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PRESS RELEASE

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## Three Bears Alaska Wins 2024 Alaska Grown \$5 Store Challenge

*"Golden Carrot" ceremony to be held Tuesday, March 4 in Wasilla*

**(Palmer, AK)** – Three Bears Alaska has won the 2024 Golden Carrot Award in recognition of their strong support and success in promoting Alaska Grown products in the 8<sup>th</sup> annual "Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge." Three Bears Alaska has long been a strong supporter of Alaska Grown products. They have participated in all eight years of the competition, often being one of the very first stores to register. Twelve out of 14 stores created Alaska Grown displays this year and Alaska Grown products were included in their weekly sales ads – even featuring Alaska Grown corn from Nenana!

"Three Bears Alaska is proud to be recognized as the winner of the Golden Carrot Award in the Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge. Supporting Alaskan farmers and producers has always been at the heart of what we do, and this challenge highlights the importance of keeping local food on our shelves and dollars in our communities," **said Paul Sonnenberg, President and COO of Three Bears Alaska.** "By making it easy for our customers to find and purchase Alaska Grown products, we help ensure fresher, high- quality food for Alaskans while strengthening our state's agricultural economy. We're honored to stand alongside our partners in growing a more sustainable and self- sufficient Alaska."

Three Bears Alaska is one of the first major Alaska retailers that local farmers can access when they are ready to expand into wholesale. The Alaskan grocery chain carries a wide variety of Alaska Grown products including local potatoes, carrots, herbs, broccoli, lettuce, greens, salad mixes, tomatoes, onions, milk, yogurt, eggs, meat, shelf stable kelp products, and chips, as well as a large variety of value-added barley products such as pancake, couscous, and brownie mixes.

Three Bears Alaska has been serving their communities since 1980, when Larry Weisz purchased a small grocery store in Tok. In 1989, after gaining a loyal following throughout eastern Alaska, he opened the first store to carry the name "Three Bears" located in Valdez. Over the years, Three Bears expanded by developing a new mini- warehouse store format beginning with their Kenai location in 1997, followed by their Palmer Four Corners location in 2005, Meadow Lakes in 2008, Knik Road in 2011, and Chugiak in 2014. Three Bears now has several mini- warehouse stores and convenience locations serving communities throughout Alaska while remaining family owned and operated.

"I am excited to announce that this year's Alaska Grown \$5 Challenge winner is Three Bears Alaska who has been a large supporter and promoter of Alaska Grown products," **said Bryan Scoresby, Director of the Division of Agriculture.** "They carry a variety of products, from meat purchased from the Livestock Market at the Alaska State Fair, milk and yogurt, eggs, an assortment of vegetables and herbs, and shelf stable products which they advertise when

available in their weekly ads. Most of their stores participated in the \$5 Challenge so the whole company was the clear winner as all of the stores worked together in promotion.”

**Division of Agriculture Director Bryan Scoresby will present the Golden Carrot award to Three Bears Alaska during a ceremony held at their Wasilla Knik store located at 3950 S Knik Goose Bay Rd. on Tuesday, March 4 at 3:30pm.** The public is welcome to attend the ceremony in person. The ceremony will be recorded and available for viewing at a later time on the Alaska Grown YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@AlaskaGrownProgram>. Photos of the event will be shared on the Alaska Grown Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown>.

The \$5 Challenge is a competition held every year by the Alaska Division of Agriculture’s iconic Alaska Grown Program, where participating retailers build displays of Alaska Grown products from June to November. These displays are evaluated based on creativity, use of the \$5 Challenge and Alaska Grown logo, and the promotion of the challenge via social media or other outlets. The goal of the \$5 Challenge is to raise awareness and support of Alaska Grown products among both retailers and consumers.

The previous “Golden Carrot” winners are Blue Market AK (Anchorage, 2023), The Roaming Root Cellar (Fairbanks, 2022 and 2021), Palmer Fred Meyer store (2020 and 2019), the Wasilla Walmart store (2018), and the Palmer Carrs-Safeway store (2017).

*The Department of Natural Resources' mission is to develop, conserve, and maximize the use of Alaska's natural resources consistent with public interest.*

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