

## Women executives form industry group

PALM BEACH, Fla. — A group of 19 high-profile women in the retail and health care industries formally announced the creation of an organization called WE during a reception at the National Association of Chain Drug Stores Annual Meeting here last month.

The mission of WE, derived from the first two letters in well, is to enhance the future and shape the next generation of female leaders, while also advancing the overall health and wellness industry. The scope of the membership stretches from small companies, including Racher Press, publisher of *Chain Drug Review* and *MMR*, to such multinationals as Walmart, Walgreens Boots Alliance, Unilever and Procter & Gamble Co.

"This is about what we can do for the industry," said Annie Walker, vice president and divi-

sional merchandise manager for O-T-C at Walmart, adding that the female voice is crucial in the retail as well as the health care sectors.

Citing a 2017 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, Walker noted that 52% of retail employees and 79% of health care employees are female. However, there are no women chief executive officers in the top health care or retail companies. Only 5% of the top consumer packaged goods companies have female CEOs. "Retail and CPG have the second- and third-highest percentage of women in the entry level jobs, but less than 30% of senior leaders are women, and only 13% rise to the C-suite," Walker explained.

"Studies show that women are missing role models. Nurturing young leaders is critical," Walker said. "We believe in a vision of creating an environment that



Annie Walker,  
Walmart

build relationships, encourages others and supports an effort to shape the future of the industry."

WE, which grew out of a conversation between Andrea Fallin, a sales director at *Chain Drug Review*, and Kim Sines, senior vice president of sales, at Hello Products, has a board comprised of women, but the group welcomes the support of men in the industry. Notably, WE singled out Scott Emerson, chairman, president and CEO of the Emerson Group, for his firm's support and sponsorship.

## Hourican leads CVS Pharmacy

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business and partnered on key innovations including the Script-Path prescription management system, the Rx Savings Finder, medication adherence programs and home delivery.

Pharmacists are the frontline of health care, he said, noting that with 10,000 locations in 49 states; Washington, D.C.; and Puerto Rico, CVS' pharmacists are highly accessible for the vast majority of U.S. residents. They are highly skilled professionals, he noted, many with a Pharm.D. degree. He called them "capable, talented, educated professionals" who can address health

care needs efficiently and, cost effectively.

He said that the pharmacist's first duty is, and will continue to be, ensuring that patients use prescription pharmaceuticals safely and in a manner that maximizes efficacy. Medication adherence is at the heart of the profession's work, he said.

In employing best-in-class capabilities to get people on their path to better health, CVS engages with patients and educates them on the importance of beginning maintenance medications. Thanks to e-prescribing, it can now see a medication that a person in the past perhaps

never brought to a pharmacy. "Some patients simply forget to come to the pharmacy," Hourican said. "Others either don't understand or do not sufficiently appreciate why they need to begin therapy." When that happens, CVS telephones those patients to help them understand the importance of starting on therapy that prescribers deem important, he said.

Adherence is CVS' top priority, he said. "It helps patients live longer, healthier lives. And our PBM partners and health plan partners are extraordinarily interested in people staying adherent to their medication. Adherence helps reduce hospitalizations and unnecessary future health problems down the road."

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## NACDS taps strengths

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Chain Pharmacy Community Engagement Report," which detailed NACDS chain members' community engagement efforts in 2017, including the contribution of an aggregated \$630 million and 1.5 million volunteer hours to various causes. The report also described the three biggest areas of focus for NACDS members in 2017: access to affordable medicines and vaccines; preventing diabetes and promoting healthy meals; and preventing opioid abuse.

NACDS president and chief executive officer Steve Anderson noted that change is a critical priority for the association as it marks its 85th anniversary.

"NACDS is about chains and suppliers collaborating to benefit the consumer, the nation and the business," Anderson said. "That is the infinite goal of NACDS, and doing that through the years requires an intentional, determined and spirited transformation."

Providing a road map for that transformation is NACDS' Future Value Targeting initiative, which Anderson said is committed to returning value to chains and suppliers now and in the future.

As part of that initiative, NACDS advocates for its Access Agenda, which states: "Pharmacies provide access to better health care every day. And we are here to provide access to health policy solutions."

Anderson added that issues

related to that Access Agenda include: direct and indirect remuneration fee reform; preventing unlawful Medicaid reimbursement policies; battling limits on pharmacy choice for military families and veterans; improving state vaccination policies; working for point-of-care testing for flu and strep; continuing to serve as part of the solution on the opioid abuse epidemic; and advancing other public health issues.

Panzer endorsed the Access Agenda, noting that NACDS' efforts reflect the ultimate goal of pharmacy and of retail, which is to serve the patient and the customer.

"It really does come down to the three parts of the Access Agenda: offense, defense and addressing issues that matter to the well-being of our communities. When you look at all of the business challenges we are facing, I cannot emphasize enough just how important it is to have NACDS representing all of us, and taking on these public policy issues."

Panzer also cited the efforts of the NACDS Retail Advisory Board, whose members mainly represent stores' front-end business.

That too is a critical part of the business of NACDS' members.

"It's vital to concentrate not just on our pharmacy business but also on building a healthy front-end business to remain a relevant and profitable business model," Panzer said.

## Drug Take Back Day

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prescription medications.

On the day before National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, which has been vocal in its support

and advocacy for safe disposal and other measures to combat the opioid scourge, applauded the lead House of Representatives sponsors of the Access to Increased Drug Disposal Act of 2018, bipartisan legislation that NACDS says is consistent with the spirit of the organization's policy recommendations to help address the opioid abuse epidemic.

The idea behind the legislation is to create a demonstration program to provide federal grant funding to states — based on a state's eligible collector participation rate and opioid overdose rate — to assist drug disposal authorized collectors with their costs.

Solutions are also coming from chain drug retailers, such as Walgreens, which says it has collected more than 270 tons of unused medication through its safe medication disposal program since the company launched the initiative in 2016.

Walgreens participated in the DEA's Prescription Drug Take Back Day, as did other companies including Kroger Co. and Cardinal Health Inc.

## Bloom departs Fred's

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subsidiary of CVS Health for \$40 million plus the value of inventory.

Fred's, which had been poised last year to buy enough Rite Aid Corp. stores to have made it the third-largest drug chain in the country — has been seeking a turnaround.

For the third quarter ended October 28, the retailer reported a net loss of \$51.8 million, or \$1.38 per share, compared to a net loss of \$38.4 million, or \$1.05 per share, a year earlier. Same-store sales and customer traffic trends at the front end were negative year over year, but improvement was visible on a month-to-month basis.

The chain was prepared to acquire up to 1,200 Rite Aid stores

to secure the Federal Trade Commission's approval of Walgreens Boots Alliance's (WBA's) takeover of the rest of Rite Aid. But FTC objections to the bigger deal proved insurmountable, and WBA and Rite Aid canceled their merger and their agreement with Fred's in June.

"After the company was not able to purchase certain assets from the Rite Aid Corporation and following the end of the 2017 fiscal year, the timing was right, both for Mike and the company, for him to step down," Fred's chairman Heath Freeman explained.

Bloom joined Fred's as president and chief operating officer in January 2015 and was named CEO in August 2016, succeeding Jerry Shore, who retired.