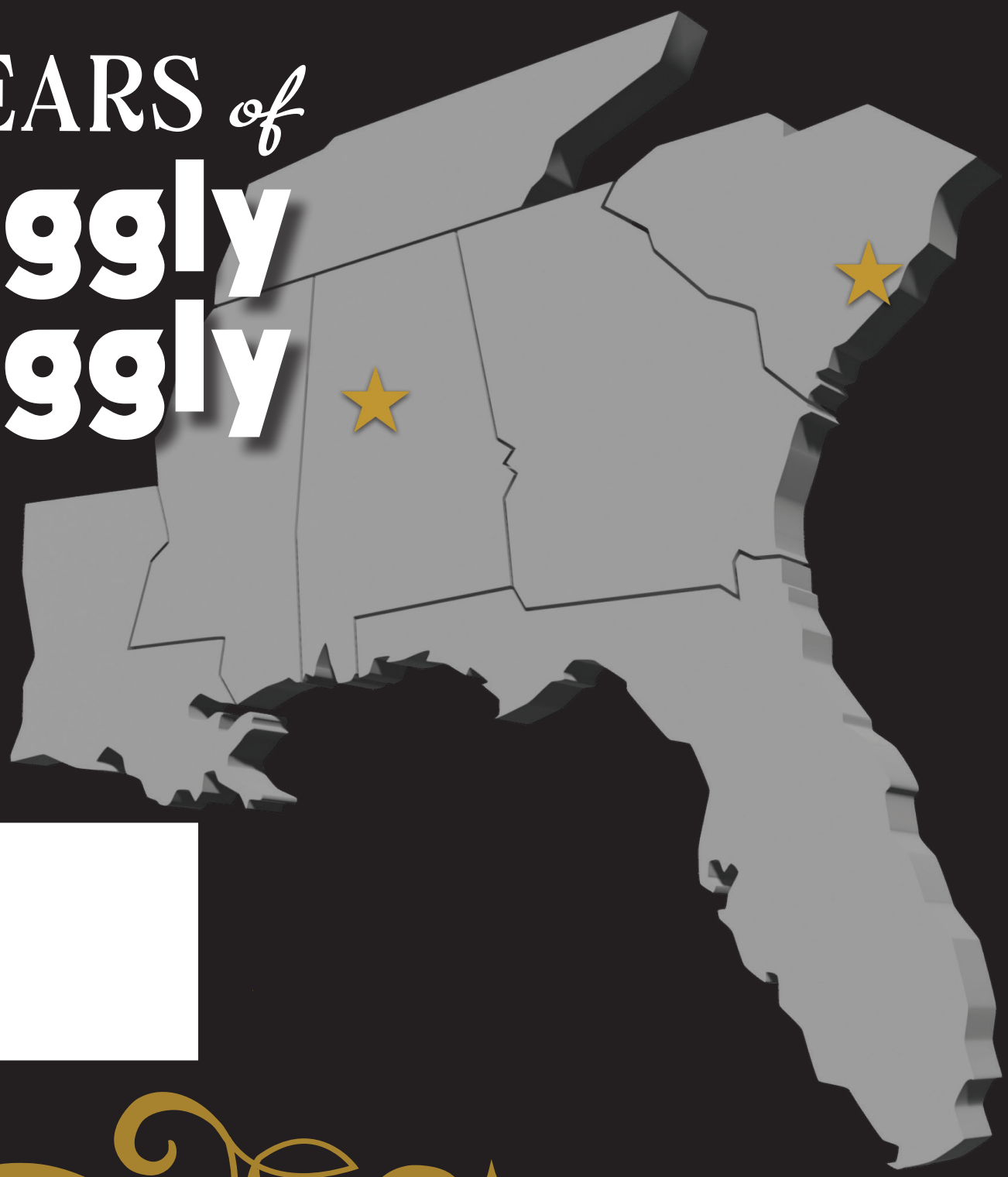
The Shelby Report of the Southeast

NOVEMBER 2026

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Let's build the next 110 years of success together!

110 Years of Piggly Wiggly



C&S pairs chain-level support with owner independence for popular regional banner

From its office in North Charleston, South Carolina, C&S Wholesale Grocers, LLC (C&S) serves 60 franchise Piggly Wiggly® stores in the Carolinas and Georgia. The office handles everything from retail pricing, retail services, merchandising, marketing, accounting, store development, air conditioning and refrigeration services. This allows the owners time to focus on their stores and customers.

That model supports a brand celebrating its 110th anniversary this year. Piggly Wiggly introduced self-service grocery shopping when its first store opened in 1916 in Memphis, Tennessee.



John Owens

"I think it's entrepreneurship of all our independent owners and the freedom to manage their stores to serve their communities," said John Owens, VP and General Manager of the Southeast for C&S Wholesale Grocers.

Owens said the independent philosophy connects today's stores to the brands' beginnings. "I think what carries forward from the origination ... is the independent mindset of how Pigs are managed versus chain grocery stores," he said.

Merchandising by market

C&S supports Piggly Wiggly stores in several Southern states and understands what customers want in each category varies from market to market.

"In our Georgia market, Blue Plate is the most popular mayonnaise," Owens said. "Whereas in the South Carolina market, Duke's is the No. 1-seller. Rice follows a similar pattern when comparing the Lowcountry of South Carolina to the Upstate.

"We also have seasonal stores such as our Hilton Head location, which David Martin owns and operates. The entire set for that store is completely different from any other Piggly Wiggly store, and it is managed by David and his team to meet the needs of his seasonal clientele.

"We are also a traditional Southern supermarket carrying many local products manufactured in the states where we operate, such as Glory and Margaret Holmes canned goods, Duke's mayonnaise and Mount Olive Pickles, just to name a few.

"We appreciate the support of our regional vendors in supporting the Pigs and the communities in which they operate."

Butcher blocks, hotlines

The perimeter departments are the differentiator for stores. Owners can take advantage of local produce, such as watermelons, collard greens, peaches, peanuts, etc.

Owens said the meat departments are full service, with local butchers on site who cut meat in store daily. They offer custom cuts and are available for special orders and events.

"The delis offer the legendary Mrs. Mac's fried chicken, as well as a traditional country hot line featuring many Southern favorites," he said. "Many of our delis have customers lined up for lunch every day to get a hot home-cooked meal at an affordable price."

The Pig owners give all the credit for the success of the fresh departments to the employees, many of whom have been with them for decades and know their customers by name.

Growing the network

Timmy Parrott, senior manager of business development, is a 40-year veteran of the Pig and C&S who helps owners find new locations as well as onboard new owners to the franchise model.

"We are very excited about the growth of the Piggly Wiggly franchise stores," he said. "Several of our owners have doubled their store count over the past few years."

For independents considering a banner change, the name carries weight.



Timmy Parrott

ABOUT THIS SECTION

Synonymous with quality throughout the Carolinas and Deep South, the Piggly Wiggly grocery banner is celebrating its 110th anniversary in 2026. "The Pig," as it's known, introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916 in Memphis, Tennessee. In the pages that follow, executives with two of the brand's biggest champions today – C&S Wholesale Grocers and Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company – as well as their independent operators discuss the successful formula and how that independence connects today's stores to the banner's beginnings.

"We have seen as much as a 10-15 percent sales increase when converting an independent to a Pig franchise store," Parrott said.

"The brand is extremely well-known and loved. With the Pig private label, along with the Pig logo merchandise and all the services we provide, it just makes sense for local independent grocers to join the Pig family."

Building on the Carolinas

Looking to the future, Owens said C&S will focus on competitive pricing and merchandising of Our Brands.

"We will also continue to invest in marketing to include radio, billboards and print, and investing in the communities in which we operate," Owens said.

For Owens, the brand's staying power comes down to community.

"We're very local, a homegrown brand, and value our customers and our communities. And that's why we've been around for 110 years and plan to be around for 110 more," he said. "You can go through all the slogans – Down Home, Down the Street; Local Since Forever. It feels like home. That's what Piggly Wiggly is – A Hometown Grocer."





For Fogle family, Piggly Wiggly banner is 'Plan A, B and C'

Chuck Fogle's father was in the grocery business, and the family operated its stores as Giant Food World until 1998, when it changed the banner to Piggly Wiggly. Nearly three decades later, Fogles Inc. operates six Piggly Wiggly stores in South Carolina with about 420 employees, including stores in Orangeburg, Denmark and Bamberg.



Chuck and Wesley Fogle

"It was a family business," said Fogle, VP and co-owner of Fogles Inc. "We thought about it, Piggly Wiggly, and we just saw it as a better opportunity."

Fogle said the name was the draw. He also cited the Charleston-based Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co., which he said "had a good business model."

"I just think it's a very good name for the South," Fogle said.

As Piggly Wiggly celebrates its 110th anniversary, Fogle said "a lot of folks know that Piggly Wiggly started the self-service model."

In 2014, Piggly Wiggly Carolina sold its operations to C&S Wholesale Grocers. The support operation became C&S Wholesale Grocers, which now serves the franchise Piggly Wiggly stores in the Carolinas and Georgia.

Fogles Inc. bought its Denmark store that year, opened its Columbia Road store in Orangeburg in 2015 and opened the Bamberg store in 2020.

The business remains a family operation. Wesley Fogle, Chuck's son, supervises a group of stores. He started out bagging groceries and later worked as a store manager.



"Everything revolved around it growing up," Wesley Fogle said.

Another son works in one of the stores, and Chuck Fogle's wife works in the office.

"We don't have a Plan B. So this is Plan A, B and C," Chuck Fogle said.

He credits independence and community ties for the brand's longevity.

"I believe us being an independent grocer has kept it relative. Being a part of the community where we live and where we shop and where we work has kept it vital, kept it going," he said.

Fogle said the family competes the way it always has.

"We do the same thing that we always do. We have clean stores, friendly stores. We pride ourselves on quality workmanship in the perishable departments," he said.

He credits C&S with helping design and equip the stores.

"Our C&S down in Charleston has a guy in charge of retail development, Joe Pinto, and he's very instrumental in helping design stores, buying equipment, shopping around, looking around for the best equipment," Fogle said. "We try and reinvest in the stores on a timely basis, keep them relevant."

The family remodeled the Columbia Road store in about 2022, adding square footage and making more room for produce. "It paid off," Fogle said.

He also pointed to a C&S pricing program.

"C&S has committed that they are going to begin an everyday low-price program this October," he said.

He noted that EDLP has become common across the industry.

"Most every chain that was not EDLP prior to this – and I'm not going to call it a recession, but it's runaway inflation that we've experienced since COVID – most everybody's begun an EDLP program," he said.

Fogle said the approach that built the business will keep the brand going.

"The grocery business is common sense. I mean, it's have a clean store, you have a friendly store, you treat the customers right and do quality work," he said. "And I think that's how we've built loyalty. I think that's what's going to keep Piggly Wiggly relevant for the future."



From bagger to 11-store owner, Smith building on deep ties to beloved brand

When David Smith walked into the back room of the Piggly Wiggly in West Ashley, South Carolina, in 2018 to introduce himself as its new owner, he was returning to the store where he started bagging groceries in 1995.



David Smith

"It was full circle for me," Smith said. "It was like, wow, this is a very surreal moment."

Smith, 48, now owns 11 Piggly Wiggly stores – four in South Carolina and seven in North Carolina – and employs 430-450 people any given week.

He spent his early career with Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co., moving into produce and advancing to assistant director of produce operations for the chain, a role that added wholesale experience to his retail background. When Piggly Wiggly Carolina closed, C&S Wholesale Grocers bought its service organization, and Smith transferred to C&S as a perishable merchandiser.

In 2014, he helped Chuck Fogle design and open a Piggly Wiggly in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

"I said, man, I would love to do what Chuck does," Smith said. "I want to take care of people and work in these communities."

In 2016, he bought the Piggly Wiggly in Hollywood, South Carolina, a store he had helped open during his Piggly Wiggly Carolina days. Two years later, he had the opportunity to buy the West Ashley location.

"That's like a dream come true," Smith said. "I immediately said yes."

In 2019, he acquired stores in Holly Hill and Summerville, South Carolina, from two families whose fathers had asked that Smith be given an option if their families left the business.

In 2024, after C&S approached him, he purchased seven stores in Eastern North Carolina from a family that had been in the business for 40-50 years.

The history of Piggly Wiggly, which introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916, is pinned to the top of each of Smith's store Facebook pages. He said loyalty to the brand has kept Piggly Wiggly around for 110 years.

"There's customers that won't go anywhere else," Smith said. "It started generations ago, and it was just, I'm going to the Pig. That part is great, but we also have to continue to evolve."

Smith said shoppers associate the banner with fresh meat and produce, while the more modern shopper also wants convenience such as cut vegetables and fruit and ready-to-heat-and-eat meals.

He said C&S' buying power allows his stores to compete on price.

"C&S is the largest wholesaler in the United States. They are massive," he said. "And their buying power is tremendous. I think from that standpoint, we have the ability to be very competitive, or in a lot of cases be the cheapest, especially in perishables."

Smith also pointed to C&S' support in technology, retail accounting and store development, as well as help with purchases such as new registers and a team that handles refrigeration and store repair.

"That's a big thing because I'm no mechanic," Smith said. "They have a lot of good people, a lot of expertise, and they'll do anything that you ask them to do."

Eastern North Carolina has more SNAP-dependent customers, and Smith said C&S has helped him get creative there. The stores price one strong meat item at or below cost as a draw and promote "Wow" items in grocery.

"It might be Piggly Wiggly sugar for $1.99, 4-pound sugar," he said. "That is an incredible price, especially in this market."

In South Carolina, the focus is on execution. Smith said it's about being ready, clean, fresh, neat and fully stocked. "Because again, you can't drive a half a mile without running into another grocery store."

After three decades in the business, Smith said it still comes down to the basics.

"We aren't building missiles and going to Mars. We're trying to sell groceries, and overcomplicating things is also something that we have to be careful of," he said. "We're just trying to sell groceries at the end of the day."



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ON YOUR 110 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



After first job led to 14 stores, Willard stays rooted in Lowcountry

As a 16-year-old high school student in 1985, Lynn Willard started working at the Cherokee Road Piggly Wiggly in Florence, South Carolina. In 2017, he bought that store.

Today, Willard owns 14 Piggly Wiggly stores through Lowcountry Grocers LLC.

Willard, who worked for Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. before becoming an owner, moved on to other locations after several years at the Cherokee Road store, including a location in Andrews, South Carolina, where he was co-operator. He became a district manager in 2001.

In 2014, Piggly Wiggly Carolina sold its operations to C&S Wholesale Grocers. The support operation now serves the franchise Piggly Wiggly stores in the Carolinas and Georgia.

That same year, Willard became an owner with six stores.

Buying the Cherokee Road store is one of his proudest moments. So is its 2022 remodel.

"We remodeled the store completely and spent a bunch of money on it, and a lot of people said I was crazy," he said. "It was a smaller store."

"It was a transformation. And it's a beautiful store. It has become one of my better performers as well."



Lynn Willard

Piggly Wiggly introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916. On what has kept the brand going for 110 years, Willard pointed first to the name.

"I think the name is certainly unique," he said. "You hear it all the time. It was just on Wheel of Fortune last night.

"I think what keeps us relevant is one benefit of being an independent is catering your location to serve the immediate community around you," Willard said. "Keeping our stores current and clean and well-lit and well-stocked, with good, friendly people and giving the customer what they want."

In the Lowcountry, he said, the Piggly Wiggly name means history and heritage.

"If you're from this area, and I mean this with all sincerity, there's a large number of people that have a Pig story, a Pig association. They know someone that worked at the Pig, there's a story about the Pig, they shopped at the Pig," Willard said.

C&S provides Willard's stores with front-end services, merchandising, marketing and store signage. He pays for those services and gains the economies of scale that come with them.

"They allow us to act as a chain and take care of things where we can concentrate on our customer," he said.

C&S also provides the stores' refrigeration service.

"There have been many times over the years where we've had a significant issue and they respond timely, and they help us save product by acting quickly," Willard said.

For remodels, he works with Joe Pinto, a C&S employee dedicated to helping retailers with those projects.

"I think by the end of this year I will have touched or remodeled in some way, form or fashion 10 or 11 of my locations," he said. "I haven't done one without Joe."

C&S holds three food shows a year – one regional and two national shows in Connecticut.

"You have the opportunity to buy in volume, and you buy at very low cost," Willard said. "And that allows you to be, in many cases, competitive with anybody in our market, including Walmart.

"There are towns that are so small, the Pig is kind of like the hub. It is where you see your customers, where you see your friends and your neighbors, people you go to church with, people you go to school with."







Congratulations Piggly Wiggly on Your 110 Year Anniversary!

From Your Friends at Kenvue

Thompsons run 5 locations in Peach State on common sense, customer service



Missy and Ashley Thompson

Missy Thompson shopped at the Piggly Wiggly in Pooler, Georgia, more than 25 years ago. She and her husband, Ashley, now own it and four other stores in the state as Thompson Markets – Piggly Wiggly Georgia.

" I would come and shop in the store, never even dreaming that I would own it one day," she said.

The Pooler store was a Bi-Lo when the Thompsons took it over, and they changed it back to a Piggly Wiggly.

The Thompsons were in the scrap metal business in 2008 when things started to turn. In 2010, they bought a small mom-and-pop grocery store 10 minutes from their home at the time. They later bought a house in McIntosh County, Georgia, where the town's Piggly Wiggly needed a new owner. They bought that store in 2014 and converted their first store to Piggly Wiggly as well.

Neither had grocery experience. Ashley had owned a hardware and feed-and-seed store, and Missy had worked in restaurants.

"We both share common sense and understanding. We try to provide to the customer what we would expect," Ashley said.

Their newest store, in Augusta, Georgia, is a former Harvey's location they bought from Southeastern Grocers in February.

Piggly Wiggly introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916. Ashley said that history "really is something that probably should be revisited and even promoted ... for all of the Piggly Wiggly stores nationwide, because it is huge."

"They were an innovator in the self-shopping experience," he added.

Ashley said his general customer base likes things the way they've always been.

"I don't really know that they care about all the new itzy ritzy stuff. They just want fair prices, good customer service, and they want a brand and employees that they can trust," he said.

"You can quote me on this: We will never be self-checkout," Missy said. "I am sorry, but our customer service is dealing with an actual person, and we're going to keep it that way as long as we can."

The Thompsons have worked with former Piggly Wiggly Carolina Co. team members at C&S Wholesale Grocers since they entered the business. Ashley said he works with C&S every week to promote produce and meat items in the circular.

"Well, I would say the No. 1 thing is always being available," he said of the C&S staff. "They don't have the corporate America big-box mentality. They understand that we're in an independent world and we're in a very competitive market."



The Thompsons also have brought back truckload sales, with C&S as the primary supplier and support.

"It's great savings in hard times, and a lot of the items that we have will fill freezers and help out throughout the winter," Ashley said.

Fellow Piggly Wiggly owners piggyback on each other's promotions to work with C&S and its buyers on lower pricing.

"None of us are in competing markets with each other, so we all want our entire team to win," Ashley said.

He said he is excited about C&S' upcoming every-day low-price program.

"We need it yesterday," he said. "This will give us an avenue to compete with big box and our major competitors, and it's going to shine a new light on Piggly Wiggly from a price perception standpoint."



McLeod leans on meat, hot food and longtime employees

Growing up around Sumter, South Carolina, Will McLeod knew where teenagers went to find a job.

"Everybody's job was at Piggly Wiggly – bagging groceries or cashier," he said.



Will McLeod

Today, McLeod oversees all six stores of McLeod Piggly Wiggly, the Sumter-based family business, which dates to 1961.

His grandfather, William R. "Billy" McLeod, who founded the company, died in 2024. His grandfather's three children, including McLeod's father, William R. "Ricky" McLeod Jr., now each own a third of the business. The grandchildren, including McLeod, own a small percentage.

After graduating from Clemson in 2006, he started his grocery career at the bottom, working every department and serving as a store manager.

"Piggly Wiggly's been a very big part of all of the family's life around here," McLeod said. "It's basically how we're identified in town."

Piggly Wiggly introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916. McLeod said Mr. Pig used to be a big thing and remains recognizable in the company's markets.

"People do love Piggly Wiggly T-shirts with the pig head on them," he said. "You'll see them all around, all around the country in places that I don't think have Piggly Wigglys."

McLeod said he thinks most of the company's employees, especially its store managers, have been with it as long as he has been alive. Many are 65 or older. A market manager who started with the company in 1970 or 1971 in Manning, South Carolina, still works two days a week.

"They've been with us for years, and then when they retire, they still work part time," McLeod said.

"A lot of those same people who worked at Piggly Wiggly [in high school], they're familiar and they still shop and buy steaks and stuff from us," he said. "Even with all the competition we have now, we have a loyal customer base ... as loyal as one can be in this age of Amazon and Walmart pickup and delivery..."

The stores' delis operate more like hot food sections, serving fried chicken, macaroni and cheese and meat-and-three plates.

"We have a real loyal following on our fried chicken and hot food," McLeod said.

Meat is a large share of sales, and the stores have big meat departments staffed by butchers. They carry a full line of premium Certified Angus Beef and have butcher cases that other stores don't offer.

The company can piggyback on C&S Wholesale Grocers for retail accounting and resets.

"They've done a good job of offering and showing technologies that we can use, and we do use some of them, but not everybody's going to implement them," McLeod said. "I guess one part of being independent is probably a good bit of stubbornness."

"As far as C&S is concerned, they do a good job moving groceries, and they are competitive on national brand grocery prices for sure," he said.

"There are not a whole lot of independents left in this part of the country, but that's one of our advantages. As long as you have a supplier with buying power, then you can do sales. You can determine what you do."

Martin family has served Hilton Head Island since 1969

When Gene Martin moved his family to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, in 1969 to work at the island's grocery store, about 2,000 people lived there.

"He gets out the first day, looks around and sees a dirt parking lot and sees palmetto trees and says, 'What have I done?'" said his son, David Martin.

Within a year, the store's owner was having some issues. Gene Martin bought the store, then an independent Red and White, on a handshake, with no contract, over about 18 months.

Today, David Martin owns the store, Martin's Piggly Wiggly. He grew up in it and worked there through high school and college. He earned an accounting degree and worked at a bank before returning to Hilton Head to work with his father.



David Martin

"I started in 1992 and I probably had it fully by 1996 or '97," Martin said of the ownership transition. "I really enjoyed it from the very beginning."

The store was the only one on the island until Winn-Dixie arrived in 1976. Martin said his father listened to customers from the Northeast and the South, and the store was probably the first in South Carolina to sell Perrier water.



As the island grew and long-term residents lived more on the north end, it became more of a seasonal store. Martin said revenue differs by about 75 percent between the slowest 10 weeks and the busiest 10 weeks of the year.

The island draws millions of visitors each year, with tourists coming from across the U.S. and around the world.

For about 40 years, the store has bought local seafood, and Martin is now a one-eighth owner in two shrimp boats, which he said helps with pricing, quality and quantity.

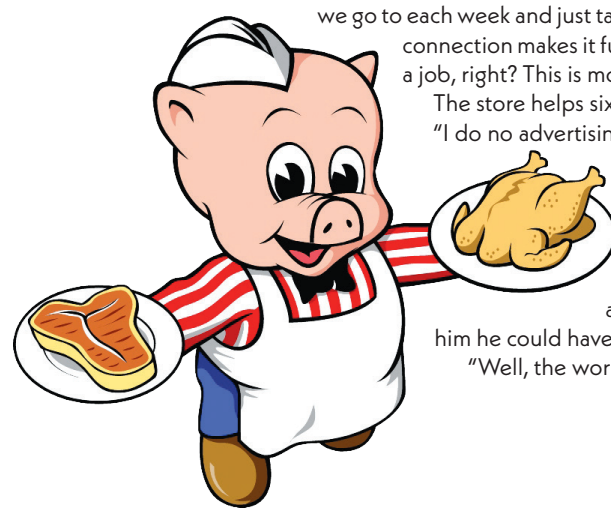
The store is 20,000 square feet, while stores around it are 45,000-50,000 square feet. Martin said he packs the store with what customers ask for and uses many vendors to find unique products.

Martin is part of the Charleston-based group of Piggly Wiggly retailers supplied by C&S Wholesale Grocers.

Teenagers who come to work for him in the summer usually stay all four years of high school, and some stay through college. A few have made their careers there. Martin said the family-type atmosphere at the store helps foster a sense of belonging and a culture of helping others.



"We have shut-ins that we go to each week and just take them groceries. And that kind of connection makes it fun," Martin said. "Otherwise it's just a job, right? This is more of a lifestyle for us."



The store helps six area food banks.

"I do no advertising. I do donations and I do community stuff. And that works for me because the local community knows us as that kind of people," Martin said.

His high school friends have asked him why he stayed, telling him he could have seen the world.

"Well, the world came and saw me," he said.



Piggly Wiggly Alabama builds momentum with performance-driven strategy

Revenue at Bessemer, Alabama-based Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. rose more than 6 percent in its most recent fiscal year, a gain President and CEO Christopher Brown credits in part to listening to retailers and giving them solutions that help them perform in their markets.



Christopher Brown

"There's a lot of people challenged right now with negative comp sales," Brown said.

Some of that growth comes from existing customers buying more categories from PWADC.

"They've been buying this category from another source for a long time, and now they're buying it from Piggly Wiggly Alabama at a much lower cost," he said.

Brown describes PWADC's value proposition as one rooted in its past.

"Piggly Wiggly Alabama's 68-year history of supporting retail families in this geography is really the anchor and the cornerstone of not only our current progress, but what I think our future success will continue to be," he said.

The Piggly Wiggly banner is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year.

Having worked for other wholesalers during his career, Brown said Piggly Wiggly Alabama is "more in line with the true old-school wholesale proposition where the retailer is first."

Across its six-state region, PWADC supplies various formats including conventional, cost plus and some upscale formats.

"Our ability to offer solutions as diverse as the customers we serve is paramount in the success of Piggly Wiggly Alabama, but also the success of our retailers to not only survive against competition but to thrive and to continue to grow," Brown said.

The company organizes its offering around products, knowledge and services – all of which band around this guiding proposition: trusting relationships.

"Retailers can call on PWADC's counselors and fresh specialists, or on CFO Matt Peters if they need help financially," Brown said. "When a store has a retail pricing issue on a Friday night, two PWADC representatives may drive three hours on Saturday morning to help solve it.

"You can't put that in a playbook and do it as consistently as we do it and do it as well as we do it, because we are going to create that solution to help that customer."



Performance-driven results

When Brown joined PWADC in early 2025, the company's first step was an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). It included employees and customers across its markets, since challenges in Mississippi may differ from those in Alabama, Tennessee or Georgia.

"We had people asking for a line of cheese, and we quickly added a line of products to our portfolio. And we had other people asking for a different line of fresh chicken. I'm not telling you we didn't listen before; we did. But we had to do it better," Brown said.

Input from the SWOT and the board's priorities shaped PWADC's performance-driven strategy, with plans including a new TPR program and new milk and water programs.

Of the performance-driven strategy, Brown said the new team "has attacked that challenge" and generated significant cost of goods savings for the retailers.

The PWADC Food Show also has changed. Products booked and sold at last year's event rose more than 70 percent over the show held the year before Brown arrived. This fall's show cycled those results with increases of more than 30 percent, and allowance income grew even more than those numbers, Brown said.



"Hot Buys" grew from 20-30 items to more than 120. These are seasonal items meant to stock endcaps and other display areas for the next 14 weeks at prices that let retailers compete against chains and big-box operators while earning a standard margin for the category. PWADC works with vendors and brokers on items such as a full pallet mod for larger stores and a mini mod for smaller ones.

"I'm tired of seeing full-price product on the end caps," Brown told the recent food show audience during a lunchtime address. He added that PWADC wants to understand what each store needs.

"We need to be the wholesaler that takes the time to know what are the right items my store needs to have, based on consumer demand, and have that at the right cost that they can retail it aggressively, beat competitors, and also make that margin that they deserve to make to protect their ultimate profitability," Brown said.

The show also introduced a salad bar program, Certified Angus Beef items, new grinds, new seafood, private label bratwursts and sausages and smoked meats from Stahl-Meyer Foods.

Digital ecosystem

A few years ago, PWADC had 80-some stores on loyalty programs, and many were not using the full platform. Through partnerships with AppCard and RSA, 150 of its 240-plus stores now have a full loyalty solution.



Signing up additional stores and engaging more shoppers is part of the strategy going forward, Brown said.

PWADC has offered a traditional print advertising service for decades. This year, through a partnership with Ideal Design House, its advertising department began offering retailers digital ads and apps. About 50 stores are live, with about 30 more coming, Brown said.

Please see page 26

From page 25

PWADC also funds digital coupons through its Savings in a Snap program and has e-commerce relationships with eGrowcery, Instacart and DoorDash.

The team has helped stores upgrade their websites and is launching a master retailer website. A shopper who looks up Piggly Wiggly and enters a ZIP code will reach that store's own site. If a store does not have one, the shopper will land on the master site, which will include retail media offers, new items, recipes and the store's ad.

PWADC also has 100 stores using Grocery TV and offers in-store audio through Adergy. At the food show, it introduced a Piggly Wiggly credit card through AppCard that sends rewards to Pig Perks for groceries.

The PWADC board voted unanimously to partner with BRdata and to fund a base BRdata program, an $1,800 value per store, for every store PWADC supplies as a wholesaler.

"Having real-time immediate data on your business, it's not a trend. It's now. It's a reality," Brown said. "It cannot be you're using data from six weeks ago off a financial you got from a third-party accounting firm. You're going to be in trouble if that's the case."

PWADC also is putting artificial intelligence to work. The company is in conversations with logistics providers about demand planning and is working on AI uses for supply chain forecasting and for how product moves through its warehouse from receipt to reserve to pick.

Winning back stores

When some Winn-Dixie stores were put up for sale years ago, the Piggly Wiggly Alabama group did not secure any sites. In the latest round of sales of Winn-Dixie stores, it picked up 12, which is more than anyone else bidding for stores in the offering, Brown noted.



PWADC Board of Directors



"It's got to come down to the retailers of Piggly Wiggly having confidence in the management team here to service them, to support their needs, for them to buy and make an investment in that store," he said.

The fall food show also drew more new prospects than ever.

"Where Piggly Wiggly lost some stores years ago, we've told the board, we don't just want a few of them back; we want all of them back," Brown said. "They are Piggly Wiggly stores under Piggly Wiggly banners, and they should have the Piggly Wiggly product in their stores, and they should be supported by the finest wholesaler in the region."

Vendors are taking notice as well. Some have seen double-digit turnarounds in their business, as PWADC recently hosted business reviews with numerous top CPGs and other suppliers.

What's next

PWADC has 12 strategic initiatives underway across logistics, technology, process, merchandising, sales and the Piggly Wiggly brand. The board monitors their execution, and all have end dates that extend into 2027.

Nine more initiatives are being vetted to start in fiscal 2027, each meant to return improved patronage or lower cost of goods to retailers, Brown said.

Logistics includes an upgrade for grocery handling, investments in receiving and appointment scheduling, Dematic warehouse automation and a security upgrade for PWADC's entire campus, which includes a 1.1 million-square-foot facility. The company also is working with Penske, which helps manage its transportation equipment and provides fleet utilization data.

"There's opportunities to run our fleet more efficiently, which ultimately is going to mean lower cost of goods or higher patronage for our customers," Brown said.

PWADC also is working with CPGs and brokers on category management to improve execution on new items and to help retailers address competitive situations faster without hurting their pricing image.

"The Piggly Wiggly team, supported by its customers, directed by its board, is operating as one cohesive unit," Brown said.

He closed his remarks at the recent food show with a promise. "I've said this before: We're just getting started."

Wholesaler acts as headquarters for 250 member stores across 6 Southeast states

Independent grocers compete in a marketplace shaped by national chains, regional operators, mass merchants, drug stores, etc. They need more than products delivered to their back doors; they need practical expertise, consistent, reliable and responsive service and a partner that understands the realities of running a store.

For Tony Chicarelli, VP of sales and store development at Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company (PWADC), that is the purpose of a cooperative. PWADC's retailer members are owners, not just customers. Through their investment in the cooperative, they have a stake in its success – and, as Chicarelli puts it, "in essence, we work for them."



Tony Chicarelli

That ownership structure forms the partnership. Members have ongoing access to people across the organization at any time.

"The PWADC business model is fully transparent to our retailers, including any fees that may be included in the product costs," Chicarelli said. "The goal is a clear, dependable business relationship in which retailers understand what they are paying for, allowing them to focus on running their operation and providing the highest level of customer service to their shoppers.

"We as a wholesaler will, at times, operate as the corporate office for the independent retailer. Independents may not have their own marketing department, specialized staff or purchasing scale independently. PWADC works to help close that gap while allowing each retailer to maintain the independence and local identity that distinguish the store."

Chicarelli joined PWADC in May 2025 and is responsible for accelerating profitable sales growth for its members and the company, providing retailer operations support and store development initiatives.

His role includes helping retailers address competitive challenges, sharing best practices and attacking opportunities that can strengthen their businesses while enhancing the consumer shopping experience. His focus and priority remain spending time in the marketplace, visiting PWADC-serviced stores as well as others.

"You cannot obtain a true understanding or broad view of the retail landscape across all of markets while sitting in an office," he said.

That field perspective is backed by a team of retail sales counselors who average 45 stores each, along with specialists in departments such as produce, meat, deli, dairy, bakery and center

Please see page 30

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Co-op model puts ownership, profits in members' hands

Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. (PWADC) in Bessemer, Alabama, delivered nearly 30 million cases to independent grocers in the fiscal year just ended, and revenue rose more than 6 percent year over year, according to Matt Peters, chief financial officer. Peters said the cooperative experienced good organic growth through the year and had a great story to tell at its Oct. 13 shareholders meeting.

The grocers receiving those cases also own the cooperative, a model Peters said differs from what many wholesalers offer.



Matthew Peters

"The cooperative model, to me, is the best model available for an independent grocer," he said.

Members have a say in the policies and rules that govern their wholesaler, and PWADC's board is made up of retailers rather than attorneys or outside executives.

"Ours is comprised strictly of grocery retail people. That's who makes up our board," Peters said.

Members also own stock in the cooperative and share in any profits left at the end of the year. After distribution expenses are covered, that profit is returned to members as patronage dividends, paid each April.

"They get that check every single year in order to share in the profits of the cooperative that they own," Peters said. "And those are meaningful checks to our members."

He said the checks issued next spring will reflect a standout year.

"April of 2027 will be a fantastic celebratory time for the members of Piggly Wiggly Alabama because it will be one of the best years, if not the very best year, in the history of our company," Peters said.

Peters has been with PWADC for 15 years and has worked under four presidents, including current President and CEO Christopher Brown. He said each brought different skill sets and the cooperative gained from each tenure.

He said that range of perspectives extends to the membership, which includes retailers that carry the Piggly Wiggly banner and some that do not.

"We're comprised of different independent retailers with slightly differing viewpoints, but at the end of the day, that diversity makes us stronger as a cooperative, for sure," Peters said.

Asked what has kept the cooperative moving in the right direction, Peters pointed to the trust and commitment of its core independent operators, many of whom serve on the board today.

"There's really a proof of concept over the years that, hey, I can trust my wholesaler and my cooperative; they're going to deliver me what I need when I need it," he said.

PWADC continues to invest in technology, including refinements to its proprietary retail pricing system, which it developed in-house. Following a unanimous board vote, the co-op is also bringing on a partnership with BRdata that will offer retailers new insights, which Peters said he hopes PWADC also can use to buy more efficiently.

As artificial intelligence evolves, it is hard for one entity to keep up with every development.

"So to partner with somebody like BRdata, who has a broader scope than maybe one particular organization does, has been a really cool and exciting thing," he said.

Peters said the board wants to provide the latest tools to help retailers with selection, planograms and store layout, so they can remain the preferred grocer in their communities.

On the capital side, PWADC will invest more than $4 million over the next six months to modernize a significant part of its warehouse, including its pick-to-belt operations. Peters said the project will make the warehouse more efficient for selectors and safer for employees, and he said he hopes it will mean a better delivered product for retailers.

"We're not going full automation, don't get me wrong," he said. "But we are modernizing a significant part of our warehouse."

"And I will say, in my tenure here at Piggly Wiggly Alabama, our cooperative has never been stronger."

Expanding on Pig legacy through merchandising, private label, digital support

Piggly Wiggly introduced self-service grocery shopping in 1916, and 110 years later, the brand's recognition remains an advantage for the independent retailers supplied by Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. in Bessemer, Alabama.

Tod Seiling, chief merchandising officer, said the cooperative pairs that brand with promotional, private label and digital support to help member stores compete in their markets.

"I feel our work goes far beyond distributing groceries," Seiling said. "We help the independent retailers serve their communities. We succeed when they do."

PWADC publishes a weekly ad with items and costs, but its retailers write their own promotional ads. He said that approach sets PWADC apart from some other wholesalers and co-ops as well as the chains.



Tod Seiling

"We take it upon ourselves to negotiate with our supply partners on behalf of the co-op the right items at the right cost of goods that will allow them to compete in their marketing areas against any type of retailer," Seiling said.

Those items are geared to seasonality, holidays, trends and consumers who may be cash-strapped, giving retailers the right assortment to choose from for their promotions.

Food shows are a big part of what PWADC offers its members. The co-op's September 2026 Fall Food Show marked the fifth consecutive one of record sales and savings for retailers. It was Seiling's third show with PWADC.

"The retailers and the suppliers and our associates, all of them were extremely excited about the energy, the collaboration, the conversation, the interaction at the show," he said. "It was fantastic."

Seiling said consumer recognition of the Piggly Wiggly name has been earned over time and is, in his opinion, the co-op's greatest asset.

"Consumers know the Piggly Wiggly name, the brand, and they associate it with quality and value," he said. "We take it seriously, the protection of the brand and the trust behind it."

Seiling said the private label program is leaning toward innovation, from label design to line extensions to growth in categories where the brand does not have an abundant assortment.

He noted that fresh continues to play a big part in helping PWADC members win with today's consumer.

"Across meat, produce, deli and bakery, it really comes down to offering the right mix of quality, value and convenience," Seiling said.

In meat, case-ready programs can help retailers manage labor challenges, keep products in stock and offer more value-added and pre-portioned choices.

"We're also continuing to see strong interest in premium options like Certified Angus Beef, Kretschmar deli meats and cheeses, organic and grass-fed beef, and fresh seafood," Seiling said. "We're also broadening our private-brand lineup in high-demand categories such as bacon, fresh and smoked sausage, hot dogs, luncheon meats and frozen poultry, with high-quality options at attractive price points.

"In produce, we're using ZIP-code-level insights to better tailor ethnic and specialty assortments to local shoppers."

PWADC is also working with a dedicated transportation partner to build full truckloads, even when that means multiple grower or packer stops, to help lower freight costs and improve freshness.

"We're paying close attention to the growing demand for convenient, all-day snacking options, especially in categories like grapes, apples and berries," Seiling said.

On the digital front, PWADC has onboarded many of its retailers and helped them get into the digital space through in-store Grocery TV, audio with Adergy, loyalty platforms and e-commerce.

The majority of stores are now on a loyalty program, many are getting into e-commerce and digital couponing continues to gain acceptance among retailers.

Seiling said redemptions of the digital coupons the company is producing and funding on behalf of its retailers are far outpacing industry averages. "So we fully recognize the need to play in the digital space, and we continue to gain ground."

Looking ahead, Seiling said the co-op's path forward is building on tradition, understanding today's consumer and serving as "that solution provider, that information provider" for its retailers.

"From a merchandising perspective, my vision begins with strengthening the Piggly Wiggly private-label brand through innovation, staying current with product trends, and providing the promotional and marketing support needed to build awareness and drive trial," he said. "At the same time, we must maintain a relentless focus on reducing costs and delivering value."

On the marketing side, he said the goal is to help retailers navigate the continued shift toward digital engagement and connect with consumers however they choose to shop.

"Ultimately, merchandising and marketing must work together to give our retailers the assortment, value, insights and capabilities they need to compete successfully," Seiling said.

Joining PWADC in 2025, Seiling said he already has seen the qualities that have sustained the organization for 110 years: a genuine sense of family and a cooperative spirit grounded in mutual success.

"And really my focus is honoring the legacy, ensuring the brand continues to connect with the next generation," he said. "Not just rely on the success of the past, but how do we continue this extraordinary foundation for the next 110 years?"

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From page 26

store. Their work can include innovation, optimized product assortment and merchandising best practices, improving department execution, strengthening consumer appeal and finding ways to support profitable sales growth.

The approach is not one-size-fits-all. A store's needs depend on its shoppers, neighborhood, competition and resources. PWADC's role is to bring a tool chest of products, knowledge and services to each retailer and help determine what makes sense locally and regionally.

Chicarelli said the strength of PWADC's relationships and regular and timely communication are crucial when something does not go as planned. The team works to resolve problems quickly and, when possible, get a retailer what is needed the same day or the next.

Testimonials and referrals from member-retailers – and the fact that members serve on the cooperative's board – help demonstrate the value of that relationship.

PWADC's support can extend well beyond day-to-day sales and service. Through its store-development work, the cooperative can assist retailers with projects ranging from ground-up construction to remodels and equipment upgrades. That may include flooring, refrigeration, lighting, décor, equipment selection and project management.

Chicarelli sees store development as an important way to help independent retailers keep their businesses current and competitive. Improvements can refresh the shopper's experience, support better store operations and help a retailer make sound decisions about a major investment. Members also earn patronage on equipment purchased through PWADC, another benefit of the cooperative structure.

Recent store transitions have created opportunities for this kind of support. Chicarelli said retailers acquired 12 former Winn-Dixie and Harvey's locations in the latest divestiture round within PWADC's geography. Several stores required substantial work, including total renovations, new flooring and equipment. One location on University Boulevard in Tuscaloosa recently reopened.

The work is tailored to the circumstances of each store. Some retailers may need a full renovation; others may be focused on specific equipment, presentation or operational improvements. PWADC can help retailers evaluate those needs and navigate the process.

The Piggly Wiggly name carries a 110-year grocery heritage and a strong connection to local communities. That history is associated with neighborhood service, fresh departments, quality and assortment – but the brand is not limited to small-town or rural markets. Piggly Wiggly stores serve urban neighborhoods and upscale trade areas as well, adapting to the shoppers and communities around them.

For Chicarelli, the brand's local roots and the cooperative's support model work together. Retailers know their communities, while PWADC brings resources, expertise and scale that can help them compete. The objective is not to make every store look or operate alike, but to help each retailer deliver the right experience for its customers.

PWADC recently completed a record fiscal year for growth and dividend and patronage payouts, Chicarelli said. That momentum gives the cooperative additional opportunities to invest proactively in innovation, equipment, digital marketing, e-commerce, etc., while continuing to strengthen the support available to member-retailers.



Scale matters in the grocery business. Vendors value the ability to reach a network of retailers, and a cooperative can help independent stores benefit from that combined presence without giving up their individual ownership or local decision-making. For PWADC, the opportunity is to turn that scale into practical value at store level.

Its service area spans Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana – markets with different shoppers, competitors and operating conditions. Chicarelli's message is that the cooperative's resources are most useful when they are connected to each retailer's specific goals.

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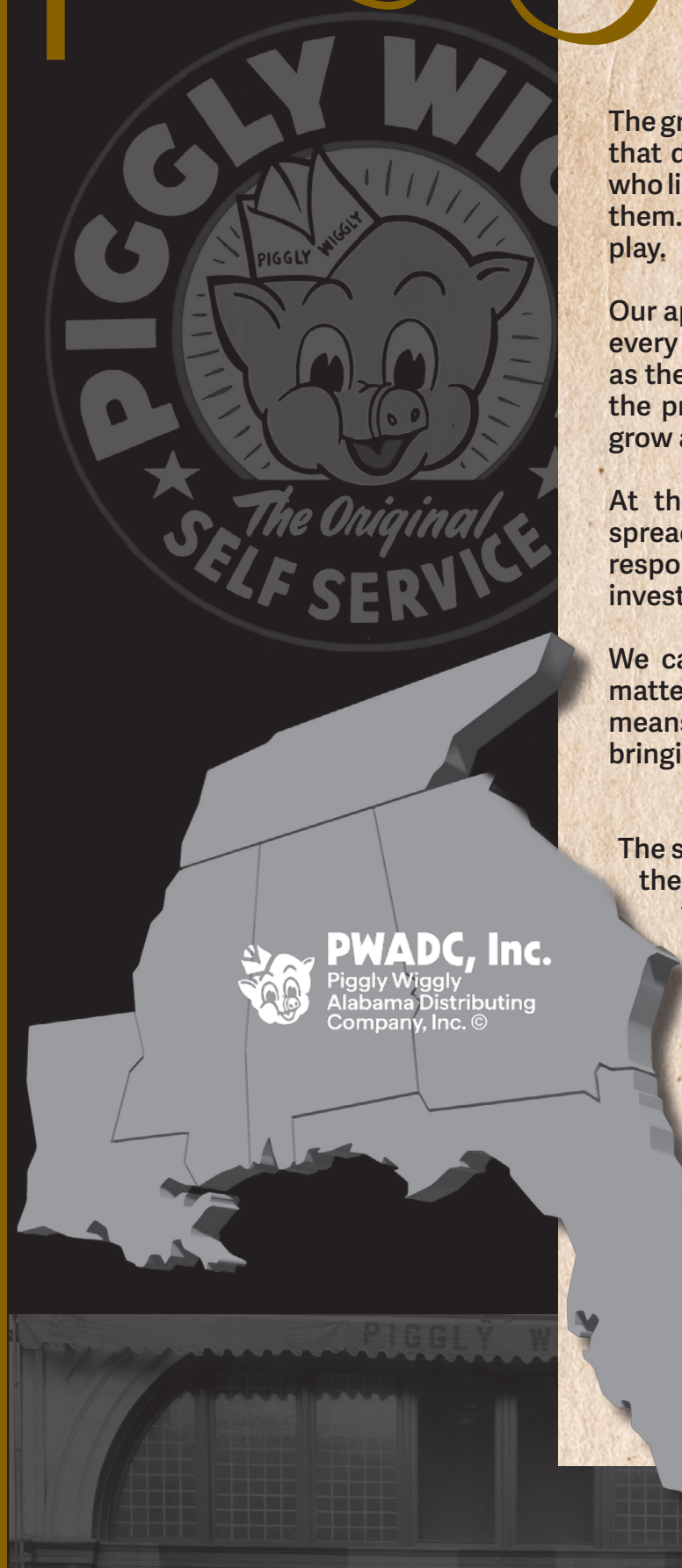
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For 68 years, Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing company has been built around a simple belief: when independent retailers succeed, we succeed with them.

Today, that commitment is stronger than ever.

The grocery industry continues to change, and independent retailers face challenges that demand more than a traditional wholesale relationship. They need a partner who listens, understands their business and is willing to continually evolve alongside them. That is the role we believe Piggly Wiggly Alabama is uniquely positioned to play.

Our approach begins with the retailer. We listen to our customers, understand that every store and every market is different, and work to provide solutions as diverse as the retailers we serve. Our goal is to not just distribute products, but to provide the products, knowledge, and services that help independent retailers compete, grow and thrive.

At the heart of that approach is something that cannot be measured on a spreadsheet: Relationships built on Trust. Our team works alongside our retailers, responding to their challenges, recognizing their opportunities and remaining invested in their success.

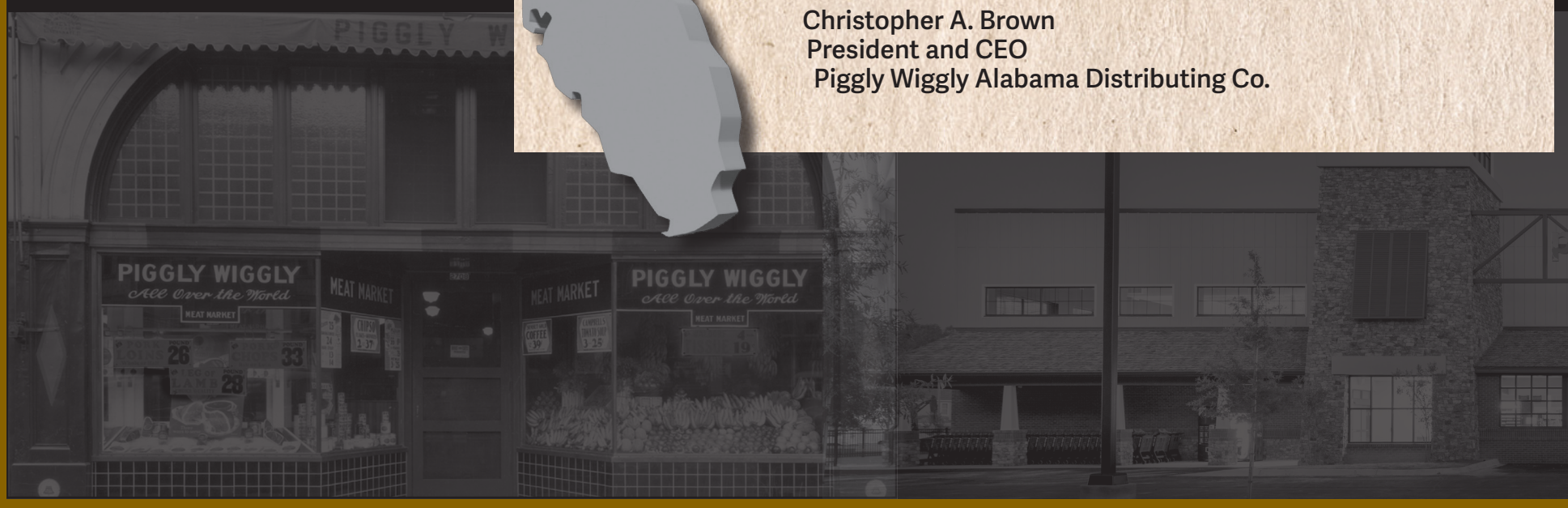
We call our approach Performance-Driven because we believe good ideas only matter when they translate into meaningful results for the people we serve. That means continually challenging ourselves to improve, investing in the future and bringing the entire organization together around one objective: Retailer Success.

The strength of Piggly Wiggly Alabama is ultimately the strength of its retailers and the strength of retailers working together through a cooperative built to serve them.

For our current members, that means a partner committed to helping you move forward. For retailers considering their next chapter, it is an opportunity to be part of something that is gaining momentum, investing in its future and working every day to make independent retailers stronger and more profitable.

Happy 110th anniversary!

Christopher A. Brown
President and CEO
Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co.



To our friends across the grocery industry:

Piggly Wiggly celebrates our 110th anniversary this year. Behind the unique and iconic brand that is loved all over the country, are independent entrepreneurs who live and work in the communities where they operate. Many of our customers, both franchisees and licensees, have been in business for decades, keeping our communities fed.

In North Charleston, South Carolina, C&S Wholesale Grocers, LLC supports 60 independent franchise Piggly Wiggly stores, owned by 16 different owners. We serve as a chain headquarters for those stores, including customer experience through our key account representatives, marketing, merchandising, retail pricing, accounting, store development, air conditioning and refrigeration services, IT and retail support.

Using that support, our owners and operators focus on the management of their business, taking care of the needs of the communities they serve. They are given the freedom to run their stores to best meet the needs of their shoppers.

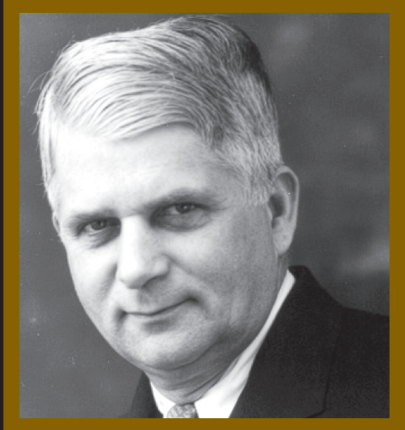
Our team makes every effort to support our owners even as our store count grows — up nearly 25% in the past 10 years. Our Lumberton distribution center, which came to C&S through the acquisition of SpartanNash, gives us a home base for operations in the Carolinas, and we continue to anticipate more growth.

C&S and Piggly Wiggly are both more than 100 years old and share the common value of taking care of customers and supporting the hometown grocer. Together, we will continue to focus on customers, community and feeding people's lives every day.

Thank you,

John Owens
VP and General Manager of the Southeast
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Switch has done 'more for our bottom line than anything else'

When Columbus, Georgia-based JTM Corp. converted Lewis Jones Food Market to the Piggly Wiggly banner, the change consisted of Piggly Wiggly private label and new signs on the front door. Sales rose 27 percent in one week.

JTM had operated the store as Lewis Jones Food Market for 10 years because owner Keith Milligan's father got his first job in the grocery business working for Jones. Milligan said every store JTM has converted to Piggly Wiggly from another banner has seen a sales increase, with gains of 8-15 percent the norm.

"But that one, it was like, oh, why did we wait so long to do this?" he said.

JTM has operated locations under four banners and now runs 13 Piggly Wiggly stores – nine in Georgia and four in Alabama. Milligan runs the business with his brother, and each has two children in the company. Milligan is also board chairman of Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. in Bessemer, Alabama.



Keith Milligan

JTM switched to PWADC in the mid-1980s after buying from Fleming Companies and Supervalu.

"And the switch to Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Company did more for our bottom line than anything else we've ever done," Milligan said. "So just with it being a co-op, if the warehouse makes extra money off of you, you get it back."

He said for-profit wholesalers are in business to make money off retailers, while the co-op's incentive is to grow the whole group.

"It's like a family. We're all running it together for the good of everybody," he said.

Milligan has been chairman for about four years. He said every recent board decision has been unanimous, with the hiring of President and CEO Christopher Brown one of the first such votes.

He said the co-op's gains go beyond high sales and patronage: Cost of goods has come down. A milk cost reduction Brown put in place in his first few months saves JTM's 13 stores $160,000 a year. "That was a game changer. We were having trouble competing on milk, and now we don't," Milligan said.

Rather than keep the savings, JTM lowered its milk prices, and its milk movement has gone up.

Milligan said that in an earlier round of Winn-Dixie closures before Brown arrived, the Piggly Wiggly group picked up no stores. During the most recent round of sales of Winn-Dixie stores, PWADC members purchased several. Milligan attributed that to the team Brown put in place, including Tony Chicarelli, Tod Seiling and Brian Butcher.

"Had he not been here, we'd have been at zero, just like before," he said.

Milligan said about 12 prospects that buy from other wholesalers came to PWADC's September food show after hearing about the excitement around the co-op, and he hopes at least two or three join. One prospect thanked Milligan for walking the show with his group. "And I said, welcome to the Piggly Wiggly family."

Milligan noted that it is difficult for an independent to coordinate digital programs alone. An operator could meet with RSA, AppCard, Ideal and BRdata at the NGA Show, but PWADC brings them together and helps each one work with the others.

JTM has used RSA's digital program since about 2018. Its weekly digital promotions with manufacturers have grown from two or three to 10 or 12, and no manufacturer that has bought one has stopped, Milligan said.

"It's let us communicate with our shoppers one-on-one where we've never been able to do that before," he added.

In another unanimous decision, the board chose to have PWADC fund BRdata for every member store whose primary supplier is PWADC, at no charge. With the resulting sales data, the warehouse will be able to show manufacturers the results of promotions, as chains do.

"And of course it's not free, the whole group pays for it. But then everybody would be foolish not to sign up for it," Milligan said.

Piggly Wiggly has been in Columbus since 1918, two years after the first store opened in 1916. The banner is celebrating its 110th anniversary this year.

After a Chick-fil-A went into one JTM store's parking lot, store sales were unaffected, but Piggly Wiggly merchandise sales tripled.

"Piggly Wiggly in our market, I mean, you say Piggly Wiggly and it just makes people smile," Milligan said.

He said PWADC is big enough to get the best prices but small enough that anyone can call the president or the chairman.

"And in a co-op this size ... your ideas are heard," he said.



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Thanks to PWADC, operators got much-needed 'swag' back

Kevin McDaniel and his father, W.R. McDaniel, entered the grocery business in 1988 when they bought a small store in Sneads, Florida. Today, McDaniel Family Investments operates 14 stores, along with other businesses.

In the last six months, the company bought and converted six former Winn-Dixie and Harveys stores – three in Montgomery, Alabama, and one each in Sandersville and Eastman, Georgia, and Havana, Florida.

"That was a lot of growth ... to do at one time, but we've handled it pretty good," McDaniel said. "Sales are up."

When the family bought the Sneads store, McDaniel had a business degree and was coaching, and his father had retired from the timber business. His mother, a nurse, left her job to join them.



Kevin McDaniel

Before they took over the store, McDaniel spent nearly a year working every department at John Higdon's store in Quincy, Florida, to learn the business. Higdon Grocery Company later sold to Wetterau, which sold to Supervalu. McDaniel, who had been happy with HGC and then Wetterau, moved to Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. in Bessemer, Alabama, after the sale to Supervalu.

He said the co-op didn't have the bells and whistles of the other companies, but its cost of goods was great. When he joined, he met then-PWADC President John Terrell Wooten, who told him the dividend should go up through higher sales and productivity and lower costs, never by charging more for goods.

"We want to sell you the cheapest possible goods you could possibly get," McDaniel recalled Wooten telling him.

McDaniel said PWADC is back to that philosophy under President and CEO Christopher Brown.

"Since Christopher Brown's been here, it is like the lights came on," he said. "We got better cost of goods. Private label has got back in line."

McDaniel said he has not seen a dividend like this year's since joining the co-op.

"That's our money coming back to us. And that's money you can use for remodels, you can use to get cost of goods down. It's money that you can help grow your business with," he said.

At 60, with 35 years in the business, McDaniel said he had been ready to turn the company over to his son and brother.

"Honestly, it's just like a breath of fresh air. I've been rejuvenized. And I'm excited again," he said. McDaniel pointed to the deals at PWADC's food shows, where "hot buy" whiteboards listing promotions now crowd the front door. He said vendors that once stayed away, including P&G, now participate and bring deals.

"And you don't get on that whiteboard unless we can sell cheaper than Walmart and make a profit. You won't be on the whiteboard. That's Christopher's philosophy," McDaniel said.

He said the excitement has reached vendors and brokers too, and he believes Brown sat down with each of them to ask what could be handled better.

Other changes include a new digital ad program and remodel support. A salad bar program coming in January will take most of the labor out of salad bars, which McDaniel said have been labor-intensive in the stores that have them.

He credited the PWADC board for the decision to hire from outside.

"I just take my hat off to the board. What a hire. They couldn't have done any better," McDaniel said of Brown.

Today, he added, any independent in the Southeast that is not buying from PWADC is making a huge mistake.

"I can't imagine being anywhere else ... We got a little swag back up here with Piggly Wiggly. And that's what we needed."

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‘This is the best version of Piggly Wiggly there ever has been’

Tom Coogle estimates that Reynolds Foodliner’s food show purchases alone have tripled in two years at Piggly Wiggly Alabama Distributing Co. He said that growth reflects more deals at the cooperative, which has a renewed focus on lower cost of goods.

“And all the while that our COGS are going down, our performance is getting better and our patronage dividends are growing while we lower cost of goods,” said Coogle, president of Reynolds Foodliner. “I don’t think that as a grocer you can ask for anything more out of your warehouse.”



Tom Coogle

Reynolds Foodliner operates in Valdosta, Jesup, Hazlehurst, McRae, Montezuma and Adel, Georgia, along with several businesses in Tifton. Most of its stores are Piggly Wigglys.

In Tifton, the company owns Georgia Best Foods, a specialty butcher shop launched at the start of the year, and a Your Pie pizza franchise. It also operates Curtis Packing Company, a sausage plant and distribution facility it bought in September 2023 that makes sausage, hams, bacon, barbecue and Brunswick stew. Curtis Foods is its grocery banner.

The company’s name comes from Reynolds Foodliner Inc., one of two corporations Coogle’s father set up for his two stores, which was in Reynolds, Georgia. The stores were IGA locations supplied by T.J. Morris in Statesboro, Georgia, which became Nash Finch. A couple of years after that change, in about 1998, the company moved to PWADC and converted its stores to Piggly Wiggly.

Coogle, a PWADC board member and longtime member of the co-op, said the organization has never been better.

“This is the best version of Piggly Wiggly there ever has been ... there is no better place to be if you’re an independent grocer right now. And you don’t have to be a Piggly Wiggly store,” he said.

Coogle credited President and CEO Christopher Brown. “I think he supported this team in a way that’s helped elevate their game.”

He went on to note that the co-op still has a low operating cost without a heavy administrative burden.

The relationship between PWADC and its vendors also has improved, Coogle said, with both sides holding each other accountable. Reynolds Foodliner has seen a significant improvement in the number of items it moves in center store.

On the marketing side, Reynolds Foodliner runs its loyalty platform through RSA and has started using Ideal Design House Media for digital ads. Coogle said RSA works well with what the co-op is calling its preferred tech stack, something PWADC did not have before. His company is “zero print,” Coogle said, except for its own one-page flyer, which it produces for all stores.

“It’s good to be able to trust that your wholesaler has really done the legwork to say, ‘Hey, this is where we feel like it’s the best place for you to be,’” Coogle said.

Members are not required to use every program, but Coogle said he sees supporting them as part of his responsibility as a board member and longtime member of the co-op.

“We own this warehouse. And if we’re not going to support the programs in our warehouse, then the programs in the warehouse won’t do well,” he said.

Coogle said PWADC knows its retailers’ customers and supports retailers in serving them.

“The South is regional. And you’ve got to take care of people in South Georgia where I do business in a different way than how you deal with people in North Alabama,” he said. “If we’re moving it, they’re going to put it in the warehouse for us.”

He said the co-op kept his stores in stock through the COVID-19 pandemic and has come through when the company needed a truck.

“It’s still a small town at Piggly Wiggly and that’s good. That’s the way I want to do business,” Coogle said.

For independents considering a change, Coogle had a message: “Ownership in Pig Alabama is something you don’t want to miss out on. If you’ve got an opportunity to move or you’ve been thinking about making a change, it is the time to be here.”

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