



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

C&K Market moves to employee ownership through ESOP Trust

Decision strengthens commitment to customers, employees and communities

Medford, OR. January 25, 2021: C&K Market, an independent chain of grocery stores in Oregon and California, completed a transaction to become 100% employee-owned through an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) trust. This enables employees to receive retirement benefits linked to the company's future equity value. The plan was established on December 29, 2020.

"At our core, we're a community grocery store that proudly serves its neighbors," said Karl Wissmann, president and CEO of C&K Market. "We tailor what we offer to meet the needs of each community we serve. That commitment continues through our Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), which allows us to maintain our independence and lets employees benefit from our success."

Wissmann noted that the ESOP builds on C&K Market's strengths: employees who go the extra mile for their customers, strong community connections and a passion to continually improving and updating its stores and their offerings. He pointed to remodeling of 100% of its stores over the past six years, as well the launch of new departments including Healthy Living, Pet Centers and Foods of the World. Additionally, each store added about 2,500 new items.

"These accomplishments were often motivated by what employees heard from customers," Wissmann said. "We strive to listen and deliver what our customers want. I'm proud of what we've achieved and know that greater things are coming, because our employees built such a strong foundation."

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Wissmann called C&K Markets “a chain of *independent* stores rather than an independent *chain* of stores. We serve a variety of communities; each has unique needs. Our passion is meeting those needs and continuing to give back to those communities, while evolving to be their grocery store of choice,” he said.

“We started an initiative some five years ago to give customers a reason to shop in our stores rather than a big box store,” Wissmann continued. “We listen to customers and respond to their preferences. Shoppers are buying more from us because we are adding real value to each of the communities that we serve.

“Our future is definitely bright as we enter our next chapter,” he said. “This is the best possible succession plan for a company with strong local roots and dedicated employees.” No changes are planned in management structure, operating policies or practices.

Store meetings will be held to introduce the plan during the first quarter with additional information provided throughout the year.

There are 6,600 ESOPs in the United States, holding \$1.4 trillion dollars and employing some 14 million people, according to the National Center for Employee Ownership. They also typically provide 2.2 times the total retirement assets as non-ESOP companies. A Rutgers study found that ESOP companies grow 2.3 to 2.4% faster after setting up an ESOP.

C&K Market: The chain started in 1956 with one market in Brookings, OR. Today it has 38 stores in Oregon and northern California, operating under the banners of **Ray’s Food Place**, **Shop Smart** and **C&K Market**. In 2014, Karl Wissmann joined the grocery chain as its CEO and led its recent revitalization. Currently, more than 1,200 people are employed by the company, which is now employee owned.

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