



PRESS RELEASE

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WISCONSIN GROCERS ASSOCIATION CROWNS STATE'S TOP BAGGER

Madison, WI – Paul Dowe of Sendik's Food Market – Oconomowoc, took home the title of Wisconsin's "Best Bagger" at the Great Wisconsin Bag-Off Event, a Wisconsin Grocers Association Innovation Expo tradition.

Competition was intense, with a 1-point difference separating the first and second place scores. Seventeen (17) contestants participated in the event, held during the WGA's Innovation Expo on October 15 & 16, 2024, at the Madison Marriott West in Middleton, WI.

Paul's winnings include a paid trip for two to Las Vegas to compete in the National Grocers Association's (NGA) Best Bagger Contest, as well as \$500 and a trophy. Now that Paul Dowe has the Wisconsin title in the bag, he is determined to go all the way and become the Nation's Best Bagger. The NGA 2024 Best Bagger Contest will be held on February 23-25, 2025, in Las Vegas, NV.

If Paul is crowned national champion, the title could once again be brought back to Wisconsin after Wisconsin's 2012 Bag-Off Winner, Stephanie Teteak of Larry's Piggly Wiggly in Kaukauna won the NGA's 2012 National Best Bagger championship. NGA champions win a grand prize of \$10,000 and have also appeared on national television, including *Good Morning America*.

Jeremiah Hemerley, Metcalfe's Market – Wauwatosa, took second place and won \$250 for his bagging expertise. Third place went to Robbie Gunshor, Metcalfe's Market - Hilldale, who received \$100. Each finalist also received a trophy.

Contestants were judged in five categories while bagging a 24-item order in reusable grocery bags. The categories were speed, number of bags used, placement of groceries in the bags, distribution of weight between the bags, as well as style, attitude, and appearance.

"The Wisconsin Bag-Off has long been a part of Wisconsin's grocery industry. Many grocers hold competition trials at their stores to get ready for the championship competition at the WGA Expo," said Lauren Barnes, WGA spokesperson.

The WGA Great Wisconsin Bag-Off contest encourages development of the skills essential for successful bagging and customer service. It promotes organization and good sportsmanship through friendly competition. Demonstrating that spirit, audience members held up signs and dressed in costumes to provide extra motivation for the baggers to perform well.

The event was sponsored by Lipari Foods and emceed by Haeli Heinzl, the 77th Alice in Dairyland. Groceries were provided by Lake Mills Market. Results were tabulated and certified by Baker Tilly.

Pictures/Images and contestant list from the event are available by contacting Lauren Barnes at (608) 210-3303 or e-mailing: lbarnes@wisconsin-grocers.com.

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