



## *Message from Adama Chair of the Owner Linkage Committee*

Sevananda's Board of Directors are member-owners elected to serve on behalf of all member-owners, to ensure the implementation of their concerns, vision and desires for charting a prospering and profiting direction for our Cooperative. Linkage is the process by which we come to know what those concerns, ideals, ideas, vision and desires are and to create the path of engagement and participation so that Sevananda has benefit of the diverse and vast resources of talent, skill, ability and care of our membership.

Sevananda has almost 4,000 member-owners, the challenge has been getting 250 of those to participate with our current Board of Directors elections. Active participation and engagement of perhaps just 6% which would be about 240 people would be great. The culture that we all have been raised in supports the "many" depending on the "few" to secure their way forward.

Over forty years ago there were four groups of people in Atlanta, who mobilized their care to respond proactively to the various degrees of turmoil from war, classism, systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, the civil rights movement, as well as governmental and police paranoia that sowed the seeds of surveillance and organization infiltration.

The first group (1970-72) was concerned about the declining quality of life in the Little 5 Points (formerly called the Bass district) urban decay, thugs, drugs and slum lords; they formed coalitions, acquired funding, organized demonstrations, and united for a common cause: to take the neighborhood back. These folks knew that buying property and opening businesses would help make this area a wonderful place to live again. One such group was named the *Bass Organization for Neighborhood Development* - or "BOND" for short. They had a bright idea: if banks wouldn't lend to locals to buy their own homes, they'd form their own financial institution starting with a \$2500 loan from the Mennonite Church. **BOND Community Federal Credit Union** was officially chartered in 1972 as a not-for-profit, member-owned financial institution. 40 years later they have over \$40 million in assets and have given over \$160 million dollars in loans to their members.

The second group formed (1973) **Radio Free Georgia Broadcasting Foundation, Inc. WRFG 89.3FM** in Little 5 Points with 10 watts, non-profit, volunteer driven, community-oriented, educational, alternative medium that provides a voice for those who suffer oppression or exploitation based upon class, race, sex, age, creed, national origin or immigrant status. WRFG is for those alternatives that uplift human dignity and give people more control over their lives and is opposed to those forces in our lives that dehumanize and oppress people, especially economic exploitation, racism, sexism, militarism and anti-foreign/anti-immigrant chauvinism. Now WRFG is 100,000 watts of community power operating 24 hours a day generating over \$400,000 a year in operational expenses that is non-commercial listener supported radio.

The third group of people began (1974) as a small group of dedicated enthusiasts searching for a way to buy whole and organic foods, they created **Sevananda Community-Owned Natural Foods Market**. Today, Sevananda is one of the largest natural foods cooperatives in the southeastern United States providing space for over 50 vendors, a member-owner data base of close to 4,000 members and patronage that has created a multi-million-dollar Cooperative enterprise.

The fourth group of people (1975) formed **Shakti Distributes later incorporated as Al Wali dba New Leaf Distributing**, with the intent to provide service towards the wholistic, spiritual, mental, emotional and physical edification and enhancement of the local communities to have a global impact. New Leaf is the world's largest distributor of New-age, Spiritual, Metaphysics and Wholistic health, self-help books, music, ritual, gem, mineral and other energy enhancing products. New Leaf has a sacred intention: to play an active role in fostering individual and collective spiritual awakening by being the nexus of trading partners for commerce in conscious books and other products yielding prosperity for all. Their work serves a cause: the outer planetary crisis reflects the crisis each of us is living and only a change in consciousness can bring us through. Like Sevananda, New Leaf is on the rise from a period of monetary loss, restructuring, but, from its humble beginnings of selling magazines from the back of a car in 1974 to generating over \$30 million in revenue in the mid 90's.

I cite these examples of how a few people starting very humbly with very little money, persevered and followed their care, commitment, vision, and as they grew, provided right livelihood for those employed and service to those who were non-traditional to say the least. Together they easily represent over a quarter of a billion dollars in revenue, exchange of ideas, capital, idealism, activism and millions of families that have benefitted from their efforts towards the greater good of the community at large being better informed, fed, financially empowered and spiritually and mentally supported in walking in the integrity of our true selves.

This now moment requires each of us to take some time to ask ourselves what truly matters. What is our life's contribution? Have we already fulfilled it? What more in membership/owner benefits would be incentive for more active participation? What greater service can we give on behalf of those who paved the way for our greater ease towards self-actualization, and those who still require more assistance into their greater selves? How is it that we have so much available to us but are not well? How do we prosper and what quality of service, ingenuity, creativity and vision can bring forth without being committed to our personal health and wellness? What are your health concerns? What are your talents, skills & abilities?

Join us at the Annual Owner Meeting on July 16, 2017 from Noon – 3pm to get the conversation and visioning started. If you are not a member-owner become one and participate, if you are a member-owner then be active, if your membership has lapsed pay up and get active. Our foundation is strong, we must create a more dynamic conversation, there's a greater work, but it requires personal commitment to be more dynamic in our personal expression of who we are and the willingness to give of ourselves on behalf of the whole and wholeness of our families and communities.

***In the love & light of the Absolute!***

***Adama***

***Board Chair Owner Linkage Committee***

[adama@sevananda.coop](mailto:adama@sevananda.coop), 678-760-9299