



# Valley NATURAL FOODS™

## 2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION



Valley NATURAL  
FOODS

EVERYONE WELCOME

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Voting Information

Member-Owner Annual Meeting (Virtual)

Tuesday, Sept. 29, 5:00 pm

Candidate Statements



# VOTING INFORMATION

## WHO CAN VOTE?

All Valley Natural Foods Member-Owners are eligible to vote (one vote per membership).

## HOW TO VOTE

**Voting is available both electronically or by paper ballot, beginning September 1.**

### **Electronic Ballots:**

Member-Owners were emailed a link for electronic voting. If you did not receive a MyDirectVote email, please contact or visit customer service, 952-891-1212, ext. 221.

### **Paper Ballots:**

Paper ballots are available in-store at customer service. A ballot box is provided in designated voting area.

**The voting period concludes at 3:00 pm on Tuesday, September 29**

# VOTE

## SEPTEMBER 1 - SEPTEMBER 29

# ANNUAL MEETING

## 2020 VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, September 29, 5:00 pm

The annual meeting is open to Member-Owners who RSVP in advance.

### TO RSVP:

Visit: [www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting/](http://www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting/)

### DETAILS FOR ATTENDING

#### **RSVP must be made in advance.**

A meeting link will be emailed to Member-Owners who RSVP'd for the virtual meeting. A password will be emailed out on the day of event.

All Member-Owners who RSVP in advance and attend the virtual meeting will receive a \$10 Valley Natural Foods coupon.

# RSVP

[www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting](http://www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting)



# BOARD CANDIDATES

## WE ASKED EACH CANDIDATE TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Why are you interested in serving on Valley Natural Foods' board?
2. What do you believe are two of the most important issues facing Valley Natural Foods over the next five years?
3. Please summarize the skills and experience you bring and the contributions you hope to make, as a Valley Natural Foods board member.

*Note: Candidate statement submissions are not edited.*

## VOTING GUIDELINES

Vote for two candidates.

The two candidates who receive the highest number of votes will each be seated a three-year term.

Member-Owner number, name and signature is required for both electronic or paper ballots to be valid.



# RAJESH APPAT

Vice President of Business and Technology Development

POLAR SEMICONDUCTOR

Owner

CWR CONSULTING



- 1.** a) I believe in VNF's vision of well being sustainable food/living for all.  
b) To take VNF to the next level - growth, educating new customers on better choices, adding more product lines at reasonable costs.
- 2.** a) Competition from other grocery chains, digital strategy and community outreach.  
b) Managing Costs and Supply chain of the sustainable vendors.
- 3.** a) End-to-End business skills - growth, new product development and sourcing, operations and integrative marketing.  
b) 5+ years of consulting experience (CWR consulting) helping small businesses and dental practices grow and stay relevant.  
c) Continue to evolve VNF's vision and mission statements to meet future needs.  
d) Capitalize on new opportunities and maximize potential of VNF's executive management team.

# PETE BASSETT

National Sales Renegade

THOUSAND HILLS CATTLE CO.



- 1.** The reason I would like to serve on the VNF board:
  - \* I can bring a wealth of food industry knowledge and experience to our local cooperative.
  - \* It is important to have a growing and prosperous local food community that can help educate our young people as to where food truly comes from and how they can connect with food.
  - \* The grocery and food business are a dynamic industries with continues change. We need to insure VNF continues to be prosperous and a place for our member-owners to feel connected and confident in their cooperative.
  - \* I have been shopping at VNF for over 20 years bringing my children with me to "pick produce and eggs" A memory I would like more families to have experienced.
- 2.**
  1. Aggressive competition. One of the biggest challenges facing VNF and other Cooperatives is how to stay relevant and offer value to our members when they can purchase most of their organic and natural food products at much lower prices from Amazon and Costco.
  2. The need to increase member/owner value. Super Natural Food (Fresh Thyme) and specialty retailers (Trader Joe's) are moving into the market and are taking market share away from the local cooperatives. VNF will need to protect and gain market share through membership value.
- 3.** Proven leadership with high integrity, values, and principles with in the organic and natural food space for over 20 years in the US and abroad. The value for our members and future members will need to continue to increase as VNF feels the pressure from this ever changing dynamic retailing in this suburban market. I believe the more value we can offer to our member/owners the more they will support their coop.

# ELISE CHAMBERS

Mediator/Lawyer

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS



- 1.** I live for grocery shopping day. I love recipes and treats and good, real, sustainable, local, whole, organic food. I fell in love with the Minnetonka Lakewinds in high school when I became a vegetarian and I've been shopping at co-ops ever since. (That was over 20 years ago.) This is my community; you, Valley Natural, are my community. I've been thinking about applying for a co-op board for a long time now, but haven't felt like I had much to offer. Now I feel I do: I've got legal skills, some HR skills, and I'm a mom, a vegan, and a whole food, organic, sustainable champion. Now that we live here in Apple Valley, you are my weekly happy grocery shopping spot and I want to help you grow and thrive.
- 2.** I believe in the co-op movement with my whole heart. I know there are challenges in a co-op business model, too. Although I don't know much about Valley yet, from what I know about the natural food co-op movement, I think outreach - both in terms of partnerships with suppliers, and in terms of increasing membership - is one area that many co-ops face. I think another important issue facing Valley might be ensuring and expanding inclusivity.
- 3.** I'm a mediator so I'm good at helping people have hard conversations. I'm also really good at facilitating collaborative decision making processes. I've got the practicing lawyer thing, which is usually pretty helpful, and I'm a member of this community, along with my family. I'm pretty good at thinking up fundraising ideas, too. But people are my jam.

# JAMES CURRENS

Parish Administrator

CHURCH OF THE RISEN SAVIOR, BURNSVILLE



- 1.** I believe strongly in the mission and purpose of Valley Natural Foods, I am proud to be coop owner and want to do what I can help the coop in any way.
- 2.** Integration of on-line delivery and pick-up into the shopping experience to avoid being left behind by the Hy-Vee's and Amazons of the world and safety.
- 3.** As a current facility, finance and HR manager I would bring outside eyes that are accustomed to three areas that always benefit from extra opinions and knowledge.



# LEAH DARST

Naturalist - teaching people of all ages about the natural world



- 1.** As is likely obvious by my always-overflowing grocery cart, Valley Natural is my go-to shopping destination, and I've been a huge fan since discovering it in 2014. I've loved making connections with staff and have even enjoyed helping other customers when I can. (I'm not sure if it was my work uniform, the length of time I spend in the store, or my general positivity, but I've had multiple customers ask me about store products and I've been happy to help when I can!)  
I think it's important for board members to listen to the people they represent and help continue to offer products and services that reflect both the customers' priorities as well as uphold Valley Natural's priority for healthy and sustainable living, for both people and the natural environment. I'd love to be able to share my genuine love of sustainable living with more people and be able to help ensure Valley Natural provides the best products and services.
- 2.** Based on my own observations and conversations with staff, I believe the two most important short-term issues for Valley Natural are:
  - staff turnover (how we can keep quality employees to maintain amazing customer service and customer/staff satisfaction), and
  - waste reduction (including reducing single-use products and providing even more local products and plastic-free options while maintaining safety amidst a global pandemic).
- 3.** Every job and volunteer position I've held has been customer service-based, and nearly all with an environmental focus. I am enthusiastic and caring, passionate about sustainable living, and I love to listen to and make positive connections with people in order to find common ground. My background as an informal educator, at nature centers and the Minnesota Zoo, has allowed me to develop and share my knowledge and enthusiasm about the natural world and how our personal choices are deeply connected to not only our personal health, but the health of the planet. I love learning and finding ways we can all do better in everything we do. Valley Natural is already great, but hopefully I'd have a tiny part in helping make it even better.

# JOAN LONNQUIST

Retired

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT



- 1.** Strong interest and extensive research (self-directed) specific to foods, nutrition, and health coupled with the opportunity to contribute to furthering the co-op concept/model, services and outreach/communications provided to member-owners and customers as a way to ensure enduring impact on community health and wellness through foods.
- 2.**
  1. Continuous education and learning for the workforce and leadership specific to food integrity, quality, and safety to engender consumer trust and ensure a strong and resilient food system in addition to advancing community partnering programs and business community interactions to meet future consumer expectations and diverse nutritional needs.
  2. Ensuring member-owners are well informed. Designing and implementing an effective Board of Directors communications plan and information system for member-owners, including a strategic plan for the future and Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning (policy and guidance for continuing critical function in emergency situations) as a way to strengthen the Valley Community Food CO-OP.
- 3.** Federal Government service - held management and senior-level positions and have experience in preparing policy and guidance documents and strategic & program plans for fiscal year operating budgets. As a board member, I would hope to contribute to drafting policy documents, a communications plan, and developing a framework to build a five year strategic plan (with input from member-owners, staff, and community) that will shape and define the future vision for Valley Natural Foods.

# MARK MOSINIAK

*Incumbent*

National Sales Leader

HONEYWELL HOME PRODUCTS



1. I started volunteering at Valley Natural Foods because I felt strongly that my unique skills could benefit the Co-op and help us grow our business and have a positive impact on our community. I continue to volunteer with Valley because it feels good to know that my efforts matter and because I get to work alongside a dedicated team of professionals who enjoy exploring ideas that can help guide our Co-op's plans for the future while ensuring sound management of our resources.

I'm seeking re-election to the Board and willing to continue to invest my time and energy to pursue our mission of supporting the health and well-being of our community while strengthening our Co-op.

2. In this unpredictable time we find ourselves in today, there are many issues of importance we need to consider for the successful future of our Cooperative. With new challenges facing our Co-op and community each day it becomes increasingly easy to lose focus of our core values and mission and redirect our time and energy on in-the-moment issues that are popular on social networks, but have little to do with why we started this amazing Cooperative some 43 years ago.

The two biggest obstacles I see in the next 5 years for our Co-op are:

- 1.) The need to strengthen and unify our message of why we exist so we stand out in a what has become an increasingly crowded business of grocery stores. By continuing to support local farmers and small-batch producers that depend on our Co-op for survival, we help maintain and create jobs that benefit our local community and lessen the impact to groups managed by distant corporations.
- 2.) An increased commitment to continue to invest in broadening our reach into our existing and new communities. By making investments into technologies, new locations, new businesses and more, we must stay relevant in this challenging and competitive marketplace. Most recently, we've experienced a surge in online grocery purchasing habits that are leading to a new way of interacting with our customers. We must anticipate how these types of trends will change how we present our Co-op to our community in a transparent and authentic way.

3. I'm always striving to bring 100% to the work I do and volunteering on the Board of Directors at Valley Natural Foods is no different. My goal as a Board member is to build strong, long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with my fellow Board members, our owner-members and Valley's management staff to help foster our Co-op's growth.

I have a reputation for being innately curious with a passion for solving problems in the work I do, driven by honesty, integrity, ethics, and humanism.

I believe the combination of my professional work and my experience serving on the Board of Directors at Valley Natural Foods helps me bring a unique set of contributions to our Co-op and I'd be honored to serve an additional term on behalf of our member-owners.

# JESSICA SETTERGREN

IT Business Analysis Specialist, AVP

GUY CARPENTER, LLC.

1. I'm a cancer survivor, so wellness and healthy food has become a real focus in my life in the last year. I haven't served on a business's board, but I have some experience on both private and city volunteer boards. I'm interested in learning as well as serving, and VNF has a well established place in the community with a board on which I could learn and contribute.
2. I admittedly don't have experience specifically in the grocery or retail industry other than as a consumer, but I can say as a consumer the two areas that stand out are delivery and competition. I was isolated at home longer than the rest of the country, since December, because of chemotherapy treatments that suppressed my immune system, and Instacart became unbelievably important. I think Covid has changed people's shopping habits for the long term. Also, since Fresh Thyme expanded south of the river to multiple communities, the "farmers' market" style grocery with a focus on wellness products appears to be a direct competitor for VNF.
3. I have 10 years of business analyst experience, which includes skills that translate to any business platform. The bulk of my job is essentially listening to what the customer wants/needs and translating those requirements from "business" language to "developer" language, so I listen well and have a flexible willing attitude about doing whatever will be most helpful.

.



# JEREMY SUNDHEIM

Senior Director, Risk Management  
HEALTHPARTNERS



- 1.** I feel a deep connection to Valley on multiple levels and want to actively participate in its continued success. Every time I step into Valley, I am reminded of my first job in my hometown grocery store in Montana. There was always a sense of community and connection to our local farms. More recently, I embarked on a life changing journey to get my health in order. Valley was instrumental in helping me make the healthiest food choices possible. I consider service on the board an important way to contribute to the health of our community and contribute to the livelihood of farmers and ranchers who truly care for the food they produce.
- 2.** I believe the primary issue facing Valley over the next five years is growth of its customer base in the midst of a very competitive environment and increasing financial challenges facing families in an uncertain post-pandemic environment. I believe another important issue facing Valley is an adequate supply chain as small, sustainable family farms face economic challenges from decreased demand and tariffs.
- 3.** I have worked in nonprofit healthcare for the bulk of my professional life. As such, I understand the need to fulfill the organization's mission while ensuring there is enough profit to invest back into the organization. I have also served on several boards, so I understand the value of working together to ensure proper governance of an organization that decreases surprise and ensures resilience. Finally, I hope to bring the perspective of a non-committed shopper who was completely won over to the value of Valley and is now one of its most loyal supporters.

# TODD WALDEN

Owner

TBW TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS, LLC



- 1.** I have been a member of the Co-op for 12 years. My wife and I became members when we lived in Bloomington because we fell in love with Valley Natural Foods when we stopped in to get something hard to find. Now we live less than a mile away, and we use the Co-op more than ever. Beyond the standard grocery shopping we do, my wife and I ride our bikes with our boys (7 and 12) in the summer to pick up ice cream bars or a smoothie to eat outside.

Valley's mission is very important to our family. Both healthy, local food and environmental stewardship are extremely important in our lives, and we would like to see Valley grow in that mission. We have lived in areas of the Twin Cities where both of those things are hard to find, often because people don't truly understand how important they are. I believe my PR background, coupled with my experience translating complex technical concepts to new audiences can help Valley gain an even clearer picture of its current members to help better meet their needs, and reach out to new people to help expand the Co-op's mission to an even wider group of people in Minnesota.
- 2.** Environmental stewardship is not only important for the world's health, it is an extremely important issue driving the decisions of our youngest generations. I would like to see the Co-op reach out to those individuals and others by continuing to reduce and offset the way that it uses energy. Finding more ways to reduce energy consumption-- and offsetting consumption that cannot be reduced with options such as solar energy-- will help the Co-op to be more sustainable, both environmentally and financially. I also think that the next five years present an opportunity for Valley Natural Foods to step into a leadership role in the community. As I am passionate about education, I'd like to see the Co-op expand, better advertise, and increase accessibility for its educational programs. Valley has a unique opportunity to help community members also become stewards of the Earth and their own health.
- 3.** I began my consulting career working for various large nonprofit organizations including the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, Zonta International, and the Girl Scouts of America, so I'm intimately familiar with nonprofits and the way that they work. I also have a great deal of experience helping businesses that are looking to contribute to their local communities. I have also been elected as the stewardship chairperson and a council member of Grace Lutheran Church, a 1,400 member faith community dedicated to serving the community of Apple Valley and the people of the world regardless of their race, gender, sexual orientation, social status, or religion. As a community, we've recently taken big steps to improve the world around us, including significant social and environmental improvements. I have been a church leader in many of those decisions, which has given me experience that will be essential to helping guide Valley Natural Foods to a future of strong stewardship and community service.



# KATE WARD *Incumbent*

Software Product Manager

ELSEVIER CLINICAL SOLUTIONS



1. Valley Natural Foods is central to my own family's livelihood. Since we moved to the area, it has become our community. Valley offers a shopping experience that aligns with my personal values. I believe in Valley and the critical role that it plays in the community, and want to have a voice at the table in furthering Valley's mission, vision, and values in the South Metro. While I represent a single segment of member-owners, I am committed to championing for the voices of all so that all truly do feel welcome at Valley.
2.
  1. Growth in a competitive market. We've been able to successfully navigate the COVID-related changes to how people shop by pivoting priorities and strategies - but what's next? Growth is critical to our sustainability as an organization, but the definition of "growth" itself doesn't mean the same thing it did a year ago. It will be important for us to be creative, thoughtful, and flexible as we approach our growth strategy.
  2. Diversity and inclusion. It's no surprise that the demographics of our board, staff, and member-owners do not necessarily reflect the demographics of our community. How do we get the right voices at the table to better inform community programming, products, and strategic growth?
3. I have served on the board since 2017, and been actively engaged in the co-op community through training, conferences, and other events. I've learned much about policy governance and from other co-ops across the U.S.  
I have experience with organization frameworks and strategy (mission, vision, values, ends, and policies) from my work helping build a non-profit from the ground-up, through my work in corporate America, and on the co-op board. I co-led the effort to update VNF's mission, and currently lead the Values and Ends committee, which is dedicated toward updating those policies as well.

## TO VOTE

Electronic: A ballot link was emailed to *Member-Owners*

Paper Ballot: Available in-store at customer service, Sept. 1 - 29

## RSVP TO ANNUAL MEETING

[www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting/](http://www.valleynaturalfoods.com/annual-meeting/)

