

40 Leaders 40 and Under

Whether they're in big corporations or modest c-store chains, individuals who shine—for professional successes and civic contributions—also form the backbone of the convenience store industry. Once again, *CSD* and the Young Executives Organization (YEO) collaborated to honor this year's crop of inspiring industry leaders.

A *CSD* Staff Report

IN THE LAST FEW years, Millennials more and more have been assuming leadership positions, or are being groomed to one day assume leadership positions. Either way, they are increasingly becoming the backbone of U.S. companies including convenience store chains.

As the c-store industry barrels through the first quarter of the 21st century, young leaders' proven track records with measurable results now outweigh years of experience, especially at family-owned chains, where grooming talent is a must to stay successful. C-store professionals with a penchant for changing course and finding new ways to do old jobs better are helping carve the path the industry is taking.

In the last few years, the convenience channel has incurred a tidal wave of corporate churn—mergers and acquisitions—as many corporate executives cashed out, opening the doors for younger, talented and capable company members. As a result, their efforts and results are seen not only on store shelves, but in back offices, forecourts, foodservice programs and training regimens.

MAKING A MARK

The face of society is becoming younger, and older. The U.S. economy is a melding, global juggernaut, governmental rules that apply to businesses are more complex than ever before and social trends are moving at a speed not seen five years ago.

There are plenty of next-generation c-store leaders who have been groomed for success and understand that the business challenges they face today are significant. Most of those in this year's class of 40 either are members of a family-owned convenience chain or work for a family-operated convenience chain.

The young leaders profiled in the following pages are passionate about their jobs and the companies they keep. More often than not, the leaders profiled here are also involved in community groups, charitable organizations and educational pursuits.

If readers are interested in nominating their own emerging leaders for future recognition or to join the Young Executives Organization (YEO), they can contact *CSD* Editor and NAG Executive Director John Lofstock at jlofstock@csdecisions.com.



Cory Boyd, 37
District Supervisor
of Southeast Iowa

Company: Kum & Go L.C.
Headquarters: West Des Moines, Iowa
Number of Stores: 410
Years with the Company: 9

CORY BOYD SEES THE most rewarding part of his current role as district supervisor of southeast Iowa for Kum & Go as the ability to hire top talent and help Kum & Go employees further develop their talent and skills within their positions at the company.

"As a leader, the most rewarding thing for me is to see people under me develop and achieve their personal and professional goals," Boyd said. "It is so rewarding to develop a direct report into a promotion they have been dreaming about their whole life."

Boyd joined Kum & Go in 2008. After joining the company, he supervised Kum & Go stores in Wyoming and Montana.

Looking ahead to 2017, Boyd is excited to continue his focus on hiring, recruiting and retaining quality employees for the Kum & Go team.

"Superior customer service is the foundation of a great convenience store experience for customers and this cannot be achieved without great people," Boyd said. "My goal in 2017 is to hire, train and develop the best people in the industry that can provide superior customer service, have the ability to build an extremely fun culture and are passionate about winning."



Meredith Bright, 27

Director of Brand Development and Corporate Communications

Company: **The Kent Cos.**
Headquarters: **Midland, Texas**
Number of Stores: **41**
Years with the Company: **5**

AS DIRECTOR OF BRAND development and corporate communications for Kent Cos., Meredith Bright's role means something different every day whether it's working on artwork for an upcoming promotion or developing a new store image for the company's Kent Kwik convenience chain.

"The position certainly keeps me on my toes, but the large variety of responsibilities keeps it interesting," Bright said.

As other new generation leaders in the industry often acknowledge, identifying the boundaries where work ends and home begins in today's ultra-connected world is one of the greatest challenges for any executive to navigate—Bright is no exception.

"With today's technology, it is second nature for our generation to constantly check our emails and phones, making ourselves easily accessible at all times," Bright said. "It is easy for our careers to take over our schedules, so defining healthy boundaries, while difficult, is important."

When Bright began her career at Kent Cos., she received extensive training at all levels and departments within the organization, which gave her a "deep appreciation and respect" for front-line team members. It's a lesson she now shares with others.

"I believe that you can't effectively manage any brand or vision until you work a day in the shoes of those who represent your frontlines," Bright said.



Wesley Campbell, 40

Co-owner and Executive Vice President of Retail Operations

Company: **Campbell Oil Co.**
(Minuteman Food Mart)
Headquarters: **Elizabethtown N.C.**
Number of Stores: **24**
Years with the Company: **18**

CAMPBELL OIL'S RETAIL DIVISION comprises 24 company-operated c-stores, 10 branded restaurants and a branded-dealer business that supplies fuel to 50 retail locations in the Carolinas.

Wesley Campbell, co-owner and executive vice president of retail operations for the third generation company, is charged with making all those parts run smoothly. Today, Campbell, who joined the family-owned business in 1999 after graduating from North Carolina State University, is looking to expand its foodservice program as part of its growing Minuteman Food Mart chain—while also grappling with today's business challenges.

"We, like other retailers, are also dealing with the challenges from operating with the increased costs of Obamacare and now the new Labor law regulations that take effect in December 2016," Campbell said.

Active on the Bladen Community College Foundation Board and in the North Carolina Petroleum and Convenience Marketers Association, the father of three remains committed to the company's biggest asset: its employees.

"We have identified some areas where we feel like we can improve on that through some improved training and recruiting strategies that will hopefully decrease turnover," Campbell said. "We hope to implement these strategies in 2017 to make sure we are able recruit and retain quality individuals that fit our core values."



Elliott Collyer, 29

Corporate Development Group

Company: **Parkland Fuel Corp.**
Headquarters: **Calgary, Canada**
Number of Stores: **1,100-plus**
Years with the Company: **3**

AS A MEMBER OF the corporate development group at Parkland Fuel Corp., which operates and services convenience stores throughout Canada, Elliott Collyer faces a set of new, complex challenges each time the company opens a new location.

"While, like the U.S., Canada has one federal government, it also has 13 provincial/territorial governments and thousands of municipal governments, each with its own set of rules and regulations," Collyer said.

In certain cities, such as the Greater Toronto area and Vancouver, for example, land value is high and land use regulations are extensive, making it very difficult to put in new gas stations. Furthermore, Alberta is instituting a carbon tax and Ontario is putting in a cap-and-trade system in January.

Language and culture also are major factors.

"In Quebec, for example, not only are the regulatory and legal systems different, but everything is French-first," Collyer said.

In 2017, Parkland plans to complete and integrate its acquisition of CST Canada, which will add over 500 stores and several convenience store brands to the company's portfolio, he explained. Another priority will be developing its private-label foodservice programs. In Canada, many c-stores are co-branded with established quick-service restaurants.

"We're trying to determine and expand foodservice in areas that help fill the convenience need and go above and beyond the co-brand partnership," Collyer said.



Chet Cox, 36

President

Company: Get N Go
Headquarters: Henderson, Nev.
Number of Stores: 8
Years with the Company: 10

BENEATH THE BRIGHT LIGHTS of Las Vegas, Chet Cox—known by most as CJ—has seen his own business opportunities hit dazzling heights the past few years.

Cox oversees the Henderson, Nev.-based Get N Go convenience chain, a business launched by his father. It's a responsibility that Cox relishes as there's no facet of the c-stores' operations he isn't involved with on a daily basis, ensuring issues that arise suddenly are addressed just as quickly.

Six of the eight retail locations have full car washes, which has helped Get N Go become a diverse retailer, earning the c-store a loyal following and an enjoyable experience for Cox. "I am lucky enough to love what I do. I see running our organization as my hobby."

Of course, it's not a one-man show by any means.

"We have a great office staff and managers that help in every way to facilitate the success of our business," Cox said.

The more customers that Get N Go can serve, the better Cox likes it.

"Most convenience stores offer the same items. Consumers can get an energy drink, soda, chips or candy anywhere up and down the street," Cox said. "We try to set ourselves apart from the pack with the cleanliness of our sites and the friendliness of our employees to get customers coming back."



Matt Cuning, 32

Corporate Development Group

Company: Parkland Fuel Corp.
Headquarters: Calgary, Canada
Number of Stores: 1,100-plus
Years with the Company: 3

WITH A DEEP UNDERSTANDING of what makes various types of businesses tick, former management consultant Matt Cuning isn't easy to surprise. After joining the corporate development team at Parkland Fuel Corp. three years ago, he was "very, very surprised" at the depths and complexities of the convenience store industry.

"From management of the fuel supply chain to new product sourcing, including a growing emphasis on fresh foods, this business requires an organization with a broad range and depth of skills to operate a network of convenience stores and retail fuel stations," Cuning said.

Another thing Cuning wasn't quite expecting was the constant development and testing of both fresh foods and non-perishable packaged goods in c-stores, making them a great incubator for new products of all kinds.

Competition for customers is fierce in the Canadian marketplace. Some pharmacy chains have even expanded their offerings to include fresh fruit, eggs, milk, cheese and salty snacks.

"One major advantage we have is in our fuel offering, which allows us to provide a true one-stop shopping experience to consumers," Cuning said. "Once our customers finish fueling up and enter the store it provides a tremendous opportunity to enhance the purchase experience. It's then up to us to ensure we always have the everyday essentials on hand, as well as a high quality coffee and food program."



Lisa Dell'Alba, 38

President & CEO

Company: Square One Markets Inc.
Headquarters: Bethlehem, Pa.
Number of Stores: 9
Years with the Company: 12

BETWEEN RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION BEING enacted and new taxes imposed, as well as the emergence of warehouse retailers in the region, 2016 has been a challenging year for Square One Markets.

"While [these developments] may not have been much of a surprise, there was a great deal of planning and preparation to deal with some of it," said Lisa Dell'Alba, president and CEO of Square One Markets Inc.

As a result, the c-store chain that operates in eastern Pennsylvania faced a substantial amount of staff turnover in its nine stores. However, the circumstances helped Dell'Alba identify personnel assets within the organization—assets that will prove beneficial to the retailer going forward.

"We saw an emergence of new leaders and had the opportunity to provide roles for them in which to succeed," Dell'Alba said. "I believe that growth and development of individuals in our organization is the most important role of any company leader."

Moving ahead, Dell'Alba hopes to expand these efforts.

"We have begun an initiative in which our store management teams are participating in category management decisions," Dell'Alba said. "This is still very new, but they enjoy being able to participate in those discussions and can give honest feedback to our suppliers and vendors. After all, they are the experts."



Nikki Earp, 32
Chief Financial Officer

Company: Good Oil Co. (Good To Go)
Headquarters: Winamac, Ind.
Number of Stores: 16
Years with the Company: 9

DESCRIBED AS A BRIGHT, intelligent leader, Nikki Earp, chief financial officer at Good Oil Co., is helping the Indiana-based chain position itself for success in 2017. Boosting its marketing might, the company is now doing analysis on its customers and rewards program. Good To Go is also connecting with the communities more, getting involved with the schools and local programs. Like her company, Earp knows that quality service is paramount to fending off a

growing list of competitors such as discount and drug stores. In fact, Dollar General Corp. is set to open its first smaller-format location, branded DGX and patterned after a traditional c-store.

"They are building in about every little community they can and customers have the perception they always have the cheapest products," Earp said. "This can really hurt the inside sales c-stores many times survive off of."

Ownership and how it affects operations is an important consideration at Good Oil. Playing a critical role within the family-owned business with four family members involved, Earp recently helped spearhead the family's strategic succession plan.

"Everyone has a different risk tolerance and point of view from working in different divisions of the company, but if you can work together, you tend to come up with a much better business decision because you encompass many different types of thoughts, not just one way of thinking."



Giselle Diaz Eastlack, 39
General Manager

Company: Diaz Inc. (Diaz Markets)
Headquarters: Metairie, La.
Number of Stores: 17
Years with the Company: 13

AS GENERAL MANAGER, GISELLE Diaz Eastlack is a key member of her family's Diaz Markets convenience store business. Each day she works alongside her parents and her brother to take the company to the next level.

Her responsibilities range from analyzing potential acquisitions, developing marketing plans, negotiating contracts and managing the corporate office, just to name a few.

Eastlack is looking forward to a number of new initiatives that the company has planned for 2017.

"We have many exciting new ventures in technology and new stores coming up in 2017," Eastlack said. "We are in the process of redesigning, remodeling and revamping our back-office software as we convert to a new provider. Our goal is to become more efficient in back of the house functions that will then translate to more time dedicated to our customers in the front of the house."

What's more, the company is set to break ground on a new build right after the first of the year. "We are planning to make a big splash with the new site," Eastlack said.

The company is also increasing focus on its employees in the new year. "They are the face of our company and we appreciate and recognize their value. For that reason, we are in the process of analyzing and revamping our benefits package to better serve our employees."



Fouad El-Nemr, 24
Executive Vice President

Company: Nouria Energy Corp.
Headquarters: Worcester, Mass.
Number of Stores: 116 C-Stores,
49 Car Washes
Years with the Company: 1

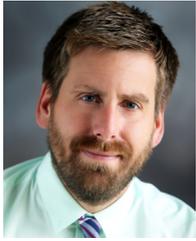
NOURIA ENERGY IS ONE of New England's largest family-owned and -operated convenience store chains. The company was founded in 1989 by Tony El-Nemr, who started in the business as a gas station attendant.

As the company continues to grow following the acquisition of F.L. Roberts & Co. this past October, El-Nemr is welcoming the second generation into the family business with the promotion of his son Fouad El-Nemr to executive vice president.

"To understand our mission and our brand you need to first understand where we came from. Our company's story is the quintessential American success story. Like so many other American success stories, ours begins with my father who immigrated to this country looking for a better life and a new dream; and like many American success stories, ours includes tremendous hard work and a dose of good luck," the younger El-Nemr said.

Watching his father build a successful c-store chain from a single store to nearly 170 retail locations through his drive, dedication and love for the business has inspired El-Nemr to follow in his footsteps.

"I am fortunate to be a next-generation leader in my family business and believe that my passion for growth and drive to create the best work environment possible for our employees leads me to work harder every day," El-Nemr said.



Brian Frawley, 31

Vice President, Light Oils

Company: Frawley Oil Co.
Headquarters: Whitewater, Wis.
Number of Stores: 6
Years with the Company: 10

A LONG WITH HIS BROTHER and sister, Brian Frawley is proud to have a role in a third-generation retail business.

As vice president of Light Oils, a subsidiary of family-owned Frawley Oil Co. that provides wholesale and retail gasoline and diesel fuels, Frawley also helps oversee customer experience, inventory control, price setting and day-to-day operations at the company's bulk plant and c-stores.

While the Frawley's brand has made inroads these past few years, no company member takes success for granted.

"With bigger chains moving in to our markets, it is imperative that we focus on creating a customer experience that makes people remember why they have been shopping with us," Frawley said. "Whether it is a simple greeting or value added on goods, we need to try to promote Frawley stores as a local, inviting and personal place to shop."

The company expects 2017 to be a big year, with new social media and loyalty initiatives and a point-of-sale equipment upgrade in the works. But, perhaps the biggest asset for any family chain is its local roots, Frawley said.

"We are from the towns and cities where our stores do business, and it's important to keep that in mind. With increasing competition, it's vital that we support and participate in the local markets we do business in."



Hilary Freedman, 28

Senior Category Manager

Company: RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.
Headquarters: Atlanta, Ga.
Number of Stores: 438
Years with the Company: 6

IN HER SIX YEARS in the convenience store industry, Hilary Freedman never ceases to be amazed at the continuous innovations RaceTrac's product teams put forth in an effort to provide the best products to the retailer's customers.

"We strive to have progressive offerings in our stores, which means testing and trying new things while also striving to have as little impact as possible on the store teams with resets," Freedman said.

As senior category manager, she is responsible for developing strategies that will work across channels so that RaceTrac can compete with other major retailers. Because competition is stronger than ever, innovation across all channels is a key component.

Because of the competition among different retailers as well as within each channel, the ongoing challenge for RaceTrac is developing products that will resonate with customers. And as the growing convenience chain, which operates in Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Texas, continues to innovate, the products continue to arrive.

"Despite the challenges that come along with trying new things, the innovation doesn't seem to stop," Freedman said. "Every day a new and innovative product comes across my desk for evaluation—it's both impressive and exciting."



Alex Garoutte, 24

Marketing Director

Company: The Kent Cos.
Headquarters: Midland, Texas
Number of Stores: 41
Years with the Company: 2

ALEX GAROUTTE JOINED THE Kent Cos.' extended training program after graduating from Arizona State University, and though he has only been marketing director for six months, feels his youth is an asset.

"I enjoy the creative aspect to my position where I get to try new things every day," Garoutte said. "It's an opportunity where my age can be a real benefit, as I can easily relate to the changing consumers in this industry."

Garoutte oversees all product placement inside the store as well as merchandising, vendors and managing Kent Cos.' distribution center.

Foodservice continues to be a prime company focus, in addition to expanding the stores' better-for-you offerings.

"One of the biggest challenges is the growing competition with Walmart neighborhood stores, dollar stores and the continued Amazon expansion, since convenience is becoming an expectation for consumers," said Garoutte. "What sets our stores apart are the people that run them. Our sites are kept to the highest standards in terms of friendliness and cleanliness."

Garoutte is most excited about how the company continues to invest in its people with continuing education.

"The opportunity for growth and continued training is a benefit of working for a family-owned business," Garoutte said. "Our strong leadership and culture are the foundation of the Kent Cos."



Robert Griffith, 31
President

Company: Golden Pantry Food Stores
Headquarters: Watkinsville, Ga.
Number of Stores: 39
Years with the Company: 4

GOLDEN PANTRY HAS BEEN a Georgia fixture since 1965. For Robert Griffith, a third-generation leader and company president, the chain's history is extremely important.

"My grandfather, Tom Griffith, started Golden Pantry in 1965 and we have just celebrated our 51st year in business," Griffith said. "For me, being a next-generation leader in a family-owned business is humbling. I feel blessed because it has always been a dream of mine to earn a leadership role within Golden Pantry following in the footsteps of my grandfather, uncle and my father, Brian Griffith (Golden Pantry's CEO), who is the perfect mix of father, friend and teacher."

Inherently there is a lot of pressure on next-generation executives when they are trying to fill the shoes of very successful past leaders. The key is to continue learning the industry and carving your own path with employees and customers.

"These experiences have given me the ability to create my own path within our family business," Griffith said. "But at the end of the day it all boils down to the most important part of the equation, which is the encouragement and support from my amazing wife, family and the rock star team members that I work with every day. I look forward to continuing to forge Golden Pantry's path as a team."



Sharif Jamal, 35
Corporate Training Manager

Company: Chestnut Petroleum Distributors Inc.
Headquarters: New Paltz, N.Y.
Number of Stores: 300
Years with the Company: 7

CHESTNUT PETROLEUM DISTRIBUTORS INC. (CPD) was founded in 1981 by Mickey Jamal as a single gas station with a repair shop.

Now more than 35 years later, with the help of his two brothers, Jamal has built the business to include a network of 300 stores, which includes company-owned and dealer-operated units in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

The family firm's next-generation of leaders is taking a more active role in day-to-day operations and Sharif Jamal is leading that charge. Jamal has been with CPD for seven years and currently serves as the corporate training manager, but has spent time learning all areas of the business.

"The convenience store industry is amazing. It is an industry made up of single-store operators to large chains, but, regardless of size, the key to success is providing great service," Jamal said. "Having the opportunity to be a part of the leadership team in my family's company has been both challenging and incredible. Although we are a family business I would never have achieved success without learning from and working with the strong team that our company has put in place."

Jamal is sharing his industry knowledge as a board member for the National Advisory Group's (NAG) Young Executive Organization (YEO).



Whitney Haslam Johnson, 37
Vice President of Brand and Guest Experience

Company: Pilot Flying J
Headquarters: Knoxville, Tenn.
Number of Stores: 650
Years with the Company: 13

TODAY'S C-STORE CONSUMERS ARE more on the move than ever before, making it more difficult for retailers to create sustained awareness and brand loyalty. Whitney Haslam Johnson, who helps grow the brand of Pilot Flying J, knows the habits and behaviors of today's consumers have evolved, and so have their expectations, which are met daily.

"With incredible growth of digital out of home (DOOH) advertising, consumer are flooded with ads and offers throughout their daily routines and paths to purchase," Johnson said. "With the ability to reach people on the go, or even at the pump, technology is promising more 'Wow' from the experience of purchasing something at a c-store."

That wow factor is something Johnson strives to improve.

"Our continued goal is to listen to our customers and develop guest experiences that are second to none," Johnson said. "With offerings like renovated restrooms, fresh meal options, free Wi-Fi and high-quality Pilot Coffee, we are continuing to reinforce how our travel centers are reliable roadside destinations for all drivers."

Johnson has served on the board of directors for the Knoxville Museum of Art and Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee, and currently is part of the Swan Ball Auction Committee for Cheekwood Botanical Garden and Museum of Art in Nashville.



Jason Klemme, 31

Director of Operations

Company: Ricker Oil Co.

Headquarters: Anderson, Ind.

Number of Stores: 56

Years with the Company: 6

THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER IN the c-store industry, Jason Klemme often caught himself evaluating personal situations as to how they could relate to improving services for customers, employees and the whole organization.

"I really enjoy traveling and seeing the differences in people's customs, values, beliefs and behavior," Klemme said. "When you visit foreign places, everyone has a different perspective, and to learn and be respectful of those perspectives is what life is all about."



Jillian Kreamer, 28

Store Systems Administrator

Company: Freedom Oil

Headquarters: Warsaw, Ind.

Number of Stores: 6

Years with the Company: 4

JILLIAN KREAMER JUGGLES A number of responsibilities as the store systems administrator for Warsaw, Ind.-based Freedom Oil, which distributes gasoline to c-stores and gas stations in addition to operating six Freedom Express Convenience Stores in Indiana.

Kreamer is in charge of accounts payable, petroleum accounting and managing the pricebook for the family-owned business, which began in July 2002, following the acquisition of four locations from Gast Fuel and Oil Inc. Kreamer also is involved with implementing new store processes, including software and employee training, and supports store managers with inventory management and paperwork.

Finally, she also represents the company at trade shows and other convenience store industry events.

As a young executive, Kreamer does find one major challenge is overcoming the stereotypes of being a Millennial and the assumptions older generations tend to make regarding how Millennials view various areas of work and life. But Millennials and their views can be quite diverse, which is forcing c-stores to stay in step.

Looking ahead to 2017, Kreamer is eager to see what changes may be ahead following the election season, which includes the nomination of a new president.

"I am looking forward to seeing how the recent local and national elections affect the laws as they pertain to the c-store industry," she said.

The same idea applies to convenience retailers.

"If you can define a group, person or demographics' perspective, then it will assist you with people development, product development, process and the implementation of initiatives," said Klemme, who started working in c-stores at age 16.

As Ricker Oil's director of operations, Klemme manages multiple functions for Ricker's Convenience Stores, such as organizational planning, business processes development, operational forecasting and budgeting and inventory.

He's also involved with district and leadership development, which often poses its own set of challenges. As the national and local economies continue to grow, unemployment rates fall and employers compete for a shrinking talent pool.

"This is where having a great culture as well as providing employees with the right personal and career advancement opportunities, and staying relevant becomes imperative," Klemme said.



Nick Lacaillade, 33

Vice President Retail & Corporate Development

Company: Certified Oil Corp.

Headquarters: Columbus, Ohio

Number of Stores: 71

Years with the Company: 4

AS A THIRD-GENERATION EXECUTIVE of Certified Oil, Nick Lacaillade quickly learned he had to be patient in making changes as vice president retail and corporate development—no easy feat for a former Wall Street professional.

"I was on Wall Street for seven years and didn't understand why we couldn't move on a dime in the retail business, but things don't happen overnight," said Lacaillade. "We need to move the needle little by little; the data points show us that."

With his father Peter, chairman and CEO, Lacaillade manages all retail operations at the company-owned and operated stores. Lacaillade is also in charge of interviewing and hiring, training and development for more than 500 employees.

"I'm also head of corporate development, including spending our growth capital on rebuilds and new builds," Lacaillade said. "We're currently looking at a slew of properties at various stages to grow our store base."

Certified Oil is also searching for a senior level foodservice staff member to take its prepared food program to the next level, while optimizing labor hours in response to new legislation is on the agenda.

"If we can continue growing our inside profits faster than our expenses, as we have been able to, we'll be on track for another record year," said Lacaillade.



Bailey Lyden, 32

Vice President of Retail

Company: Truenorth Energy LLC

Headquarters: Brecksville, Ohio

Number of Stores: 110

Years with the Company: 9

LIKE MANY SOCIALLY-CONSCIOUS YOUNG executives, Bailey Lyden is concerned with issues both inside his own business and beyond.

For example, Lyden said he believes some of the more threatening issues facing the c-store industry are related to government regulation. "That includes everything from FLSA (Fair Labor Standards Act) to the continued regulation of tobacco."

Lyden has become more involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, and was recently named to the group's board of trustees.

"I look forward to growing the nonprofit organization's retail partnerships, not only with Truenorth but with several other retailers," Lyden said. "This will raise money and awareness for a wonderful cause."

He's also proud of the performance of the company's truенorth convenience chain.

"We have experienced double-digit inside sales growth while increasing gross profit margin, adding millions to the bottom line," Lyden said. "We also continue reinvesting nearly our entire annual cash flow, enhancing our retail network with raze-and-rebuild or major modernization projects."

For 2017, Lyden and his team are looking to increase the number of new-to-industry locations truенorth will build.



Lindsay Lyden, 34

Vice President of Administration & Development

Company: Truenorth Energy LLC

Headquarters: Brecksville, Ohio

Number of Stores: 110

Years with the Company: 11

RECOGNIZED FOR THE SECOND consecutive year, Lindsay Lyden's main initiative as Truenorth Energy LLC's vice president of administration and development has been to build new locations and remodel existing sites for its truенorth convenience chain.

"It's been a serious initiative for the past four years in an effort to remain competitive," Lyden said. "We've ramped up our development where we used to work on one to two stores annually and now we're rebuilding five to six and remodeling four to five."

The family-owned company, which operates the truенorth convenience chain, boasts 110 locations in Ohio and Indiana.

Remodeling efforts have included expanding the fountain area from eight to 20 heads, adding iced tea, iced coffee, frozen cappuccino and other Millennial-friendly beverages; doubling its coffee varieties from three to six blends; and upgrading the prepared foods sections, to include open air coffin coolers that range from five feet to seven feet in smaller locations, to 12 feet in larger stores.

"We have a four-corner layout, with restrooms and foodservice items near the front counter and the beer cave in the back," said Lyden. "This has changed the flow of the store for the better."

Plans for 2017 at truенorth include continuing current remodeling and building projects, while also upgrading technology at the pumps to ensure secure credit card payments.



Mary Mamalakis, 29

Senior Category

Manager of

Packaged Beverages

Company: RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.

Headquarters: Atlanta, Ga.

Number of Stores: 438

Years with the Company: 7

PACKAGED BEVERAGES ARE A complex area full of creative use of design and space. For Mary Mamalakis, it's that creativity that fuels her work to ensure RaceTrac's beverage displays bring in customers.

"We're always open to innovation and exploring how a category can evolve and grow," Mamalakis said. "Using technology to create added value and enhance our guests' shopping experience has been a big opportunity within the beverage category."

With competition from usual and new players as well as shrinking real estate available to display the merchandise, engaging the customer has become a more creative endeavor.

"In addition to our usual competitors, retailers from a variety of industries, whether it's your neighborhood pet store or where you get your oil changed, are offering front-end merchandising that includes grab-and-go beverage options," Mamalakis said. "My team is consistently looking for ways to optimize the space we are given to ensure we're delivering the variety and elevated experience we've become known for."

Mamalakis expects that exciting array of products and experiences to grow next year.

"In 2017 I'm particularly looking forward to seeing more of the creativity that's been going on in the space," Mamalakis said. "In addition to creativity in product, there is also creativity in packaging and marketing that targets the c-store customer and experience with engaging campaigns."



Dana Moloney, 28
Food Service
Director

Company: Warrenton Oil Co. (FastLane Convenience Stores)

Headquarters: Warrenton, Mo.

Number of Stores: 35

Years with the Company: 3

DANA MOLONEY IS BRINGING 2016 to a close after redesigning FastLane's foodservice offering at its newest location, which was scheduled to open on December 30—and with an eye squarely on the future.

"I'm excited to try out some new ideas, like making our own doughnuts in store," Moloney said. "We're testing a few other new concepts and hoping we can roll them out to other locations if proven successful."

Last year, the Missouri-based convenience chain acquired two new stores—the latest in a string of assets.

"In addition, we acquired a 24-hour sit-down restaurant connected to one of our convenience stores. We also opened our third hotel, a Holiday Inn Express & Suites, which was awarded the Formula Blue New Development Design Award from InterContinental Hotels Group."

In 2017, Moloney and her colleagues will be working on offering additional leadership training programs. "We hope to provide our store managers, especially, with additional resources to help make them more effective leaders."

Like her company's chain, Moloney remains focused on growth.

"We have two new builds on the calendar for 2017," Moloney said. "We are also focused on employee recruitment and retention. We're trying to come up with ways to help simplify many of our processes and make each job we have just a little bit easier."



Reilly Robinson Musser, 40
Vice President of Marketing & Merchandising

Company: Robinson Oil Corp.

Headquarters: Santa Clara, Calif.

Number of Stores: 34

Years with the Company: 17

LIKE MANY CONVENIENCE STORE chains, northern California retailer Rotten Robbie enjoyed a prosperous year in 2016.

"It was a great year in our stores," said Reilly Robinson Musser, referring to the 34-store chain owned by Robinson Oil Corp. "We are in Silicon Valley, and the economy is booming here; lots of construction and lots of people in their cars driving to and from work. Most categories performed well for us."

Over the past years, Musser has expanded her duties and corporate role in the fourth-generation family business, established in the town of Watsonville in 1938.

"I am responsible for all categories, marketing, planogramming, promotions and vendor relations," Musser said. Musser also oversees staff employees assigned to social media campaigns and price book functions.

Her immediate goal for 2017 is to streamline cooler and beer cave inventories, displays and marketing plans across the chain.

"I took both categories over this year and never realized how many cooks are in the kitchen when creating schematics and determining promotions and displays," Musser said. "It's challenging to try and get the right mix while dealing with all of the different vendors, contracts, store layouts and delivery guys at the store level. I am looking forward to figuring out a strategy."



Mousa Nesheiwat, 34
Vice President

Company: Gas Land Petroleum Inc.

Headquarters: Kingston, N.Y.

Number of Stores: 200

Years with the Company: 21

MOUSA NESHEIWAT PRACTICALLY GREW up in the gas station/c-store business starting from 13, when he worked on the construction side with demolition and sweeping for his family's business, Gas Land Petroleum Inc.

This helped him learn from the ground up how to build, and then run, the New York State chain's growing locations.

"I remember selling gas at full-service stations at the age of 13, then ordering products from vendors, making sure to choose the appropriate merchandise for our customers," he said. "I grew up in this business, so I've been able to see every angle, from construction to retail to wholesale; I've always been hands-on."

Gas Land has a style that's unique in the convenience industry, mainly due to the way the company formats its buildings and the style of its stores.

"We have a different look and carry products no one else has," said Nesheiwat. "Our focus is on enhancing the appearance of our stores to bring in new customers and keep existing customers coming back."

To help accomplish this, the stores have moved more into healthy snacks and products, including deli stands that provide items with more nutritious ingredients.

"In this business, it's all about image, cleanliness and customer satisfaction," said Nesheiwat.



Whitney Douglass Oestreich, 27
Credit Manager

Company: Douglass Distributing Co.
(Lone Star Food Stores)
Headquarters: Sherman, Texas
Number of Stores: 22
Years with the Company: 3

SOMETIMES A PERSON'S CAREER path isn't defined by the bumps in the road, but rather the guidance he or she receives along the way.

Whitney Douglass Oestreich, credit manager for Douglass Distributing Co., hopes to avoid a bulk of the former by paying attention to the latter.

In this case, Oestreich works closely with her grandfather, Bill Douglass, the founder of Douglass Distributing and a former chairman of the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), to learn more about coordinating store remodels, design, strategic planning and banking relationships "in an attempt to partially fill his role when he retires."

Her regular company duties include processing credit applications for wholesale, propane and dealer accounts, marketing, social media and writing the monthly company newsletter. With so many burgeoning skills, Oestreich is uniquely positioned to tackle the future, as she acknowledges.

"With 22 convenience stores, there is always something that needs to be done. I'm partnering with my grandfather to work on new ideas and new layouts for these upcoming remodels," Oestreich said. "In conjunction, we are working to solidify the Lone Star branding elements to ensure a cohesive look and feel."

When not at work, she serves on the board of McKinney Public Safety Children's Scholarship Foundation, is an active member in the McKinney Chamber of Commerce and plans to serve on the chamber's advisory board in 2017.



Alex Olympidis, 29
Vice President, Operations & Human Resources

Company: Family Express
Headquarters: Valparaiso, Ind.
Number of Stores: 68
Years with the Company: 8

WHILE MANY CHAINS SAY they are committed to retail excellence, Family Express has taken steps to not only ensure retail greatness, but to build a legacy.

That legacy starts with company Founder, President and CEO, Gus Olympidis, who opened his first store on Christmas Day in 1975. Over the next 40 years, Family Express became a game-changer in the industry.

Olympidis remains active in the family business, which was honored as *Convenience Store Decisions'* 2015 Chain of the Year, but has been joined by his three sons Alex, Dimitri and Spiro.

"Our company strives to be the finest small chain of convenience stores and fueling centers in the world," Alex Olympidis said.

Alex Olympidis, a board member for the Young Executives Organization (YEO), helped Family Express launch the "You Matter!" campaign to increase employee wages. Since the launch of the campaign 18 months ago, total company turnover has been reduced by 20.8% and store employee turnover in the first 90 days of employment has been reduced by 17%; from 36% to 19%.

"Our gratitude towards our communities, our people and especially our parents, has only strengthened with time and compensates for any pressure that naturally comes from taking on the big challenges of the day," Alex Olympidis said. "We know we are privileged to continue to serve in truly special communities with truly special coworkers."



Dimitri Olympidis, 39
Vice President, Central Enterprises & Marketing Liaison to Operations

Company: Family Express
Headquarters: Valparaiso, Ind.
Number of Stores: 68
Years with the Company: 5

INNOVATION, SUPERIOR LEADERSHIP AND an ongoing commitment to convenience retailing are the common characteristics of the best convenience store chains in the industry. Family Express embodies all of these qualities and more.

What makes Family Express special is that it is constantly evolving. Dimitri Olympidis, son of company founder Gus Olympidis, is helping to transform the business with unique customer-focused programs and an expansive new center

store design, emphasizing Cravin's Kitchen, a hot food program offering pizza and all-day breakfast.

As a part of its "Free Fruit 4 Kids!" initiative to expand access to healthy foods, Family Express c-stores are now offering a free piece of fruit to children 12 and under. The chain also launched "Better 4 You" sections in cold and ambient sets as part of its commitment to provide customers healthier grab-and-go options.

"Our parents have provided us with a tremendous opportunity to serve our communities, customers and coworkers," Olympidis said. "This opportunity and responsibility is what drives me through any pressure that I may encounter along the way. We also have the opportunity to work together and grow together as a family and in many regards as individuals. We have all taken very different paths to get where we are today and those different experiences have prepared us in many ways for the next generation of our company."



Nick Powell, 39

Corporate Chef

Company: **QuikTrip Corp.**
Headquarters: **Tulsa, Okla.**
Number of Stores: **737**
Years with the Company: **7**

WHEN NICK POWELL BEGAN as corporate chef at QuikTrip Corp. (QT) in 2009, the company didn't have in-store kitchens, and everything had to be prepared off site. How times have changed.

"We started building commissary kitchens and bakeries about 10 years ago and had one servicing every division by 2010," Powell said. "We've gone from zero kitchens in store to having full-service kitchens with made-in-store food in all but a handful of our stores."

Powell finds the people he works with to be a major benefit. "I really love the people I work with. I think we've managed to create a really talented and diverse group of both creative and science types with a world of different experiences. It's just a plus that we all truly get along so well."

Before his role at QT, Powell was a corporate research chef at Bama, a frozen dough company, where he split his time between the U.S. headquarters and new operations in Beijing. He has a baking and pastry degree from the Culinary Institute of America and a bachelor's from the University of Oklahoma.

Heading into 2017, Powell is looking forward to a redesigning of some kitchens and operational systems to streamline production as well as continuing to implement best foodservice practices QT has learned through trial and error.



Matthew Redmond, 29

President

Company: **Raymer Oil Co. (Fast Phil's Convenience Stores)**
Headquarters: **Statesville, N.C.**
Number of Stores: **10**
Years with the Company: **6**

THOUGH NOT YET HAVING seen his 30th birthday, Matthew Redmond serves as chief decision maker for the interconnected businesses of Raymer Oil Co., Public Transport Corp. and Fast Phil's Convenience Stores—a chain of 10 convenience stores that operate in the Mooresville-Statesville region of central North Carolina.

"My role has been to oversee employees responsible for the implementation of new programs to grow both inside sales and fuel gallons," Redmond said. "I also work to make sure that Raymer Oil is meeting its responsibility for charitable giving within the communities in which we operate."

Cost of compliance and what he terms "excessive government regulation" are the biggest headwinds that challenge Redmond. But they haven't kept him from making ambitious plans for 2017.

"We are working towards a more comprehensive foodservice program . . . we're expanding our footprint in both retail and dealer operations, but our primary focus is on the expansion of company-operated stores with made-to-order foodservice."

Like many North Carolinians, Redmond is an avid fan of the NFL's Carolina Panthers and perennial March Madness participants the University of North Carolina Tar Heels basketball team. He also enjoys politics, travel and spending quality time with family, friends, his girlfriend Hannah and dog Lexie.



Quinn Ricker, 39

President & CEO

Company: **Ricker Oil Co.**
Headquarters: **Anderson, Ind.**
Number of Stores: **56**
Years with the Company: **11**

WHEN HE'S NOT WAKE surfing or wakeboarding you might find Quinn Ricker, president and CEO of Ricker Oil, riding a four-wheeler or dirt biking. As Ricker acknowledges, he's interested in "anything that goes fast."

That's probably why finds the c-store environment so appealing. Customers walk into a Ricker's to buy a snack, beverage, tobacco product or foodservice item and then quickly get on their way. During his 11 years with family-owned Ricker Oil, which operates 56 c-stores in Indiana and supplies fuel to more than 80 stores in three states, Ricker has seen plenty of larger retailers try to capitalize on the speed factor.

"Grocery competitors that have convenience offers, best-in-class c-store operators, and now more than ever, quick-service restaurants (QSRs) since we have gone heavily into foodservice the last few years [pose the biggest challenges]," Ricker said.

As president and CEO, Ricker continuously gauges such market changes. Of course, he checks in with department heads to gain their frontline insight on issues affecting business. Among the recurring issues are changing local, state and federal legislation and taxes that impact Indiana companies. Ricker said the extent that these outside factors influence business decisions and outcomes continues to confound him.

"[I'm surprised] how much the government enters into the conversation of how we run our business and set strategy," Ricker said.

COVER STORY



Michael Schiemer, 31

Digital Marketing Manager

Company: **Colbea Enterprises**
(Seasons Corner Market)

Headquarters: **Cranston, R.I.**

Number of Stores: **60**

Years with the Company: **3**

LIVING IT EVERY DAY, Michael Schiemer can attest to the fact the New England convenience store business is growing more competitive with every passing year. It's therefore essential to stand out from rivals by providing extraordinary customer service, he said.

As digital marketing manager for Seasons Corner Market, it's Schiemer's role to keep his company on the cutting edge of digital marketing technology, designed to help improve customers' experience.

Schiemer shepherds that digital presence by managing the company's websites, social media, email marketing, search engine optimization, gas pump media and mobile application.

"I believe being relatively young allows me to view the industry from a different perspective and better understand the consumer behavior of Millennials and Generation Z," Schiemer said. "[They] have tremendous spending power, and digital marketing is an outstanding way to reach them."

Looking toward to 2017, Schiemer reported his company is focused on "constantly improving our product, strengthening our community with our 'Seasons of Giving' charitable initiative, and giving customers the best c-store shopping experience."

He's happy to be working for an industry leader that keeps growing Seasons Corner Market brand. The company is just one chapter of a bigger success story.

"The c-store industry is becoming more influential and taken more seriously by the overall business community," Schiemer said.



Kyle Schrader, 32

Director of Marketing

Company: **Schrader Oil Co.**

Headquarters: **Fort Collins, Colo.**

Number of Stores: **18**

Years with the Company: **13**

LIKE MANY OTHER NEXT-GENERATION executives, Kyle Schrader has been around the family convenience store business his whole life. Founded in 1937 by Wayne Schrader, the company has earned a reputation for putting its customers first.

Kyle Schrader looks to continue that long tradition.

"My involvement with the family business has been a great experience. Growing up, I spent time working in and out of the stores, on construction crews and maintaining properties," he said. "I have always been a creative person so I chose to follow my heart and study art and design. I quickly became enamored with the technological revolution that was unfolding before our eyes. These tools gave me a breath of fresh creative air and helped me see how I could affect Schrader Oil's future."

Technology is creating a host of new opportunities to connect with customers, Schrader said. "My grandparents, father, aunt and uncle have accomplished some amazing things and I'm excited for the opportunity to take our business to the next level."

Over the past four years, Schrader and his marketing team have leveraged technology to build a new website, creating a thriving social media presence, and upgrade store hardware to better track inventory and collect more accurate store data. Currently, the team is working on a proprietary digital loyalty program, Schrader said.



Jared Sturtevant, 38

Supervisor of Digital Marketing

Company: **CST Brands Inc.**

Headquarters: **San Antonio, Texas**

Number of Stores: **1,159**

Years with the Company: **21**

JARED STURTEVANT HAS HAD the opportunity to learn from some of the industry's most respected leaders during his 21-year career in the convenience store industry. Those experiences have shaped his leadership style and help him mentor other young executives and those new to the industry.

Sturtevant began his career with Nice N Easy Grocery Shoppes in 1996 as a clerk shortly after completing high school. Sturtevant served nine years in the stores before being promoted to the corporate office as a buyer.

Prior to CST's acquisition of Nice N Easy, Sturtevant served as the director of marketing at Nice N Easy for five years. Before that, he was the director of category management. Sturtevant is also the chairman of the National Advisory Group's (NAG) Young Executive Organization (YEO), which he views as his opportunity to learn more about the industry while creating a welcoming environment for next-generation leaders.

"Working in the convenience store industry has been rewarding, even during times of uncertainty and change," Sturtevant said. "I've experienced many opportunities and worked with great mentors at both CST Brands and Nice N Easy Grocery Shoppes throughout my career. Their support of my participation in industry events like YEO and the NAG Conference has helped shape my career and given me the opportunity to share ideas and learn from other leaders in our industry."



Christie Sullivan, 33
Acquisition and
Divestitures Director

Company: Kum & Go L.C.
Headquarters: West Des Moines, Iowa
Number of Stores: 410
Years with the Company: 4

CHRISTIE SULLIVAN RECENTLY STEPPED into a new role as acquisitions and divestitures director for Kum & Go a few months ago. However, the 33-year-old professional has been up to the challenge.

Working in real estate for the first time in her career allows her “to leverage operations knowledge, financial analysis experience and negotiation skills to help the organization get where we want to be from a brand standpoint.”

In her more than three years of experience at Kum & Go, which operates 410 stores in 11 states, Sullivan spent most of her time developing and leading the company’s loss prevention department. More recently she held an interim role in operations.

“I feel fortunate to have been able to learn and grow in a few different areas in my time here, and gain a better understanding of how all of the components fit together to run a successful chain,” Sullivan said.

She noted uncertainty and changing expectations of what a convenience store should be are the biggest issues facing the c-store industry today. “We are determining the best way to cater to the changing demographic who shops our stores and to keep up with technological advances and requirements.”

Sometimes it seems there are more questions than answers. “But that’s also what makes this an exciting time to be part of the convenience store industry,” Sullivan said.



Spencer Thomas, 23
Brand Manager

Company: Southwest Georgia Oil Co.
Headquarters: Bainbridge, Ga.
Number of Stores: 80
Years with the Company: 2

A RECENT GRADUATE OF YOUNG Harris College, where he played baseball and earned his degree in business and public policy, Spencer Thomas’ youth and energy has been an asset to Southwest Georgia Oil Co.’s rebranding efforts.

The brand manager for the company, Thomas was instrumental in Southwest Georgia’s transition in 2015, when it closed 44 of its Florida stores, formerly the S & S chain, as part of a rebranding effort to its Inland banner. The company also temporarily shuttered 30 of its southern Alabama Inland sites to get the stores up to speed. Southwest Georgia Oil also operates 25 Shell- and 13 Marathon-branded locations.

“I do a lot of the imaging on the exterior of the store, gas canopy and dispensers as well as a lot of the branding for Inland, Shell and Marathon,” said Thomas. “We’re expanding and are on a growth strategy that’s consistent with remodels and new stores.”

This project began in 2015 with plans to make the stores cleaner, brighter and more shopper-friendly. The layout and product items were modified to accomplish this.

“There is definitely more of a foodservice focus in our locations, and we see that continuing and expanding in the future,” Thomas said.



Whitney Thomas, 24
Executive Assistant to the Chief Operating Officer

Company: Southwest Georgia Oil Co.
Headquarters: Bainbridge, Ga.
Number of Stores: 80
Years with the Company: 3

IF THERE’S ONE ATTRIBUTE that applies to both the convenience store industry and the companies it encompasses, it’s diversity.

“No day is ever the same, so we have to stay focused and ready to be challenged daily,” said Whitney Thomas executive assistant to the chief operating officer (COO) of Southwest Georgia Oil Co., based in Bainbridge, Ga.

That said, it’s the fast-paced environment she most enjoys about her position as the company’s retail portfolio includes about 40 stores that operate under the Inland banner, as well as 25 Shell- and 13 Marathon-branded locations.

During her nearly three years on the job, Thomas has been trusted with a growing list of responsibilities, including special projects, rebates and working with vendors under the direction of the COO. She also handles social media initiatives.

As a Millennial, Thomas can offer a valuable perspective on how to reach this all-important demographic, especially as the company prepares to implement a brand makeover.

“Our company is moving very fast and we are close to finalizing our next-generation image,” Thomas said. “We are developing very innovative concepts and ideas that will be in full use this time next year.”

During her personal time, Thomas enjoys hanging out with family and traveling. A big sports fan, Thomas also follows Florida State University football.



Steven Turner, 38
Director of Food and Beverage

Company: RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.
Headquarters: Atlanta, Ga.
Number of Stores: 438
Years with the Company: 5

A S DIRECTOR OF FOOD and beverage for RaceTrac Petroleum's 438 stores, quality and consistency in foodservice are of vital importance to Steven Turner. He knows that getting the best product every time keeps customers coming back. And he wants RaceTrac to keep those customers coming in.

"There are examples across the country of retailers that are doing it right and guests reward them with more visits and by spending more money on foodservice," he said. "It does require a substantial investment in the building design, equipment and people."

That's an investment that RaceTrac, which has locations in Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Texas, is willing to make, and one that Turner said brings excitement to the stores. To better meet the needs of customers who purchase food in-store, in 2017, RaceTrac will expand its made-to-order food offerings to include customizable pizzas, sandwiches, smoothies and milkshakes while at the same time remodeling legacy locations to prepare for the introduction of foodservice.

"There is a tremendous amount of opportunity to elevate quality and consistency of the food offering at c-stores," Turner said. "We are in the middle of that investment at RaceTrac and it is very exciting to see how positively our guests are responding."



Courtney Vercollone, 31
District Manager

Company: VERC Enterprises Inc.
Headquarters: Duxbury, Mass.
Number of Stores: 26
Years with the Company: 5

A S A DISTRICT MANAGER for VERC Enterprises Inc., which operates 26 c-stores in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Courtney Vercollone supervises six stores, where she's responsible for staffing, weekly inspections and monthly audits.

Vercollone began working at the family business, which is run by her father President and CEO Leo Vercollone, five years ago. She started her foray into the company as a marketing assistant, and later worked as a category manager before being promoted to district manager.

While the c-store chain has enjoyed steady growth, there are still industry pressures to contend with. Vercollone said the biggest issue facing convenience stores today is tobacco regulations.

"With all the new town laws on tobacco, the government is limiting what we can sell, and to whom. As a result, the neighboring towns are getting our business that we used to have before the law was passed. Over half of our stores have some kind of town restriction on tobacco, and more are to follow," she said.

She's also looking ahead to the 2017. In 2017, VERC Enterprises is set to implement a new back-office system, which Vercollone noted will simplify the company's daily paperwork and enhance data analysis.

"I am excited to how it will benefit our company and see it in action," Vercollone said.



Mark Scott Zietlow, 29
Real Estate Development Manager

Company: Kwik Trip Inc.
Headquarters: La Crosse, Wis.
Number of Stores: 510
Years with the Company: 7

S INCE THE CHAIN WAS founded in 1965 by Don Zietlow, Kwik Trip has a well-deserved reputation for treating its associates and guests like family.

Today, Kwik Trip has more than 18,000 co-workers serving guests in over 500 Kwik Trip, Kwik Star, Kwik Trip Express, Kwik Star Express and Tobacco Outlet Plus stores throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Despite its impressive size, Kwik Trip is a growing company and a leader in the c-store industry by giving its customers qual-

ity products and outstanding, friendly service at a fair price.

Just as important is the impact the third generation is having on the business. Mark Zietlow, Don's grandson, worked his way through the ranks now serves as president of Northwest Investments, a branch of Kwik Trip's real estate department. He is responsible for the development of property and management of leases associated with store locations. As a next-generation executive at family-owned Kwik Trip, Zietlow has learned from some of the most recognizable leaders in the industry.

For example, during his first few years with the company, Zietlow spent the majority of his time with his grandfather, which helped shape his values and his understanding of convenience retailing.

"Doing what's right for Kwik Trip will ensure my future in this industry and, more importantly, the futures of our 16,000-plus coworkers and their families," he said.