, *Store #207*  
**Jennifer Saylor**, 15 years, *Store #230*  
**Larry Stark**, 15 years, *Store #157*  
**Daniel Stiltner**, 15 years, *Corporate*  
**Scott Tilley**, 15 years, *Store #191*  
**James Tillotson**, 15 years, *Store #179*  
**Martisha Wallace**, 15 years, *Store #151*  
**Brandy Wilkins**, 15 years, *Store #182*  
**Kevin Williams**, 15 years, *Store #254*

## WLF

**Anthony Bonds**, 20 years, *Elgin IGA*  
**Gerald Flowers**, 20 years,  
*W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Wanda Garner**, 20 years, *Kingstree IGA*  
**Vicki Nesbitt**, 20 years, *WLF Retail Office*  
**Phillip Stevens**, 20 years, *Tabor City IGA*  
**Towanda Anderson**, 15 years,  
*Kj's Market IGA Florence Claus*  
**Tonya Brown**, 15 years, *St Stephen IGA*  
**Shirley Burgess**, 15 years,  
*W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Phillip Dukes**, 15 years, *Blythewood IGA*  
**Charles Ervin**, 15 years, *Latta IGA*  
**Frankie Fowler**, 15 years, *Tabor City IGA*  
**William Gathings**, 15 years, *Cheraw IGA*  
**Danielle Hallman**, 15 years, *Gilbert IGA*  
**Anthony Hart**, 15 years, *Latta IGA*  
**Gloria Hickson**, 15 years, *W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Vanessa Kirby**, 15 years, *WLF Retail Office*  
**Mary McDaniel**, 15 years, *Gilbert IGA*  
**James Montgomery**, 15 years,  
*W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Clint Nettles**, 15 years, *W. Lee Flowers Warehouse*  
**Marvin Reid**, 15 years, *Camden IGA Foodliner*  
**Rachel Titus**, 15 years, *Blythewood IGA*  
**Judith Wiggins**, 15 years, *Latta IGA*

## PROMOTIONS

### ALI

**Linda Dilley**, *Solutions Technology Lead to Dir App Dev Ent Fin HR & EDI*  
**Fernando Navarro**, *Lead Financial Analyst to Manager of FP&A, ALI*

### MDI

**Scott Campbell**, *Associate Buyer I to Associate Buyer II*  
**Rachel Ellis**, *Food Safety Manager to Operations Manager*  
**Mark Geiser**, *RAS Automation Digital Coord. to Mgr, Ret Automation Implement.*  
**Vincent Kehler**, *Associate Buyer II to Buyer-WLF*  
**Shannon Lobo**, *Sr. Recruiter to Talent Acq Mgr Multicultural*  
**Victoria Perdun**, *Payroll/Ben Coord Employee Exp to Recruiter*  
**Andrew Webb**, *HR Analyst to Payroll/Ben Coord Employee Exp*

### LFS

**Kenneth Draughn**, *Engineering Tech & Equip Coord to Engineering Tech & Whse Mgr*  
**Clayton Gorton**, *Beer Den Master II to Field Merchandiser*  
**Brandon Gritzmaker**, *Fresh Co-Manager to Field Merchandiser*  
**Lanette Holmes**, *Accounting Supervisor to A/P & A/R Manager*  
**Keith Mitchell**, *Refrigeration Technician 2 to Maintenance Supervisor*

**Dawn Mock**, *Sr Financial Analyst to Mgr eComm Mktpl & Partnerships*  
**Kelsey Murr**, *Accounting Clerk I to Staff Accountant*  
**Zachary Norman**, *Beef Shoppe Manager Level IV to Fresh Co-Manager*  
**Shawn Robinson**, *Grocery Manager Level IV to Center Store Co-Manager*  
**Wade Toomey**, *Deli Manager Level V to Center Store Co-Manager*  
**Kayla Vidal**, *Staff Accountant II to Sr Accountant*  
**Michael Whicker**, *Fresh Co-Manager to Field Merchandiser*  
**Meghan Whitaker**, *Bakery Manager Level V to Field Merchandiser*  
**Bradley Wolak**, *Grocery Manager Level V to Fresh Co-Manager*

### WLF

**Mindy Napier**, *Assistant Manager to Co-Manager*  
**Roosevelt Myers**, *Lead Loader to Warehouse Supervisor*  
**William Tompkins**, *Beef Shoppe Manager to Meat Merchandiser*

## RETIREMENTS

**Dale Washburn**, *MDI*, after 47 years  
**Kim Brown**, *MDI*, after 43 years  
**Mark Brooks**, *MDI*, after 37 years  
**Len Brown**, *LFS*, after 30 years  
**Donald Whitley**, *LFS*, after 26 years  
**Joseph Worrell**, *LFS*, after 25 years  
**Noreen Varney**, *LFS*, after 23 years  
**Lucy Riffle**, *LFS*, after 23 years  
**Christina Hurst**, *LFS*, after 21 years  
**Kenneth Jeffries**, *LFS*, after 21 years  
**Kurt Smith**, *LFS*, after 17 years  
**Dennis Clark**, *LFS*, after 11 years  
**Arthur Munson**, *LFS*, after 11 years



# GEAR UP FOR GRILLING SEASON

Grilling season is here and—as always—Lowes Foods has all your grilling needs covered. Whether you're a newbie to the grilling scene or a seasoned veteran, we've put together a few helpful tips to ensure your grilling season is full of flavor and fun!

## TIP #1: PICK YOUR PROTEIN

Selecting the perfect meat to go on the grill is one of the highlights of any cookout shopping list creation. And Lowes Foods has all you need ... and more! From massive Tomahawk Chops and Boston Butts, pre-kabobbed kabobs, over 70 flavors of SausageWorks sausage to Lowes Foods All-Natural Chicken and a wide variety of Certified Angus Beef cuts, your only question will be, "Do I need a bigger grill?"

## TIP #2: SAVOR THE SEASONINGS

What is grilling season without an assortment of flavorful seasonings to spice up your grilled goodies? Set yourself up for success with an arsenal of delectable seasonings to impress. We recommend our extensive line of Spice Bazaar seasonings. From delicious Deep South Rubs to savory Central American Spices, you won't run out of ideas this grilling season.

## TIP #3: DON'T SKIP THE DIPS

The star of your cook-out will always be the meat, but never underestimate a variety of delicious dipping sauces. Whether you're grilling up steaks, hot dogs, chicken, or hamburgers, we've got sauces to satisfy all tastebuds at the table. Want a quick and easy dip? Grab a Spice Bazaar Dip Mix and Brown Bag Sour Cream to quickly elevate any cookout spread!

## TIP #4: FAVOR FLAVORFUL FRUITS (AND VEGGIES!)

Who says the grill is only meant for meat and veggies? Give those summer fruits a fair shot alongside the traditional grilling vegetables. Make it simple by grabbing some pre-prepped Pick & Prep fruits and vegetables or grill-ready trays. Grilling has never been easier!

From hearty meats and delicious dipping sauces to fresh fruits and vegetables, we're your one-stop shop for delivering all things grilling and grubbin'! Need some extra inspiration? Check out some of our "BBQ and Grilling" recipes on [lowesfoods.com/recipes](https://lowesfoods.com/recipes) and make this grilling season the best one yet!

