

River Valley Market

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River Valley Market is a community-owned, retail food cooperative whose mission is to create a just marketplace that nourishes the community.

Everyone is welcome!
We are open 7 days a week,
from 8 am to 9 pm

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jade Barker, President
Claire Morenon, Vice President
Lynn DiTullio, Clerk/Treasurer
Christine Dutton
Dorian Gregory
Marci Linker
Jeff Rosen
Max Saito
Rochelle Prunty, *General Manager*

OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS

Liz Benson
Sue Curran
Rosalyn Malkin
Judy Mazel
Margo McMahan
Jane Nevinsmith
Virginia Schulman
Diane Stewart
Jeff Stoloff
Trevor
Alan Wertkin
Additional members
always welcome!

PHOTOGRAPHY

River Valley Market Staff
Jim Gipe, Pivot Media

NEWSLETTER

Loran Diehl Saito, *Editor & Designer*

MEMBER-OWNER CONTRIBUTORS

Sheri Lee Pierce

WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER

by Jade Barker, River Valley Market Board President



AT 17, recently graduated from high school, I was faced with a dilemma. Should I take a clerical job that I'd been offered, or go to college? When I talked to my mother about it, she got a dreamy look in her eyes and said, "When I was your age, they didn't hire blacks."

Inwardly, I analyzed the situation. My mother, a single parent on a limited income, had grown up in the south when citizens with slave ancestry were still required by law to drink out of separate, unequal drinking fountains, and all the other indignities that came with. Unlike my mother, I'd grown up in California, and though it was also quite segregated, the lines of opportunity weren't drawn so hard and fast. I understood in that moment that her dreams for the future were hindered by the realities of her past.

We each carry a little bit of our past with us. Sometimes we recreate what we have become accustomed to, even if we've never liked it. If we're accustomed to being devalued, we look for it and expect it; if we've become accustomed to wielding privilege, that's also what we come to expect. One power of the cooperative model lies in our willingness to overcome our personal and historic pasts and learn new ways of being with each other.

By default, injustices that permeate our society will affect our co-op. Power imbalances (often based on gender, race, ethnicity, historic wealth, etc.), unfair economic structures, and corporate domination of our food supply are still with us. Our mission in the midst of all this is to build a "just marketplace that nourishes the community." In just a few years, motivated by a shared vision, we've built a \$14 million dollar-a-year business with nearly 100 staff and over 5,000 members out of an empty rock quarry. We are off to a great start, yet we know there's so much more we can do. So what's next?

Right now, our board is working on a process for strategic visioning. What will our co-op's role be in our future local food system? What will our contribution be 10, 20, or even 50 years from now? We currently dedicate time at each board meeting to improving our capacity to grapple with these and other important questions. The cooperative business model is the only one ever honored by the United

Nations—2012 is the UN's International Year of the Cooperative, and we are still finding ways to tap its incredible potential.

But we don't just need excellent processes, we also need leaders who not only value "a just marketplace that nourishes the community," but are excited about creating and maintaining it. These future leaders commit to outward vision rather than internal preoccupation, collective rather than individual decisions, and strategic leadership rather than administrative detail. We know they must encourage diverse viewpoints, focus on the future rather than on the past or present, and prefer proactivity to reactivity (Adapted from CDS governing style policy.)

More than having the right answers, we need folks who can ask the right questions. If you'd like to join us, let us know; we are excited about sharing this great work.

As a teenager, I couldn't have imagined helping create a \$14 million dollar cooperatively owned entity dedicated to enriching our local economy. But I did know that I wanted to make the world a better place. Right now, my co-op work fits the bill. As for my job or college dilemma, I ended up doing both. A job during the day funded college at night until I had the resources to make a full-time go of it. It may seem like a pretty obvious solution looking back, but at the time, I was constrained by my limited experience. At the co-op, we don't have to be held back by our personal limitations, because we're stronger together.



Whether or not you're a 2012-registered gardener at our new community garden, Grow Food Northampton welcomes your involvement! The garden will grow from 100 to 400 plots over time and will eventually include a barn, hoop houses & more. Get in on this exciting project at ground level! We need help with such tasks as creating signage, leading gardening workshops, peer mentoring, mowing, and planting permanent hedgerow. Contact Llama at volunteer@grow-foodnorthampton.com.