



PHOTOS BY JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Mike Violette, the CEO of Associated Grocers of New England, reviewed its stock of key supplies that may be in high demand if COVID-19 cases surge. The organization hopes to head off the kinds of shortages seen at the start of the pandemic.

Prepping for panic at the supermarket — just in case

Rising numbers of COVID-19 cases could again prompt a run on essentials, but grocers and their suppliers say they're better prepared now to prevent shortages

By Andy Rosen
GLOBE STAFF

Who can forget the bare supermarket shelves that marked the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic? Everything from toilet paper to canned soup was in short supply, and each trip to the grocery store was a grim lesson in how deeply the virus had disrupted our lives.

Supply and demand have caught up with each other in the intervening months, and buying household staples has become fairly routine again. But with winter approaching, and the threat of a second surge of the virus looking more likely, are we on the verge of another period of shortages and panic buying?

Not necessarily. This time, grocers, suppliers, and even consumers have the benefit of experience. And people in the industry say they've taken advantage of the time they've had to prepare for another onslaught.

Retailers and wholesalers have been stockpiling items that would be most coveted if customers must retreat to their homes again, and they are hopeful that shoppers will be less likely to hoard supplies this time around — reducing the strain on the system.



But supply chains take a long time to align with fast-moving shifts in customer demand. Some goods, including paper towels and cleaning products, still have not entirely caught up.

"There are still some items that we really cannot get," said Michael Violette, chief executive of Associated Grocers of New England, a wholesale distribution

center for the region's independent grocers.

A resurgence of the virus could also disrupt production of products such as fresh produce and meat.

Nada R. Sanders, distinguished professor of supply chain management at Northeastern University, said the pros-

About 15,000 cases of flour are on hand at Associated Grocers of New England, a supplier to independent stores.

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Babson alumnus Blank ties managing, purpose

Home Depot cofounder relates core principles

By Jon Chesto
GLOBE STAFF

To Home Depot cofounder Arthur Blank, profit and purpose go hand in hand.

That was a recurring theme during Blank's recent return to his alma mater, Babson College. Blank's visit to the Wellesley campus last Thursday was in large part tied to his 2019 decision to donate \$50 million to fund a new entrepreneurial leadership school at Babson.

The owner of the Atlanta Falcons football team also just authored a book, called "Good Company," about how to implement this concept of managing with purpose.

The book is based on six values that have guided Blank throughout his career.

Those principles — think put people first, not make tons of money first — are being incorporated into classes offered for the first time



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Business leader Arthur Blank visited Babson College Thursday, following up on his \$50 million donation to the school in 2019.

this fall through the Arthur M. Blank School of Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Blank, who left Home Depot in 2001, said companies need to be more purposeful in their decisions today, in part to attract the best talent. Younger workers, he said, want

to join employers that share their vision and their mission for life. They want to connect with companies driven by a higher purpose than just financial results.

"The younger generation represents a third of our population, but 100 percent of our future," Blank

said. "That's an important opportunity and responsibility."

At the time of its unveiling last fall, the gift was the largest single donation in Babson's history. It was also the biggest one for Blank's family foundation — until several days ago, when it was announced the family would give \$200 million for a new children's hospital building in Atlanta.

At Babson, some of this money is being used for scholarships, and some of it is going to salaries. Care.com cofounder Donna Levin was recently recruited from Worcester Polytechnic Institute to be chief executive of the new school, and Babson professor Scott Taylor was appointed to an endowed chair for values-based leadership.

The new school isn't represented by a physical building on the business college's campus, at least not yet.

Babson president Stephen Spinelli hopes to eventually put at least \$18 million to work by creating an "entrepreneurial village," either by putting up a new structure

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N.H. sues to halt tax on remote workers

Governor calls Mass. levy an attack on Granite State's legacy of shielding income

By Jon Chesto
GLOBE STAFF

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu took his beef over income tax collections with Massachusetts to the US Supreme Court on Monday, as he promised he would.

But whether the country's highest court even agrees to take up the case before the Massachusetts regulation in question expires is an open question.

Sununu said the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's new regulation, formalized on Friday, is an unconstitutional incursion on a state that takes pride in its lack of a broad-based income tax and a fundamental threat to



ROBERT F. BUKATY/ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

New Hampshire's Republican governor, Chris Sununu, is asking the Supreme Court to void a Massachusetts tax.

its sovereignty. The rule allows Massachusetts to continue to collect income taxes from out-of-state residents who previously commuted to Massachusetts but are now working from home because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Massachusetts has launched a direct attack on the defining feature of the 'New Hampshire Advantage,'" Sununu said at a press conference in Concord, N.H., on Monday. "Massachusetts cannot balance its budget on the backs of our citizens."

New Hampshire's complaint, filed Monday, seeks three things: an order declaring that the Massachusetts rule violates the Constitution's commerce and due process clauses, a ruling barring enforcement of the rule, and an injunction requiring a full refund of taxes collected under it. An estimated 80,000-plus New Hampshire residents used to commute

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Harvard junior wins grant for antibullying app

ReThink gently urges users to avoid insults

By Hiawatha Bray
GLOBE STAFF

A junior at Harvard University is about to receive a big payoff for her seven-year campaign against cyberbullying. Trisha Prabhu, 20, will get at least \$300,000 from the Elevate Prize Foundation to further develop ReThink, a smartphone app that nudges people into using more courteous language online.

The grant is just the latest accolade for Prabhu, whose work earned her a White House visit during the Obama administration and a 2016 appearance on the ABC television series "Shark Tank," where she persuaded entrepreneurs Mark Cuban and Lori Greiner to invest in ReThink.

"It's been an incredible ride, and not one I imagined at 13," said Prabhu, a native of Naperville, Ill., who is studying political science and computer science at Harvard.

In middle school, Prabhu endured some bullying but shrugged it off. She later learned about other children who had suffered far worse, in some cases committing suicide.

"I realized this is impacting so many young people out there," she said. "This is unacceptable."

So Prabhu channeled her outrage into a science project. She surveyed 500 high schoolers and found they were less likely to make insulting comments if they were encouraged to think about their words before speaking. The results of the survey inspired Prabhu to develop ReThink.

The no-cost app substitutes its own key-

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Pelosi, Mnuchin continuing talks on stimulus

By Billy House, Erik Wasson, and Laura Litvan
BLOOMBERG NEWS

WASHINGTON — Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin “continued to narrow their differences” on a coronavirus relief package, a Pelosi aide said Monday, as time draws short to reach agreement on a bill that could pass by Election Day.

“The Speaker continues to hope that, by the end of the day Tuesday, we will have clarity on whether we will be able to pass a bill before the election,” Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill said on Twitter. “The two principals will speak again tomorrow and staff work will continue around the clock.”

Pelosi earlier Monday told House Democrats that significant areas of disagreement are standing in the way of any deal, according to four people who participated in the closed conference call.

Democrats have resisted giving up on their priorities for local governments, workers, schools, and health care. Hammill said Democratic committee chairmen have been directed to work with their Republican counterparts in the Senate on a solution.

Republican lawmakers have not played a leading role in negotiations, with Senate GOP members



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Julie Gilbert, furloughed from her job, joined other airline workers in Boston Monday to call for federal aid.

favoring a far smaller effort than what’s under discussion. President Trump said if an agreement is reached he would lean on congressional Republicans to “come along.”

“We’re discussing it today very solidly — we’ll see what happens,” Trump told reporters in Arizona.

“Nancy Pelosi at this moment does not want to do anything that’s going to affect the election, and I think it will affect the election negatively for her.”

A welter of dividing lines remain between the two sides, including the scale of assistance to state and local authorities, tax

credits Democrats want for lower-income families, liability protections that Republicans are pushing but Democrats oppose, and a repeal of a credit for past business-tax losses that Republicans want to keep.

While Trump has said he’s ready to match the \$2.2 trillion spending level demanded by Democrats — or go higher — Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell has consistently warned that most GOP senators will oppose any coronavirus relief package that big.

Amid the continuing stalemate, lawmakers have been voting on single-party proposals in an effort to demonstrate they’re determined to do something to help households and businesses that continue to be hammered by the COVID-19 crisis.

After House Democrats early this month voted on a \$2.2 trillion package, Senate Republicans will try to stage two votes in coming days on separate, smaller relief efforts. Both are expected to be blocked by Democrats.

“American families deserve for us to agree where we can, make law, and push huge amounts of money out the door while Washington continues arguing over the rest,” McConnell said Monday. “It’s what the country needs.”

First up on Tuesday in the Sen-

ate is a standalone bill to allow unused money left over from a \$2 trillion March stimulus deal to reinvigorate the Paycheck Protection Program, which provides help to small businesses facing the risk of layoffs.

On Wednesday, McConnell plans to proceed with a broader package, on a scale that Democrats say isn’t sufficient. His last attempt at such a move, in September, was blocked. Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer said Monday, “The Republican proposal was unacceptable a month ago. It remains unacceptable now — even more so that the crisis has gotten even worse.”

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows said that if Pelosi and the administration get an agreement with Democrats, McConnell “will bring it to the floor, it will get a vote, and hopefully we’ll get stimulus on the way to the American people.”

But McConnell made no such pledge publicly on Monday.

Most forecasters say nothing will be done before the Nov. 3 election. The question then is whether relief could get wrapped into an overall spending bill, which is due by Dec. 11. Without passage of such a stopgap funding package, the federal government faces a shutdown.

Prepping for panic at the supermarket ahead of a new surge

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pect of shortages remains considerable as Thanksgiving and the winter holidays approach.

“The level of panic may not be as much as it was in the spring, but I think the consumer demand will be as high through the holidays,” she said. “Once we are done with the holidays, we are going to start seeing a dip back to normalcy.”

Even if no crisis emerges this winter, the pandemic has already changed how grocers stock their stores, in ways that customers can expect to see for a long time.

There’s enough toilet paper; paper towels may be a problem

The toilet paper panic of the spring seems to have mostly subsided. Retailers say they generally have enough on hand. Producers have been able to shift to making more toilet paper for the home, rather than commercial supplies for offices. Meanwhile, customers who bought in bulk earlier in the year have slowed down their purchases — allowing stocks to replenish.

But that doesn’t mean customers will be able to get as much as they want of their preferred brand whenever they like. Roche Bros. says its stores are still dealing with some out-of-stock items, and that could get worse as the holiday season approaches.

Demand for paper towels, in particular, has remained higher than usual, even after sales doubled in the early weeks of the pandemic.

Georgia-Pacific, the massive producer whose brands include Sparkle and Brawny, said people are buying 15 to 20 percent more

than usual, which a spokesman said is “a big increase to absorb for an industry that is used to a very consistent demand.”

The increase may be linked to the sustained demand in other cleaning products, such as sanitizing wipes, which have remained hard to come by through the summer and into fall.

Retailers stocking up

If you’re used to choosing between 45 flavors of salad dressing, or if you have an obscure favorite variety of canned stew, you may find it harder to find exactly what you want as the winter goes on.

Sanders, of Northeastern, said savvy store managers will devote their resources to accumulating as much as they can of the products people want most. That allows companies to limit how much money they have tied up in inventory, she said. And many manufacturers are cutting down on the varieties they produce.

Violette, of Associated Grocers of New England, said he is trying to keep a stable supply of products that will be popular over the holidays, particularly ingredients for baking. He has 15,000 cases of flour on hand, for example. That’s about as much as the organization sold from April to September, when sales of flour were up 218 percent over the comparable period in 2019.

Some grocers are also accumulating what are being called “pandemic pallets” — including paper goods and cleaning supplies. And many have worked for months to be ready for the holidays.

“For folks wondering about turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas, we believe we’re well-positioned for the holidays. Orders for



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

these meats are placed much earlier in the year, so these items are already in cold storage,” Jennifer Brogan, spokeswoman for Stop & Shop, said in an e-mail. “We have not only increased our buy, we have also shifted the focus into smaller turkey sizes, anticipating more small gatherings.”

But stocking up on inventory can be more of a challenge for smaller grocers with less room to store surplus goods. Chris Crosby, president of Crosby’s Marketplace, which has seven stores, mostly on the North Shore, said he is hopeful that holiday shoppers will pick up what they need early, to limit the rush and the strain on stocks.

“There might even be more people in the store who don’t usually shop. They might go to a relative’s place. So that puts more pressure on us, too,” Crosby said.

Fresh foods are a wild card

While grocers have had some

success in stocking up on items that won’t spoil, the supply of perishables is more vulnerable to production disruptions.

Anna Nagurny, a professor who studies supply chain management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said she has some particular concerns about the supply of fresh produce — especially from international sources.

The pandemic has shaken up trade, with some countries trying to hang onto fresh foods, and others banning imports. International outbreaks could affect the availability of foods that are typically grown overseas in winter.

On top of that, Nagurny said, the supply of fresh foods grown or processed in the United States can be affected by the virus. This spring, shutdowns at meat-processing plants created shortages in that industry.

“Without people, we don’t pro-

duce anything,” Nagurny said.

Crosby said that even at the height of the meat processing slowdown, customers’ reaction to the prospect of shortages was a major reason things went out of stock. “Once people start to panic, it starts that problem going.”

Don’t panic

While a lot remains uncertain, there is one big advantage that our food system did not have in the spring: experience with a pandemic. There’s better science, albeit imperfect, about how to control the virus.

In the spring, Sanders said, “there was this fear that grocery stores, everything, entire cities will be shut down. That is not going to happen under any circumstances.”

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An employee stocked paper towels — a product that continues to be in unusually high demand — at Associated Grocers of New England in Pembroke.

JPMorgan Chase gives \$7m for career program at Boston schools

Chief executive Jamie Dimon, who visited Boston in 2018 (right), was scheduled to appear at a virtual event on Tuesday with Governor Charlie Baker to announce grants to help lower-income neighborhoods in the city.



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF/FILE 2018

By Jon Chesto
GLOBE STAFF

For the second time this month, the banking giant JPMorgan Chase & Co. is unveiling a multimillion-dollar grant award that’s aimed, in part, at helping neighborhoods in Boston.

Chief executive Jamie Dimon is scheduled to appear at a virtual event on Tuesday with Governor Charlie Baker to announce \$35 million worth of grants to be doled out to career readiness initiatives in five cities. The other four beneficiaries in this round are Dallas, Indianapolis, Nashville, and Columbus, Ohio. These grants are part of a \$75 million initiative that the New York company announced in February.

In Boston’s case, the bank is giving \$7 million over five years to a program overseen by the local nonprofit EdVestors that will strengthen career and college

preparations in the city’s public schools.

EdVestors’ chief executive, Marinell Rousmaniere, said the program will focus on three to five schools, while some of the work will help other high schools in the Boston Public Schools system, as well. Most of the money, at least at the start, will be used to pay for staffing, she said. Among other things, the program could bring changes in coursework and connect students to internships, she said. It could also help students choose classes and extracurricular activities to better situate themselves for jobs down the line.

“We want students to have the information to make the best decisions for themselves about what those paths should be,” Rousmaniere said.

Local partners include Bunker Hill Community College, the University of Massachusetts Boston,

the Boston Private Industry Council, and the Boston Foundation, as well as city and state agencies.

The announcement comes nearly two weeks after JPMorgan Chase awarded \$5 million over three years to a Boston Medical Center-led initiative to support job training and affordable housing for residents of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

Abby Marquand, philanthropy program officer at JPMorgan Chase, said it’s a coincidence that these grant awards are happening in Boston while the bank is in the midst of expanding its retail presence here. The company now has 19 Chase branches in the Boston area, up from zero two years ago. “It’s a fortuitous moment for Boston,” she said.

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