



2026 NOURISHING CHANGE CONFERENCE



IMPACT REPORT

From Insights to Action

Founded By **Kroger** + **health**

Hosted By **HyVee**



120+
World-Class Speakers



60+
Emerging Brands



1,000+
Attendees



CONNECT



3 M
Total Impressions



85+
Sponsors



50+
Sessions



REAL VOICES, REAL IMPACT

"This is an amazing sponsorship opportunity. Not only do you get in front of the leaders from retailers like Hy-Vee and Kroger, but you're making a lot of connections with the leaders inside the expo floor. There's a lot of value to be part of the sponsorship experience here at Nourishing Change."

—Andy Phung, Optimity

"We're making new connections we've never thought of before. From technology to different retailers, we've been able to make connections that will change how we go to business in the future, all the way down to specific retailers and store departments."

—Rachel Schmitt, Pepsi

"Going in and out of the breakout sessions has been tremendous. We're learning about cancer rates nationally, GLP-1s and the consumer, and how greater access to GLP-1s will transform the industry. Overall, it's a great place to connect with suppliers and new emerging brands, but it's an even better place to learn what's coming and take an insight from a breakout or keynote back to your company to impact change."

—Anna Stoermer, Hy-Vee

"I've just been blown away with how many on-the-fly conversations we've had that are really making the right connections for all of us in the industry. I would highly recommend it."

—Sherry Frey, NielsenIQ



MORE THAN JUST A CONFERENCE

"The connections we've made, the energy in the rooms and the quality of the presenters, I couldn't recommend it more. For us, a lot of these conversations are going to come to life and take action as soon as we leave here. Meetings are set up, follow-ups are set up, to begin not just talking about who we are but showing folks who we are. Ultimately what we're doing is trying to change patient outcomes and drive better long-term patient care and health. That's the goal of everybody I've talked to here at the conference."

—**Greg Mueller, EmpiRx Health**

"What you're seeing here is the convergence of a new way of thinking by consumers and companies around how food, diet, health care and home testing are all converging into a big picture that we're all part of. We've met retailers looking to add new and exciting products to their offerings, as well as companies in the health care space looking for more home testing opportunities, more data and our key data being part of their platforms."

—**Paul Denslow, GutID**

"Over the last three days, we have been filled with so many great speakers. I personally have found so much value and insight on where the industry is going in the next three to five years based on the change that the consumer is wanting right now. I've been able to listen to panels to get a deeper understanding."

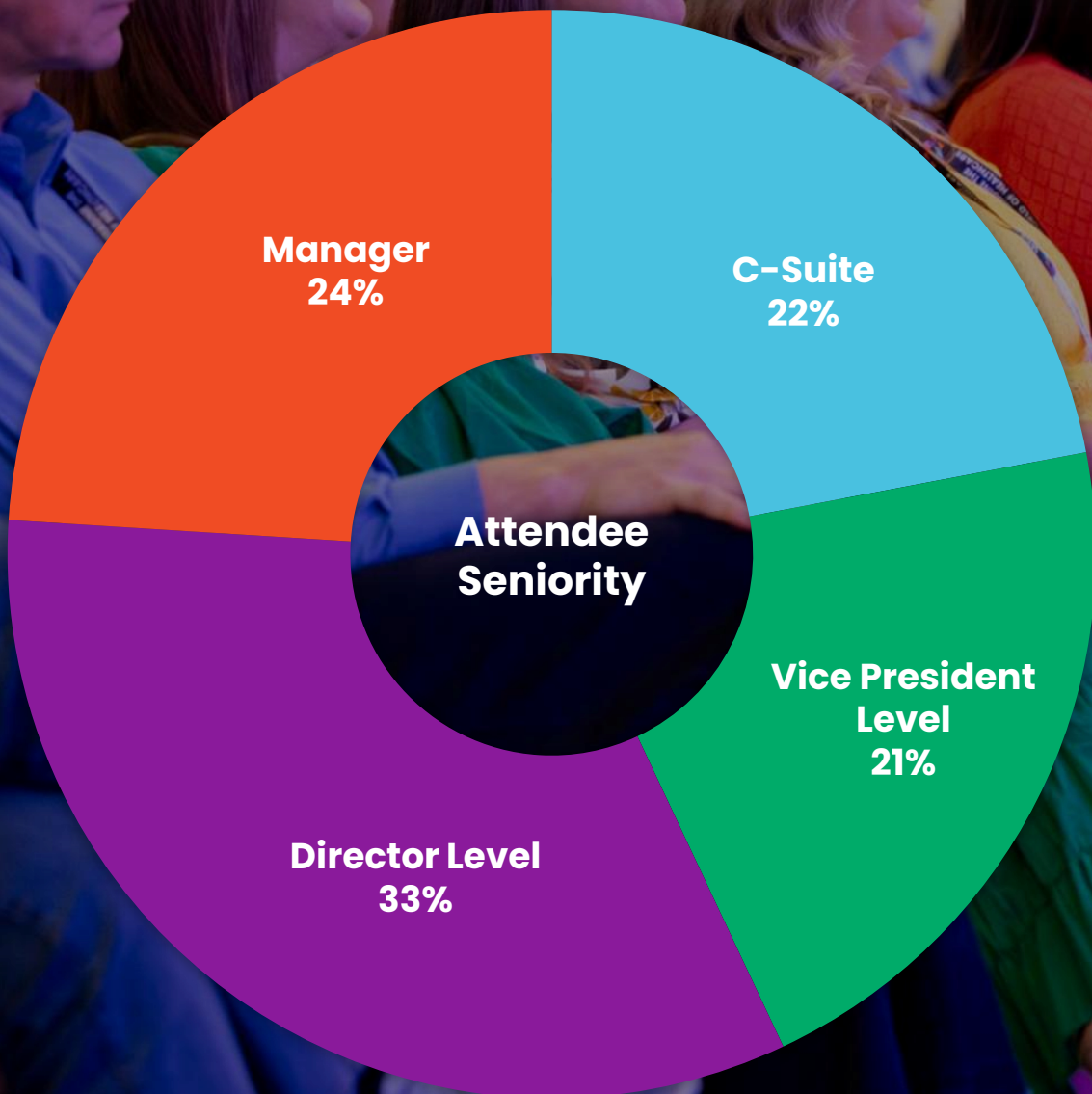
—**Isabelle Kelly, Emerson Group**

"It's been monumental for me. So many great connections. I've talked to so many people, and just being able to see different brands out there, what they're bringing to market, what they're introducing, and having the opportunity for people to try our smoothie cubes has been great."

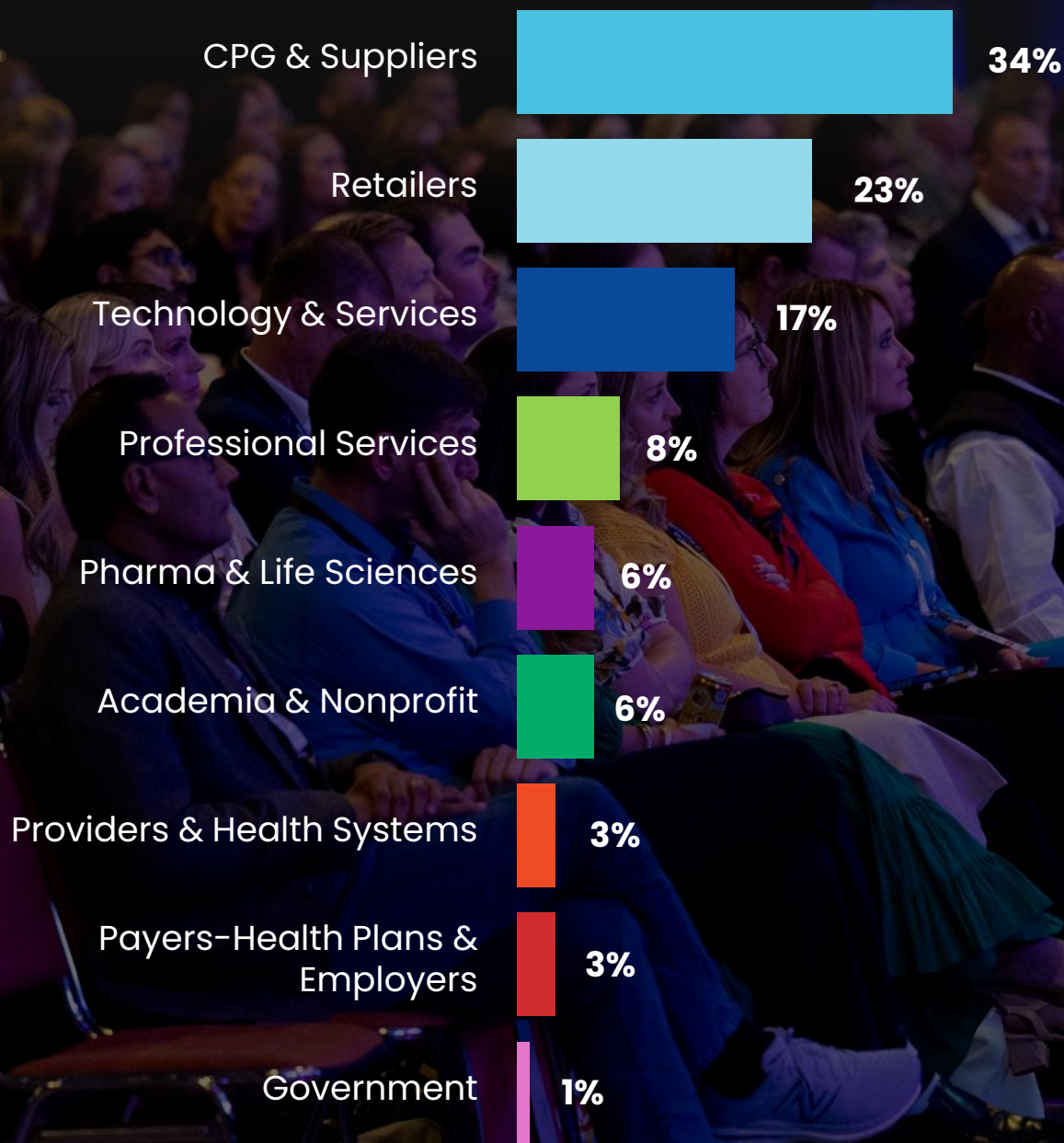
—**Parker Stewart Ziro Smoothies**



LEADERS IN THE ROOM



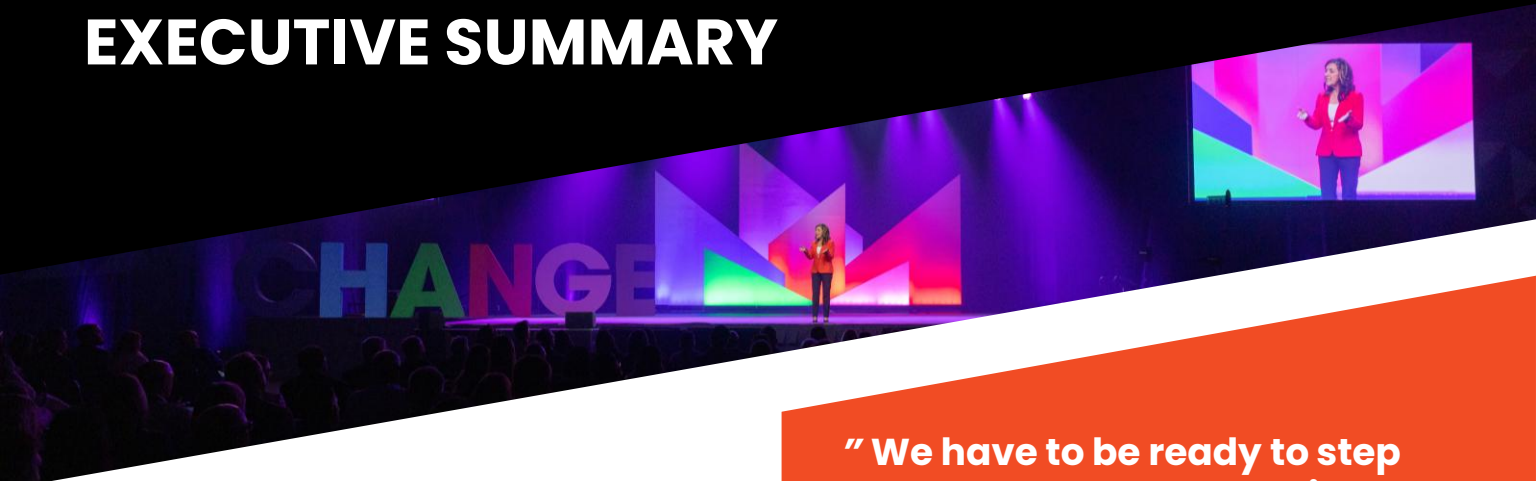
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RETAIL HEALTH



[View Full Attendee Snapshot](#)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The conversations at the 2026 Nourishing Change Conference made one thing unmistakably clear: retail health is no longer defined by potential, it is being measured by execution.

Founded by Kroger and hosted in 2026 by Hy-Vee, Nourishing Change has become more than a conference, it is a movement bringing together retailers, pharmacists, dietitians, providers, payers, policymakers, brands, innovators, and community leaders to advance the future of health at retail.

Across three days of debate, collaboration, and candid discussion, leaders confronted a common challenge: how to transform isolated innovation into scalable, measurable change.

"Nourishing Change's ethos is that the challenges facing America's health system are too large for any one company to solve alone."

Colleen Lindholz, Group Vice President and President of Kroger Health, The Kroger Co.

" We have to be ready to step up and actually take action and do the things that we've been asking for."

Aaron Wiese, President of Hy-Vee

The discussion shifted away from asking *whether* retail health should evolve and instead focused on *how* to redesign care delivery, modernize pharmacy, strengthen consumer trust, leverage artificial intelligence responsibly, expand Food-for-Health programs, improve interoperability, and create sustainable reimbursement models that reward outcomes rather than transactions.

Food policy sparked some of the conference's most spirited conversations, pushing the industry to tackle a deceptively simple question: **"What is healthy food?"** Peter McGuinness, CEO of Bel North America, highlighted the paradox facing the industry today: that while there is unprecedented regulation in food, there remains little consistency around how healthy food is defined. His remarks underscored that meaningful progress in Food-for-Health will require alignment across manufacturers, retailers, providers, policymakers, and health plans.

Leaders challenged attendees to move beyond strategy and focus on execution, rethinking longstanding assumptions about loyalty, engagement, merchandising, and value creation.



NOURISHING CHANGE 2026

Discussions centered on meeting consumers where they are, creating more human-centered experiences, and building trust through relevance, personalization, and convenience.

Leadership and culture also emerged as critical enablers of change. Danny Meyer's keynote on **"Enlightened Hospitality"** reminded attendees that transformation ultimately begins with people. His reflections on service, leadership, and intentionally investing in employees resonated throughout the conference, reinforcing the belief that organizations that take care of their people are better positioned to take care of their consumers.

Innovation was coming from every corner of the ecosystem, with sponsors spanning diagnostics, biomarkers, testing, digital health, wearable technology, pharmacy



benefit management, consumer packaged goods, nutrition, healthcare services, and technology platforms.

Emerging Brands arrived with a shared goal: earning distribution and building relationships with some of retail's most influential buyers. Competition was strong as innovators showcased products designed to capture the next wave of consumer demand, with retailers actively searching for brands capable of driving growth, engagement, and differentiation.

As Nourishing Change 2026 concluded, Ahold Delhaize USA, parent company of Food Lion, Giant Food, The Giant Company, Hannaford, and Stop & Shop, announced it will host the 2027 Nourishing Change Conference in Washington, D.C. The momentum continues as Nourishing Change brings together leaders across industries to advance the future of health at retail and turn bold ideas into measurable impact.



DRIVING FORCES

RETAIL TRANSFORMATION & CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Retail transformation was arguably the dominant conversation of the week because it touched nearly every discussion, from loyalty and merchandising to pharmacy, wellness, technology, and workforce strategy. The question is no longer whether retail should play a role in health; it is how quickly retailers can redesign experiences that connect grocery, pharmacy, wellness, and care into a seamless consumer journey.

Jim Kirby, Chief Commercial Officer of Kroger Health, challenged attendees to focus on immediate action rather than long-term aspiration, asking, ***"What do your stores do differently tomorrow than today?"*** That challenge echoed throughout the week as executives questioned longstanding assumptions about loyalty, engagement, merchandising, and value creation. Scott Honken, Chief Commercial Officer, WeightWatchers, noted ***"Behavior change requires staying relevant in people's lives over time. Programs need scalable groups, individual tailoring, and data-driven nudges that show up when a member actually needs them."*** From protein and fiber trends to social commerce, emerging brands, provider-status opportunities, and integrated health offerings, retail leaders explored how every touchpoint can contribute to a more connected health journey.

Health can no longer be treated as a department. It is becoming an integrated consumer experience that connects food, pharmacy, wellness, and care.



DRIVING FORCES



TRUST WINS LOYALTY

While technology, personalization, and innovation dominated much of the agenda, trust remained the common denominator behind every successful consumer engagement strategy. Across retail, pharmacy, food, and healthcare, leaders emphasized that consumers are looking for guidance from organizations they believe have their best interests at heart.

Whether discussing food recommendations, pharmacy services, wellness programs, or digital health tools, speakers repeatedly returned to the importance of authenticity, consistency, and delivering on promises. Dave Dolman, Director Government Health Benefits, Alberta Blue Cross observed that **"Trust starts with actual care"** captured a broader sentiment heard throughout the week: consumers do not build loyalty through transactions alone, they build loyalty through experiences that demonstrate value and genuine concern for their well-being.

As organizations invest in new services and technologies, the companies that win will be those that use innovation to deepen trust rather than replace human connection.

FOOD-FOR-HEALTH, POLICY & DEFINING "BETTER FOR YOU"

Few topics generated more debate than the role of food in health. As Food-as-Medicine programs expand and nutrition becomes increasingly integrated into care delivery, leaders confronted one of the industry's biggest challenges: despite decades of policy, regulation, and innovation, there is still no consensus definition of what healthy food truly means.

Conversations focused on affordability, accessibility, reimbursement pathways, consumer education, and policy reform, while exploring how the industry can make healthier choices easier without making them more expensive. Holly Freishtat, Senior Director, Feeding Change at Milken Institute challenged stakeholders to simplify the experience for everyone involved, noting that **"We need to make food as easy as possible for the consumer, the retailer, and the health plans."** The momentum behind Food-for-Health reflected a growing belief that food may be one of healthcare's most effective preventive tools, but only if the ecosystem can align around scalable implementation.

The future of Food-for-Health will be defined by making healthier choices simpler, more accessible, and easier to act on.



DRIVING FORCES

WOMEN'S HEALTH & THE WELLNESS ECONOMY

Women's health emerged as one of the fastest-growing opportunities discussed throughout the conference. Conversations expanded beyond traditional healthcare discussions to include beauty, wellness, healthy aging, menopause, nutrition, self-care, and prevention, reflecting how consumers increasingly view health holistically.

Ulta Beauty and other leaders highlighted the growing convergence of beauty and wellness, with Laura Beres, Vice President of Wellness, Ulta Beauty noting that **"We see beauty and wellness starting to converge."** As wellness spending continues to rise, retailers are increasingly becoming destinations for everyday health.

Discussions around perimenopause and menopause reinforced the significant opportunity to better serve an often-overlooked population, while Dr. Jill M. Kolesar, Dean and Professor, Jean M. Schmidt Chair in Drug Discovery, University of Iowa College of Pharmacy challenged attendees to think further upstream, stating, **"The question now is how we prevent cancer in the first place and manage people across a lifetime of risk, screening, and care."**

Women's health is moving from an underserved niche to a central growth driver for the wellness economy.



DRIVING FORCES



AI, DATA, INTEROPERABILITY & CONNECTED CARE

Artificial intelligence was everywhere at Nourishing Change, but the conversation moved beyond hype. Leaders focused on practical applications that improve care coordination, personalize recommendations, streamline workflows, and connect food, pharmacy, wellness, and clinical care into a more complete consumer journey.

Amy Gleason, Acting Administrator, U.S. DOGE Service challenged the industry to accelerate interoperability, while Rick Gates, SVP, Chief Pharmacy Officer, Walgreens reinforced the urgency, stating, ***"We're not moving fast enough on interoperability. We need to go faster."*** The discussion repeatedly returned to outcomes. As Sanjiv Karani, Founder and CPO, GrocerAI noted, ***"The outcome is what matters. The path is awareness to intent, intent to action, and action to adherence."*** Meanwhile a panel featuring Milen Mahadevan, Chief Data and AI Officer, The Kroger Co. panel reminded attendees that connected care depends on seeing the entire consumer journey: ***"It's not just one point of medication or purchase, but how those connect together."***

The real opportunity is not AI itself, it is using connected data and technology to create healthier, more personalized consumer journeys.

CLINICAL CARE INNOVATION & THE EXPANDING ROLE OF PHARMACY

Pharmacy has moved well beyond dispensing medication and is increasingly becoming one of the most accessible platforms for healthcare delivery. Throughout the conference, leaders focused on provider status, reimbursement reform, value-based care, chronic disease management, and expanding clinical services into communities that continue to face provider shortages.

Examples from around the world demonstrated what is possible. Attendees heard how Canada is reinventing aspects of primary care through community pharmacies, helping close access gaps while expanding the clinical role of pharmacists. The conversation consistently returned to action. As Dr. Annie Eisenbeis, Director of Practice Development, Missouri Pharmacy Association commented, ***"You already have thousands of pharmacist providers waiting to be tagged in."*** Across screenings, vaccinations, medication management, and community-based care, pharmacy is increasingly demonstrating its ability to improve access, close gaps in care and deliver measurable health outcomes.

The challenge ahead is aligning reimbursement and policy models with that reality.



DRIVING FORCES

GLP-1s & THE CHANGING CONSUMER

Few topics generated more hallway conversations than GLP-1s. What began as a discussion about obesity quickly expanded into conversations about merchandising, reimbursement, nutrition, consumer behavior, food purchasing patterns, and long-term health engagement.

Speakers explored the implications of a world where consumers may purchase differently, eat differently, and engage with wellness differently. The discussion extended beyond clinical outcomes and into the realities of access, affordability, and sustained success. As Deanna Horner, SVP, Chief Pharmacy Officer, Waltz Health noted, ***"GLP-1s exposed cracks in the access process. We have to think about direct programs, pharmacy reimbursement, and outcomes like adherence and persistence, not just whether someone can get the prescription once."***

And NielsenIQ's data underscored just how quickly consumer behavior is shifting, prompting retailers and brands to rethink category strategies, nutrition offerings, and how they support consumers throughout their health journey. Increasingly, the conversation focused on what happens after treatment begins and the role food, pharmacy, wellness, and care teams play in helping consumers achieve sustainable outcomes.

The question is no longer whether GLP-1s will impact retail health, but how organizations adapt to the new consumer behaviors they are creating.



DRIVING FORCES



LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE & CULTURE

As bold as the conversations around technology, food, and care delivery were, many attendees left talking about something more fundamental: people. The workforce transformation needed to support the future of retail health extends beyond pharmacists and clinicians to every associate shaping the consumer experience.

Danny Meyer's call to ***"put the salt shaker back in the center of the table"*** resonated throughout the week, serving as a reminder that leadership starts with service. Discussions around workforce development, education, hospitality, and culture reinforced a simple reality: organizations that invest in their people are better positioned to earn trust, drive engagement, and deliver better outcomes.

Retail health transformation will ultimately be powered by people, not programs.

POWER OF COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

The conference itself served as evidence that the future of health will be built through collaboration. From public-private partnerships improving maternal health outcomes at the state level to retailers working alongside emerging brands, providers, policymakers, technology companies, and payers, nearly every success story involved stakeholders working across traditional boundaries.

Whether discussing interoperability, Food-for-Health, prevention, community health programs, or retail innovation, the most impactful solutions emerged when organizations aligned around a shared outcome. Nourishing Change continues to demonstrate that healthcare's biggest challenges are too complex for any one sector to solve alone.

The future of health will belong to organizations that build ecosystems, not silos.



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EMERGING BRAND COMPETITION

More than 60 emerging food, health and wellness brands showcased their products and stories, creating one of the most energetic and discovery-driven parts of the conference.



MEET THE WINNERS

This year's awards included one joint winner, along with three Kroger-selected and three Hy-Vee-selected winners, reinforcing the value of the program for discovery, connection and retail growth.



VOICES OF CHANGE



Isabelle Kelly

Some conferences leave you with notes. Others leave you with a new perspective. The Nourishing Change Movement did both. Hearing from leaders across pharmacy, retail, healthcare, brands, and CPG reinforced one clear takeaway: ideas alone are not enough. If we want to help build a healthier America, we need to execute. It all starts with people. People drive change. People build trust. People create connection. And people are ultimately the reason ...



Melissa Jaeger, RD, LD

Earlier this month I had the opportunity to speak at Nourishing Change Movement. A conference founded by Kroger Health and hosted by Hy-Vee, Inc., that brought together leaders across healthcare ...



The Foundation for Fresh Produce

Real momentum for improving health is coming from unexpected collaborations and we couldn't be more thrilled. Katie Calligaro represented The Foundation for Fresh Produce at the Nourishing Change Conference, hosted by Kroger and Hy-Vee, Inc. last month. And what stood out wasn't a single breakthrough idea or program; it was the direction of the conversation itself. Improving health outcomes will never be the responsibility of a single industry ...



Alexandra Trott

Excited to have joined the panel for "Shelf to Signal: How Brands Drive Growth Beyond the Basket" at the Nourishing Change Movement Conference in Des Moines! 🗣️ 🛒 📊



Jami Haberl

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the Nourishing Change Movement Conference, an energizing and thought-provoking gathering focused on the future of food, health, and systems change ...



Ashley Rodriguez

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of attending the Nourishing Change Movement Conference in Des Moines. Coming together with passionate leaders dedicated to driving systemic change and ...



Nourishing Change Conference IN THE NEWS

Business Wire, 9/30/25

Kroger and Hy-Vee to Co-Host 2026 Nourishing Change Conference

Progressive Grocer, 10/1/25

Kroger, Hy-Vee Joining Forces for Nourishing Change Conference

Chain Drug Review, 10/1/25

Kroger Health and Hy-Vee to co-host second annual Nourishing Change Conference

Chain Drug Review, 5/1/26

Kroger Health and Hy-Vee announce lineup for 2026 Nourishing Change Conference

BevNET, 5/11/26

Chlorophyll Water Selected for Nourishing Change Emerging Brands Competition, Founded by Kroger and Hosted by Hy-Vee

Chain Drug Review, 5/19/26

Chris Powell to deliver keynote at 2026 Nourishing Change Conference

Drug Store News, 5/20/26

Video: Nourishing Change returns with bigger focus on retail healthcare innovations

Chain Drug Review, 5/28/26

EmpiRx Health leads discussion on the evolution of PBMs at 2026 Nourishing Change Conference

Startup CPG, 5/31/26

Chlorophyll Water Selected for Kroger and Hy-Vee's Nourishing Change Emerging Brands Competition

Chain Drug Review, 6/1/26

AssureCare showcasing NutraVance at Nourishing Change Conference

Drug Store News, 6/2/26

Kroger Health, Hy-Vee convene leaders at Nourishing Change conference

Kroger Newsroom, 6/2/26

Kroger Health, along with Hy-Vee, Convenes Industry Leaders to Shape the Future of Health at Nourishing Change Conference

PR Newswire, 6/2/26

Kroger Health, along with Hy-Vee, Convenes Industry Leaders to Shape the Future of Health at Nourishing Change Conference

Progressive Grocer, 6/3/26

Kroger and Hy-Vee Unite on Nourishing Change Conference

Chain Drug Review, 6/3/26

Kroger Health, Hy-Vee rally leaders for Nourishing Change

Progressive Grocer, 6/8/26

EXCLUSIVE: Kroger's Plan to Nudge the Country Toward Better Health

Progressive Grocer, 6/12/26

THE FRIDAY 5: Hy-Vee Sells Convenience Stores; Another Walmart Leader Exits

Progressive Grocer, 6/16/26

Discussing the 'New Gold Standard' of Food at Retail

PR Newswire, 6/23/26

Kroger Health, Hy-Vee and Ahold Delhaize USA to Convene Industry Leaders Advancing the Future of Health at Nourishing Change

Progressive Grocer, 6/23/26

Ahold Delhaize USA Joins Kroger and Hy-Vee in Nourishing Change Movement

Drug Store News, 6/23/26

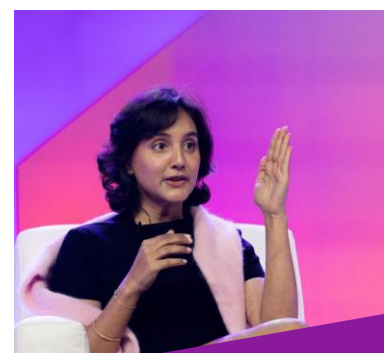
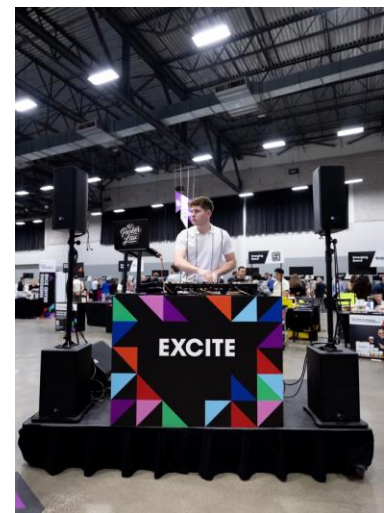
Ahold Delhaize USA to Host Nourishing Change 2027 with Kroger, Hy-Vee

Chain Drug Review, 6/23/26

Kroger Health, Hy-Vee and Ahold Delhaize USA to convene industry leaders advancing the future of health at 2027 Nourishing Change



VIEW THE GALLERY



[CLICK HERE FOR MORE!](#)



See you in 2027! NourishingChange.com

WAYS TO STAY INVOLVED

Join the Conversation

Follow Nourishing Change Conference on LinkedIn and share what's inspiring you.

Inspire Others

Have a story, product, or breakthrough idea? Post it on LinkedIn and tag us—you could be featured in our spotlight series.

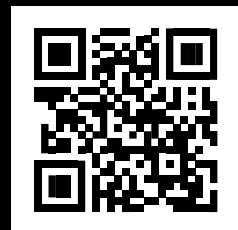
Collaborate in Cross-Sector Working Groups

Interested in taking part in deeper conversations with leaders across sectors to move ideas to action? Email marie.montelibano@youradv.com

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