



New England  
**2023**  
**ESG Report**

## Letter from our Corporate Sponsor

I am pleased to present to you our inaugural Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) report, a milestone achievement that underscores our unwavering commitment to sustainable business practices and responsible corporate citizenship.

At Associated Grocers of New England, we believe that conducting business with integrity and mindfulness of our environmental and social impact is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for long-term success. With this ethos at our core, we have crafted our first ESG report to highlight our endeavors across four foundational pillars:

**Cooperative** – An opportunity to empower others' efforts through *our business*.

**Culture** – An incredible pride in the celebration and development of *our people*.

**Community** – A deep-rooted dedication to the support of *our neighborhoods*.

**Climate** – An active pursuit of sustainable practices, fostering a healthier future for *our world*.

As you explore this report, we encourage feedback and collaboration from each of you. Together, we can amplify our impact and contribute to a world where business success aligns seamlessly with social and environmental well-being.

Let us embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, confident in our ability to build a better, more sustainable future for all.



Russ Greenlaw  
S.V.P Sales



**"Let us embrace  
the opportunities  
and challenges  
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# Cooperative

An opportunity to empower others' efforts through **our business.**



## Our History

In February 1946, with an investment of \$1,000 each, a small, but enterprising group, consisting of 21 independent food retailers formed New Hampshire Wholesale Grocers. Their purpose in doing so was to grow and compete more favorably with the ever-increasing supermarket chain stores by combining their purchasing power.

Over the past 75+ years, AG has continued building upon that foundation to become what we are today: a wholesale grocery cooperative located in Pembroke, NH, that is dedicated to supplying independent supermarkets and convenience stores with both quality products and supportive services. At its core, a cooperative business model is intended to serve the communities in which it operates. For Associated Grocers of New England, this translates to hundreds of neighborhoods across the northeast from northern Maine to upstate New York.

When considering this scope of reach, it becomes quite clear the impact we have and thus the incredible responsibility that comes with it. By leveraging the strength of the cooperative and each of its members, we are able to amplify that impact even further.



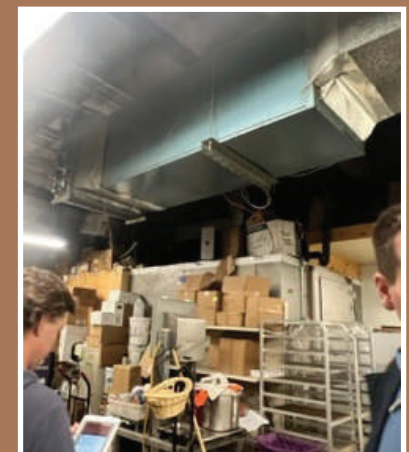
## Energy Audits

In 2023, AG began a relationship with The Ratio Institute, an independent, non-profit organization with a mission to accelerate measurable sustainability and viability in the food retail industry. Through this partnership, we have been able to connect our retailers with The Ratio Institute to undergo energy audits within their stores. This is an effective means to quantify both the importance and the benefit of having updated, eco-friendly equipment and sustainable business operations.

To date, ten of our retailers have undergone an energy audit: a number we aim to double in 2024. Interested to see how AG's own Distribution Center did? Check out page 18.

## REAP Grants

To further encourage the sustainability efforts of our retailers, AG has committed to subsidizing the cost of USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants by 50% for interested participants. If approved, grant recipients may receive considerable federal funding to go towards the purchase and installation of renewable energy systems and efficiency improvements. AG is even exploring bringing this service entirely in-house, simplifying the application process even further for our retailers.



Ratio Institute at Solomon's Store

# *Culture*

An incredible pride in the celebration and development of **our people.**



## Learning & Development

Investing in our team members' personal and professional development not only enhances their individual skills and capabilities but also strengthens our collective success as a company. Through comprehensive training programs, mentorship opportunities, and ongoing support, we empower our employees to reach their full potential, pursue new challenges, and drive innovation.



## Employee Testimonials

"Every person who spoke to us had such passion and knowledge. It was apparent in every presentation we had."

– AG University participant

"I found this program extremely beneficial. It was great to sit down with the supervisors after I had gotten a chance to settle in. The information stuck way better than it did during my initial meetings during my first few weeks."

– Understanding the Business participant

"This has been a fantastic experience! I appreciate all the effort that goes into it and thankful that AG offers it."

– Mentorship Program participant

**"I'm grateful to have these opportunities to grow my career and myself as a person. I feel lucky to be part of a community of people that serve independently owned businesses and I'm proud to represent the company everywhere I go."**

– AG University participant



### **Retail Learning Institute**

RLI is a worldwide organization with a focus on developing people within the retail food industry. Through their diverse course catalog, customizable learning paths, and mobile application, we've been able to elevate our Corporate Store associate training process to new heights.

### **AG University**

AGNE's internal series of personal and professional development courses with a carefully curated curriculum based on an annual needs assessment. Topics in 2023 included Psychological Safety, Hiring with Confidence, Inclusive Language, Imposter Syndrome and Generational Diversity.

### **Understanding the Business**

An in-house program that allows small groups of employees at all levels to connect with department heads and AG's leadership to build relationships, improve engagement, and help them understand where they fit into the "big picture".

### **Educational Reimbursement Program**

Supporting associates' pursuit of continued education through a tiered, monetary reimbursement program. Additionally, AG has partnered with local institutions to offer employees and their families discounted tuition rates, ranging from 10-20% off.

## ***Mentorship Program***

Our internal mentorship program offers a framework for fostering growth, development, and collaboration within our organization, connecting associates at all levels with AG's senior leaders to provide guidance, support, and opportunities for skill enhancement.



## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Together, we believe that by prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion, we not only strengthen our workplace community but also foster innovation, creativity, and excellence in all that we do.

Our internal DEI Committee made up of a group of associates across the organization, with varying positions and backgrounds, lead the charge in driving meaningful change throughout Associated Grocers of New England.



### Supplier Diversity Program

Throughout the year, AG's Merchandising Team is working on the establishment of a Supplier Diversity Program to recognize our vendor partners with a diverse certification such as Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB), and Service-Disabled Veteran (SDVET) to name a few. The goal with this program is to recognize and support these suppliers, ultimately increasing their opportunities with our retailers and communities across the northeast.

### DEI Committee Mission

In alignment with the AGNE Mission Statement, we will work to cultivate a unique and diverse culture that promotes acceptance, creates opportunities and rewards excellence. We will do this through connection, education and understanding, while fostering high values and standards for all employees, retailers and the communities we serve.

### DEI Committee Vision

At Associated Grocers of New England, we welcome a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. We know that a united company is a successful and productive one. We focus these characteristics on our workforce and products. We embrace diversity of background, culture, and experience. Together with our retailers, we strive in all efforts to eliminate injustices and inequities. We're committed to leveraging our unique platforms and talents to help create positive change.



## Recognition & Awards

Each member of our team brings unique skills, expertise, and passion to their roles, contributing to our collective achievements and recognition. We are immensely proud of our staff's accomplishments and grateful for their unwavering commitment to excellence.

### Individual

#### *Women of Influence, The Shelby Report*

A regional recognition of women in the grocery industry that demonstrate a superior level of dedication, professionalism, tenacity and leadership through job performance, charity, or philanthropic efforts.



*Charlene Miller, Elaine Packard and Sarah Masters*

#### *40 Under Forty, New Hampshire Union Leader*

A local recognition of the state's most influential young professionals who help shape the future through their career and community service.



*Joe Conley*

#### *GenNext, Progressive Grocer Magazine*

A national recognition for those under 40 years of age within the grocery industry who demonstrate a high level of commitment to their career and community, innovative thinking, an ability to inspire others, and a willingness to make an impact in the world.



*Josh Button*



*Evan Green*

#### *Top Women in Convenience, Convenience Store News*

A national recognition of women in the convenience sector and the integral role they play within the industry.



*Kendra LeGendre*

# Recognition & Awards

## Company

### *Business of the Year, Granite State Independent Living*

An honor by a local organization recognizing AGNE's longtime partnership and support of their mission to promote quality of life for people with disabilities through advocacy, information, education, support and transition services.

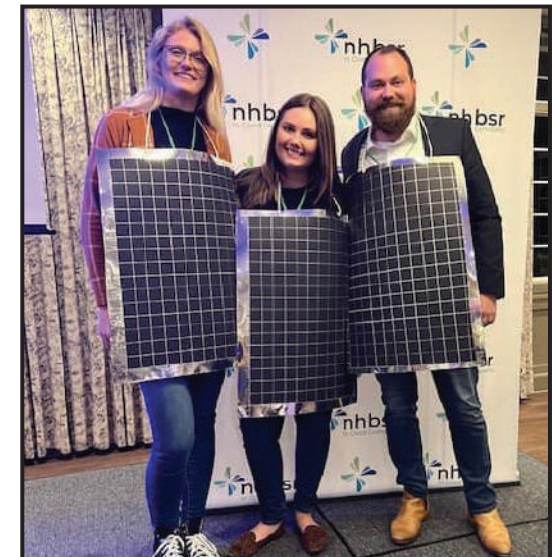
### *Platinum-Level Veteran Friendly Business, NH Department of Military Affairs & Veterans Services –*

A recognition of NH-based businesses that support the wellness of military and veteran families through practices and policies that serve to:

- Honor military experience and sacrifice
- Fortify families by meeting their unique needs in innovative ways
- Empower employees with opportunities for career growth and financial stability
- Impact the broader community through collaborations and partnerships

### *"Large Company – Environment" Sustainability Slam, New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility*

A creative demonstration of different companies' sustainability-focused initiatives in categories such as Community, Workplace, Environment & Non-Profit.



# Community

A deep-rooted commitment to the support of **our neighborhoods.**



# Giving Back

Concern for the communities we serve is a founding tenet of our mission statement that AG is incredibly proud to embody and bring to life every day. We are committed to actively volunteering our time, skills, and resources to support local initiatives, nurture meaningful connections, and make a tangible difference in the lives of those around us.



## Organizations We Support

### Partnered Organizations

- New Hampshire Businesses for Social Responsibility
- Special Olympics of New Hampshire
- NH Food Bank
- Boys & Girls Club
- Granite State Independent Living
- American Cancer Society
- American Red Cross



### Donations/Support

- CamBam
- AGNE Golf Tournament
- Star Program
- Granite State Independent Living Golf Tournament
- Mac Off
- Pembroke Old Home Day
- Making Strides
- Real Men Wear Pink
- Blood Drives

## Community Connection Program

AG's Community Connection Program allows associates the opportunity to opt-in for weekly payroll deductions that are dispersed to a variety of local organizations in need. Benefitting causes are first vetted by an internal committee to ensure funds are going to organizations that are in alignment with our mission and are close to our employees' hearts. Additionally, AG contributes a 25% match to all employee donations, resulting in more than \$1.4 million in community donations over the last 20 years.



## Impact Hours

Recognizing the transformative power of giving back, we empower our employees to make a difference in their communities while on the clock. Each year, associates are given 24 (paid!) Impact Hours to be involved with their community in whichever way is most meaningful to them.

In 2023, 526 Impact Hours were used which equates to a 42.5% increase over prior year!



## Neighbor2Neighbor

This unique program allows participating customers to accrue funding for most cases of private label products they purchase from our Distribution Center. This funding can then be used to double charitable contributions made to health and human service organizations in their local community.

We recently celebrated the program's 20 year anniversary in which time our retailers have donated \$1.1+ million to worthy causes throughout our market area.

*166 Participating Stores*

*Over \$68k Donated in 2023*

*"I see how much the stores help their community out and that touches my heart. I am very happy to be a part of that process in making it happen. Kindness goes a long way and to see it first hand is very exciting. It proves that there is still a lot of good people in society willing to help their community in any way they can. It is the best part of my job. I can just imagine the smiles on the faces of the people who receive the donation."*

*– Debbie Demers, Marketing Administrative Assistant and long-time N2N Coordinator*

## Employee Spotlights

Providing a supportive employee environment includes recognizing our associates' passions outside of work. AG is incredibly proud of our exceptional team and it is an honor to recognize and support their personal endeavors.

### The CamBam Open

#### Joe Conley

"My son, Cam, was diagnosed with Leukemia at 3.5 years old, and received treatment from The Jimmy Fund Clinic at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. After he finished treatment, beating cancer, we felt it was our responsibility to give back; not all families and children we crossed paths with over those 2.5 years of treatment were as fortunate as we were. Our family enjoys golf, so we started The CamBam Open, a tournament to benefit Dana Farber via The Jimmy Fund. We weren't sure how the response would be, and we were uncertain of how much we'd even raise. However, AGNE came in early and strong to take on the Ace Sponsorship along with associates volunteering and other donations as well. They wanted to make sure we got off to a great start, and we did – thanks to them. In three years total we have raised \$213K for pediatric research and care, which isn't possible without my company, AGNE, supporting us out of the gate. It is an incredible example of how AGNE takes care of its associates, and truly cares about them and the community they are involved in." – Joe Conley, Director of Center Store Procurement & Merchandising



## Special Olympics of NH

#### Eric Tinker

Associated Grocers of New England has been a long-term supporter and partner with the Special Olympics of New Hampshire (SONH), an organization that aims to give those with intellectual disabilities a chance to build friendships and improve their self-confidence through the physical activity of Olympic-style sports. As a company, AG annually participates in both the Winter and Summer Olympic Games, as well as the Penguin Plunge each February.

One of our associates, however, truly goes above and beyond for SONH, making his commitment for the organization a part of his life – Eric Tinker, Director of Perishable Sales. Eric is the Chairperson of the Board for SONH, but more than that he brings the organization's mission to life every single day. Over the past several years, Eric has built an incredible relationship with athlete, Charlie Helfritch, competing alongside him in the 2022 USA Summer Games as well as running their first Boston Marathon together in 2023.

In support and recognition of Eric's passion, SONH's mission and the achievements of all their athletes, AG has hosted several celebrations onsite including the kick-off torch-lighting ceremony for the 2023 Summer Olympics.







# *Climate*

An active pursuit of sustainable practices,  
fostering a healthier future for **our world**.

### AGGA Committee

The Associated Grocers Green Awareness (AGGA) Committee was formed in 2020 to improve the Cooperative's overall carbon footprint through the research and implementation of sustainability-focused initiatives internally and throughout our membership. In 2023, AGGA representatives hosted internal employee engagement events, supported local legislative efforts, and participated in community networking with likeminded businesses and professionals throughout New Hampshire.



## AGNE-ECO

AGNE-Eco is a new program that will track the sustainability certifications of our vendors and items. This will be a partnership program with our vendors to collect their sustainability certifications and compile a database of what items we're currently warehousing that are considered eco-friendly. It is our goal with this program to support our members and retailers in their efforts to become more sustainable and provide eco-friendly product offerings to our local communities.



## Our Distribution Center

To successfully measure future progress, we first need to know where we are. In 2023, The Ratio Institute came onsite AG's headquarters to conduct a comprehensive energy audit to help us establish benchmarks to reference growth against for years to come. Included here is a snapshot of some of the results.

### Air Infiltration

AG's building structure and operational systems minimize air infiltration, in turn optimizing air quality and energy consumption.

### LED Lighting

Since AG's first fluorescent to LED conversion in 2012, our Distribution Center has had over 800 LED lights installed. Making this switch has saved over 25,000,000 kilowatt hours!

*"Our Level 1 energy audit and sustainability assessment found that AGNE is systematically preventing air infiltration into the building, maximizing energy efficiency, and diverting food waste."*

*— Peter Cooke,  
Maine Office of Ratio Institute*



## Waste Management

Being a wholesale grocery distribution center that's just under 500,000 square feet, we require a wide variety of products and materials to operate successfully. However, AG is committed to minimizing our waste through local partnerships, proper handling, and innovative operations.

### Plastic Wrap

While AG has recycled our Distribution Center's plastic wrap for years, we partnered with sustainability-focused decking company, Trex, in 2020 for a unique means of upcycling this film instead. Each year, we send Trex 40 tons of plastic which then gets manufactured into their high-performance decking material.



### IT Equipment

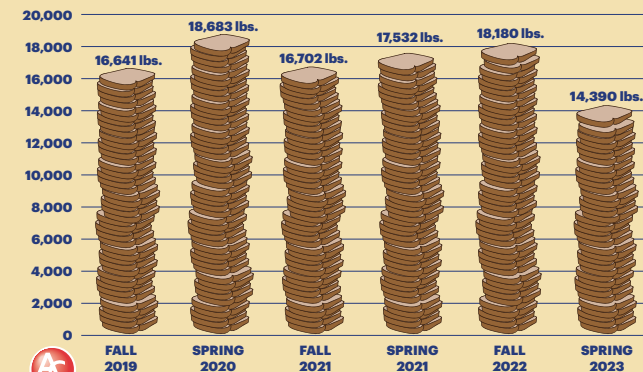
Material waste generated from our Distribution Center aren't the only items AG recycles, however. In 2023, AG also recycled 2,480 pounds of electronics and other IT-related equipment such as computers, monitors, keyboards, toner cartridges and more.

## Food Shows

AG hosts two Food Shows a year where our customers, employees, and vendors have the opportunity to meet face-to-face and discuss new products, trends in the industry, and negotiate deals in pursuit of mutual success. Being in the grocery industry, the majority of featured items and products of discussion are made up of both perishable and non-perishable food items. While customers are able to sample and take these items home, there is inevitably a large amount that remains untouched. In the Spring of 2023 alone, AG donated 14,390 pounds of food to the New Hampshire Food Bank!

### New Hampshire FOOD BANK A Program of New Hampshire Catholic Charities

### Food Bank Donations Fall 2019-Spring 2023



New England is proud to join our vendors and support the local community

## Cardboard

About 2,000 tons of cardboard from our Distribution Center gets salvaged annually.

## Reclaim Program

When grocery items are damaged, they aren't necessarily unusable. Take for example canned goods that get dented; they are unappealing to the eye and thus less sellable, however the product within is typically unharmed. To handle effected products such as this, Associated Grocers of New England has a formalized reclamation process that our retailers can choose to participate in.

When damaged goods are received back at the Distribution Center, they undergo a thorough assessment process. Based on the determined state of the item, AG has several different means of proper handling: sell to a third-party for resale, donate to the state's food bank or, in the case of perishable items, given to local farms for animal consumption.

By offering this service to our retailers we are helping them minimize the effects of SHRINK on their business, as well as reducing food waste within the supply chain – truly a win-win!



## Renewable Energy

Beginning in 2020, AG's Green Awareness (AGGA) Committee partnered with ReVision Energy to install what would become the largest rooftop solar array in New Hampshire at the time. In March of 2022, it officially went live. As a 1.3-megawatt system boasting 3,450 panels, the array was expected to generate more than 1.45 million kilowatt hours of clean energy annually, offsetting 2.2 million pounds of CO2 emissions in just as much time.

So, how did our panels do? See for yourself!

In 2023, 1,218,234 kWh were generated, which is equal to...

**294**

tons of waste recycled instead of landfilled.



**5.6**

acres of U.S. forests preserved from conversion to cropland in one year.



**36,838**

trash bags of waste recycled instead of landfilled.



**1,015**

acres of U.S. forests in one year.



**14,072**

tree seedlings grown for 10 years.



**0.237**

wind turbines running for a year.



*As we look ahead, we are reminded that our actions today shape the world of tomorrow. Let us carry forward the spirit of accountability, innovation, and compassion that are at the core of this journey. With each step, we reaffirm our commitment to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future, together.*



**New England**