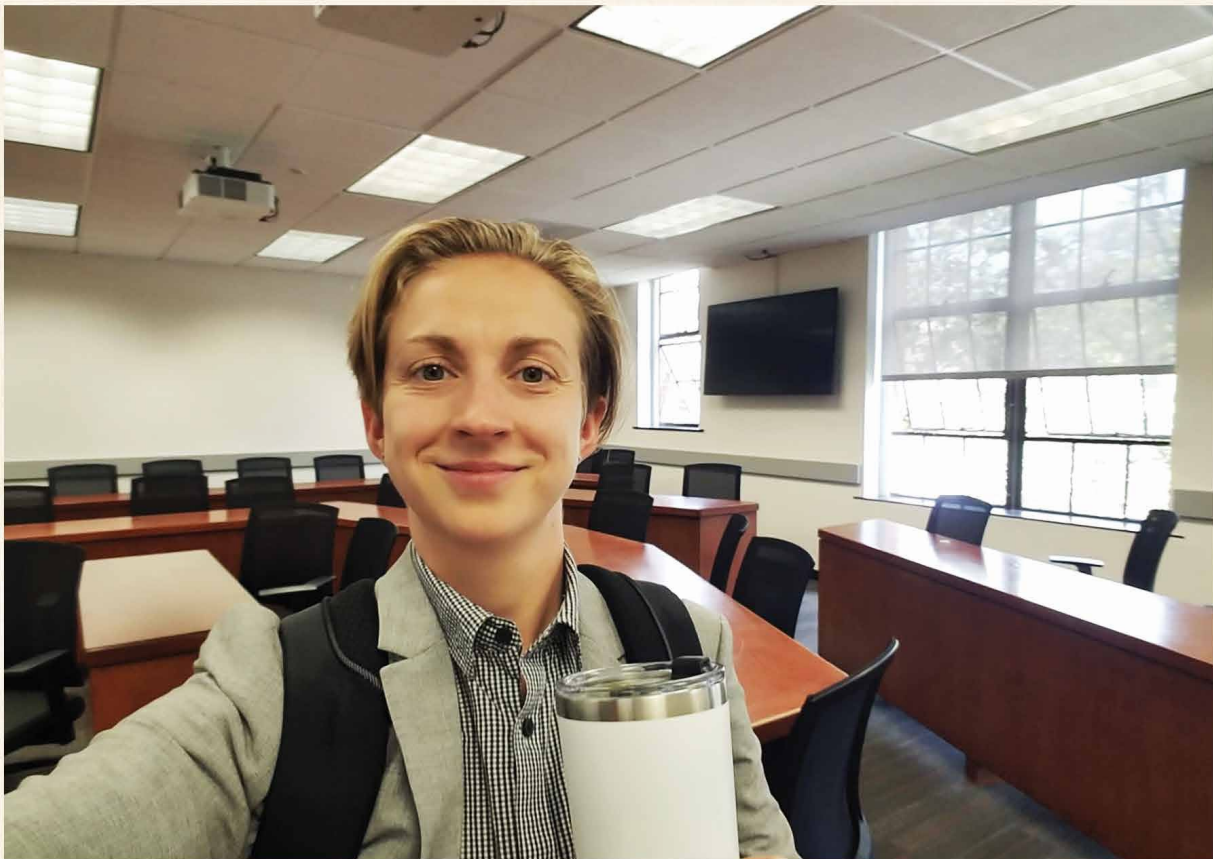


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LEADING





SOMETIMES IT TAKES SOMEONE ELSE TO REALIZE YOUR
UNTAPPED POTENTIAL. FOR ROSITA SZATKOWSKA,
THE 2023-24 CGA EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION \$10,000
LEGENDS OF THE INDUSTRY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT,
THAT PERSON WAS KIMBERLY REICH (FORMERLY BEACH).

By Grace Becker

Now a seasoned leader, Rosita oversees more than 2,000 employees as District Manager for SoCal Division Albertsons Companies. Over the past 13 years in the industry, Rosita has experienced rapid growth and has worked her way up through more than 10 role changes and promotions. She did not start out with a proclivity for leadership, though. Until this point, her career has been fueled by a combination of her own natural drive, learning on the fly, and transformative mentorship.

“It started with my mentor. She really believed in me and took the time to help develop me.”

Kimberly’s mentorship came at a crucial time for Rosita, who was emerging from a tumultuous chapter in her personal life when they met.

“Prior to coming to work with the company [Albertsons], I was struggling with drug addiction, I was homeless, and I didn’t have a good relationship with my parents. Kimberly took me under her wing, I was yearning for that motherly love.

Because she was so highly invested in me, I became in love with my job.”

A few years after moving from Poland to the United States at age eight, Rosita’s parents divorced which sparked teenage rebellion and time spent hanging out with the wrong crowd. Emerging from this phase around age 20, Rosita started working at a Northern California Safeway store as a deli clerk, which is where Kimberly came into her life.

“My store manager really saw something in me, and she became my mentor. Within four months I was promoted from a deli clerk to a deli manager. I had zero experience in the grocery business. I had zero experience being a leader or manager. All of a sudden, I was leading 21 employees.”

Though she hadn’t had prior leadership experience outside of playing forward position on her soccer team, Rosita was up to the task and threw herself into leadership education.

“I never thought of myself as a leader growing up,” she said. When she was promoted, something clicked. “I just fell in love with the business and with leading people. I became obsessed with personal development and professional development. I started reading leadership books and attending personal development seminars that my mentor showed me.”

The hunger and dedication that Kimberly saw in Rosita only grew from there. Each night before bed and in the morning when she woke up, Rosita would read a four-page leadership competency packet provided by Albertsons. She can still recite it to this day.

This first promotion kicked off the momentum for Rosita’s impressive career growth, which hasn’t stopped since. Rosita quickly moved on from her deli and bakery manager role to perishables manager, and then assistant store manager under Kimberly’s wing. Then came a major change when Kimberly transferred to the Southern California Albertsons Division. After a few months, Rosita followed.

“I left everything behind in NorCal and moved to the Southern California division,” she said. “I slept on her [Kimberly’s] couch for about four months, and then I became her assistant store director at Vons.”

The promotions continued and Rosita bounced from relief store director to store director. After a short-lived four-month stint at Target, Rosita returned to Albertsons Companies as a store director at Pavillions, and soon after was promoted to a district customer service and front-end operations manager, overseeing 41 stores and learning the behind scenes of the business.

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**“YOU CAN ALWAYS EDUCATE YOURSELF.
IT’S CONSTANT AND NEVER-ENDING IMPROVEMENT
EVERY SINGLE DAY.”**



Though mentorship drew her to the industry, its fast pace and dynamic nature was the perfect match for Rosita’s drive and is ultimately what kept her in the industry. “We’re a people business that happens to sell groceries. We are constantly focusing on how we can be better today than yesterday, and it’s great because we get to feed people.”

With a goal of becoming a district manager, Rosita applied to a grocery operations role, which didn’t fall into place quite as seamlessly. But Rosita didn’t take no for an answer.

“I applied for grocery operations three times, and I ended up getting it the fourth time. Each time, I was given feedback on what to work on and what kind of assignments I had to take on to help me prepare for the role. I did that and was promoted to grocery operations specialist.”

About a year later, Rosita’s career went on pause when she was selected to attend the University of Southern California (USC) Food Industry Management program as a

full-time student. When she returned, she was thrust into her biggest leadership task yet at the Albertsons corporate office. There she was asked to lead the company’s Metavision initiative based on her capstone project on the Metaverse at USC, for which she and her team won first place.

“I had a team of people with their own specialties and my job was to create a roadmap and vision and start executing selling groceries within the metaverse,” she said.

After seeing the initiative through and helping Albertsons become the first grocer to sell food through the Metaverse, Rosita went back on course and returned to the Southern California division as a division shrink manager. After a few short months, Rosita’s goal was realized when she was promoted to her current role, district manager in district 50.

“It’s about continually being open to change, learning, and asking questions because each

time I was in a new role—knowing nothing about what to do, except for how to lead—I had to sit back, stay humble, and learn from my team. Each time I had to swallow my ego.”

As you would guess, Rosita’s ambition doesn’t end there. With an associate’s degree already under her belt, she is currently completing her bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Massachusetts, which will get her one step closer to her ultimate goal, becoming a CEO. Her next step will be pursuing her master’s degree back at USC.

“I had this epiphany that in order to be a better leader and a better operator—because my goal is to be a CEO—an education, especially a master’s from USC, will really allow me to level up.”

Rosita attempted to pursue her higher education right before she joined Albertsons. She took a few college courses, but it didn’t stick. “It just wasn’t my time,” she said. Although the traditional route didn’t call to her at first, she never stopped her pursuit



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of knowledge and continued to educate herself through books, courses, and motivational speakers.

Receiving the CGAEF Legends of the Industry Scholarship puts Rosita one step closer to achieving her ultimate goal. Now in its sixth year, this annual \$10,000 scholarship is awarded to emerging grocery leaders pursuing a career in the grocery.

“Because my story made an impact with the CGA Educational Foundation I know that as I share it with my team and other associates within the company, it shows that you can go to school regardless of how old you are. You can always educate yourself. It’s constant and never-ending improvement every single day.”

Rosita’s intentionality, passion for the industry, and deep drive is apparent. Part of her daily routine (which begins at 3:41 a.m., by the way) consists of listening to motivational and top-performance speakers to help fuel her own top performance.

“My drive comes from my ‘why.’ At the core, my ‘why’ is to be at my best every single day, and to really show up and to matter, and it’s because I don’t want to lose out on life,” she said.

Her past struggles certainly fuel this. “Once I got clean and was able to get away from that [situation], I told myself I was never going to be there again. I need to show up as my best self every single day so I never get back there again,” she said. “I also know that performance is rewarded.”

Today, Rosita is eager to share her learnings and guidance with her mentees and throughout her company. “You have to relentlessly follow up. I always say you recognize your top performers, you motivate your middle performers, and you teach your bottom performers.”

Continuing the mentorship program she started at Albertsons years ago, this year she brought the program back to her division to build a deeper bench.

“You can have a mentorship relationship across an organization and never even work with that person directly,” she said. “That’s true mentorship.”

She’s also grateful to have her own cabinet of mentors to counsel her through her career, consisting of her current boss Chris Brown, Area VP of Operations, Michelle Larson, EVP of Operations, and her previous district manager Julie Fields, who is now her peer.

“I’m very blessed because I have a mentor at a peer level, at a direct supervisor level, and also someone who can bring perspective on a much higher level. It’s incredible, I’m very honored.”

At home, her fiancé Rhoni is her “number one fan” who supports her through any career transition that comes her way. And of course, Kimberly is still close by. “She’s retired now. I call her my ‘mom.’ I’m one of her daughters.” ■