

LIVING NATURALLY

a community newsletter



**GREEN TEAM
ON THE MOVE**

**ALLERGEN
AWARENESS**

**FRESH
SALAD RECIPES**



Valley NATURAL
FOODS™

SPRING 2023



LIVING NATURALLY SPRING 2023

Nick Seeberger
CEO

Ashley Greywitt
Marketing Brand Manager

Susie Hessburg
Communications Specialist

Brienna Schleusner
Community Relations &
Marketing Specialist

Store Hours
8 a.m. – 9 p.m. Daily

Drive-Thru Window Hours
7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Daily

Have an idea or questions for the
VNF Board? Send us an email at
board@valleynaturalfoods.com

CO-OP EVENTS AND CLASSES



Supporting Healthy Lung QI with Sonja Murray (Wild Integrative Health)
Wed. April 12 | 7 p.m. | Valley Natural Foods - Education Room



Spring Sushi with Robin Asbell
Mon. April 17 | 5 p.m. | Virtual



Ask the Naturopath with Melissa Olson (Vibrant Wellcare)
Wed. April 19 | 6 p.m. | Virtual - Zoom



Buddha Bowls with Jess Toliver
Tues. May 2 | 6 p.m. | Virtual - Zoom



Tasty Tacos Kids Cooking Class with Jackie Mart
Thurs. May 4 | 6 p.m. | Valley Natural Foods - Education Room



Composting at Home with Dakota County
Wed. May 10 | 6 p.m. | Virtual - Zoom



Community Dinner - Burrito Bar
Thursday May 18 | 5–7 p.m. | Everyone welcome!



Exploring a Mediterranean Lifestyle in Minnesota with Adina Lebowitz
Mon. May 22 | 6 p.m. | Virtual - Zoom



Scan QR Code for event details or visit
www.valleynaturalfoods.com/events-classes



Sustainability



Cooking & Recipes



Lifestyle & Wellness

Valley Natural Foods Co-op works in partnership with the South Metro community to support health and well-being through education and expertise in local, sustainable food and wellness services.

— Valley Natural Foods Mission Statement

CEO UPDATE Nick Seeberger

Food allergies are serious business. They can cause pain and discomfort from eating certain foods, or even anaphylaxis and potentially the loss of life. Six years ago I was feeding my young son strawberries and cashew butter for the first time. The cashew butter no more than touched his tongue and within two minutes he had a full anaphylactic response – his tongue and face swelled, he vomited and had diarrhea, his skin turned blue, his eyes rolled back in his head and he became unresponsive as his breathing slowed way down. It was the most terrifying moment of my life. Luckily, we had an epi pen handy, I believe it saved his life. Learning to safely live with food allergies has been a challenge, but Valley Natural Foods has been the absolute best place for me and my family to shop to find a wide selection of products that are free of the many allergens my son is sensitive to, so he can safely enjoy eating at family gatherings, birthdays and other social events.

For those with gluten intolerance or allergies, Valley's Own Bakehouse, a certified gluten-free bakery, is a delicious source for seeking out baked goods and treats that are safe to eat. In 2011, Valley Natural Foods launched Down in the Valley Bakehouse, known today as Valley's Own Bakehouse. Our bakehouse manufactures products that are registered with Gluten Free Certification Organization (GFCO). This year is the 12th anniversary of the bakehouse and its future is more exciting than ever. Valley's Own and Kakookies products can be found on the shelves and in the freezers of Valley Natural Foods and retailers across the upper Midwest. Learn about allergen awareness and the latest bakehouse news on pages 10-11.

Earth Day is approaching. April 22 serves as a reminder to take care of the one planet we have to live on. At Valley Natural Foods, we are continuously looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact. Check out more about what the co-op is doing for sustainability plus meet our staff's Green Team on page 8-9.

This year we have decided to expand our efforts to include directly giving back to the community by joining the Department of Transportation's Adopt-a-Highway program.



Beginning this Spring you will see a section of Highway 13 in Burnsville with Valley Natural Food's name on the Adopt-a-Highway signage. Twice a year our staff will use the co-op's volunteer program that rewards staff for giving back to their community to see that this stretch of highway is clean and free of litter.

My youngest son has never known life without allergies, so to him this is just how life is. While his relationship with food is definitely fraught, it brings me great joy to see how much he enjoys gardening with his Nonni (grandmother). He helps with planting in the Spring, weeding throughout the season and joyfully harvests and eats the vegetables as they ripen. We get most of our plants from Valley Natural Food's Garden Center which opens on April 30. These plants are sourced from growers that operate to ensure they are safe for the environment, including nature's pollinators, the bees! For more information on our Garden Center, check out the back page.

Finally, I hope to see many of you at our May Community Dinner on May 18. Enjoy a good meal, with friends and neighbors, at your local co-op.

Happy Spring!

Nick Seeberger

LETTER from the board



Mike Jensen,
VNF Board Member

Policy is a pretty bland word to describe such an important statement for the co-op. This is telling us why we are here and the impact that we want to make. During a recent board meeting, we reviewed a report of how we are living out the ENDS policy. Reading the report, I learned much more than I expected about how much we really are doing for our South Metro community. I want to share some of this with you!

Did you know...

- Locally sourced products make up 25% of annual sales.
- Organic products make up 34% of annual sales.
- Since our building expansion in 2019, we have reduced our carbon footprint by 20%!
- Last year, shoppers redeemed credit for bringing in reusable bags from home 46,548 times.
- Our staff, including leadership, is 60% female and 40% male.
- Our starting wage is \$15/hour.

These are just a snippet of the positive things happening at the co-op. As we (finally) are now enjoying Spring, we have a lot to be proud of, but there is still more to do. I hope you all feel and experience the positive impact of the co-op in your life.

Have an idea or questions for the VNF Board? Send us an email at board@valleynaturalfoods.com

Spring is in the air! It's hard to believe, especially when winter seemed to have lasted longer than it should have. Spring is often a time for cleansing and renewal. It can also be a time to take stock of what we have and how we live our lives. We need to do this at the co-op too. I am not talking about checking the stock on the shelves (of course that's always happening). I am talking about reviewing how we impact our community.

The Board of Directors and the co-op management team ask questions like this when it reviews its ENDS policy. The ENDS policy is: Valley Natural Foods Co-op exists to engage our community in a journey of exploring health and well-being through:

- Access to locally-produced and organic foods
- Sustainability in our products and practices
- Diversity of staff, member-owners, consumers, products and prepared offerings to be representative of the South Metro

COMMUNITY IMPACT

A LOOK BACK AT SHOPPER CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR PREVIOUS QUARTER

January
\$2,052



CAP Agency provides the resources, connections and support to empower people in our community to overcome social and economic barriers to self-sufficiency, and to lead healthy, connected lives with gainful employment, stable housing, and quality education.

February
\$1,936



Minneapolis-based EdAllies works to make sure every child can succeed, by helping historically underserved students—children of color, students with special needs, children from low-income households, and English Learners—finally receive the rigorous, engaging education they need and deserve. EdAllies partners with schools, families, and communities to advance equity, and remove barriers.

March
\$2,170



The Open Door is a hunger relief organization dedicated to ending local hunger through access to healthy food. As the largest food shelf in Dakota County, The Open Door serves roughly 14,000 Dakota County residents each month through a combination of innovative programs.

IT'S EASY TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR MONTHLY REGISTER ROUND-UP RECIPIENTS!

At the registers, shoppers have the opportunity to round-up their grocery bill to to the next dollar (or any amount they choose).

Shoppers who bring in reusable bags for packing up their groceries have the option to redeem or donate the 10¢ rebate earned per reusable bag.

At self-checkout, you can round up at the end of your purchase by hitting "checkout" and then the blue "Charity Round Up" button.

Food Shelf Donations 724 lbs.

Food donations were collected throughout the months of January - March for The Open Door

THANK YOU MEMBER-OWNERS AND SHOPPERS, FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY!

AMERICAN RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

We hosted a 2nd successful blood drive in our parking lot on March 13! Once again, all donation slots filled up and 29 total units of blood were collected. Due to the popular response to the blood drive, we hope to host future drives more often than just once a year, thanks to our generous community!



**29
total units
donated!**

THANK YOU TO MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY WHO DONATED BLOOD—ONE OF THE GREATEST GIFTS TO GIVE!

Microplastics and Sustainability

By Sarah Johansson,
VNF Board Member

As I waited to see the launch of Artemis I to the moon, fifty years after man first landed on the moon, I realized how far we are from realizing our dream of being an interplanetary society. I also realized simultaneously that of all the wisdom we possess as humans, we are unable to protect this ONE and ONLY planet we can survive on, from none other, but OURSELVES.

Microplastics, as the name implies, are tiny plastic particles. Officially, they are defined as plastics less than five millimeters (0.2 inches) in diameter—smaller in diameter than the standard pearl used in jewelry. There are two categories of microplastics: primary and secondary.

Primary microplastics are tiny particles designed for commercial use, such as cosmetics, as well as microfibers shed from clothing and other textiles, such as fishing nets. Secondary microplastics are particles that result from the breakdown of larger plastic items, such as water bottles. This breakdown is caused by exposure to environmental factors, mainly the sun's radiation and ocean waves.

The problem with microplastics is that—like plastic items of any size—they do not readily break down into harmless molecules. Plastics can take hundreds or thousands of years to decompose—and in the meantime, wreak havoc on the environment.

Drinking water, including tap and bottled water, is the largest source of plastic in our diet, with the average person consuming about 1,769 tiny microplastic particles each week, according to a 2019 report supported by WWF. Other primary sources of microplastics include shellfish, beer and salt.

A new study published this year in Environmental Research found that microplastics were even present in common fruits and vegetables. Apples had one of the highest microplastic counts, with an average of 195,500 plastic particles per gram, while broccoli and carrots averaged more than 100,000 particles per gram. Through normal water and food consumption, it's estimated that the average person consumes about 5 grams of plastic each week, equivalent to the size of a credit card, according to the WWF report.

We ALL have the power to make a change. My request to YOU is to start here and now, with small steps in your life. Leave a legacy of a clean planet for our children and future generations.

1 Buy organic clothes (or those made from organic materials)

Synthetic clothing, such as polyester, is a huge contributor of microplastics. When possible, choose clothing made from organic materials, such as cotton, silk, wool, hemp and other natural fibers.

2 Change how you do laundry

Microfibers from all types of materials are generated by washers and dryers, but it's the microplastics from polyester and other synthetic materials that are the most concerning. Dryers generate about 40 times more microfibers than washing machines, with a single household dryer releasing up to 120 million microfibers into the air every year. You can help reduce the amount of microplastics released by your washer and dryer by:

- Ensuring you have quality filters that catch microplastics
- Air-drying your clothing
- Using less water with every load
- Avoiding the delicate wash setting, which uses more water than the normal cycle
- Washing your clothing less often
- Buying fewer new clothes, as new clothing sheds more microfibers than clothes that have been previously washed and worn

3 Avoid single-use plastics

- Bring fabric bags or backpacks while shopping
- Ask for paper instead of plastic bags
- Shop at zero-waste grocery stores and other eco-conscious retailers
- Swap disposable plastic straws for reusable metal, glass or bamboo straws
- Reduce the use of disposable plastic water bottles, using a refillable water bottle instead

4 Buy plastic-free cosmetics

- Microbeads can show up in a variety of cosmetic and household products.
- Read labels carefully, looking for words that indicate the use of microbeads.
- Avoid products with ingredients such as:
 - Polyethylene, abbreviated PE
 - Polypropylene, abbreviated PP
 - Polyethylene terephthalate, a form of polyester abbreviated PET or PETE
 - Polymethyl methacrylate, abbreviated PMMA
 - Nylon
- Opt for sustainable cosmetics and household products that offer alternative ingredients, often listed as “natural alternatives” to microbeads.

5 Reduce shellfish consumption

Microplastics that end up in the ocean are ingested by bottom-feeding shellfish. When you consume the shellfish, the microplastics are then ingested by you. Reducing or avoiding your consumption of shellfish can help cut down on the amount of microplastics that get into your system. Popular consumed shellfish include: Mollusks, Shrimp, Lobster, Crab, Scallops, Clams, Oysters and Mussels.

6 Use public or alternative transportation

Car tires are a major source of microplastics, making up 28% of the microplastics found in the ocean. The tires break down when driving, sending the tiny particles off into the environment. The fewer cars on the road, the fewer tires out there releasing microplastics.

7 Don't microwave your food in plastic

Plastic and microwaves don't mix. Plastic containers leach plastics when they're heated. This holds true even when plastic containers are labeled “microwave safe.” Being microwave safe means the container won't melt in the microwave, not that it won't transfer chemicals to your food.

8 Support environmental sustainability policies

Taking personal action to reduce microplastics is great. But your efforts don't have to stop there. You can support policies, politicians and organizations that are committing to take action for the environment and long term sustainability.



Sources :

1. National Geographic, Resource Library, Encyclopedic entry, Microplastics
2. Mongabay : Our life is plasticized?: New research shows microplastics in our food, water, air, July 2020
3. Perch Energy : Easy Ways to Reduce Microplastic Pollution & Consumption In Your Daily Life, May 2022

VNF SUSTAINABILITY

At Valley Natural Foods, our values of providing sustainable, healthy food on our shelves are being honored by our new "Valley Natural Foods Sustainability Stamp of Approval."

Though all identified brands may each have different reasons for qualifying for our 'Sustainability Stamp of Approval' we recognize their ethical practices and/or integrity and genuine efforts in climate protection and preservation.

Some ways organizations can qualify: practice ethical farming, are upcycled certified, practice sustainably-caught seafood certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), are a Certified B Corporation, EWG Verified, and more.

Sustainability is at the core of who we are as a co-op. This year, we are making it a priority to recognize sustainable brands and share their stories. Starting in April for Earth Month, look for our new stamp on our shelves.

Check out this shelf tag in front of various products, noting it is marked with our Sustainability Stamp of Approval! All products on our list may not be marked if space doesn't allow for multiple shelf tags. Make sure to check out our master list on our Sustainability Stamp of Approval webpage.



Scan this code to visit our Sustainability Stamp of Approval webpage!



The VNF Green Team



"The Green Team works to improve our environmental footprint and social impact by identifying opportunities, launching new programs, and engaging staff and members to make a positive difference."

We are excited to announce that Valley Natural Foods is participating in Adopt a Highway!

The Green Team is excited to get out and clean our community this spring.

Watch for our sign on Highway 13



The Green Team has a member from each department in the store, to bring new and unique ideas to the table.

Members are passionate about sustainable practices and can find ways to solve a problem in their own department as well as seeing what goes on in the store as a whole.

Scan this code to visit the Green Team webpage!



VNF Green Team Staff Members

SUSTAINABLE SPOTLIGHT

Moonshot's ingredients are sourced as close to the farmer as possible, so they are always aware of when and how their food is grown.

They support regenerative agriculture practices, which include supporting new topsoil creation, which produces more nutrients in the plants that grow. On top of all of that, they are a carbon-neutral brand!

Scan QR to learn more >>

A rectangular tag with a green background and a white border. It features the Valley Natural Foods Sustainability Stamp of Approval logo in the top left corner. The main text is in a bold, sans-serif font. Below the text is a small image of a Moonshot Crackers product box. At the bottom right is a QR code.

Sustainable Spotlight tags will be featured the month of April, celebrating Earth Day. Learn about the brands you buy!

SESAME SEED ALLERGEN AWARENESS

As of January 1 this year, sesame – the most recent item included on the major food allergens list – is now required to be labeled on packaged food and dietary supplements that contain sesame as an ingredient. The proteins found in sesame seeds, sesame flour and sesame oil can cause mild to severe reactions for people who may be allergic to sesame.

Though not an exhaustive list, here are foods that may contain sesame:

- Sesame oil
- Breads, buns and other bakery goods
- Bulk food items
- Cereals, granolas and hot cereal mixes
- Cookies
- Deli hot bar and salad bar items
- Crackers and chips
- Dipping sauces
- Dressings and marinades
- Energy bars
- Falafel
- Hummus and Baba Ghanoush
- Packaged flavored rice and noodles
- Processed meats and sausages
- Protein bars
- Snack foods (pretzels, candy, rice cakes, snack mixes, etc.)
- Spice mixes
- Sushi
- Tahini (and all dips and spreads that contain tahini)
- Tempeh

READ THOSE LABELS!

Look for the word "contains" followed by listed allergens, usually located below or near ingredient labels on food and supplement packaging.

TOP NINE MAJOR FOOD ALLERGENS:



Valley's Own Bakehouse



Brody's 579 is soon to become Valley's Own, with a fresh new look! We are thrilled to unveil our refreshed brand identity for the popular Brody's 579 muffins and muffin mixes.

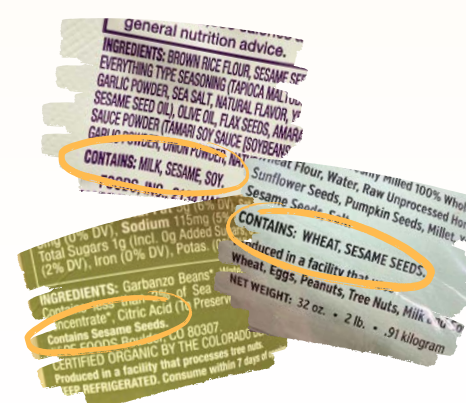
In the past, our certified gluten-free kitchen at the bakehouse served as the production center for the Brody's 579 Brand. In 2019 Brody's 579 was purchased by Valley Natural Foods, and became one of our brands. We are excited to move Brody's 579 under the line of Valley's Own, while still offering the same muffins and mixes Brody's 579 customers have grown to love!



While this is a notable change, our core beliefs and standard for excellence in certified gluten-free products have not changed. Brody's 579 fans can still expect the same care and quality ingredients that goes into producing their products. Be on the lookout for Brody's muffins and muffin mixes sporting the new Valley's Own Bakehouse label soon!



0% Gluten. 100% Delicious.





Fresh Summer Salads

Grilled Panzanella

Serves: 4-6. Prep time: 30 minutes.

- 2 slices of rustic bread, cut 3/4-inch thick
- 1 medium zucchini, quartered lengthwise
- 1 large, firm avocado, pitted and quartered
- 1/2 medium red onion, cut into 3/4-inch rounds
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus more for brushing
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 4 large tomatoes, chunked
- 4 ounces fresh mozzarella, diced
- 1 cup fresh basil, shredded

1. Preheat the grill to medium high. Put two tablespoons of olive oil in a small bowl or cup and dip a wadded paper towel into the oil. When

ready to grill, use tongs to swab the grate with the oiled towel.

2. Use your pastry brush to brush the bread, zucchini, avocado and onion with oil, then place each piece on the hot grill. Grill the bread for about one minute per side, until browned and toasted. Grill the zucchini, onion and avocado until tender, about four to five minutes. Transfer the food back to the cutting board and let cool, then cut into bite-sized pieces.
3. Transfer the grilled ingredients to a large bowl. In another bowl, whisk the remaining oil, balsamic vinegar, salt, pepper and garlic, and pour over the ingredients in the large bowl.
4. Add the tomatoes, mozzarella and basil to the bowl, and toss to mix. Serve immediately.



Black-eyed Pea Salad

Serves: 6. Prep time: 20 minutes.

- 2 15-ounce cans black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 large carrot, shredded
- 1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 2 large scallions, chopped
- 1 large jalapeño, minced
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, chopped

Dressing

- 3 tablespoons sesame seeds
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

1. Combine the black-eyed peas, carrot, cucumber, scallions, jalapeño, tomatoes and parsley in a large bowl.
2. In a small saute pan, place the sesame seeds and swirl over high heat. When the seeds are lightly toasted, transfer to a small bowl. Add the vinegar, honey, olive oil and salt and whisk to combine.
3. Drizzle the dressing over the pea mixture and toss to mix. Serve or refrigerate, tightly covered, for up to three days.



Thai Cucumber Salad with Peanuts

Serves: 6. Prep time: 1 hour 15 minutes; 15 minutes active.

- 2 pounds (about 3 large) cucumbers, split lengthwise, seeded, and sliced into 1/4-inch crescents
- 3 scallions, sliced
- 1/4 cup cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 small jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

Dressing

- 1/3 cup rice wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon curry powder

1. In a small bowl, whisk together all dressing ingredients. Set aside.
2. In a large glass or stainless steel bowl, combine all vegetables. Add dressing and toss. Let sit at least 1 hour, mixing occasionally.
3. Add peanuts just before serving and stir to combine. Garnish salad with sesame seeds.



Italian Marinated Chopped Salad

Serves: 6. Prep time: 50 minutes; 20 minutes active.

- 2 tablespoons red or white wine vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 12-ounce jar marinated artichokes, drained
- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, drained
- 1 cup pitted Kalamata olives
- 2 large oranges, peeled, segmented and cut in pieces
- 4 ounces sliced mini-pepperoni
- 4 ounces fresh mozzarella, chopped
- 2 romaine hearts, chopped
- 4 leaves radicchio, torn

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the vinegar, garlic, oregano, mustard and salt. Then whisk in the olive oil.
2. Add the artichokes, chickpeas, kidney beans, olives, oranges, pepperoni and mozzarella to the bowl and toss to coat. Marinate for at least 30 minutes. This can be tightly covered and refrigerated for up to 4 days.
3. To serve, spread the romaine and radicchio on a large platter and sprinkle the marinated vegetable mixture over the top, drizzling any left over dressing over the salad. If desired, toss to mix, or serve as is.

Kale Cranberry Salad

Serves: 4. Prep time: 15 minutes

- 2 large bunches lacinato kale, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup walnuts (toasted, optional)

Dressing

- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 1/2 teaspoons honey
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

1. Place the kale, onions, cranberries and walnuts in a large bowl and set aside.
2. Whisk together all of the dressing ingredients in a small bowl. Drizzle the dressing over the mixed kale and toss well.

Let these recipes inspire your own salad improvisations! Reach for flavorful and nutritious toppings — try fresh herbs, beans and lentils, cooked whole grains like quinoa and farro, fruit slices, nuts and seeds.

Lebanese Cabbage Salad

Serves: 6. Prep time: 15 minutes.

- 1/2 small red cabbage (8 cups shredded)
- 1 large carrot
- 1 small red onion, slivered
- 1 large jalapeño or other chili pepper, chopped
- 1/2 cup parsley, chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Orange segments
- Toasted slivered almonds

1. Use the slicing blade of a food processor to shred the cabbage, then switch to the coarse blade to shred the carrot. (You can do it by hand, as well.)
2. Place the cabbage and carrot in a large bowl and add onions, jalapeño, parsley and mint.
3. In a cup, combine the garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and salt. Pour over the cabbage mixture and toss to mix.
3. Transfer to a serving platter, then top with orange segments and almonds.

GARDEN CENTER 2023

Garden Center Opening Day: Sunday, April 30

Hours: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Daily

SUSTAINABLY-GROWN AND ORGANIC STARTER VEGGIES, HERBS, FLOWERS, NATIVE PERENNIALS, HANGING FLORAL & HERB BASKETS, AND MORE!



On May 18 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM
join us for our Community Dinner
featuring a burrito bowl bar and live
music. Everyone welcome!

\$3 Burrito Bowl Bar will include:

- Beyond Beef Taco Meat
- VNF Taco Meat
- Peppers and Onions Fajita Mix
- Rice, Beans, Salsa, Guac & more!