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Meet the New EMA Chair *Jason Mirabito, Mirabito Energy Products*

Meet the **New EMA Chair**

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Most of the time, business leaders who rise through the ranks of national industry organizations and arrive at the top spot do so at the culmination of a decadeslong career in the industry. But every once in a while, someone comes along who is relatively young, hopeful, focused and prepared to take the reins. In the case of the Energy Marketers of America, that someone is Jason Mirabito, incoming chair of the EMA Executive Committee.

"Serving as EMA chair is usually a celebration of someone's career. I view my year of being chair as a celebration of our company and of our industry," said Mirabito, senior vice president of wholesale fuels and logistics at Mirabito Energy Products in Binghamton, New York. "My great-grandfather was a little Italian guy selling coal, and four generations later, that business has grown into a \$1 billion organization, with his great-grandson the chair of a national organization. It is a special thing to acknowledge."

The fourth-generation company started in 1926, when James Mirabito, an Italian immigrant, started selling coal to fellow Italians in Norwich, New York. Over the years, the company grew and began selling heating oil, then operating convenience stores, then offering wholesale fuels, then finally opening a



natural gas and electric division. Today, Mirabito Energy Products offers myriad products, including heating oil, propane, natural gas, electricity, coal, gasoline, diesel fuels and kerosene. The company owns 115 c-stores and provides home heating oil and propane to more than 55,000 customers.

"I am really reaping the benefits of the American dream on the backs of all my ancestors. I live the life I live because of them. It feels nice to be able to do my part for the family company," Mirabito said.

Mirabito started working for the company as a kid, painting fences in the fuel yard. When he was about 13, he started helping deliver coal and heating oil to customers. He also interned at the company while in college.

"The family business has always been in my blood since day one, and I could not picture myself working anywhere else," he said.

After graduating from Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, Mirabito started working full time at Mirabito

Energy Products as the pricing and supply manager. Later, Mirabito became the sales and marketing manager, then moved into his current role as senior vice president of wholesale fuels and logistics. Mirabito's division operates in nine states and delivers wholesale fuels to about 3,000 customers.

"Anyone [who] thinks or says working in a family business is easy either has not worked in a family business or is lying," he laughed. "But at the end of the day, there are a lot of positives working in a family business. In what other type of business are you able to see your dad, your uncles and your cousins every single day and go to lunch with them and all work toward the common goal of expanding and growing and making your family business more profitable?"

When he is not spending time with family at work, Mirabito is spending time with his wife, Shannon, and their 1-year-old son, Spencer, or he is working on his golf game.

In years past, Mirabito also worked as a Division 1 college basketball referee, a 10-year career that included refereeing the infamous 2017 Rider University vs. Siena College game in Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference play.

"There was a fight in the game. After the game, the Rider team walked off the court, and the Siena coach did a fake



handshake," Mirabito recalled. "It hit every national news outlet. My picture was on the *Today* show. I was right in the middle. That was my claim-to-fame game."

This college basketball season will be Mirabito's last as a referee.

"I loved officiating, but I always knew that the family business was my top priority," he said.

Mirabito likes highlighting the significant role traditional fuels play in today's world, where greener energy often gets more attention. For instance, Mirabito recently saw a tractor-trailer hauling a massive part for an electricity-generating wind turbine, and the convoy included New York State Police vehicles and guide vehicles.

"Here are all these vehicles running on gasoline and diesel fuel escorting an electric windmill that will be put up by a crane operated by diesel fuel, and then we will take lubricants and inject them into the windmill to make it turn," Mirabito said. "They have got to have us."

Sights like this make Mirabito hopeful for the future of the fuel industry.

"One of the biggest misperceptions of our industry is that it is over and that there is a sunset. I think there are plenty of opportunities for energy marketers to be successful for decades to come, whether it is with biofuels, ethanol, standard fossil fuels or electric energy. There is a way to figure out the future and participate,"



Mirabito said. "It might look different. But for those [who] want to hang in there, they are going to be able to. But it does not come without a fight."

Boosting the image of the industry in the eyes of regulators, legislators and even the general public is key to its longevity. Being involved in EMA and sharing how energy marketing works can help improve the industry's image.

"We are not big oil. We are made up of hundreds of thousands of small companies that distribute energy products. EMA is able to take our issues and effectively lobby on our behalf," Mirabito said.

Before becoming the EMA Executive Committee chair, Mirabito served as the New York state representative to the Board of Directors, then served on the Executive Committee as the Northeast region chair, second vice chair and first vice chair. As one of the youngest EMA chairs ever, Mirabito is eager to offer a fresh perspective. His main goals as chair are to keep the industry united and to tell the story of what fuel marketers do more effectively.

"I want to focus on communicating and spreading the word of all the positive things our industry does for Americans. We can get painted in a very negative light, but what we do is actually extremely positive," Mirabito said. "Is what we do sexy? No, it is not at all. But we do a lot for this country.

"All of our family businesses and other businesses, we provide energy to Americans. We allow for the family road trip. We keep the house warm for Thanksgiving dinner. We give power to generating facilities that allow for the lights to turn on," he continued. "We need to do a better job of letting people know exactly what we energize."



by Erin Pinkerton



Jason Mirabito's grandfather James Mirabito (third from left) and great-uncle Tom Mirabito (second from left) are pictured with employees of James Mirabito & Sons Inc.

