

Gina M. Chavez, M.Ed.
Vice President of Operations, Creative Water Solutions

Gina Chavez serves as Vice President of Operations for Creative Water Solutions. She brings to CWS extensive background in research, with analytical and organizational skills developed through an accomplished work ethic and educational history. In 2002, Chavez joined the Embro Corporation researching the potential of sphagnum moss, prior to the formation of CWS in January 2003. Since then, as Operations Manager, she has managed ongoing product research, the development of product packaging, company finances, and production and inventory schedules, in addition to day-to-day operations of the company. She brought Lifeworks, a Twin Cities company that provides meaningful work and wages to people with disabilities, into CWS in 2004 to perform product assembly and packaging. In 2009, Chavez was named Vice President of Operations, which expanded her previous role to include import/export processes and documentation, critical supplier relationships, and growth, training and management of staff. With a family history and many ties to Minnesota's legendary Iron Range, Chavez (formerly Palazzari) is eager to pursue the development of a sustainable sphagnum moss harvesting industry in northeastern Minnesota, where abundant sphagnum moss bogs exist.

To date, her other major projects include:

- **Marketing/brand identity/retail packaging initiative with Integreat and Sussner Design, 2005**
- **Critical residential Minnesota pool study, 2006**
- **4 company website and 3 web store revisions, most recently with Sinard, Inc.**
- **Bi-lingual, international packaging design for BerryStart™ and BerryPure™ for the Canadian-based producer of the SpaBerry™, 2008**
- **Bi-lingual, international packaging design for Canadian-based distributor of SpaNaturally® products, Sani Marc, 2009**
- **Critical commercial pool study involving City of St. Paul, Minneapolis Jewish Community Center and Oak Ridge Country Club, 2009**
- **Development of CWS' social media presence, 2009**

Operations Experience Began at Age 10 in her Parent's Dairy Queen

Ms. Chavez jokes that her business education began in 1982 when her parents became owner/operators of a Dairy Queen franchise in Moose Lake, Minnesota. In 1984, at the age of 10, barely able to see over the counter, she began waiting on customers, making cones with that signature curl and malts with her high school aged coworkers. Her 10 years of experience working at the establishment alongside her parents and brother gave her a solid foundation in the management of inventory, product quality, and employees, as well as effective customer service and solid business-community relations.

Chavez began her research experience with three undergraduate years as a Missouri Space Grant Intern in the research laboratory of Earth Science Department with Chair, Dr. Raymond Arvidson, at Washington University in St. Louis. She graduated in 1996 with honors and an A.B. in Earth and Planetary Science. Following a brief stint as a laboratory technician for Edina-based Bergquist Company, she earned a B.S. degree with honors from St. Cloud State University in Science Education in Earth, Life, and General Sciences in 1998. She taught 8th grade earth science for three years, was an International Baccalaureate Middle Years instructor, multi-sport coach, and organized a number of extracurricular educational programs. In May 2001, she earned her Master of Education degree from Saint Mary's University in Winona with a final project on Poverty and Achievement.

Today Chavez is an accomplished pilot and flight instructor, an avid marathon, duathlon and triathlon athlete in Minnesota, Boston and elsewhere. She is also the mother of two young children. She lives with her husband and family in Crystal, Minnesota.