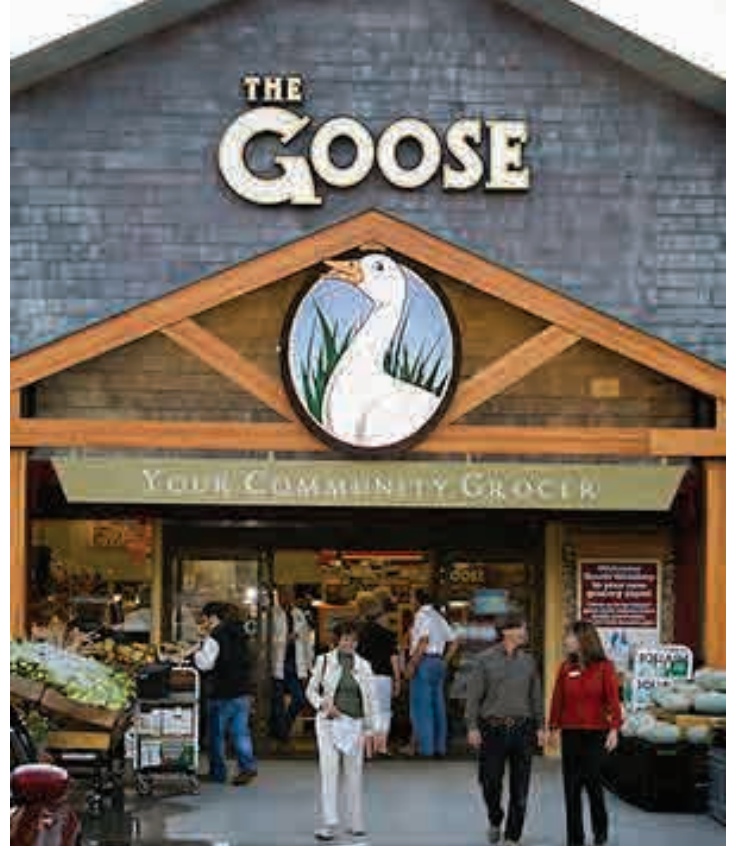


# The Goose comes to Bayview

Grocer delivers merchandise with a new concept

By Carolyn Tamler

**GOOSEFOOT, A NON-PROFIT** community development organization located on South Whidbey celebrated the opening of The Goose, a 21,000-square-foot supermarket at Bayview Center, on Sept. 16. On the first day, the store had tallied more than 1,000 transactions, and the enthusiasm and excitement overwhelmed those involved with the development and operation of The Goose.



The “can’t miss” storefront provides a welcoming atmosphere for customers visiting South Whidbey’s newest grocery store, The Goose.

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Marian Myszkowski, director of program and fund development for Goosefoot, was at the store throughout the day and noted that people were overjoyed to find a grocery store back in Bayview Center. She also observed, “People loved the new features, like the bulk food section and the extensive produce department, and were amused by the whimsy in the signage throughout the store.”

Chris Hurley, Goosefoot CEO and president of Bayview Grocery Inc., believes that this store may be the first of its kind in Washington, or the nation for that matter, where a non-profit owns a retail grocery store and has hired a professional manager to deal with all aspects of operations for the store. She also notes that the new grocery store is an excellent fit for the mission of the nonprofit: “The magic of this store is that it’s a great grocery store, with excellent merchandise at great values, and we are reinvesting the profits back into the community. ... We look forward to the day when we show a profit from our commercial

ventures both here at Bayview Center and at the Bayview Cash Store.” The eventual profits will be invested in affordable housing and promoting economic development on the South Whidbey.

As the owner, Goosefoot has financed all the building’s equipment and renovations, store inventory and day-to-day operating expenses. Hurley notes that Goosefoot has been very cost-conscious and environmentally aware in the re-design and furnishing of the new store. The floor remains cement rather than another type of floor covering that would require costly maintenance. Wherever appropriate, Goosefoot looked for ways to utilize recycled materials rather than purchase costlier new ones; most of the produce bins, shelving and refrigeration units are recycled. New energy-efficient improvements were added as well, including more efficient refrigeration motors, anti-sweat heater controls, night covers and energy-efficient exterior lights. Goosefoot expects to save 400,000 kWh (kilowatt-hour) in

its first year, which represents the total energy used by 50 households.

The day-to-day operation of the store is the responsibility of The Myers Group, a family-owned business that currently owns several grocery stores, hardware stores, gas stations and other retail businesses in Western Washington. The Myers Group currently has 325 employees. The company has the infrastructure to provide the necessary management services for the operation of The Goose. Tyler Myers, president of the Myers Group, is pleased that of the 25 full-time and 10 part-time employees who will work at The Goose, all but one reside on Whidbey Island. Included in the new employees are specialists in each major area of a grocery store operation. Store manager is Larry Hooker, a Greenbank resident.

The Goose had its preview opening in the evening of Sept. 15. Hundreds of people listened to speeches, watched philanthropist and Goosefoot founder Nancy Nordhoff perform the ribbon-

cutting ceremony and took a first walk through the new store. Praise was abundant.

The grand opening was the following day. An estimated 4,000 people entered the store, and more than 1,900 transactions were recorded. The staff at The Goose was overwhelmed by the numbers and the enthusiasm of the opening-day shoppers.

#### GOOSEFOOT PARTNERS WITH THE MYERS GROUP

When Jim Springer decided not to renew The Red Apple lease, Goosefoot's Hurley began a search for another tenant who would own and operate a grocery store. She found no one willing to do this, and in the end determined, "Goosefoot was the only one willing to take the risk."

Bryan McDonald of Whidbey Island Bank is the banker for both the Myers Group and Goosefoot. He introduced Myers and Hurley to each other when he heard that Goosefoot was looking for a grocery tenant for Bayview. The

Myers Group began on Whidbey Island in 1978, when Kent Myers, Tyler's father, purchased the grocery store in Bayview Center, known as Casey's. He sold the store to Springer in 1999, and the store operated as a Red Apple until

"When I heard about the possibility in Bayview, I knew I could make it happen and I loved the idea of being able to be back on Whidbey."

Tyler Myers,  
Myers Group

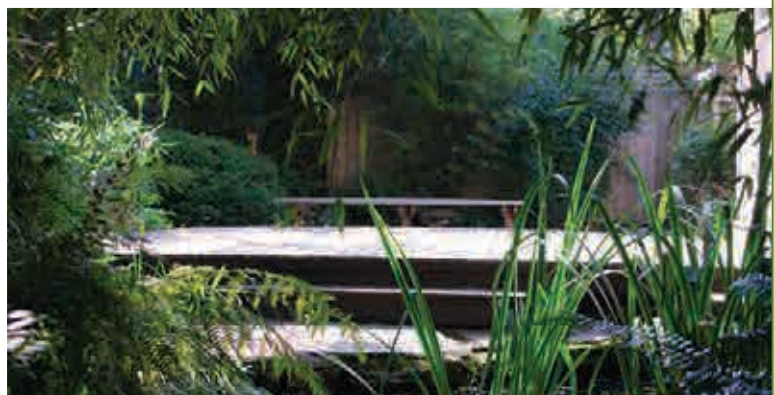
the lease expired earlier this year. From this simple beginning, Kent Myers and Associates developed into The Myers Group LLC, a small family business with an impressive portfolio of retail businesses in Western Washington.

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Nancy Nordhoff, founder of Goosefoot, cuts the ribbon for the new store. With her are (L-R) Myers Group President Tyler Myers, Nordhoff, Goosefoot CEO Chris Hurley and Goosefoot Board President Gordy Edberg.

Their current grocery businesses include the Kress IGA in downtown Seattle and IGA stores in Ocean Shores, Camano Island and Snoqualmie Ridge.

For Tyler Myers this venture feels like coming home. Myers currently lives in North Seattle, but he was raised on South Whidbey, and his father still lives on the island. His first job at age 15 was as a bagger for Casey's. "When I heard about the possibility in Bayview, I knew I could make it happen and I loved the idea of being able to be back on Whidbey."

Hurley and Myers met 25 times while looking for a solution to the problem Goosefoot had in finding an anchor tenant for the Bayview Shopping Center. It wasn't until they had explored many options that the relationship concept between Goosefoot and The Myers Group became the current business model. An agreement was signed in May 2009.

Hurley says the partnership works because of "Tyler's curiosity, creativity and generosity." The two agree that The Goose represents a perfect fit for the community. Myers says he ran the model and it was the only one that worked. They talked through the strategy and the conceptual philosophy and created a business plan.

#### THE OPERATIONAL PLAN

The fundamental objective behind the development of The Goose is to replace an anchor tenant that existed at the site and served the local community for many years. Hurley says, "Our goal from a store positioning standpoint is to offer the best values for customer dollars while offering the finest quality perishable products and local products available on South Whidbey."

Myers notes that there are several aspects about The Goose that are truly unique: First, no one else that he knows of owns a grocery store and hires a management service to handle the operations, nor has never heard of a nonprofit that owns a supermarket and has a vision of using the profits to benefit the community.

The focus is on ways to differentiate The Goose from other groceries on South Whidbey. The store will endorse as many local products and services as possible. Overall The Goose plans to offer the best values at the best prices. It also wants to develop a reputation as the best place to shop for staples.

The partnership of Goosefoot and The Myers Group provided the credi-



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bility that the operation could succeed and facilitated a half-million-dollar loan for the initial stocking of the store based on the concept of job creation in a rural area.

Hurley expanded on the unique business model The Goose presents: "I looked some time ago and did not find any similar examples. I was looking for the legal template for the management services agreement. The co-op model, such as Puget Consumer's Cooperative is certainly out there. But they are self managing.

"In terms of the description, I like to use the term social enterprise. It's a term that is widely used as a model to generate revenues to use for social benefit."

#### A VISIT TO THE GOOSE

A tour through the new store presents many new or enlarged services that are certain to please grocery customers:

- "Aisle of Honkin' Good Values"



The Goose produce department boasts a number of hard-to-find items for islanders.

offers values on every day items that people need.

- The produce department features as many local products as possible, including many items not found in other stores on the island (such as blood oranges, plantains and fresh

okra), and offers a large selection of organic and non-organic fruits and vegetables.

- The bulk foods section offers the largest selection on the south end of the island with many specialty items such as rice flours and grind-your-own

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The vast selection of local wines at The Goose is rounded out by wines of the world.

peanut butter.

- The meat department offers grass-fed beef grown by local suppliers and provides a service counter.
- Langley Village Bakery operates a full-service bakery and has espresso

and coffee.

- A generous selection of local wines and wines from around the world.
- The Community Gathering Corner has seating space for 20 people and features information about what's

going on in the community.

A happy, white domestic goose is the new logo for The Goose. Since Canadian Geese are not seen in a positive light by many, a decision was made to use the domestic variety to represent the new supermarket that stands out in what was once a drab strip mall. A bright awning covers the entrance, and a concrete pad in the front shows off special products and events being promoted.

Many see The Goose as the beginning of a rebirth for Bayview Center. Nearby tenants have spruced up their exteriors to match the sparkle of The Goose. The parking lot has been re-stripped and new signage invites passersby to stop in.

**“The community input was overwhelmingly in favor of a new grocery store. The Goose will deliver that and so much more.”**

**Chris Hurley,  
Goosefoot CEO**

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Store hours are more extensive than any of the other groceries on South Whidbey: Monday through Sunday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Hurley and Meyers are enthusiastic about the potential for The Goose and couldn't be more pleased with the response to the store in its opening days. Hurley adds: "Tyler and I have been planning and plotting for over a year to make this happen. It has been a long road, but the community input was overwhelmingly in favor of a new grocery store. The Goose will deliver that and so much more." ■

Writer Carolyn Tamler is a resident of South Whidbey Island.