

40 Under 40 Saluting the Industry's Next-Generation Leaders

Young executives across the industry are assuming greater responsibilities in the areas of operations, finance, marketing and technology. CSD partnered with the Young Executives Organization (YEO) to look at these emerging leaders.

A CSD Staff Report

GROWTH IN THE CONVENIENCE store industry today, as it was decades ago, is a complex, multi-tiered web that requires everyone within an organization to focus beyond their immediate needs and anticipate the needs of tomorrow.

This is especially true when it comes to identifying the next generation of industry leadership. For some organizations, this is a fairly simple process. The next-generation leaders will be family members who have grown up eating and sleeping c-store operations since they were first old enough to say “turnover.” These family-owned businesses continue to be role models by virtue of their longevity, but also because of their commitment to greatness.

This is what makes the convenience store industry so special.

Convenience store industry leaders prove time and again that innovation and hard work are the foundation that supports steady, meaningful growth. This growth isn't only important from a sales standpoint, but is vital to a company's long-term stability when analyzing the human element.

C-store companies must be able to produce young talent that will guide the business into an uncertain future. As such, the future of the convenience store industry is heavily dependent on individual chains and the industry as whole.

That's why the National Advisory Group (NAG) and

Convenience Store Decisions are proud to partner on the Young Executive Organization's (YEO) 40 Under 40 Leaders.

PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

This year's 40 Under 40 class is a diverse group of committed convenience store staffers that hold positions ranging from president and CEO to chief financial officer to marketing administrators, and all points in-between.

These are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but in many cases, the leaders of today. Next-generation leaders should be given multiple opportunities to experience the roller coaster ride of leading—of being accountable and of taking charge.

On the pages ahead, CSD and the Young Executives Organization (YEO) present the 40 Under 40 Leaders to Watch in 2016 (in alphabetical order). Learn about their companies and their accomplishments and keep them on your radar when evaluating what makes a company successful in the hyper competitive convenience store industry.

This list will be an annual fixture in *Convenience Store Decisions* so if you are interested in nominating your emerging leaders for future recognition or to join YEO, contact CSD Editor and NAG Executive Director John Lofstock at jlofstock@csdecisions.com.



Gareth Bishop, 25
Business Analyst

Company: **BFS Cos.**
Headquarters: **Morgantown, W.Va.**
Number of Stores: **65**
Years With Company: **3**

GARETH BISHOP APPRECIATES THE unknown as well as a good challenge. Since joining BFS Cos. in operational support at just 22, he has encountered both.

After working in all of its fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, his current responsibilities include determining retail gasoline pricing at 65 BFS locations.

“I view my age as an advantage,” Bishop said. “My lack of experience gives me an excuse to ask as many questions as possible from the more experienced individuals I come across.” Bishop has cross-trained in variety of departments within the company, he added, allowing him to see how they all come together to form the big picture.

Overall, the c-store industry is a great place to make a career, Bishop has found. “It is a fast-paced environment that is constantly changing and forcing you to adapt to keep up. It also provides careers within companies with high growth rates and great opportunities.”

Likewise, Bishop looks forward to what lies ahead. “I do everything I can to the best of my ability. At the end of the day I know I gave it my all. This allows me to celebrate my successes and learn from my failures,” he said.



Alli Bixler, 26
Assistant to the President

Company: The Kent Cos. (Kent Kwik)
Headquarters: Midland, Texas
Number of Stores: 40
Years With Company: 3



Lisa Dell'Alba, 37
President and CEO

Company: Square One Markets Inc.
Headquarters: Bethlehem, Pa.
Number of Stores: 9
Years With Company: 11

DESPITE GROWING UP IN the family business, Bixler didn't originally aspire to work in the convenience store industry.

Bixler is the stepdaughter of Kent Cos. President and CEO Bill Kent, making her a third-generation family member in the business.

"As a kid, I never had interest in the business. I worked in our Baskin Robbins locations as a teenager, and swore I'd never return to the family business for a career," Bixler said. "My first year of college I did a summer internship in our marketing department to get some experience, and found I really enjoyed the marketing/merchandising side of the business."

When the head of marketing later asked if she would come back, she jumped at the chance. "It was a great opportunity that not many people my age are given," Bixler said.

Previously she worked in Kent Cos. marketing department for 2.5 years as a category manager. Now, her role as assistant to the president for The Kent Cos is more expansive.

"My current role is to keep the president of the company, my stepdad, Bill Kent, in line. Not always an easy task," Bixler joked. "My most important role, and why I took this job, is to learn as much as I can from Bill. I attend most meetings he is involved in and try to absorb every bit of knowledge I can."

AS THE PRESIDENT AND CEO of the family-owned Square One Markets, Lisa Dell'Alba is responsible for the overall direction and vision of the company, not to mention everything from strategic planning to store level execution. Of course, it's even more involved than that.

"I am primarily responsible for cultivating a great culture for our team and customers alike," Dell'Alba said. "Every day is different and exciting. I enjoy helping people learn new things and grow into leaders."

Having also taught tap dancing and ballet, Dell'Alba counts flexibility as just one necessary skill. In addition, she has a degree in psychology, which helps her in her present position. "I believe that my background studying human behavior and movement has guided me tremendously in the decisions we make at store level from store design to how we go to market," she said.

Looking forward, Dell'Alba has plenty perspective to keep her engaged.

"Being in charge of my father's legacy has been a wonderful experience. I am truly excited to begin every day helping to make our customers' day brighter and helping our team members grow as individuals. I can't imagine doing anything else."



Niki DePhillips, 37
Senior VP, Store Development

Company: Kum & Go LC
Headquarters: West Des Moines, Iowa
Number of Stores: 430
Years With Company: 13

NIKI DEPHILLIPS IS ALWAYS focused on the future.

The senior vice president of store development formulates the planning for each new Kum & Go convenience store—including the site selection, design and construction of 20-30 stores yearly. "I'm also actively involved in visioning, strategy and resource allocation for the company," she said.

When DePhillips designs product sections, she considers varying consumer attitudes, including those of Millennials.

This is particularly true with foodservice.

"Lines are blurring between convenience fuel retailers, grocery stores and coffee shops in terms of what kinds of fresh, prepared food consumers expect," DePhillips said. "That competition drives us to deliver a menu that doesn't just satisfy an immediate need, but delivers fresh and delicious options that actually create demand and position the convenience retailer as a destination for food."

DePhillips also believes the industry should keep experimenting with hybrid marketing strategies.

"To remain relevant with younger, more tech-sophisticated customers who are looking to interact with us in new and different ways, we must stay on top of the latest technology trends, like mobile apps, social media and digital offers," DePhillips said. "At the same time, we must continue to meet the needs of less tech-savvy customers who want to interact with us face-to-face in stores."

Ashley Englefield DeWitt, 32 Director of Marketing

Company: **Englefield Oil Co. (Duchess Convenience Stores)**

Headquarters: **Heath, Ohio**

Number of Stores: **122**

Years With Company: **7**

AS THE DIRECTOR OF marketing for Englefield Oil, Ashley Englefield DeWitt handles marketing for Englefield Oil's three divisions: Retail (Duchess stores), Lubricants and Fuel. Among her responsibilities in the family-owned business are advertising, brand image, Web / social media, customer engagement and customer loyalty.

Prior to her current position, she served as a division manager



with Englefield Oil for four years. She began working for the family business in high school and in college during summer breaks, learning everything from account receivables to payroll to customer service. She is a third-generation Englefield in the business.

Those many roles prepared her for what was to come. But, she doesn't forget the valuable lessons learned along the way.

"After graduating college, I worked as a cashier, stocking shelves, greeting customers and making sandwiches," DeWitt said. She's been taught there's "no better way to be a part of the business than to learn every aspect of it and gain the respect of those around you as you grow within the company. I strive to do this every day."

DeWitt said she aims to continue to grow the Englefield and Duchess brands, "by continuing to learn and educate myself on all aspects of the business."



Jarod Downing, 38 Chief Financial Officer

Company: **Ricker Oil**

Headquarters: **Anderson, Ind.**

Number of Stores: **54**

Years With Company: **5**

PRIOR TO JOINING RICKER'S, Jarod Downing served as a finance manager for the aerospace segment of Rolls-Royce Corp. in Indianapolis.

While Rolls Royce was something unique to include on his resume, Downing found his true professional passion at Ricker's, where he serves as the convenience chain's chief financial officer. At Ricker's, Downing is accountable for all financial-related matters impacting the organization, including capital management, risk management, financial reporting, corporate taxes, forecasting and budgeting, fuel hedging, real estate transactions and contract negotiations.

That's a long list of responsibilities, but Downing's passion for the job is on display daily.

"My primary goal is to lead by example—not just with words. Another goal of mine is to continue building a best in class finance team that is full of people who come to me with recommended solutions to problems rather than asking what I think we should do to resolve the issue," Downing said. "A leader has achieved a great milestone once his or her team is fully empowered to resolve issues and enhance the business without always checking first to see what the boss would do."



Jonathan Durling, 31 District Leader

Company: **Quick Chek**

Headquarters: **Whitehouse Station, N.J.**

Number of Stores: **143**

Years With Company: **15**

JONATHAN DURLING, A 15-YEAR veteran at Quick Chek, currently serves as a district leader for the New Jersey-based convenience store chain. He essentially grew up in the family business. Durling is the son of company president and CEO Dean Durling and the great-great-grandson of the company's founder, which got its start back in 1888 as Durling Farms, a thriving dairy business.

Quick Chek is a chain on the move. Long known as a retail powerhouse in New Jersey, the chain moved into the state of New York about a decade ago. Within the past year, it has expanded into Long Island, N.Y. The privately-owned company currently operates 143 stores, the first of which opened its doors in 1967. Today, several stores also include pharmacies.

The size of the stores range from smaller neighborhood shops to larger convenience stores with as many as 12-14 fueling locations. While the chain is known for its upscale offering and store design, the backbone of its operations is the food business, which has received numerous awards through the years.

Quick Chek's foodservice program features a variety of fresh foods, soups and cold cuts, all of which can be ordered through touchscreen kiosks.



Giselle Diaz Eastlack, 38
General Manager

Company: **Diaz Inc. (Diaz Markets)**
Headquarters: **Metairie, La.**
Number of Stores: **17**
Years With Company: **12**

DIAZ MARKET IS A true family business. An integral part of that business, Giselle Diaz Eastlack works alongside her parents and brother every day, where she analyzes potential acquisitions, develops marketing plans, negotiates contracts, manages the corporate office and “cheers on my employees—you name it, I’ve done it.”

Eastlack has also been instrumental in transforming

stores that offer fresh fruits and lean protein sources, which has increasingly attracted a larger, younger and more health-conscious type of clientele.

Shortly after graduating from Loyola University New Orleans with a marketing degree, Eastlack’s father asked her to help him manage and grow his business. Changing the c-store’s approach to healthy and fresh offerings was the tip of a solid business plan, which is paying dividends.

“The diverse clientele that visit our stores on a daily basis has been such an inspiration and a driving force to provide a better c-store experience,” Eastlack said. “In 2003, the c-store industry was not the same industry it is today. I am very proud to have transformed the c-store experience in the New Orleans market to an upscale family-friendly experience. I love it when my customers say their children enjoy shopping at my ‘fancy’ gas stations.”



Jacob Forehand, 28
Director of Human Resources

Company: **Flash Foods Inc.**
Headquarters: **Waycross, Ga.**
Number of Stores: **170**
Years With Company: **7**

AS THE DIRECTOR OF human resources for Flash Foods, Jacob Forehand is responsible for training, payroll, benefits, personnel and employment risk management.

Previously he served as a division supervisor for Flash Foods, where he oversaw a division of about nine stores, working with the management team in varying locations to provide customers with the best experience possible.

Before that he was a supervisor for six years, where he grew to appreciate the daily operation of a convenience store.

“I grew up in a convenience store. My family has owned and operated a c-store—Stilson Country Corner, outside of Statesboro, Ga.—for over 33 years and counting,” Forehand said. “I was stocking coolers and fronting shelves when other kids were out on the playground. The c-store business is in my blood. I worked in the store until I graduated college, and went to work for Flash Foods.”

Forehand aims to continue to innovate and find new ways to take care of the company’s staff. He’s constantly looking at new ways to recruit and train personnel.

“My goals are to find more ways to attract the best talent to our organization, keep them happy and engaged, and develop them to their fullest potential.”

Kellan Gallagher, 31
Senior Director of Brand Development

Company: **Smoker Friendly International LLC**
Headquarters: **Boulder, Colo.**
Number of Stores: **88 company stores; 847 authorized dealers**
Years With Company: **3**



FOR MOST PEOPLE VESTED in retail channels, the speed of change and innovation within the industry is lighting fast and success requires a thorough understanding of most categories within a store. It’s been no different for Kellan Gallagher.

“As new products and technology become available it is important to embrace and understand those which will generate foot traffic and further sales,” he said. “It also requires a constant evaluation of promotional programs and the diligence to rework programs based on changes such as new products, changing consumer preferences and even tax changes, especially in the tobacco category.”

Gallagher is responsible for growing the volume of the Smoker Friendly brand in each tobacco category across the entire Smoker Friendly dealer network of 847 stores. He said that at the executive level, the industry also requires a keen understanding of the impact the federal, state and local governments on operations.

Smoker Friendly is a family-owned business. Two generations of Gallaghers joined to create a culture of family for the entire company. “The No. 1 way in which working at Smoker Friendly International has determined my professional outlook is by recognizing and embracing the culture that has been developed at the company,” Gallagher said.



John Hiram, 36
Vice President, Power Move
Division (Fuels Division)

Company: **Maverik Inc.**
Headquarters: **North Salt Lake, Utah**
Number of Stores: **280**
Years With Company: **5**

A **THE VICE PRESIDENT** of the Power Move division at Maverik, John Hiram is responsible for operational management and P&L ownership of the Maverik network of retail forecourts, fuel transportation, fuel supply & trading, and fuel sales & marketing functions.

His goals include aggressively pursuing strategies to increase core-area market share for Maverik and identifying growth markets where Maverik could make a long-term difference.

Previously, Hiram served for nine years as the director of supply and logistics for Flying J, where he supervised the purchase and distribution of petroleum fuels, and assisted the company during Chapter 11 bankruptcy restructuring and emergence. He also previously worked as the executive director of logistics for Maverik, where he supervised all aspects of Maverik's trucking operation.

Maverik Inc. owns and operates over 280 stores across 10 western states and distributes in excess of one-half billion retail gallons annually. Thriving on its customer-centric "Adventure Culture" and broad line of Maverik-branded products, Maverik continues to enjoy rapid growth throughout the West.

"I get to work with the most wonderful people every day that the world has to offer...truly exceptional individuals," Hiram said.



Melanie Isbill, 31
Executive Director of Marketing

Company: **RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.**
Headquarters: **Atlanta**
Number of Stores: **410**
Years With Company: **10**

MELANIE ISBILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR of marketing, has been with RaceTrac for six years. As one of Carl Bolch's four children working in the family-owned business, she is a third-generation executive at the Atlanta-based convenience store chain. Her sister Allison Moran is RaceTrac's current CEO.

Prior to joining RaceTrac, Isbill was a product assistant at Macy's Merchandising Group and an intern at Coca-



Brandon Hofmann, 38
Chief Marketing Officer

Company: **The Parker Cos.**
Headquarters: **Savannah, Ga.**
Number of Stores: **40**
Years With Company: **18**

IN HIS 18 YEARS with The Parker Cos., Brandon Hofmann has held several positions, first as a third-shift cashier and most recently as chief marketing officer. Hofmann has witnessed how economic and consumer trends have marked the convenience store industry, and especially increased competition for shoppers' dollars.

"Big box and grocery stores are getting extremely competitive with gas prices through loyalty programs that reward consumers for shopping in their stores," Hofmann said. "As an industry, we are challenged to become more sophisticated and consumer-centric as our competitors are no longer just other convenience stores."

To help distinguish Parker's from other retailers, Hofmann is directing the company's marketing efforts toward freshness. "We plan on increasing the number of stores that serve fresh prepared foods, upgrading our coffee offering to bean-to-cup brewers, and incorporating technology into all our ordering and menu systems. We will also open our first food service drive-through store in 2016."

Because the c-store industry is ever-evolving, there are always opportunities for growth.

"Our company strives on being not only the best in the region, but the best in the country, and this is the daily challenge that makes me look forward to going to work every day."

Cola prior to joining RaceTrac. At RaceTrac, she started her career as a transportation analyst and has also served as the private label brand manager and director of brand communications.

"I was fortunate to grow up learning about the convenience store industry firsthand from one of its finest leaders. I strive to emulate my father's entrepreneurial spirit and passion for RaceTrac as I guide the marketing communications strategies that differentiate our brand and celebrate our unique culture," Isbill said. "It is an exciting challenge and I am inspired every day by the opportunity to build upon my father's legacy while making a distinct impact on the organization."

Isbill is a graduate of Southern Methodist University and earned her MBA from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

Sharif Jamal, 34 Corporate Training Manager

Company: **Chestnut Petroleum Distributors Inc.**
Headquarters: **New Paltz, N.Y.**
Number of Stores: **300**
Years With Company: **6**

SHARIF JAMAL IS QUICK to say that the convenience store industry had a great effect on his career path, even at a young age.



"The greatest influence was my father Mickey Jamal who started our company with a small mechanic shop in New Paltz and built it along with his brothers into the

company we are now," Jamal said. "With my family's support and the knowledge and experiences I have had growing with this industry, I realized it was the path that I wanted to take as a career."

Jamal has had various business assignments while working at Chestnut Petroleum (CPD). He recently switched from retail and wholesale account manager to corporate training manager, overseeing training programs and developing new training for fuel operations, online sales associate training programs, new POS systems and back-office systems.

"I also spend some of my time working on projects with the general manager of the company," he said.

His tenure at the family-owned company has also broadened Jamal's outlook for his own future as well.

"Working with CPD has helped me realize the growth potential in the c-store industry and I am hoping to continue my path to become an innovative leader," he said.



Briana Darnell Jatlow, 29 Real Estate Manager

Company: **The Wills Group Inc. (Dash In Food Stores/ Southern Maryland Oil/Potomac Energy Holdings)**
Headquarters: **La Plata, Md.**
Number of Stores: **300**
Years With Company: **1**

BRIANA JATLOW HAS EMBRACED the opportunities and challenges that her career has presented her with. "These experiences, and those of my teammates, have helped guide me, and have also shaped my career."

In her current role, she is responsible for identifying new sites, negotiating contracts and ground leases, and managing the company's real estate portfolio. Jatlow finds the c-store industry to be a quickly-evolving one.

"When we are negotiating for a property or location we're competing with QSRs, drugstores, banks, and in some cases big boxes, when it comes to planned developments," she said. "It's a challenging and fun industry to work in for these reasons, and as someone in real estate it's important to predict the change so we can continue to be relevant in the c-store space."

Jatlow's strategy has been to surround herself with talented team members. "When you foster good relationships with colleagues both inside and outside of your organization you can leverage these relationships to achieve success together," she said. "It makes all of the hard work worth it when you get to celebrate both big and small successes together."



Mary O'Connor Kolkoski, 28 Assistant Director of Marketing

Company: **Jetz Convenience Centers**
Headquarters: **Hales Corners, Wis.**
Number of Stores: **3**
Years With Company: **7**

MARY O'CONNOR KOLKOSKI IS a fourth-generation member of the O'Connor family, helping to guide the family business, Jetz Convenience Centers into the future. She currently serves as the assistant director of marketing, but has worked in several areas of operations over the last seven years, learning the vital components of the convenience store industry.

Her father Bob O'Connor serves as company president and is the current vice chairman of the Wisconsin Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association (WPMCA).

Jetz traces its roots in the convenience store and petroleum industry back almost 60 years. In 1957, O'Connor Petroleum Co., founded by Robert O'Connor, built its first gas station in Milwaukee. In 1992, Robert's two grandsons, Tim Klein and Bob O'Connor, purchased the business and began to transform these older stores to state-of-the-art locations.

The duo also changed the company name to Jetz Convenience Centers, which better fit their vision of where the convenience industry was heading.

As a next-generation leader, Mary O'Connor Kolkoski helps to oversee the company's world-class Jetz loyalty program, its growing foodservice offering and the gourmet JetzJava coffee program, which has garnered regional raves.



Jillian Kreamer, 27
Store System Administrator

Company: **Freedom Oil**
Headquarters: **Warsaw, Ind.**
Number of Stores: **6**
Years With Company: **3**

WHEN SHE'S NOT ENTHUSIASTICALLY cheering for the Cincinnati Reds, Jillian Kreamer has been honing her skills as the store system administrator at Freedom Oil, and its convenience chain, Freedom Express. What does that cover? A lot, actually.

Killian is in charge of accounts payable, petroleum accounting and managing the company's price book. She also helps in

the implementation of new store processes, including new software and employee training. She also supports store managers with inventory management and daily paperwork, not to mention representing Freedom Oil at trade show and conventions.

Hardly time to fit in a baseball game, but that's part of her career ambition at the family-owned business, which is beginning to expand its footprint.

Freedom Oil began in July 2002, after acquiring four stores from Gast Fuel and Oil Inc. Freedom is also a qualified gasoline distributor, selling to other gas stations, convenience stores and commercial operations.

With an insider perspective, Kreamer appreciates her company role.

"I never realized how important the convenience store industry is and how influential a customer's experience at a c-store can be," she said. "I have the potential to impact lives positively every day—one of my greatest joys."



D. Bailey Lyden, 31
Vice President of Retail

Company: **Truenorth Energy**
Headquarters: **Brecksville, Ohio**
Number of Stores: **110**
Years With Company: **8**

BAILEY LYDEN, THE CURRENT vice president of retail at Truenorth, is a fourth generation Lyden family member working in the family-owned business. Lyden joined the company in 2007 after graduating from the University of Colorado with a degree in economics.

Lyden is responsible for overseeing buying for all mer-

chandise at company-owned Truenorth convenience stores. As part of his role, he also oversees three category managers and two field merchandisers, in addition to learning all other aspects of the business that will enable him to move into a more senior leadership role down the road.

Truenorth has a long history in Ohio. The retailing company was founded in 1999, stemming from a long line of successful companies owned and operated by The Lyden Co., now known as True North Holdings. The Lyden family has been in the retailing business for 96 years, with both the 3rd and 4th generations' now leading growth and development. Through its company operations, Truenorth provides fuel and convenience retailing to customers at 110 locations, while distributing fuel to another 400-plus dealers sites across the Midwest.



Lindsay Lyden, 33
Vice President of Administration & Development

Company: **Truenorth Energy**
Headquarters: **Brecksville, Ohio**
Number of Stores: **110**
Years With Company: **10**

LINDSAY LYDEN CURRENTLY SERVES as the vice president of administration and development for Truenorth Energy, a joint venture between the Ohio-based Lyden Co., founded in 1919, and Shell Oil Products US. Like her brother Bailey Lyden, Lindsay is a fourth-generation

Lyden family member working in the family business.

Lyden, who has spent 10 years at Truenorth working her way up to her current position, received her undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and an MBA from the University of Findlay in 2006. In addition to her position at Truenorth, Lyden serves on the board of directors for the National Advisory Group's (NAG) Young Executive Organization (YEO).

The Lyden family has a 96-year history in fuel retail. Lyden Oil was founded in 1919 as a bulk fuel delivery business. By 1969 the company had grown to 150 service stations and it opened its first convenience store, the Fast Check Food Mart, in 1982. Today, the company operates 110 convenience stores and supplies more than 320 Shell franchise sites across the Midwest.



Andrew McIntosh, 28
Director of Marketing & Technology

Company: McIntosh Energy
Headquarters: Fort Wayne, Ind.
Number of Stores: 4
Years With Company: 3

ANDREW MCINTOSH CAN ATTEST to the fact that learning the family business is a never dull experience. "I remember doing on-site fuel deliveries with my dad when I was seven and our first convenience store was an old rundown house with two pumps and no canopy," McIntosh said. "I remember looking at the hole in the ground where the tanks were to be set for our first unattended Pacific Pride and thinking it was the Grand Canyon."

A former Patriot Missile operator in the U.S. Army, McIntosh in the last three years has expanded his duties at the company, which operates Macfood Mart, including his current position as director of marketing and technology.

McIntosh Energy, founded by his grandfather Russell, also supplies fuel and marketing to independent dealer operators under the Sunoco brand. As some names have changed, so has the corporate landscape.



Dana Moloney, 27
Food Service Director
Company: Warrenton Oil Co. (FastLane Convenience Stores)
Headquarters: Warrenton, Mo.
Number of Stores: 33
Years With Company: 2

DANA MOLONEY FIRST JOINED Warrenton Oil as a manager in training, and today manages the company's growing foodservice division. The FastLane convenience store chain operates 10 Chester's locations and one Broasters unit, and is working to expand its food offerings at every one of its locations.

In assessing her career thus far, Moloney said she has been afforded exceptional opportunities and been fortunate enough to learn from remarkable teachers. "I've had the privilege of receiving a great education, and have then benefited from the right job opportunities to give me the real-world training I needed."

At family-owned Warrenton, she has enjoyed support from experienced leadership. "I've been able to learn from industry veterans, and been given the freedom to make my own decisions. I've also been introduced to several trade organizations and encouraged to take an active role."

Moloney, who also sits on the Young Executives Organization (YEO) board, said she views the convenience store industry as a great place to build a rewarding career. "Our whole purpose is to offer a service that helps make peoples' lives easier. If we can help brighten someone's day with a quick, tasty breakfast sandwich and coffee, that's pretty cool. And it's evolving, so it keeps things exciting."



Natalie Morhous, 32
Executive Director of Strategy and Solutions

Company: RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.
Headquarters: Atlanta
Number of Stores: 410
Years With Company: 3

NATALIE MORHOUS STARTED HER career with RaceTrac in 2012, but her company roots run much deeper. She is one of four of Carl Bolch's children currently working in the family business and among a third-generation of Bolch family members to serve the company.

In her current role, Morhous drives the development of strategic plans for each of RaceTrac's five operating companies and leads a team that manages the cross-functional implementation of the companies' strategic initiatives.

In 2014, she also spearheaded a program aimed at generating innovative ideas for RaceTrac's future from its nearly 7,000 employees.

"With pressure comes motivation. I've never seen myself as having to fill my dad's shoes; rather, I see his accomplishments as inspiration to continue cultivating his life's work and take RaceTrac to even greater heights in the future," Morhous said. "Being in a position to drive strategy and innovation sets me up to play a big role in helping RaceTrac realize its extraordinary potential. I hope I can not only live up to my dad's achievements but also create a strong legacy of my own in the process."

Prior to joining RaceTrac, Morhous spent five years working as a strategy and management consultant in Washington, D.C.

Reilly Robinson Musser, 39 Category Manager

Company: **Robinson Oil Corp. (Rotten Robbie Convenience Stores)**
Headquarters: **Santa Clara, Calif.**
Number of Stores: **34**
Years With Company: **16**

ROTTEN ROBBIE OPERATES 34 stores throughout Northern California, primarily in the greater San Francisco Bay Area, and Reilly Robinson Musser has a hand in all of them.

The category manager for Robinson Oil, a fourth generation family business, Musser oversees all of the categories in the center of the store—grocery, candy, salty, alternative, automotive, general merchandise, coffee and e-cigarettes.

In addition, Musser oversees the retailer's digital media and social media programs. She's reminded daily that the company begins and ends with family.

"This is a family business; my dad [Tom Robinson] is the CEO and my sister is on the fuel buying and commercial fueling side," Musser said. "I started out in accounting and then went to pricebook and am now on the marketing/merchandising side."

Of course, the company also gauges outside factors as part of its success.

"We have always been involved in industry events. It's great to go out to these events so we are able to see what other companies are doing, see what's going on with legislation and make connections with vendors. I think that helps keep things in perspective—meaning, there's more going on out there than just the issues within the company."



Jeremie Myhren, 34 Vice President of Information Technology

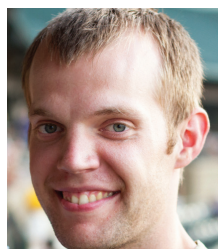
Company: **Road Ranger LLC**
Headquarters: **Rockford, Ill.**
Number of Stores: **35**
Years With Company: **13**

WHEN JEREMIE MYHREN JOINED Road Ranger LLC as director of IT in 2002, consumers typically were paying for purchases with cash, credit or debit. Today, payment options and the devices accepting them have multiplied significantly, and that has created challenges for the current vice president of IT, who oversees corporate and store technology for the c-store.

"Fragmentation in industry-specific technology is increasingly holding us all back," Myhren said. "Whether we're talking about fuel brands and their technology and card processing dictates or the huge variety in dispensers installed in the field, credit networks, point-of-sale suppliers, and on and on, no other consumer-facing industry puts up with that level of fragmentation and lack of standards."

Of course, the issue of implementing EMV mandates remains a hot topic for the c-store industry. "We'll finally start to see and deploy dispenser payment terminals that accept all the modern forms of payment, including (Near Field Communication) and EMV," Myhren observed.

That breadth of technological diversity throughout the industry, however, is also what appeals to Myhren. "Where else do you get to work with and get exposure to such a wide variety of some of the biggest names in American business? We touch all the big names in consumer product goods, food, petroleum and technology."



Chris O'Bryan, 29 Director of Business Planning & Analysis

Company: **Thorntons Inc.**
Headquarters: **Louisville, Ky.**
Number of Stores: **184**
Years With Company: **6**

AS THE DIRECTOR OF business planning & analysis for Thorntons, Chris O'Bryan leads the teams responsible for data analyses, insights and valuations of core functional departments and initiatives within the organization, including operations, brand management, loyalty, store development and fuel pricing.

He also leads Thornton's alternative fuels project management. Projects and analyses include pricing, merchandizing and promotion analyses; SKU rationalizations; capital project modeling and valuation; operational efficiency analysis and tactical strategy development; new store modeling and divestiture analysis.

Previously, he served Thorntons in various analytical capacities for several years, in many areas of the business. O'Bryan's foray into the c-store industry began when he started working at Thorntons on capital project evaluations and equity diversification analysis.

O'Bryan said his goals for the future are to "develop the culture of data informed business decisions through testing and refined analytic platforms, and grow into a broader role to lead profitable change and strategic direction for the industry and retail channels."



Alex Olympidis, 28
Vice President of Operations and Human Resources

Company: Family Express
Headquarters: Valparaiso, Ind.
Number of Stores: 65
Years With Company: 7

ALEX OLYMPIDIS IS A next generation leader, as vice president of operations and human resources for his family's company, Family Express, which was recently named CSD's 2015 Convenience Store Chain of the Year.

In his current corporate role, Olympidis is responsible for the cultivation of what Family Express refers to as "the

Living Brand"—its people and its culture. Before taking on his role as vice president of operations and human resources for Family Express, Olympidis served two years as the outreach manager for Indiana's Secretary of State.

His foray into the c-store business started as early as high school when he worked in store operations for Family Express. "I came back to the industry after managing community outreach, finance and logistics for a successful congressional campaign," Olympidis explained.

Today, he is also a board member of the National Advisory Group's (NAG) Young Executive Organization (YEO). "I hope to grow our company by fostering a culture of service that is inclusive of diverse backgrounds and ideas," said Olympidis. "Through volunteerism and civic engagement, we endeavor to pay back a portion of what others have given us in the communities we serve."



Rugwed Phatak, 34
Director of Marketing

Company: Giant Eagle Inc.
Headquarters: Pittsburgh
Number of Stores: 201
Years With Company: 10

RUG PHATAK'S INTRODUCTION TO the convenience store industry came as a marketing intern for GetGo. A decade later, he's leading that department.

"I oversee all of the marketing for the GetGo brand," Phatak said. "This includes the continued evolution of the GetGo brand, as well as artwork development and execution across various media platforms—in-store

signs, radio, billboards, social media, digital marketing, etc."

In a customer-focused industry, feedback is critical to measuring success. Phatak acknowledges that some of the best research comes directly from consumers and the staff at GetGo's convenience stores.

"I really enjoy the time I spend talking with customers and I'm lucky to work with so many outstanding colleagues and team members that are always teaching me something new," he said. "Another perk of working on a brand that is focused on delivering high quality fresh products is that I get to eat a lot of really great food."

Indeed, Phatak points squarely at foodservice as a prime branding opportunity for all convenience chains. "While this is a challenge, it's a really great opportunity for our industry to step up our game overall and find ways to differentiate ourselves and surprise and delight our customers."



Quinn Ricker, 38
President & CEO

Company: Ricker Oil
Headquarters: Anderson, Ind.
Number of Stores: 56
Years With Company: 10

QUINN RICKER IS THE president and CEO of Anderson, Ind.-based Ricker Oil. He is the second-generation leader at Ricker's Convenience Stores, following in the footsteps of his father, Jay Ricker, a former chairman of the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS).

As president and CEO Ricker is responsible for managing all department heads and company strategy at Ricker's.

Ricker's operates 56 upscale Ricker's convenience stores in Indiana. The company also supplies fuel to 85 stores across three states. While it offers upscale foods and it is noted for its outstanding customer service, Ricker's is perhaps best known by its customers for "Ricker Pop" beverages.

In addition to his responsibilities at Ricker's, Ricker is involved with Young Presidents Organization, the Madison County Community Foundation, the Madison County Chamber of Commerce Board, NACS, Coca-Cola research council, and is part of the National Leadership Board for BP.

Quinn earned his bachelor's degree from Purdue University. After graduating he spent five years as a stock broker/investment advisor for Charles Schwab and J.P. Morgan. After returning to Ricker's in 2005, he obtained his MBA from Anderson University.

Rob Saunders, 36 GetGo District Leader

Company: **Giant Eagle Inc.**
Headquarters: **Pittsburgh**
Number of Stores: **201**
Years With Company: **15**

FIRST AS A TEENAGER and now as a professional, Rob Saunders has found the c-store industry full of possibilities.

He joined the privately-held, family-operated business as a member of its produce team in 1995, and after a few "brief stints with other companies," Saunders now serves as GetGo Café + Market district leader.

It's as if he never left.

Saunders is involved with leadership development, operational and regulatory compliance, profitable sales growth, and aligning company objectives with operational execution.

"The most exciting and rewarding part of working at GetGo is making strategic decisions with leadership, and working on directives and products that can be quickly measured and validated by the satisfaction of our customers," Saunders said.

Additionally, Saunders deals with large-scale operations.

"Working in multi-unit management, I've enjoyed collaborating with multiple leaders and their teams that operate in various geographies," he said. "I share in their successes and challenges, and I'm excited about the impact I can have on fellow team members as well as the customers we serve."

Saunders also is excited about what's lies ahead. "I'm eager to learn more about the industry and look forward to being part of the future evolution of GetGo."



Jared Scott Scheeler, 35 Managing Director

Company: **The Hub Convenience Stores Inc.**
Headquarters: **Dickinson, N.D.**
Number of Stores: **4**
Years With Company: **1**

WHEN JARED SCHEELER DECIDED to leave Bobby & Steve's Auto World in the Twin Cities after 15 years at the end of 2013, he immediately went to work on plans for The Hub, which opened in January 2015.

As the head of a small c-store chain today, Scheeler is busy overseeing all business functions, including operations, sales and marketing, and human resources. "The majority of my time is spent in establishing my desired business culture and standards in our start-up business."

How has Scheeler managed to achieve so much success at so young of an age?

"Every successful young person I know possesses three key traits," he said. "They understand the value of networking. They are great at maximizing the potential of their teams and key individuals. And they have an underlying purpose behind what they do every day that goes beyond finances. I have had the fortunate benefit of watching and learning from great people, both inside and outside of the convenience industry, and that has helped me immensely in advancing my career and my businesses."

Scheeler summed up his personal philosophy this way: "At the end of the day, every major decision we make needs to revolve around our own personal values, as well as the vision and mission of the business."



Michael Schiemer, 30 Digital Marketing Manager

Company: **Colbea Enterprises (Seasons Corner Market)**
Headquarters: **Cranston, R.I.**
Number of Stores: **52**
Years With Company: **2**

ANYTHING DIGITALLY RELATED, MICHAEL Schiemer can figure out. For Colbea Enterprises, parent to Seasons Corner Market, he builds, manages and optimizes all of the company's Websites, social media accounts, email newsletters and mobile apps. In addition, he manages Colbea's gas-pump digital media and in-store digital media, as well as assists with corporate photography, graphic design, video editing, public relations, event promotion and customer loyalty.

"Outside of Colbea, I'm passionate about entrepreneurship, investing, writing, photography, fitness and helping to promote charitable organizations. I like to help new entrepreneurs and small businesses get the results they need to achieve success."

Schiemer said working at Colbea Enterprises under the strong leadership of CEO Andrew Delli Carpini and marketing director Sandra Delli Carpini has taught him a great deal about the c-store industry. "I see the trend of c-stores becoming more technologically advanced and data-driven, and I want to stay ahead of the curve," he said. "It's also an increasingly competitive business and you need to differentiate yourself from the other brands out there. Ensuring that your customers have a unique and exceptional shopping experience is absolutely crucial."



Melissa Schlinger, 36
Director of Human Resources

Company: **Bobby & Steve's Auto World**
Headquarters: **Eden Prairie, Minn.**
Number of Stores: **8**
Years With Company: **2**

SHORTLY AFTER SHE JOINED Bobby & Steve's Auto World, Melissa Schlinger recognized the human resources department was ready to grow beyond the basic administrative duties. So she launched several initiatives to streamline programs and increase employee engagement.

"[We] are working through a strategy called Brand Promise where we enhance the fun, appreciation, and communication to our team members, which in turn, will create a culture where the level of service we provide our customers is beyond expectations," said Schlinger.

Indeed, human resources entails much more than just hiring and managing benefits. It's also about empowering individuals to develop professionally, which is what Schlinger truly enjoys about her job. "I love working with team members who may not know what they aspire to be in their careers or what their strengths are," she said. "We are implementing a mentoring program for new hires and existing team members. There will be opportunities to learn new skills, work on leadership development, volunteer in the community together, and attend outside educational opportunities.

"To see people evolve to discovery of their own being is exciting and rewarding," Schlinger said.



Adam Sheetz, 32
Director, Regional Operations

Company: **Sheetz Inc.**
Headquarters: **Altoona, Pa.**
Number of Stores: **512**
Years With Company: **5**

ADAM SHEETZ HAS BEEN a director with Sheetz Inc. since May 2010. Previous to his five years at Sheetz' he was an associate at Barclays Capital and Lehman Brothers.

He has an M.B.A. from Emory University-Goizueta Business School, and a bachelor's of science from Penn State University. Sheetz is a family-owned convenience store chain based in Altoona, Pa.

For more than 60 years, the chain's mission has been to meet the needs of customers on the go. It's one of the fastest growing family-owned convenience stores in the world. The chain boasts more than \$6.9 billion in revenue, with more than 510 store locations throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and North Carolina. The convenience retailer also employs more than 16,500.

Sheetz takes seriously its mission to provide fast, friendly service and quality products in clean and convenient locations. Sheetz' vision is to create the business that will put Sheetz—as it stands today—out of business.

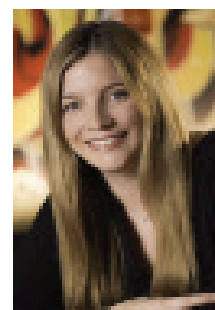
It's just such a vision that keeps Adam Sheetz on his toes as he works to make Sheetz even more successful in the future.

Emily Sheetz, 35
Director of Talent Development

Company: **Sheetz Inc.**
Headquarters: **Altoona, Pa.**
Number of Stores: **512**
Years With Company: **2**

EMILY SHEETZ IS THE director of talent and development at Sheetz, in charge of training and leadership.

Previously, she was involved in a leadership rotation within the company for two years. Her foray into the c-store industry began when



she interned with the Sheetz marketing department at age 15, and she continued to learn the business through college by working in the stores.

She is a graduate of Columbia University law school, and has a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied economics, finance and marketing.

Sheetz Inc. is a chain of gas stations and convenience stores owned by the Sheetz family. Sheetz said she aims to "continue to grow with the company and take a leadership role in the organization."

In early 2004, Sheetz opened the world's first "Convenience Restaurant" and today the chain is renowned for its foodservice success. Today it offers an award-winning menu of made-to-order sandwiches and salads, which are ordered through touchscreen kiosks.

Founded in 1952, Sheetz also is well known for its Sheetz Bros. Coffeez, which is a full-service espresso and smoothie bar where customers can order hand-made specialty coffee drinks including lattes, cappuccinos and mochas—hot, frozen or iced.



Ryan Sheetz, 32
Director of Brand Strategy

Company: **Sheetz Inc.**
Headquarters: **Altoona, Pa.**
Number of Stores: **512**
Years With Company: **13**

RYAN SHEETZ HAS GROWN up in the company with a heavy work experience in marketing and store operations. In May 2010, Ryan was promoted to a director position at Sheetz Inc. and began a cross-functional rotation, which consisted of positions in Loyalty Programs, IT, HR and Sheetz Distribution Services. At the conclusion of his rotation, Sheetz settled in Brand Development. He has an MBA from Penn State University, and a Bachelor's Degree in marketing and psychology from Penn State. Earlier in his career he served as a District Manager at Sheetz, as well as the Director of Marketing for Galliker Dairy Co.

Established in 1952 in Altoona, Pa., Sheetz is one of America's fastest growing family-owned and operated convenience store chains, with more than \$6.9 billion in revenue and more than 16,500 employees. The family-owned business is regularly recognized as a "best place to work" in the states it operates. The company operates more than 510 store locations throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Ohio and North Carolina.

Sheetz is renowned for its menu of made-to-order sandwiches and salads, which are ordered through touchscreen kiosks.



Bart Stransky, 36
Executive Director of Merchandising

Company: **RaceTrac Petroleum Inc.**
Headquarters: **Atlanta**
Number of Stores: **410**
Years With Company: **10**

BART STRANSKY IS THE executive director of merchandising for Atlanta-based RaceTrac Petroleum Inc., which operates more than 410 stores across Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, and Mississippi. An Army veteran and graduate of the University of Georgia, Stransky has led some of the RaceTrac's largest initiatives and served in a variety of leadership roles within the organization.

In his current role as director of merchandising, he is responsible for all of the products and offers sold inside RaceTrac locations. Supporting a key goal of the organization, he is steadily driving RaceTrac towards being a recognized food destination for people on the go. This is being accomplished through new product offers, such as Swirl World frozen yogurt, fresh and made-to-order foods, an expanded focus on hot foods as well as freshly-made and freshly-baked products delivered daily.

RaceTrac, *Convenience Store Decisions'* 2014 Convenience Store Chain of the Year, excels at retail. Stores feature 20-24 fueling positions and 5,000-plus square-foot convenience stores offering more than 4,000 items. In January 2012, Stransky also helped RaceTrac introduce its new 6,000-square-foot store design, which features Swirl World frozen yogurt, free Wifi Internet and indoor and outdoor seating.



Layne Stuckey, 28
Merchandiser and Buyer

Company: **C.E. Taylor Oil Inc. (Chuckles Convenience Stores)**
Headquarters: **Washington, Ind.**
Number of Stores: **36**
Years With Company: **6**

LIKE MANY INDIVIDUALS WORKING at a family-owned convenience store chain, Layne Stuckey started in the back office during high school.

"Since, I've been involved in almost every area of the c-store business," Stuckey said. "Our industry is very diversified in both products and services the customer desires to find at our stores. The competition has expanded

over the last 10-12 years to include many new participants like Walgreens, Dollar General and big box stores. This has caused me to broaden my thoughts of what can and should be sold/marketed within our stores."

Stuckey is in regular contact with vendors, trying to stay on top of the latest trends and making sure Chuckles has the right mix of products in our locations. She's also involved with day-to-day operations, including regular meetings involving the future of company, new store design and other future considerations.

Chuckles consists of 34 locations throughout southern Indiana and western Kentucky.

Stuckey also must grapple with larger issues: PCI compliance, the Affordable Care Act, EMV and several others. "I can see a need for continuous learning and training for myself and our team members to stay ahead of the curve. Learning will be an ongoing requirement.



Jared Sturtevant, 37
Supervisor of Digital Marketing

Company: CST Brands Inc.
Headquarters: San Antonio
Number of Stores: 1,030
Years with Company: 20

AS THE SUPERVISOR OF digital marketing for CST Brands, Jared Sturtevant is responsible for “all things digital” including social media, apps, Web and mobile.

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.

Based on his tenure at Nice N Easy, he is a 20-year CST legacy employee, effective Jan. 1. Sturtevant is also the chairman of the Young Executive Organization’s (YEO) board of directors. His immediate goals include working with the team at CST to deliver a best in class digital engagement experience for customers and employees. “Long term, I strive to be an integral part of the talented group that will make Corner Store famous as we introduce fresh new ideas to delight more customers every day,” he said.



Courtney Vercollone, 30
District Manager

Company: VERC Enterprises Inc.
Headquarters: Duxbury, Mass.
Number of Stores: 24
Years With Company: 4

CCOURTNEY VERCOLLONE OFFICIALLY BEGAN working in her family’s business four years ago as a marketing assistant, covering various duties such as pricing, signage and promotions. Since then, she’s worked as a category manager, and currently serves as district manager.

Vercollone, whose father is company president and CEO Leo Vercollone, supervises six stores, including responsibilities for staffing, weekly inspections and monthly audits. She also makes it a practice to be a regular on-site to check in with managers and elicit their feedback. In fact, that’s one of her favorite aspects about working in the c-store industry.

“I love being in the stores every day and working with the associates and helping customers. The stores may be small, but they are very busy,” she said.

Vercollone also likes to keep a pulse on what’s coming down the road, which could help boost business.

“The most challenging part of being in this industry is keeping up with new technology. There are so many new apps, mobile Websites, loyalty programs and other ways to save and promote,” Vercollone said. “It takes time, money and research to find out what works best in the convenience store industry and what is most profitable for our chain. And we need to be continually changing to keep up with the competition.”



Mark Scott Zietlow, 28
Real Estate Development Manager

Company: Kwik Trip Inc.
Headquarters: La Crosse, Wis.
Number of Stores: 477
Years With Company: 6

BACK WHEN HE WORKED in retail, Mark Zietlow spent his days unloading trucks, stocking merchandise and working behind the register. Over the next four years, he transitioned into the company’s real estate department as a real estate development manager.

He 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.

“During my first few years at the support center in La Crosse I got to spend the majority of my time with my grandfather, Don Zietlow,” he recalled. “That time was invaluable to my development in this industry. His guidance and mentoring have gotten me to where I am today.”

Indeed, Zietlow’s personal philosophy has largely been shaped by my family’s values.

“Those values started with my grandparents and have trickled down to the third and fourth generations,” Zietlow said. “It is our responsibility to take care of our co-workers who, in turn, take care of our guests in our stores every day. 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.”