



Price check on energy savings.

When people save energy at home, it helps keep their energy costs low. Companies can help, too, by becoming more energy efficient. One Avista customer that's making a difference is Sperm's Markets—a true community gem.

Sperm's has been a locally recognized name since 1967, when Sperm and Wanda Olsrud purchased the Thunderbird Market in Medford, Oregon. Sperm admits he kept the Thunderbird name because he couldn't afford a new sign at the time.

Keeping freezer air from escaping did more than improve customer comfort. It also decreased their store's annual natural gas usage for heating by a projected \$15,633 a year.

In Eugene, Sperm and a partner co-owned a small meat shop and grocery store. Sperm was the butcher. But he wanted to get out on his own and do one better. His goal was to create a store known for its friendliness, one that would offer the largest selection of quality products at the lowest prices possible. As it turned out, he did just that. And customers loved it.

In fact, the Olsruds ended up expanding the business in 1974 by purchasing the Mayfair Market in Klamath Falls. Their customer count kept growing until that building started feeling a little cramped. So, they built what is now their current

Thunderbird Market just across the parking lot from the original location. Avista was there to assist with an incentive for heat recovery that helped reduce natural gas costs by an estimated \$7,597 a year.

Three years later, in 1976, Sperm expanded again. This time he bought the former Bazaar department store in Medford. His newest store however, carried a wide selection of non-food items in addition to groceries. Sperm operated it as a one-stop shopping center until 1985, when he obtained a Food 4 Less franchise.

Sperm didn't add his fourth location until 2000, when he purchased the struggling Food World in Roseburg, Oregon. He quickly turned things around and success followed.

Always concerned with keeping prices low, Sperm's Markets also built a warehouse in Medford. The added storage lets them purchase large quantities of a product when distributors offer a lower price. They also can buy more items directly from wholesalers.

The company's commitment to the grocery industry has not gone unnoticed. Sperm's Thunderbird Markets received the Unified Grocers' 2017 Ben Schwartz Retail Grocery Visionary Award, a prestigious national honor within their industry.

Receiving such a high honor proves Sperm made a smart decision when he put his son Steve in charge when he retired. Like his dad, Steve loves the grocery business and it shows. Today, Sperm's Markets employs about 638 people at its stores

and warehouse with over 65 being with the company for 20 years or more. That's because they treat their employees as well as they do their customers.

Sharing their rewards of success is something the Olsruds enjoy, especially to help their local communities. They've contributed to everything from youth and high school sports to college scholarships. And they give continuously through a trust fund disbursed by the Oregon Community Foundation. Every year, Sperm's Markets also donates semi truckloads of food to each of the area's food banks.

The Olsruds enthusiastically support regional 4-H and FFA programs in Douglas, Jackson, Josephine and Klamath counties. Through a generous gift to Friends of the Fair, the Olsrud family helped build the 12,000-sq-ft pavilion that bears their name in Jackson County.

In addition to being a generous corporate citizen, Sperm's Markets is committed to being a good environmental steward and strives for sustainability. The stores recycle all their cardboard. The company also recently worked with Energy Trust of Oregon, which partners with Avista, to complete energy-efficiency upgrades at their Food for Less store in Medford. Upgrades included installing energy-efficient LED lighting and adding doors to open freezer cases.

Keeping freezer air from escaping did more than improve customer comfort. It also decreased their store's annual natural gas usage for heating by a projected \$15,633 a year. And Sperm's is passing these savings onto customers.

Reducing their energy use, not only is Sperm's keeping prices low on groceries, they're helping the communities they serve. Avista salutes them!

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