

Wild Rivers Market is the go-to for natural foods

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When Rick Littlefield bought a little health foods store called Crescent City Health Foods in 1986, the organic and natural foods movement was just beginning to germinate.

Since then, the demand for natural foods has fully sprouted, and organic produce has become mainstream with the rise of Whole Foods Market and the ilk. With the expansions in the overall market, Littlefield's store has also grown. After a couple of moves and name changes, the most recent coming in 2013 when they moved to their current location, Wild Rivers Market stands as the go-to natural grocery store in Crescent City.

"Now, it's really established," said Littlefield. "I think most people in Crescent City know about us, and they like what we're doing."

What started as a family operation with three employees, has now expanded to three stores and more than 200 employees.

Additionally, recent renovations increased the size of their building from 5,000 to 7,000-square-feet. With more space, the market added a deli and a salad bar last winter, which they have not been able to make full

use of yet due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Littlefield said health food and natural food stores began as separate entities but have combined into one demographic over time.

“The old natural foods stores, they would have a bag of rolled oats and you would go and scoop it out of the bag, you’d get the organic apples, but they might have worms in them. It was a little bit funky,” said Littlefield.

However, Whole Foods and similar markets brought a fresh design to natural foods stores, which altered public perception about natural foods and opened up opportunities in smaller markets, said Littlefield.

With sister stores in Eureka and McKinleyville, Littlefield said Wild Rivers Market receives lower prices from vendors due to the size of the account, which in turn keeps prices lower for customers.