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Rhode Island Food Retailers Association Past Chairman Receives N.G.A. Spirit of America Award

ARLINGTON, Virginia (December 12, 2002) – On December 2, 2002, Clifford W. Johnson, Jr., Director of Retail Sales, Garelick Farms, and past Chairman of the Board of the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, received the N.G.A. Spirit of America Award at the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association's Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island.

The award was presented by N.G.A. Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Tom Wenning, to Johnson in praise of his support and leadership of the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, 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.

Johnson was practically raised in the food industry. His family owned and operated a dairy farm, Hillside Farms, where Johnson worked for many years after college. Hillside farms later acquired East Greenwich Dairy as well as several other dairies including Federal Dairy, Brown's Dairy, and Bonnie Milk as well as a milk distributor in Massachusetts and a convenience store chain, Sunnybrook Farms. The family business changed its name to East Greenwich/Brown's Dairy with Johnson serving as President. In 1990, East Greenwich/Brown's Dairy was sold to Garelick Farms, and Johnson now serves as its Director of Retail sales in Franklin, Massachusetts.

In 1995 and 1996, Johnson served as Chairman of the Board of the Rhode Island Food Dealers Association, and made tremendous leaps during his tenure. He was instrumental in steering the Association more firmly towards its mission, representing its members in the State House and with regulatory agencies, and implementing many new value added programs and services that added value and benefits to the membership. Johnson continues to serve the food industry in the State of Rhode Island as a member of the Board of Directors.

The N.G.A. Spirit of America Award, established in 1982, honors key industry and community figures whom have provided leadership in the areas of community services and government relations on behalf of a free and independent food distribution system. 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 and others are employee owned. 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.

