

Valley Natural Foods Board Bios

Mike Jensen

Savage, MN

Member-Owner since 2012

Engineering Manager, Xcel Energy

Mike is a believer in healthy eating leads to healthy living. If you see him at the Co-op, he is either chasing his daughters or reading labels. On the board, Mike currently serves as the Secretary keeping meeting notes and helping with agenda planning. He brings his passion for local, slow food to discussions around how the Co-op can improve its relationships with members and communities. With a background in engineering, Mike wants details! He is equally engaged in writing policy documents, reviewing financial analyses and creating strategic plans.

Mike understands the challenges and changes happening within grocery store and food industries. It is paramount to stay true to the Co-op FRESH values when outside forces push the cheaper and bigger is always better model. The Co-op is here to enable members to educate each other to live healthier, happier lives.

Relevant Skills

Better communication is a way to improve most any business or group. Mike finds success in establishing clear expectations through frequent and detailed communication. Mike uses his engineering background and analytical approach to breakdown problems into easy to handle parts. His knowledge of food and food issues allows him to understand impact to Co-op strategic plans and remain relevant.

DeAnne Shea

Prior Lake, MN

Member-Owner since 2003

Volunteer and serve on several ministries and organizations within my church and community

DeAnne believes that the two most important issues facing VNF over the next five years are competition and ensuring our commitment to the cooperative model and mission while educating shoppers and telling our story. Competition and changing shopping patterns are a reality that VNF and the board have been facing and strategically planning for and must continue to do so. With the influx of grocery stores in the south metro area and broader twin cities, as well as the continuing surge of online shopping, VNF will have to continue to look for strategies to stay ahead of the competition and differentiate ourselves.

VNF's greatest strength is our cooperative model and our personal relationships with farmers, our community and our member owners and shoppers. This is what differentiates us from the competition. VNF must stay aligned to its mission and cooperative values. We need to continue

educating our shoppers and member owners about our cooperative differences and strengths and continue sharing our story of what it means to be a cooperative. It is our strength as a member owned cooperative and staying true to our mission and values that will help us thru the competition.

During her time on the board, DeAnne has gained the experience and understanding of how the board processes operate using the policy governance model. She has several years of management purchasing and contracts experience, as well as teaching experience. She's served in leadership roles on a variety of committees. As a 15-year member of VNF, DeAnne is committed to the success of VNF and support the mission and cooperative values of VNF.

Amy Simpson

Member-Owner Since 2013

Apple Valley, MN

Chief of Staff, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota

The building expansion brings exciting opportunities for Valley Natural Foods and this large undertaking shows the co-op's commitment to serving the local community. The southern suburbs are rapidly expanding and Valley Natural needs to position itself to serve a larger number of people wanting local and organic food. With suburban growth comes competition. Valley Natural will need to make sure prices are in line with competitors and provide an experience for shoppers they cannot find elsewhere. Secondly, technology is rapidly changing retail. Valley Natural will need to decide how it will address changes in grocery experiences such as food delivery, rapid pick-up, and offering prepared meals. Clearly defining and following the mission (who are we and what do we do well?) needs to be a priority in order to keep members committed and attract new members to join a truly exceptional community and shopping experience.

Serving on the board will allow me to utilize the leadership skills I have gained from my experience overseeing the daily operations of a large department at the University of Minnesota. I am particularly skilled in budget oversight and cost reductions, resulting in yearly positive balances that make possible new programming and initiatives. Equally important, I am highly skilled in organizational development and successfully restructured the department's administrative function, which resulted in improved efficiencies and increased employee morale by addressing workload inequities. On a personal note, I am a very easygoing individual and enjoy meeting new people and finding the positive in everything I do.

Gary Sankary

Member-Owner Since 2007

Apple Valley, MN

Director of Retail Industry Solutions for ESRI

My retail career started in my father's local business when I was 10. Since that time, I've had the opportunity to work with small retailers all the way up to the largest retailer companies in the

World. From this experience I strongly believe that locally owned and operated business are one of the foundations of healthy, sustainable communities. Valley Natural Foods represents the best of community-based business because the coop ownership model enables members of the community to actively participate and engage in the in direction and mission of the organization. This is what attracted me to becoming a member many years ago and it's why I continue to shop at Valley.

In May I was graciously asked by the board to fill in for a vacancy. In my short tenure I've come to appreciate the challenges faced by the organization as well as to better understand a bit how strong leadership has made this organization successful. The retail industry in a bit of a disruption. New competition and market pressures are changing the way customers interact with retailers. In my professional role I have the opportunity to work with many retailers around the world to use tools and data to mitigate the impact of this disruption. I feel strongly that I have a great deal to offer from my own experience and I've enjoyed working with the board and wish to continue to do so.

The number one issue that I see for our coop is to return the business to positive sales growth. Our market has changed, and our sales have been impacted. New competitors have entered the market which has changed how our customers shop. We have also seen shifting demographics in Dakota county, this is something we need to understand and accommodate in our merchandising and marketing strategies. I strongly believe we are taking the right steps by expanding the building. This will give the coop the opportunity to expand our best performing businesses and create a more compelling space for our customers. We must continue to do more.

I love what Valley does in the community to support healthy lifestyles and provide products that help our owners and customers live their values. But to continue to do this we have to be successful and as a retailer, success is measured by growth. We've had some challenging years recently, I want to see the coop return to sustained growth.

The other issue that I think we need to focus on, and this goes hand in hand with the previous, is growing our customer base, both owner and non-owner customers. We have already implemented new engagement tactics; our community dinner and our farm tours for example. We need to continue to do more to keep our current market share while attracting new families to Valley. This is exactly how we will defuse the impact of our competition in our market.

I have over 40 years of experience in the retail industry. From stocking my Dad's when I was a kid, to developing and implementing merchandising strategies for Target to my current role helping retailers use geographic data to better understand their stores and their markets. I have a strong understanding of retail analysis, many of the challenges I've been exposed too in my short time on the board are exactly the sorts of issues I help my current clients with and are issues I worked on with Target.

Some of the areas of focus I have in my background are:

Merchandising and assortment planning: What are the right products for a store?

Store Space Planning: Working with store planograms (where to put specific products to maximize turnover and sales) and store category plans to optimize shopping experience and store operations.

Market Analysis: Leveraging tools to better understand the market we operate in- competitive analysis, customer analysis, marketing opportunities and market penetration.

In addition to these I've also spent many years in front line store operations, from staffing to stocking and have a good understanding of how a successful store operates.

Mark Mosiniak

Member-Owner since 2008

Apple Valley, MN

Retail Coach at Spring

Mark has served on the Valley Natural Foods Board of Directors since 2009. He has a strong background in retail, bringing over 25 years of work experience to the board. He has a passion for healthy living and helping others. He seeks reelection to continue to serve the community by providing direction and guidance to fulfill the long-range goals of our co-op. As a seasoned board director, he's familiar with these goals.

When it comes to important issues, Mark focuses on two priorities. The first issue involves planning. He understands the board's need to identify and implement a strategic plan for growth. This will ensure Valley Natural Foods remains viable among increased competition in the Twin Cities market. Second, Mark understands the connection between owners and community involvement. It improves visibility so others can experience how the co-op impacts the greater community.

Mark served as a consultant to the Valley Natural Foods Board of Directors for 2 years and is currently serving as an elected board director. He has over 25 years of experience across a variety of disciplines in the retail industry with proven qualifications in strategic planning, merchandising, marketing and business development. Mark is known as a clear, dynamic, and enthusiastic communicator capable of connecting with a diverse audience.

Sarah William Johansson

Prior Lake, MN

Member-Owner since 2013

Vice-President, New Markets and Innovation

Sarah holds dear the famous Hippocrates' adage "Let your food be thy medicine". A firm believer of the authentic organic food movement the way only a coop can do, she currently serves Valley Coop as a board of director and treasurer. She is excited about the new frontiers for our coop while keeping a firm eye on competition in our market. She insists with passion on spreading our coop's F.R.E.S.H values in our local community, supporting our local farmers and preserving the environment for future generations through sustainable practices

Sarah clearly sees the headwinds of the dynamic market in our local area. With competition coming in fast and furious, Sarah believes that now more than ever our coop needs to emphasize on what makes us special – our F.R.E.S.H values and our uncompromising customer service. Growth, in meaningful and fiscally responsible ways, is critical to our success. Member engagement and retention is equally important to keep our coop relevant for our community and coming generations

Sarah has been honored to serve as a board director and treasurer for three years for Valley Natural Foods. Her extensive eighteen years of experience in making growth seeking business succeed via organic or acquired growth in Healthcare, Financial, Manufacturing and Airline industries are directly relevant to the current needs and important issues of the coop.

Kate Ward

Member-Owner Since 2016
Apple Valley, MN
Clinical Content Specialist

Kate holds a BS in BioBehavioral Health, an MPH in Health Behavior and Health Education, and is a Certified Health Education Specialist. She's worked extensively with international and multi-community non-profits critical to food access, including the SPOON Foundation and the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition. Kate is passionate about sustaining and growing the critical role Valley Natural Foods plays in the surrounding community to improve food access and to engage the community through service, education and empowerment.

Kate acknowledges that the co-op will need to gracefully navigate its store expansion while continuing to grow its fresh meats and bakehouse businesses, and community programs. She also understands the importance of the co-op to differentiate itself from other grocery competitors through better meeting the needs of the changing demographics of the surrounding communities.

Having served as an interim board member the past few months, Kate has learned more about the co-op. This has heightened her excitement and passion about what the co-op is doing and the direction it is going. In addition to her board experience, Kate brings vital work experience and expertise to the board, including strategic planning, grant writing, copywriting, copyediting, multimedia communication, volunteer coordination, qualitative research, community-based participatory research, and adult education. Kate wants to use these skills, in partnership with

co-op staff, owners, and the community, to better understand the needs of the Valley Natural Foods ownership and community, improve engagement, and grow the co-op's impact.