

Riverwest Co-op Grocery & Cafe

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**733 East Clarke Street
Riverwest, Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

By Debbie Powers, President

Letter from the Board of Directors

Hello and welcome to the Riverwest Co-Op's annual report for 2019! Whether you are a long-established member of the community, a long-time supporter of our cooperative, an interested individual who has never stepped foot in our doors, or someplace in between, my message is the same. The Riverwest Co-Op has been a staple of this neighborhood for many years, and we appreciate your support in whatever fashion it comes.

In 2019, the Riverwest Co-Op Grocery & Café entered adulthood, celebrating our 18th lap around the sun. We have seen so many transitions in this time, and have grown through uncountable changes to the neighborhood, to the market, and to our base of invested community members. Cooperative models are incredibly exciting, progressive, and appealing in this day and age, but a fundamental and challenging factor is that they rely on the strength and sustainability of individuals who keep them afloat. We, the board of the Riverwest Co-Op, would like to recognize the individuals who founded this business, those who are currently putting their hearts and souls into helping us develop a strategy for progress and survival, and all those who have touched us in between.

As you will learn throughout this report, 2019 was a huge year for us. The Co-op's board, the Workers Collective, volunteers, and members have all joined forces to take a holistic view of our operations and

our impact on the community, in order to set goals for our organization.

The section following this contains more information about the strategic planning that has been underway to better serve our customers and our neighborhood. You will also learn about our current financial situation; if you are otherwise unaware, factors like the internet and "trending" food markets can make the survival of a small community-run grocery store and café appear bleak. One could misread this information as troubling or problematic, but for those who are ramping up involvement in our small-yet-strong venture, it is a challenge that brings more hope than fear.

2019 saw a slew of extraordinary circumstances. Geared up with a Board of Directors who were committed to the longevity of the co-op and a Worker's Collective made up of intelligent, diligent, and creative individuals, the co-op is getting a long overdue face lift. A rush of energy is coming in from all angles, whether that be from increased member involvement, new volunteers, or seasoned vets getting an extra boost of co-op appreciation, the movement is palatable and real.

One thing I would like to spotlight is that in May of 2019, we held a special membership meeting to approve changes to the bylaws. At the General Membership Meeting (GMM) in April 2018, minor



Debbie Powers, President
2018-present
(will serve until 2021)



Vince Bushell, Vice President
2018-present
(will serve until 2021)



Collin LaVallee, Treasurer
2017-2020
(finishing term)



Wendy Mesich, Secretary
2019-present
(will serve until 2022)



Alex Handwerker, Board Member
2019-present
(will serve until 2022)

changes to the bylaws were proposed to better reflect the reality of our business operations. The membership base at that meeting showed concern that we needed a more holistic approach at looking at our bylaws. A dedicated group of board members and volunteers worked for just over a year to review and discuss each bylaw and consider new policies or language. This resulted in five proposals to amend the bylaws, which would be voted on at a special membership meeting. Prior to said meeting, there were email and social media blasts, fliers in the store and other local establishments, and face-to-face promotions requesting member-involvement in these decisions. Though bylaw changes might not be the most glamorous topic of discussion, we had a solid turnout and lively discussion. All five bylaw changes were passed. This is just one example of how membership can have their voices heard and influence the business in a way that non-cooperative models would not allow.

I hope you find the rest of this annual report informative and exciting. There is a lot going on at our little ol' Co-op, and we want you to be aware and get involved! Keep an eye out for new developments in the store and café, and be sure to renew your membership!

Best wishes,
Riverwest Co-op Grocery & Café Board of Directors



Cooperative Principles:

For nearly two decades, we have been dedicated to providing the community with nutritious, wholesome food and support organic and local producers. We are also committed to supporting the principles of organic farming, urban agriculture, workers rights, environmental sustainability, and equality.

We strive to follow the Seven Cooperative Principles:

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members' Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training, and Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

Mission Statement in the Bylaws:

"The primary mission of the co-op is to operate a financially sound grocery store in the Riverwest neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Cooperative philosophy and values are an essential part of our enterprise; therefore, the co-op will operate in a fully democratic manner."



Rhiannon Kurtz, Board Member 2019-present (will serve until 2022)

Karen Reynolds, Board Member 2018-present (will serve until 2021)

Shelly "Belles" Schauer, Former Volunteer Liaison 2018-2019 (left term early)

Caresse Reiland, Former Secretary 2019 (left term early)

Ousia Whitaker-DeVault, Interim Board Member 2019

Co-Op Refresh

As a member-owned and volunteer-run organization, we go beyond being simply a grocery store and café. We strive to provide a genuinely welcoming atmosphere by creating connections between the local producers and the people we serve.



New produce bins installed this year.

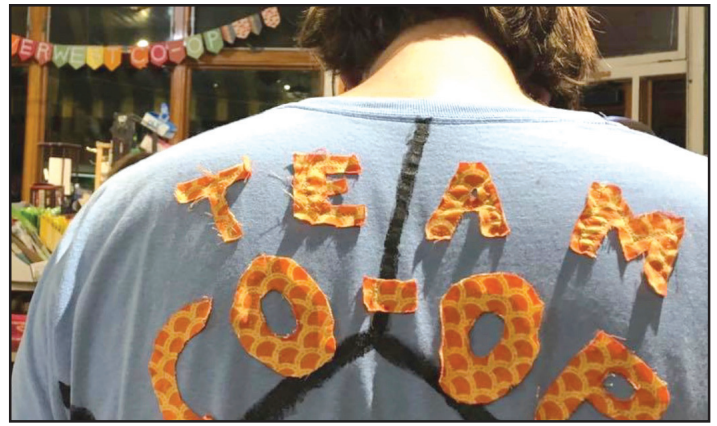
The café and the store have recently been struggling to maintain their market share within the community. For example, currently, the labor to run the café is more expensive than the profit from the café sales. The Co-op will be undergoing a necessary refresh; a refresh of the store and the café. The number of sales per purchase has been in decline over the past few years. The refresh, which will be celebrated during the first week of May, will fur-

ther cement our place in the community by creating a more social-focused center in our neighborhood. This will contribute to the financial success of the co-op in the coming years.

The Refresh will be community-focused

We understand that members are shopping at our store less, so we're making changes to the co-op to enhance our ability to be a social center for the neighborhood. Members will be wondering what is going on and it's important we answer that this is an opportunity for us to continue running the co-op without sacrificing our values.

- Expand café seating: add a café bar with additional seating in the store area to welcome more community members to gather and feel welcomed in our space.
- Replace our re-pack section: use bulk bins instead to reduce our single-use plastic in an effort to be more environmentally sustainable.



Yes, we are!

- Relocate produce bins: move to center store to spotlight our local and organic produce selection while also protecting the produce from harsh UV rays.
- Update inventory & merchandising: address issues of food insecurity by offering the best price that is financially stable for our business.
- Other projects include: repaint walls in the store and café and revitalize the café menu.

Revitalizing the store will improve the customers' experience. The second phase is replacing the produce bins. A community member has built the new produce bins which are already in the store. During the month of April, we will be placing them in the center to make room for additional seating. New bulk bins for items like chocolate covered pretzels and energy bites, will help us to reduce plastic waste. We are also excited to unveil our new line of Co-op Values, a core 20 or so essential items which will be marked up at a lesser rate.

Our co-op is a special place for several reasons, but none more so than the community. By adding an additional six bar seats, more customers will be able to stay to enjoy their food and drink, reducing waste and continuing to foster community.

Let's reverse negative sales and profit trends to position the co-op for long-term success.

Tops From The Café

Grab-n-Go

- Breakfast Bagel
- BBQ Tofu Wraps
- Vegan Chix Salad Sammy (Tempeh Base)

Top Café Items

- Coffee
- Soup
- Philly

2019 Overview

Greetings Members,

Our Co-op has continued to struggle financially, mainly due to lower sales. The Board and Workers Collective are working on ways to increase sales and monitor costs better. We have had a number of transitions in our store and café and there are good things happening. We have a strong Workers Collective and Board, as well as an ad hoc committee to look at ways to improve our cooperative. There are plenty of reasons to be optimistic.

2020 Budget

The Board has approved a 2020 budget that uses 2019 sales as goals for the store and café and takes into account a decrease in café labor and purchasing. The Finance Committee has been working with the Workers Collective to monitor and adjust the budget as needed. Our goal is to work proactively to monitor costs and sales in order to be able to plan and make decisions accordingly. We will be meeting each quarter to reassess the budget.

2019 By The Numbers

Total Sales:	Net Operating Income:
Café..... \$ 351,732.57	Café..... \$ (42,766.82)
Store..... \$ 604,456.74	Store..... \$ (2,628.71)
Total..... \$ 922,228.15	Total..... \$ (45,395.53)

Final Words

Despite a difficult year we are confident that we have the people and measures in place to move forward positively. The commitment of our staff, volunteers, and members is important to our success and has always been a strength. We can look to each other for support while doing the work needed to improve our finances.

Finally, I would like to thank past and present members of the Finance Committee for their commitment to cooperative values while working to make sure that the Co-op is a financially viable business.

Cooperatively,
Collin LaVallee
Treasurer



Volunteers help keep merchandise looking great by stocking, and re-stocking, deliveries on the shelves and coolers. This includes checking *sell by* dates. Fresh produce needs to be culled every day so it's always fresh.

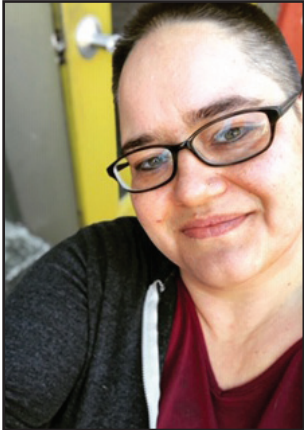


RIVERWEST CO-OP						
Profit and Loss						
2020 Budget Projection						
	Cafe		Store		TOTAL	
	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income
Income						
Sales		0.00%		0.00%	0.00	0.00%
Cafe Sales	355,000.00	100.00%		0.00%	355,000.00	38.71%
Store Sales		0.00%	600,000.00	100.00%	600,000.00	65.43%
xMember Sales Discounts		0.00%	(18,000.00)	-3.00%	(18,000.00)	-1.96%
xVolunteer Discounts		0.00%	(15,000.00)	-2.50%	(15,000.00)	-1.64%
Total Store Sales	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 567,000.00	94.50%	\$ 567,000.00	61.83%
Total Sales	\$ 350,000.00	98.59%	\$ 567,000.00	94.50%	\$ 917,000.00	100.00%
Total Income	\$ 350,000.00	98.59%	\$ 567,000.00	94.50%	\$ 917,000.00	100.00%
Cost of Goods Sold		0.00%		0.00%		
Cost of Goods Sold		0.00%	1,400.00	0.23%	\$ 1,400.00	0.15%
Materials & Supplies	20,000.00	5.63%	600.00	0.10%	\$ 20,600.00	2.25%
Purchases	130,000.00	36.62%	400,000.00	66.67%	\$ 530,000.00	57.80%
Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$ 150,000.00	42.25%	\$ 402,000.00	67.00%	\$ 552,000.00	60.20%
Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$ 150,000.00	42.25%	\$ 402,000.00	67.00%	\$ 552,000.00	60.20%
Gross Profit	\$ 200,000.00	56.34%	\$ 165,000.00	27.50%	\$ 365,000.00	39.80%
Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Administrative Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Board Expenses	700.00	0.20%	700.00	0.12%	\$ 1,400.00	0.15%
Conference Expenses	650.00	0.18%	650.00	0.11%	\$ 1,300.00	0.14%
Donations	500.00	0.14%	500.00	0.08%	\$ 1,000.00	0.11%
Office Supplies	150.00	0.04%	150.00	0.03%	\$ 300.00	0.03%
Professional Fees	2,500.00	0.70%	2,500.00	0.42%	\$ 5,000.00	0.55%
Total Administrative Expenses	\$ 4,500.00	1.27%	\$ 4,500.00	0.75%	\$ 9,000.00	0.98%
Advertising & Promotion	1,700.00	0.48%	1,700.00	0.28%	\$ 3,400.00	0.37%
Events Expense	400.00	0.11%	400.00	0.07%	\$ 800.00	0.09%
Licenses & Fees	70.00	0.02%	70.00	0.01%	\$ 140.00	0.02%
Occupancy Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Insurance	7,000.00	1.97%	7,000.00	1.17%	\$ 14,000.00	1.53%
Licenses & Fees	500.00	0.14%	500.00	0.08%	\$ 1,000.00	0.11%
Rent	7,200.00	2.03%	7,200.00	1.20%	\$ 14,400.00	1.57%
Repairs & Maintenance	1,800.00	0.51%	1,300.00	0.22%	\$ 3,100.00	0.34%
Security	350.00	0.10%	350.00	0.06%	\$ 700.00	0.08%

RIVERWEST CO-OP						
Profit and Loss						
2020 Budget Projection						
	Cafe		Store		TOTAL	
	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income	Jan - Dec 2018	% of Income
Utilities	1,500.00	0.42%	1,500.00	0.25%	\$ 3,000.00	0.33%
Total Occupancy Expenses	\$ 20,520.00	5.78%	\$ 20,020.00	3.34%	\$ 40,540.00	4.42%
Operating Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Bank Charges		0.00%	700.00	0.12%	\$ 700.00	0.08%
Cash Over/Short		0.00%	1,800.00	0.30%	\$ 1,800.00	0.20%
Credit Card Fees	9,500.00	2.68%	9,500.00	1.58%	\$ 19,000.00	2.07%
Equipment Lease	665.00	0.19%	665.00	0.11%	\$ 1,330.00	0.15%
Materials & Supplies	800.00	0.23%	1,000.00	0.17%	\$ 1,800.00	0.20%
Printing	230.00	0.06%	230.00	0.04%	\$ 460.00	0.05%
Telephone/Internet	3,300.00	0.93%	3,300.00	0.55%	\$ 6,600.00	0.72%
Web Fees	15.00	0.00%	15.00	0.00%	\$ 30.00	0.00%
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 14,510.00	4.09%	\$ 17,210.00	2.87%	\$ 31,720.00	3.46%
Payroll Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Payroll Taxes	16,000.00	4.51%	9,000.00	1.50%	\$ 25,000.00	2.73%
Wages	145,000.00	40.85%	100,000.00	16.67%	\$ 245,000.00	26.72%
Total Payroll Expenses	160,000.00	45.07%	109,000.00	18.17%	\$ 269,000.00	29.33%
Solar Costs		0.00%	850.00	0.14%	\$ 850.00	0.09%
Total Expenses	\$ 199,530.00	56.21%	\$ 150,730.00	25.12%	\$ 350,260.00	38.20%
Net Operating Income	\$ 470.00	0.13%	\$ 14,270.00	2.38%	\$ 14,740.00	1.61%
Other Income		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Interest Income		0.00%	450.00	0.08%	\$ 450.00	0.05%
Sales Tax Discount	(100.00)	-0.03%		0.00%	\$ (100.00)	-0.01%
Total Other Income	\$ (100.00)	-0.03%	\$ 450.00	0.08%	\$ 350.00	0.04%
Other Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Income Taxes		0.00%		0.00%	0.00	0.00%
Federal Income Taxes		0.00%	1,900.00	0.32%	1,900.00	0.21%
State Income Taxes		0.00%	800.00	0.13%	800.00	0.09%
Total Income Taxes	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 2,700.00	0.45%	\$ 2,700.00	0.29%
Profit Sharing	0.00	0.00%		0.00%	0.00	0.00%
Total Other Expenses	\$ -	0.00%	\$ 2,700.00	0.45%	\$ 2,700.00	0.29%
Net Other Income	\$ (100.00)	-0.03%	\$ 450.00	0.08%	\$ 350.00	0.04%
Net Income	\$ 370.00	0.10%	\$ 12,020.00	2.00%	\$ 12,390.00	1.35%

by Sara Schueneman & Alex Handwerker

2019 Store Report



Sara Schueneman,
Merchandise Coordinator

Mission

It is our mission to provide the Riverwest community with locally sourced products, products requested by our members, and to provide a safe and welcoming space for all.

Changes at the Co-op

2019 brought many changes to the Co-op and to our staff. We said goodbye to Resse as the evening closer,

though she continues to share her talents as a volunteer. We created a new position in the store to balance our daily workload: the Evening Store Manager. We are blessed to have Alex, a board member and former volunteer, in this new position.

From Alex: I was a café and store volunteer at the Co-op for over a year and I have been on the Board of Directors since the General Membership Meeting last year. In October I was hired for the new position of Evening Store Manager. I have felt so welcomed by this community and I am very excited for my larger role at the Co-op.

We have also welcomed Abigail as the new Café manager, and Annica as our new Volunteer Coordinator. We now have three new members of the Worker's Collective, working diligently to keep the Co-op running day to day. You will hear from Abigail and Annica in their individual reports.

Sales Challenges

With the rise in availability of organic and natural foods, the Co-op has seen a decline in sales over the past few years. In 2019, the Worker's Collective hired a consultant from Columinate who works specifically with co-ops that are struggling to stay relevant in a competitive market. Through our meetings with them we have developed new goals and we are working on some significant changes in the store and café for 2020. One of these changes will be the introduction of our new Co-op Values program. This program offers everyday favorites throughout the store at a lower markup to allow everyone access to

quality, ethically sourced food. For more information about the coming changes check out the Co-op Refresh report.

Member Benefits

- Our members enjoy a 5% discount on everything in the store every day. Members who volunteer with us weekly also enjoy an additional 10% off. These discounts are on top of our daily featured sales.
- Members have a say in what we carry in our store as well. Drop us a recommendation in the suggestion box or catch Sara in the mornings and let her know what you're looking for!
- Members may place Special Orders from any of our existing vendors. These orders are priced at 20% above wholesale, a savings of up to 60%.
- Each member can cast a vote for our Board of Directors. In this way, every member has a say in how our Co-op is run.



Todd, Nick and a volunteer make up some of the evening staff.

Giving Back!

In 2019 we collectively raised \$4,816.12 for local non profits through our Round-Up program. Thank you all so much for contributing to the larger Milwaukee community in this way.

We value the input of our members and strive to make the Co-op an inclusive and welcoming space for all people. Thank you for your continued support over the years. We look forward to seeing you in the store!

by Abigail Campbell, Café Manager

Café Report 2019

It's transition time! There are a number of big changes that have been shaking things up in the café over the past year. First and foremost, the management structure of the Café has changed and there have been several new additions to the Café staff. Currently, our fabulous team includes Gretchen, Nick, Scott, Todd, Rhiannon, and Jessica - and we've had the pleasure of welcoming Shannon, Katie, and Abby (who has taken on the management position). Since June, we've been working to create more structure within the day-to-day operations of the Café. This led to the development of several leadership positions including Kitchen Lead (Gretchen), Bakery Lead (Shannon), and a Social Media Lead (position is yet to be filled).

We've seen a significant improvement to deli and bakery sales over the past few months, as compared to last year's sales. We hope to continue this trend in order to surpass the sales goals we've set for this year. The café continues to strive toward our overarching tenets of sustainability, consistency, inclusiveness, and excellence.

Shannon has developed some new bakery items. Namely, she has adapted our house granola into scrumptious s'mores granola bars and she has been experimenting with gluten free pastry options. Gretchen is leading our new Grab-N-Go project with great success. In addition to our old favorite wraps and breakfast bagels, we've added vegan chicken salad sandwiches (available on GF bread), pita pockets, roast "beef" sandwiches, mixed berry pie, GF breakfast sandwiches, and vegan sausage biscuits.

More deliciousness to come!

We continue to use sustainably-made compostable disposables for our to-go containers and our Grab-N-Go packaging. There was a change regarding which materials our composting service would accept. We briefly went back to recyclable plastic deli containers. However, we are proud to announce that all Grab-N-Go packaging (EXCEPT the cling wrap) is plant based and compostable. One of the Café's long-term goals is to be completely plastic free!

We've begun to take a close look at our menu as a whole, and more changes are in the works. We want

to stay true to our roots but we also yearn to stretch and grow with the changing market for vegan/vegetarian options. Our mission is the same: To provide exceptional vegan, organic, and sustainable food to our community at an affordable price. Our changes to the menu run somewhat in conjunction with the overall Co-op Refresh, yet a "fully refreshed" menu will likely roll out this summer—just in time for our busiest season!

A Message From our New Manager

Hello! My name is Abby and I have been with the Café for a year. I took the Café Management position last June, and since then it has been a whirlwind of exciting change! I hail from Madison where I worked as a chocolatier, a pastry assistant/baker, and where I helped my friend Amy start her vegan food cart. I came to Milwaukee to pursue a BFA in sculpture (metal fabrication) with a minor in Art History. While here, I worked at the Outpost and Urban Beets before landing at the Co-op. I love this community and I feel lucky to be a part of something that aligns with my values so neatly. I am excited to be part of all the necessary changes we are making within the Co-op as a whole, and that excitement and hope helps to motivate me while we face the very real challenges within our ever-changing environment and economy.



Volunteer, Seth, is helping the kitchen run by keeping up with the dishes.

By Annica Mandeltort, Volunteer Coordinator

Passing On The Torch

The Riverwest Co-op's volunteers participated in a multitude of Co-op and community engagements in 2019. Within the brick-and-mortar at Fratney and Clarke, volunteers provided much-valued insight and inspiration on our various committees, pushing for more of a presence at local festivals and for more membership to support the cooperative. Outside these walls, volunteers cheered each other on at the softball diamond, the volleyball court, and the hal- lowed lanes of the Falcon Bowl. The spirit of the Co-op was alive and well in this past year's volunteers!

As the sports and seasons changed, so did the diverse team of volunteers that rotated through the store and café. Not only did some of the volun- teer faces change this year, but so did the face of the Volunteer Coordinator. In August, Ousia passed the

torch, and all the dedicated volunteers that come along with it, to me. I was sad to see Ousia go but excited to pick up where she left off! I have been a volunteer at the Co-op since 2017 and consider it to be a second home here in my favorite neighbor- hood. I love the tasty food, good energy, and won- derful people that fill the Co-op each day, and am happy to have the opportunity to give back to this community the way I know best: making connec- tions and bringing people together! It is a pleasure to put my training as an anthropologist (ask me about my work at the Milwaukee Public Museum any time!) and my experience with local, sustainable practices to use everyday.

As with any change in leadership, I have brought my own spin to the Co-op right out of the gate, chal- lenging the volunteers to interact with our beloved space in new ways. Since before I joined the Co-op professionally, the Workers' Collective was work- ing with a cooperative consultant to help us con- sider better business practices and take the much- needed steps towards being the best co-op we can be for the community we serve (as well as our own self!). I encouraged volunteers to similarly reeval- uate and ask "What can I do to better myself and my environment?"

It is my job to demystify the daily tasks involved in the day-to-day operations of the store and café for volunteers and empower them to take ownership of their three hour shifts each week. I support vol- unteers in putting projects on their plate (not just a Philly!) each week, creating a pattern and rhythm of work that is simultaneously fun and gives back to the Co-op, and leaving their shift with a sense of

accomplishment. I constantly sing high praises of the volunteers to cus- tomers each day, and it is true they are the glue that holds the Co-op together! I cannot wait to con- tinue working with the current volun- teers and new volun- teers yet to come in the next decade.



[Above] The transfer of responsibility—with a hug! Annica Mandeltort (left) is our new Volunteer Co-ordinator and Ousia Whittaker-Devault, who guided our volunteers from 2017-2019; [Right] Voted Top 3 Best Vegetarian Restaurants 2019 by BST MKE.

Membership Report by the Karen Reynolds

Your Membership Matters: A Co-operative Idea



Volunteers, Jeannie and Clare, not only help out in the store, but shop here too!

from \$100 to \$120 for newly enrolled members- a very small bump from the previous cost. Once a lifetime membership is attained, there is no annual fee and the individual continues to receive full benefits.

The membership committee has been blessed with several very talented volunteers over the years! Katie Jesse has been an anchor for many years, and with the addition of Alex Handwerker, they have really stepped up to the plate to cover all of the tasks to keep your memberships in order. This committee needs more support to keep our membership database in good order, handle welcome and renewal emails, track down information for incomplete or hard-to-read membership forms, and organize an annual membership drive. Anyone that wants to volunteer and prefers quiet and flexible shift times, this could be perfect for you. Wink wink.

Please email rwcoopmemcom@gmail.com for more Information.

Thank you!

Since 2001, the Riverwest Co-Op has depended on the support and care of a devoted membership base. Serving this community of individuals is largely the reason why we exist, and in return, we hope to provide a valuable entity back to them. Over the past 18+ years, more than 5,400 friends of our co-op have purchased memberships. We would like to take a moment to formally thank all of our fellow members for supporting this wonderful co-op!

As of December 31, 2019, we had an active member base of 1,740 individuals who were up-to-date with their equity, thus receiving their membership discount, 959 of which have reached lifetime status. In case you haven't heard, we provide significant benefits to our members! Along with access to bulk ordering at great prices and other perks, members receive an additional 5% off of all the products in our store on top of any other promotions or sales. This past year, members spent \$522,241 at our Co-Op, and received \$19,292 in discounts.

The cost of membership is kept relatively low when you look at inflation over the years. When we opened our doors, members paid \$20 per year for five years (or \$100 up front) to become lifetime members. As of January 1, 2019, lifetime memberships increased



The Co-op café fulfills our goal of providing healthy vegan-vegetarian dining options to our many new and regular visitors. Mmmm, Biscuits and Gravy!

Communications Committee: The Co-op's Voice



Liz Koetting shares her great organizational skills as our new volunteer leader of the Communications Committee.

Below—Alyssa Russo was quite appealing when she represented the Co-op during Vegan Expo last year.

The Comm Comm, as it is affectionately called, has been in a state of flux but with new leadership and a new crop of eager and enthusiastic volunteers we're hoping to continue the mission of expanding the Riverwest Co-op and Café's business and reach in the neighborhood.

We are back to a monthly meeting at the Co-op, and can always use help from passionate, talented people with social media, event planning, or other expertise. If you're looking for ways to help out your neighborhood co-op through outreach, then please email commcomm.rwcoop@gmail.com, we'd love to have you.

With the help and knowledge of veteran staff and volunteers, as well as new, we've got a great slate of events coming up in 2020. We're going to continue raising awareness of our excellent vegan menu through social media campaigns and vending at local vegan events, creating more partnerships in the community by hosting and attending events that feature the businesses thriving alongside us, and bringing in new members and volunteers with an expanded online presence as well.

In 2019 the Co-op attended several events in and outside the neighborhood. In March we brought our Chili Cookoff winning recipe to the Rockabilly Chili Cook-off, the city wide competition that is a fundraiser for WMSE. Mango Plantaingo was the brainchild of some Co-op staff and volunteers, and it was a runner-up in the Best Veggie category. We also had a presence at MKE Vegan Expo, organized in partnership with the UWM Nutritional Sciences Club, the Locust Street Festival of Music and Art, catered an event meal for the Riverwest 24, and had our banana cart in the Center Street Daze Art Cart Race.

Riverwest Co-op Round Up at the Register 2019

Thanks to the generosity of our members and customers, we collected \$4,816.12 to support the following local groups and initiatives.

Your change is for the better!

- Fondy Market
- Justice at the Tap - Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee
- Riverwest Community Garden School
- Riverwest Boomerang Bags
- Courage MKE
- Adult Learning Center
- Street Angels Milwaukee



Our monthly member newsletter—now going out to almost 2,000 people—is a great way to keep up to date on all the exciting things the Co-op is planning, whether it be in store or out in the neighborhood. If you're already signed up for it, check all your email folders and inboxes on the 1st of each month to see what we have going on. If you aren't signed up for it, email us at the address above so we can make sure that you're on the list.



[above—left] For a minute...Bicycle Bingo participants went bananas in our Co-op on November 23, 2019. Bikers were asked to post their visit on Facebook.
NOTE: The stowaway never left his compartment;
[above—right] Adrian, Jason, Tommasina & Casey peeled down the raceway during Center Street Daze;
[below] RW24 Team Co-op members Jason, Shay, Adrian, Blythe and Tommasina.



Environmental Awareness

Balance. Each new day we are presented with choices that can alter or maintain our balance. Our balance within. Our balance with our neighbors. Our balance with nature. These forces, amongst others, all work together to develop our environment. It is of great importance that we recognize our choices and how they influence the delicate balance of our environment.

Our Sustainability Committee serves as an advocate for the natural environment, implementing best practices to reduce our carbon footprint and further integrate sustainability issues into the operation of our Co-op. Together, with the community, we believe we have the ability to improve our relationship with nature and discover the means of which to maintain a healthy balance.

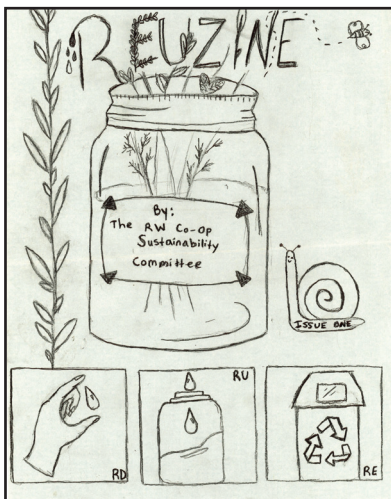
This year we saw hundreds of bags flying to and from the post, so many in fact that a new post was created by one crafty member of our Co-op! The committee personally got hands-on and helped create numerous colorful combinations of the bags we know & love. Also, we created the first edition of our sustainability zine called "ReuZine." We were very proud to collaborate with incredibly creative individuals and are looking to make a second edition this coming summer!

I'd like to recognize a wonderful soul and tireless force of the Sustainability Committee, Hannah Glasson. The former head of our committee recently

moved back to her homeland of Australia/New Zealand in the Fall. Her brilliant presence was complimented with grace as she, amongst others, initiated actions and assisted with requests put forth. Her enthusiasm was inspiring and, surely, the future will look back on her efforts with great respect.



[Clockwise from left] Jason, Beth, Ananda and Blue of Sustainability Committee and Georgia of BYB Riverwest, combined their talents and space to sew up Boomerang Bags.



First edition REUZINE magazine. The Boomerang bag rack at the register, evidence what a group of planet loving volunteers can accomplish.

Our projects are diverse from, leading and participating in local events, hosting meetings/conversations about methods of improving our impact within multiple scales, creating visual materials to be shared amongst various platforms, and more to be named. We encourage collaboration throughout our endeavors. It is a central pillar to developing our ideas of sustainability and methods of enacting said ideas. We're all spinning together on this wonderful rock in space and I'm thankful for each and every thought/action that is made to help rather than harm this place we call home. We always welcome anyone looking to get involved, please contact Annica if you interested in volunteering with the Sustainability Committee (annica.riverwestcoop@gmail.com)

Thank you!
Jason



[Clockwise from top left]
 Hannah Glasson;
 Volunteer, Martha, taking a Café order;
 Scott and his personal bulk buying system—
 beware!
 Grab-n-Go goodness in the cooler;
 Volunteers & Staff take on varied tasks and
 shifts all day at the Locust Street Festival of
 Music & Art—thanks Ousia, Annica, Gibson
 and Shelly, along with many others;
 We source as many locally made products as
 possible; Seasonal baking display.





The History of the Riverwest Co-op Grocery & Café

In the fall of 1999, members of the Riverwest Workers Buying Club and other community members decided to dedicate their time and resources toward building a viable neighborhood food co-op. A building was made available thanks to the generosity of two loyal members who purchased the 1904 former Schlitz Tied House specifically to have the Riverwest Co-op as tenants. After two years of planning and fundraising, and thousands of hours of hard work, the Co-op opened its doors to the public in November 2001.

Initially the store had a couple of shelves and a few dozen items. The first three years were dedicated to expanding the inventory to give our members and shoppers what they wanted. We were successful in creating enough stability in our finances to hire one full time, and one part time employee to compliment the predominately volunteer staff, and

to add bulk bins and refrigerated coolers for the expanded inventory.

The Co-op building is a small space, but we did have an attached garage. We planned to open a Café in that space to provide another service to our community and to complement our healthy-food store.

The Riverwest Co-op Café opened its doors in October 2004. The Café has earned a positive reputation for offering delicious vegetarian and vegan fare using predominately organic ingredients. The Café has received many positive reviews.

The Riverwest Co-op continues today with the sustained mission to serve our members and community. This is signified by our logo, a Serviceberry. In that vein volunteers are the heart and soul of the Riverwest Co-op Grocery and Café from the beginning to today.

The Co-op has been described as an oasis. You are a part of making it happen.

