

# Happy 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

With Down to Earth CEO Mark Fergusson

Welcome back to Sunrise at 7:17am...

Down to Earth is 35 years old.

CEO Mark Fergusson joins us...

I'd forgotten that the chain actually started with one store on Maui...

Mark: On Maui, Wailuku...

Howard: Even though four of the five stores are here on Oahu now...

Mark: Right...

Howard: Now, were you with it from the beginning?

Mark: No... I wasn't.

I started with the company in 1986...

Howard: Uh huh...

Mark: Yeah...

Howard: Did you work your way up? Or they brought you in as a CEO?

Mark: No, I came in...

Well... I came in mainly to do a little bit of consulting initially...

Sort of help...just help with different...

I'm a CPA by background...

So just help with some financial management...

That led to other things...

And then I became the CEO...

And now I'm the "Chief Vegetarian Officer..."

Howard: You know...

Journalists are, of course, notorious for backing underdogs...

We love underdogs...

And when Whole Foods came in...

This big, rich company...

A lot of people were worried if you would be able to survive...

And you seem to be doing quite well...

Mark: Yeah... no. Well, we're surviving and thriving.

Howard: Now part of that is because...

You have a niche that's a little different from Whole Foods...

Mark: Right...

Howard: And part of it too is...

You're local and you give good service...

And you have a lot of people who are loyal to you...

But it occurs to me that there's also a third reason...

Which is a growing number of people...

Are interested in adding healthy foods to their diet...

Mark: Oh... definitely.

I mean there's such a problem in the United States...

And Hawaii in particular with obesity...

Diabetes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and so on...

And so we're actually offering foods...

And products that actually can help people live a healthier life.

Howard: One thing we've discussed before that's kind of interesting...

Is, you know, it's a vegetarian store...

But you're getting more meat-eaters...

Who are coming there as part of their shopping...

Because they like the products that you have...

Mark: Oh... yeah!

Well, you don't have to be a vegetarian to shop with us....

Howard: And in fact...

The first time I went...

Bernadette dragged me...

And I didn't expect...

I just assumed there would be nothing there that interested me at all...

But actually...

The so-called "Veggie Burgers..."

And there are like twelve different kinds now but...

Mark: Yeah...

They're good! I like them...

Mark: They're great!

Howard: And we get them... not because they're healthy...

Although they are...

But because I actually like the flavor...

Mark: Oh... that's great!

Howard: Yeah... yeah.

So what are you doing for the anniversary?

I think you've got some deals...

Mark: Yeah... well we've got a big sale on today.

Thirty-five percent off 35 best-selling items...

Howard: Mmm... hmm.

Mark: And it's going to be a busy day...

So people want to get down there early...

And... and buy up!

Howard: So this is what I want you to do...

If you've never been to Down to Earth before...

Today... I just want you to make kind of a thing in your mind...

That you're going to go there...

And just wander around and see what you like...

And I guarantee you...

That you will be pleasantly surprised.

By some of the things you like...

Even if you think of yourself as somebody...

Who just subsists on beef and chocolate...

Here's Dan...

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