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**NORTH CAROLINA PIGGLY WIGGLY OPERATOR
RECEIVES N.G.A. SPIRIT OF AMERICA AWARD**

RESTON, Virginia (July 16, 2001) – Ward Sylvester, North Carolina Piggly Wiggly operator and President of the North Carolina Food Dealers Association, was presented today with the National Grocers Association's (N.G.A.) Spirit of America Award at the National Piggly Wiggly Operators Association Annual Convention in Washington, D.C.

The award was presented by N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Tom Wenning, to Sylvester in honor of his involvement in community and civic affairs and in recognition of his active and effective participation in government affairs to preserve and foster the principals of free enterprise, and as a strong and effective advocate for the independent food distribution industry.

Sylvester began his grocery career in the meat department of his father's grocery store and today, he and his father still work together to run the family business, which has grown to include 31 stores (all located in eastern North Carolina) and 600 employees. The significant growth of the Sylvesters' business is in no small part due to their own hard work over the years. Sylvester is a current N.G.A. board member, and is a trustee of Coastal Carolina College and the Richlands United Methodist Church.

The N.G.A. Spirit of America Award, established in 1982, honors key industry and community figures who have provided leadership in the areas of community service and government relations on behalf of the independent retail/wholesale system. The award is N.G.A.'s way of saying thanks to those individuals who have worked to maintain a marketplace that is fair and competitive and free from excessive government intervention and regulation. Recipients of the award have included former Presidents Gerald Ford and George Bush; former Vice President Dan Quayle; former Speaker of the House, Tom Foley; Clinton Administration Chief of Staff, Leon Panetta; as well as other distinguished individuals serving the public interest.

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Independents are the true "entrepreneurs" of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers and their state associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.