



8TH BIENNIAL

**NATIONAL
RURAL GROCERY
SUMMIT**

JUNE 24-25, 2024
MONTGOMERY, AL

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ABOUT THE CO-HOSTS

Rural Grocery Initiative

Grocery stores are anchor institutions in rural communities. They are a primary source of jobs, contribute to the local tax base, and help attract and retain residents. Rural grocery stores serve as gathering spaces where community members can connect and bond. They offer a wide variety of healthy food options at lower cost than discount retailers and convenience stores.

Since 2006, the Rural Grocery Initiative (RGI) has sought to sustain locally-owned rural grocery stores to enhance community vitality and improve access to healthy foods, providing resources to help establish and sustain these crucial businesses. RGI serves as a national source of evidence-based information for rural grocery questions, identifies and responds to the significant challenges that rural grocery stores face, and highlights and promotes sustainable models of rural grocery operations.

Hunger Solutions Institute

Hunger Solutions Institute (HSI) was established by the College of Human Sciences and Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station at Auburn University in 2012. Through teaching, research, outreach, and student engagement, HSI uses a comprehensive approach to promote food and nutrition security on campuses, in communities, throughout Alabama, regionally, nationally, and globally.

HSI facilitates Universities Fighting World Hunger, Presidents United to Solve Hunger, and End Child Hunger in Alabama. HSI also spearheads multiple initiatives such as Double Up Food Bucks Alabama and Add Milk to promote access to healthy food options for SNAP recipients. HSI co-leads Hunger Free Higher Ed, a collaboration of 30 colleges and universities working to address college student food insecurity. Additionally, HSI oversees projects like Delta Healthy Food Financing Initiative and Alabama activities associated with the Delta Regional Food Business Center to address rural food infrastructure.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Land & History Acknowledgement

Today, we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. We recognize the painful history that has profoundly impacted the Muscogee people and other Indigenous communities. We honor the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous peoples and their traditional lands and commit to ongoing efforts to listen to, learn from, and support Indigenous communities, acknowledging their enduring presence and contributions to this region.

The city of Montgomery, AL, is known as the birthplace of the civil rights movement. Montgomery and nearby cities are home to innumerable historic civil rights efforts that solidified this city's significance in this country's journey towards equal rights for all. From the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. served as pastor during the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the site of Rosa Parks' arrest, it is impossible to visit this city without acknowledging and respecting its critical role in civil rights and the evolution of this country.

Getting Around

The summit is being held at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa, located at 201 Tallapoosa St, Montgomery, AL. Maps of the first and second floor are provided on pages 4 and 5.

For quick reference, plenary sessions will be on the first floor in Alabama Ballroom BCDE. Breakout sessions will be on the second floor in the following rooms: Montgomery 5, Montgomery 7, Riverview 6, Riverview 7, and Riverview 8.

Nametags

Please wear your nametag at all times during the summit. This shows you have paid for registration, and it helps build community!

Registration & Information

Have questions? The Registration & Information table, located outside the Alabama Ballroom, will be staffed both days of the summit. We're here to help. Stop by!

Nursing Space

The women's restroom on the 2nd floor Montgomery Hallway has a sitting room available for nursing mothers. There are several comfy chairs and outlets. For an option with more privacy, the storage booth near the Registration & Information table offers space for nursing mothers to use throughout the event. Please stop by the registration table for access.

Wi-Fi Instructions

Free Wi-Fi is available for conference attendees.

- Network: Renaissance_CONFERENCE
- Password: nrgs2024

Social Media

Tag us! Use the hashtag #NRGS2024 in your social media posts.

Exhibitors

Be sure to visit with our exhibitors, located in the Concourse Hallway on the first floor. A dedicated exhibitor time is scheduled for 1:30-2:15 PM on June 24. See page 4 for a full list of exhibitors. Get a stamp on your passport from all exhibitors, and enter to win complimentary registration at the 2026 National Rural Grocery Summit! Winners will be announced in the final plenary session.

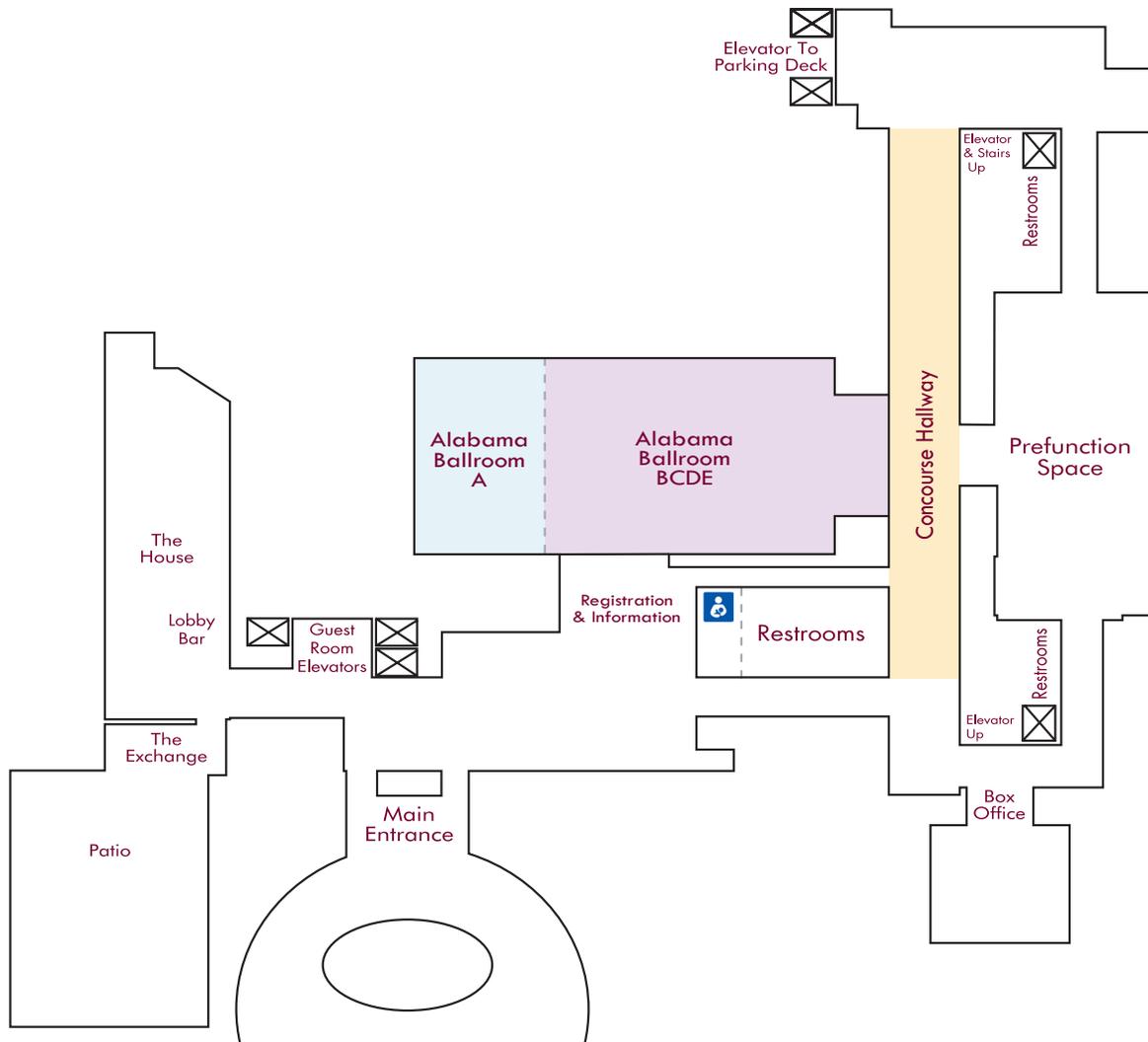
Agenda Updates

This program is current as of June 12, 2024. Any changes made after that date will be reflected on the summit website. Scan the code or visit ruralgrocery.org/summit.



HOTEL MAP

First Floor

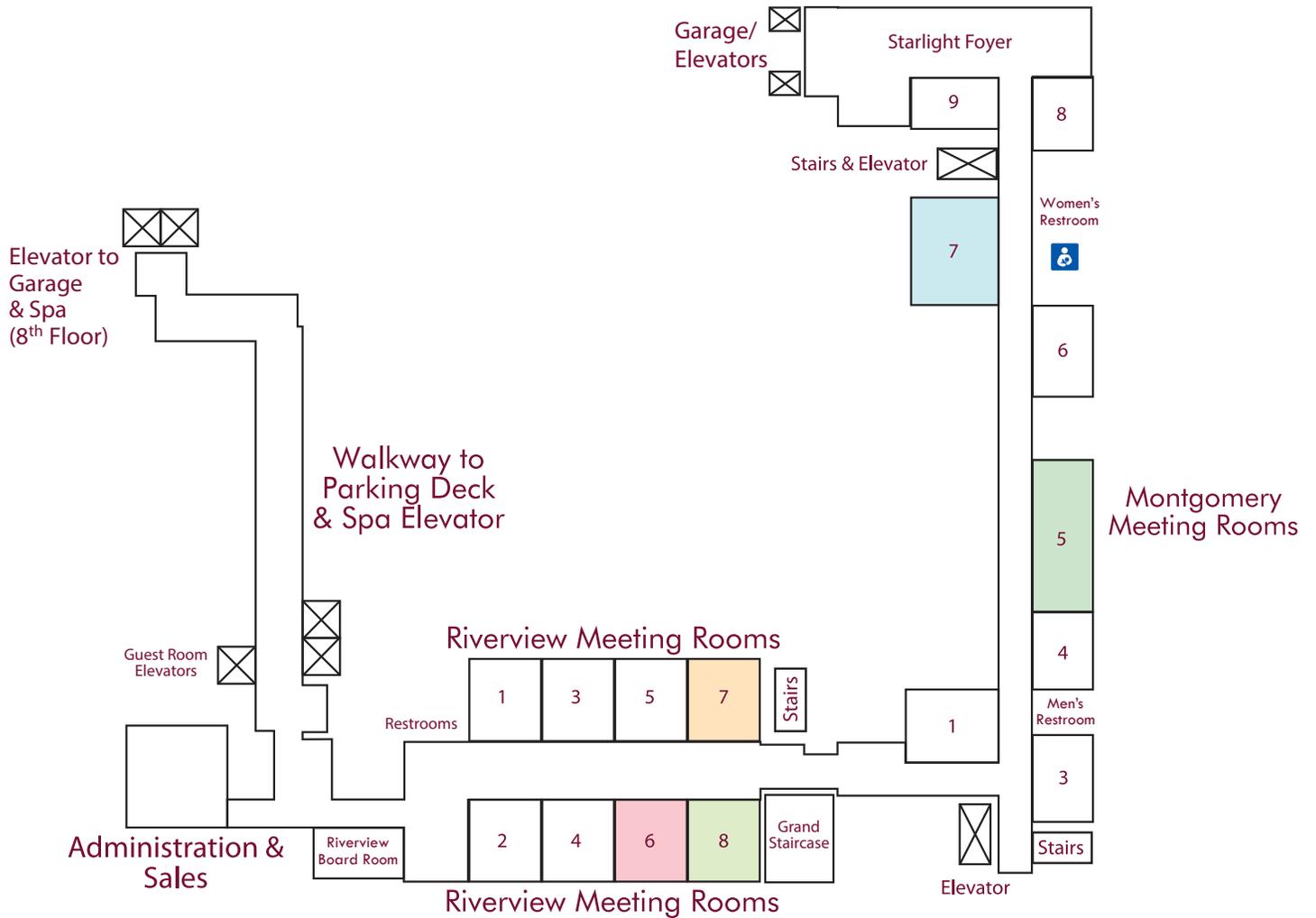


Visit our exhibitors in the Concourse Hallway!

Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries
Associated Wholesale Grocers
Coca-Cola Bottling Company United
Columinate
Dakota Worldwide
ECRS
Hawk, Inc.
Hope Enterprise Corporation
Hunger Solutions Institute
Independent Grocers Alliance, Inc.

Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group
Mitchell Grocery Corporation
National RTAP
National Grocers Association Foundation
Reinvestment Fund
Retail Data Systems
Rural Grocery Initiative
Rural Grocery Solutions
Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension
USDA Rural Development - Alabama

Second Floor



WELCOME

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 8th biennial National Rural Grocery Summit!

The Rural Grocery Initiative is thrilled to convene this year's summit outside the state of Kansas for the first time ever!!

The very first rural grocery summit was held in 2008 with a few dozen rural grocers and food access stakeholders in a barn in Inman, Kansas. This was RGI's first foray into bringing rural grocers together to network and learn from each other, and it stuck. Since then, RGI has convened this event every other year, alternating between Manhattan, KS, and Wichita, KS – until now. We are excited to partner with the Hunger Solutions Institute at Auburn University to bring this event to an entirely new part of the country, building new relationships and exposing our national audience to the food access landscape in Alabama.

The world of rural grocery today is full of creativity and partnership. The grocery business is not an easy one and yet, despite the myriad challenges rural grocers face, local residents and grocers step up to meet the needs of their communities. At this year's summit, with over 250 attendees from all over the country, we will acknowledge the determination that rural grocers carry with them each day and use this time to support each other, share successes, innovate, and celebrate the important work being done to sustain rural grocery.

Over the next two days, you will hear from industry leaders, policymakers, and rural grocers during our plenary sessions as they highlight critical topics related to rural grocery. During each breakout session, choose between five session tracks, each with a different focus: Rural Grocery Best Practices, Innovation, Partnerships & Community, Funding & Policy, and Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access.

Look for opportunities to network throughout the event. After lunch on Monday and during breaks throughout the event, be sure to stop by the exhibitor tables located in the Concourse Hallway adjacent to the Alabama Ballroom. On Monday evening, join us for a documentary screening and panel discussion highlighting two independent grocers, or head straight to our evening reception for a chance to mingle and debrief from the first day. New this year, two post-conference tours will showcase the local dynamics of rural grocery and local food systems in Alabama (registration required).

Finally, I must extend a sincere thanks to our generous event sponsors, our National Rural Grocery Summit Steering Committee, and to the Hunger Solutions Institute and Rural Grocery Initiative team members who made this event possible. Organizing this event was a team effort.

Cheers to the 2024 National Rural Grocery Summit!



Rial Carver
Program Leader
Rural Grocery Initiative
K-State Research and Extension

Dear Summit Attendees,

Welcome to the Great State of Alabama and the first ever National Rural Grocery Summit outside of Kansas!

For the past year, Hunger Solutions Institute has worked closely with the Rural Grocery Initiative at Kansas State Research and Extension to plan an informative, empowering, and dynamic few days where you can think BIG and broad about the possibilities of rural grocery, rural food infrastructure, and local and regional food systems. Take advantage of all opportunities available during these next few days. From keynotes, to breakouts, to exhibitors, to poster sessions, the information, connections, and possibilities are plentiful.

I want to extend a THANK YOU to Rial Carver and Erica Blair with the Rural Grocery Initiative for trusting Hunger Solutions Institute as their first partner for hosting this long-standing biennial gathering outside of Kansas. It has been a joy to work alongside them to honor the history of the National Rural Grocery Summit while also ensuring highlights reflective of the southeastern rural grocery landscape.

Another big thank you to the incredible team at Hunger Solutions Institute. Each team member played a critical role in making this summit and associated field trips informative and engaging. You are truly an amazing team that I am grateful to lead each day.

Thank you also to the many other organizations that played a critical role in supporting the summit. Steering committee members, sponsors, Auburn University Office of Professional and Continuing Education staff, Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa at the Convention Center staff, and many others have invested much time to making this a great event! And last, but definitely not least, a HUGE thank you to Jimmy Wright, HSI's fearless grocery consultant who gets us into all sorts of good trouble, like co-hosting the National Rural Grocery Summit.

Enjoy your time in Alabama,



Alicia Powers, PhD
Managing Director
Hunger Solutions Institute
College of Human Sciences
Auburn University

AGENDA AT-A-GLANCE

Monday, June 24

8:00 - 9:00 AM **Light Continental Breakfast and Registration** Alabama Ballroom BCDE

9:00 - 10:30 AM **Welcome and Opening Plenary** Alabama Ballroom BCDE

KEYNOTE *Sponsored by NGA Foundation*

John Ross, President & CEO, IGA

The Changing Landscape of Grocery and How Independent Grocery is Positioned to Keep Up

10:30 - 10:45 AM **Break** *Sponsored by Alabama Cooperative Extension System*

10:45 - 11:45 AM **Breakout Session #1**

TRACK A **Rural Grocery Best Practices** **Montgomery 7**

Marketing Strategies to Drive Sales Growth Performance for Any Size Store

TRACK B **Innovation** **Montgomery 5**

Ten Years of Grocery Access Solutions Using a Mix of Online, Mobile, and Brick-and-Mortar Stores throughout Stark County, Ohio

Farm Stop: A Novel Retail Store Model to Grow Local Food Economies

TRACK C **Partnerships & Community** **Riverview 6**

The What and the Why of Food Co-ops: An Introduction to the Co-op Model

TRACK D **Funding & Policy** **Riverview 7**

If You Can't Beat 'em, Don't Play by Their Rules: Understanding Big Grocery's Weaknesses

Dollar Stores and the Food Environment: Consumer Perceptions and Policy Opportunities

TRACK E **Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access** **Riverview 8**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Overview

SNAP Online in Rural America

12:00 - 1:30 PM **Lunch and Afternoon Plenary** Alabama Ballroom BCDE

KEYNOTE *Sponsored by Reinvestment Fund*

Will McIntee, Director of Strategic Engagement, The White House

White House Update on National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Healthy Food Financing Initiative Program Announcement

1:30 - 2:15 PM **Networking, Exhibitor, and Poster Session** Concourse Hallway

Sponsored by Hawk, Inc.

2:15 - 3:15 PM Breakout Session #2

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

Montgomery 7

Data-Driven Decision-making to Open a Rural Grocery Store
Rural Grocery Profit Simulator

TRACK B Innovation

Montgomery 5

Rise Community Market: Difficulties and Successes in Creating a Community-owned Grocery Store in a Rural Food Desert

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

Riverview 6

Lessons Learned in Developing Rural and Urban Food Systems in the Black Belt of Alabama

TRACK D Funding & Policy

Riverview 7

Using State Industrial Policy Power to Shape Markets and Tackle Food Deserts
Unlocking Growth: Incentives for Cities to Attract Grocers to Rural Markets

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

Riverview 8

What's Fresh with GusNIP: A Retailer Perspective on Double Up Food Bucks

3:15 - 3:30 PM Break *Sponsored by Coca-Cola Bottling Company United and Hope Enterprise Corporation*

3:30 - 4:30 PM Breakout Session #3

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

Montgomery 7

Interpreting Financial Statements to Make Better Business Decisions

TRACK B Innovation

Montgomery 5

Rural Grocery Development and Nutrition Incentives in the Four Corners

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

Riverview 6

Engaging Communities through the Cooperative Process Increases Community Vitality

TRACK D Funding & Policy

Riverview 7

Grants as a Financial Resource: Opportunities, Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies for Innovation in Rural Food Access

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

Riverview 8

Food is Medicine: Implications and Opportunities for Rural Grocery

Data-Supported Policy Recommendations for USDA Food Insecurity-Related Programs

4:45 - 5:45 PM Documentary Screenings and Panel Discussion
Sponsored by CoBank

Alabama Ballroom BCDE

5:00 - 6:30 PM Evening Reception

Alabama Ballroom A

Tuesday, June 25

7:30 - 8:30 AM **Light Continental Breakfast** Alabama Ballroom BCDE

8:30 - 9:15 AM **Opening Plenary** Alabama Ballroom BCDE

AWARDS *Sponsored by Associated Wholesale Grocers*

9:15 - 9:30 AM **Break** *Sponsored by IGA, Inc.*

9:30 - 10:30 AM **Breakout Session #4**

TRACK A **Rural Grocery Best Practices** Montgomery 7

Wholesale Grocery Partnerships in Alabama

TRACK B **Innovation** Montgomery 5

Converting Your Store to a Co-op: A Viable Path for Long-term Success

TRACK C **Partnerships & Community** Riverview 6

Non-profit Office of Rural Health Steps Up to Streamline State Efforts for Rural

TRACK D **Funding & Policy** Riverview 7

Making the Case: How to Demonstrate Inadequate and Inequitable Food Access Using Reinvestment Fund's Limited Supermarket Access (LSA) Analysis

TRACK E **Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access** Riverview 8

Innovation in Partnerships: Understanding Existing Practices on Sourcing Local
Farmers' Perspectives of a Digital App to Build Direct to Retail Sales Channels in Rural Areas

10:30 - 10:45 AM **Break** *Sponsored by Retail Data Systems and Rural Grocery Solutions*

10:45 - 11:45 AM **Breakout Session #5**

TRACK A **Rural Grocery Best Practices** Montgomery 7

Reduce Operational Costs and Increase Profit by Benchmarking and Upgrading Your Store(s)

TRACK B **Innovation** Montgomery 5

Leveraging Non-profit Relationships to Increase Business

TRACK C **Partnerships & Community** Riverview 6

Grow Your Food Business Ecosystem
Community Building through Cooperation and Cooperatives

TRACK D **Funding & Policy** Riverview 7

How Healthy Food Financing Initiatives Can Leverage Data-Driven Strategies to Support Equitable Rural Food Access

Bringing Healthy Foods Closer to Home: An Alabama Solution to Reverse Childhood Health Trends

TRACK E **Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access** Riverview 8

Building a Robust and Healthy Farmer/Retailer Relationship Data-Supported Policy

12:00 - 1:30 PM **Lunch and Closing Plenary**

Alabama Ballroom BCDE

KEYNOTE *Sponsored by Tuskegee University*

Duane Legg, Legacy Foods Market and Bakery, Indore, WV
Marquitrice Manghum, Farmacy Marketplace, Webb, MS
Jenny Osner, Hired Man's Grocery & Grill, Conway Springs, KS
Eric Simpson, West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative, LaGrange, GA
Moderator: Chelsea Matzen, National Grocers Association Foundation
Panel: Rural Grocer Perspectives on Boldly Serving Their Communities

2:00 - 8:00 PM **Post-Conference Tours**

We value your **feedback!**

After the summit, please take a few moments to share your thoughts. This will greatly help us improve this event for attendees in the future. You will also receive this survey by email.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Duane Legg

Legacy Foods Market & Bakery

Duane Legg began working in his grandfather's grocery store in 1985 at 10 years old, stocking shelves and sweeping floors. In 1995, he started Legacy Foods, having attended Johnson & Wales University and Virginia Tech. Following a colorful career working in restaurants and as a Corporate Chef for a major food distributor, Duane returned to his roots and opened a storefront for Legacy Foods in 2020. The store front is located on the exact spot of his grandfather's store. Legacy Foods is located in rural West Virginia, Clay County – a population of less than seven thousand with the nearest major grocery over a 45-minute drive away. Legacy Foods is very active in Clay County with local schools and the community. Partnering with Clay County Schools Baking & Pastry Program allowed students to place second in the state. Duane is currently affiliated with the American Culinary Federation, Bakers Guild of America, WV Food & Farm Coalition, and WVGrown. He is currently the Vice President of the Clay County Business Development Authority and a member of the Board of Directors for the Mountain State Arts & Craft Fair.



Marquitrice Mangham

Farmacy Marketplace

Born and raised in Charleston, Mississippi, Ms. Mangham is a third generation farmer and U.S. Army veteran. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master's in Public Administration. After pursuing her Juris Doctorate at Phoenix School of Law, Ms. Mangham continued her 20-year professional career in the public sector as a Community Planner. After inheriting her family farmland in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi, in 2016, Ms. Mangham began producing row crops including soybeans and wheat over her 180-acre farm. In 2017, Ms. Mangham founded and currently manages In Her Shoes, Inc. (IHS), a nonprofit organization that provides resources and support to socially disadvantaged and underserved farmers in Georgia and the Mississippi Delta through its Farm Business Enhancement Program (FBEP). FBEP's goal is to increase long-term sustainability among socially disadvantaged farm businesses through income diversification and is funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 2023, IHS received national attention for efforts to increase fresh food access and support small farm businesses in rural communities by opening one of only two grocery stores in Tallahatchie County, the only fresh food retailer within more than a 15-mile radius and supported by local farmers.



Will McIntee

Director of Strategic Engagement, White House Office of Public Engagement

Will McIntee serves as Director of Strategic Engagement at The White House and manages rural, agriculture, food, and nutrition engagement for the White House Office of Public Engagement. He served as the National Rural Engagement Director on the Biden-Harris campaign. He also previously served at the U.S. Department of the Interior during the Obama-Biden Administration, in the Office of Congressman Bruce Braley (IA-01) in Iowa, and as the Midwest Outreach Director for the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition. A native of Iowa, Will is an alum of Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa and is passionate about the rural places he has lived and worked, ensuring that all rural communities have the resources they need to thrive.



Jenny Osner

Hired Man's Grocery & Grill

Jenny Osner has her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and was a certified teacher for eighteen years in Conway Springs, KS. In July 2008, she and her husband opened the grocery store they built from the ground up, naming it Hired Man's Grocery & Grill, Inc. where she serves as president. The store has been part of Kansas State University Center for Engagement and Community Development's Rural Case Study and Healthy Eating Grant, State of Kansas Supporting Local Food Systems grant, and USDA REAP grant. Hired Man's is proud to work with local farmers and vendors so local produce and products can be sold in their store. They offer the Double Up Food Bucks program, which supports local farmers and allows Hired Man's to invest in their local community (population 1,200) both financially and socially.

Jenny has been awarded the Kansas State University Rural Grocery Initiative Leadership Excellence Award and Associated Wholesale Grocer's OKC Store Manager of the Year. Hired Man's received the Kansas Department of Commerce Retail/Service Award, Affiliated Foods Midwest Pinnacle Achievement Award, Friends of 4-H Award, National Grocers Association Creative Choice Award, and National Grocer's Association Creative Choice Outstanding Merchandiser Award for their homemade Candy Corn Brats. Jenny currently serves on the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative's Advisory Board and the National Grocers Association Government Relations Committee.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



John Ross

President & CEO, IGA Inc.

John Ross, President & CEO IGA Inc., is responsible for domestic and global operations for IGA, the world's largest independent supermarket network with nearly 6,500 IGA supermarkets in more than 30 countries worldwide.

During his career John has served as President, Inmar Promotions network; CEO, IPG Shopper Sciences; and President, IPG Emerging Media Lab. He has held leadership positions with smaller independents and larger retailers like Home Depot, in roles ranging from CMO, store management, merchandising, advertising, marketing and e-commerce.

John's experience spans many industries and areas of focus. He's worked in operations; merchandising and marketing; new, traditional and digital media; and analytics and big data for some of the largest brands in the world, including Coke, P&G, Schwab, Publix, Walmart, Chrysler, Fiat, Sony, Bose, Google, AOL, and so many more. He has also helped launch and grow some of the world's largest propriety brands at retail.

He is the co-author of the Google Book ZMOT: Zero Moment of Truth, and author of the recently-published Fire in the Zoo, a book about shopper influence, marketing mania, retailer chaos, advertising pitfalls, consumer confidence, converting customers and how screaming at people usually doesn't work.

John is a champion of data-driven decision making, shopper-focused marketing and active listening.

John has BA, BS and MBA degrees from Tulane University in New Orleans, and serves on a number of retail industry boards, including Food Marketing Institute, National Grocers Association, Consumer Goods Forum, and Inmar. He and Marie, his wife of 25+ years, live in Atlanta, where they have three kids and too many pets.



Eric Simpson

West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative

Eric Simpson put his hands in the dirt with an intention to grow something 15 years ago and grow something, he did. His farming journey, from backyard gardener to one of the leading members of the West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative, unfolded as organically as it gets (no pun intended) and continues to set an example for other farmers in how to hold space for building strong community and continuing the tradition of convening and mobilizing, while carving out space for a successful, independent business.

Mr. Simpson sits on the Board of Directors for the West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative, located in Hamilton, Georgia. Founded in July 1966, West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative's mission is to rebuild a viable local food system and promote economic development within the community. The mission, values, and vision represent the cooperative's true work in the community and across West Georgia. The agricultural co-op has traditionally consisted of local Black farmers, and through their leadership and because of recent participation in the Justice40 Accelerator, the cooperative has successfully been awarded numerous USDA grants to support the build out of a grocery store, shared commercial kitchen, and a credit union. Today, the co-op includes consumers and other community members who all strive to support the continuous growth of the cooperative!

PRESENTATION DESCRIPTIONS

Monday, June 24

Opening Plenary

KEYNOTE

9:00 - 10:30 AM | Alabama Ballroom BCDE

The Changing Landscape of Grocery and How Independent Grocery is Positioned to Keep Up
John Ross, President & CEO, IGA

Shoppers are stressed and likely to become more so during the next 12 months. Inflation in food, housing, and energy are forcing shoppers to trade down at the very time they are hoping to eat better, buy higher quality meals for their family, and improve their overall health. IGA CEO John Ross will look at changes in the global and U.S. economies that are creating this dilemma for average Americans and make suggestions for how retailers can modify their store offerings and marketing to keep pace with changing shopper demands. Ross will also examine recruiting and retention strategies for independent grocers in light of these economic and behavioral trends.

Breakout Session #1

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Montgomery 7

Marketing Strategies to Drive Sales Growth Performance for Any Size Store

Jeanie Wells, Columinate and Founder of Mighty Community Markets; Rebecca Torpie, Columinate and Briar Patch Co-op

Small rural stores don't have the luxury of large marketing teams. But any store can leverage tools and techniques to drive sales growth through increased basket size and improved customer counts. Join us for a fun session with easy, down-to-earth ways to tell your store's story, create the image you want to have in your town, and drive local impact in your community.



co-op session

TRACK B Innovation

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Montgomery 5

10 Years of Grocery Access Solutions Using a Mix of Online, Mobile, and Brick-and-Mortar Stores throughout Stark County, Ohio

Tom Phillips, StarkFresh

Stark County, Ohio is over 64% rural and home to dozens of USDA-defined food deserts. In some of these areas, the poverty rate approaches 70%. Simply put, this is a county in need. For ten years, StarkFresh has been innovating ways to create affordable grocery access. See how stationary markets made way for a mobile grocery market, which paved the way for neighborhood-sized brick-and-mortar stores and see how their unique approach to an online grocery store is poised to offer even more access.

Farm Stop: A Novel Retail Store Model to Grow Local Food Economies

Laura Matney, Argus Farm Stop

Farm Stops are year-round, everyday markets that support small-scale farmers and strengthen local and regional food systems. They do so most often by operating on a consignment model, which gives producers a fair price, flexibility with their time and products, and provides more direct connections with consumers. This presentation will review how this model store operates and the impact it can have on local food economies.

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 6

The What and the Why of Food Co-ops: An Introduction to the Co-op Model

Faye Mack, Food Co-op Initiative

Have you heard of a food co-op but aren't sure what it is? Have you visited a food co-op and thought "that's not for my community"? This session is for you! Join Food Co-op Initiative (FCI) to learn all about co-ops and what makes them unique, the benefits and challenges of the cooperative model, and why a community-owned grocery store might be right for your community.

TRACK D Funding & Policy

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 7

If You Can't Beat 'em, Don't Play by Their Rules: Understanding Big Grocery's Weaknesses

Alan Lewis, Natural Grocers

In this presentation, learn about the history of retail in the U.S. from A&P to Amazon. Discover how big CPG brands and dominant meat and dairy processors succeed in controlling access to retail shelves. Understand why the needs of rural communities don't fit this system's imperative of expansion and excessive profit, and explore where rural food systems can have strengths and opportunities that Big Food has boxed itself out of.

Dollar Stores and the Food Environment: Consumer Perceptions and Policy Opportunities

Karen Gardner, Center for Science in the Public Interest

Dollar stores are the fastest-growing food retailer in the United States by both sheer number of stores and consumer food expenditure share. This presentation will discuss the results of a national survey of consumer utilization and perceptions of dollar stores and examples of local communities across the country who are advocating for policies that limit or affect dollar stores.

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 8

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Overview

Anna Adams and Andrew O'Connor, USDA Food and Nutrition Service

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is vital to meeting the food needs of over 20 million US households. Food and Nutrition Service, SNAP representatives will provide an overview of Program initiatives in a forward-looking informational session.

SNAP Online in Rural America

Brielle Underwood and Gabrielle Rumney, National Grocers Association

Grocers considering offering online shopping must also be prepared to accept all forms of payment that customers use, including SNAP Online. Hear some of the key considerations when deciding to offer online shopping to customers in rural communities and best practices about going through the SNAP Online approval process.

Afternoon Plenary

KEYNOTE

12:00 - 1:30 PM | Alabama Ballroom BCDE

White House Update on National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Will McIntee, Director of Strategic Engagement, The White House

White House Director of Strategic Engagement Will McIntee will provide updates on the Biden-Harris Administration's work to implement the National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health, and work to invest in rural communities through the American Rescue Plan Act, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and Inflation Reduction Act.

Breakout Session #2

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

2:15 - 3:15 PM | Montgomery 7

Data-Drive Decision-making to Open a Rural Grocery Store

Elliott Olson, Dakota Worldwide

The presentation will reveal the basis behind two commonly used economic models and their role in determining retail performance and market feasibility. The impacts of supercenters on rural communities will be discussed along with potential avenues that can be used to strengthen food retailing in rural communities. The attendees will gain knowledge and understanding of a rural town's position in the grand structure and be better able to evaluate strategies to solve food access challenges in their communities.

Rural Grocery Profit Simulator

Duane Johnson, Iowa State University Extension

The Rural Grocery Profit Simulator is a program designed to give potential grocery store owners an opportunity to estimate the size of their market and the revenue a hypothetical store might create. Users will then input data that is specific to their individual situation to estimate expenses, and ultimately project a bottom-line profit or loss. Users can experiment with different values to evaluate impact of various changes.

TRACK B Innovation

2:15 - 3:15 PM | Montgomery 5

Rise Community Market: Difficulties and Successes in Creating a Community-owned Grocery Store in a Rural Food Desert

Sean Park, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs; Steven Tarver and Robert Edwards, Rise Community Market; John Shadowens, University of Illinois Extension

This panel presentation will provide an overview of the Rise Community Market, a cooperative developed in a low-income, predominately African American, rural food desert. The efforts of planning both the business and the community connections will be discussed, highlighting some of the difficulties encountered during the process. Among issues discussed are the integration of two workforce development programs into the community-owned business.

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

2:15 - 3:15 PM | Riverview 6

Lessons Learned in Developing Rural and Urban Food Systems in the Black Belt of Alabama

Dr. Raymon Shange, Dr. Franklin Quarcoo, and Dr. Kristin Woods, Carver Integrative Sustainability Center at Tuskegee University

This session will highlight the past, present, and future of food systems work being engaged in by the Carver Integrative Sustainability Center at Tuskegee University. Lessons learned from engaging in projects with Walmart, Whole Foods, and local markets will be raised as Tuskegee University strives to continue the work of George Washington Carver in enhancing rural Alabama food systems.

TRACK D Funding & Policy

2:15 - 3:15 PM | Riverview 7

Using State Industrial Policy Power to Shape Markets and Tackle Food Deserts

Erion Malasi, Economic Security Project

The Illinois Grocery Store Initiative, a \$20M strategic grant fund created by the JB Pritzker Administration, seeks to use public funds to support grocery stores to expand their offerings, purchase and maintain equipment, and seed efforts to open publicly-owned grocery stores in food deserts. This comprehensive market-shaping approach creates a flexible pool of funds to support grocery stores and jumpstart new stores in rural and urban communities to solve food access issues caused by systematic divestment.

Unlocking Growth: Incentives for Cities to Attract Grocers to Rural Markets

Elliott Cook, Retail Strategies

This session will explore the challenges rural communities face in securing access to grocery stores amidst urbanization. The discussion will focus on how cities can attract grocers to rural markets through innovative strategies, including financial incentives, zoning policies, and public-private partnerships. Attendees will gain insights into the economic, social, and health benefits of enhancing rural food access, while learning practical solutions for fostering sustainable growth and creating thriving rural communities.

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

2:15 - 3:15 PM | Riverview 8

What's Fresh with GusNIP: A Retailer Perspective on Double Up Food Bucks

Rachel Hoh, Fair Food Network; Vanessa Wielenga, No More Empty Pots; Dr. Lisa Franzen-Castle, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Rural communities often have fewer resources and options when it comes to food assistance. In response to this unmet and growing need, rural grocery stores across the country have been able to partner with nonprofit organizations through the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) to implement innovative

strategies that increase the sale and purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income and SNAP shoppers. This panel will feature GusNIP grantee organizations and their partner grocers, who will share about their rural communities, how they run their nutrition incentive or produce prescription program, successful strategies for increasing local sourcing, and how these programs have supported the health and well-being of rural communities. This session will be facilitated by Fair Food Network and the National Grocers Association Foundation Technical Assistance Center and include results from the Nebraska Double Up Food Bucks program's evaluation through retailer interviews and customer surveys.

Breakout Session #3

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Montgomery 7

Interpreting Financial Statements to Make Better Business Decisions

Joel Harper and Gene Holland, Small Business Technology Development Center of North Carolina

Finance is the language of business and financial statements tell the profitability story of a business. Grocery chain managers probably have a home office providing them with that story. Independent grocery owners may not have that luxury. This session will teach attendees how to understand the story their financial statements are telling, and how to use that information to make informed management decisions. We will use a real-world profit & loss statement and a balance sheet to teach attendees these skills. By the end of our session, attendees will be able to use their own profit & loss statements and balance sheets to run more profitable grocery stores.

TRACK B Innovation

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Montgomery 5

Rural Grocery Development and Nutrition Incentives in the Four Corners

Jess T. Church, MS, RD, CommonSpirit Health; Jordan Duncan, Durango Natural Foods Co-op; Lonni Byrd, Nourish Colorado; Olivia Muskett, Community Outreach and Patient Empowerment

Join Four Corners Region panelists across Tribal government, healthcare, food retail, nonprofit, and economic development sectors in a conversation focused on enhancing rural resilience through food. Their innovative efforts combine in a vast, sparsely populated region intersecting four states and many Tribal Nations. Discover how to leverage the strengths of a frontier community into the innovative solutions we need to solve rural food systems' biggest challenges.

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Riverview 6

Engaging Communities through the Cooperative Process Increases Community Vitality

Charlotte Narjes, Nebraska Cooperative Development Center; Marilyn Logan, The Marmaton Market

The local grocery store is critical for older adults to remain in their communities and to attract new community members. When a store closes, it is devastating. The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center (NCDC) has engaged communities in a process that has led to opening grocery stores that have increased community vitality and hope. Through a ripple mapping evaluation process, this hope has been captured in communities that have reopened their grocery store. This session will also feature a cooperative rural grocery store in Southeast Kansas that has utilized innovative strategies to sustain community support for the store.

TRACK D Funding & Policy

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Riverview 7

Grants as a Financial Resource: Opportunities, Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies for Innovation in Rural Food Access

Dr. Kara Newby, Auburn University Hunger Solutions Institute; Jimmy Wright, Wright's Markets; Gray Harris, USDA Rural Development; Kate Fitzgerald, USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs

Federal, state, foundation, and non-governmental organization grants are not often thought about as resources for supporting grocers in innovating to enhance rural food access. This panel will provide a summary of grant opportunities available to grocers. In addition, the panel will provide nuts and bolts on how to develop a strong grant proposal and administer a successful grant. A grocer also will detail first-hand the benefits and challenges of grant funding in a small independent grocery store.

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

3:30 - 4:30 PM | Riverview 8

Food is Medicine: Implications and Opportunities for Rural Grocery

Karen Shore, Upstream Strategies

What is 'Food is Medicine' and how does it impact rural grocery? This presentation will explore Food is Medicine including what it is (and isn't), funding needs and opportunities, key partners, and how and where to begin. It will highlight case studies and share important resources for food is medicine in rural and tribal communities across the U.S., covering programs such as healthy food incentives, produce prescriptions, and medically tailored meal and grocery programs.

Data-Supported Policy Recommendations for USDA Food Insecurity-Related Programs

Jillian Morrison and Natalie Minton, University of Mississippi; Dr. Kara Woods, Alcorn State University

This presentation will summarize the findings from a collaborative research project to examine the demand for nutrition incentives and produce prescription programs across Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. It will include policy recommendations for farmers and local grocers to collaborate and participate in these programs.



Opening Plenary

AWARD CEREMONY

8:30 - 9:15 AM | Alabama Ballroom BCDE

To celebrate those who are leading the way and making a positive difference in the world of rural grocery, the 2024 National Rural Grocery Summit Steering Committee will present awards for Rural Grocer of the Year and Grocery Champion of the Year.

Rural Grocer of the Year: We will honor an independent rural grocer who has demonstrated excellence in community engagement, innovation, customer service, and more.

Grocery Champion of the Year: We will honor a leader who has dedicated their time, knowledge, and talents to helping independent grocery stores thrive.

Breakout Session #4

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

9:30 - 10:30 AM | Montgomery 7

Wholesale Grocery Partnerships in Alabama

Ellie Taylor, Alabama Grocers Association; Jay Mitchell, Mitchell Grocery Corporation; Jeff Brown, Piggly Wiggly; Gerry D'Alessandro, Fresh Value LLC

Rural grocery stores have unique needs when it comes to their wholesalers. They need a wholesaler who can regularly supply them and at a price point that works for their store size and customer base. Hear from a panel of Alabama wholesalers and retailers about what goes in to serving a rural grocery store and how best to leverage a wholesale relationship for the benefit of your store.

TRACK B Innovation

9:30 - 10:30 AM | Montgomery 5

Converting Your Store to a Co-op: A Viable Path for Long-term Success

Faye Mack, Food Co-op Initiative; Stuart Reid, The Co-op Consultant; Nicole Borner, Montana Cooperative Development Center

Business transition planning is critical to maintaining grocery stores long-term. Converting to the cooperative model is an option more and more rural grocers are considering. You will learn why you might consider the co-op model, how it works, and how to get started. We will also be sharing a new Action Guide (that you can take home with you!) to help you and your community along the process.

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

9:30 - 10:30 AM | Riverview 6

Non-profit Office of Rural Health Steps Up to Streamline State Efforts for Rural

Courtney Watson, South Carolina Office of Rural Health

Multi-sector partners are fortifying their relationships and streamlining their efforts in order to execute an organized plan to address rural food deserts. Attend this session to discover how one of the three nonprofit offices of rural health in the nation is creatively approaching food retail in rural South Carolina through a total food ecosystem partnership.

TRACK D Funding & Policy

9:30 - 10:30 AM | Riverview 7

Making the Case: How to Demonstrate Inadequate and Inequitable Food Access Using Reinvestment Fund's Limited Supermarket Access (LSA) Analysis

Michelle Schmitt, Reinvestment Fund

Reinvestment Fund's updated Limited Supermarket Access (LSA) analysis is a national, data-driven measure of inequitable food access and an eligibility measure for funding sources, including America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative. Demonstrating inequitable access to healthy food retail is often the first step to attracting the attention (and resources) of funders and policymakers. In this presentation, participants will learn 1) how to access the LSA through PolicyMap, a free interactive mapping platform, 2) use the LSA metrics to understand inadequate and inequitable food access, and 3) learn how to combine the LSA analysis with other community indicators to create a compelling case for their communities.

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

9:30 - 10:30 AM | Riverview 8

Innovation in Partnerships: Understanding Existing Practices on Sourcing Local

Dr. Courtney Long and Lisa Bates, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Healthy communities thrive when there is collaboration between small businesses, partnerships are mutually beneficial, and businesses actively engage with their local community. This presentation will highlight the initial findings of a two-year national study that seeks to identify and inventory existing best practices on sourcing local and culturally relevant products in independent, rural grocery stores. This session will also engage participants to further build a best-practice model of collaboration between independent grocers, local producers, and their rural communities.

Farmers' Perspectives of a Digital App to Build Direct to Retail Sales Channels in Rural Areas

Audrey Thomas, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

This presentation discusses the Building Up Food Distribution (BUD) app, developed to overcome challenges in sourcing healthier food for small, rural retailers by connecting them with local producers. We share insights from formative research that guided the BUD pilot trial in Southern Maryland, featuring farmers' perspectives on the barriers and facilitators to accessing direct-to-retail sales channels, as well as the app's potential to enhance the local food economy.

Breakout Session #5

TRACK A Rural Grocery Best Practices

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Montgomery 7

Reduce Operational Costs and Increase Profit by Benchmarking and Upgrading Your Store(s)

Courtney Dragiff, Ratio Institute

Attendees will learn how best sustainability workplace practices reduce operational costs and improve profit. Benchmarking stores against a common standard helps identify opportunities to improve operations through behavioral changes, process implementation, and capital expenditures and upgrades. Learn the value of different practices to the bottom line and the equivalent greenhouse gas reduction. Lastly, for capital expenditures, learn about Rural Energy for America (REAP) grants and other sources of funding to support upgrading refrigeration systems, refrigerants, lighting, HVAC, and other critical systems or adding renewable energy.

TRACK B Innovation

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Montgomery 5

Leveraging Non-profit Relationships to Increase Business

Chelsea Matzen, National Grocers Association Foundation; Jon Henry, Jon Henry General Store; Aaron "AJ" Johnson, Oasis Fresh Market; Jimmy Wright, Wright's Market

Many non-profits have programs dedicated to increasing food access or community connections that grocers can leverage in their businesses. These relationships can increase sales, boost customer retention, and help with marketing, among other benefits. Hear multiple stories of grocer/non-profit partnerships and the benefits these grocers have seen.

TRACK C Partnerships & Community

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 6

Grow Your Food Business Ecosystem

Deb Brown, SaveYour.Town

This session will highlight innovative models and strategies for strengthening healthy food retail opportunities in rural communities. Learn to create new sales outlets for local foods, use the innovative rural business models to nurture new food businesses, and expand food tourism to draw new people to your community.

Community Building through Cooperation and Cooperatives

Lyndsay Gutierrez and Nicole Borner, Montana Cooperative Development Center

Hear from the cooperative development team in Montana on the work they're doing to build rural capacity through women leadership and cooperation.

TRACK D Funding & Policy

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 7

How Healthy Food Financing Initiatives Can Leverage Data-Driven Strategies to Support Equitable Rural Food Access

Marisol Zavaleta Martin and Rita Ouimet, The Food Trust

This presentation will explore the intersection of Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFIs) and data-driven strategies for addressing disparities in healthy food access within rural communities. We'll discuss how HFFIs can be leveraged to facilitate equitable access to financing and examine methodologies for using data analysis to identify areas with limited access. Additionally, we'll explore best practices for ensuring HFFI programs achieve their intended impact in rural areas.

Bringing Healthy Foods Closer to Home: An Alabama Solution to Reverse Childhood Health Trends

Rhonda Mann, VOICES for Alabama's Children

For the 1.8 million Alabamians, of which ½ million are children, access to healthy, affordable food options were out of reach resulting in poor health outcomes. The Healthy Food Financing Initiative is an effective, viable and economically sustainable policy solution to the problem of limited food access. Such initiatives attract healthy food retailers, including grocery stores, farmers' markets, cooperative, mobile markets, and other vendors of healthy, affordable foods in underserved communities. Healthy food financing initiatives can have a long-lasting economic impact through local communities and the state. Some of these benefits include increased home value, boosted economic activity, new jobs, increased wages, and increased tax revenues.

TRACK E Increasing Healthy & Local Food Access

10:45 - 11:45 AM | Riverview 8

Building a Robust and Healthy Farmer/Retailer Relationship

Mark Mulcahy, Organic Options and Columinate

Cultivating robust relationships with local producers and providing locally-grown food in our stores are two key aspects of creating a strong local food system. This session is intent on sharing stories, models, and tools for connecting like-minded retailers/farmers in producing and procuring food and other products. Attendees will leave with proven examples of how to build the most successful retailer/farmer relationship possible.

Afternoon Plenary

KEYNOTE

12:00 - 1:30 PM | Alabama Ballroom BCDE

Panel: Rural Grocer Perspectives on Boldly Serving Their Communities

Duane Legg, Legacy Foods Market and Bakery, Indore, WV; Marqutrice Manghum, Farmacy Marketplace, Webb, MS; Jenny Osner, Hired Man's Grocery & Grill, Conway Springs, KS; Eric Simpson, West Georgia Farmer's Cooperative, LaGrange, GA. Moderator: Chelsea Matzen, National Grocers Association Foundation.

In this closing keynote panel, four grocers will share their unique perspectives. While they may face similar challenges, every community and grocery store is different. Discover how each grocer tailors their approach to meet the specific needs of their local population, showcasing solutions that may vary from one community to the next. Gain insight into the strategies these grocers employ, reflecting the relationship between store management and community engagement in maintaining rural food access.

Poster Presentations

Monday, June 24

1:30 - 2:15 PM | Concourse Hallway

'a place to be fed': detailing the journey of a man and his efforts to create a place of hope, healing, and restoration to food desert communities

Billy Ivey, Small Stories Studio

This poster introduces 'a place to be fed,' a short documentary film that shares the story of James Harris and his journey to create a self-sustaining and replicable place of hope, healing, and restoration for food desert communities. The film shines a light on our universal need for healthy food, and a place to call our own. We travel to Chicago, Illinois to visit Mari Gallagher — a food access expert — where she reminds us that “food deserts are not just a southern problem, and certainly not just an issue for the urban poor. We all require sustenance with substance...” We then travel to Minden, Louisiana to visit James' hometown and learn more about the motives behind his mission. And finally, the film returns “home” to Birmingham and the building of Carver Jones Market in Fairfield: “An older city moving in a new direction.”

Assisting Rural Grocers: Building Business Resiliency, Efficiency, and Profitability

Zachary Paige, University of Minnesota Extension

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) works to sustain Minnesota's rural communities by addressing community-identified sustainability issues in partnership with the University of Minnesota. In 2015 and 2020, RSDP surveyed MN rural grocers to identify their most pressing needs and develop key strategies for addressing them. Both surveys achieved a strong response rate (>50%) that identified aging infrastructure and business transition as top concerns. RSDP set forth to work one-on-one with store owners and managers to connect them with funding and assistance to address these concerns.

Building Equity in Rural Montana Food Systems through Rural Grocery Stores as Local Food Access Points

Maura Henn, National Center for Appropriate Technology

Learn how Food System collaborators are working to build equity in rural Montana by working with rural grocery stores in the absence of other local food access points. Through three projects that combine on-the-ground food access, nutrition & agriculture literacy, and statewide advocacy, this poster will show how the Double SNAP Dollars program, Montana Harvest of the Month, and Grow Montana Food Policy Coalition are working together to improve equity and health outcomes in Montana.

Carver Jones Market: A Grocery Store Concept Intended to Become a Self-sustaining and Replicable Model

James Harris, Carver Jones Market

This poster introduces the Carver Jones Market concept, a new grocery store utilizing 10,000 square feet of a once-abandoned office building in Fairfield, Alabama. Carver Jones Market is scheduled to open on July 15, 2024. Fairfield ranks as one of Alabama's most dangerous and desperate communities and is widely considered a food desert. Carver Jones is a minority-owned grocery store providing the Fairfield community access to affordable, fresh food; jobs; and other key resources. “We believe that Carver Jones will be used to bring hope to suffering and reveal the redemptive power that comes from serving others; doing hard things; making the world a happier, healthier place; and inviting others to join us along the way...CJ's will serve as much more than a place to get food...it will become a place to be fed.”

Local Sourcing Innovation in Independent and Locally-Owned Groceries

Jacob Miller-Klugesherz, Rural Grocery Initiative; Abby Long, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Even though grocery stores are a crucial part of local and regional food systems, they often lack local food offerings due to logistical and time constraints. The Rural Grocery Initiative and USDA Agricultural Marketing Services cataloged and interviewed innovative local sourcing models across the country, in hopes that locally-owned and rural stores could learn from and replicate these creative local sourcing solutions. In this poster session, the research team shares preliminary findings and solicits feedback from audience members.

Piloting a SNAP Incentive Program in Rural Communities and Small Grocers

Codie Robinson, Baylor University

The issues that rural individuals face when it comes to hunger and food access are unique and require interventions designed with their situation in mind. The Baylor Collaborative has piloted a SNAP incentive program, Add Milk!, and has compiled program information and feedback regarding operating a SNAP Incentive program.

Using Hyper Local Hunger & Market Data to Form Strategies That Increase Good Grocer Entry, Healthy Food Access, & Grocer Sales & Sustainability in Urban & Rural Food Deserts

Mari Gallagher, Mari Gallagher Research & Consulting Group (MG)

Imagine the State of Alabama partitioned into about 4,000 hyper local pinpoints and reliably calculating for each the number of net meals that are missed each week because households cannot afford them. This poster session details our pinpointed hunger model and analysis of the “worst 20” locations across Alabama, plus a meal deficit and market comparison of the two communities detailed in the grocer documentaries to be shown at the conference (one in rural Iowa, the other in urban Alabama – both are considered food deserts). You might be surprised by what we found and how this approach can support your healthy food market and program initiatives. Can a strategic data framework help solve persistent food access issues while increasing grocer sales? We think so!

Documentary Screenings & Panel Discussion

Monday, June 24

4:45 - 5:45 PM

Alabama Ballroom BCDE

Attend screenings of two short documentaries highlighting the importance of independent grocery stores, followed by a brief Q&A session with the films' featured grocers and their partners.

"a place to be fed" is a short film that shares the story of former grocery executive, James Harris, and his journey to create a self-sustaining and replicable place of hope, healing, and restoration for food desert communities. The film shines a light on our universal need for healthy food, and a place to call our own.

"They Came from All Over" highlights the important role small businesses play within their local communities. A love letter to small businesses everywhere, the film follows grocery store owner, Tom Mulholland, as he confronts the possibility of losing his family business and the impact it can have on his small Iowa town.



Mari Gallagher,
Mari Gallagher Research
and Consulting Group



James Harris,
Carver Jones Market



Billy Ivey,
Small Stories Studio



Tom Mulholland,
Mulholland Grocery

Post-Conference Tours registration required

Tuesday, June 25

2:00 - 8:00 PM

East Alabama Tour: Montgomery > Notasulga > Auburn

This tour will visit one of Alabama's oldest grocery stores in Alabama's Black Belt. Carmack's Grocery is a local, family-owned and operated grocery store in Macon County, Alabama. Operating out of the same location since the early 1900s, Carmack's has established presence, credibility, and knowledge of the local market. They consistently provide a family-friendly atmosphere with low prices and a variety of fresh produce, fresh cuts of meat, and grocery items.

The tour will also visit innovative agricultural practices and Farm to Table activities happening at Alabama's land-grant university. The Food U program at Auburn University immerses students in the food system by linking research, teaching, and extension projects with on-campus food production. Students employed in the FoodU program cross-train at four venues across campus including AU Aquaponics Greenhouses, AU Vertical Farms, AU Transformation Garden Raised Beds, and the Rane Culinary Science Center Rooftop Garden. Each of these venues provides students with experience growing fresh produce using differing technologies. Produce from FoodU goes directly to Auburn University Campus Dining venues and partner restaurants, including Ariccia Cucina and 1856 Culinary Residence.

West Alabama Tour: Montgomery > Newburn > Greensboro

This tour will visit a variety of food outlets in some of the most rural areas in West Alabama. From co-ops to farmers markets and even farm to table restaurants, West Alabama's local and regional food system are the heart of their vibrant communities. This field trip will feature a few stops in rural Alabama towns to check out a variety of farm-to-consumer activities. One stop will feature Auburn University's Rural Studio, an off-campus design-build program, rooted in Hale County and part of the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture. Rural Studio's mission is to educate students and conduct research on sustainable, healthful rural living. Tour stops will also include community and economic development projects in Greensboro, including Project Horseshoe Farm, the Greensboro Farmer's Market, and The Stable coffee pub.

Please note: Registration for these tours is now closed. All registered tour attendees should have received separate email communication from conference organizers with details on where and when to meet and what to expect. If you have any questions, please visit the Registration & Information table.

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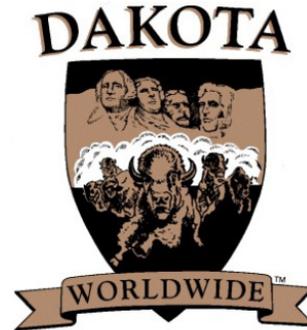
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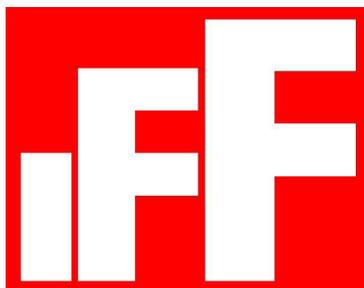
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The Rural Grocery Initiative sincerely thanks our travel scholarship sponsor and partner: The Sunflower Foundation and Kansas Rural Center. Through the Sunflower Foundation's generous support, 10 Kansans received travel support to attend the 2024 National Rural Grocery Summit.

The Kansas Rural Center served as the fiscal sponsor to administer these scholarships.

Additional organizations provided travel support to attendees based on organizational funding availability. These include the Center for Rural Affairs, Common Spirit Health Network, Fair Food Network, NGA Foundation, and Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI). This is not an exhaustive list, simply what the planning team was made aware of.

Thank you to these organizations for their generous support of this event.





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Reinvestment Fund administers America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) on behalf of USDA Rural Development to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, support local economies, and strengthen the food supply chain.

To learn more about the resources we offer for grocery stores, particularly in rural communities, including loans, grants and technical assistance, visit—www.reinvestment.com/food-system



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- Understanding federal requirements for SNAP Online
- Guiding retailers through the SNAP Online application process
- Managing eCommerce technology & SNAP Online Integrations
- These services are provided free to retailers thanks to funding from the SNAP EBT Modernization Technical Assistance Center (SEMTAC) grant.



Nutrition Incentives

Nutrition incentives - commonly called Double Up Food Bucks - provide extra food dollars to help low-income shoppers buy more fruits and vegetables. NGAF offers assistance in these partnerships through:

- Match-making between grantees & grocers
- Solving technology issues with GusNIP payments
- Understanding food as medicine
- These services are provided free to retailers thanks to funding from the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Grant Program (GusNIP).

We can help with that.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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CATALOG OF LOCAL SOURCING INNOVATIONS

The Rural Grocery Initiative is developing a catalog of organizations and businesses across the country that are using innovative solutions to get local food into independent grocery stores. Help us build this resource by sharing examples of local sourcing models!



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Garrett Dixon, AU College of Agriculture

“

I feel fortunate to have been introduced to Extension at an early age through the 4-H club. We met with the county assistant for lessons on farm life. Later I used the Choctaw and Colbert County offices for gardening help and assistance with other projects and problems. **Extension has served my needs for over 75 years, and it is FREE.**”

Bob McIlwain, Colbert County Resident



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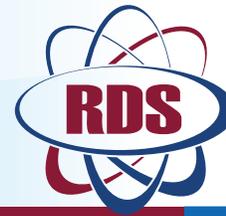
Through the ForestHER Program I was able to learn to do things that I didn't know before. It was very beneficial for me to know that I can do this, and if I don't know something, I have resources and contacts to help me figure out what I need to do.”

Jackie Meggison, Alabama Forestland Owner



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SPECIAL THANKS

We extend heartfelt gratitude to the 2024 National Rural Grocery Summit Steering Committee who provided expert guidance and invaluable insights in planning this event:

- Jeremy Arthur, Director, Government & Economic Development Institute at Auburn University;
- Olivia Chatman, Program Associate, Reinvestment Fund;
- Faye Mack, Executive Director, Food Co-op Initiative;
- Chelsea Matzen, Vice President, National Grocers Association Foundation;
- Dr. Kara Newby, Outreach Administrator, Hunger Solutions Institute at Auburn University;
- Caileen Ostenson, Owner, Main Street Market;
- Ashley Page, Vice President, Marketing & Public Affairs, IGA; and
- Jimmy Wright, President, Independent Grocer, Wright's Market and Wright Food Solutions.

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