

Store Director Wins National Award Plus People's Choice Vote

Rob Vassar's cell phone has been ringing non-stop since early April, which is not uncommon for the Store Director at one of our most successful stores.

But when you're nominated as a finalist – and then win the Food Marketing Institute's (FMI) prestigious 2022 FMI Store Manager Award – the calls take a different tone than the usual day-to-day business at the Stevensville Meijer on West Michigan's lakeshore.

Since news of the nomination, each time the phone rang it was another ringing endorsement, proof positive of an impactful 35-year career at Meijer. Then FMI recently released the results announcing Rob as both the recipient of the industry recognition and the People's Choice Award.

"At first, I was shocked when I was told I was nominated as a finalist. Then the phone started ringing. Now I am just numb," Rob said. "I've heard from leadership across our company, my store team, co-workers I haven't seen in 20 years... Customers are even calling me to tell me 'I voted for you because you deserve it.'"

The FMI award recognizes top store manager talent in the industry, and Rob certainly qualifies. A native of Hartford, Mich., Rob began 35 years ago as a produce clerk at the Benton Harbor Meijer. Within 7n years he was given the chance to run his first store and never looked back.

For the next 28 years, he led nine stores in five states, including our first Meijer store in Kentucky, and has developed hundreds of leaders now at stores across the Midwest. He also became passionate about philanthropy, becoming deeply involved in the United Way and other organizations and events that benefit our communities.

When given the opportunity to be Store Director for the then-new Stevensville store more than 11 years ago, it was like coming full circle. He's proud he could return home and make a difference in neighborhoods so close to where he grew up. Over the years, his store was able to make donations to countless organizations, events, and fundraising efforts. In every way, Rob has embodied our mission of enriching lives in our communities.

As for the calls, Rob may need to increase the minutes in his phone plan. Out of the 7,000 votes cast among 10 finalists from the largest grocery stores across the country, Rob received more than 3,000 votes.

"It is so nice people wanted to vote for me, but it's the phone calls and chance to connect with friends that have been priceless," he said. "It was very emotional for me, especially when I told my mother. She was very, very proud and it gave her a chance to call everyone in our family and her friends."

Looking back on his career, he's proud he was given the chance to advance beyond produce clerk. So much of his accomplishment, he thinks, is due to the belief others once showed in him.

"You don't realize how much opportunity you have to make a difference every day until the years pass and something like this happens," Rob said. "Then you understand we're only successful if we allow people to feel a part of something. Because that's when we give everything. This is an honor I will cherish for the rest of my life."

To see Rob's first reaction to his wins, check out this [video](#).

Additional assets available online: [Photos](#) ⁽³⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/Store-Director-Wins-National-Award-Plus-Peoples-Choice-Vote>