REGISTER ONLINE OR CALL TODAY

The Vermont Retail & Grocers Association Annual Golf Outing, held each year in June, raises money for the VRGA Scholarship Fund. The proceeds from this event benefit employees and dependents of VRGA members who plan to enter their first year of school at an accredited 2 or 4 year institute.

In 2015, ten scholarships were awarded to students throughout the state. Your involvement in this event will help us in our goal to award ten scholarships in 2016 totaling $15,000. This includes three scholarships based on merit and seven scholarships based on financial need & merit, both at $1,500.

Each player will enjoy a flight of golf, welcome bag, networking opportunities, games, a fabulous meal after your round and a chance to win great prizes! Try out a new piece of equipment that could be the key to improving your game.

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JUNE 2016

VRGA Annual Meeting - June 7
The annual membership meeting of the Vermont Retail & Grocers Association will take place on June 7 at 12:30pm at the Mountain Top Inn, in Chittenden, VT.

Nominations for the organizations board of directors, which are elected at the meeting, may be forwarded to nominating committee chair, Joe Cafarelli, HP Hood at joe.cafarelli@hphood.com.

Join us at the 26th Annual Golf Outing - June 8
One of the most popular industry gatherings is coming up next week. While the morning flight is sold out, there are openings in the afternoon flight (subject to change since this newsletter’s been printed)

Enjoy networking opportunities at Green Mountain National Golf Course one of Vermont’s most beautiful courses. Each flight is followed by a fabulous meal, social hour and awards ceremony.

John Cochrane of Gifford Ice Cream will once again join us with a performance between flights.

VSFA Annual Education Forum & Meeting - June 9
More information on the back cover of this newsletter.

GMO Labeling Law Begins July 1
Vermont’s first in the nation GMO labeling law for food products sold in the state’s grocery stores goes into effect July 1, 2016. With no action on a pending lawsuit or Congressional intervention as we write this column, industry members must get labels changed and signs made for in-store responsibilities soon.

At VRGA’s recent convention, the association held a packed workshop on the new law. The session was videotaped and is available to association members in the members’ only section of our website, www.vtrga.org/gmolabeling. For information on accessing the video and other GMO materials on the website, please contact VRGA at 802-839-1928 or gmolabeling@vtrga.org.

Several of the frequent questions include:

Q. Are sandwiches subject to the GMO labeling law?
A. Sandwiches made to order in a deli or restaurant are exempt for the labeling law (if they have GMO ingredients) as they are subject to the meals tax and are unpackaged. This exemption applies only to unpackaged, processed foods. Thus, any food that is pre-packaged (e.g., as a “grab-and-go item” or a pre-packaged sandwich) must be labeled pursuant to CP 121.02(b) even if it is considered a taxable meal.

To register: www.birdeasepro.com/VRGAScholarshipGolfOuting2016 or contact the association office, 802-839-1928 or info@vtrga.org
Q. Can a sticker or stamp containing the required GE disclosure be placed on a product’s label to bring it into compliance?
A. Yes, it is acceptable for the required disclosure to appear on a product in the form of either a sticker or stamp as long as all disclosure criteria are met, and the sticker or stamp is such that it results in all disclosure criteria being present on the product when it is offered for retail sale.

Q. Can I, as a retailer, place stickers or stamps on a product I did not manufacture to bring it into compliance?
A. If a retailer chose to sticker a packaged, processed food produced by another manufacturer (and there may be additional legal considerations that arise from altering a manufacturer’s existing label, beyond the requirements of Vermont’s GE labeling law), the retailer could be considered a “manufacturer” under the law, and might be held liable if the sticker-label is not accurate.

Q. What happens if a retailer in Vermont offers for sale a non-compliant product that it purchased out of state and was never meant for distribution in Vermont?
A. All products offered for retail sale within Vermont retail premises must be labeled in compliance with the GE labeling law, regardless of whether the product was originally distributed into Vermont.

We were very saddened to learn of the passing of Dale Ameden of D & K Jamaica Grocery, which he owned with his wife Karen. He operated a number of businesses in Jamaica, VT including D & K’s Redemption Center.

Dale was a long time association member and also part of the Vermont Alliance of Independent Country Stores. He will be missed.

A Hannaford Supermarkets program designed to help both the environment and local people in need has surpassed two significant milestones: more than 500,000 meals provided to fight hunger and $100,000 raised to support local community groups, according to a news release from the grocery store chain.

Morrisville Food Co-op, known to locals as MoCo, broke ground on the renovation of its storefront with plans to complete interior work in time for a fall 2016 opening.

NRF Recognizes Welch as a Legislator of the Year
WASHINGTON – The National Retail Federation announced that Representative Peter Welch, D-Vt., and Senator Tim Scott, R-S.C., have been named NRF’s Legislators of the Year. The awards were presented last week during the Retail Advocates Summit, NRF’s annual congressional fly-in.

“I would like to thank Senator Scott and Representative Welch for their ongoing support of the nation’s largest private-sector employer and for being true advocates for the retail industry,” NRF President and CEO Matthew Shay said.

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“We need the support of lawmakers like these to help retailers large and small grow their businesses and create jobs in their communities.”

“From major international retailers to Vermont country stores, the retail industry plays a crucial role in job creation and economic development in Vermont and around the country,” Welch said. “It has been a pleasure to work with the National Retail Federation on solutions that are good for the retail industry and consumers including cutting credit card swipe fees and making sure Main Street small businesses can compete on a level playing field with online retailers.”

“Congressman Welch is a leader on swipe fee reform and has been a longtime advocate for other top-priority policy issues for retailers,” Shay said. “He championed legislation calling for the Federal Reserve to prevent debit card providers from charging out-of-control fees to small businesses, and helped bring transparency to debit interchange costs for merchants.”

Single Walled Tanks Being Phased Out
Of the estimated 225 single wall underground petroleum tanks registered in Vermont, 175 are unlined. All unlined single walled tanks must be closed by January 1, 2018.

Marc Sherman of Stowe Mercantile, Erin Sigrist, VRGA, Senator Pat Leahy and Marcelle, Andrew Brewer of Onion River Sports, Trudy Trombley of The Boutique at Stowe Mercantile and Caleb Magoon of Power Play Sports attending the National Retail Federation Public Policy Conference in Washington last week.

New Firewood Rule Prohibits Untreated Firewood from Entering Vermont
A new Vermont rule effective May 1st prevents invasive insects from piggybacking into the state on untreated firewood. As summer camping season arrives, visitors to Vermont should be prepared to buy firewood in-state or be able to verify that imported firewood is heat-treated to USDA-approved standards.

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation already urges all campers and homeowners to purchase wood locally. The new rule strengthens protection of Vermont’s forests by reducing the likelihood that invasive pests and pathogens, such as the emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle, will enter the state.

Firewood is defined as any tree species processed for burning and less than four feet in length. Out-of-state firewood vendors can supply visitors to Vermont with certified heat-treated wood. However, if the wood is harvested outside of Vermont but near the border and is not restricted by other quarantines, vendors or other firewood users can request in writing to the commissioner that the heat-treatment requirement be waived.

Emerald ash borer, not yet detected in Vermont, has been found in 25 other states and two Canadian provinces, including Massachusetts, New York, New Hampshire, and Quebec. Vermont has over 100 million ash trees which will be threatened by this tree-killing insect when it arrives in Vermont. Other regulations already exist to prohibit transportation of logs from areas under quarantine for emerald ash borer.

In Vermont, firewood can be purchased at state parks, at many private campgrounds, and in nearby communities. “Most people understand that this new rule exists to protect the health of Vermont’s forests,” said Michael Snyder, Commissioner of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. “Buying local firewood reduces the risk of unknowingly spreading destructive insects. It’s something we can all do to protect the forest.”

Out-of-state campers, second homeowners, and others who wish to transport firewood into Vermont must have a receipt or label certifying that the wood has been heat-treated to a core temperature of 160° F for at least 75 minutes at a certified treatment facility.
This USDA standard treatment kills any insects or microorganisms concealed in the wood. The Agency of Natural Resources has the legal authority to confiscate and destroy non-compliant firewood.

For more information on the firewood rule, visit http://fpr.vermont.gov/firewood
For more information on invasive pests, visit http://vtinvasives.org/

Questions or requests for a waiver can also be addressed to Barbara Schultz, Forest Health Program Manager at barbara.schultz@vermont.gov

Magoon Named SBA’s Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Vermont

Power Play Sports owner Caleb Magoon has been named the Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Vermont. Located in Morrisville with a new second location in Waterbury, the business serves area sport enthusiasts.

"Really taking an interest in the good of the community because the health and survival of the community is the health and survival of your business," says Magoon. "It does take the invested business owners in the community to put in some legwork, to put in some sweat equity, not just into their businesses but into the community, in order to grow both businesses and community," he says.

Burritt Named Vermont’s Woman-Owned Business of the Year Award

Debbie Burritt a VSFA member, Sweet Crunch Bake Shop, Has been honored with the Vermont SBA Woman-Owned Business of the Year Award.

Located in Hyde Park, the bake shop portion of her business has evolved from a Main Street eatery to wholesaling some of her most popular treats. Sweet Crunch’s Vermont Maple Cookie gained a national following after it was featured on television’s Rachael Ray Show.

Congratulations to Michael DeSanto and Renee Reiner of Phoenix Books on their purchase of Misty Valley Books in Chester to their growing group of local book stores that includes Rutland, Essex and Burlington.

Price Chopper is one of the latest food retailers to add their pledge to transition to 100% cage-free eggs in its Price Chopper and Market 32 stores by 2025.

Champlain Country Club celebrated its centennial in 2015 as one of the oldest golf courses in New England and the U.S. Now, CCC is ready to launch a Vermont-produced book about its first 100 years. Fore! The Grand History, Glory Days and Golden Future of Champlain Country Club, by St. Albans writer Leon Thompson, will be released on Saturday, June 4, during a 2 to 4 p.m. event at CCC, on Rte. 7, Swanton.

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) Consumer Protection Chief and Resident Maple eExpert, Henry Marckres was inducted into the North American Maple Hall of Fame by the North American Maple Syrup Council recently, in a special ceremony conducted at the American Maple Museum in Croghan, N.Y. The son of a buyer for a Maple Sugar Company, Marckres, has been tasting and grading Vermont maple syrup since the age of three. A 30-year veteran of the VAAFM, Henry Marckres is one of the world’s foremost maple experts.
Congratulations to Ben Theriault, Director of Operations for Hannaford's Vermont stores, will soon be relocating to Maine for a new role in the company's supply chain.

The two health insurance companies that sell through Vermont Health Connect are asking to increase what they charge for insurance plans by more than 8 percent each:

- **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont** is seeking increases averaging 8.2 percent starting Jan. 1.
- **MVP Health Care** wants to raise its price for the same period by 8.8 percent.

The companies submitted the requests to the Green Mountain Care Board, which regulates how much the companies charge on the exchange as one of its core functions.

C&S Wholesale Grocers announced it had signed an agreement to acquire Davidson Specialty Foods, a leading specialty food distributor based in Newington, Conn. Davidson provides direct store delivery services for more than 6,000 specialty, kosher, and ethnic products to independent and chain retailers across New England.

Vermont Attorney General Bill Sorrell joined 8 other AG's in a letter to the major card networks, including Visa and MasterCard, strongly urging them to adopt the chip and pin technology for credit cards (and not just the chip). The move has the strong support of the national retail community as a way to add better security to transactions and lower the risk of data breaches.

**Amendment to Genetically Modified Food Labeling (Act 120) Passes**

Included in the state budget bill, H.875, lawmakers included an amendment that provides a delay on the Private Cause of Action until 7/1/2017. This will allow, companies that are complying with the law and labeling products as of July 1, 2016, protection from private litigation. For the first year of the law, enforcement will only be done by Vermont's Attorney General's Office. This should allow for a more orderly sell off of existing inventory that was labeled prior to the effected date of the new GMO labeling law, July 1, 2016.

Sec. E.204 **PRIVATE CAUSE OF ACTION; EXTENSION OF DATE**

(a) Notwithstanding 9 V.S.A. § 3048(b), a consumer may not, prior to July 1, 2017, bring a private cause of action under 9 V.S.A. chapter 63, subchapter 1, for a violation of the requirements of 9 V.S.A. chapter 82A.

**Liquor Fees Increase**

The Liquor Control sections of this year’s fee bill increase many existing liquor licensing fees by approximately 9%. These include fees for licenses to bottle, to solicit, to sell at wholesale, to ship wine, to store wine, to cater, and to serve and sell alcohol according to the different statutory classes. The fees will also increase for permits for festivals, and educational sampling events. However, the following fees will not be increased: fees for licenses to manufacture beer, wine or spirits, first-class licenses, second-class licenses, and permits for special events.

Additionally, the Liquor Control sections establish training requirements for liquor and tobacco licensees through in-person seminars or online programs. The fees for these training sessions will be the same regardless of whether they are taken in-person or online going forward at $25 per person.

Included in the Liquor Control sections is a new fee for retail vendors of electronic cigarettes, which are a type of tobacco substitute. Retail vendors will be required to obtain a tobacco substitute endorsement in addition to the current requirement of a tobacco license. The endorsement will require an annual $50 fee to be paid to the Dept. of Liquor Control. **The bill does not include a proposal by the House to apply a new $1,000/yr. fee on electronic cigarettes.**

**Increase in Employer Assessment Removed from Tax Bill**

One of the major revenue bills included a significant increase in the employer health care assessment in the House passed version. Overall it would have gone up 42%, although the increase would have been born by employers with over 20 "uncovered" employees.
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In the final week of the session the Senate Finance Committee removed the increase, which was opposed by VRGA, and it stayed out in House-Senate negotiations over the final bill.

Having “uncovered employees” does not mean the business does not offer health insurance. Many retailers offer coverage to their full time employees but still pay the assessment on part time associates. These companies must pay the assessment on full-time employees who choose to go without insurance and part-time or seasonal staff who do not qualify for coverage and go without or are on Medicaid.

Criminal record inquiries by an employer “Ban the Box”, signed into Law by Governor Shumlin

S.261 will mirror the executive order signed by Governor Shumlin last April which implemented ‘ban the box’ for the hiring process of State Employees. The executive order removes questions about criminal records from the very first part of job applications for state employment. Background checks will continue to be conducted only after an applicant has otherwise been identified as being qualified for the position.

This bill proposes to include all employers and will prohibit requiring the disclosure of criminal history record information on an initial employment application but does allow an employer to inquire if applicant has criminal record during an interview or thereafter. The bill, as written, provides carve outs for specific positions based on current federal or state laws or presumptive disqualifications based on conviction.

VRGA had asked and received a one year delay in the implementation of the new law until July 1, 2017.

Retailers Appeal to Congress to Block Overtime Expansion

WASHINGTON – The National Retail Federation released the following statement from Senior Vice President for Government Relations David French in response to the Department of Labor’s new overtime rules:

“These rules are a career killer. With the stroke of a pen, the Labor Department is demoting millions of workers. In the retail sector alone, hundreds of thousands of career professionals will lose their status as salaried employees and find themselves reclassified as hourly workers, depriving them of the workplace flexibility and other benefits they so highly-value. And the one-size-fits-all approach means businesses trying to make ends meet in small towns across America are now expected to pay the same salaries as those in New York City."

"In the real world – as opposed to D.C. conference rooms filled with career bureaucrats and political appointees – employers and employees will suffer the consequences of a policy rooted in pure politics." David French

Research conducted for NRF shows that the rules will force employers to limit hours or cut base pay in order to make up for the added payroll costs of overtime expansion, leaving most workers with no increase in take-home pay despite added administrative costs. A separate survey found that the majority of retail managers and assistant managers the new regulations are supposed to help oppose the plan.

The Final Rule provided by the Food Marketing Institute, focuses primarily on updating the salary and compensation levels needed for white collar workers to be exempt. Specifically, the Department:

1. Set the standard salary level at $47,476 annually for a full-year worker ($913 per week), which is 40th percentile of full-time salaried workers in the lowest-wage Census region (currently the South);
2. Allows up to 10% of standard salary level to come from non-discretionary bonuses, incentive payments, and commissions, paid at least quarterly;
3. No changes to the standard duties test;
4. Automatically adjusts every three years, maintaining the standard salary level at the 40th percentile of full-time salaried workers in the lowest-wage Census region.

Effective Date: December 1, 2016
USDA Grants NGA Request for Enforcement Delay of Meat Grinding Log Rule

In response to a request from the National Grocers Association, USDA has granted a request to delay the implementation of their regulation "Records to be Kept by Official Establishments and Retail Stores that Grind Raw Beef Products." The Agency, however, did not set a date to begin enforcement as it is requesting additional information back from NGA to help them make that determination.

The new requirement was scheduled to begin June 20, 2016, at all retail stores and official establishments that grind raw beef for sale must maintain records. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Inspection Service, published a final rule in the federal register, detailing this requirement. The goal of the new rule is to improve response time and identify the source of a foodborne illness outbreak involving ground beef.

More information at vtrga.org/regulatory under the header “MEAT”

Directory of Manufacturers and Brand Families Compliant with

Cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco not listed in the Vermont Attorney General directory may not be stamped or sold or offered for sale in Vermont. Moreover, cigarettes, in order to be legal for sale in Vermont, must also be certified as “fire-safe” pursuant to 20 V.S.A. §2757.

The Directory is updated on a regular basis. Receive notice of changes in the Directory or combined listing by email. Join the listserv Tobacco Directory Notification by sending an email to jay.bailey@vermont.gov and requesting to receive the monthly notification of changes to the tobacco Directory.

Vermont Strong plates – End of display on Vehicles

The Department of Motor Vehicles announces the I Am Vermont Strong partnership among the Vermont Disaster Recovery Fund, The Vermont Foodbank and the DMV comes to an end on June 30th.

As of July 1, 2016 the Vermont issued registration plate, which matches the rear plate, must be displayed on the front of all vehicles. The I Am Vermont Strong plate may be displayed in addition to or alongside the registration plate. Any vehicle with a Vermont Strong or any other plate; such as sports teams, advertising, or decorative plates, in place of your registration plate will be in violation of Vermont Motor Vehicle law.

A number of Vermont retailers sold Vermont Strong plates as a way to help the state raise money for Irene recovery efforts and may want to consider posting information to customers reminding them of the plate’s expiration.

Quechee Mobil was closed by longtime operator, Sheryl Trainor, a few weeks ago. Sheryl had operated the exit one store for 21 years and was a longtime VRGA member. A dismal winter and significant employee theft were contributing factors. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.

It is believed that station owner, Summit Distributors has plans to re-open the location.

NRF Forecasts Retail Sales to Grow 3.1% in 2016 Non-store Sales to Grow as Much as 9%

The National Retail Federation is projecting that 2016 retail industry sales (which exclude automobiles, gas stations and restaurants) will grow 3.1 percent*, higher than the 10-year average of 2.7 percent. NRF also announced that it expects non-store sales in 2016 to grow between 6 and 9 percent.

“The economy had a bumpy ride in 2015 with fits and starts along the way,” said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz. “Despite the volatility, the economy continued to reduce unemployment, raise wages and actually increase real GDP by 2.4 percent. Lower gas prices are creating more discretionary income to save, pay down debt and spend on travel, eating out and personal services. Retailers have benefited as well, and continue to find ways to compete and succeed in a very cost-conscious environment.”
Additional economic insights from the National Retail Federation include:

- Economic growth should be more of the same and uneven. It is likely to be in the range of 1.9 to 2.4 percent in 2016.
- Employment gains of approximately 190,000 on an average monthly basis are expected. While that pace is down from 2015, it is consistent with the labor market growing near its underlying trend. By year end, unemployment should drop to 4.6 percent.
- Prospects for consumer spending are straightforward — more jobs equals more income, which equals more spending. However, spending will come largely from the growth in jobs and not as much from increased wages.

This resulted in total sales inside of the store reaching a record $225.8 billion in 2015.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Industry Snapshot</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Nielsen/TDLinx; NACS)

Convenience stores sell 80% of the fuel purchased in the country and a continued period of low gasoline prices caused the overall sales in the convenience and fuel retailing industry to decrease significantly, dropping 17.4%. However, low gas prices and a recovering economy benefited retailers by driving more consumers inside the store.

Convenience Stores Hit Record In-Store Sales in 2015

CHICAGO – U.S. convenience stores experienced record in-store sales in 2015, led by strong growth in foodservice products. These industry’s overall metrics for 2015 were released at the NACS State of the Industry Summit, taking place April 11–13 in Chicago.

Overall, 69.2% of total industry sales were motor fuels, but motor fuels only accounted for 39.5% of profit dollars. Motor fuels continued to drive sales dollars, but in-store sales drove profitability.

Foodservice, a broad category that includes prepared and commissary foods, hot dispensed beverages (coffee) and cold and frozen dispensed drinks, continues to be a key focus for growth in the convenience store channel, contributing 20.8% of in-store sales in 2015 and accounting for 33.7% of gross profit dollars.

Convenience store pretax profits increased in 2015 to $10.6 billion, despite a slight decrease in the average gas margin, which was 21.6 cents per gallon before expenses.
Top 10 In-Store Categories
The top 10 in-store categories ranked by sales dollars represent about 80% of all in-store sales. In 2015, nine out of 10 top in-store categories had positive sales and all 10 had positive gross profit dollar growth. Factors such as low fuel prices and more discretionary income in consumers’ wallets drove shoppers inside convenience stores with more money in their pockets to spend.

Snacking categories, including alternative snacks, salty snacks, candy and packaged sweet snacks, all had strong growth as some consumers, especially millennials, moved toward snacking and away from traditional meals. This is highlighted by the fact that for the first time, alternative snacks, a category driven by protein- and energy-rich items, has landed in the top 10.

Here’s how in-store sales were broken down in 2015:

- Tobacco (cigarettes and OTP): 35.9% of in-store sales
- Foodservice (prepared and commissary food; hot, cold and dispensed beverages): 20.8%
- Packaged beverages (carbonated soft drinks, energy drinks, sports drinks, juices, water and teas): 15.1%
- Center of the store (candy; sweet, salty and alternative snacks): 10.7%
- Beer: 7.2%
- Other: 10.3%

Foodservice accounted for 33.7% of gross profit dollars in 2015. Packaged beverages were second, accounting for 18.8% of gross profit dollars. While tobacco products constituted 35.9% of in-store sales dollars, they accounted for only 16.8% of gross profit dollars.

Despite record in-store sales, direct store operating expenses (DSOE) outpaced inside gross profit dollars in 2015. If DSOE remains high throughout 2016 and beyond, this trend will create challenges for convenience retailers as they look to grow their businesses.

Beyond sales, convenience stores remain an important part of the economy. The convenience and fuel retailing industry employed 2.5 million people in 2015 (a 2.9% increase from 2014). If total industry sales were compared to the GDP of other nations, our $574.8 billion industry would rank at number 21, just above Switzerland.

The industry’s 2015 metrics are based on the NACS State of the Industry survey powered by its wholly owned subsidiary CSX, the industry’s largest online database of financial and operating data. Complete data and analysis will be released in June in the NACS State of the Industry Report of 2015 Data.

Scam Targeting Vermont Businesses
The Vermont Attorney General’s Office is warning about an imposter scam targeting Vermont businesses. Since February four Vermont businesses have reported to the Attorney General's Office that they received fraudulent emails purporting to be company representatives, requesting wire transfers of tens of thousands of dollars. The reports involve fraudulent communications that are not associated with the businesses in question. However, the communications may appear legitimate because the scammers replicate information found on the company’s website.

Vermont businesses should carefully examine any email requesting a transfer of funds to determine whether it is genuine. Close attention should be paid to the spelling of any email addresses or domain names. It is also recommended that businesses implement internal verification protocols before proceeding with transfer requests, such as enlisting the use of a password, a pin number, or other authentication.

Any Vermont business that has received such a communication should contact a law enforcement agency and the Attorney General’s Consumer Assistance Program at consumer@uvm.edu or by phone at 1-800-649-2424 or 1-802-656-3183.

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What Is “Natural?”
That is the question for which the Food & Drug Administration appears to be seeking an answer. Since the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1980, FDA has applied a very vague policy regarding product labeled natural to mean that nothing artificial or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to, a food that would not normally be expected to be in that food.

But not long ago, as reported by The Food Institute (www.foodinstitute.com) on the day it was announced, FDA started soliciting information and comments on the use of the term “natural” in food labeling. And although FDA did not say what its specific intentions were, many view it as a prelude to updating its policy and defining natural once and for all.

A plethora of class action lawsuits regarding the term natural is thought to have been 1 reason the FDA opened the door to defining the term. The Food Institute has tracked at least 27 separate class action lawsuits alleging improper use of the term natural for everything from Kix Cereal to Earth’s Best Organic Mini Waffles in the past 18 months.

And when FDA has been asked what its position on natural is in some of those cases, according to Food Institute counsel OFW Law, “the agency ‘respectively declines' to come to an administrative determination of whether specific ingredients belong in foods labeled as ‘all natural.’” “In a world of limited resources,” the agency said it had more pressing priorities relating to “public health and safety matters.”

FDA is seeking comments on natural until Feb. 10, 2016 and will almost certainly have plenty to review.

To take advantage of a special member benefit from this association, go to www.food1.co/partner to sign up for a special discounted membership in the Food Institute.

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Deb King has owned and managed the Barnet Village Store in Barnet, VT for 30 years. She was raised in Barnet on a dairy farm that has been in her family for 200 years, so she has deep roots here! As a child, she spent hours in the village with her Aunt and made many trips to the village store, so when the opportunity came to purchase it, she felt like it was a natural fit.

She also worked there for a year and a half as a clerk, before purchasing the store and believes that as with any venture enjoying what you are going to be doing for so many hours a week is the key to being successful.

In many ways running the Village Store is the same as it has been for years, not just her 30 years, but over the 100+ years that it has been here, it gives the community its center—just as the post office or library does. Customers are their business whether they come for daily shopping or to pick up an item they cannot find anywhere else. Some are just passing through and staff may only know them a few months, but many come in for years and for some they will be the only people they talk to all day.

Of course, there have been many changes over the past years; they have added a deli—which has become the center of the business. In 2011, Deb purchased a second store in West Barnet, which has gas pumps—that was a new challenge! Plus all the new laws to keep up with (Thanks to VRGA for keeping her updated for 30 years).

As with most businesses, Deb could not be successful without the many devoted employees that she has had over the years. And of course friends, vendors, colleagues, family, (Mom) and her husband Armand.

Deb King
Owner
Barnet Village Store &
West Barnet Quick Stop
UPCOMING EVENTS

VRGA Annual Meeting & BBQ
June 7, 2016
Mountain Top Inn
Chittenden, VT

26th Annual Golf Outing
June 8, 2016
Green Mountain National Golf Course
Killington, VT
birdeasepro.com/
VRGAScholarshipGolfOuting2016

VSFA Annual Education Forum
& Meeting
June 9, 2016
Mountain Top Inn
Chittenden, VT
vsfa2016-educationalforum.
eventbrite.com

FMI Connect
June 20-23, 2016
McCormick Place (South Hall)
Chicago, IL

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Summer Fancy Food Show
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Javits Center
New York, NY
www.specialtyfood.com

The Chip Festival
July 16, 2016
Saratoga, NY
www.TheChipFestival.com

Vermont Statehouse Buy Local Market
August 10, 2016
Montpelier, VT

Vermont Best Bagger Competition
October 8, 2016
University Mall
South Burlington, VT

With over sixty years as a Cooperative, Associated Grocers is owned and operated by its 300 plus Members – and servicing the over 600 Independent Retailers from Maine to Maryland - to the benefit of both the Members and their communities.

Talk with us and find out how being a Cooperative Member is so much more than a line on a resume. It’s a source of pride and promise.
Contact Mike Violette, (603) 223-5304 • mviolette@agne.com
or Nathan Beit, (603) 223-5436 • nbeit@agne.com
NEW VRGA MEMBERS!
Welcome to the following businesses that recently joined the Vermont Retail & Grocers Association.

Duncan’s Auto  (Retail)
Kelly Blar
Burlington, VT
802-864-9477

Doc’s Hard Cider (Associate)
Chris Marks
Proctorsville, VT
802-558-0308
wvinery.com/cider

Saratoga Olive Oil Company (Retail)
Kaitlin Ryan
Burlington, VT
802-489-5276
www.saratogaoliveoil.com

NEW VSFA MEMBERS!
Welcome to the following businesses that recently joined the Vermont Specialty Food Association.

Sherpa Foods
Nurbu Sherpa
South Burlington, VT
347-499-1836
www.facebook.com/Sherpafoods

Little Red Fox Bakery
Kristi Tursi
Essex Jct, VT
802-578-7927
www.littleredfoxbakery.com

Runamok Maple
Joe Buswell
Cambridge, VT
802-644-9366
www.runamokmaple.com

North Country Canning
Clara Walsh
Montpelier, VT
860-806-1091
www.facebook.com/northcountrycanning

UPCOMING DLC TRAINING CLASSES FOR SECOND CLASS LICENSEES
To register for any of the DLC seminars, visit: secure.vermont.gov/DLC/eventreg or call 828-2339.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1</td>
<td>10:00 am-1:00 pm</td>
<td>Shelburne Town Office 2nd Floor, 5420 Shelburne Road</td>
<td>Melanie Gaiotti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>11:00 am-2:00 pm</td>
<td>Community College of Vermont (CCV), 145 Billings Farm Road, Wilder</td>
<td>Jennifer Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>10:00 am-1:00 pm</td>
<td>CCV 1197 Main Street, Suite 3 (3rd floor, rear door entrance) St. Johnsbury</td>
<td>Jennifer Fisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 28</td>
<td>10:00 am-1:00 pm</td>
<td>Department of Liquor Control, 13 Green Mountain Drive, Montpelier</td>
<td>Jennifer Fisher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reach us online at www.bcbsvt.com or by phone at (800) 255-4550

We’ll see you through.
We are very pleased to announce that Chris Bailey of Vermont Smoke & Cure, will join us as our featured luncheon speaker. The journey of Vermont Smoke & Cure from a local smokehouse in 2006 to the leading meat snack company (in the natural channel) is a story not to be missed!

SESSION TOPICS:

- From Burlington to Boca - growing sales & distribution
- Trends in specialty foods
- Digital trends & tools to manage your online business marketing
- Capital continuum - Sources for raising capital
- GMO Labeling Q & A
- Trends to watch in “Good Foods”
- Supplier and distributor relations
- From production to profit - knowing your numbers
- Financing questions with the experts

Online registration: vsfa2016-educational-forum.eventbrite.com
26TH ANNUAL GOLF OUTING
Wednesday June 8th, 2016 @
Green Mountain National Golf Course
more info at BIRDEASEPRO.COM/ VRGASCHOLARSHIPGOLFOUTING2016

148 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
www.vtrga.org

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