



Board of Directors 2008-2009

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Rhea Sullivan, Secretary
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Board meetings are the third Wednesday of each month and any co-op member is welcome to attend—please email or call the co-op a couple of days in advance: info@lindenhills.coop or 612-922-1159. You may also email the board at board@lindenhills.coop.

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International Principles of Cooperation

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Rollin' Oats Journal

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Linden Hills Co-op's web site is at www.lindenhills.coop.

Linden Hills Co-op and Linden Hills Natural Home are proud members of the National Cooperative Grocers Association.



Board Report Co-op Conference = Co-op "Kool-Aid"

BY RHEA SULLIVAN

I drank the Kool-Aid. Not right away. In fact, it has been a long, slow journey for me from the Linden Hills resident who first wandered into the old store on Upton Avenue to the co-op board member I am today.

On that first visit I was overwhelmed. I wasn't sure how things worked. I had a feeling I wasn't really supposed to be there. So I left.

But I kept coming back. I started with small purchases. No one seemed to realize I didn't belong. I loved taking home the little brown bags filled with nuts or fruit. They were like some kind of holiday gift to myself.

I took a job working for the neighborhood years ago and met Jeanne Lakso, and suddenly I had a personal link to the store. As I worked to build community in the neighborhood, I began to understand that the co-op was a vital part of the community, a hub, a gathering place, a place to find sustenance—not just food, but friends.

I watched the little co-op grow and stretch and move around the corner to its present location. I was dazzled by the new space and fascinated by the idea that the co-op was owned by its members. Even though my family wasn't interested in organic food, I felt I needed to be part of it. So I became a member.

My journey from member-owner to board member wasn't a straight path and I don't have space here to explain it. I sought to join the Board because I was hungry to learn more about our mission and I hoped that I could put my community building skills to work for the co-op.

Over the past couple of years, my learning has been non-stop. One of the



Rhea Sullivan

perks of being a board member is the opportunity to attend the Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) Conference, which is held annually in different venues. This year Brian Shields and I were the lucky board members who attended the conference in Pittsburgh, PA, along with co-op staffers Becky Nichols and Jolene Parker.

The conference for me was a turning point.

I attended workshops where I learned how to be a better leader, heard from 15 co-ops nationwide who shared their sustainability successes, learned more about opportunities for cooperation among cooperatives and much more. At the workshop on Member Linkage, I learned there are many different reasons why people join the co-op and all are good. We need to appreciate the diversity of member needs and motivations and find ways to connect with members where they are. I gathered ideas and strategies for making those connections.

Best of all, I had the chance to share ideas with people from other co-ops across the country who are working on the same issues we are.

I came back from CCMA fired up to put what I learned to work, and believing that, with my new knowledge and the connections I made, I will be a much more effective Board member.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to "drink the Kool-Aid." Want a sip?

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Membership Meeting Thursday, October 29

At press time, details were still in development—but we cordially invite all Linden Hills Co-op member-owners to mark your calendars for this year's annual membership meeting. We'll hear about the successes and challenges of the past fiscal year—and learn about plans for the future. Speakers, food, and a chance to get to know YOUR co-op's staff and board. No Kool-Aid, thought! Look for details in the October-November newsletter or on line at www.lindenhills.coop.

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Co-op Member Spotlight

Keiko Veasey, EcoParent

BY KATHY GERHARDT

It was music to Keiko Veasey's ears. Her four year old daughter was about to throw something away when she turned to her mother and asked "compostable garbage or regular garbage?"

"She will hold something up and ask 'Is this recyclable? Can this go in the recycling?'" shared Veasey. "It is just really fun to see the next generation grow up with that as the standard expectation [that] it doesn't automatically go in the trash: there are alternatives."

"Alternatives" is a good word to use in this case. Veasey—a product of the strong Madison, WI, co-op community and a Linden Hills Co-op member for the last nine years—has taken that desire for finding alternatives and turned it into a budding neighborhood organization, Linden Hills EcoParents.

The group was Veasey's brainchild. This stay-at-home mother of two young children had the right background, the right enthusiasm and just the right spark to set the wheels in motion a little over a year ago.

"Last year, at the beginning of the year, I read an article in *The New York Times* about a national organization called EcoMom Alliance. And I thought, 'Oh, that is kind of a neat idea' and it percolated in my brain for a couple of months," she recalled.

But Veasey didn't want to limit her pet project to just moms. In fact, one need not be a parent nor a Linden Hills resident to participate; the group welcomes anyone interested in learning more about environmental and sustainable issues.

"I thought Linden Hills would be a really good neighborhood to pull together parents and take an opportunity to learn about environmental issues especially as they related to families and kids. I think there are issues that are acutely of concerns to parents."

Veasey quickly set about finding grant money to get the group up and running. Small grants from the Hennepin County Community POWER (Partners On Waste Education and Reduction) program, the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council's Environmental Committee and the Hendry Family Foundation, along with information and products from Linden Hills Co-op and Natural Home were exactly the kinds of resources she needed.

It became apparent, as she spoke, that this



Keiko with Leo (right) and Kaiya (left).

wasn't the first time Veasey had dipped her toes in this pool. Her background includes a Masters in Public Policy and professionally she has worked in both the environmental and public policy non-profit arenas. It was truly a matter of right time, right place, and right person.

The kickoff meeting of Linden Hills EcoParents took place last October with over twenty people in attendance. The results of an initial survey by these participants helped create a monthly agenda which included different topics and generally a guest speaker to help facilitate their discussions.

"I'm not an expert in all these areas and a lot of issues are ones I want to learn more about, so I will take the time to find someone who does know and bring them in," she explained. "The focus is on things you can do as a household or at a family level ... and because of the grant funding from the Community POWER program, this year has been focused on waste and toxicity issues."

Some of the topics this group covered in its first year included: how to make safer choices in plastic products; identifying, reducing and disposing of household hazardous waste; understanding and doing more recycling; natural body care products; organic gardening and nontoxic lawn care; and hosting "green" parties.

"We try to alternate our topics, because some [things] are really heavy and scary, it's like 'oh are you killing your kids?'" And then there are other

ones that are lighter but no less important," explained Veasey. "We try to structure things in a way so that it isn't about what you *can't* do but rather 'here are options of things you can do' or [providing] information to make better choices or more informed choices."

"If you make people always feel like it is a sacrifice to do the right thing, it is a lot harder. If you can make people aware of the choices available then they can make the choice that works for themselves, their family and their values."

The meeting on plastics was a topic of particular interest to Veasey. As she put it, their speaker "really knew the science and not just the hype." "As a parent you want to do right by your kids and to have the information—real information—to make better choices."

The "green party" topic was definitely a little more fun. Key takeaways included setting up containers for recyclables and compostables, purchasing and planning your food to reduce the amount of waste, thinking in terms of compostable, recyclable or reusable party decorations.

One waste reduction meeting focused on changing purchasing habits while shopping and consciously thinking about the packaging you are bringing into your home. For a family with small children, consider the waste from all those juice boxes versus one large container of juice or one large bag of popcorn instead of individually wrapped microwavable popcorn.

The people pulled together into a group like this one may be at different places with respect to their goals and actions, so that is something the participants and presenters have taken into consideration.

"We are here to support each other. Wherever you are on that continuum of green, we hope that everyone moves at least one step and that [they] have the information to make more informed choices. That's really what it is about."

In other words, it is about alternatives, in thoughts and actions, to help individuals, families, neighborhoods and the greater community. Veasey likens Linden Hills EcoParents to an intimate group moving along on a journey together.

For more information on Linden Hills EcoParents or upcoming meetings and topics, join their Facebook page, check out their blog at lindenhillsecoparents.blogspot.com or send an e-mail to ecoparents@lindenhills.org.