



Life In The Valley

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CEO Letter to the Patrons



Dave Holtom
Chief Executive Officer

October is Co-op Month – a sound reason to celebrate.

Back in 2010, Forbes Magazine published an article about how the Great Recession of 2008 was going to produce a “new” business model. ⁽¹⁾ A business model who’s focus was less about capitalistic greed and profit, and more about integrity, transparency and a true desire to meet the needs of the customer. Surprisingly, the article went on to say that that business model already exists – in the Cooperative. It’s a business model that has proven to embody a corporate social responsibility in times of both crisis and prosperity. Why is that? Because we are owned and directed by people that hold those same social responsibilities and values to be important in their families and the businesses they run as individuals. Here is an excerpt from the article:

“A cooperative is a democratically run business whose members are also its owners. There are some 29,000 of them in all sectors of the American economy. They have revenues that exceed \$3 trillion and employ 856,000 people. Household names among them include Ace Hardware, Ocean Spray, the Associated Press, True Value Hardware and Sunkist.

Many co-ops exist to bring services to millions of people who would otherwise lack them. Much of rural America, geographically marginalized, didn’t have electricity until residents formed utilities cooperatives during the Great Depression. In the 1970s, communities joined together to create food co-ops. Moreover, in many major U.S. cities, housing cooperatives provide almost the only way people with lower incomes can afford to own homes.

All these cases reflect the basic value that guides cooperatives, a value that has set them apart in the current economic crisis. To put it simply, they exist to serve people’s needs rather than to maximize profit.

With their shared ownership, cooperatives serve their members’ needs democratically. They offer each member-owner a vote in board elections and a say in the running of the business, thus establishing a greater degree of mutual responsibility and accountability than in investor-owned companies. Member-owners answer to one another rather than to outside investors, and that interrelationship tends to minimize fraudulent, deceptive and damaging behavior.”

Not bad coming from Forbes. I don’t know if I could have said it better. The cooperative business model reflects the same core principles that describe this nation as a Democratic Republic. Does it work perfect – obviously not, but would we want any other system of government? No.

In contrast, both privately held, and investor owned, firms operate under a system with built-in conflicts of interest with that of the customers they serve. That is, they are in it for a profit first and foremost. I’m not saying they can’t be good companies, but fundamentally, they are in stark contrast with the cooperative business model because there is not a direct connection between the customer and the investors of the company. Case in point: AIG. The giant finance company that was the recipient of the largest bailout of the recession – some \$90 billion. Yet the investors in companies like AIG have escaped with a clean conscience, because they don’t feel any direct connection to the foreclosures on people’s homes that AIG’s actions produced. Someone should have gone to prison for what they did.

Some other key points:

- Members/patrons have a voice. Built into the principles of Cooperative membership is “one member, one vote”. No favoritisms, no way to buy influence.
- Transparency – we promote participation through our annual meetings.
- Local commitment – to both the communities we do business in and the cultures represented in those communities.
- Ownership – you gain your right to ownership by using the products and services promoted by your Cooperative. It’s entirely your choice and right.
- Control and direction – your co-op is governed by a Board of Directors elected by you, from among you.
- Wealth distribution – not dictated by any one individual, and not mandated by decree. The wealth of the company is shared equitably by an amount equal to your level of participation. Also, we share in both the success and lack of success – good times and bad. There are no entitlements.

The Cooperative is truly a community business. Valley Wide’s best interests are embedded in, and directly associated with, the interest of those in the communities we serve.

Regarding your Cooperative – Valley Wide. Honestly, when your Board of Directors meet each month, there is just as much time and effort spent on addressing the needs of the customers as there is on the financial condition and economic performance of the company. We, as a team, strive to make improvements in the way we do business, not only because we want to perform well, but because we know who owns the company and who we ultimately are accountable to. There is a direct connection between the investor, customer and those who are employed by the company that results in a business model completely different than any other business out there. Valley Wide Cooperative is your company. It’s vibrant, growing, serving and striving to improve every day for the benefit of its owners – and that’s worth celebrating.

Dave Holtom, CEO

⁽¹⁾ Hansen, Paul. “Cooperatives: A Better Kind of Corporation.” Forbes.com, Forbes Media LLC, 13 May 2010, <https://www.forbes.com/2010/05/13/cooperatives-co-op-leadership-citizenship-ethisphere.html>.



Five Divisions Of Service

Chairman's Message

It's hard to believe that another season is coming to a close. It seems like just yesterday that the snow was melting off the ground, the grass was starting to turn green, and the equipment was being pulled out of the shed and being prepared for the field. From that point until now has been a blur, at least for me. Now harvest is just beginning, is currently underway, or is behind us, depending on where you live. I say this because Valley Wide now serves members in Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and southern Washington. Throughout that geography the crops are largely diversified and the growing season greatly differs. The culture in the different communities the cooperative serves is also different. Despite that, Valley Wide strives to serve and meet the specific needs of farm supplies, fuels and lube, propane, feed, and agronomy in those communities we serve.



The Cooperative system is a great system because it is owned by the people it does business with. The board of directors are elected by the members of the cooperative to represent the members' interests. The board consists of farmers, ranchers, and agribusinessmen that live throughout varying communities that Valley Wide serves. Right now, the board consists of 10 board members; two from district one, five from district two, and three from district three. Each director serves for a three-year term, with a term limit of four. Though each director helps make decisions for the company as a whole, we hope to be a resource in the districts we reside. We do this by observing Valley Wide's local operations and listening to the needs of the local members. Each of us can then discuss in our board meetings the specific needs of the different locations and give direction to management to ensure the highest standard of service in meeting the needs of our members.

Each year elections are held for directors. Last election we tried something new with mail ballots. Ballots for the specific elections in your district were mailed out to voting members several weeks prior to the annual meeting. Ballots were mailed back and results were tallied and presented at the annual meeting. Overall, it was very successful. Each race last election was also contested and we would like to see that continue. If you are a voting member in good standing and would like to represent the members of the cooperative, or know of someone that meets the qualifications and you think would do a good job, please contact a board member in your district. Even though we are still months away, with the time it takes to prepare and mail the ballots, I would recommend filling out your application early. Before we know it, all the crops will be harvested, the land tilled, snow will cover the ground, and the annual meeting will be upon us. I hope everyone has a good and safe harvest.

The Passing of a Menan Monument



By: Sean Durham

Contributor: Robert Poole

The ride down the long dusty road was worth it for the excitement of arriving for the penny candies and nickel soda pop that were awaiting at the destination. Upon arriving, farmers would be hanging around shooting the breeze and passing the time. A neighbor from down the street was getting his car repaired in the shop, and a friend who rode with you into town was playing with the burst of air that would come down and ring the bell when the door opened. Memories similar to these and more are what many remember about the Menan Coop building, which was torn down in July of 2017.

Built around 1938, the tan brick building was a centerpiece to the community and a nice hang out spot for many. It had a full-service auto shop, which was originally in what was the feed area before being retired. The store had been remodeled several times, including the bathrooms being moved inside the building in 1997. It had been part of the Menan Coop until the merger between Menan and Madison Coop in 1998, to create Valley Wide Cooperative. The building was highlighted by its tower which stood out among all the buildings in the area.

With some ash from the 4th of July fireworks still lying on the roof, the building was torn down Saturday, July 8th. It still had the original tan bricks that were there after being built. The “COOP” sign that was on the tower is now in the new store across the street, toward the back of the store, helping a piece of its legacy to live on, signifying the tradition that is kept, even with the newness and modern look of the new facility. Valley Wide continues to offer the same level of service and attention, as was the case many years before.

*We would love to receive any stories you have about your memories of the coop building that was torn down. If you are so inclined to share, please send them to customersupport@valleywidecoop.com, or mail them to:
Attn. Sean Durham, 1833 S Lincoln Ave, Jerome, ID 83338.





A "Wiser" Built Tradition



By: Sean Durham

What do you think of when you hear the word tradition?

You may think of Tevye singing about his village Anatevka in the classic musical "Fiddler on the Roof." You may think of Native Americans dressed in their ritual clothing singing around a campfire in the 1800's. Or you could be thinking about that great Thanksgiving dinner and football with the family every year. Traditions are such an influential part of our lives, and have a role in helping us become who we are. They are the legacy our parents, grandparents and so on, have left in our lives. As we continue those traditions, we help their legacy to live on in our lives and the lives of our children.

I had the great opportunity of spending some time with the Wiser Family, in Lewiston, Utah, who have had a long tradition of farming and raising dairy cows. Wallace Wiser started the farm many decades ago and the farm has been passed down through the generations, being passed first to his son Brad. Now, Brad's son Cody has been starting to take the reins and continue with the Wiser tradition. Cody started helping out around the farm when he was about 12 years old, and continued taking on more responsibilities as time went on, all the way up until now, where he has taken on most of the responsibilities related to managing the farm. Their farm has grown to a little over 200 acres of farmable ground and 125 Holstein dairy cows. They currently have 3 full time employees and 2 part-time high school kids who work on the farm with them. On their farm ground, they produce what they use for their cattle, which includes hay, barley and corn. I asked Cody what he liked about farming and raising cattle, and he said, "What I like most is you get a little bit of variety of everything... One day you might be a mechanic and the next day you might be a vet."

For many years now, they have provided milk for Gossners Foods in Logan, Utah. The milk is used only for cheese products, primarily for swiss cheese. The quality of milk they produce is shown by the several awards they have received over the years. Cody expressed, "Gossner's has been a great company to work with, and I can't say enough good things about them." Cody recently received a 15-year quality bonus award from them.

The Wisers used Franklin County Grain Growers for many years and have "been doing business with Valley Wide ever since they took over [Grain Growers]," stated Cody. They have Valley Wide Coop roll their barley and add it to the custom feed mix that Valley Wide blends for their cows. He continued, "We get our flaked corn, cottonseed, and our mineral mix from Valley Wide. Pretty much everything we put in our grain mix comes from the Coop."



5 Divisions Of Service



When asked about his experience with Valley Wide Coop, Cody replied “I would tell [other people] that they are a great company. That all their workers, all the way from the feed manager Shaun, all the way to employees in the feed mill, the ladies in the office, and the people in the agronomy department. They are friendly and knowledgeable. They are just good genuine people...All around they are a great company.”

Cody grew up in a family of six and was the only boy with three older sisters. He married his wife Bailey and has two boys, Gage and Easton. He is currently studying Ag Systems Technology with a minor Ag Business in Dairy Science.



Giving Back

Valley Wide Cooperative has had the opportunity to give back to communities in many ways, and appreciates the good causes that these organizations support. Thank you for all you do! We wish we could support all the requests that come in to us, but as anyone could imagine, we are unfortunately not able to.

**Bonneville County
Cattleman's
Association
\$2,500**



**Fremont County
Historical Society \$1,000**



**High Desert Bucking Bull
Association \$750**



**Jerome High School
\$250 in Gift Cards**



**Wyoming Lincoln County 4H
\$1,500**



**Mini Cassia Search & Rescue Extrication
Two-Burner Camp Chef Stove**



**Vale, Oregon Fire Department
\$3,000**

Ensuring Fuel Quality



By: Marty Humphries – Refined Fuels Division Manager

Harvest has been completed for some of our members and still going strong for others. Now is a great time for taking a good look at your fuel volume and tank conditions to ensure that your equipment continues to run efficiently. Diesel engines power more than two-thirds of all farm equipment, move 90 percent of products and pump one-fifth of the water in the United States. Farm tractors, combines, irrigation pumps and other equipment are the workhorses in an industry vital to our national economy and quality of life. U.S. agriculture is among the most productive and economically valuable in the world.

Fuel quality plays a major part in your operation. It's that time of year to determine how much winter additive to add to your existing fuel along with any deliveries that

are being made to safeguard against any downtime due to fuel gelling. We recommend a quality additive such as Power Service Fuel Supplement. This additive helps prevent fuel gelling, protects against fuel filter icing and boosts cetane for faster starts. It also contains Slickdiesel Lubricator to protect fuel pumps and injectors from increased wear caused by Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD) fuel. Cummins, Inc. now endorses and recommends Power Service products for use in their diesel engines.

Our Refined Fuels managers and sales team would be happy to meet with you to determine your fuel and oil needs. They keep up to date on products and services through attending classes and completing on-line courses to better assist our members in making decisions for their operations.

Farmers Be Heard



By: Sean Durham

At a not-too-balmy 82° F and relatively low humidity, the evening in Washington, DC was a fairly pleasant one, considering what it typically would be for a June evening. Among several other people from schools and other organizations visiting the capital, Alan Clark was standing at the feet of the monument of one of the most influential Presidents of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln. He was ready for an adventure. He was ready to make an impact.

Alan had the privilege of being a part of the National Council for Farm Cooperatives (NCFC), which included traveling to our nation's capital between June 25-28 with a couple of board members from Land-O-Lakes, the Land-O-Lakes DC team members, and individuals from other farms. The visit was to lobby lawmakers, more especially senators and representatives, to help them to understand the importance of making sure tax reform and other laws do not negatively impact farms and cooperatives, focusing more on pending tax reform that has been proposed. They spoke to the senators and congressmen about the Farm Bill and how it was important to make sure Crop Insurance was not cut from it.

Alan commented, "That was one of the things that President Trump was thinking about cutting. So [we] wanted the Congress and Senate to know how important those were to farmers' infrastructure. [We] wanted to let them know there is a difference between city life and city infrastructure and out here in the rural communities. We stressed that we don't need toll roads out here in the rural areas."

The group that Alan was with visited the offices of Senator Mike Crapo, Senator James Risch, Representative Mike Simpson, as well as congressmen from Indiana and Pennsylvania, in the Senate Office Buildings and in the House Office Buildings located on both sides of the Capitol Building. They were able to speak directly with Senator Risch, and spoke with staff members from Senator Crapo and Representative Simpson's teams. Alan spoke of his experience of visiting their offices: "Not only was I able to advocate for ag, but it gives me a greater respect for our congressmen and our senators... They have so much going on and so little time to do what they have to do." Immigration was another topic they touched on while visiting with the senator and congressmen. Alan said they emphasized that "in the immigration bill, they need to make sure they have a guest worker program, so we can have a work force for agriculture."

When asked about what he felt was the most important lesson he learned from the experience, he said "I think that the most important thing that I took from it is that someone like myself can go and advocate and make a difference. It's about getting out there and doing something. There's so many different ways of being involved. It's great to have people like Valley Wide and Land O Lakes to give us the opportunity to have our voices heard."

Alan is a resident of Menan, Idaho. His family has been involved with Valley Wide Cooperative for multiple generations.





We'd love to hear from you!

Do you know of something or someone that has a story worth telling?

Tell us about it.

Please email customersupport@valleywidecoop.com or go to valleywidecoop.com/about/contact-us to send us your recommendation.

Connect with us:

