UNFI Distributor of Natural, Organic Food to Add 150 Jobs

United Natural Foods Inc., a wholesale distributor headquartered in Providence with $8.47 billion in net sales last fiscal year, expects to add 150 jobs in Providence by 2020 after selecting Rhode Island from about 30 prospective metro locations.

The company is seeking a long-term lease for a new, shared business services center in the Providence metro area, Gov. Gina Raimondo and the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation announced Wednesday.

United Natural Foods expects to request at least $1.9 million in Qualified Jobs tax credits from the Commerce Corporation at its Feb. 27 board meeting, Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor told The Providence Journal.

About a year ago, Rhode Island leaders responded when the company issued a solicitation to different jurisdictions, seeking answers about office space availability and financial incentives that locations could offer, Pryor said.

The company narrowed its search to three top metro locations — places that are leaders in “shared services operations,” said Josephine Eke, the firm’s vice president of branding and communications marketing. Centralizing in Rhode Island continues the company’s effort “to stay nimble and evolve to the market changes,” she said.

“Clearly, we have a great relationship with Rhode Island because our headquarters is here,” Eke said in a phone interview Wednesday. “This is about building a business for the future, trying to do the best for our customers as well as our associates, and I think we’re thrilled to be able to continue our relationship with Rhode Island.”

Eke said she does not know how many of the jobs would be new and how many would move from other locations, or whether there might be layoffs elsewhere.

The wholesale distributor moved its headquarters from Connecticut to Rhode Island in 2009 and has grown exponentially since then.

As it seeks tax credits from Commerce, the firm could request more credits if it exceeds its current expectations for job creation, Pryor said. The board will likely consider a higher amount of credits, not yet negotiated, that the firm would redeem if it hires about 250 or more employees, Pryor said. Neither Pryor nor Eke could immediately say what median annual wages would be.

continues next page...
It’s exciting that Rhode Island-based operations such as United Natural Foods are deciding in Rhode Island’s favor when they are considering where to expand,” Pryor said. “Some of our recent victories include companies moving into Rhode Island from outside our borders. It’s enormously encouraging that companies such as UNFI are joining A.T. Cross and Ocean State Job Lot, and other Rhode Island companies, in growing right here.”

Lytx, provider of the exception-based DriveCam video safety program, shared some insights from how its customer KeHE Distributors uses the technology to fight cognitive driver distraction.

The DriveCam program combines video capture of road incidents such as hard braking or sudden swerving, data analysis of those incidents, and personalized coaching insights to improve driving behavior.

KeHE, a natural and organic food distributor, adopted the DriveCam video safety program in 2013. They have since doubled the number of drivers in their fleet, and are now approaching 595 drivers with a 489-vehicle fleet.

As new drivers are added, new risk is introduced to the fleet. KeHE incorporates information about DriveCam into its orientation for new hires, and focuses heavily on training coaches. With an approach that emphasizes fine-tuning of skills, collisions rates have been steadily decreasing, despite the rapid growth and constant threat of distractions.

“Most kinds of distracted driving can be tackled with a combination of policy enforcement and common sense, but to solve the toughest kind of distractions – when something else is occupying the driver’s mind – we need to dig a little further,” said Greg Sikorski, director of transportation safety for KeHE, who says he uses DriveCam video and one-on-one coaching to help decrease all forms of distracted driving.

“It could be a problem at home, or thinking about the next delivery, but if you’re not thinking about driving while behind the wheel, you’re not driving safely,” said Sikorski.

Coaches spend one-on-one time with drivers to help them become more aware of what may be causing them to trigger video.

“We have very experienced drivers, and with 15 to 20 years of driving, certain habits build up,” he said. “Every driver has their own technique, and we needed to make them aware of the part of their technique that could improve without changing what makes them so successful.”

The KeHE team learned over time that a personal and positive approach to coaching nets the best, most long-lasting results.
KeHE Distributors Fights Driver Distraction with Video Safety Program cont...

With that perspective, KeHE’s Eastern Region Transportation Safety Manager Tom Harden said he is able to chip away at unsafe behaviors, making sure drivers know that KeHE won’t give up on them.

Harden leverages the post-game tape philosophy to help coaches understand their role, and to help give perspective to drivers about why watching video clips of their driving performance is the best way to improve their safe driving skills.

“We’re using education combined with the DriveCam clips to show drivers the type of distraction they’re exhibiting – visual, mechanical (manual) or cognitive – and how it leads to a driving event, like late response,” said Harden. “If they can recognize the behavior, they can change it.”

“The reality is, we all have the same goal and that’s to get home safely. We’re having tough conversations because they’re the right conversations to have,” he continued. “And when we connect with drivers on that level, we’re able to get the real reason they might be distracted on the road. The DriveCam program is one more tool for our drivers to be the best that they can be.”

KeHE’s Summer Selling Show Marks Record Attendance, ‘Best Of’ Awards Presented

The 2017 KeHE Summer Selling Show, held earlier this month in New Orleans, hosted more than 3,700 industry professionals—a nearly 35 percent increase from the year prior. Retailers, vendors and brokers were able to get a look at the latest natural and organic, specialty and fresh products for the summer season.

“This increased attendance is a testament to the value of KeHE’s Summer Selling Show in the industry,” said KeHE President and CEO Brandon Barnholt. “Our growing community of retailers and suppliers know they can find the hottest deals, best new and established brands and exciting innovations at our Summer Selling Show.”

New for 2017, the OnTrend Pavilion in the New Products Showcase included more than 100 new products and educational presentations; the New Orleans Pavilion featured local flavors and live jazz; and the Fresh Pavilion, a centerpiece of the show, proved to be a hot destination with wide-ranging offerings for bulk/foodservice and retail deli, bakery, cheese and perimeter departments, according to Illinois-based KeHE.rate affairs and communications and the executive director of the SpartanNash Foundation.
Retailers also cast their votes for the “Best of” items out of more than 30 new featured products. The 2017 winners include:

- Best New Product: Center Store Grocery—Simple Mills;
- Best New Product: Fresh/Frozen—Three Twins Ice Cream;
- Best New Product: HBC/VMS—Wedderspoon Manuka Face Cream; and
- Most Innovative “Best of”—Sugar 2.0

In addition to these awards, KeHE was honored as Distributor of the Year by Michael’s of Brooklyn and Gaea USA.

To continue its efforts to fight hunger in the communities where SpartanNash associates live and work, the SpartanNash Foundation—the company’s charitable giving arm—recently made a series of $5,000 donations to 14 food pantries in 13 states.

In total, $70,000 was donated to community food pantries located near SpartanNash’s food distribution and MDV distribution centers. Each SpartanNash distribution center selected its partner pantry, ensuring the financial support would have a significant local impact.

The food pantries chosen by the company’s distribution centers are:
- Manna Food Bank (chosen by the Pensacola, Fla. DC); Valley Rescue Mission (Columbus, Ga. DC); Hoosier Hills Food Bank (Bloomington, Ind. DC); Maryland Food Bank (Landover, Md. DC); Caritas Emergency Services (St. Cloud, Minn. DC); Robeson County Church and Community Center (Lumberton, N.C. DC); Our Lady of Grace Food Pantry (Minot, N.D. DC); Our Daily Bread (Bellefontaine, Ohio DC); West Ohio Food Bank (Lima, Ohio DC); Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City DC); Feeding South Dakota (Sioux Falls, S.D. DC); San Antonio Food Bank (San Antonio DC); Bluefield Union Mission (Bluefield, Va. DC); and Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia (Norfolk, Va.).

“Donations like this support our Foundation’s mission of ending hunger while also building relationships where they matter most—in our local communities,” says Meredith Gremel, vice president of corporation.

“We are honored to be able to support these distribution center partner pantries and do our part to put food on peoples’ tables.”

For the past 12 years, the SpartanNash Foundation—and its predecessor the NFC Foundation—has supported local food banks during the holiday season, giving each SpartanNash distribution center the opportunity to personally select its partner pantry and provide food for those who need it most. Since 2004, the company’s distribution centers have donated nearly $1 million to community food bank and pantry partners.

continues next page...
SpartanNash Foundation Donates to Food Pantries cont...

SpartanNash distribution centers also support their local food banks throughout the year by donating food items and other goods. In 2015, SpartanNash donated 2.58 million pounds of food to food banks, churches, schools and other organizations serving those in need in our communities.

In September 2016, the SpartanNash Foundation also hosted a companywide scan campaign to end hunger. Store guests and company associates who visited any SpartanNash corporate-owned store during the 12-day retail scan campaign had the opportunity to donate $1, $5 or $10, with 100 percent of dollars raised going to support community food pantries and food banks.

The scan was the most successful companywide retail fundraising effort to date, raising nearly $300,000 on behalf of more than 100 local food pantries. Through the scan campaign to end hunger, the SpartanNash Foundation also provided $60,000 in donations to community food pantries located near its distribution centers in Fargo, N.D.; Omaha, Neb.; and Grand Rapids, Mich.

Sell By? Use By? Grocery Industry Moves to Simplify Labels

At a Gristedes supermarket on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, packages of Sabra Supremely Spicy Hummus are stamped with “best before” dates, while one shelf up, Tribe Forty Spices Hummus sports a “use by” date. Across the aisle, packages of meat are dated with language like “best by” and “best before.”

That is because each food company determines for itself how long a shelf life its products should have, and how to communicate that to shoppers. More than 10 different phrases are used to inform consumers about when to use or discard food, according to the Grocery Manufacturers Association and the Food Marketing Institute, the two large trade groups that represent major food producers and grocery chains. As a result, many people are confused about exactly when to throw out food.

On Wednesday, those two groups, and Walmart, announced that they had agreed to whittle that lexicon to just two phrases: “best if used by” and “use by.”

They said they hoped the change, which is voluntary, would be embraced by the vast majority of food manufacturers and producers sometime next year.

Walmart, the nation’s largest grocery retailer, said it strongly encouraged its suppliers to use “best if used by” on products that might not taste or function as well beyond the specified date, but were nonetheless safe to consume. The company also encouraged suppliers to save “use by” for the handful of products that are highly perishable and could pose a health hazard if kept too long.

“Research shows that the multitude of date labels that appear on foods today are a source of confusion for many consumers,” Frank Yiannas, vice president of food safety and health for Walmart, said in a statement.
Sell By? Use By? Grocery Industry Moves to Simplify Labels cont...
Walmart and the two groups hope the new labels will also help reduce food waste, an issue of growing concern as consumers learn more about the effect that food production and consumption have on the environment.

“Eliminating confusion for consumers by using common product date wording is a win-win because it means more products will be used instead of thrown away in error,” Jack Jeffers, vice president for quality assurance at Dean Foods, said in the statement released by the grocery manufacturers group. “It’s much better that these products stay in the kitchen — and out of landfills.”

Brand Protection from Farm to Plate

Consumer packaged goods companies spend millions of dollars to promote, develop and protect brands. With supply chains becoming more diverse and consumer purchasing methods expanding beyond brick and mortar, the years ahead may become even more challenging when it comes to protecting the equity companies have established in many high profile brands.

“What’s happening is many manufacturers of consumer products are manufacturing (potato) chips, and they are designed, packed and labeled to be sold in a store,” said Jorge Izquierdo, vice-president of market development for the Packaging Machinery Manufacturers Institute (P.M.M.I.), Reston, Va. “Manufacturers of soft drinks do the same thing.

“However, now there are third parties that may be selling these products. They’ve got web sites consumers can go to and buy a bag of chips and a six pack of Coke. If the condition of those products when they reach the consumer is bad it may reflect badly on the on-line seller, but it also may impact the consumer’s perception of the brand. The consumer doesn’t understand the packaging is not designed to be used that way.”

This past August the P.M.M.I. published a report outlining brand protection trends its members see in the coming years. A more robust supply chain, with the ability to track products from the beginning to the end, is a key component of any effort. The Brand Protection report said the use of smart labels/tags will continue to grow on products and that radio frequency identification (R.F.I.D.) will continue to grow throughout operations and the supply chain.

Mr. Izquierdo said price remains a key hindrance for greater adoption of R.F.I.D. throughout the food and beverage supply chain.

“By now I think a lot of people thought every product bought in the supermarket would have an R.F.I.D. tag,” he said. “But that point has not been reached yet. Plus, there are restrictions to the technology itself. For example, tags can be hard to scan through liquids.”

Where R.F.I.D. technology will continue to gain greater use is in internal applications throughout the supply chain.
Brand Protection from Farm to Plate cont...

“Use will increase in the future. Today we are talking about pallets. In the future it may move to boxes and even secondary packaging.”

Mr. Izquierdo added that areas of vulnerability within the food and beverage supply chain remain at the very beginning, with the sourcing of ingredients, and at distribution, just before products reach the consumer.

“At both points there are opportunities for tampering,” he said. “With raw materials you don’t have the advantage of packaging and labeling to identify the product. A manufacturer may think they are getting a premium ingredient, but someone may replace it with something of a lesser quality. In some situations it’s easier to do and hard to check.”

Audits and supplier certification programs are currently key programs used by food and beverage manufacturers to ensure the identity of the ingredients they source. But Mr. Izquierdo said such new technologies as blockchain may represent the future of maintaining supply chain integrity and ensure brand protection.

Blockchain is a continuous database that tracks key aspects of a product as it moves through the supply chain. Records that contain the data are called “blocks,” and each block represents a digital link through multiple stages of production. In mid-December, The Wall Street Journal reported that Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Bentonville, Ark., will begin testing blockchain during the first quarter of this year in its U.S. produce and Chinese pork supply chains.

“Blockchain is pushing information from the beginning to the end of the supply chain,” Mr. Izquierdo said. “That’s why this exercise from Wal-Mart is so interesting.

“With blockchain you have a birth certificate for every product and almost a resume. It tells everyone in the supply chain who has done what to an individual product. It’s like a pedigree for individual products, and, in the future, the amount of information you are going to be able to get is really amazing.”

Avoiding Accidental Allergens

In the processing and packaging areas of baking and snack facilities, allergen-containing dust has been identified as a potential cross-contamination point. It’s also a common observation that’s made during many audits, including those by Global Food Safety Initiative inspectors and others.

Specifically, the concern is that the contamination of non-allergenic foods by airborne dust and aerosols could contaminate products on an adjacent line due to general air movement, static electricity or by the use of compressed air to clean equipment.

To determine if this is a risk in your bakery or snack facility, you need to use a hazard analysis tool to verify whether the potential for dust cross-contamination exists and requires preventive control as defined by the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

This concern dates back to the January 2013 proposed FSMA rule:
Avoiding Accidental Allergens cont...

“It is required that food allergen controls include those procedures, processes and practices employed for ensuring protection of food from cross-contact, including during storage and use. Examples of such controls include procedures for separating ingredients and finished products that contain allergens from those that do not contain allergens, and procedures for separating foods that contain different allergens. Such controls are essential to prevent the inadvertent incorporation of an allergen into a product for which it is not an ingredient.”

Examples of such procedures for controlling food allergens include procedures that provide physical barriers; eliminate or minimize the formation of dust, aerosols or splashes; conduct manufacturing and processing of foods in different parts of a facility; emphasize separation in time, such as by production sequencing or by cleaning equipment between production runs; emphasize storage and handling appropriate to reduce the potential for cross-contact; and control the movement of tools and personnel that might carry allergens when the same production lines are used for both foods that contain allergens and foods that do not, or when the same production lines are used for foods that contain different allergens.

The Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP) has viewed dust cross-contamination in plants as a low risk. As a result, a baker’s primary focus should be on high-risk areas that include scheduling of product runs, controls during manufacturing (separate tools, GMPs, sequencing), effective cleaning between production runs, rework controls, and storage of allergen-containing ingredients.

Given the level of interest in potential dust cross-contamination based on FSMA — and with dust being cited as a risk in audits — collaboration was initiated with multiple companies, FARRP and myself to conduct trials of a method to measure dust contamination from adjacent lines. Time spent on this project was pro bono by FARRP, which tested the many samples, and me. The goal of this exercise was to provide a science-based hazard analysis to evaluate risk. Up to this point, personal opinions on dust drove control decisions and audit comments. The resulting method allows collection and analytical analysis to make science-based decisions. Known by FARRP as the “Stout Method,” it has been presented to and applauded by the FARRP board.

The approach used in the test method is to scientifically measure the allergen dust generated by a processing, transfer, packaging or cleaning process. It also analyzes the impact to an adjacent open process, exposed contact surface or tools, which if exposed, could allow allergens to be incorporated into a product not formulated with that allergen.

Companies that volunteered to participate in these studies were concerned with potential allergen dust cross-contamination from adjacent line operations (processing, transfer packaging or cleaning). One study focused on cross-contamination by adjacent lines at multiple exposure points from process to packaging. Another targeted batch processes with intermittent exposure and concerns with adjacent line cleaning.

In the first model, multiple points where product was exposed were measured. This is referred to as the “continuous processing” scenario.
Avoiding Accidental Allergens cont...

The second scenario involved a single point of exposure in a mixing vessel with a hatch cover, which was open for a set time when dust could enter the open mixer. Referred to as a “batch scale” scenario, this method is an excellent tool for measuring impact of adjacent line cleaning but only if air pressure is not used in the cleaning process. Using compressed air for cleaning an allergen line when an adjacent line is operating can propel heavy dust and particulates onto adjacent lines.

The Stout Method is based on the placement of multiple petri dishes next to the potential “allergen receiving line” to measure dust over multiple time periods while also measuring the exposure area, depth, weight and speed of the product. The residue in the petri dish is analyzed for allergen residue by FARRP. All of this information is inserted into a formula developed by FARRP and provides a mathematical calculation of potential allergen cross-contamination.

In summary, this method yields a complete hazard analysis of the potential for allergen dust cross-contamination as recommended by FSMA rules. Once this information is created, it can provide insight about the risk of dust cross-contamination and whether a preventive control is needed. And if such a control is indeed needed, then the processing plant may have to provide separation between adjacent lines to control dust movement from one area to another.

Consumer Trends

Is the Average American’s Diet Reflecting Consumer Trends?

Consumers may be increasingly demanding cleaner labels and better-for-you food options, but a recent U.S. Department of Agriculture report is suggesting that those same shoppers may not be putting their mouth where their money is.

According to loss-adjusted food availability data from a study conducted by the USDA’s Economic Research Service, the average American’s total daily calories per person decreased from 2,545 to 2,481 calories from the year 2000 to 2010. Of those calories, animal-based and plant-based foods made up the same percentage in a person’s diet in both years. This statistic contradicts analysts predictions and trends that suggest consumers are seeking out and eating more plant-based foods, a growing sector with an estimated value of $4.9B last year according to data from by SPINS.

The annual study, which surveyed about 5,000 people, asked respondents to record what they ate in a 36-hour period and to undergo an extensive health evaluation. The data indicates that grains are the primary contributor to the average American’s daily calories per capita, followed by plant-based fats and oils, and meat, poultry and fish coming in close behind.

The study’s results are leaving some, including USDA Senior Economist Biing-Hwan Lin, concerned. In updated federal dietary guidelines released last year, the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services encouraged Americans to eat more fruits, legumes, vegetables, lean meats, low or no-fat dairy, whole grains and plant-based oils while cutting back on red meat, sugar and salt.
Despite the recommendation, Lin told NOSH only three of the 10 food categories evaluated in his most recent study saw changes in calorie amounts greater than 10 percent. Of most concern, he said, was an 11 percent decrease in average calories consumed from both vegetables and added sugar and sweeteners.

“It is very important to eat fruits and vegetables and whole grains,” Lin said. “There have been guidelines to this effect for Americans, but at the same time we are still not doing that, especially when eating away from home. [Consumers] are running out of time all the time, so when we eat out, we should pay more attention to the nutritional profiles of our meals.”

The decrease in sugars is also not as sweet as it may appear at first glance. The drop may be thought to reflect the trend of consumers steering clear from added sugars; however, calories from these sugars is not a substantial portion of the American diet, Lin noted. Added plant-based sugar and sweeteners, which includes high fructose corn sweetener and other not naturally occurring sugars in food, only decreased on average by 47 calories between 2000 and 2010.

Though the report found little change in broad food categories, the amount of calories from individual food commodities within the categories did shift. The proportion of calories from meat, poultry, and fish stayed at 17 percent of total calories in both 2000 and 2010, but within this category, there was an increase in calories per capita from poultry and fish and a decrease in calories from red meat. Though the vegetable category as a whole saw a drop, the per-capita calories from kale and sweet potatoes increased.

Lin said he thinks this individual food data can potentially help brands to innovate within and across categories.

“Though [the study] is not necessarily intended for them, food companies can certainly learn from this report,” he said. “[They can] see a trend and see how consumers are behaving over time.”

Giving Infants Peanut-Containing Foods may Prevent Allergy

Introducing infants to peanut-containing foods may prevent the development of peanut allergy, according to a panel sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the Bethesda-based National Institutes of Health. The panel provided three separate guidelines for infants at various levels of risk for developing peanut allergy.

“Living with peanut allergy requires constant vigilance,” said Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (N.I.A.I.D.). “Preventing the development of peanut allergy will improve and save lives and lower health care costs.

“We expect the widespread implementation of these guidelines by health care providers will prevent the development of peanut allergy in many susceptible children and ultimately reduce the prevalence of peanut allergy in the United States.”
Giving Infants Peanut-Containing Foods may Prevent Allergy cont...

The first guideline covers infants deemed at high risk of developing peanut allergy because they already have severe eczema, egg allergy or both. The panel recommends peanut-containing foods should be introduced into the infants’ diets as early as 4 to 6 months of age. Parents and caregivers should check with their infant’s health care provider before feeding the infant peanut-containing foods.

The second guideline covers infants with mild or moderate eczema. They should have peanut-containing foods introduced into their diets at about 6 months of age.

The third guideline covers infants without eczema or any food allergy. They should have peanut-containing foods freely introduced into their diets.

In all cases, infants should start other solid foods before they are introduced to peanut-containing foods.

The new Addendum Guidelines for the Prevention of Peanut Allergy in the United States supplement the 2010 Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Food Allergy in the United States. The new guidelines were published Jan. 5 in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and may be found here. They also are scheduled to be co-published in the Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology; Journal of Pediatric Nursing; Pediatric Dermatology; World Allergy Organizational Journal; and Allergy, Asthma and Clinical Immunology.

“These new guidelines are very exciting in that they have the potential to reduce the prevalence of peanut allergy in the United States,” said Tonya Winders, president and chief executive officer of the Allergy & Asthma Network. “Parents of at-risk children can now take steps to prevent the development of peanut allergy by introducing peanut-containing foods as early as 4 months of age.

“However, we continue to strongly urge parents of at-risk children to not introduce peanut into their child’s diet without first consulting a board-certified allergist who can closely supervise and monitor the results.”

The Allergy & Asthma Network, a national non-profit organization based in Vienna, Va., said peanut-containing foods should be given to children only when they are not ill. Whole peanuts, because they are a choking hazard, should never be given to infants.

Clinical trial results reported in February 2015 showed regular peanut consumption that began in infancy and continued until age 5 led to an 81% reduction in the development of peanut allergy in infants deemed at high risk because they already had eczema, egg allergy or both. The finding came from the Learning Early About Peanut Allergy (LEAP) study, which was funded by the N.I.A.I.D.

“The LEAP study clearly showed that introduction of peanut early in life significantly lowered the risk of developing peanut allergy by age 5,” said Daniel Rotrosen, M.D., director of N.I.A.I.D.’s Division of Allergy, Immunology and Transplantation. “The magnitude of the benefit and the scientific strength of the study raised the need to operationalize these findings by developing clinical recommendations focused on peanut allergy prevention.”
Fruit-based snacks are in a global sweet spot, thanks to the shift toward more healthy snack options in 2016.

A recently published Innova Market Insights report found that global new product developments for fruit-based snacks more than doubled, from less than 8 percent to nearly 18 percent, over the past five years. This makes the category, which includes dried snacking fruit, fruit bars and processed fruit, the No. 3 snacking category after savory and salty snacks, and snack nuts and seeds.

North American new snack product launches followed the same global upward shift, with fruit snacks jumping from 9.2 percent of product launches in 2012 to 12.1 percent in 2016. Savory/salty snacks and popcorn’s share both decreased.

So why is sweet edging out salty in the snack world? Innova suggests consumers may perceive fruit based snacks to be more healthy. Nearly half of launches tracked over 12 months were positioned on a health platform of some kind, rising to over 85 percent in North America, according to Innova.

But just because these products use the term “fruit,” doesn’t mean they are healthy. Companies like Welch’s have faced lawsuits in recent years over the high-sugar content of its “fruit” snacks.

The report also found that innovation in fruit snacks’ packaging and positioning could be adding to the popularity surge.

“There is ongoing activity in emphasizing the snack positioning of fruit products, with more user friendly packaging such as resealable stand-up pouches and small pots and trays, making them more suitable for anytime snacking,” Lu Ann Williams, Director of Innovation at Innova Market Insights, said. “There has also been growth in the availability of multi-packs of individual snacks.”

LifeAid is one company riding the success of the fruit-focused trend. It recently launched its first food product through FitAid: an on-the-go fuel pack of pureed fruit, grass-fed whey and BCA’s.

“All the current gels and goos that are used in endurance races... are composed of 100 percent sugar,” Hinde previously told NOSH. “We know that jacking your insulin levels up and letting them crash multiple times during a race, if you want longevity in your sport, does not go over well. So we wanted to create a product that was super clean.”
They’ve got a corner on the market — but that might not be enough.

Fairway Market will be Georgetown’s only grocery store when it opens in neighborhood’s eponymous shopping center next month, but it may have trouble attracting business, area shoppers say. A Waldbaum’s occupied the site until late last year, and in the months since, locals found new places to buy milk and eggs, said one patron perusing Georgetowne Shopping Center.

“Nobody is really excited about it. It’s been closed for so long,” said Michael, who declined to give a last name.

The Waldbaum’s shuttered last November when parent company A&P went belly-up, and shoppers who frequented the market found an alternative at the Key Food in Mill Basin and the Foodtown in Marine Park, locals said.

The new Fairway will be neighbors’ most conveniently located big grocer, but that may be its only draw, because the company has a reputation of higher prices than most nearby stores, according to an area mom ambivalent about the coming market.

“I’m not dying to go there, because I heard that Fairway is expensive,” said Marilyn Zwas Mack-Joshua, who lives a few blocks away. “I’ll go in and look since it’s close.”

Fairway filed for bankruptcy in May — just after signing a 20-year lease on the Ralph Avenue space. The company eventually filed a petition for bankruptcy protection to save all its stores. A court approved the plea last month, and the company reorganized its board and closed just one location on Long Island.

Fairway’s management delayed the Georgetown supermarket’s opening during the proceedings, a spokeswoman said.

Contractors are still renovating the building’s interior, and when it is done, it will be Brooklyn’s second Fairway after the one in Red Hook.

Kroger to Hire 10,000 Store Employees

Supermarket giant Kroger said Monday it plans to hire 10,000 permanent employees across its different chains as it continues to expand.

The Cincinnati-based company currently employs more than 430,000 workers nationwide. Kroger (KR) has store chains such as Ralphs, Fred Meyer, Dillons, Smith’s, King Soopers, Harris Teeter and Food 4 Less.

Kroger’s move is the latest in a series of announcements from large corporations aimed at playing up their hiring in the U.S.
Several automakers have shifted focus to expansion of plants in the U.S. and hiring waves to go with them as they seek to deflect tweets from President Trump about previously announced expansion plans in Mexico. In the case of Kroger, the hiring move comes as many traditional retailers, like Sears and Macy’s, have announced store closings as they face more competition from online sellers.

Kroger isn’t immune: Amazon has been experimenting with its own high-tech grocery operations. “Kroger’s growth trajectory continues to create opportunities for our people to advance their careers — and to do that in a fun, team environment with great benefits,” said Tim Massa, Kroger’s group vice president of human resources and labor relations, in a statement.

Your groceries may be cheaper, but farmers and supermarkets feel the pain. The company said its total active workforce grew by more than 12,000 associates in 2016. Over the last eight years, Kroger has created more than 86,000 new permanent jobs. These figures do not include jobs created as a result of capital investment, such as temporary construction jobs, nor do they include increases because of the company’s mergers.

The hiring news comes as the company announced in December it wanted to cut costs by offering voluntary early retirement to nearly 2,000 workers. Executives said the move would target mostly office personnel and middle management. The early retirement offer did not include store and district associates, senior officers and supermarket division presidents.

Kroger has blamed food price deflation this year for weighing down its earnings. While deflation lowers grocery prices for shoppers, it makes it harder for supermarkets like Kroger to grow overall sales. Kroger reported a $391 million profit for the third quarter, an 8.6% drop from 2015.

In late-morning trading, Kroger shares were down 1.2%, or 40 cents, to $33.69.

**Albertsons No Longer in Talks to Acquire Price Chopper**

It seems as though the speculation surrounding Albertsons and its prospective acquisition of the Price Chopper chain has finally come to a close. Financial sources close to the matter have disclosed that Albertsons has dropped its pursuit of the matter.

According to the Times Union, Albertsons is no longer eyeing Price Chopper to focus on a possible upcoming IPO instead of an immediate expansion. Previously, Albertsons was considering the acquisition with a price tag of upwards of $1 billion.
Albertsons’ IPO focus could potentially raise $1.7 billion towards a future expansion, to further bolster the chain’s current 2,200 store status. The Times-Union also stated that Albertsons could have stopped pursuing its offer for Price Chopper as soon as last month.

Price Chopper, according to the Times Union, declined to comment on Albertsons speculative involvement or respective pull-out and stated, “We don’t comment on rumors,” as said by Price Chopper spokeswoman Mona Golub.

Had Albertsons acquired Price Chopper, the chain would have added 135 northeastern locations to the Albertsons footprint. Price Chopper boasts an annual revenue of $3.6 billion.

Sprouts Gains New Distribution Center Through Expanded

Following the announcement of its 2017 plans to expand its footprint to more than 250 stores in 15 states, Sprouts Farmers Markets will be opening a new temperature-controlled distribution center for its Southeastern operations. The 260,000 square-foot facility, purchased in July of 2016, reflects the expansion of the retailer’s partnership with Americold.

“The opening of our East Point site allows us to support Sprouts and other food retailers that are rapidly expanding throughout the Southeast. We’re very happy to bring new jobs and career opportunities to our home-town Atlanta community,” commented Fred Boehler, President and CEO of Americold, according to source American Journal of Transportation. “Americold is thrilled to be able to work with Sprouts as an anchor tenant in this facility and provide the additional, dedicated capacity needed as they continue to expand their healthy grocery operations from coast to coast.”

The East Point, GA site will serve as a temperature-controlled distribution center for Sprouts’ Southeastern operations, which will expand considerably in 2017. The site offers two temperature zones at 34F and 55F—ideal for Sprouts’ fresh produce warehousing needs.

“As Sprouts continues to grow, we’re deeply invested in enhancing our operations and developing our team members so they can deliver the best experience possible for our guests,” said Sprouts Chief Operations Officer Dan Sanders, according to a statement earlier this year. “Sprouts team members are inspired by the company’s growth and our ‘healthy living for less’ approach to grocery shopping, and we offer tremendous opportunities for career progression, especially in the Southeast.”
Whole Foods Market is switching to a “hybrid” buying model, in which some control is moving from local buyers to category managers at the company headquarters. National brands will deal with national category managers, while local brands will still work with local buyers, but they will be guided by the category manager, rather than making fully autonomous decisions as they previously did. The category managers will ultimately decide what products end up on the shelves and how they are promoted.

The chain noted that while it needed to move to a new model to compete with other stores such as Target that are expanding their natural and organic offerings, it could not completely centralize buying because it wants to remain an incubator of local trends and brands.

However, some producers worry that local brands will have a tougher time getting into stores. Zach DeAngelo, the former COO of Little Duck Organics, believes the chain is looking to streamline its operations to save costs, which will result in fewer local brands. He notes that more small food companies are beginning to rely on e-commerce to get their products out, reports Fast Company.

Whole Foods Moving its Regional HQ from Cambridge

Austin, Texas-based specialty grocery chain Whole Foods Market Inc. is moving its North Atlantic regional headquarters from Cambridge to Marlborough this spring, a company spokesperson has confirmed.

Whole Foods (Nasdaq: WFM) currently employs 144 workers at a 32,000-square-foot office at 125 Cambridge-Park Dr., said Heather McCready, public relations manager for Whole Foods.

The company will move into office space at 200 Forest St., a 500,000-square-foot building occupied by GE Healthcare Life Sciences and Quest Diagnostics, said Meredith Harris, executive director of the Marlborough Economic Development Corp. GE Healthcare Life Sciences relocated its U.S. headquarters to Marlborough from New Jersey early last year.

Harris called the Whole Foods move “a big win for the city on a number of fronts.”

“Just four years ago, this half-a-million-square-foot building was completely vacant, and Whole Foods’ arrival puts it back to full occupancy,” Harris said in an email to the Business Journal. “The company is also bringing more jobs to the city, which will continue to drive down our already-low unemployment rate. We are excited to welcome another well-known brand to our business community and we look forward to working with them and assisting them during their transition and beyond.”
“Marlborough provides a more conveniently located headquarters to support the entire North Atlantic region,” McCready said in an email. “We are pleased to be joining the Marlborough community this spring.”

Whole Foods continues to restructure as its plans for the year further unfold. The retailer announced yesterday that while it plans to increase the number of its lower-priced 365 banner stores, it will also be closing nine of its Whole Foods stores—a first for the banner since 2008.

John Mackey, a Co-Founder and current CEO, said that Whole Foods considered rebranding some of the closing locations into 365s but that the move wasn’t a practical one, according to the Chicago Tribune.

“We cleaned up the stores we needed to clean up for the time being, and we’re looking forward to moving forward,” Mackey said. The executive stated in a conference call that shuttering the nine stores will help boost profits and comparable sales, and that while the retailer has also cut back on its ambitious growth plan of reaching 1,200 locations it does still have more than 80 stores in the pipeline.

On the same day the company announced it will be closing these stores, Whole Foods announced it has signed leases for new 365 stores in both Brooklyn, New York, and Oakland, California.

For those on Wall Street that desire to see Whole Foods streamline rather than pursue growth, the news was received warmly, according to the report; speculations have circled that a top investor is looking to take on the chain and calling for a number of changes in leadership and direction.

The stock reportedly gained 2 percent to $29.91 at 10:02 a.m. in New York on Thursday following the news.

The Whole Foods store in Boulder and in Colorado Springs, two stores in California, one each in Chicago, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, and Georgia will all close by April 9.
Lidl announced Wednesday that it would open the first 20 of its U.S. stores this summer as part of 100 planned openings within a year, events that could kick off a new era of competition for U.S. grocers.

The German discounter characterized the summer openings as “ahead of schedule” although the company had previously said only that its first U.S. stores would open prior to 2018. The first wave of stores, to be located at unspecified locations in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, would open roughly four years after reports first surfaced of Lidl’s plans to expand in the U.S.

Lidl has established U.S. headquarters in Arlington, Va. and is building regional distribution centers in Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina with intentions of servicing stores along the East Coast from New Jersey to Georgia. A spokesman acknowledged Lidl reps have also scouted Texas although a formal announcement of intentions to expand there has not been made. The first 100 Lidl stores would create approximately 4,000 jobs, officials said.

Lidl is a division of Schwarz Group, one of Europe’s largest retailers with 10,000 stores in 26 countries, and is often compared to its domestic rival Aldi for efficient operations, limited assortment and service, and heavy emphasis on private label goods. Those retailers have created havoc among conventional operators in Europe, and sources predict a similar fate could await U.S. grocers, many of whom are already feeling effects of Aldi’s rapid U.S. growth and concurrent evolution toward a more mainstream customer.

Lidl’s planned U.S. stores of 36,000 square feet would be more than twice the size of typical Aldi locations.

In a statement, Lidl US President Brendan Proctor said Lidl’s U.S. stores would offer a combination of convenience, price and quality that would address “compromises” in typical grocery shopping.

“Customers are being forced to choose between quality, price and convenience, and this is a compromise they shouldn’t have to make,” Proctor said. “At Lidl, we are committed to delivering outstanding quality goods to our customers at market leading prices. We are carefully curating our selection to ensure every choice in our stores is a great choice for our customers.”

“Thanks to the efficient work of our team, we are excited to announce that Lidl will open its first stores in the United States ahead of schedule. We are thrilled to introduce residents across the East Coast to a unique shopping experience,” said Proctor. “Grocery shopping involves too much compromise. Customers are being forced to choose between quality, price and convenience, and this is a compromise they shouldn’t have to make. At Lidl, we are committed to delivering outstanding quality goods to our customers at market leading prices. We are carefully curating our selection to ensure every choice in our stores is a great choice for our customers.”
Lucky’s Market will open at least six new Florida stores in the next 18 months, bringing what it calls a “wider selection of affordable organic, local, specialty and gluten-free items” to the Sunshine State.

Lucky’s currently operates eight stores in Florida—in Gainesville, Naples, Coral Springs, Plantation, Neptune Beach, Orlando, Tallahassee and Melbourne. Over the next year and a half, Lucky’s expects to open units in Sarasota, Panama City and Oakland Park in summer 2017, Port St. Lucie in late 2017, Bonita Springs in early 2018 and St. Petersburg in summer 2018.

Lucky’s includes a variety of specialty foods, including in-house smoked bacon, house-made sausages, fresh seafood, a large selection of fresh and local produce, as well as a bakery. Lucky’s in-house butcher serves “never ever” meats, which have never been treated with antibiotics or artificial growth hormones. Customers also can find a department filled with ready-to-eat meals, made from scratch daily inside the store, as well as fresh grab-and-go sushi options and cheese islands stocked with cheeses from all over the world, according to the Boulder, Colorado-based grocery chain.

Lucky’s Market stores also include juice bars, bulk foods, apothecary departments, beer and wine departments, café areas and the company’s “Sip ‘n Stroll” program, allowing customers to grab a $2 pint of local beer or a $3 glass of wine to enjoy while shopping.

In addition to its Florida stores, Lucky’s currently operates units Boulder, Colorado (two), and Longmont, Colorado; Savannah, Georgia; Iowa City, Iowa; Bloomington, Indiana; Jackson, Wyoming; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Columbia, Rock Hill and Ellisville, Missouri; Billings, Montana; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Columbus, Ohio.

In 2016, The Kroger Co. made a “meaningful investment in Lucky’s, which will significantly accelerate Lucky’s Market’s growth in new and existing markets.” The financial terms of that transaction were not disclosed. The Kroger Co. currently operates one Florida store, in Fernandina Beach, under the Harris Teeter banner.

The Fresh Market will host a grand opening at its third Boca Raton location on Wednesday, Jan. 11. The new 24,000-s.f. store is located at 5540 North Military Trail and will mark the specialty grocer’s 43rd store in Florida and 178th nationwide. The unit will bring 80 new jobs to the Boca Raton area, according to the North Carolina-based company.

At the new Boca Raton location, guests will find The Fresh Market’s revamped look, which it recently launched in North Carolina, “that stays true to the company’s roots in offering fresh, delicious food—but re-imagines the market as a destination where guests can find an increased selection of local products,
The Fresh Market To Open Third Boca Raton Store Next Month cont...

health-conscious items—and now, new categories including everyday grocery classics.”

The specialty grocer’s refresh will continue to roll out at its stores across the country through 2018.

“The Fresh Market provides a unique grocery shopping experience featuring delicious fresh fare in an inviting atmosphere. Every item in our store has been carefully curated, and we stock our shelves with a combination of produce from local farmers, specialty items found from around the world and everyday grocery classics,” said David Chimenti, store manager of the new Boca Raton unit. “We know from our existing presence in Boca Raton that this community has always offered a warm welcome to The Fresh Market, and we look forward to delivering extraordinary eating experiences to even more of our neighbors here.”

Beginning Jan. 11, the new location will offer shoppers more of what they love from The Fresh Market, the company says, with a concentrated focus on several key areas: delicious, fresh food; meal solutions; grocery essentials; and health & and wellness.

Winn-Dixie’s New Strategy Succeeds Amidst Stiff Competition

Winn-Dixie supermarkets are forging ahead; in an effort to regain market share and stay competitive in a saturated Florida grocery market, the company is slashing prices and making significant investments in overhauling storefronts.

In late 2015, Winn-Dixie began to cut prices after hiring CEO Ian McLeod, according to local news source the Orlando Sentinel. The company’s stores first dropped their prices on 400 common items—including bread, chicken breast, and sugar—in one fell swoop, and subsequent cuts followed as the grocer attempted to win customers back from steep competition.

“Ultimately the customers have a choice of where to shop. We wanted to make sure we offered the most competitive prices, the products customers were buying on a regular basis,” McLeod told the Sentinel.

So far, McLeod noted, the strategy has been a success.

Central Florida’s grocery market has grown increasingly crowded in the past few years. With discount brands like Aldi and niche stores like Lucky’s Market moving, and increasingly convenient pickup and delivery services being offered by major national players like Walmart and Amazon, Winn-Dixie is in a precarious position—offering a full grocery selection at discount prices.
Recently Winn-Dixie’s parent company, Southeastern Grocers, has been narrowing its footprint. The company has closed several drugstores in Central Florida. McLeod, though, is optimistic.

“There have been a limited number of stores that closed, but we’ve remodeled more stores than have actually closed,” McLeod said, noting that the company has shifted focus and is now looking to grow in high-income areas. “Flagship” remodels in Tampa with bright, clean features and modern decor, and stores rebranded under the Fresco y Mas banner in South Florida promise new avenues for growth.

Giant Eagle has a few changes in store, as the company has announced a span of store closures that will take effect over the next three months.

The retailer has announced plans to immediately close five supermarkets and four GetGo Café + Market locations in Ohio and Maryland. Giant Eagle has two supermarkets pending closure in Pennsylvania, according to local news source Pittsburg Post-Gazette.

Some in the industry have attributed the store closures to increased competition among discount retailers.

“There is increased competition among the chains and there is a blurring of the channels, meaning that you now have dollar stores competing with food stores and pharmacies with food departments,” remarked Alex Baloga, Vice President of External Relations for the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association, to news source GoErie. “This is happening...across the country. The competition, especially in the food industry, is fierce.”

GetGo locations in Altoona, PA, and Frederick, MD, are expected to close as early as January 17.

Meanwhile, three supermarkets and one GetGo in central Ohio near Columbus, and two supermarkets and another GetGo in northeastern Ohio near Cleveland, are slated to be closed between February 4 and March 4.

The additional shutdown of two supermarkets in the Erie, PA, area are expected to follow. The company will close locations at 7200 Peach Street and 2877 West 26th Street—in part to transition resources to the company’s new Millcreek Mall location.

The company emphasized that the Pennsylvania store closings are due to local factors and are not related to the corporation tightening its belt. The company has announced plans to transition employees from closed store locations to surrounding-area Giant Eagle stores.
Fresh Thyme, which first opened here last summer, will add two more stores in west Omaha next month

Fresh Thyme grocery stores will triple their footprints in Omaha with the Feb. 22 opening of two new stores focused on natural and organic foods.

The west Omaha stores are part of the Chicago-area grocer’s push to expand quickly throughout the Midwest. The chain has 48 stores now, including one that opened last summer along West Maple Road and another in Lincoln.

The company said it expects to have a total of 70 stores by the end of 2017. A Grand Island store could be in the works in 2018, and another is expected to be part of Omaha’s Crossroads redevelopment at 72nd and Dodge Streets.

Fresh Thyme launched in 2014 and expects to surpass 5,000 employees this year and has passed $500 million in annual sales, Chief Executive Chris Sherrell said, although he declined to share specific sales numbers. (By comparison, Iowa-based competitor Hy-Vee has more than $9 billion in annual sales.)

“We have no reason to slow down anytime soon,” Sherrell told The World-Herald.

Fresh Thyme stores are organized with a focus on produce, meats and prepared foods, along with a vitamin and supplement department. The company is also expanding its private-label line to lower prices on grocery items like snacks, cereals and sauces.

“We want to show that you can eat healthy at affordable prices,” Sherrell said.

The stores have a smaller footprint than a typical supermarket and don’t stock many of the biggest food manufacturers’ popular brands.

“We don’t sell the Cokes and the Pepsis and the Doritos,” Sherrell said.

The new stores opening in February are at 132nd Street and West Center Road, and at 175th Street and West Center Road.

The stores will face heavy competition from established retailers in both neighborhoods. The 175th Street location is within a half-mile of Target, Baker’s, Walmart and Natural Grocers. Competitors closest to the 132nd Street location are Aldi, Family Fare, Baker’s, Walmart and Target.

Many of those competitors tout their own selections of natural and organic foods, but Sherrell said there’s demand for another option.

“Certainly the conventional stores will sell some natural groceries,” Sherrell said. “People that are looking to make lifestyle changes, they want to do it in one place.”
Lesley Jacobs (1975-2017), formerly the National Sales Manager of Bob’s Red Mill has passed away at the age of 41. She passed January 11th, after having been battling cancer. Lesley accomplished a lot in her young life. She started as a Regional Manager, and has been a long time Bob’s Red Mill employee. Lesley truly loved her job and spent over a decade with the company.

Lesley is remembered for being a loving daughter, sister, friend and colleague. She was known by many for her trade mark smile and incredible zest for life. Lesley left a strong legacy and will be dearly missed.

In lieu of flowers, the family requestes donations in her honor to the following: www.trucare.org, www.longmonthumane.org, and www.breastcancerfund.org.

Subscribing has never been easier!
To stay informed & to subscribe to the C.A. Fortune Newsletter click the subscribe button below or scan the QR code using a barcode scanner app.

For any questions or concerns please submit an email to: caffortune.communications@cafortune.com
# Shows & Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expo West</td>
<td>Anaheim, CA</td>
<td>March 10-12, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Midwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>March 1, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Northeast Tabletop</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>March 8, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Great Lakes Tabletop</td>
<td>Fort Wayne, IN</td>
<td>March 22, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Great Lakes Tabletop</td>
<td>Bolingbrook, IL</td>
<td>March 29, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Midwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>April 5, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Southeast Tabletop</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
<td>April 28, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddon House Spring 2017</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
<td>May 2-4 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Southwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>May 17, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFI Foxwoods Tabletop</td>
<td>Mashantucket, CT</td>
<td>May 17-18, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFI Long Beach Tabletop</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>May 23-24, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony’s UNFI Show</td>
<td>Anaheim, CA</td>
<td>May 24, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDDBA</td>
<td>Anaheim, CA</td>
<td>June 4-6, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Holiday Show</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>June 12-13, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Fancy Food</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>June 25-27, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Midwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
<td>August 9, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony’s UNFI Specialty Show</td>
<td>San Francisco, CA</td>
<td>August 23, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Midwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Milwaukee, WI</td>
<td>August 23, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Southwest Tabletop</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
<td>August 30, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haddon House Show</td>
<td>Uncasville, CT</td>
<td>September 13-14, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expo East</td>
<td>Baltimore, MD</td>
<td>September 14-16, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Great Lakes Tabletop</td>
<td>Bolingbrook, IL</td>
<td>September 20, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Northeast Tabletop</td>
<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>September 27, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Natural Show</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>October 4-5, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Southeast Tabletop</td>
<td>Orlando, FL</td>
<td>October 6, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KeHE Great Lakes Tabletop</td>
<td>Fort Wayne, IN</td>
<td>October 11, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>