

## **Chaffee's Got Heart Community Spotlight: Natural Grocers**

The Chaffee's Got Heart Committee is extremely proud of local businesses and individuals that have gone above and beyond by doing extraordinary things during these uncertain times.

From innovating ways to thrive despite trying circumstances to showering struggling members of our community with generosity to prioritizing the health and safety of our most vulnerable, these businesses and individuals, who have been nominated for this honor by fellow community members, have shown what it really means when we say: **Chaffee's Got HEART.**

Today, we sat down with Kemper Isely, Natural Grocers Co-President to find out how the pandemic changed operations at neighborhood grocers. They have taken extra strides to promote a safe and sanitary community environment, while nourishing the people of Chaffee County and recognizing the exceptional work of their staff.

### **How did COVID cause you to innovate the way you do business?**

We quickly realized that our communities were going to be relying on our stores and good4u Crew more than ever before. Keeping our shelves stocked and our customers and Crew as safe as possible became our goal.

Our stores are neighborhood grocers, which means many of our Crew and customers know one another, so we quickly implemented new policies to help safeguard both customers and Crew. We developed extra cleaning and sanitization routines on frequently touches surfaces, added plexiglass shields at registers, social distancing protocols, Crew health checks and more. We were ahead of the curve on getting our Crews masked – with the reports of mask shortages, our Crew members, some of their family members, and our customers began making masks for in-store, distribution center and bulk manufacturing good4u Crew.



In recognition of the Crew's extraordinary efforts and commitment to keeping their communities rooted in health, we instituted a hero pay and bonus program, which began in March 2020 and continues into 2021. The incremental cost of these pay enhancements was approximately \$14 million as of December 31, 2020, which includes a permanent \$1 per hour pay increase for hourly Crew and periodic discretionary bonuses.

Additionally, our free nutritional health coaching sessions became available by video and phone, and we developed a program for virtual nutrition education classes.

### **Why did you decide to go above & beyond to contribute to our community?**

As a company, we've always used our [Five Founding Principles](#) to help us navigate different situations, pandemic included. We looked at those principles – commitment to community and Crew, to Nutrition

Education and to providing quality products at our Always Affordable Prices – and knew what had to be done.

We knew that as the world grappled with the unknown brought by the pandemic that the one thing we could do – as a neighborhood store – was to make sure our communities felt as safe as possible shopping with us so that they could keep their pantries and fridges stocked with everything they needed to keep their families healthy.

**Where do you see examples of the idea that ‘Chaffee’s Got Heart’?**

Every day and in so many ways, including:

When our Crew and community worked to sew masks so every Crew member in our stores and distribution centers would have one, making it possible for us to be one of the first national chains to have all of our employees masked up.

Day-to-day support amongst our Crew members to help get through the pandemic together, bonding over their Wellness Wednesday moments as they celebrate wellbeing and each other.

In August 2020, along with our customers we raised over \$260,000 for local food banks in communities we serve to help meet the growing needs of community members experiencing food insecurity. In August, as part of our 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we broke our own record for the highest fundraiser in a single month.

**What’s your biggest takeaway from the past year?**

That what we’ve always believed to be true is in fact true – the importance of community and of our good4u Crew. For more than 65 years Natural Grocers has been connecting with community members who believed in our mission and Founding Principles and who want to be a member of our Natural Grocers family and good4u Crew. We were not surprised when Crew rose to the occasion to make sure they were helping to keep their fellow community members rooted in health. They truly are our heroes in capes and face masks.

**Cool Tidbits:**

We partner with several non-profits throughout the year including local food banks, Beyond Pesticides, and Jack and Jill of America. These fundraisers are an important way to give back to our communities. Our communities always show up to add to the fundraising efforts, and we are so appreciative. We donate 5 cents to local food banks when customers use reusable shopping bags at our stores. Those donations add up – since 2010 we have donated over \$2 million to local food banks where we operate stores.

Be on the lookout for other opportunities to donate to non-profit organizations with Natural Grocers, including our Beyond Pesticides fundraiser in April.