

TOP WORKPLACES 2015

The personal touch helps distinguish Frank's Piggly Wiggly in crowded marketplace



Frank and Stephanie Lueptow operate Frank's Piggly Wiggly grocery stores in Elkhorn and East Troy. The stores employ 220 people.

By [Joe Taschler](#) of the *Journal Sentinel*

June 12, 2015

Top Workplaces



The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's Top Workplaces section recognizes the best places to work in southeast Wisconsin.

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Sometimes, small-business owners have to plant flowers in the parking lot.

That's what Frank and Stephanie Lueptow were doing at 6 a.m. on a recent morning outside their Frank's Piggly Wiggly franchise store in East Troy.

"Then we went to work," Stephanie Lueptow said.

The Lueptows operate Frank's Piggly Wiggly grocery stores in Elkhorn and East Troy. (They also own a liquor store in Elkhorn to conform with local regulations that require alcohol sales to be separate from the grocery operations.)

Their stores are franchises of Piggly Wiggly Midwest, based in Sheboygan.

In a land of supercenters, their two stores range from 40,000 to 50,000 square feet. That's about a quarter to a third the size of a typical supercenter in the United States.

Frank's Piggly Wiggly employs 220 people. In addition to the stores on Main St. in East Troy and W. Market St. in Elkhorn, the Lueptows say, they would like to grow and eventually open additional stores in the region.

Frank's Piggly Wiggly was named to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's 2015 listing of Top Workplaces in southeast Wisconsin — which should come as no surprise, given that the company offers its employees training as well as seminars that feature topics such as happiness.

"We treat everyone like our family," Stephanie Lueptow said. "Each person is important."

"We just try really hard to make us one solid team," Frank Lueptow said. "We train our people. We believe in our people."

The Lueptows, who have had the grocery stores since 1981, work to differentiate their business in a crowded marketplace where stores from pharmacies to home improvement warehouses are selling food.

"They might have cheaper peas in cans than us, but they can't do what we do," Stephanie Lueptow said.

"We have over 2,000 items that we make in our store," she added. "We do lots of specialty things."

The Frank's Piggly Wiggly stores make their own dips, salads and bratwursts, among other things.

"We probably have 40 kinds of brats," Stephanie Lueptow said. There are beer brats, sauerkraut brats and blueberry brats. There are also Al Capone brats, which contain provolone cheese, mushrooms and salami among other things.

"They are really tasty," Frank Lueptow said.

Frank's Piggly Wiggly also buys truckloads of organic produce each year from local Amish farmers.

"We really feel special about our produce," Stephanie Lueptow said, adding that the stores plan to expand their organic offerings this year.

Still, even if the products are the best, the workers who take care of customers are the most important part of the business.

"It's everything," Stephanie Lueptow said. "We have some amazing, wonderful people. We love our people."

The Lueptows say they have a passion for their business and, "We try to have that at the store," Frank Lueptow said. "We try to have a positive energy flowing through the store."