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CONTACT:

Tammie Hetrick, President & CEO, WFIA

Phone: 360.870.0486 (mobile)

Email: tammie@wa-food-ind.org

Twitter: @thewfia

PHOTO: WFIA President & CEO Tammie Hetrick is joined by Dale Baker (URM Stores), John Akins, Sr. and Ray Sprinkle (URM Stores) to present Akins with WFIA's 2020-21 Retailer of the Year Award. The presentation was a surprise ceremony held April 6 at Akins Fresh Market (Photo courtesy of WFIA)

Akins Fresh Market Named 2020-21 WFIA Retailer of the Year

QUINCY — For nearly 60 years, John Akin, Sr. and his family have provided shoppers in the Columbia Basin with access to fresh groceries and supplies, treating customers and employees like family. For these reasons — and so many more — Akins has been awarded this year's Retailer of the Year Award by the Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA).

The award, presented at a surprise event at the Quincy store Tuesday, recognizes Akins' lifetime commitment to the industry and exemplification of business leadership. The honor also recognizes a commitment to the prosperity, ethics, and image of the independent food industry and WFIA.

"John Akins and his team at Akins Fresh Market represent what it means to be an independent, family-operated grocer," said Tammie Hetrick, WFIA president and CEO. "John and his family have poured themselves into this business and taken the extra steps to make sure everyone — employees and customers alike — receive exceptional treatment."

In 1963, Arlis Akins, opened his first grocery store in Quincy, where John worked alongside his father from the age of six. In 2007, Arlis passed away and John took over the company.

Today, John's sons Nick and John Jr. have joined him in the business, marking three generations of family involved in the business.

"Small, family-owned businesses like Akins Fresh Market are so important, especially in smaller rural communities," said Hetrick. "The Akins know everyone who shops in their stores, and they deepen those connections by taking an active role in the communities where they do business. The Basin is fortunate to have a family like the Akins who know their customers and do everything possible to serve them in the best way possible."

The Akins once owned and operated six stores total, though just three remain today. The stores in Quincy, Soap Lake and Oroville currently employ more than 150 people, providing rural customers with quality shopping experiences and access to fresh food. The Akins have also continually invested in their stores, renovating all three locations to better serve their communities.

"During the past year, family is what has mattered most to us all. So when I hear employees or customers say they were 'treated like family' at Akins, it's both heartwarming and reassuring to know this shopping experience, and true customer service, still exists," added Hetrick.

"I want to thank John and his whole family for a continued commitment to their communities and for representing the spirit of what it means to be an independent grocer."

About the Washington Food Industry Association

The Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) is dedicated to promoting and protecting the independent, community-focused grocery and convenience store industry and its suppliers. Founded in 1899, the WFIA represents the state's independent grocers and convenience stores. Membership includes all levels of the food and beverage distribution industry who collaborate to promote the principles of free enterprise to ensure a vigorous, competitive, economically healthy food industry. The grocery and convenience store industry provides about 50,000 Washington jobs. For more information, visit www.wa-food-ind.org.