



100 years

Wills Group

OF MOVING LIVES FORWARD

A Chronology of
Growth and Success Since 1926



Introduction

As Wills Group celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2026, this history book honors the legacy of innovation, perseverance, and collective commitment of the people who have shaped our story. By looking back, we honor our past and the foundation that carries us into the next 100 years.

Over the past century, Wills Group has grown from an early energy provider in Southern Maryland to a community-focused organization with more than 300 retail locations across the Mid-Atlantic and Carolinas. Through each era, our work has been guided by a single purpose: to keep *Lives in Motion*.

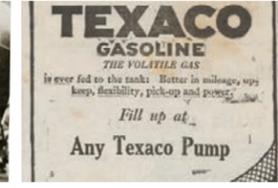
Reflecting on this history, we see periods of growth, challenge, and transformation – moments when we redefined what was possible. Each generation has left its mark through business achievements and acts of service, innovation, and shared purpose that enrich the lives of our team members, guests, and neighbors.

As we celebrate our first 100 years, we also look ahead. Our journey of moving lives forward continues, inspired by our people. Together, we will continue to embrace new ideas, nurture our communities, and build on this strong foundation with every step we take.

This history book is both a tribute to our past and an invitation to imagine what comes next. Our story is far from finished, and the next century promises to move even more lives forward.



1926–1945 The Early Years



1926

Two engineers, **Jim Wills and Harold Swann**, acquire the **La Plata Oil and Mechanicsville Oil Companies**, marking the founding of Southern Maryland Oil. The company handles three principal products: kerosene, gasoline, and “Texaco Golden,” a motor oil. With eight employees, Wills and Swann begin establishing a pattern of growth that continues for decades to come.

1927

Wills and Swann purchase land to build a plant in Owings, Maryland and the company secures the “Texaco Franchise” for Southern Maryland. With a fleet of six trucks and a hardworking team, leadership notes that everyone reaches the office before “daybreak” and does not leave until “way past dark.” Everyone contributes – one day driving a truck, the next working in the office.

1936

The company formally adopts the name Southern Maryland Oil Company (SMO). For the first time, product arrives by 2,000-gallon tank trucks from Baltimore rather than by rail at the Owings Plant. The La Plata office also expands, and while the upgrade helps, the “old pot-belly stove” remains in use. **SMO begins distributing motor oil and becomes the first company to offer Texaco Havoline.**

1937

Fuel oil for home use increases sharply, driving expansion across home heating. **SMO begins automatic delivery service – the first of its kind available to customers across Southern Maryland.** SMO strengthens its commitment to employees, announcing full benefits, including paid vacation, sick leave, and an annual holiday bonus.

1940

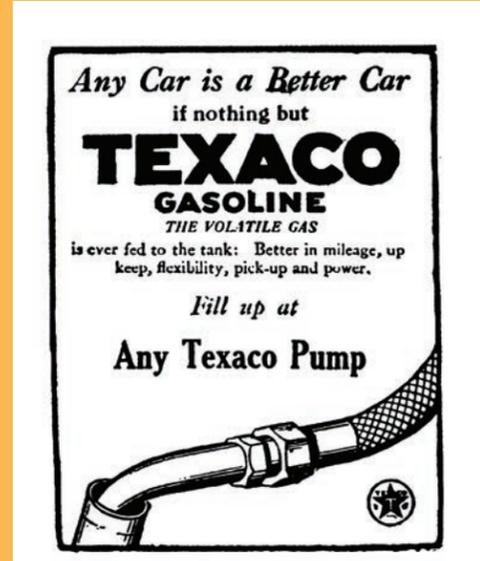
SMO builds its Indian Head Plant to meet growing demand for heating oil.

1942

SMO becomes the first principal field supplier to the Patuxent Naval Air Station, securing government contracts that provide steady, reliable business.

1943

SMO expands into fuel transportation as the principal fuel supplier for the construction of the Potomac River Bridge, which would go on to connect the Southern Maryland peninsula with the northern neck of Virginia.



DISTRIBUTORS OF TEXACO PRODUCTS SINCE 1926

MAIN OFFICE - LA PLATA, MARYLAND - WE 4-8101
DR 2-8301



SOUTHERN MARYLAND OIL COMPANY INCORPORATED

H. S. SWANN
JAS. W. WILLS

PHONE { LA PLATA 39
MECHANICSVILLE 19
OWINGS, PR. FDK. 42-F-13

July 2, 1926
M. Southern Maryland Oil Company

To SOUTHERN MARYLAND OIL COMPANY, DR.
"THE HOME ORGANIZATION"

LA PLATA :o: MECHANICSVILLE :o: OWINGS

WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTORS

TEXACO PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

MANUFACTURED BY THE TEXACO CO., U. S. A.

Kerosene :-: Lubricating Oil and Greases :-: Gasoline

1946–1969

Post–War Growth and Potential



1946

SMO procures new station sites as the company transitions from a partnership to a corporation.

1947

The new La Plata plant and warehouse facilities are completed – facilities that remain in operation today.

1948

SMO remodels the Owings Plant and establishes new policies for securing service station sites, focusing on through-traffic routes and consistent, year-round demand.

Founder Harold S. Swann passes away in October. As vice president and treasurer, his leadership leaves a lasting impact, and his loss is felt across the organization.

1949

The Korean War brings challenges such as rationing and transportation difficulties. Despite these pressures, SMO continues to thrive under strong leadership.

President Wills proposes increasing coverage in the company's Hospitalization Plan for employee medical services.



1951

A new era of office automation begins as SMO adopts its first Remington Rand bookkeeping machine, followed by Burroughs and IBM systems in subsequent years.

1953

Leadership announces a Profit Sharing Plan, effective December 11, 1953 – the first program of its kind in the State of Maryland. Through this deferred plan, employees receive a portion of the year-end profits for retirement purposes.

The Profit Sharing Plan is administered by trustees selected from company personnel and supported by an attorney, who together manage all investment decisions. The announcement is made at the annual Christmas party at the Rod-N-Reel Restaurant in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland.

As the company expands and its workforce grows, leadership concludes that the plan would be best managed by a professional financial firm to secure the strongest returns for employees.

1954

An analysis of gasoline distribution shows that eighteen service stations account for 40 percent of output, confirming the value of SMO's strategy to build modern stations in strategic locations.

Lund Station opens in Bryans Road, Maryland. SMO also decides to relocate and develop a new Mechanicsville Bulk Plant and office. On the day the new office opens, Hurricane Hazel sweeps through the region. It is one of the worst storms to hit the area, resulting in widespread damage and loss of life.

1955

SMO opens the region's first Oil Burner Service Department, using two-way radio communication to support customers. The service quickly becomes a key part of SMO's heating oil operations.

SMO also purchases Kroll Petroleum Company, expanding into Prince George's County's heating oil market. The plant is later renamed the Clinton Plant.

1957

The company suffers a tragic loss when **President James W. Wills dies in an automobile accident.** He is succeeded by his wife, Julia B. Wills.

Julia Wills is ahead of her time; few women lead companies in this era. Under her leadership, SMO continues to grow – a testament to her steadiness, courage, and influence across the organization.

1946–1969

Post–War Growth and Potential continued



1958

SMO acquires Proutt Oil Company, expanding its heating oil market in the Gambrills area of Anne Arundel County.

Company lore holds that the purchase “took place over a bottle.” Whatever the circumstances, the deal proves highly profitable – the purchase price is just \$5,000. Today, such transactions are far more complex, often requiring months or years to complete.

1960

With the success of the parts business, SMO expands its Parts Department and begins marketing supplies through a “pie-wagon” delivery concept. A new wing is added to the La Plata Plant to support the growing operation.

The company installs its first Lockheed Meters on fleet trucks.

Soon after, a new building is added to the La Plata Plant to relocate the Maintenance and Parts departments.

1961

J. Blacklock “Blackie” Wills Sr., son of the founder, is appointed president in August, succeeding his mother, Julia Wills.

He serves as president until his retirement in 1988 and remains Board Chairman through 1998. His tenure is marked by rapid growth, innovation, and steady leadership through shifts in the oil industry.

1963

With a strong parts business in place, SMO diversifies further by entering the tire retreading business. A modern retread plant and warehouse are developed in Waldorf, Maryland, under Southern Maryland Tires, Inc., and the facility expands quickly to support demand.

That same year, **SMO acquires Brandywine Auto Parts. The business is merged into existing operations and becomes a full-line automotive parts house known as Partco.**

Amid this diversification, SMO’s core emphasis remains on its petroleum business. The Bryans Road Plant is developed and becomes the company’s first unmanned key operation. On May 10, 1963, SMO hosts an “Open House” to mark the completion of its new “Main Office” on U.S. Route 301, centralizing accounting and administrative functions.

1964

SMO reaches another Maryland milestone by developing the state’s first central oil system at the Cedarville Woods Manufactured Home Community.

In November, the company expands again, receiving the franchise for Texaco products in the Annapolis marketing area.

1965

SMO completes its second central oil system installation at the Waysons Woods Manufactured Home Community in June and continues adding locations as the model grows.

Construction also begins on a new, modern Annapolis Bulk Plant on Bestgate Drive.

1966

SMO enters the heating installation business with the creation of its Installation Department, offering services such as hot water heater, central air conditioning, and furnace installation.

SMO celebrates its 40th anniversary, reinforcing its reputation as a “long-established, well-founded organization.”

The company also installs a new IBM Data Processing System to further centralize accounts receivable and other administrative functions.

1968

After years of strong growth, Partco outgrows its facilities and relocates to the remodeled former IGA building in Waldorf, Maryland, which becomes its permanent home. That same year, **SMO acquires three additional automotive businesses — Beltway, Hillandale, and Roadway.**

On January 30, the company experiences another loss with the passing of Board Chairman Julia W. Lorimer. Her leadership and charisma played a significant role in the company’s growth, and her absence is felt by all who worked with her.

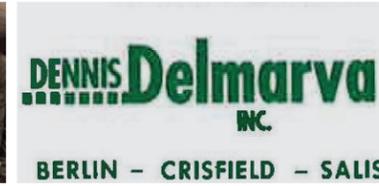
1969

SMO expands to the Eastern Shore with the acquisition of F.L. Godman Oil in Crisfield, and Dennis Oil Service in Salisbury and Berlin, Maryland. These purchases form the foundation of a new business unit: Delmarva Oil.

The F.L. Godman acquisition also marks SMO’s first venture into the coal business, selling coal by the ton, bushel, and bag – a product line later discontinued.

The operations of Hillandale, Roadway, and Beltway are consolidated into a subsidiary called Autopac, Inc. When the business becomes unprofitable, Autopac, Inc. is sold, while Partco continues operating as one of the largest parts stores in Southern Maryland.

1970–1985 Overcoming Obstacles



1970

1970 marks the beginning of one of the fastest periods of growth in the company's history. SMO expands in northern Prince George's County and Anne Arundel County, with continued growth in Charles and Calvert counties.

The decade also brings renewed regulations and consumer protections, prompting the company to reassess its position and define new goals and long-term objectives.

These shifts lead to a broad rehabilitation of service stations. Early in 1970, **SMO begins marketing gasoline through car washes. By the end of 1971, three new service stations and three car washes are operating, laying the groundwork for future expansion.**

1971

Delmarva Tires is created in March and begins operating on the Eastern Shore. Sales quickly exceed expectations, and the operation becomes profitable.

Delmarva Oil continues to grow through acquisitions, including Timmons Oil Company in July, which opens new opportunities in Delaware.

In August, Southern Maryland Oil acquires McNew Brothers Oil in Annapolis and merges its operations into the Annapolis Plant.

In September, Southern Maryland Tires in Waldorf is updated with new designs and retreading equipment. Larger facilities are built, adding improved office and warehouse space as well as new services such as fleet and commercial tire mounting, balancing, and alignment.

1972

At the beginning of 1972, the company holds a major Organization Meeting to introduce new management techniques and business philosophies. For the first time, company objectives are formally outlined for employees.

These objectives include a revised marketing approach and new strategies for acquisition and development. As part of this shift, SMO forms a new corporation – EPG, Inc. – to expand motor fuel distribution into new markets.

Shortly before the meeting, **SMO acquires the assets of Pete White Oil Company and merges the operation into Delmarva Oil in Salisbury and Berlin.** A new water terminal is developed with storage capacity of roughly two million gallons.

At the July 1972 Stockholders Meeting, Southern Maryland Oil, Inc. officially becomes SMO, Incorporated. Delmarva Oil and Southern Maryland Tires, Inc. become subsidiaries, while Partco and Southern Maryland Oil remain divisions of SMO, Inc.

SMO also introduces Long Term Disability Insurance as an employee benefit.

With the Pete White acquisition complete, SMO adopts CITGO-branded fuel for its entire Eastern Shore operation. Anticipating significant industry changes and modern marketing trends, **SMO develops Maryland's first branded self-service station at Forest Drive in Annapolis.** The station's popularity leads to additional self-service locations across the network.

As part of its ongoing investment in efficient station operations, the compan



1970–1985

Overcoming Obstacles continued



1973

Signs of a coming fuel shortage emerge, prompting SMO to focus heavily on efficiency and cost controls. At the same time, new government regulations – particularly in safety and environmental areas – increase operating expenses. The fuel crisis intensifies the following year, bringing further regulation on allocation, price controls, and product distribution. These pressures create a difficult period for the petroleum industry.

During the year, the National Labor Relations Board petitions SMO for a union election. The effort does not move forward, but it underscores the need for stronger communication with employees. Their continued confidence in the company proves valuable during this challenging time.

1974

SMO acquires C.K. Duncan-CITGO in Pocomoke, Maryland, and Sussex-Atlantic Oil Company in Georgetown, Delaware. Both operations are merged into Delmarva Oil and additional storage facilities are added at SMO plant locations to support customer demand.

The company also announces a new Pension Plan at the employees' summer picnic, giving team members both a Pension Plan and a Profit Sharing Plan to support their retirement.

1975

The year begins with the acquisition of BP-La Plata Oil Company, followed by the purchase of Quality Oil, U.S. Oil, and Oil Holdings, Inc., all of which are merged into Delmarva Oil.

In March, SMO diversifies further by acquiring Educational Design Associates, a developer and manufacturer of educational toys. After attempts at nationwide marketing, the venture proves unprofitable and is discontinued in 1977.

During this period, the company also creates two new departments. The Management Fee operation is introduced to market motor fuels through a commission plan, while the newly formed Personnel Department is established to better support employees and meet growing regulatory requirements.

1976

SMO, Inc. celebrates its 50th anniversary, entering its next fifty years with continued optimism.

1977

SMO acquires Dean L. Sharrar of Salisbury, Maryland. The operation, along with the BP brand, is merged into the company's water terminal facilities in Salisbury.

1978

With centralized administration and decentralized profit centers in place, the company introduces new telecommunication capabilities. This system provides all major operating units with instant access to information, improving customer service and daily operations.

1979

Delmarva Tires relocates to new, modern facilities with a stronger focus on retail merchandising.

In early spring, the nation faces another severe energy crisis. This time, Americans recognize the long-term implications. A wave of new federal regulations and interventions follows, creating additional challenges for both customers and the company.

In November, SMO opens its first convenience store on Route 50 in Annapolis. Its early success highlights new opportunities in the retail space and leads to the introduction of the Dash In Food Stores.

1980

The effects of the 1973 and 1979-80 energy crises are now fully felt across the country. Energy conservation becomes widely recognized as a long-term priority, and fuel services enter a more mature stage of their product lifecycle.

1981

On January 20, federal regulatory controls shift, triggering major changes across the petroleum industry. The early 1980s quickly emerge as a period of "survival of the fittest," but SMO is well prepared. Strong leadership, financial stability, and a capable workforce position the company to pursue new opportunities created by these transitions.

On May 1, SMO opens its first full-size Dash In Food Store on Route 198 in Laurel. Continuing the company's tradition of leadership, it becomes the first convenience store in Maryland to offer an in-store foodservice program featuring fried chicken and potato wedges. Its design also informs the prototype developed the following year and used in future Dash In locations.

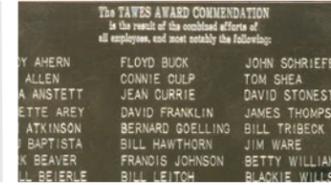
1984

SMO expands its Corporate Headquarters to support long-term growth and new operational needs. The company also installs an upgraded computer system that offers a broader range of programs and more user-friendly data access.

By this time, energy prices have softened, the economy is strong, and new opportunities continue to emerge. However, additional environmental regulations are introduced that will further affect the industry. Recognizing the importance of these changes, the company moves quickly to meet all requirements.

1986–1999

Dawn of Convenience Retailing



1986

SMO marks its 60th anniversary as energy prices fall and the company undergoes a major restructuring. **A new holding company – The Wills Group, Inc. – is created, and divisions are reorganized into subsidiary corporations.** Motor Fuels becomes SMO, Inc.; Convenience Stores becomes Dash In Food Stores, Inc.; and Heating Fuels becomes Delmarva Oil, Inc. on the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland Oil, Inc. on the Western Shore.

In June, Delmarva Oil acquires the assets and customer accounts of Housewarmers, Inc., merging them into existing operations.

The company also makes the difficult decision to sell its remaining Partco operations. Combined with the previous year's closure of Delmarva Tires, this move formally ends SMO's involvement in the automotive aftermarket business.

1987

December is marked by a flurry of acquisitions. On December 15, Delmarva Oil acquires Cavalier Energy Company, a fuel oil marketer in Salisbury. Two weeks later, on December 29, the company acquires Eastern Shore Oil, adding 35 motor fuel outlets, 10 convenience store facilities, and plant locations in Cambridge, Chance, Crisfield, and Easton, Maryland. Three major suppliers – Amoco, Exxon, and Phillips – agree to continue supplying these outlets. These additions strengthen the company's position as one of the leading motor fuel marketers on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Wills Group receives the Tawes Award for a Clean Environment for its "outstanding service and highly professional response in helping to prevent oil spills," with the proclamation noting that the company "exemplified what it means to be a responsible wholesale distributor and a good neighbor in the community."

1988

President J. Blacklock "Blackie" Wills Sr. retires but remains Chairman of the Board for the next ten years. **He is succeeded as president by J. Blacklock "Lock" Wills Jr.**

1991

Wills Group welcomes CITGO as an additional motor fuel supplier for markets on Maryland's Eastern Shore and select locations in Southern Maryland.

The company also introduces a Price Protection Guarantee for home heating oil customers.

1993

The SMO Motor Fuels team identifies an opportunity to acquire 20 new retailer outlets – representing more than 17 million gallons of new gasoline business. The group includes the company's first retailers in Northern Virginia and in Montgomery, Frederick, and Carroll counties. **This acquisition marks the largest single-year increase in fuel product sales in the company's history and strengthens its position as the region's leading independent marketer.**

In September, Southern Maryland Oil acquires Southern States' fuel customers in Southern Maryland and integrates them into existing operations. The company also becomes a branded dealer for "Super Gold" diesel and Southern States lubricants, giving customers access to a broader range of products.

1994

Wills Group acquires Amoco's Eastern Shore outlets in Cambridge, Ocean City, and Salisbury, Maryland.

That same year, **Delmarva Oil Service Technicians achieve another milestone as the company becomes the first company in Maryland to receive PMAA's National Oil Heat Certification.** Six technicians meet the training and experience requirements and pass the advanced certification exam, earning Gold Certificates. The company shares this achievement with customers as a point of pride in the service team.

1995

Wills Group completes a major technology upgrade, transitioning from mainframe and custom software systems to networked personal computers and specialized software packages. A new office automation system links all users for electronic messaging, and laptop computers give managers full system access. E-mail improves communication across the company and supports faster, more collaborative problem solving.

At year's end, the company introduces a new 401(k) retirement plan feature, expanding employees' ability to save for a secure retirement.

1996

January marks the company's 70th anniversary, celebrated with commemorative calendars, toy trucks, and events that welcomed many retirees. The celebration culminates in April with a company-wide gathering at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport Marriott.

In July, Delmarva Oil introduces a new set of Service Contracts featuring Loyalty Credits and a Four-Hour Emergency Service Guarantee. These additions reward long-time customers and strengthen Delmarva Oil's service advantage.

Later in the year, Wills Group sells the Little Sue Food Stores in Tidewater.

1998

Delmarva Oil expands into bulk propane distribution within its service area, investing in new equipment and vehicles to support the effort. The team begins by serving existing Delmarva Oil customers, then quickly attracts new propane customers across the region. The program proves so successful that additional vehicles are added in the Easton market the following year.

2000–2016 Expansion

2000

Wills Group approaches its 75th year with continued momentum. **The company strengthens its presence in the Mid-Atlantic by acquiring 137 Texaco- and Shell-branded motor fuel locations**, extending its network from Southern Maryland to the Baltimore region and Wilmington, Delaware.

2001

Wills Group and SMO Motor Fuels launch the Retailer Excellence Program (REP), offering franchisees a suite of tools to help drive sales and strengthen their businesses. The program quickly grows and becomes recognized as an industry first among fuel wholesalers.

2002

On April 28, a tornado devastates downtown La Plata, destroying the Oak Avenue Dash In. Focused on renewal, the company rebuilds the site as a next-generation Dash In prototype, which would open on April 17th the following year. The new design reflects customers' desire for convenience and a wider range of product choices.

2003

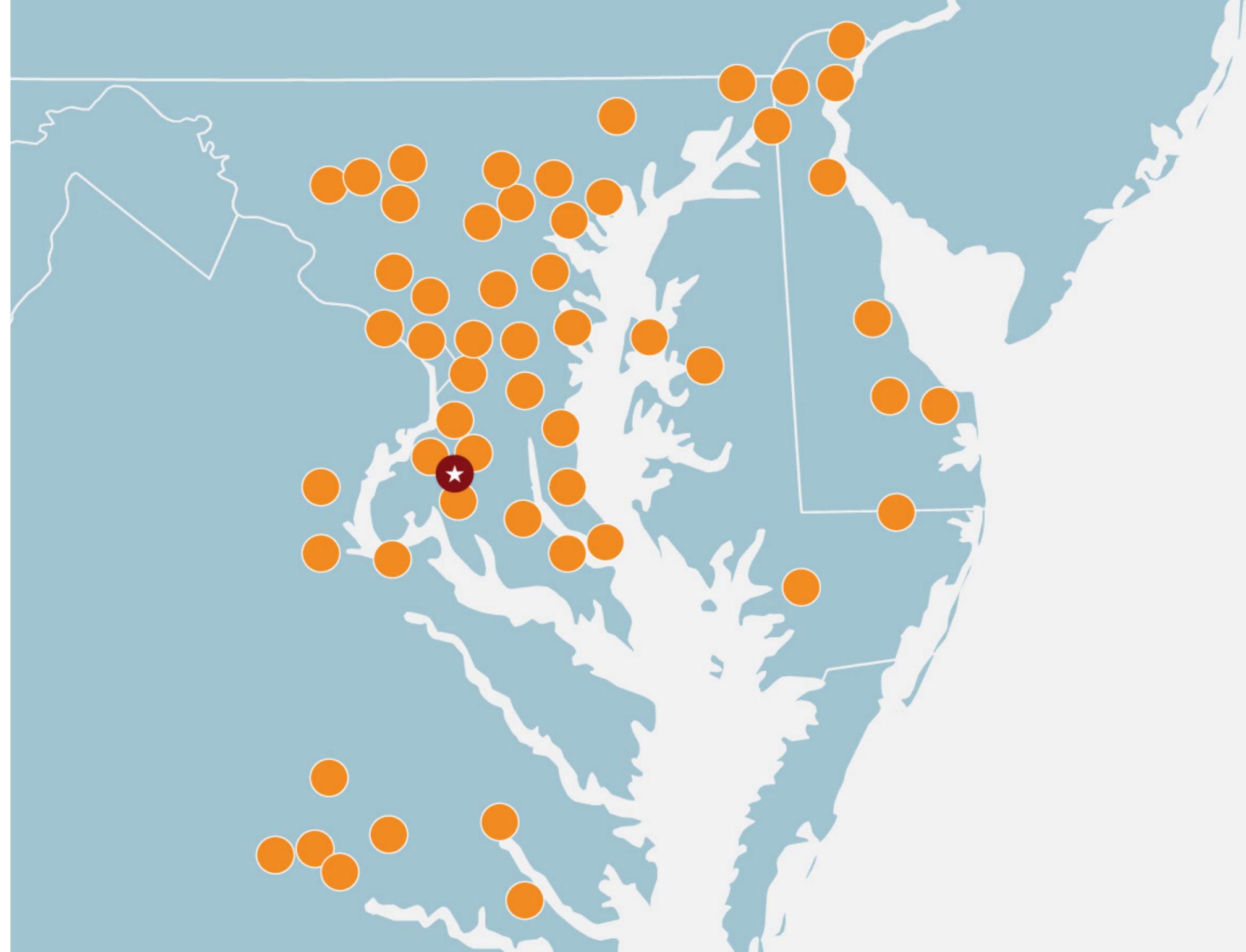
Southern Maryland Oil and Delmarva Oil introduce an Above Ground Tank Warranty program – an industry first – offering AST testing and replacement features that give peace of mind to home heating customers.

In September, Southern Maryland Oil opens the Shymansky Institute at the La Plata Plant, named in honor of Joe Shymansky, SMO's first Service Manager. Originally opened in 1988 as the company's technical training center, the Institute provides 800 hours of internal training each year and partners with HVAC manufacturers, service organizations, and the College of Southern Maryland. The expanded, state-of-the-art facility marks another first for the region.

2004

Wills Group acquires 58 Texaco- and Shell-branded properties from Motiva in the Richmond and Tidewater, Virginia, markets, enabling entry into adjacent regions. The company also acquires 13 outlets following Exxon's withdrawal from the Tidewater market. Together, these actions solidify Wills Group as the leading wholesale marketer in the Mid-Atlantic.

As the year ends, Southern Maryland Oil launches a new propane marketing initiative in Southern Maryland. Designed to broaden the company's fuel offerings, the effort leverages the successful Build-with-Oil program and aims to increase share in the region's growing new-home market.



2000–2016 Expansion continued



2005

In August, Wills Group acquires the heating fuel business of the Gott Company in Calvert County, expanding its propane footprint in Southern Maryland and accelerating its broader propane marketing strategy.

That same year, **the Beantown Dash In in Waldorf, Maryland, becomes the brand's first franchise location** – another regional first for Dash In.

Wills Group receives the Leading Edge Award for its collaboration with the College of Southern Maryland's Partnership in Education Award program. The partnership provides students access to the Shymansky Institute and enhances our training curriculum for Service Technicians.

2006

The Splash In Car Wash brand is introduced at three sites in the Wilmington, Delaware market. Over the next 14 years, it grows into one of the largest car wash chains in the Mid-Atlantic, with 47 facilities across three states.

2009

In July, **Wills Group announces the newly formed Potomac Energy Holdings (PEH), a joint venture with Motiva Enterprises.** As part of the venture, the company acquires business assets in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, including 74 Shell-brand retail locations across Prince George's, Montgomery, Frederick, and Howard counties in Maryland.

In October, the company introduces a new concept called "Dash In Sales Royalty" at the store on Pennsylvania Avenue and Union Street in Wilmington, Delaware. The model represents an evolution in franchising for Dash In and becomes a key component of our dealer support programs.

2010

On February 14, the company mourns the passing of former president Blackie Wills, whose business acumen and personal warmth will long be remembered.

Early in the year, Chevron Texaco announces it will no longer market gasoline in the Eastern United States. In response, Wills Group ends its 84-year representation of the Texaco brand in June. Despite this shift, the company continues its strong relationships with quality fuel brands, including Shell, Exxon, and CITGO.

On July 28, Wills Group acquires 16 Exxon dealer properties in the Wilmington and Newark, Delaware, markets from Southside Oil Company. The locations are merged into the SMO Motor Fuels dealer network.

In October, the company exits the petroleum transport business, selling its transport fleet to Kenan and contracting the firm to manage hauling from the Fairfax, Baltimore, and Salisbury supply terminals.

Later in the year, Southern Maryland Oil and Delmarva Oil undergo a brand refresh. With both companies expanding beyond their geographic namesakes and broadening their offerings beyond oil to propane and HVAC services, they adopt new acronyms — SMO and DMO — and operate jointly as SMO Energy.

As part of the refresh, the company upgrades its websites and launches another industry first: an e-commerce portal that allows customers to schedule services and manage their accounts online.

2011

Wills Group acquires four MACS' Exxon stores in Charles County, Maryland, expanding its retail presence in Southern Maryland.

2012

In August, Wills Group acquires the heating fuel business of Besche Oil in Waldorf, strengthening SMO's footprint in Charles, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties. The acquisition broadens SMO Energy's reach and adds HVAC services to its offerings.

2013

Wills Group sells its DMO subsidiary, along with select retail stations in Tidewater, Virginia, as the company exits that market.

That same year, SMO Energy introduces "Same Day Delivery" for will-call customers — another first for the company. The will-call segment, once a small share of heating oil volume, had grown significantly since 2008 as more customers chose to manage their own tank reserves amid rising heating oil prices. Within the program's first two years, SMO doubles its will-call volume, reflecting the strong response to the new service.

2014

Wills Group acquires the Hein Brothers heating fuel business in Glen Burnie, expanding its market share in northern Anne Arundel County and adding the logistical capability to grow further into the Baltimore metropolitan area.

Dash In unveils its new Neighborhood Concept with the opening of the Fairway Village store in St. Charles, Maryland. The design blends a modern look with a hometown feel and features a self-serve Grill Bar, Made-To-Order sandwiches, gourmet coffee, and state-of-the-art digital marketing throughout the store.



2000–2016 Expansion continued

2015

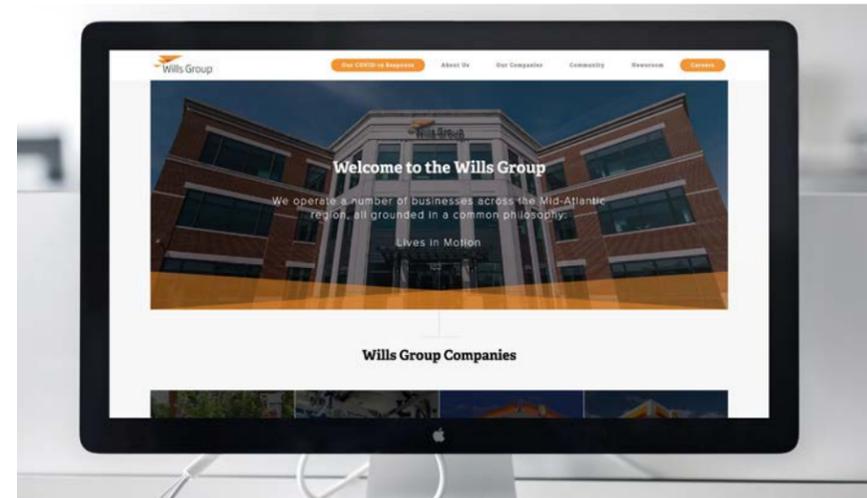
Wills Group introduces a formal maternity and paternity leave program, continuing its tradition of being a leader in employee benefits.

2016

Wills Group completes a major corporate brand refresh, introducing a **new brand identity and a renewed purpose for the decade ahead: *Lives in Motion***. The refresh strengthens the company's employer brand, supporting ongoing employee recruitment efforts and professional development, and deepens the focus on how leadership growth fuels the company's future.

As part of this effort, the company partners with an outside firm to deliver a rigorous leadership development program for high-potential employees. The program – the first of its kind at Wills Group – equips teams with a growth mindset and the agility needed to navigate changing business dynamics.

The refresh also expands the company's commitment to Community Engagement, including the creation of the Blackie Wills Community Leadership Fund. Wills Group renews its Customer Focus as well, working to become the preferred choice for employees, customers, and business partners.



PREVIOUS LOGO



NEW LOGO

2017–2025 New Beginnings

2017

Dash In breaks ground on its first 5,600-square-foot large-format prototype at Bridgewood Crossing in Midlothian, Virginia. The all-new store is designed to feature a central kitchen and inspire a new kind of guest experience with customer-friendly innovations that establishes a renewed direction for future Dash In locations.

2018

Wills Group is named Philanthropist of the Year by Chesapeake Charities, recognizing the company's long-standing stewardship and support for local communities.

The company also hosts the inaugural Blackie Wills Golf Classic and Gala in honor of J. Blacklock (Blackie) Wills, Sr. The event quickly becomes an important source of support for the Blackie Wills Community Leadership Fund, which now distributes millions of dollars in charitable donations to regional nonprofits.

Wills Group grows its regional presence through the acquisition of Tevis Oil, Inc., which expands SMO's asset base in Carroll County, Maryland and Southern Pennsylvania.

2019

After more than 56 years, Wills Group moves into new corporate headquarters. **In May, the company makes the difficult decision to sell SMO Energy to Griffith Energy Services,** sharpening the focus on Dash In, Splash In ECO Car Wash, and SMO Motor Fuels as the key engines for future growth.

Retail innovation continues with the **opening of the first Splash In ECO Car Wash tunnel in Clinton, Maryland.** The location also introduces the company's first monthly membership program for a car wash, marking a new step in customer loyalty.

In June, Wills Group welcomes employees, partners, and community members to the new headquarters in La Plata. The event theme, "Here for Good," celebrates the company's commitment to Southern Maryland and its expanding community engagement efforts across the Mid-Atlantic.

2020

A global pandemic reshapes daily life. Wills Group steps up in unprecedented ways to care for, listen to, and support employees and communities through the uncertainty. The company moves quickly to help employees transition to remote work and collaborates throughout the year to maintain health, well-being, and connection.

Wills Group hosts virtual events and town halls to keep team informed and together. The company also affirms its commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, promising that its workforce reflects the diverse communities it serves and supporting equitable opportunities for belonging at the Wills Group. By elevating employee voices, the company strengthens its ability to deliver products, services, and experiences that exceed customer expectations.

Community engagement grows significantly during the year. Wills Group provides \$500,000 in unrestricted grants to four regional food banks and three

Southern Maryland nonprofit organizations. Dash In launches Lift Up, offering free breakfast sandwiches to healthcare professionals and first responders. Customers also send Snack-O-Grams – snacks or beverages paired with personal messages – resulting in 2,500 deliveries to 10 healthcare organizations and fire departments across Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia.

Wills Group partners with Lifestyles of Maryland, the Maryland Food Bank, the Maryland Department of Transportation, and local officials to host a mobile food bank at headquarters. Families drive through the parking lot to receive food donations in a fully contactless environment.

The Washington Business Journal recognizes Wills Group's efforts, ranking the company 11th on its Corporate Philanthropy List.



2017–2025 New Beginnings continued



2021

Wills Group celebrates 95 years. With the pandemic still a concern, the company hosts virtual events throughout the year to stay connected and recognize employees. At a February town hall, Wills Group reaffirms its Philosophy and Values, reinforcing the culture and heritage that guide the organization. The year-long celebration concludes with the fifth annual Blackie Wills Golf Classic at Turf Valley Golf Resort.

In March, **Chairman, President, and CEO J. Blacklock “Lock” Wills Jr. retires and becomes Executive Chairman. He is succeeded by Julian B. “Blackie” Wills III as President and Chief Operating Officer.**

CStore Decisions recognizes Dash In for excellence in Food Service, honoring the brand’s continued menu innovation during the pandemic, including freshly made sandwiches, quesadillas, wraps, and fish. Wills Group also deepens its community engagement commitment, providing another \$500,000 in grants to regional food banks and launching a new focus on *Enhancing Outdoor Spaces*, beginning with a project at the Edgewater Library in Maryland.

2022

Wills Group earns certification as a Great Place to Work®, reflecting the company’s strong culture and comprehensive wellness and benefits program.

In February, SMO acquires six mini truck stop fuel and convenience locations from MAPCO along the Virginia I-95 corridor and in Warrenton, Virginia. The acquisition expands SMO’s presence in the truck diesel market, bringing its retail network to 277 operated locations across the Mid-Atlantic.

Later in the year, employees and business partners gather at the Gaylord National Resort in Oxon Hill, Maryland to celebrate 95 years of success – an event delayed one year due to the pandemic. The celebration also honors Lock Wills and his many years of leadership as president and CEO.

Wills Group’s community engagement efforts continue to grow with the formal re-launch of *Reimagining Outdoor Spaces*. In July, the company completes its first park project – Phoenix Run Park in La Plata, Maryland – investing

more than \$130,000 to transform the space. Supported by the local community and hundreds of volunteer hours from employees, the park now features art-inspired basketball courts, walking paths, landscaping, and seating areas that create a vibrant gathering place for families.

In August, Wills Group acquires two Blue Hen Car Wash sites along the I-95 corridor in Delaware, expanding the Splash In ECO Car Wash network to 51 sites.

2023

Dash In unveils its all-new branding and a 5,600-square-foot next-generation store in Loudoun County, Virginia, debuting a fully reimagined experience and menu. The elevated concept features a concierge, chef-inspired fresh food, an extensive beverage program, and welcoming indoor and outdoor seating.

Splash In ECO Car Wash is also re-branded with a complementary water drop logo, reflecting its commitment to a guest-focused, eco-friendly experience. The refreshed identity supports the growth of independent tunnel washes, membership value packs, and environmentally conscious products. Splash In also opens its first 95-foot tunnel car wash on Crain Highway in La Plata, Maryland.

Amid this momentum, Dash In earns a place – for the first time – on *Fortune’s Best Workplaces in Retail* list.

In June, Wills Group hosts its first Community Engagement Roundtable at headquarters in La Plata, Maryland, bringing together community partners and team members for meaningful conversations about impact, progress, and collaboration.

In August, **President and COO, Julian B. “Blackie” Wills III, is announced as President and Chief Executive Officer.** The announcement caps two years of growth across Wills Group as it continues to invest and grow its retail line of businesses, including Dash In, Splash In ECO Car Wash, and SMO Motor Fuels; and expands on its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and community and employee engagement.



2017–2025 New Beginnings continued



2024

Wills Group and Splash In ECO Car Wash launch the company's third community engagement initiative, *Advancing Waterways and Watersheds*, committing to protect and restore essential waterways. **The program is announced at the 8th annual Blackie Wills Golf Classic with a \$50,000 grant to Alliance for Chesapeake Bay.**

Dash In continues expanding its next-generation store concept, opening a new location in Indian Head, Maryland – a longstanding food desert. The opening also marks the relaunch of Dash In Rewards, a simplified loyalty program offering discounts on fuel, car washes, and tailored menu items.

The Dash In Rewards app earns recognition from the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences in the Apps & Software – Shopping & Retail category at the 28th Annual Webby Awards. Webby Awards President Claire Graves notes: *"Honorees like Dash In are setting the standard for innovation and creativity on the Internet. It is an incredible achievement to be acknowledged among the best from the 13,000 projects we reviewed this year."*

Later in the year, Dash In is nominated for the best Foodvenience Store in the world by Global Convenience Store Focus. Dash In finishes third overall in the competition and is ranked first in North America.

2025

As Wills Group enters a period of accelerated growth, the company reaffirms its purpose – *Lives in Motion* – and its core values: *Passion, Integrity, Growth, Diversity, Humility, Accountability, and Courage.*

The company's vision – *to push the limits of service excellence one interaction at a time* – and its mission – *to redefine convenience by elevating the experience* – continue to guide culture and shape future growth.

Dash In completes its next-generation rebrand across all Mid-Atlantic locations, transitioning from the former red-and-white "circle D" identity to a modern, colorful location-marker logo paired with chef-inspired menu offerings and an elevated guest experience.

In August, Splash In adds its sixth tunnel car wash and first 110-foot tunnel to the network in Leonardtown, Maryland.

Dash In also announces its expansion into North Carolina, with the first locations set to open in 2026. In October, the company breaks ground on its first North Carolina store in Concord, located off Interstate 85 near Concord Mills.

This wave of innovation and expansion marks a pivotal moment for Wills Group and its family of companies – positioning Dash In and Splash In ECO Car Wash to lead the future of convenience retail.

2026

Wills Group marks a major milestone: 100 years in business. Since its founding in 1926, the company has grown from a regional energy provider into a multi-brand retail, real estate and fuels organization serving communities across the Mid-Atlantic and beyond.

In January, Julian (Blackie) Wills is elected Chairman of the Board of Wills Group, ensuring that Wills Group will continue to grow and prosper.

Wills Group

Closing Note from President and CEO, Julian (Blackie) Wills, III

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone of 100 years, what stands out is not only our growth, but the spirit of community, service, and innovation that defines us. Every achievement reflects the dedication and resilience of our people, partners, guests, and neighbors – all of whom embody our values and help shape our future.

As we look to the next century, we do so together: building relationships, embracing change, championing new ideas, and strengthening our commitment to making a difference in every community we serve.

The years ahead inspire us to dream bigger, act boldly, and continue moving lives forward – making every interaction more rewarding. On behalf of the entire Wills Group family, thank you for being part of our journey. Here's to the next century.

Julian (Blackie) Wills, III
President, CEO, and
Chairman of Wills Group

Wills Group

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