



IT'S YOUR CO-OP

IT'S YOUR VOTE

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION GUIDE

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WHO CAN VOTE?

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

HOW TO VOTE:

Voting is available online or by paper ballot, August 26 - September 15. Only one ballot (online or paper) may be cast per household membership in order to be valid. Please communicate with your household if you share a membership. Subsequent or multiple voting on additional ballot types will not be counted.

ONLINE BALLOTS:

Member-Owners were sent an email for Valley Natural Foods Board Elections. Be sure to check for a "Vote Now! Valley Natural Foods-Board Elections" email from [Valley Natural Foods](#). If you did not receive the email, please visit or contact customer service: customerservice@valleynaturalfoods.com, or call 952-891-1212, ext. 221.

PAPER BALLOTS:

Paper ballots are available for Member-Owners who are not voting online (visit customer service for a paper ballot) A ballot box is provided in a designated voting area.

VOTING GUIDELINES:

There are three Board of Directors seats open. Please review candidates* and their statements* on the following pages and vote for three candidates. The three candidates who receive the highest number of votes will each be seated in an open position. Member-Owner number, name and signature are required for both online or paper ballots to be valid.

THE VOTING PERIOD BEGINS AUGUST 26, AND CONCLUDES AT 11:59 PM (FOR ELECTRONIC VOTING) ON SEPTEMBER 15. (PAPER BALLOTS MUST BE PLACED IN THE BALLOT BOX BY 9:00 PM ON SEPTEMBER 15.)

ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

**Note: Candidates are listed in alphabetical order by last name.*

**Note: Candidate statement submissions are not edited.*

NATALIE ALCOS

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

I am interested in serving on Valley Natural Foods' board because I believe in the power of community-owned organizations to create lasting value for their members and communities. The co-op's commitment to healthy food, sustainability, supporting local producers, and fostering community connection aligns closely with my personal values.

Professionally, as a Product Owner, I work with diverse stakeholders to understand needs, align priorities, make data-informed decisions, and develop strategies that support long-term success. I regularly balance competing perspectives, facilitate collaboration, and focus teams on delivering meaningful outcomes. These experiences have strengthened my ability to think strategically while keeping the customer and community at the center of decision-making. I previously served on the board of our local youth softball association as the Assistant Tournament Director. Through this role, I've helped coordinate large community events, work through operational and budget considerations, collaborate with volunteers, and ensure decisions support the best interests of young athletes and their families. These experiences have reinforced the importance of thoughtful leadership, community engagement, and strong governance.

I would be honored to bring both my professional and community leadership experience to Valley Natural Foods and help ensure the co-op continues to thrive for current and future generations.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

I believe two of the most important opportunities facing Valley Natural Foods over the next five years are strengthening community engagement and continuing to differentiate itself in a competitive grocery market. Valley Natural Foods has a unique opportunity to deepen connections with members by expanding educational programs, community events, and partnerships that bring people together around shared values of health, sustainability, and local food. Building those relationships will help ensure the co-op remains a vibrant and welcoming resource for current and future members. At the same time, as more retailers offer natural and organic products, Valley Natural Foods can continue to stand out by emphasizing what makes a cooperative special: local connections, member ownership, and a strong commitment to community. By staying true to its mission while evolving with member needs, I believe the co-op is well positioned for continued success.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I bring a combination of professional leadership experience, strategic thinking, and community involvement. Throughout my career and volunteer work, I have developed skills in collaboration, planning, problem-solving, stakeholder engagement, and balancing diverse perspectives to achieve shared goals. As a Valley Natural Foods board member, I hope to contribute a thoughtful, member-focused perspective while helping the co-op remain financially strong, community-centered, and true to its mission. I am especially passionate about fostering community connections and supporting initiatives that engage members, strengthen local partnerships, and ensure the co-op continues to thrive for future generations.

CHRIS COYLE (INCUMBENT)

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

I hope to continue my service on the board of directors at Valley Natural Foods as the last 3 years of service have been incredibly rewarding. The co-op has been in a position to thrive and deliver an outstanding level of service to the community under strong store and board leadership. We are proud to have made significant investments in the existing building to make it an even better place to shop and work. Under the careful eye of store leadership, store layout, produce chillers, bulk goods areas and office space have all received upgrades with overwhelming support from the board. We view these improvements as critical investments and I look forward to supporting more initiatives like these in the future!

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Accessibility to high-quality, organic foods at approachable prices continues to be a top priority for the co-op. We must find ways to leverage resources available to us in order to see this mission through. Maintaining a culture of inclusivity oriented around health and wellness.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I aim to bring my growing knowledge of the co-op grocery space built over the last 3 years, combined with my experience in my personal career, to help guide the future of the co-op. We are in a great place as a business, but as economic and competitive conditions evolve, we will need to have a strong long-term plan.

TONY GARDNER

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

Over the past 30+ years, I have held leadership positions focused on human resources, organizational development, strategic planning, leadership development, and executive coaching. My work has included partnering with senior leaders to improve organizational effectiveness, develop talent, lead change initiatives, strengthen workplace culture, and align people strategies with business objectives.

I am the founder of Triad Success Consulting, where I provide executive coaching, leadership training, organizational consulting, and strategic advisory services to individuals and organizations. My work emphasizes leadership effectiveness, organizational health, and sustainable long-term success.

In addition to my professional experience, I have remained active in community and professional organizations, including leadership and service through Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and I have a longstanding interest in health, wellness, leadership, and community engagement. My career has been built on collaboration, thoughtful governance, ethical leadership, and helping organizations fulfill their missions while achieving strong organizational performance.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

I am interested in serving on the Valley Natural Foods Board because I believe the cooperative plays an important role in improving the health and well-being of our community. As consumers increasingly seek trusted sources of nutritious food, wellness education, and sustainable business practices, Valley Natural Foods has an opportunity to be more than a grocery store. It can continue to be a community leader that helps people live healthier, more intentional lives. Throughout my career, I have been drawn to organizations whose mission extends beyond financial performance to creating meaningful value for the people they serve. That philosophy aligns well with the cooperative model, where long-term stewardship, member engagement, and community impact are as important as sound business decisions. Professionally, I bring more than 30 years of leadership, organizational development, and human resources experience, along with a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership, an MBA, SPHR certification, and training in lifestyle and wellness coaching. My experience has taught me how to think strategically, ask thoughtful questions, build consensus, and support effective governance while keeping the organization's mission at the center of decision-making. Serving on the Valley Natural Foods Board would allow me to contribute those skills while learning from fellow directors and the membership. I would welcome the opportunity to help ensure that Valley Natural Foods remains financially strong, responsive to member needs, and a trusted resource for healthy living for many years to come.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I would bring a combination of strategic leadership experience, organizational development expertise, governance perspective, and a collaborative leadership style to the Valley Natural Foods Board. Professionally, I have more than three decades of experience helping organizations improve leadership effectiveness, strengthen culture, develop talent, and navigate organizational change. My educational background includes a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership, an MBA, SPHR certification, and advanced training in lifestyle and wellness coaching. These experiences have strengthened my ability to evaluate complex issues, think strategically, ask insightful questions, and contribute to sound governance. I believe effective boards succeed by listening carefully, respecting diverse viewpoints, focusing on long-term strategy, and supporting management while maintaining appropriate oversight. My approach is thoughtful, collaborative, and grounded in data, while never losing sight of the people impacted by board decisions. As a board member, I hope to contribute by helping Valley Natural Foods strengthen its long-term strategic direction, support financial sustainability, enhance member engagement, and continue advancing its mission of promoting healthy living and community well-being. I also hope to bring fresh perspectives on leadership development, organizational effectiveness, and consumer wellness trends that can help position the cooperative for continued success. Above all, I would view board service as an opportunity to serve the membership through responsible stewardship, sound governance, and thoughtful decision-making that preserves Valley Natural Foods' mission and values for future generations.

ALPA GOSWAMI

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

I have worked professionally in food systems for the past 14 years and have been personally committed to environmental stewardship since the 1990s. I believe that healthy food and responsible stewardship of the land go hand in hand, and that strong local food systems benefit both people and the environment. For nine seasons, I worked with The Open Door's Garden to Table program, with 13 gardens, including helping manage the Valley Natural Foods community garden. That experience gave me a firsthand understanding of the importance of growing and increasing access to fresh, healthy food while building community connections. It also reinforced my belief that everyone deserves access to nutritious, locally produced food, regardless of income or background. Throughout my career, I have worked to strengthen sustainable agriculture by building partnerships, supporting local farmers, and developing programs that increase access to healthy food. I hope to bring this perspective, along with my experience in nonprofit leadership, strategic planning, and community engagement, to the Valley Natural Foods Board as it continues to support local producers, serve its members, and advance a resilient and sustainable food system.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Over the next five years, I believe Valley Natural Foods will face two significant opportunities and challenges. First, demand for organic, locally produced, and sustainably sourced food is expected to continue growing as more consumers prioritize health, environmental stewardship, and transparency in the food system. Valley Natural Foods has an opportunity to build on its trusted reputation by strengthening relationships with local farmers, expanding member education, and continuing to offer high-quality products that reflect cooperative values. At the same time, the co-op must remain competitive as conventional grocery stores continue to expand their natural and organic offerings. Second, the co-op will need to navigate ongoing supply chain and economic challenges. Climate change is already affecting agricultural production through extreme weather and changing growing conditions, while tariffs and global market disruptions can increase costs and limit product availability. Combined with inflation and rising operating expenses, these factors will require thoughtful financial stewardship, strong supplier relationships, and strategic planning.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

As a nonprofit leader with more than 20 years of experience in strategic planning, community engagement, and sustainable food systems, I bring a collaborative, mission-driven approach to board service. In my role as Program Director at Marbleseed, I oversee complex programs, manage multimillion-dollar grant portfolios, and build partnerships among nonprofit organizations, government agencies, businesses, and farmers to strengthen local food systems and support resilient communities. My experience includes strategic planning, financial oversight, program evaluation, fundraising, governance, and organizational leadership. I value thoughtful decision-making, building consensus, and helping organizations balance mission with long-term sustainability. In addition to my professional work, I serve on the Dakota County Regional Chamber Foundation Board and the Burnsville Parks and Natural Resources Commission, where I contribute to community development, environmental stewardship, and public engagement. As a Valley Natural Foods board member, I hope to help advance the co-op's mission by supporting sound governance, strategic growth, and meaningful member engagement. I am passionate about expanding access to healthy, locally produced food, strengthening connections between consumers and local farmers, and ensuring the cooperative remains financially strong, innovative, and responsive to the needs of its members. I look forward to contributing my leadership experience, collaborative approach, and commitment to building a healthy, sustainable community.

LAURA JOHNSON

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

Valley Natural Foods has long been a trusted resource in our community, and I appreciate its commitment to local producers, sustainability, nutrition, and member education. As someone who values healthy living and enjoys supporting organizations that make a positive impact, I would be honored to serve on the board.

As a Physician Assistant, I have developed strong critical thinking and analytical skills, regularly evaluating complex information, weighing different perspectives, and making thoughtful, evidence-informed decisions. I enjoy asking questions, solving problems collaboratively, and considering both short- and long-term implications when making decisions. I believe these skills would allow me to contribute thoughtfully to board discussions and governance.

In addition to my professional experience, my volunteer work in schools, youth sports, and my church has reinforced the importance of community engagement and working alongside others toward a common goal. I value listening, collaboration, and respectful discussion, and I enjoy learning from people with different backgrounds and areas of expertise.

I am excited about the opportunity to help Valley Natural Foods continue to serve its members, remain financially strong, and fulfill its mission while adapting to the needs of the community for years to come.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

I believe two important issues facing Valley Natural Foods over the next five years are maintaining competitiveness in a changing grocery landscape and sustaining financial health while remaining true to its cooperative mission.

First, larger grocery chains and online retailers continue to expand their organic, local, and health-focused offerings. This makes it increasingly important for Valley Natural Foods to clearly communicate the unique value it provides through member ownership, community connections, exceptional service, and commitment to local and sustainable products.

Second, navigating economic pressures while maintaining accessibility and quality will be an ongoing challenge. Inflation, changing consumer behaviors, product costs, and supply chain disruptions require thoughtful planning, strong financial stewardship, and adaptable strategies.

These challenges require thoughtful leadership, data-informed decision-making, and a deep understanding of member needs. As a Physician Assistant, I have developed strong analytical skills through evaluating evidence, considering multiple factors, and making thoughtful decisions in complex situations. I would bring that same approach to board discussions while continuing to learn from fellow members and leaders.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I would bring a combination of healthcare experience, analytical thinking, community involvement, and a commitment to serving others.

As a Physician Assistant, I have developed skills in evaluating complex information, considering multiple perspectives, communicating clearly, and making thoughtful decisions based on available evidence. Healthcare has also reinforced the importance of integrity, accountability, and ethical decision-making, as patients and colleagues rely on me to approach decisions with honesty, compassion, and professionalism. I believe these values are equally important in board service. Beyond my professional experience, I have been actively involved in my community through volunteering in schools, participating in the Farm to School program at Thomas Lake Elementary, coaching youth soccer, and serving in my church's elementary ministry. These experiences have strengthened my appreciation for collaboration, education, and building strong community connections.

As a Valley Natural Foods board member, I hope to contribute a thoughtful, member-focused perspective while continuing to learn from others with different experiences and expertise. I would bring curiosity, careful consideration of information, and a willingness to engage in meaningful discussions to help support decisions that serve the long-term interests of Valley Natural Foods and its members.

I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to an organization that values health, sustainability, community, and access to quality food.

LINDSEY RADLE (INCUMBENT)

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

My interest continues to be serving the collective and representing the diverse needs of the co-op. I am passionate about what Valley offers to its customers, whether it's a sense of community, access to local and/or organic foods, learning opportunities, or meeting other like-minded folks. To me, there are grocery stores, and then there is Valley. It's more than a grocery store; it's about the intention, care, and quality of service they provide in everything they do. I align with the values and ethics that Valley represents, and being a part of that is something I appreciate and am proud of.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

A few things that come to mind on this topic would be rising costs and competition. While these things are real, I see the intentionality, leadership, and focus of the team at Valley. They are dedicated to identifying how to shift and how that change impacts the members. The strong relationships within are a testament to the work they do and how valuable that is both in times that are steady and in times that require new ways of thinking.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

As an educator, my role is to ensure inclusivity and accessibility, and that remains a top priority for me as a board member. I enjoy observing how we operate to identify gaps and opportunities to streamline our processes as we plan for the future. If elected to another term, I would continue to provide consistent and transparent communication, ensuring we stay rooted in our values while making healthy financial decisions. I am committed to evolving our organization as we grow, while representing every one of your voices. Thank you for your time and consideration!

CARRIE SAWYER

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

I am incredibly excited about the prospect of being able to connect to and serve directly, my local community. We live about 5 minutes from Valley Foods and for the past 5+ years I've been visiting Valley on a weekly basis, sometimes daily! I am someone who has a deep passion for health and wellness and making health information and resources accessible to more people.

In my career I'm at a point where I have a desire to contribute my experience and skills outside of the role/company that I work for. I have thought leadership and strategy experience with an emphasis on innovation and creativity and know I have much more to give to a broader community. From a personal standpoint, I am also drawn to the prospect of connecting with other like-minded individuals who have similar desires to serve a common goal and give back to community.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

1) Competition for cost-conscious customers - with the increased pricing and effects of inflation, many customers will be making decisions to shop elsewhere or reduce spending, shopping more selectively at Co-ops, trying to source grocery basics more from bigger box retailers like Costco or Cub. Considering how we capture attention of this customer and provide incentives to increase traffic perhaps through selective budget conscious staples.

2) Growing need for differentiation - creating a unique shopping experience that feels different and offers a unique value from other grocery store options - considering different styles of food or variety of recipes/expansion of hot bar/salad offerings or expanding gift/card offerings to provide additional draw.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I have been in the leadership development space for the past 7 years as a strategic thinker who looks at problem-solving through the lens of the psychology of persuasion, influence, and adoption of new habits. I am excited at the prospect of contributing this lens to how we think about buyer habits and increasing adoption of more consistent shopping habits.

Additionally, the majority of my career has been spent working for start-up companies, wearing many different hats, creating teams, strategy, markets from scratch; I bring a "positive disruption" dynamic, prioritizing innovation and creativity to reinvent and rethink for the purpose of growth. Additionally, I have worked alongside senior leaders who are navigating significant organizational changes - and empower people through human-first strategy with an agile mindset and collaboration process.

Lastly, as someone who has also spent years in sales, I am an expert in storytelling and crafting persuasive messaging to spark excitement and connection to a bigger vision.

ANDREW SWANICK

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SERVING ON VALLEY NATURAL FOODS' BOARD?

I want to serve my community and the industry that I love by enhancing the accessibility, and affordability of key products in order to increase value the shareholder's intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. This means helping the store remain a champion of organic, local, and fair trade products that contribute to environmental and social impacts and continuing the legacy of high standards from selected brands. I'd like to help Valley Foods expand its reputation of being a be a destination for trust and integrity in a ever changing world - while helping to widen our customer base by to overcoming reputations of the "health elitism" ideal.

At this time I genuinely feel called to ensure the success of our members' experiences, and of our greater community through the maintaining the impact, inclusivity, and accessibility for all members and community that we serve. I feel that I have the education and experience to address some of the issues facing co-ops such as mainstream competition, and have a strong interest in the policy governance of the co-op in relation to its vendors and greater management agenda.

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING VALLEY NATURAL FOODS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Now and within the next five years, the biggest issues facing Valley Natural Foods are the greenwashing of products at big box stores creating market saturation and the entry of new competition from not just from other retailers but fitness influencers that capture the attention and disposable income of the consumer, as Gen X retires, their attention may be captured by niche industries promising longevity.

As inflation creates a higher cost of living, increases in production costs are being passed on to the consumer while the demand for organic fruits and vegetables at big box stores like Costco and Sam's club capture supply chains from farmers and increase supply chain constraints for independent grocers.

A practical example is my neighbors who are retiring and have lived in the neighborhood for 20 years; they have never set foot in the co-op partly because of its elitist reputation and lack of marketing towards their demographic. Although they do not fit the profile of our key demographic, the marketing campaigns from the brands that co-ops carry , as well as NCG's marketing have failed to capture the foot traffic of these who would benefit the products and services that the co-op offers.

PLEASE SUMMARIZE THE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE YOU BRING AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS YOU HOPE TO MAKE, AS A VALLEY NATURAL FOODS BOARD MEMBER.

I have spent many hours in Natural Health Foods across the Midwest and around the country as a freelance demo rep in my 20's for Country Life, Veriditas Botanicals, and various other health brands. I have experience working with vendors at traditional grocery stores through DSD brands. Additionally, I was a part time employee for the oldest health store in Minnesota, Mastel's and attended many staff trainings for health and body products that emphasize the vendor's relationship to the store and the customer.

I would like to combine these front line customer engagement experiences with my skill set based in business strategy and data analytics to create differentiation strategy to enhance foot traffic from both our core demographic and all members of the community that we serve.