

## Inserra Supermarkets Invests in Health and Wellness: A Conversation with... Lindsey Inserra-Hughes

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LINDSEY INSERRA-HUGHES WAS diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at a young age. Today, as vice president of Health and Wellness for Inserra Supermarkets, Inc., she uses her own personal experience to guide her as she manages the health and wellness programs at her family's 22 ShopRite stores in New Jersey and New York. Her father, Lawrence (Larry) Inserra, Jr., is the company chairman and CEO and serves on CIANJ's Board of Directors.

In this interview with COMMERCE, Lindsay Inserra-Hughes discusses the family business; its health and wellness initiatives; healthy eating and food sourcing; and the latest advances in the battle against diabetes.

**Joining the Family Business:** "I graduated from New York University with a degree in social work and did an internship at Hoboken University Medical Center. Around that same time, my dad was creating a new associate health and wellness initiative, and asked me to take the leadership role."

**In-Store Dieticians:** "Our registered dietitians serve as free nutrition and wellness resources at the stores on a daily basis for our customers and associates alike. They also host health events for our customers each month, including cooking workshops, nutrition counseling sessions, and weight management classes. We frequently partner with local health companies to provide free cholesterol and vascular screenings."

**Healthy Eating:** "We have a Meal of the Week program, which aims to help our shoppers take the guesswork out of putting nutritious, home-cooked meals on their dinner tables. On a weekly basis, our stores will feature a different, easy-to-prepare recipe and have all of the ingredients conveniently located in a refrigerated case. Right now, Meal of the Week is in more than a dozen of our stores, and we have plans to further expand the program."

**Organic and Natural Products:** "Consumers want a wider variety of organic and natural products, but labeling foods as 'natural' is not yet regulated. The rules for labeling foods 'organic' are more specific. There is a belief that if an item is labeled with one or both of these terms, it is better for you. It is our responsibility to maintain the integrity of our health and wellness offerings by making sure that when we label something as a healthier option, it really is good for you."

Technology: "Farmers are now using drones to monitor the health of crops and are able to release the proper levels of fertilizer, water or pesticides. There are also sensors that are working to monitor water waste. Technology also helps consumers find locally-grown produce from farms or supermarkets in their area, which is something that Inserra is focusing on this year."

Urban Agriculture: "Alternatives to conventional farming, such as rooftop farming, is bringing the freshest local and healthy product to many markets much quicker than ever before. One example is Gotham Greens, a pioneer in urban agriculture. Gotham Greens grows its produce in rooftop greenhouses in Brooklyn and Queens. It's the definition of hyper-local and sustainability, and we are excited to bring their produce into our stores."

Corporate Buy-In: "Over the last decade, companies in a multitude of industries have become more tuned in to the importance of supporting health and wellness in the workplace. That trend will likely grow as companies see the positive changes an employee wellness program can have. Unfortunately, a lack of resources often stands in the way."

Health and Wellness Matters: "As someone living with type 1 diabetes, I always prioritize health and wellness, as does my family. It is never far from my mind. We wanted to start a real 'boots on the ground' approach to health and wellness and help our associates help themselves by creating lifestyle changes. As people often spend the bulk of their day at their place of employment, we knew it had to start here. This is especially true for us since we are surrounded by food all day, every day."

Fighting Diabetes: "One of the most promising developments is Wendy Peacock receiving the first islet cell transplant last summer. Wendy had lived with type 1 diabetes and daily insulin shots since her teenage years, and within a month of the transplant, she was insulin free. Doctors and researchers at the Diabetes Research Institute (DRI) transplanted three new patients using the same technique, and they are all doing very well.

"These transplant patients, including Wendy, require anti-rejection medication. Those medications can be tough on anyone. Two world-renowned scientists at the DRI are working on this exact problem—the body accepting cells that are not its own. The DRI is working to have these cells live together harmoniously instead of fighting one another. Once we solve this problem, we will be able to do transplants without immunosuppression.

"The DRI's new BioHub, a bioengineered mini organ that mimics the native pancreas, is innovative and proving to be successful. It contains real insulin-producing cells that can sense blood sugar and release the precise amount of insulin needed in real time."