

*NPA East's President's Letter*

## Why Your Membership Matters

By John Garvey



Since I became president of your association back in October, I've become much

more aware of the services our small group is able to provide to our membership. I'm especially proud of the dedication shown by our volunteer board of directors and our executive director.

Throughout the year, this small but highly motivated group helps protect our livelihood and, I believe, dramatically improves our chances for success in an uncertain business environment.

That's a big promise. But it's one that NPA East has kept to its members for more than 40 years. In fact, NPA East is the *only volunteer organization* completely dedicated to the needs of natural products retailers in the east region, and the businesses that support them.

Every day, your association exists solely to serve you in a number of critical areas:

- Lobbying on your behalf for fair and reasonable industry regulation
- Protecting you against unfair competition through our partnership with the National organization and its watchdog groups
- Setting the standard for ethical industry practices in our region

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## Retail Spotlight: Michael Smulders

By Michael Pelton, Principal Inner Circle Nutrition, Portland, CT and a member of the NPA East Board of Directors



**Q** *When did you start Garden of Light and why?*

**A** As a 30-year vegetarian myself, I've understood the importance and challenge of eating and staying healthy for a long time, and it's one of the main reasons I opened my first store, Garden of Light, on Main Street in Glastonbury, Connecticut in 1992. In 2000, I opened my second store in Avon, and my brother Tim has done a great job of managing and growing the business every year since then, even during these tough times. I wish I could say the same for my original store, but after Whole Foods opened a store less than a quarter of a mile away, I was forced to close the location in July 2010. It was particularly hard because I had met so many

good friends over the years, but I'm proud of what we did.

**Q** *What motivated you to start BAKERY ON MAIN? Tell us more about this business. How does it compare to your retail store? What's more satisfying for you?*

**A** I was baking when I opened my first store in 1992, so I've always been very involved in gluten-free and vegetarian cooking. Within two years, I had already moved to a larger location in town to expand my bakery. I hired some outstanding local and regional vegan chefs and continued to develop a variety of specialty foods. My retail business was very satisfying over the years,

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**M**ichael is the owner of a retail store, Garden of Light in Avon Connecticut, and **BAKERY ON MAIN**, a purveyor of premium gluten-free granola products in East Hartford, Connecticut.

## Contact Us

Join NPA East at  
[www.npaeast.org](http://www.npaeast.org)

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29 Pickwick Drive  
Marlton, NJ 08053

or call  
856-985-5446

or email  
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## Advocacy Report: Crisis Pending in New York

**I**n New York State, there are three bills pending that, if passed, would materially and permanently affect the survival of every retailer, supplier, and manufacturer in the state:

- S. 3553 A.5669: The “Dietary Supplements Safety Committee would create the equivalent of a local “FDA” in New York State with powers to regulate sales of dietary foods and supplements.
- S3556, Dieticians and Nutritionists Licensure Act would require certification from New York State to sell and recommend dietary supplements to consumers.
- A01396: Dietary Food and Supplements Act would require all dietary supplements sold in New York State to contain a label that notifies consumers that these supplements are not approved or tested by the FDA. The cost alone for suppliers and manufacturers to comply would run into thousands of dollars. Several manufacturers who currently sell products in New York would be very likely to stop

manufacturing and selling products in New York. And those who continue to manufacture and sell products in New York would pass on these additional costs to our New York retailers, who, in turn, might be forced to charge their customers higher prices than their competition in neighboring states.

### What Happens in New York Doesn't Stay in New York

Unlike Las Vegas, what happens in New York doesn't stay there for long. The New York Legislature prides itself in “exporting” its regulations. They may not be laws in your state today, but the chances are very good that if these bills pass in New York State, they could be quickly adopted by your local legislature.

Your NPA East staff is closely monitoring these bills. We also regularly contact the offices of key sponsors of the bills seeking to head them off before they can become laws. And this is just one of the 11 states we cover!

*Interested in helping us protect your interests? Call your Executive Director, Paul Kushner, at 856-985-5446 and help us monitor your state legislature. Or email Paul at [pkushner@comcast.net](mailto:pkushner@comcast.net)*

## President's Message

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- Keeping ahead of all legislation that could adversely affect our businesses
- Advancing the education of our members through our partnership with New Hope Media during Education Day at Expo East

As a fellow retailer, I can tell you, first hand, that membership in NPA East provides a definite pay-back to offset the modest annual dues. Like you, I'm incredibly busy keeping my customers satisfied and my business profitable and growing. And you can be sure that I volunteer my time to support NPA East because it's an excellent investment in the current and future viability of our industry.

### How we protect your interests all year

Let me give you a tangible example of how NPA East fights for your best interests. For the third year in a row, we took the lead in lobby-

ing against proposed legislation that seeks to establish a mini-FDA in New York State. Should it pass, retailers in the state would have had yet another obstacle to remaining profitable. Just as important, this mini-FDA could easily become the model for more restrictive regulation in other states. (Please read the Advocacy Update article in this issue for more examples of how NPA East is fighting for the rights of independent retailers every day.)

### NPA East: A Commitment to Advocacy

If we have learned anything from the political and financial climate of the past few years, it is that our livelihood continues to be threatened by forces intent on using unnecessary legislation to try to limit, alter, or contribute to the demise of our industry.

That's why NPA East and its elected

volunteer officers are relentless in reminding both Washington and our local government officials that the FDA has already established, through the DSHEA legislation of 1993, legal groundwork for fair and appropriate government oversight of our industry.

### NPA East fights for your right to survive and prosper

Even with our success so far in protecting your right to do business, why do we keep up the fight? Because we know that a small, concentrated effort from a determined group could sway ill-informed legislators to make decisions and pass laws that could reverse decades of progress in the course of one legislative session.

The future of your business is too important to leave to others! Yes, NPA East has been successful in protecting your interests so far. But this is an ongoing battle.

To win, we need the support of everyone who sells, manufactures, and sustains the natural products industry in our region. We need you to continue the fight!

If you are already a member, thank you for your support, and please consider becoming an active participant in one of our committees. If you are not currently a member, please accept my invitation to join NPA East today. Annual dues are only \$95.00, which is an investment of less than \$2.00 a week to help protect your business every day. To join, please contact our Executive Director, Paul Kushner, at 856-985-5446; email: [pkushner@comcast.net](mailto:pkushner@comcast.net) Or go to our website and join online: [www.npaeast.org](http://www.npaeast.org)

I believe that membership in NPA East is one of the best investments I make for the success of my business. Give us the opportunity to serve you, and I'm sure you'll feel the same way.

# NPA East Welcomes Two New Board Members

We are pleased to announce two recent additions to the NPA East Board of Directors.



Norm Benjamin

According to Norm Benjamin Senior Director, Natural Sales Northeast, for Tree of Life, Greenwich, New York, Tree is

dedicated to the success of the independent natural foods retailer. He believes that Tree's mission,

along with the NPA East's commitment to natural products, is an ideal combination. As a member of the NPA East Board, Norm will make a positive contribution to our membership by serving as a valuable link between both organizations, providing a voice for our members and delivering their concerns to the NPA East Board of Directors.

Adam Goodman is a principal at Nature's Supplement Brokers

Brand Development, Suffern, NY. Adam is a devoted advocate for our organization, with more



Adam Goodman

than 20 years of experience as an industry professional. He spent a number of years in retail management for Nature Food Centres

and five years as a sales representative and sales manager for Health from the Sun.

Adam was instrumental in the creation of new products, developing and implementing sales and marketing programs as well as training and educational programs. Adam has developed numerous relationships with all key distributors and accounts such as United Natural Foods, Tree of Life, Select Nutrition, Whole Foods Markets, Wegmans, Vitamin Shoppe, and Sprouts. Most recently, he took on the task of recreating a key division for Tree of Life.

## Michael Smulders

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especially because our customers trusted our advice, and we took that very seriously. But I have to say, the feedback from my bakery customers was immediate, and I like that.

Late in 2003, after trying a great tasting granola recipe one of my bakers was working on, I walked through my store and gathered ingredients and baked the first batch that day. It took almost two years to find gluten-free sources for all the ingredients and find a place where we could make the product without risk of cross-contamination. But it was worth it.

We currently make all of our gluten-free granola products in a 34,000 square foot manufacturing facility with state of the art quality controls and in-house gluten testing on every batch. We're just a few miles down the road from the original bakery and the plant maintains the small bakery quality by continuing to bake in small batches.

**Q What is different and/or the same between your businesses?**

**A** The biggest difference is that I have much less daily contact with my customers in my bakery versus

being in my store seven days a week – which is also one of the things I really like about the bakery: *I don't have to be there seven days a week!* I also really enjoy developing new products. It gives me a great deal of personal satisfaction.

**Q Do you have a formal or informal business plan for BOM? What have been the key element(s) that have helped drive your success?**

**A** Listening closely to my customers and really understanding that anything I make has to be gluten-free *and* taste great. Healthy is nice but they won't eat what they don't like – at least not a second time.

**Q Over the years, what's been the best business decision you've made, either intentionally or not? What's the worst?**

**A** I guess my worst decision was by default, not design. During the 1990's when most stores were really expanding their prepared foods business, I held off, and I think I could have done very well if I had jumped in with both feet.

**Q Do you get involved in community/local events, either at your store or manufacturing facility?**

**A** Absolutely. I'm very active within the gluten-free community, including the various support groups, websites, blogs, clubs, local events – wherever I can get involved. Gluten-free customers tend to be very motivated

**Q As an independent Health Food store owner for almost 20 years, what advice do you have for anyone thinking about opening up their first health foods store??**

**A** (Laughter!) It's a tough market, and you need to know it. Get involved locally. Find a specific niche that you do better than anyone else. Fully use social media. Keep learning.

**Q How important are your employees to your overall success? What kind of staff environment do you foster to keep employees once you've invested the time and money to train them?**

**A** Having the right people in place is essential for both of my businesses, especially when it comes to my retail store. Customers want to be helped, not sold, and my brother does a great job of listening to our customers and helping them choose the best products.

**Q What are the biggest challenges ahead in growing your BAKERY ON MAIN business?**

**A** My biggest challenge is to keep developing great tasting new products. It takes at least a few months from idea to finished product, and I'm constantly talking to my customers about what they want, what they like and what we can do better. That work never stops, but it's what I enjoy the most.

**Q Do you attend any of the industry trade shows?**

**A** I used to attend the various trade shows on a regular basis, with Expo West being my favorite show, but they can be very expensive. I'm glad that Expo East is back in Baltimore again but I hope it hasn't lost too much momentum since it went to Boston. I thought that was a mistake.

**Q What are your predictions on upcoming trends in products, business growth, and climate overall?**

**A** I didn't see anything truly unique at Expo West, but I'm focusing my efforts on the basics: creating the best-tasting gluten-free products I can and staying focused on what I do best. If you're a retailer or manufacturer, you need to focus on being an expert at whatever niche you know.

# Save These Dates

## Natural Products Association MarketPlace

Las Vegas Convention Center • June 23 to 25, 2011

At the NPA MarketPlace you will find a place to connect with

- **PEOPLE:** 5,000 industry members attend to support the mission of the NPA and find business opportunities in a fun environment.
- **PRODUCTS:** 250 exhibits (plus access to 200 more in World Tea Expo) showcase the new leaders in natural and healthy lifestyle products.
- **KNOWLEDGE:** This year's program features Keynote Speaker Dr. Tieraona Low Dog and a series of focused education sessions.



To register for NPA MarketPlace and for more information, please go to [www.npainfo.org](http://www.npainfo.org)

## We're Back... Where You Belong!

### Natural Products Expo East 2011

Baltimore Convention Center • September 21 to 24, 2011



*Natural Products Expo East 2011 is returning home to the Baltimore Convention Center.*

"The familiar convenience of the Inner Harbor, both from a cost and access to market perspective, will maximize the ability for retailers and manufacturers alike to be successful," said long-time Natural Products Expo East attendee and NPA East member Ralph Celebre of Basil Bandwagon.

Discover products at more than 1300 exhibits:

- Health & Beauty
- Functional Ingredients
- Natural & Specialty Foods
- Natural Living
- Organic
- Pet Products

- Supplements

To register and for more information, please go to [www.expoeast.com](http://www.expoeast.com)

## Board of Directors

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#### Paul Kushner

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