

Grocery chain sells its stores to competitors

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WiseWay Foods and Strack & Van Til are purchasing all four Wilco grocery store locations in a deal that's expected to close at the end of August.

Strack & Van Til will take over operations at Wilco County Markets in Lowell, Rensselaer and Cedar Lake. WiseWay will take over operations at Amelia's County Market in Winfield.

"We look forward to the opportunities the new ownership will bring for our personnel and to the communities we have been honored to serve for so many years," said Wilco Foods President Linda Armstrong in a statement.

Armstrong said the change in ownership will allow her to focus her time on family, friends and her personal interests.

The terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Dave Wilkinson, president of Strack & Van Til, said the purchase allows the company to expand into southern portion of Northwest Indiana, because more stores are already concentrated in the middle and northern tiers of the area. The last store opening for Strack & Van Til was in East Chicago at the beginning of 2009.

Strack's currently has about 4,500 employees across 30 stores, and the acquisition will add 200 employees to the company.

Wilkinson said the company continues to look for acquisition opportunities that would be a good fit for the organization.

Don Weiss, president of WiseWay Foods, said the purchase of Amelia's complements its current network of stores in Northwest Indiana. WiseWay Foods currently operates four WiseWay stores, three PayLow discount grocery stores and a Wise Guys liquor store.

"It's a fine company and we think it will fit in very well with our culture," Weiss said.

Armstrong said in a statement that the Wilco company started with a single store in Miller in 1960.