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For Immediate Release

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Trader Joe's Sued For Alleged Sexual Orientation Discrimination***Lawsuit Alleges Trader Joe's Fired Beloved Store Manager
Because She Is Gay***

LOS ANGELES (September 22, 2016)— A former Store Manager (or, Store "Captain" in Trader Joe's parlance) has filed a sexual orientation discrimination lawsuit against the Company. In her lawsuit, Sandy Holm, a long term 15-year employee, alleges that her former supervisor, Regional Vice-President Caroline Judd, fired her because she is gay. The lawsuit was filed in the Los Angeles County Superior Court and assigned case number BC634605.

"I'm absolutely heart-broken," responded Ms. Holm when asked to describe how she felt. "Trader Joe's was my life. I loved that company and I did anything and everything that was ever asked of me."

Among other things, the lawsuit alleges that Regional Vice-President Judd asked Ms. Holm inappropriate personal questions about Ms. Holm's sexual orientation including whether Ms. Holm had a "partner," asking the age of Ms. Holm's partner, how long Ms. Holm and her partner had been together, and whether they were planning on having children. According to the lawsuit, these questions and the tone and manner in which they were asked caused Ms. Holm to believe that Ms. Judd had a problem with gay people, in general, and with Ms. Holm for being gay, in particular. Ms. Holm claims that shortly after asking these questions, Ms. Judd fired her because she is gay and because she made charitable donations to several LGBT organizations including Jewish Queers, Los Angeles LGBT Center, and Pacific Area Boosters Association.

According to Ms. Holm's lawsuit, Trader Joe's gives Store Captains wide discretion to make charitable contributions to community groups. According to the lawsuit, Ms. Judd accused Ms. Holm of favoring LGBT charitable organizations because she is gay and that Ms. Judd then derisively commented to Ms. Holm, "I like kitty cats but that doesn't mean that I can make donations to kitty cat organizations." Then, according to the lawsuit, without any prior warnings, Ms. Judd fired Ms. Holm. Ms. Judd, the lawsuit alleges, attempted to justify Ms. Holm's firing by falsely claiming that Trader Joe's had a written policy forbidding Store Captains from making charitable donations in excess of \$250.00 without permission from their supervisors.

Ironically, one of the organizations that Ms. Judd allegedly believed to be a gay organization was actually a law enforcement organization -- Pacific Area Boosters Association.

Ms. Holm's attorney, Courtney Abrams, of Helmer Friedman LLP, asked that witnesses and/or persons with knowledge regarding whether Trader Joe's had and enforced charitable donation policies contact her, "If you have worked for Trader Joe's and know whether or not the Company had any type of charitable donation policy requiring Store Captains to obtain permission from their supervisors before making donations in excess of \$250.00, we'd like to speak with you."

Commenting about the lawsuit, Andrew H. Friedman, a founding member of Helmer Friedman LLP, stated, "Sexual orientation discrimination is real. It happens every day. We are very fortunate that California outlaws sexual orientation discrimination in employment and housing. "

In addition to employment law, Helmer Friedman LLP also provides legal representation and advice in a wide range of other areas, including consumer rights, sports, and entertainment. Andrew H. Friedman (afriedman@helmerfriedman.com) and Courtney Abrams (cabrams@helmerfriedman.com) can be reached at 310-396-7714.