

September 2021

the heart beet

A Pulse on What's Happening at the **Viroqua Food Co+op**



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Cooperative Model in Action

Lizzy Haucke, VFC Board of Directors

Make your voice heard and contribute to the future of our Co-op. Join me in voting starting September 20!



Dear Co+op Community,

This fall, many farmers in the Driftless region are bringing in the harvest: vegetables and fruits, grains and beans, dairy and meat. Not everyone is so lucky. As if COVID weren't enough to shock us into a reset, wildfires have burned millions of acres of the West. High temperatures scorch the Plains. Storms have once again torn through our own community.

How many times in the last 18 months have we heard, "We're all in this together"? As familiar as the adage may sound, take a moment. Where in our modern lives are we permitted to live out that kind of camaraderie?

The cooperative model puts into practice what could otherwise be only aspirational principles. From democratic leadership and open membership, to economic participation across stakeholders, the Co-op

presents us all with a chance to enact our values of equity, cooperation, and community engagement.

From September 20 to October 20, you have an opportunity to shape the leadership and direction of our Co-op by voting for your Board of Directors. We have two seats up for three-year terms, with three excellent candidates running. We also have a special election to reelect Andrew Anderson for a one-year term as he fills the seat formerly held by Eric Snowdeal, our colleague and neighbor who passed away this summer.

We are not through the multiple crises confronting us yet, and maybe that is the point. The challenges and risks, opportunities and rewards we're experiencing now will shape our world far beyond our own time here. Our Co-op is a way for us all to live out the adage that we are all in this together, now and into the future, because through the Co-op structure, we are mutually connected as producers and consumers, owners and workers. As we transition into a new era globally, regionally, locally, and personally, let's actively engage with the social and economic structures that truly lift us all up.

I hope you will take a moment this fall to make your voice heard and contribute to the future of our Co-op. Join me in voting starting September 20!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Bergquist, *President*
Elizabeth Tigan, *Vice President*
Aurora Boyd, *Secretary*
Andrew Anderson
Olive Reynolds
Julie Tomaro
Lizzy Haucke

GENERAL MANAGER

Jan Rasikas

The Board meets at 6:30pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. Meetings are hosted virtually for now. Changes are posted on the VFC website. To make a presentation or ask questions at a meeting, please contact a Board member 10 days in advance. Contact the Board at: vfcbod@viroquafood.coop

PUBLICATION TEAM

Jen McCoy
Writing, Editing
Shana Meshbeshier
Design, Editing, Writing
Haley Stafslie
Design, Photography

The Heart Beet is intended as a vehicle for communication among VFC owners & shoppers. Articles pertaining to health and nutrition are presented for informational purposes only. VFC recommends consulting a healthcare professional for medical problems and advice.

The Heart Beet is printed and available in-store monthly. A digital copy is available online at: viroquafood.coop/vfc-publications

Cover photo credit: Haley Stafslie
Location: Keewaydin Farms
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VFC News

Celebrating local food

It's peak season for local produce at VFC! We are proud to work with over 200 local farmers and producers to get you the freshest locally-grown food for your table. Choose local to help build our local food economy,

support our community of farmers and producers, and keep your meals extra fresh and always in season. Our offerings are always changing so stop by the produce department often to see what's new!



New lower prices

Look for the *new lower price* signs on many items throughout the store! By working with other cooperatives through the help of National Co-op

Grocers (NCG), together we are able to leverage our buying power to pass on lower pricing to you!

Fresh food – fast!

As we say goodbye to summer and adjust to new routines, the fantastic folks in our prepared foods departments are working hard to provide you with easy, delicious, and nutritious meal options that will make you the hero of your homestead.

from our deli

For breakfast, lunch, and dinner, our deli has great options for life on the go. Our hot bar is open at 7am daily with a variety of healthy breakfast options including oatmeal with your favorite toppings, breakfast sandwiches, and breakfast burritos. If you are looking for lunch or dinner on the fly, our grab-n-go is the perfect place to pick up family-sized salads, take-n-bake pizzas, sandwiches, and tasty sides. And our "made to order" burrito bar

is a great option for a hot meal on the go!

from our bakery

For special occasions or an everyday treat, our bakery has some great options that are made in house and with great ingredients! Our 8x8 pans of cakes and brownies, *plain or with walnuts*, are the perfect thing to satisfy your sweet tooth. Or pick up your favorite VFC cookies sold in singles

or 3-packs to eat on the go or savor with a cup of hot coffee. You can even buy VFC cookie dough in 6-packs to heat them and eat them fresh at home.

from our butcher

Do you need a quick and easy meal? Pick up our pre-marinated chicken breasts that are ready to stir-fry, sauté or bake, then serve on a sandwich, in a salad, or with a delicious side! Flavors include Thai Curry, Cilantro Garlic, and more!





Local Producer Profile

Keewaydin Farms

At the end of a dirt road deep in the Driftless Region, there sits a 200-acre paradise called Keewaydin Farms. Overlooking the rolling hills are no-till produce plots and greenhouses teeming with edible vegetation, waiting in anticipation to be harvested by Rufus Haucke and Joy Miller, the heart and soul behind Keewaydin Farms, as well as their farm crew.

Keewaydin Farms hasn't always been yielding luscious produce though. Rufus's parents, Richard and Mary Haucke, originally founded it in 1976 as a dairy farm. Rufus spent his early years on the farm and learned from them about their strong beliefs and their roles as stewards of the land. Growing up, Rufus didn't see himself as a dairy farmer, but as he grew, his appreciation for farm-to-table produce did too.

Today, Rufus and his wife Joy (pictured right) have built a life they love. Between running their own CSA program, attending local farmers markets, supplying the Viroqua Food Co+op and Willy Street Co-ops



"I had a couple of experiences coming back from college to visit the farm. There, I had a spiritual awakening regarding the life that I had lived here and the possibility of having a career here as a farmer."

—Rufus Haucke

and many surrounding restaurants with produce, Rufus and Joy have also started sharing their farm with the community through their events and new nonprofit organization, *Driftless Curiosity*. Learn more about it at: driftlesscuriosity.org

How did you start selling produce to the Viroqua Food Co+op?

We've been with the Co-op since the transition between the little store to the location it's at now. I set up a meeting with the produce buyer, Dani Lind, who stopped me a few minutes into the meeting and said "Rufus, I'm sorry. I thought you were here for another farm. We work with so many other producers and we just can't bring in Keewaydin." I was a little heartbroken. I saw her a few weeks later at the Viroqua Farmer's Market and she saw my rainbow carrots and said "Hey! We don't have those so maybe we can get those at the VFC!" We've been at the Co-op selling lots of different produce ever since.

What does being a vendor at the VFC mean to you?

It's been a wonderful relationship. The VFC has been a consistent customer for us through my whole farming career and that is absolutely unique because we feel we have a partnership with the Co-op. One of the risks is investing in the infrastructure and growing all of the crops, then not knowing if you will have a market to sell the produce. The relationship that we have with the VFC means that those crops are already sold before we plant them. Not only is that important, but the relationships are also genuine.

What was your biggest struggle during the Covid-19 pandemic and how did it effect your farm?

We hate to say it, but it was actually a

positive experience. We think people stopped taking food for granted and it brought people out who want to be involved in the process. The pandemic has also given us extra time to reexamine and reprioritize what we really believe in and are passionate about. We've been able to continue practicing new farming techniques such as a no-till farming method.

What is a no-till technique?

No-till is a farming practice where instead of tilling the ground to prepare for new crops, you just add nutrient-rich compost on top of the existing soil. It's been treating us well.

What are you most proud of?

I'm most proud of enduring failure and persevering in a difficult business.

What's next for the farm?

With some help, we've started a new nonprofit called *Driftless Curiosity*. A part of it is hosting classes out on the farm while teaching a broad range of topics. We hope to bring people out here to expose them to the beauty that we see every day and help them learn new things. As humans, we have such a small sliver of understanding nature and we feel it's important to stay curious about life and all of the wonderful things this planet has to offer. Be sure to follow our Facebook pages for daily posts about the farm and about *Driftless Curiosity* events!



VFC Election

Owners vote: September 20-October 20, 2021

VFC Owners – get your owner numbers ready – it’s time to vote!

Here’s how to submit your vote:

- 1) Owners with a current email address on file receive a link to access the online voting site.
To update or add your email to our database, click on “e-mail sign up” when you go to www.viroquafood.coop
- 2) Owners without a current email on file but with a current street address listed will receive a postcard with a login to access the online voting system.
- 3) Owners without a current email nor current mailing address can request a paper ballot in the store.

Save the date!

“Virtual” Annual Owners Meeting
Wednesday, October 20 • 6-7:30pm

Link to attend available when you RSVP online;
follow website link below for meeting details!

viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors/election-2021

VFC Board recommends Bylaw change

Original language is listed below. The Board recommended updates are in green text to the right, along with the justification for the change.

Current Language: Bylaw Section IV, 4.8

Directors shall be compensated by a \$100 per month VFC gift card. The President shall receive a \$125 per month VFC gift card.

New Language: Bylaw Section IV, 4.8

Directors shall be compensated by a **\$150** per month VFC gift card. **The Vice President shall receive a \$175 per month VFC gift card.** The President shall receive a **\$200** per month VFC gift card.

Justification: *The last increase to the Board stipend was in 2007. VFC’s growth year over year demands more time and greater responsibilities.*

Vote for two candidates

“What is your motivation to serve on the Viroqua Food Co+op Board of Directors and what do you hope to gain through your participation on the Board?”



Peter Bergquist – Incumbent, running for 3-year term

The VFC is an integral part of our vibrant community and our local food economy. As a VFC Board member and representative of its member-owners it is a privilege to serve the interest of the VFC mission to provide access to healthy and sustainable food. Having access to high quality and local food is what brought me to this community. As a Board member I will continue to do the work needed to uphold the democratic principles of our cooperative so that it best serves the community. It is our responsibility, as members of the community and the VFC, to sustain and grow the value we create together.



Elizabeth Tigan – Incumbent, running for 3-year term

I have appreciated the past three years of service to the VFC and the opportunity to play a role in how the Co-op works. We are VERY fortunate to live where we live and have this amazing resource available to us. I am glad to be a part of making sure the Co-op “meets the ends” statement which loosely translates to: the VFC exists so that our community is empowered and... has access to socially and environmentally responsible products and services; and... we have access to health food; and... we have a flourishing cooperative economy; and... we have a sustainable environment. I am very proud that through it all we are meeting our end goals.



Steve Tippins – New Candidate, running for 3-year term

Seven years ago we moved out of Vernon County for adventures in Costa Rica and Oregon. We moved back just over a year ago and I am ready to reengage in the community that we love. I want to be part of the post-Pandemic reenvisioning of how the Co-op fits in the community.

Vote for one candidate



Andrew Anderson – Appointed, running for 1-year term

Participation on the Board of Directors is an incredible opportunity to be of service to the membership and community by supporting the VFC through its continued growth, stabilization, challenges and opportunities. I believe my experience in co-ops, natural/organic grocery and food service would provide useful and sound perspective to the Board of Directors. It would be an extreme honor and privilege to contribute to this mission driven organization’s ongoing success.

Full candidate profiles & videos, proposed bylaw changes, along with Annual Owners Meeting information on our website at:
viroquafood.coop/board-of-directors/election-2021

Give Where You Live

“Round Up” for local nonprofits to make a bigger impact!

Visit viroquafood.coop/community-outreach for a complete schedule.

Round up this month for McIntosh Memorial Library

McIntosh Memorial Library is an inspiring beacon of lifelong learning, bringing knowledge alive, sparking imagination, and creating possibility for a vibrant and creative Viroqua. McIntosh Memorial Library is a member of the Winding Rivers Library System and offers programming for patrons of all ages, with a special emphasis on children's programming for youth ages 2-18.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a glass dropper, dispensing a yellow liquid into a small, dark blue ceramic cup. The background is softly blurred, showing green foliage and a pinecone.

\$10 off
for VFC Owners
Viroqua
food  **coop**

Featured Driftless Folk School Class:
Bitters for Your Health
Learn about bitters & craft your own!
Saturday, Sept. 18 • 9:30am-12pm

See all discounted classes with QR code below!



in partnership with the
Driftless Folk School

DFS classes fill up fast so pre-register online today!