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Meet our **Retailer** of the **year** finalists

11 NATURAL FOODS STORES EXEMPLIFY
EXCELLENCE IN TODAY'S RETAIL WORLD



Sustainability. Innovation. Community. These values define the natural products industry. To commend these qualities in retail, Natural Products Expo and *Natural Foods Merchandiser* joined to award retailers of the year in these categories as well as for the best new store. Learn more about the finalists on the next four pages. Meet the winners and celebrate their accomplishments at Expo East's Friday Evening Celebration cosponsored by KeHE Distributors.

SUSTAINABILITY FINALISTS



New Morning Market

Woodbury, Connecticut

Since 1971, New Morning Market has been committed to enhancing the local sustainable food community in Woodbury. But it hasn't always been easy. "We have been losing farms for quite a while in our area, so for a time, a lot of our local resources disappeared," says owner John Pittari. "In those in-between years, we actively sought out local producers and maintained those relationships. Even though consumers didn't understand the value at the time, our mission dictated that

we carry local items and educate them to create a market for local production."

Today, Pittari's work has paid off. New Morning Market boasts a healthy customer base that frequents the natural and local shop for the largest organic produce selection in the area; an extensive supplement and homeopathic department; a juice, smoothie and espresso bar; and a prepared foods section offering freshly made natural and organic eats to go.

New Morning highlights sustainability in these ways:

Sustainable building: New Morning Market recently relocated to a redeveloped building, designed with sustainability at the forefront. Energy efficiency, local and recycled materials from floor to ceiling, native plantings, a stormwater recharging system that puts the property's rain right back into the aquifer, and habitats for local wild animals are just some of the features.

Local feeding: In addition to its extensive organic and local produce offerings, New Morning sends its kitchen scraps and extra produce to local farms to feed the animals. "We actually sell the pork from the pigs that are fed," Pittari says.

Community partner: The store maintains active partnerships with many local environmental organizations including the Connecticut Audubon Society and the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition. As a result, New Morning Market is host to a number of awareness-raising events around local ecology from the Woodbury Earth Day celebration to a bird watching night.

Sustainability stands out at Rainbow Blossom in these ways:

LEED certified: When Rainbow Blossom opened its fifth location in 2009, it became the first LEED certified retail store in the state of Kentucky. The four remaining locations integrate practices gleaned from certification including using repurposed materials and no-VOC paint to installing higher-efficiency coolers and touch-free faucets.

Loving local: About 70 percent of Rainbow Blossom's produce is local, providing shoppers the opportunity to learn about and support small-scale, sustainable agriculture. Auerbach is also the founder of the Louisville Independent Business Alliance, which, alongside 650 member businesses, educates the public about supporting local farmers and businesses as a sustainability and economic effort.

Growing green: Every year on Earth Day, Rainbow Blossom distributes 800 trees to shoppers to take home and plant. In this eighth year, shoppers were encouraged to share pictures of how their trees have grown. According to Auerbach, "It engages shoppers and makes them feel involved" in nature conservation and sustainability efforts.

Rainbow Blossom

Louisville, Kentucky

With five locations in the Louisville metro area, Rainbow Blossom offers shoppers a fresh, organic and local destination for bulk and traditional grocery, supplements and body care.

In fact, nearly all of the store's produce is grown with organic methods—without the use of artificial pesticides or fertilizers—and the store guarantees that all the foods on its shelves are free of

synthetic preservatives, artificial colors and flavors.

According to second-generation owner Summer Auerbach, it's important for natural foods stores to take a stand and lead the way in sustainability. For Auerbach, running her business in a green way not only meshes with the store's values but offers a unique opportunity to educate her shoppers about sustainability.



Family Farm Health Food Store

Tomball, Texas

Nestled in a small town northwest of Houston, Texas, Family Farm Health Food Store is a resource for supplements, essential oils, homeopathic remedies, gift items and packaged foods. Shoppers can also make an appointment to see a Family Farm holistic specialist in a session room situated behind the retail store. In this way, Family Farm is more than a health food store—it's a destination for an integrated, holistic approach to wellness, with a focus on how it, too, impacts the planet.

For owner Cathy Kilgore, sustainability has two meanings: first, it applies to practicing eco-friendliness in her business plan to extend the health of the earth; secondly, it's about applying these practices and other innovations to extend the life of her store. "A business owner has to be continually looking at the industry and what's going on in order to move with it," she says. "If not, you're not going to sustain yourself much less be in a position to be growing."

Three sustainable steps Family Farm makes:

Cutting down on packaging: Family Farm prioritizes brands that minimize waste and package their products in eco-friendly ways. At the very least, Kilgore says, the packaging must be recyclable, but she also wants to know if the packaging is green, meaning it's made with less (or no) plastic, is biodegradable or packaged and shipped with minimal fillers.

Focusing on non-GMO: Family Farm shoppers are seeking out non-GMO products, so it's no coincidence that the store's two biggest vendors are non-GMO. For Kilgore, it's a huge selling point when she can tell her shoppers that lines are either completely non-GMO or moving in that direction.

Minimizing waste behind the scenes: Whether it's minimizing printing or maximizing recycling, Family Farm makes sure its footprint is as small as it can be. "We don't print unless we have to print and, when we do, we print double-sided," Kilgore says. "That's just one small example of how we generally conduct ourselves with our business."