

BUSINESS

LEGACY

From page B1

Steady growth

Rocky Cingari died June 3, succumbing to complications from injuries sustained in a single-vehicle crash a few weeks earlier in Pound Ridge, N.Y. He was driving from his home in Stamford to the Brookfield ShopRite when he suffered an apparent cardiac episode.

Five months earlier, he had stepped down as CEO and president. He had stayed on as chairman and was still logging seven-day work weeks.

His 31-year run as chief executive marked a period of striking growth.

When he succeeded his brother, Dom Cingari, as CEO and president, in 1988, he took over a business that owned three stores.

That trio included the company's original Grade A store, the still-running supermarket at 200 Shippan Ave., in Stamford, which was opened in 1943 by Rocky Cingari's father, Salvatore, the firm's founder.

"Rocky was highly motivated," said Sam Cingari, brother of Rocky Cingari and father of Tom Cingari, and the company's chief financial officer. "He's very aggressive, so he took on the possibility of getting the new stores. But to run them, that's my department. He did his thing, and I do my thing. It was a great partnership."

Reflecting its push toward expansion and keeping prices low, the Cingaris' company joined Wakefern Food Corp. in 1991. As the country's largest retailer-owned cooperative, Wakefern comprises 50 members who today independently own and operate 350 supermarkets under the ShopRite, The Fresh Grocer, PriceRite and Dearborn Market brands in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey and seven other states.

"Rocky Cingari led the company during a time of remarkable growth and planted the seeds for a company that will live on long into the future," said Wayne Pesce, president of the Connecticut Food Association. "His incredible work ethic and nationally renowned advocacy on behalf of macular degeneration

are the legacy he leaves on the Connecticut retail landscape."

Today, Grade A ShopRite operates 11 stores across the southwestern section of the state. It opened its latest establishment, in Danbury, in 2016.

"We take new projects on as they present themselves," Tom Cingari said. "We'll analyze if it is the right thing for the company."

Statewide, about 260 grocery stores are in business, down about 20 percent from 20 years ago, according to Connecticut Food Association data. The drop reflects consolidation of locations and the continued rise of big-box supermarkets.

Changing business

The Cingaris are running Grade A ShopRite amid industry shifts in the past few years that have included Amazon's \$13.7 billion acquisition of Whole Foods Markets in 2017.

While milestones such as the Amazon-Whole Foods merger have ushered in a range of digital advances in customer service, Grade A ShopRite was already rolling out its own technology-boosted programs.

Since 2015, it has run its online ShopRite from Home platform, which offers store pickup and home-delivery options. To better track its inventory and registers, it uses a "computer-generated ordering" system.

At the same time, self-checkout machines have become more prevalent in its supermarkets.

Such changes did not cut staffing at Grade A ShopRite, which employs a total of about 2,500 across the 11 stores.

"The trend in 2019 is automation and no checkouts," Tom Cingari said. "We're on the other end of the spectrum. We're going to deliver an experience that our customers aren't getting anywhere else. We have fully staffed meat departments, we have full-service seafood. We have an amazing fresh-scratch bakery program. You don't get these things in most supermarkets."

As the technology, product demand has also evolved.

"Fifteen years ago organics

didn't exist, and now it's mainstream," Tom Cingari said.

Grade A ShopRite has implemented those changes, while avoiding the labor strife that has afflicted some of their competitors.

In April, Stop and Shop employees across Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island went on strike for 11 days before three-year agreements were reached.

Grade A ShopRite's employees are not unionized, but the Cingaris said that ensuring good working conditions is a top priority.

Several long-time employees told Hearst Connecticut Media that the company has realized that goal.

"I love working for them," said Amir Seyal, the Norwalk ShopRite's assistant store manager, who has worked for the company for 25 years. "They're very easy to talk to, if you have a question or want to talk to them about anything to do with the business. They have an open-door policy."

The Cingaris said their focus on customer service and economic prices has cultivated repeat business from longstanding customers such as Christina Burke.

"They're always helpful, and I always find what I need in the store, and it's always fresh produce," said Burke, a Stamford resident who shops at the Norwalk ShopRite and the Grade A Market on Newfield Avenue in Stamford. "It's enjoyable to grocery shop here. And you know what you get in one store, you'll find in another store."

All in the family

Today, five Cingaris work for the company, including Stamford residents Sam Cingari and Tom Cingari.

The new generation includes 60-year-old Tom Cingari's sons, Tom Cingari Jr., 34, and John Cingari, 25. The former already works at the company and the younger son will soon join the firm.

Meanwhile, Sam Cingari, a spry 88 years old, intends to carry on in his current role, as long as his health remains good.

"You can't stop the growth," Sam Cingari said. "That's the industry we're in."

pschott@stamfordadvocate.com;
902-061-2226; Twitter: @dhauschott

BRIEFS

From page B1

so members could pool their dollars, study local concerns, and award grants together to nonprofit organizations tackling issues affecting women and girls in Greater Waterbury and the Litchfield Hills. This is their second year of grant awards.

LiveGirl, a New Canaan-based nonprofit aiming to build self-esteem and social and emotional intelligence — "the building blocks of competent leaders," according to Sheri West, its founder and CEO — received a \$4,000 grant from the circle.

The grant will fund two 10-week "Confidence Clubs" for middle school-aged girls attending the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury. The Giving Circle's grant will also cover the transportation costs for four girls to attend a LiveGirl summer camp and for all girls from the Waterbury Confidence Clubs to attend a statewide Boys & Girls Club leadership summit in November.

New grantees include:

Madre Latina in Waterbury was awarded a \$10,000 grant to launch "Young Representatives of Waterbury," a program geared toward Latina high school students in the city. Participants will learn leadership and civic engagement skills to make change in their communities.

Waterbury Youth Services received a \$10,000 grant to support a second year of the "Girls Who Code" program for 14 Waterbury high school girls. Girls learn computer coding skills in a fun and supportive after school program.

Greenwoods Counseling and Referrals in Litchfield was awarded a \$4,000 grant to subsidize women's counseling sessions, providing the psychological support necessary for promoting and protecting mental health and developing resil-

ience to stress and adversity.

LiveGirl was given a \$4,000 grant to provide programs at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Waterbury, including: Four scholarships to Camp LiveGirl, 20 weeks of LiveGirl Talk afterschool programming, and transportation to a leadership summit in Bridgeport.

Seabury Society for the Preservation of the Glebe House in Woodbury was awarded \$1,500 to create a six part, historical hands-on workshop that will present colonial women's activities.

Learn about getting involved in the Women's Giving Circle at Connecticut Community Foundation. Visit www.conncf.org/womens-giving-circle.

Helping Hands receives Draper Foundation grant

WINSTED — Helping Hands, a 501(c)(3), community-based, home care service, has received a grant of \$1,500 from The Draper Foundation Fund, a fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation to support medical transportation for senior clients.

"This grant affords Helping Hands the resources we need to meet the rising demand for medical transportation among our clients," said director Irene Connole in a statement. "Funding will also enhance our clients' health and wellness by providing them access to dependable transportation, quality doctors and healthcare providers." Helping Hands appreciates the financial assistance from the Draper Foundation in support of this vital project.

To learn more about Helping Hands, call 860-379-4900 or visit www.helpinghandschore-service.org. Services include housekeeping, personal care, companionship and respite for family caregivers. Helping Hands is affiliated with the Winsted Health Center Foundation and partially funded by a grant from Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging.

THE REGISTER CITIZEN

<https://www.registercitizen.com/business/article/Torrington-area-business-briefs-June-30-2019-14060132.php>

Torrington area business briefs, June 30, 2019

Published 8:16 pm EDT, Friday, June 28, 2019

Helping Hands receives Draper Foundation grant

WINSTED — Helping Hands, a 501(c)(3), community-based, home care service, has received a grant of \$1,500 from The Draper Foundation Fund, a fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation to support medical transportation for senior clients.

“This grant affords Helping Hands the resources we need to meet the rising demand for medical transportation among our clients,” said director Irene Connole in a statement. “Funding will also enhance our clients’ health and wellness by providing them access to dependable transportation, quality doctors and healthcare providers.” Helping Hands appreciates the financial assistance from the Draper Foundation in support of this vital project.

To learn more about Helping Hands, call 860-379-4900 or visit www.helpinghandschoreservice.org. Services include housekeeping, personal care, companionship and respite for family caregivers. Helping Hands is affiliated with the Winsted Health Center Foundation and partially funded by a grant from Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging.