

REYNOLDS

The Catherine B.
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Program in Social
Entrepreneurship

NYU Reynolds Program in Social Entrepreneurship 2008 – 2009 “Social Entrepreneurship in the 21st Century” Speaker Series

John Mackey

Chairman & CEO, Whole Foods Market



John Mackey has devoted the better part of his 50 years to the seemingly friendly and peace-loving world of selling natural foods. As Chairman and CEO of Whole Foods Market, Inc. he has built a \$5.6 billion (2006 figures) Fortune 500 company that is now one of the top 12 supermarket companies in America. He has out-manuevered every other entrant into the natural foods marketplace, eventually purchasing most of them. No wonder *Business Week* entitled its 1998 profile of Mackey: “Peace, love, and the bottom line.”

In 1978, at the age of 25, Mackey was bitten by the entrepreneurial bug. Borrowing \$10,000 from his father and raising the first few thousand of what would eventually become hundreds of millions of dollars in equity investments, he co-founded Safer Way Natural Foods with his girlfriend Renee Lawson. Two years later, in 1980, he and Renee teamed up with two other young entrepreneurs to create Whole Foods Market, a 10,000 square foot store on Lamar Boulevard in Austin.

With his fierce sense of competition, strong belief in Libertarian and free market principles, staunch support for a decentralized and team-based structure, keen understanding of consumer trends and endless supply of innovative ideas, Mackey gradually built Whole Foods Market into a powerhouse. By the end of 2006, the global organic foods industry was more than \$40 billion in size, a development Mackey sees as good for all concerned, especially Planet Earth. Whole Foods Market now has 272 stores in the US, Canada, and the UK. The goal is to be a \$12 billion company by 2010.