

# 40 UNDER 40

*CStore Decisions presents  
the 2020 class of 40 Under  
40 C-Store Leaders to Watch.*

**A CStore Decisions Staff Report**

**2020 has brought challenges** to the c-store industry like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic arrived in spring, changing the way retailers approach their businesses and escalating digital disruption. Stores have scrambled to keep customers and employees safe with social distancing decals, masks and plexiglass shields. At the same time, they're launching mobile apps, online ordering, curbside pickup, delivery and contactless payment. Next-generation leaders, who are digital natives and generally quick to adopt new technology, are leading the way forward with innovative solutions to help their chains thrive in these difficult times.

On the pages that follow, CStore Decisions presents the 2020 class of 40 Under 40 C-Store Leaders to Watch. These next-generation leaders represent some of the most promising young executives in the c-store industry today, selected from chains of all sizes across the convenience store industry. Among them, these retailers hold a variety of positions, including CEO, category manager and chief financial officer, to name a few.

Several are members of the National Advisory Group's (NAG) Young Executives Organization (YEO), a growing group of emerging industry frontrunners focused on education and networking with other under-40 executives in the competitive c-store channel. Those interested in nominating future leaders for next year's 40 Under 40 or joining YEO can contact CStore Decisions Editor-in-Chief and NAG Executive Director John Lofstock at [jllofstock@wtwhmedia.com](mailto:jllofstock@wtwhmedia.com).



**BRAD AYERS, 36**

Director of Operations

**Company:** Ayers Oil Co.

**Headquarters:** Canton, Mo.

**Number of Stores:** 16

**Years With the Company:** 12

Representing the fourth generation in the family business, Brad Ayers first began working in maintenance for Ayers Oil Co. part-time in the summers. He joined the company full-time in 2008 and has since led the charge to bring its stores up to date with technology and equipment, including upgrading the point-of-sale system, establishing a loyalty partnership, introducing mobile checkout and offering customers discounted pricing. He also implemented an overall PriceBook scanning build that has allowed the company to be more accurate with pricing, discounting, combos, promotions and more.

**What is the most challenging issue facing young executives today?** "Labor — both managing the increasing cost and retaining staff members."



## JOSEPH BARONE, 32

District Manager,  
Food Operations

**Company:** Delta Sonic

**Headquarters:** Buffalo, N.Y.

**Number of Stores:** 32

**Years With the Company:** 7



Joseph Barone leads 20 teams between western New York and Chicago. He has also taken on several additional projects this year including increasing incremental sales by getting Delta Sonic's food programs listed on Uber Eats and Grubhub, implementing waste-tracking programs to improve gross profit and enhancing food safety by streamlining processes. He's also using technology to ensure customers are receiving the quickest and most complete service possible.

**What is the most challenging issue facing young executives today?** "Training new hires and other employees of different age groups, mindsets and learning styles by providing videos, tests and other means to meet the needs and preferences of each individual."



## SHANITA BROWN, 38

Senior Manager, Financial Planning Operations

**Company:** 7-Eleven Inc.

**Headquarters:** Irving, Texas

**Number of Stores:** 71,800 globally, 12,000 in North America

**Years With the Company:** 10



After graduating college, Shanita Brown began her career in the convenience industry at Speedway SuperAmerica. Since then, Brown has held several positions with 7-Eleven before being promoted to her current role, in which she's able to harness her experience and education to support one of the most innovative areas in the company — digital. She partners with a team to ensure platforms that impact customer experiences and store operations are implemented effectively from start to finish. Brown is also an active member of a leadership and mentoring organization, Network of Executive Women (NEW).

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?**

"The best part of my job is impacting the human experience; from helping customers, to supporting our franchise community, to creating well-defined processes, this career and company offer intrinsic rewards that make this experience feel like a dream!"



## BILL BUSTIN, 33

Marketing Director

**Company:** Dandy Mini Marts Inc.

**Headquarters:** Sayre, Pa.

**Number of Stores:** 65

**Years With the Company:** 2.5



Bill Bustin brings a fresh approach to marketing in the convenience store space. His education and several years of previous experience with a large e-commerce firm in Chicago allow him to look at brick-and-mortar and, specifically, c-store marketing from a different perspective, fueling Dandy's move toward data-driven, digital marketing. The move has made a huge difference for the company, especially when it comes to its Dandy Stache rewards and pay program.

**What is the most challenging issue facing young executives today?** "Balancing operational efficiency with intelligent risk-taking and experimentation in a fast-moving industry."





## BRAD CAMPBELL, 28

Category Leader – Tobacco & CBD

**Company:** Sheetz Inc.

**Headquarters:** Altoona, Pa.

**Number of Stores:** 611

**Years With the Company:** 11

Brad Campbell began his career at Sheetz in 2009 as a salesperson at Sheetz store No. 59 in Latrobe, Pa. He also worked in the merchandising department as a planogram analyst, and then as the retail space manager where he oversaw the planogram team and lottery sales across six states. In January 2019, Campbell transitioned into his current role as category leader for other tobacco products (OTP) and CBD. He is responsible for the sales and marketing of OTP (snuff, cigars and e-cigs) and CBD categories.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "I'm excited for the continued expansion of the CBD category."



## KELSEY CAPELLINO, 30

Category Manager –  
Beer, Wine & Spirits

**Company:** United Pacific

**Headquarters:** Long Beach, Calif.

**Number of Stores:** 451

**Years With the Company:** 4



The global pandemic has forced Kelsey Capellino to rethink how she manages the adult beverage category for United Pacific. Customers have turned to c-stores for their beer, wine and spirits in communities where officials continue to limit indoor capacity of bars and restaurants. To support

the welcomed business and capitalize on the profit potential, the category manager redirected her retail operations team to focus more on larger take-home packages and maximizing cooler capacity.

**What do you think today's young executives bring to the table?** "Young executives want to work in collaborative environments; if we are going to win, we want to win together."



## MEGAN CHMURA, 33

Director of Center Store

**Company:** GetGo

**Headquarters:** Pittsburgh

**Number of Stores:** 265

**Years With the Company:** 6



As director of center store, Megan Chmura oversees a plethora of product families, from snacks to dairy to frozen and more. In addition to devising marketing and merchandising profiles, Chmura manages profits by streamlining inventory control operations for store managers and warehouse staff. She recently centralized the company's milk program by leveraging an assisted replenishment system to generate orders based on sales volume per store and redirecting product delivery to a single site.

**What do you think today's young executives bring to the table?** "Young executives aren't afraid to identify and test new opportunities to capture the millennial/Gen Z consumer, monitoring results and making changes to their programs as needed."





## CANDICE CLARK, 38

Chief Financial Officer

**Company:** Clipper Petroleum

**Headquarters:** Flowery Branch, Ga.

**Number of Stores:** 28

**Years With the Company:** 5

When Candice Clark joined Clipper Petroleum as accounting controller five years ago, she saw just how fast-paced the convenience store industry moves, a challenge she welcomed. For example, she's witnessed how foodservice stepped up as a major differentiator in the competitive retail environment. She was recently promoted to chief financial officer, which means assuming a more strategic role for the company's growth initiatives. Clark looks forward to identifying new investments to expand market share in the new year.

**What do you think today's young executives bring to the table?** "I believe that young executives bring a fresh perspective, and not only have their finger on the pulse of what's happening now, but plan for where things are headed in the future."



## RYAN CLONTZ, 36

President

**Company:** Breeze Thru Markets LLC

**Headquarters:** Cary, N.C.

**Number of Stores:** 19

**Years With the Company:** 8

Ryan Clontz serves as president of Breeze Thru Markets, the retail arm of Cary Oil. The company operates 19 stores and supplies fuel to more than 800 independently owned and operated c-stores and gas stations. Clontz noted that working for a family-owned business gives him the flexibility to react to the market and make key decisions more quickly than he could have in the past working for larger corporations. He looks forward to growing Breeze Thru Markets in the upcoming years through acquisitions and new-to-industry sites.

**What makes young executives effective in the competitive convenience store industry?** "I believe that today's young executives are innovative and adaptive to the ever-changing technology that is available. This attitude allows for a deeper understanding of what true convenience means for today's consumers."

## ICY CONN, 33

Executive Director of Retail Operations

**Company:** Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma; Division of Commerce Retail

**Headquarters:** Durant, Okla.

**Number of Stores:** 17

**Years With the Company:** 4.5



Icy Conn began her career at 15, at a local family-owned hardware store. After college, she began working with a c-store wholesaler. In 2016, she joined Choctaw Nation, which operates Choctaw Travel Plazas, as senior retail merchandising manager, bringing 17 years of experience in retail and wholesale distribution, specializing in strategic analytics and vendor relationship management. She went on to hold multiple roles for the commerce retail, food and beverage departments. In July, she was promoted to executive director of retail operations, leading the Choctaw Nation's Commerce Retail Operations team's overall strategy and daily operations.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "In 2021, I'm most looking forward to advancing technology inside of our locations to meet the safety and efficiencies our guests expect."





**GARRETT CRUMPTON, 38**

Director of Marketing

**Company:** Golden Pantry  
**Headquarters:** Watkinsville, Ga.  
**Number of Stores:** 32  
**Years With the Company:** 2

Garrett Crumpton joined Flash Foods right out of college in 2008 as an operations supervisor. He ran a division for several years. Crumpton went on to work as a category manager for CST Brands before moving into marketing with Circle K. Two years ago, Crumpton joined Golden Pantry as director of marketing. Crumpton said he is fortunate to have had some great mentors in the industry. He enjoys heading to work every day because retail is always changing and always challenging. Crumpton wants to continue to grow with Golden Pantry and help others succeed in their career goals as he has been able to do in his.

**What's the biggest issue facing c-stores today?**

"Multichannel buying experiences are the largest challenge for c-stores."

**COLIN DORNISH, 31**

Senior Director of Operations

**Company:** Coen Markets Inc.  
**Headquarters:** Canonsburg, Pa.  
**Number of Stores:** 56  
**Years With the Company:** 7

Colin Dornish serves as the senior director of operations for Coen Markets, one of the oldest and largest convenience store chains in the Pittsburgh region. It began serving the public in 1923, and today operates nearly 60 stores in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia.

**What do today's young executives bring to the table?**

"The convenience store industry has been challenged to adapt over the past five years in order to stay relevant and meet our customers' expectations. Technology has become a critical part of convenience store development. Many young executives are coming to their leadership tables with diverse backgrounds in technology applications to impact business processes and increase productivity. Our industry is always evolving, and the excitement of what we can build today to impact our lives for the future is the most exciting part of being a young executive in the convenience store industry."

**FOUAD EL-NEMR, 28**

Executive Vice President

**Company:** Nouria Energy  
**Headquarters:** Worcester, Mass.  
**Number of Stores:** 128  
**Years With the Company:** 5

Fouad El-Nemr is a second-generation leader at Nouria Energy, a Massachusetts-based chain founded in 1989 by his father, Tony El-Nemr, when he purchased a single underperforming service station in Auburn, Mass. Today, the company operates nearly 130 stores, 46 Golden Nozzle carwashes, the award winning Whately Diner and supplies fuel to a network of 150 dealer-operated sites.

**How is being part of a family business helping you reach your career goals as a young executive?**

"Today's young executives essentially bring unique and different strategic approaches to the table. They add a fresh, new dimension to strategic thinking that might not have been previously considered. Being part of the family business has given me a firsthand experience in various disciplines within the company — from working as a sales associate at store level, to becoming a c-suite executive. This experience was invaluable because it allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the business and, most importantly, a unique appreciation for each of its parts to accomplish my career goals."





## STEVEN FLORES, 36

Senior Director, Retail Fuel Pricing & Fleet

**Company:** 7-Eleven

**Headquarters:** Irving, Texas

**Number of Stores:** 71,800 globally, 12,000 in North America

**Years With the Company:** 3



Steven Flores has been instrumental in building an innovative and inclusive culture across his team that enables them to deliver results and serve the organization by optimizing fuel prices at 4,600-plus locations throughout the U.S. and Canada. It is his bias for action that has positioned 7-Eleven to grow and retain B2B fleet customers while staying ahead of market trends.

**What is the most challenging issue facing young executives today?** "In addition to keeping our company well informed in the rapidly evolving digital environment, rethinking strategies for talent acquisition and development, productivity through work-life balance and the importance of diversity and inclusion are top of mind."



## NICHOLAS GIACOBBI, 38

Director of Development

**Company:** Procaccianti Cos.

**Headquarters:** Cranston, R.I.

**Number of Stores:** 2

**Years With the Company:** 2

Nicholas Giacobbi grew up in his family's local c-store business. After attending college for business and finance, he was drawn to real estate development and construction, which led to a 10-year career building hospitals, banks, pharmacies and other retail facilities for a national development

and construction firm. He joined Procaccianti Cos. two years ago as development director. The company recently launched Neon Marketplace, and Giacobbi has been instrumental in identifying locations and orchestrating the predevelopment, development and construction of the sites. In addition to two operational c-stores, six more are under development/construction. Neon Market has a goal to grow to 30 sites in the Northeast within the next 18 months.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "I'm looking forward to the deployment of new technologies in the c-store space that align with the dramatic shifts in consumer behavior and preferences."



## GEOFF GIVEN, 36

Vice President of Operations

**Company:** Good 2 Go Stores

**Headquarters:** Idaho Falls, Idaho

**Number of Stores:** 61

**Years With the Company:** 2



Geoff Given began his career in the convenience industry with RaceTrac Petroleum in 2008, working his way through multiple positions in several divisions. He began working for Good 2 Go in October 2018. Currently, Given and his team are working on 'Project Elevate,' a program that provides a clear path for team members to grow with the company and achieve their goals, focusing on leadership so that wherever they go, they can wave the Good 2 Go flag and influence others because they were invested in by Good 2 Go.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "Having the ability to be a positive influence on others and helping them succeed in their aspirations."





**CHRIS HARTMAN, 31**

Director of Fuels, Forecourt &amp; Advertising

**Company:** Rutter's**Headquarters:** York, Pa.**Number of Stores:** 78**Years With the Company:** 2.5

When he was 13 years old, Chris Hartman was eager to represent the 11th generation for the family's c-store business. As a teenager stocking shelves and running registers, Hartman observed how fuel and tobacco drove sales. When he rejoined the company a few years ago, after earning his MBA and working as a food broker, the chain had refocused on attracting customers by providing restaurant-level foodservice and also diversified into gaming and alcohol sales. Hartman believes the company's ability to adapt to trends and customer expectations will push future success.

**What do you think today's young executives bring to the table?** "We bring a passion to shape the long-term vision of our companies to ensure future success as needs change."

**AMIR HASSAN, 23**

Operations Coordinator

**Company:** H&S Energy LLC**Headquarters:** Orange, Calif.**Number of Stores:** 112**Years With the Company:** 5

As a second-generation member of the family business, Amir Hassan grew up learning about convenience stores. While Hassan had originally planned to become a doctor, he felt destiny guiding him into the family business, and he officially joined the company when he turned 18. H&S Energy operates 46 company-owned Power Markets and 56 ExtraMile c-stores in California, and plans to double its store count in five years. As operations coordinator, Hassan plays a key role in the chain's numerous initiatives from growing its store network to launching a loyalty program and mobile app. In Q1 of 2021, Power Market plans to debut a cashierless store pilot at a handful of its sites.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "The project I am most looking forward to in 2021 is our cashierless store innovation."

**ARABY HASSAN, 20**

Marketing and Sales Coordinator

**Company:** H&S Energy LLC**Headquarters:** Orange, Calif.**Number of Stores:** 112**Years With the Company:** Officially 1.5

As a second-generation member of the family business, H&S Energy has always been part of Araby Hassan's life, and he's

been assisting his father and uncle since a young age. In his current role as marketing and sales coordinator, Hassan works with vendors, team members and executives to ensure marketing initiatives and goals are met. The

team has been busy working

on a range of projects from a new mobile app and loyalty program to store remodels and its new subscription-based car wash model.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "The growth of our mobile app alongside the release of our loyalty program to better serve our customers and community."



**CHIQUITA JONES, 34**

Regional Director of Operations

**Company:** Circle K**Headquarters:** Tempe, Ariz.**Number of Stores:** 109 (in region) 15,000+ (overall)**Years With the Company:** 5

Chiquita Jones began her career working for a department store after college before joining Speedway in 2011. Jones wore many hats throughout her time at Speedway, which helped her become a well-rounded, visionary leader. Today, she has a knack for directing company operations in a growth-minded direction. She joined Alimentation Couche-Tard (Circle K) just under five years ago. In her current role as regional director of operations in central Illinois for Circle K, she oversees approximately 100 sites for the Heartland Business Unit. She is directly responsible for ensuring that processes in her region run efficiently.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "Seeing the results and initiatives from our new Business Resource Group. One of the focuses is on diversity and inclusion, which is huge, especially for women in a predominantly male-run industry."

**ANKUSH KAMBOJ, 32**

Chief Operating Officer

**Company:** KFT Holdings**Headquarters:** Bakersfield, Calif.**Number of Stores:** 5**Years With the Company:** 8

Ankush Kamboj began working at his parents' convenience stores after school and on weekends in high school. After college, he rose up the ranks in KFT Holdings' current 7-Eleven locations and Denny's restaurants, learning both sides of the business before becoming chief operating officer in 2014 and combining his experience in restaurants and c-stores to help start the Millbrook Station brand. Millbrook Station c-stores are both "tech- and fresh food-obsessed," aiming to elevate the convenience store experience for its customers while looking to expand aggressively in the next several years.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?**

"From the employees to our customers, focusing on servant leadership as well as leveraging technology, store design and merchandizing all energize me."

**PATRICK LAWRENCE, 33**

Vice President

**Company:** Speedway Q Markets**Headquarters:** Kimball, Mich.**Number of Stores:** 21**Years With the Company:** 13

Patrick Lawrence is third-generation member of the Speedway Q founding family. He began working with the company part-time, cleaning up the truck lot and stocking coolers when he was 16, and joining full-time when he was 20. Under Lawrence's guidance as vice president, Speedway Q has developed an environment in which the company's various departmental teams are in constant communication, allowing them to share information and quickly address any issues that may arise.

**What is the most challenging issue facing young executives today?** "Making sure you can attract and surround yourself with the best people."





## ANNIE MARSZAL, 37

Chief Business Development Officer

**Company:** California Retail Management / Lahaina Petroleum

**Headquarters:** Sacramento, Calif.

**Number of Stores:** 25 in California, 17 in Hawaii

**Years With the Company:** Officially 10

Annie Marszal grew up in the industry, going to sites with her dad. After college, she moved to New York City to gain outside experience and sharpen her business skills. Before moving home to Sacramento, she took an internship with the Midland, Texas-based Kent Kwik stores. Marszal officially joined the family business in 2011 and is grateful to have worked side by side with her dad, Ed Marszal, over the last decade. She is responsible for bringing new sites to the company, remodeling and improving existing sites, and she serves on several industry advisory committees and executive committees.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "I get to work with my dad and brother every day, growing a business that started with just one gas station in 1981 to over 40 stores in California and Hawaii."



## ERICA PARET, 32

Associate General Counsel

**Company:** GPM Empire LLC (formerly Empire Petroleum Partners LLC)

**Headquarters:** Dallas

**Number of Stores:** 1,466 wholesale locations; 88 retail locations (Empire Petroleum)

**Years With the Company:** 5

Erica Paret got her start in the convenience industry as outside counsel to Empire, assisting on due diligence for one of its acquisitions back in 2014. Today, Paret is most excited about the integration of Empire's existing business into GPM and seeing how the combination of the two businesses can accelerate their growth strategies and allow the company to better serve its existing customers.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "I have the opportunity to interact and learn a variety of new things about our business every day from the different departments, including operations, finance and accounting, and I think this makes me a better lawyer by being able to understand the business functions in order to collaborate and better serve our customers."



## CINDY PERILLI, 37

Associate Experience Strategist

**Company:** Wawa Inc.

**Headquarters:** Wawa, Pa.

**Number of Stores:** 860+

**Years With the Company:** 7

Cindy Perilli began her career in human resources (HR) with generalist roles, later moving through various HR disciplines, including information systems, training and development, performance improvement, change management, and now employee experience.

She brought with her to Wawa HR experience across nonprofit, manufacturing, fashion retail and global food operations. As associate experience strategist, Perilli creates strategies to look at the 'associate experience' holistically from the Talent Lifecycle viewpoint, i.e. from pre-hire to retire. She also acts as associate advocate on projects to ensure decisions are made with the associate at the center. When a business problem is tied to human behaviors, she conducts full-scale performance improvement investigations to identify root causes through qualitative and quantitative data to guide solutions.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward in 2021?** "Deep focus on our associates' needs to improve their holistic work experience."





## KATIE PETRU, 38

Director, Communications and Community

**Company:** Casey's  
**Headquarters:** Ankeny, Iowa  
**Number of Stores:** Nearly 2,300  
**Years With the Company:** 1

While her position at Casey's is Katie Petru's first role in the convenience store industry, the Iowa native grew up on Casey's pizza and fountain drinks. Petru said she loves being able to connect what she does in her role as Casey's director of communications and community to the world and the people around her. Every day, she and her Casey's colleagues make a direct impact with their local customers and the communities they serve.

**What's the biggest issue facing c-stores today?** "Relevance. Being convenient is table stakes — to connect with the guest we must be relevant in their life, daily activities and deliver a great experience."

## BRIAN PREVATT, 35

Chief Financial Officer

**Company:** Parker's  
**Headquarters:** Savannah, Ga.  
**Number of Stores:** 67  
**Years With the Company:** 2



Before joining Parker's, Brian Prevatt spent nearly a decade as a tax manager with Hancock Askew & Co. in Savannah, Ga., where he designed long-term strategic and financial plans for companies, including Parker's. After joining Parker's, he served for eight years as the CPA before becoming chief financial officer. Prevatt's career goals are to continue to scale to meet the needs of "an incredibly innovative, diverse and fast-growing company at Parker's." In addition to serving as a valued financial strategist and CPA for the Parker's team, he stays active in professional and community organizations.

**What's the biggest issue facing c-stores today?** "Navigating the evolving convenience store industry with more complex offerings, new competitors, rising operating costs and a challenging labor market."



## RYAN RAZOWSKY, 34

President

**Company:** Rmarts LLC  
**Headquarters:** Deerfield, Ill.  
**Number of Stores:** 13  
**Years With the Company:** 10

Ryan Razowsky is the president of family-owned Rmarts LLC, a company that was founded in 1951 in Chicago. Rmarts operates c-stores under the MinuteMan and Fillinup banners. Being part of a family business gave Razowsky the opportunity to lead a team of 100-plus employees at a young age and gave him a space for personal and professional growth that he cherishes. He has enjoyed the opportunity to grow a team and to watch the staff grow and evolve as people.

**What do today's young executives bring to the table?** "The chance to change and continue to evolve the industry. The future of convenience and the needs of our customers will look very different 10 years from now. Young executives carry the vision for what our future holds. They have the answers to what products our customers will be looking for and how we can better serve our communities going forward."





**MATTHEW REDMOND, 33**

President

**Company:** Raymer Oil Co.**Headquarters:** Statesville, N.C.**Number of Stores:** 38**Years With the Company:** 10

Convenience is in Matthew Redmond's blood. Redmond joined the four-generation family business after graduating with a finance degree from Appalachian State University in 2010. He was named president of Raymer Oil in 2015. Redmond has grown Raymer Oil's operation from one store to 38 stores in just over five years. The convenience stores operate under the banners Fast Phil's and Run In.

**What's the biggest issue facing c-stores today?**

"The impact that COVID-19 is having and will continue to have on the labor market, and what that means in terms of adaptation to new technologies."

**KATIE ROBERTS, 30**

Brand Development and Communications Manager

**Company:** The Kent Cos. Inc.**Headquarters:** Midland, Texas**Number of Stores:** 54**Years With the Company:** 3

Katie Roberts serves as the brand development and communications manager for The Kent Cos., which operates 54 Kent Kwik convenience stores. The Kent Cos. is helping Roberts reach her career goals, allowing her the flexibility to try new things within communications and branding approaches. Roberts enjoys being able to study what the chain has done in the past and share what she thinks the chain could do in the future with the support of her colleagues.

**What is it like to work in the c-store industry as a young executive?** "Today's young executives bring adaptability and fresh perspectives to the table. I think young executives are more accepting of change and are willing to push boundaries for the betterment of their industry."

**TED SADOWSKI, 39**

Regional Director of Operations

**Company:** QuickChek Corp.**Headquarters:** Whitehouse Station, N.J.**Number of Stores:** 158**Years With the Company:** 7.5

Ted Sadowski got his start in the industry when he attended human resources classes with QuickChek employees David Bussiere and Donna Lyn Kane, who touted the company's culture, values and mission. Sadowski knew he needed to be a part of the QuickChek team. In his current role as regional director of operations, Sadowski is tasked with enhancing the leadership pipeline in store operations and identifying future leaders for both multi-unit and executive succession planning. The company recently developed the senior district leader role, designed to provide experiential learning opportunities in the field and career enrichment for future QuickChek executives.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "Each week, my time on the front line, coaching, teaching, mentoring and troubleshooting store operations, with the most talented and dedicated team members in the convenience industry, is priceless."





## JON SIRON, 36

Food & Beverage Director

**Company:** Gier Oil Co.

**Headquarters:** Springfield, Mo.

**Number of Stores:** 50

**Years With the Company:** 2.5



Jon Siron was first hired into a different leadership position within Gier Oil's corporate team. Just one week into his training, they knew he was destined for a different position. Siron has 20 years of experience in the foodservice industry, and every store he would visit, he couldn't stop talking about all the opportunities and ideas he had for the kitchens. He was quickly moved into the food & beverage director position. His nickname, 'Jonny Hotdogs,' was coined by the company's finance manager one day, and it stuck. Now, it's a character used for the roller grills. The chain recently launched its On the Fly pizza program, using all-new pizza recipes with fresh ingredients.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "Every day I get to play with food, and I can't believe this is my 'job!'"

## HEIDI STEINKER, 38

Branded Fuels Specialist



**Company:** Beck Suppliers Inc.

**Headquarters:** Fremont, Ohio

**Number of Stores:** 27 company-owned FriendShip Stores, and several hundred independently-owned dealer locations

**Years With the Company:** 6

As a branded fuels specialist, Heidi Steinker is well versed on buying fuel as well as managing relationships and contracts with suppliers, and she's known for her passion and strong leadership skills. She looks forward to growing in her career with Beck Suppliers and continuing to support branded fuel expansion for Beck Suppliers' independently owned sites, helping them fly a major branded flag while remaining unique in their store character and offerings. Beck Suppliers is part of a dynamic industry full of opportunities and has a diverse team.

**What's the biggest issue facing c-stores today?** "In today's environment, c-stores must find the perfect balance of giving contactless options without compromising customer service, while also leveraging loyalty options (oil company partner brands or proprietary) to differentiate."

## ERIC STOKES, 39

Senior Director of Finance

**Company:** Tri Star Energy

**Headquarters:** Nashville, Tenn.

**Number of Stores:** 145 company-owned sites, 600+ dealers

**Years With the Company:** 6

After a decade of working in wealth management, Eric Stokes looked forward to the challenges he'd face in directing corporate finances for a large convenience store chain. Who knew a public health crisis would skew much of that work?



On top of dealing with the fiscal fallout of COVID-19, much of his year was spent on securing the acquisition of Hollingsworth Oil for Tri Star Energy. The transaction increased the Nashville-based company's retail footprint by more than 50 locations, which now includes Twice Daily and Sudden Service c-stores.

**What do you think today's young executives bring to the table?** "I think young executives assist in bringing technological advancements to operations."







## IRFAN TEJANI, 36

President & CEO

**Company:** Tejani Holdings Inc.  
**Headquarters:** Sugar Land, Texas  
**Number of Stores:** 40+  
**Years With the Company:** 10

Irfan Tejani acquired and opened his first c-store in 2010. A decade later, his Charge Up convenience store chain has grown to 40-plus sites in Texas and Louisiana, and he's on track to reach 50 locations in 2021. With Charge Up, Tejani aspires to create a destination stop where all customers feel welcome and can find the products and services they need, including food and electric vehicle charging. Charge Up plans to launch a loyalty program in 2021, among other initiatives.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "Along with looking forward to our organic growth in the year 2021 we will be devoted to branding and implementing the loyalty program, all across (our chain)."



## WALEED WADI, 39

Division Vice President, South

**Company:** Kum & Go  
**Headquarters:** Des Moines, Iowa  
**Number of Stores:** 400  
**Years With the Company:** 3



Waleed Wadi's father owned convenience stores in Houston, so he grew up mopping, stocking shelves and running a register. His dad even had a special stool for him so he could work the counter and talk to customers. Wadi went on to serve 13 years in the military, followed by a career in risk management, which led him to Kum & Go a little over three years ago. Wadi is passionate about Kum & Go's purpose of 'Making Days Better' by connecting with people. The chain is currently rolling out a new technology platform, Crew, an app that will further connect and engage store associates.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "In addition to operating stores in an exciting industry, I also get to focus on developing our teams and providing opportunities for others to succeed."



## SLATON WHATLEY, 33

Director of Operations

**Company:** Whatley Oil Co.  
**Headquarters:** Columbus, Ga.  
**Number of Stores:** 11  
**Years With the Company:** 3.5

Slaton Whatley is a third-generation member of the family business. He began his career in Arizona and California working in retail, tourism and software, before he moved home to Georgia at the age of 30 to join his dad and uncle in operating Zelmo's Zip In convenience stores. Whatley trained under industry veteran Ralph Byrne, who was the former director of operations for Whatley Oil Co. When Byrne passed away suddenly, Whatley stepped up to the role. Today, he's immersed in the daily operations of the company. The chain is busy remodeling stores and preparing to open its first unbranded site.

**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "Completing construction on and opening our new flagship store in Columbus, Ga."





## SARAH WHITNEY, 31

Director of Marketing

**Company:** Tiger Fuel Co.

**Headquarters:** Charlottesville, Va.

**Number of Stores:** 9

**Years With the Company:** 2



Sarah Whitney oversees strategic marketing, branding and communication efforts for three distinct brands — Tiger Fuel Co., The Market convenience stores and TigerWash — while authentically engaging with customers and sharing stories of the Tiger Fuel team. Future Tiger Fuel projects include implementing a custom online ordering feature within the mobile app and website, offering monthly subscriptions and inviting customers to turn their loyalty points into donations for local nonprofits. Tiger Fuel recently acquired a solar panel company and has plans to build an express tunnel car wash and a new deli store with a drive-through option.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "I work with passionate, collaborative, authentic and diverse people who truly want to make an impact on our community, and it is a privilege to be part of such a great culture and work with a team that feels like family."

## ALEX WILLIAMS, 33

Chief Operating Officer

**Company:** Jiffy Trip

**Headquarters:** Enid, Okla.

**Number of Stores:** 29

**Years With the Company:** 11

Alex Williams is a third-generation member of the family business. After college, Williams began managing c-stores for Jiffy Trip while he completed his MBA from Oklahoma State University. Over the next four years Williams served as a district manager overseeing 10 locations. In 2018, he was promoted to his current role of chief operating officer. In this position, he is responsible for operations, fuel strategy, land development and overseeing four district managers. Jiffy Trip is poised to grow to 50 multi-site locations by 2025 and 100 locations by 2030, expanding with new concept stores through the Central U.S.



**What project or innovation are you most looking forward to in 2021?** "In Q1, we will be debuting our Jiffy Trip Mobile App with food ordering for our JT's Restaurants."

## STEPHANIE ZIERKE, 37

Controller

**Company:** Parkland USA

**Headquarters:** Calgary, Alberta, Canada

**Number of Stores:** 7 locally, 58 regionally

**Years With the Company:** 13



After graduating college and working for CPA firms, Stephanie Zierke went into the private sector, deciding on the oil and gas industry because her father worked in the industry for 30 years. Zierke took a job in accounts receivable for a wholesale company to get her foot in the door; three months later, she was offered the job of controller of the retail division at Parkland USA. Parkland recently announced the rebranding of all of its retail operations in the U.S. to On the Run. Zierke is excited to see the sites come together and unify with Parkland's retail sites in Canada.

**What's your favorite thing about your job/role?** "So much of retail is in the details, and as a detail-oriented person, I love to be able to dive into the details of the business to improve the overall picture."

