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Williams Grocery buys Albertsons stores

The Albertsons grocery store at Bryant and Danforth in Edmond is one of six purchased last week by Williams Discount Foods.

BY PAUL B. SOUTHERLAND, THE OKLAHOMAN

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Williams Discount Foods bought six of the 23 Albertsons stores that were sold statewide last week. Two of the stores are in Oklahoma City — one at NW 122 and Rockwell Avenue and one on S May Avenue — and one each are in Edmond, Yukon, Del City and Midwest City.

The company has stores in Anadarko, Bristow, Choctaw, Del City, Drumright, Elgin, Minco, Stroud and Tuttle.

Jeff Williams said with all their new stores, the company will inherit about 600 Albertsons employees. Williams now has about 400 employees between nine stores. Williams did not want to disclose the price paid for the six stores.

"We will drop prices and they will drop dramatically," said Jeff Williams, owner of Williams Discount Foods with his sister Wendi Taylor.

Other than cost, Williams said he doesn't anticipate many other changes.

"We're going to maintain what they did well and bring in what we do well, which is price consciousness and customer service, customer service, customer service," Williams said.

Williams and his sister grew up in the grocery business. His dad opened the first Williams Discount Foods in Tuttle in 1971. Williams said he started racking bottles when he was 8 years old and started unloading trucks when he was 18.

Today, he's one of the few true independents left in the Oklahoma City area grocery market. According to industry tracker, The Shelby Report, Wal-Mart consistently dominates, bringing in more than 50 percent of market share monthly between its supercenters and its Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market concept. Albertsons was its nearest competitor, cornering an average of only 8.5 percent of the market each month over the last several years.

Williams said those statistics don't scare him.

"We compete directly with Wal-Mart Supercenters in Bristow, Anadarko and Del City, and we do well in those markets," he said.

"We do what we do well, and they do what they do well. We service people. We treat you like you should be treated and like you used to be treated in the old grocery stores your parents shopped in, yet we understand price."