



Life In The **Valley**

Number 6 - January 2018

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www.valleywidecoop.com

CEO Report

Mission – Message – Member Participation

So much of what occupies our time here at Valley Wide has to do with the day-to-day tasks of taking care of the customers. From the Board Room to the back warehouse, buying product, merchandising, storing, mixing, delivering and accounting, it all has to do with meeting the needs of our customers. While these are all important job functions, running a successful business requires we do other things equally as well. Things that can't be seen or measured but if left undone, could impact the momentum, morale and future success of any organization, especially a Cooperative organization where teamwork is critical. Defining the mission, getting the message out and actively promoting member participation are three of those things that are critical to our success.

Mission – a cooperative needs a well-defined mission statement that defines why they are in business. For Valley Wide, that mission is to:

“Provide quality products and services at a value that both the company and customer enjoy. We do this with respect to the communities we do business in and the environments that we impact.”

Everything we do beyond that needs to comply with our mission statement. The Board and management teams take this very seriously, to the point that we revisit our mission statement every year to ensure that what we are doing lines up with our objective. Are we on track with our marching orders?

A mission statement sets the bar of performance. It identifies what's important to the company. It communicates to the employees why they do what they do.

Message – Think about all the work that goes into raising kids so they turn out right. How many parents have made the mistake of thinking the answer is to simply provide good things to them and they will turn out OK – only to find the opposite was true. Providing good things is commendable, but at some point you have to sit them down and communicate the important things in life – eye-to-eye. Parents need to “tell their story” as to why certain things are important. You cannot communicate that by just providing good things to them. For example, Monsanto thought that if they were to provide genetically modified plant varieties that were disease and weed resistant (thus requiring less pesticide use) the world would love them. The opposite is true – why? Because they didn't tell the story as to WHY, and the world rejected the effort.

The same holds true for our organization. So much effort goes into providing good things (a product, service, price or program) and very little effort goes into communicating with our employee base or

customer base; the “why” we do certain things as a cooperative. What sets us apart from the rest of the industry? What things are valuable to us and why? What is this company’s legacy or history and how has that affected where we are at today or will be tomorrow?



Dave Holtom
Chief Executive Officer

Our goal this year was to develop and implement a comprehensive Communications Plan because we recognize that we needed to improve in our communications efforts to both our employees and our customers. Our company shares a tremendous history and legacy with our industry of agriculture. We have an obligation to get that message out. This publication is an effort to do just that. We hope to give you a look into your cooperative, the members that do business with us, and the employees that make it all happen.

Member Participation – The cooperative principle of “one member, one vote” is foundational to our cooperative way of business. The fact that a customer who spends \$2,500 has an equal vote to the one who spends \$250,000 is foreign to most, but for us it protects this company from becoming a company only for the largest customers. The opposite is true as well – that we don’t focus solely on the small guy either. In summary, everyone who is a member – no matter their size or enterprise - has a say.

In order for this system to work, it requires one thing....that members vote!

However, it goes further than just voting on the issues. As a cooperative, our producer members govern us. The Board of Directors is comprised of nine producers elected from across our trade area. These producers dictate the policies, the values we operate by, the direction we go as a company, and monitor and hold accountable those who run the business for them. They are accountable and report to the membership. This is no small task for a company with close to \$500 million in sales. In order for this to work, we need to be willing and able participants who can devote the time needed to fulfill the duties.

The Valley Wide Board of Directors recognize that their seat on the board is not a legacy seat. They actively look for members to participate in the election process every year to ensure that those who lead this company are selected by the membership and that the membership is given a choice during that election process. We are committed to recruiting, training and sustaining the right leadership for this company from among our members. When given the opportunity, I would encourage you to challenge yourself, step out, and experience firsthand, the workings of this great cooperative that our heritage established almost 100 years ago.

Mission-Message-Member Participation – it’s the Cooperative way.

Thank you for your patronage!

Dave Holtom, CEO

Chairman's Message

The first of a new year has always been a time to reflect on what we have achieved over the past twelve months, or at least what we had hoped to achieve. It is also a time to reassess where we are and to set new goals for the upcoming year. Every year I set personal goals as well as goals for my farming operation. Unfortunately, sometimes there are factors outside of my control that don't allow me to accomplish the goals I have set. For example, \$3 a bushel wheat and 3rd crop hay that was rained on for a month straight did not help me reach my financial plan. There are many things that are out of our control, so we must make adjustments to compensate for those variables. We were forced to reassess our situation and make the necessary changes to our plan to move our operation forward.

Similarly, it was one of those years for Valley Wide Coop. We had a strategic and financial plan in place, had the resources and people necessary to accomplish those plans, but factors outside of our control made it difficult to achieve everything we wanted to. Despite low market prices and bad weather at the wrong times, I would have to say the employees of Valley Wide Coop worked hard and adapted to meet the needs of the customers. If it wasn't for their hard work and making changes mid-season, things would not have turned out as well as they did. We still didn't make plan, but we came out ahead of where we would have been if we hadn't been willing to make hard choices such as cutting back in labor and other expenses, as well as employing new sales tactics.

This year, Valley Wide is committed more than ever to serving its customers and striving to meet their individual needs. Time is taken in every board meeting to discuss customer service and the importance of it in our strategic plan. Additional plans for this upcoming year include:

Attract and retain the best employees - The coop is only as good as the people working here. The board feels that we have some of the best employees in this business. Like I said, without their hard work and dedication to the coop and members they serve, we wouldn't be where we are today. We will continue to hire the best people and do what we can to keep them.

Cross Marketing - Valley Wide has a wide variety of supplies and services to offer. It is our hope that if we earn your agronomy business, we can also earn your business for propane, fuel and lubes, feed, retail farm supplies and whatever you may need to assist in the success of your operation.

Reinvesting in Infrastructure - As part of our long-term strategy, we will also continue to reinvest in our facilities. We strive to keep up-to-date with technology and supply the tools necessary for our employees to be successful. This past year, we opened a state-of-the-art fertilizer facility in Pocatello and Travel Center in Twin Falls. We have also reset several of our retail stores, putting in new pumps and canopies. We have added additional bulk fuel and propane storage and updated our delivery trucks. All in an effort to better serve Valley Wide's customers.

Partnerships - Over the years, Valley Wide has created strategic partnerships with suppliers, as well as other cooperatives. These partnerships allow us to acquire products for less, help us minimize our risk, share resources, and many other benefits. Valley Wide will continue to seek out partnerships that mutually benefit us and our partners. These benefits can then be passed on to the customers we serve.

It's exciting to look forward to this upcoming year. Know that your cooperative isn't just sitting by as things happen around it. We have a strategic plan in place and are being proactive to ensure the success of your company. As unknown factors come, and we know they will, we will make necessary adjustments, as well as take advantage of opportunities that present themselves.



Adam Clark
Board President



Member Owned since 1920

Our Timeline

Valley Wide Cooperative's story is not a short one. It goes all the way back to 1920, and since then, the cooperative system is still kicking strong because of the nature of it, in always trying to be a system where it is helping to make the lives of farmers and ranchers easier.



Wendell Grange Coop formed

1925

1920

Buhl Coop formed



1938

Menan Coop formed



Our



Madison Coop formed

1942



Producer Supply Coop formed

1966

1960

Producer Supply, and Idaho Grange Coops formed



Timeline



Menan Coop & Madison Coop
merge to Create Valley Wide Coop

1998

1991

Idaho Grange Co-op & Wen-
dell Grange Supply merger
to create Valley Co-ops



2015

Valley Co-ops merges with Valley
Wide Coop

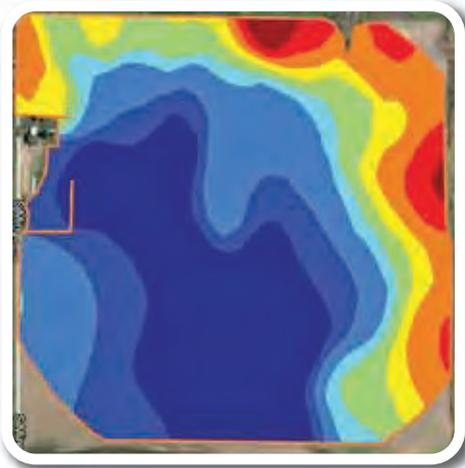


Keep It Simple

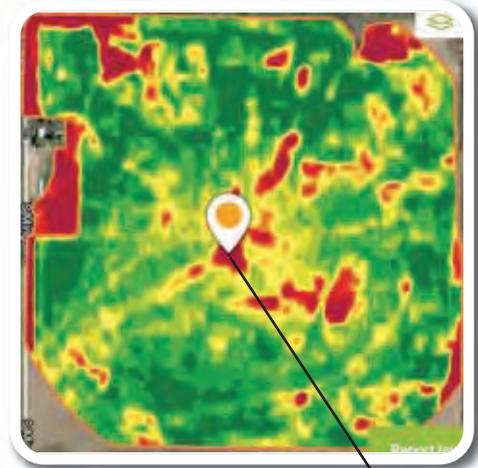
By Connor Lankford:

While going to school, I had a professor who used to tell us lowly undergrads, “just keep it simple stupid.” If there was ever a motto that a precision ag guy should live by, it’s probably that one. Often in Precision Ag we tend to over complicate things. As a result, we end up missing out on some great opportunities to make small management changes that can result in great outcomes. Over the last year, Valley Ag has helped collect a variety of precision data on thousands and thousands of acres. After collecting all this data, the question we get most often is “now what?” It’s a great question, and one where a simple approach should be the starting point. What are some simple things that can be done using Precision data? Setting up a few zone to zone soil samples and variable rate fertilizer application is one that comes to mind. Using some simple topography information that’s been collected to apply fertilizer or soil amendments to ridges and swells differently could be very valuable. In-season imagery from satellites or airplanes could be used for direct tissue sampling efforts as well as scouting efforts. After scouting and detecting a disease or nutritional deficiency, a variable rate application may be feasible, but perhaps an application on part of the field, half the field, or even the whole field is easier and makes more sense. One of my favorite stories from this season is of a grower who took his early-season satellite images, printed them out, and used the printed map to re-plant areas of alfalfa that had died over the winter. High-tech? Maybe not, but it certainly got the job done. Another grower used ultra-high-resolution imagery to identify areas in the spring that were wet, so he could install a drain in the late summer, after the water was gone. Sometimes we worry that if we don’t have the latest, greatest variable rate planter or a sprayer that will inject chemical into the water on the go, we can’t utilize precision ag. Tools like a variable rate planter have a fit and a place, but remembering to “keep it simple” can create a lot of opportunities that can pay big dividends as well.

Elevation maps could be used to apply mixes differently on ridges or swells.



In Season Maps could be used to identify tissue sampling areas.



Tissue Sample Here!

Donations



Date December 9, 2017

Pay to the Order of 7 Cares Idaho Shares **\$15,000**

Fifteen thousand and 00/100 Dollars

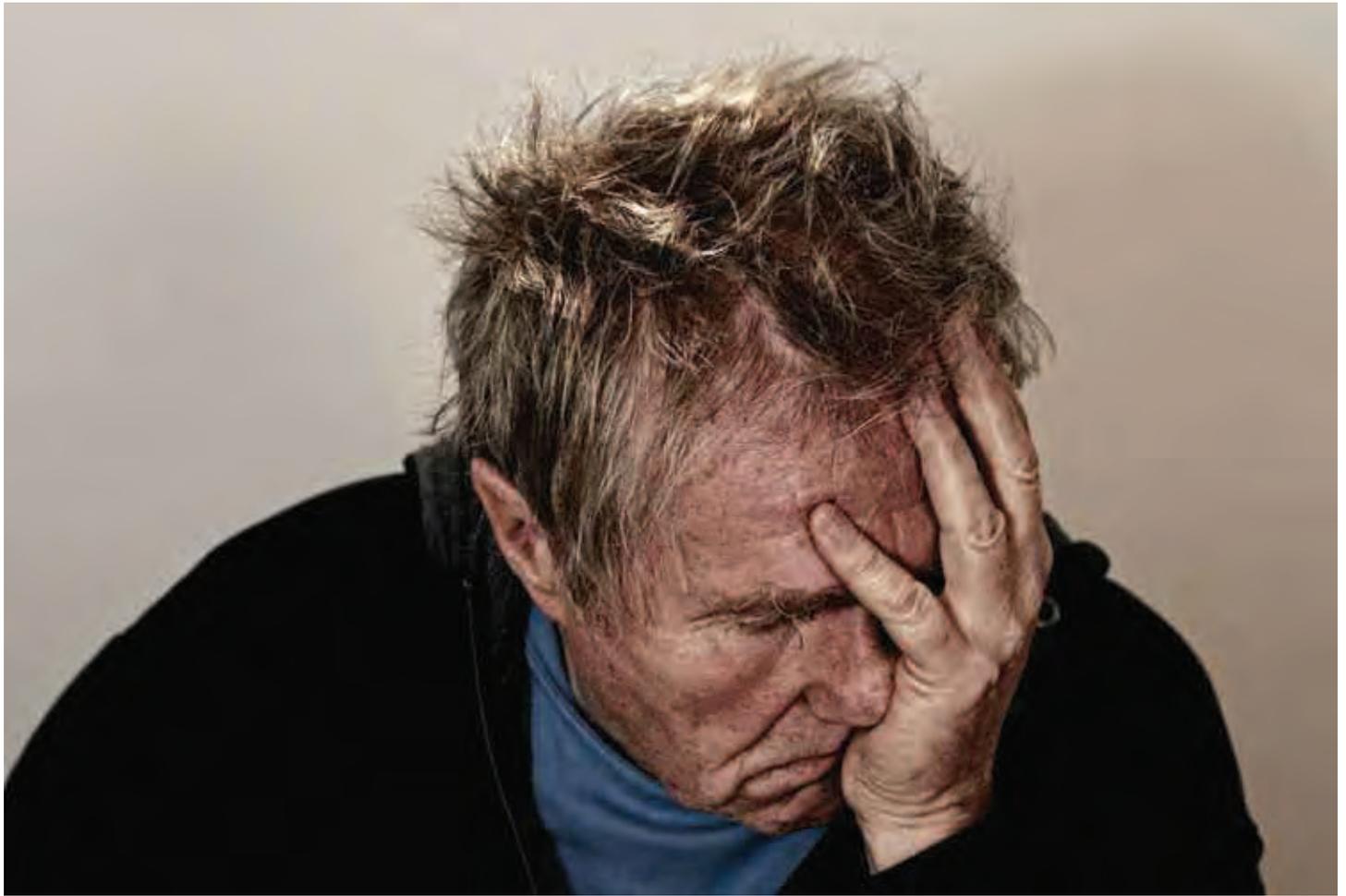
For Idaho Community Foundation David J. Altoon
Valley Wide Coop CEO

December 9, 2017

As has been the tradition, Valley Wide Cooperative, along with Land O'Lakes Inc. were able to participate in the 7 Cares Idaho Shares fundraiser this year. Between Land O' Lakes, Valley Agronomics, and Valley Wide Coop, \$15,000 was donated to the fund. In addition to the monetary donations, over 7 tons of non-perishable food items were donated between customers of the Valley Country Store and Capitol Distributing. Several pallets of potatoes and onions were donated from growers like Jeremy Morris Farms, Magic Valley Growers, Snake River Produce, Muricami Produce, Froerer Farms, Driscoll Brothers, and Mart Produce.

Both monetary and non-monetary items are directed toward several different charities in the Treasure and Magic Valleys. Including, but not limited to, the Salvation Army, homeless shelters, women and children shelters, food banks and more.

We are happy to carry on this standing tradition of being able to give back to the communities we are in to help improve the lives of those who are less fortunate.



Good Will Is Not Dead

By Sean Durham:

Have you ever seen someone leave a valuable object behind, like a wallet, a smartphone, or even a child? Depending on where you live, that valuable object or child could quickly disappear before the person responsible for leaving them behind could come back for them. In this day and age when news of corruption, selfishness, deceit, and hatred dominate the headlines, we thought it would be a welcome break to hear about a decent act performed by an individual.

He was going through some tough times. Bills were piling up, debt collectors calling at every hour, and the money coming in from the crops was just not cutting it anymore. Call it unlucky times, call it mismanagement, or whatever you will, but life was extremely difficult and there was no undoing what had already been done. There was no opportunity to go back and change things. So, in 2004 he had to do what was necessary: declare bankruptcy.

We'll call the unfortunate soul "Aaron." "Aaron" owed some money to the Coop: \$9,611 and some change to be precise. It was one of the many debts he was not able to pay when he declared bankruptcy.



Thirteen years later (just a few weeks ago), we received a call from someone that works for “Aaron”. They asked if we still had the account on file from when “Aaron” was a farmer, and if so, could we tell them how much he owed. They were informed we did have the info and were given the amount of the debt, but that they were under no legal obligation to pay us back for any of it. The employee stated that “Aaron” had gotten back on his feet and wanted to make good on his old debts. He promptly sent a check.

Although it was certainly nice to have the debt repaid, it was many times better, and more important, to see the goodness that man had preserved in his life by being more honest than many people in the world today. He and many others like him are great examples we can all look up to.

*Although this is based on a true story, the name of the individual has been changed, the pictures are not of the actual individual, and few details are meant as a portrayal of how it might have happened.



E-newsletter Sign-up



Sign up for our e-newsletter, as well as other electronic updates about the company and sales for the Valley Country Store.

Go to www.valleywidecoop.com, scroll down on the page until a pop-up shows at the bottom of the window, then fill out the form. You may also email your name and preferred email address to use to customersupport@valleywidecoop.com

Finally, if you would like to make a recommendation on content for this newsletter, please email customersupport@valleywidecoop.com

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