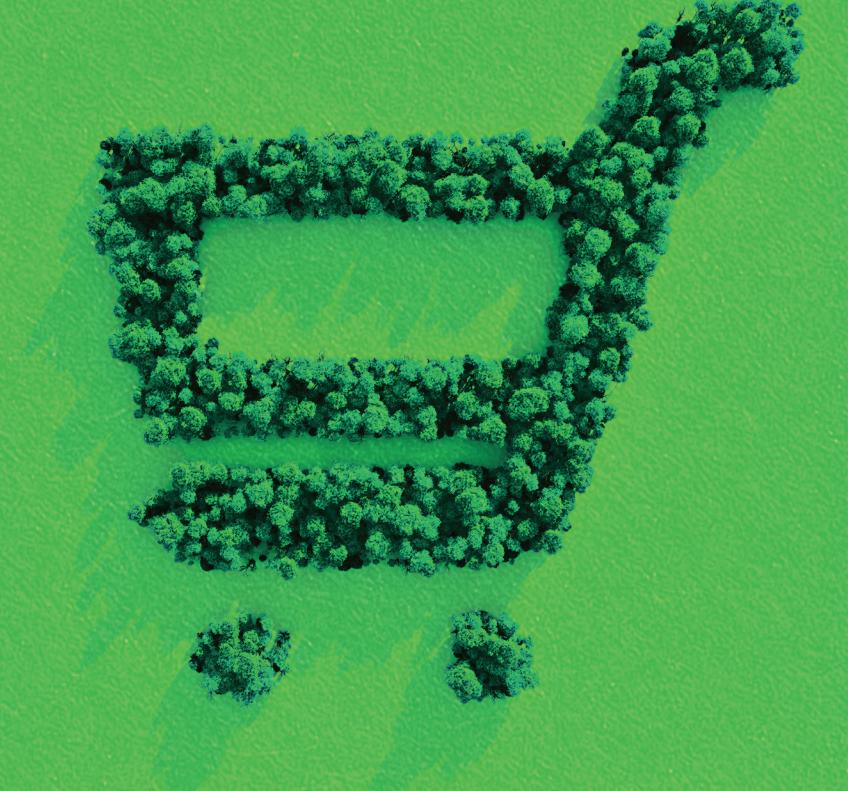


# Sprouts



## CELEBRATES



# 20

# YEARS



The beloved grocery chain does a lot more than sell the freshest produce around, with its innovative small-business mentoring and positive impacts in the community.

STORY BY SHELBY DEERING

SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET

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## When you shop at a grocery store, you probably don't ponder its purpose beyond keeping shelves stocked with food, and—well, that's the end of the story. But that's certainly not the case with Sprouts Farmers Market grocery stores.

The health-food chain, currently with 380 locations in 23 states, carries one key difference that sets it apart from the rest of the healthy grocers out there: They give others a leg up in a big way, from helping small businesses get into retail for the first time to aiding communities with their Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation.

While the first Sprouts grocery store opened in 2002, their history goes back further than that. In 1943, Henry Boney started his fresh-fruit stand in San Diego before his son Stan and grandson Shon opened the first location in Chandler, Arizona. After growing and acquiring a couple

more than 31,000 team members bring their mission to life through their stores.

With an open layout that puts produce right in the spotlight, the stores brim with natural foods (all with ingredients you can pronounce) that they call "a farmers market experience." It's also packed with organic, gluten-free, plant-based, keto-friendly, and grass-fed eats. In 2021, they launched 400 new products under their house brand.

And you can count on that produce being fresh, just like Henry Boney would have ensured back in the day. But today, they take a more modern approach, with a strategic

And the innovation doesn't stop there. It continues well into the ways they help people and the planet, too. For instance, Sprouts donates all its unsold but edible groceries to Feeding America and its local affiliate relief agencies—in 2021, this equaled more than 32 million pounds of donated food.

Also in 2021, Sprouts generated 39,546 tons of food waste and recovered 78 percent of it through donation, compost, energy generation, and meat recycling (the processing of scrap meat, bones, and more). Food that doesn't meet Sprouts' food bank donation standards is donated to cattle ranches for animal feed.

They apply this same level of thoughtfulness and creativity to the very small businesses they cultivate, support, and help get off the ground, turning some into mega brands, including the likes of Mikey's, Fresh Press Farms, Gelato Boy, Urban Accents, and Siete.

It's a relationship that has been rewarding for Mikey's. In 2015, the brand began selling their now-famous gluten-free English muffins at Sprouts grocery stores and, in 2018, added their gluten-free and dairy-free pizza pockets and tortillas to the Sprouts offerings.

"With lifestyle-focused products expanding across multiple catego-

## "They find disruptive brands and give them a platform."

of other grocery store chains along the way, Sprouts became a publicly-traded company in 2013, then started expanding into the Southeastern states. They've continued to expand steadily ever since. Today,

goal of positioning fresh produce distribution centers within 250 miles of each store—that means that your oranges won't be driving thousands of miles across the country until they reach you.



ries, Sprouts has let us bring in and test new products to see what best resonates with the Sprouts natural shopper, who is our target demographic,” explains Michael Tierney, Mikey’s founder and CEO. “This relationship and ability to build our brand with Sprouts is what led us to pivot our products to be focused on plant-based pockets this year after finding success in store.”

It’s a feeling that’s shared among the new brands that Sprouts is currently fostering in their stores, with new kids on the block like Pasturebird, TMRW Foods, Hope & Sesame, Bobo’s Oat Bars, and Hope Foods.

TMRW Foods, with their plant-based protein shreds and burgers,

Veggie Chips and Hope & Sesame Sesame Milk on their in-store ‘innovation centers’ display stands when the products launched at Sprouts, Sprouts kick-started a love affair between their shoppers and our brands,” she says. “More and more people are adding our brands to their Sprouts shopping lists and their lifestyle dietary choices.”

And just a few months ago, Pasturebird launched in stores with their pasture-raised poultry offerings. Paul Greive, co-founder of Pasturebird, shares that Sprouts has been instrumental to their growth, saying, “They are an incredible partner who really believes in our mission and wants to help us succeed in

that tell each brand’s unique story. “Innovation and differentiation have always been the lifeblood of our business,” she says. “Our mission is to provide inspiring and innovative products to our target customers, creating an experience that enables them to live a healthier lifestyle and have fun doing it.”

As if all this do-gooding wasn’t enough, Sprouts continues to spread the love around communities in different ways as well through the Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation. It was founded in 2015 as a nonprofit with the objective of supporting children’s nutrition education.

“Our goal is to help children ‘Grow Healthy’ by empowering them with the knowledge, confidence, and desire to make healthy food choices,” says Executive Director Lyndsey Waugh, adding that the mission comes to life through their nonprofit partners, including more than 130 organizations working across the country in school gardens and afterschool programs that teach children hands-on gardening, cooking, and nutrition lessons.

To date, Sprouts has dedicated more than \$18 million to this effort and has helped an estimated 3.5 million students. Additionally, Sprouts hosts an annual company-wide Day of Service in which team members participate in local volunteer projects.

With Sprouts’ future goal of continuing to intentionally shape a culture of care, love, and being different (and owning it), Dean Blignaut of TMRW Foods really sums up the company best: “The team at Sprouts are kind, thoughtful humans.” It’s no doubt a vibe they’ll continue to put out into the world for years to come.

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started selling their products at Sprouts in August 2022 and have appreciated their laser-sharp focus on innovation. “They find disruptive brands and give them a platform,” says Dean Blignaut, TMRW Foods’ co-founder and CEO. “They are truly leading the drive to evolve the plant-based space.”

Julia Stamberger, CEO and co-founder of Hope & Sesame, had the same experience with their plant-based sesame milk, veggie rice, and veggie chips, added to the store between 2019 and 2022. “By positioning both Mozaics Real

their stores as much as we do.”

Dean Blignaut says that the team at Sprouts provides “emotional, branding, and in-store promotional support to their brands” along with “regular communication” that helps brands know what’s working and what’s not in an effort to gain traction. Kim Coffin, Sprouts Senior Vice President and Chief Forager, says that Sprouts has been helping small brands come to market for many years, looking for brands that align with their target customers, providing feedback to small brands, and building marketing programs