

Riverwest Co-op Grocery & Cafe

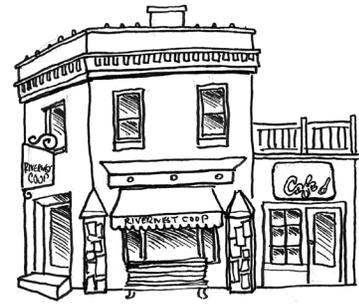
2018 ANNUAL REPORT

April 7, 2019, 4-7PM
Falcon Bowl, Riverwest
Milwaukee, Wisconsin



by Karen Reynolds and Vince Bushell

Letter from the Board of Directors



Seventeen going on eighteen, that is our history. Or is it we are already eighteen? The metaphor implies we are now or will soon be an adult. Time brings changes in perspective and options available. Eighteen years ago, we started the process of turning an old Schlitz bar that had been used by a sign painter for decades into a corner cooperative grocery store. With gump-tion and hope, we cleaned, painted and fixed up the place in 2000 so we could open in November of 2001. It was a big challenge that turned a dream into reality. A few years later we opened the cafe, which is now a significant part of the business.

To put our timeline in perspective, there was no Facebook and Amazon was just an online bookstore in 2001. These days, our events are announced on Facebook, Amazon owns Whole Foods, and most large grocery stores carry organic food options. We've not only seen the growth of competition, but also a massive change in our society since we opened. Healthy foods are no longer just a niche market and ready-to-eat foods and restaurant fare have grown greatly. We note these changes outside our doors since they are important factors when addressing where we find ourselves today—as a business, as a community, as a cooperative.

At the 2018 general membership meeting we did our best to forecast a positive new year and implemented several successful initiatives. Last year we learned that a number of members do not receive our email newsletters, and we are making continued efforts to come up with solutions that will redirect the emails to member inboxes. That said, if you don't receive the newsletter or other emails, you can make sure your email is updated at the register or by emailing membership@riverwestcoop.org. Additionally, our new website and the "Board board" in the cafe are reliable places to check for important information.

We started an ad hoc committee that includes membership and board participation to look at our by-laws and make recommendations for change. We will share those with the membership on our website, by email, and by posting them in the Co-op, along with two informational meetings. We have focused much energy to allow for ample discussion before a special membership meeting (meeting details to be announced). For questions, comments, and concerns, feel free to contact Debbie at dspowers266@gmail.com. The board has reviewed and approved these proposed changes to be submitted for a vote by the membership. It is up to you, the membership,



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

Karen Reynolds, Acting President, 2018-present (will serve until 2021)

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

Shelly Schauer, Volunteer Liaison, 2018-present (will serve until 2021)

Collin LaVallee, Treasurer, 2017-present (will serve until 2020)

to become informed and vote at the special membership meeting.

We need reliable and enthusiastic board members, and will add some at the April 2019 General Membership Meeting. Any member interested in becoming a board member in the future should consider attending a monthly board meeting or being active on a committee. Also, we have several committees that could use more volunteer assistance—Finance, Building and Maintenance, Human Resources, Membership, Communication, Sustainability, and some ad hoc committees that pop up when the need arises (currently there are Bylaws and Expansion/Exploratory Committees). Participation on a committee would familiarize the member with the internal operations of the Riverwest Co-op and Cafe.

Just a short time ago, our Board President, Veronica O'Donnell, had to step down due to personal reasons. Her leadership skills and dedication to the Co-op were very valuable and will be missed. We thank her for her service and wish her well. We have enough structure on the Board to have our Vice-President, Karen Reynolds, take on that position. Board member and former Treasurer, Vince Bushell, has assumed the role of Vice President.

We also note that Shelly McClone, who was here knocking down walls before this was even a Co-op, has opened an exciting new chapter in her life, and has left her position as inventory coordinator. You may still run into her as she remains on staff part time to handle accounts payable. Shelly has been a mainstay at the Co-op since we opened, and she has been instrumental in creating the foundation on which our

Co-op will continue to grow. We cannot thank her enough for her service.

We were delighted to hire Sara Schueneman as our new inventory coordinator. We welcome Sara with open arms and thank her for the enthusiasm she has shown in taking on this important position. When you're at the co-op be sure to say hi!



Shelly McClone [son Aidan], the Co-op's very first employee, created the role of Inventory Coordinator. Left, Sara Schueneman, our new inventory coordinator.

The budget approved by the board for 2018 called for a conservative profit. The store did a great job making adjustments to inventory practices in the face of declining sales, but we did not meet our goal in the cafe. The major budget item not met was controlling labor costs. This resulted in a large loss for the cafe and the business. The board is working with the Workers Collective, along with the Finance and Human Resources Committees, to develop strategic plans to improve current practices. As we notice positive changes already, we have confidence that everyone is committed to improving how we operate to allow for growth and success.



Ousia Whitaker-DeVault, Interim Board Member, 2019-present

Rachel Messenger, Secretary, 2016-2019 (finishing term)

Alyssa Russo, Volunteer Liaison, 2018-2019 (leaving the country and will not complete a full term)

Veronica O'Donnell, Former President, 2018-2019 (had to leave term early)

Riverwest Co-op and Cafe

"My favorite time to be at the Co-op is after a long day at work, stopping in to get some yummy things for lunch and popping in to check the soups and visit in the Cafe. I then enjoy chatting with the varying evening volunteers and customers (and Resse) I leave with a smile and head home feeling refreshed."

- Karen Reynolds

This loss calls for us to realize that times have changed and there are new challenges for cooperative food stores. We have ridden a positive wave since opening, but now are a mature cooperative looking at new ways to run our business so it can be sustainable in our community.

Most of all, we need you, our members and our customers, to support and contribute to our Cooperative. The community surrounding the Co-op is the reason for its success thus far; you are an active part in that. Every dollar spent in our store and cafe makes our mission possible. Every person that leaves here smiling spreads the spirit that made this all happen at the turn of the century.

With Cooperative love!

Karen Reynolds, acting President

Vince Bushell, acting Vice President



Store Report by Paula Gelbke and Sara Schueneman

2018 Store Report: How May We Help You?

Mission

It is our mission to provide our community with locally sourced products, products suggested by our members, and to provide a welcoming safe space in our neighborhood.

Changes at the Co-op: Saying Goodbye to Shelly and Hello to Sara

Shelly resigned from her position as Inventory Coordinator in August, 2018. You will still see her on the weekend when she comes in to pay bills, do payroll, and offer sage advice. After 17 years of guiding and illuminating the Co-op, her friendly welcoming presence will be missed by everyone!



In comes Sara Scheuneman, Inventory Coordinator. Sara, a former volunteer, comes with a passion for co-ops and excellent customer service skills.

From Sara: In December of 2018, I began training to take over Shelly's purchasing duties at the Co-op. I learned so much in my first month! I feel so blessed to be involved in such a real way with our wonderful co-op community. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming. The dedication of our staff, volunteers, and members is truly impressive and heartwarming. I have learned so much from all of you! I have been getting to know our amazing local vendors as well. It is truly a pleasure to be able to focus on providing local, organic, and ethical food options for our community. I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year. Please feel free to email suggestions or feedback to saras@riverwestcoop.org. You can also drop me a



On Bulk Thursday, Andy's member discount of 5% + 10% volunteer discount + 10% bulk Thursday discount = very reasonably priced spices!

line in the suggestion box or catch me in the store in the morning for a chat! Thank you all so much for all you do. I am truly honored to be a part of this beautiful community.

Sales Challenges

For years, food co-ops were the source for organic, bulk and local products. Now, these goods are common in most food markets. Each year the number of stores offering organic, natural, and vegan options increases. This is good news for the consumer, but creates a challenge for the Co-op.

We've noticed sales leveling off over the past few years, but in the past two years we have seen sales decline significantly. We are responding by managing our inventory to meet demand.

More than just a grocery store

We are your store, owned by our members! The only food cooperative that offers volunteer opportunities to community members with the added benefit of an increased discount.

The Riverwest Co-op provides jobs for residents. Locally owned and dedicated to our community, it is a business model that empowers our community.

How we give back

While we acknowledge the increased competition in the natural food world, we also would like to draw attention to the things that set us apart from other stores. That is, how we give back to our owners and customers.

- Member discounts, 5% on all grocery purchases, everyday!

Member purchases represented 55% of total sales in 2018. Though our sales were down last year, we were able to give back thousands in member discounts. In 2018 our member discounts totalled \$20,896. Being able to offer a discount on groceries is an important part of continuing to be an affordable option for our members.

- Daily Sales for everyone, including 10% off produce and bulk products weekly
- Special Orders (for members only) can be placed at 20% above our cost. In some categories that means a 60% savings!
- Knowing our members and customers, and responding to their suggestions and feedback whenever we can.
- Support local economy.
- Support local farms, growers, and producers.
- Support local organizations.

Last year the Co-op raised \$4,159.00 through our Round-UP at the register initiative.

These funds went to the following groups: Street Angels; Riverwest Public House; Co-Fed, not local but a co-op leadership program; Black Holocaust Museum; Groundworks Milwaukee Young Farmers; All Peoples Church, Wednesdays lunch program and food pantry

Support your co-op whenever you can!

**AN AVERAGE
SALE AT THE
CO-OP IS
\$13.00**

Volunteer Report by Ousia Whitaker-Devault

Keeping the Flame Alight

Most people do not understand what it means to be a member of a cooperative like ours. The prevailing business model taught to us prioritizes individual profit instead of community gain, top-down decision making instead of collective decision making, and competition instead of cooperation. The majority of today's leaders do not have cooperative values reflected in the structures they build in their work or personal lives.

In times like these, when darkness fills the seats of power, I sometimes imagine us as torch bearers or temple-keepers, caring for a flame inherited from generations past to ensure that its light shines in the future. This labor requires many helping hands and minds; these are our volunteers. Really? you might ask. You're comparing entering membership data, or stocking the potatoes, or washing the cafe's dishes, to keeping an ancestral flame alight? Well, I would reply, I've said it before, and I'll likely say it again: doing the dishes is a sacred task, a labor of love, and necessary in any revolution. Most anyone you talk to who has spent time volunteering at our Co-op has glimpsed the truth in that.

In 2018, our volunteers saw us through the day-to-day, as well as unprecedented transitions. Volunteers on the Communications Committee thoughtfully created written and visual

Our best selling grocery item is... Bananas!!

When we buy bananas from our Co-op, we are connecting our community to distant communities, which are also cooperatives. These farmers receive a fair wage, and they also are able to fund their own community projects, like education. Bananas are appealing in lots of ways!

Center Street Daze Art Cart banana Board Members. Winners of the 2017 Gumption award & 2018 Imagination award.

content for the business; the Sustainability Committee conducted our first Waste Awareness Week, during which time 90% of all workers were given a thorough training in the consequential business of managing our waste; the Finance Committee worked to create and educate our managers about the budget; the Membership Committee negotiated with programmers and navigated technical challenges in implementing our equity change; cafe volunteers invited customers to try vegan food, helped prepare some of those meals, and dreamed up specials; our store volunteers greeted most everyone who walked through the door, designed eye-catching displays, unloaded the delivery truck in the wee hours of Thursday mornings, and responded with intelligence and groundedness when our store was threatened by robbery.

In addition to working hard, our volunteers also played hard again this year. You cooked up delicious vegan chilis for the Co-op's cookoff; represented us on the softball field, the volleyball courts, in the streets during the RW24, and on the lanes of Falcon Bowl; you shared food and games together (despite



rain and mud!) at the Labor Day Potluck, performed an educational skit at Locust St. Festival, placed our banana cart honorably in the Center St. Daze cart race, welcomed a local film crew into the store, and dined together at the Spaghetti Dinner.

Best of all, the incredible workers of the Riverwest Co-op, volunteers and staff alike, made connections with and supported one another this year. You offered compassionate ears to those going through the hardest of times, treated visitors with hospitality and respect and, through your commitment and kindness, helped to lift up our community. I am honored, and humbled, every single day, to learn from and work alongside people as good as you.



*Thank you for carrying the flame,
Ousia Whitaker-DeVault*

Cafe Report by Victor Ivy and Sebasteon Obito

Tasty Treats in the Cafe

Despite financial hardships and a rough and tumble year, the cafe remains resilient! Our team is making adjustments and great strides towards increasing business and efficiency, and are confident that 2019 will bring us to a place of balance and a comfortable revenue stream. We are extremely proud to be in collaboration with the store and Sustainability Committee to continue reducing food loss. As always, we are using as many natural and organic items that we can in our food, providing the community with affordable deliciousness!



Our cafe staff has grown and is truly amazing. We have some new faces including Rhiannon and Abby,

as well as some familiar ones: Gretchen, Todd, Riles, Scott, Mark, Jessica, Nick, and Sebasteon, who recently moved up to the position of cafe co-manager. We are always working to provide the best customer service and food for our customers. Be sure to introduce yourself to any unfamiliar faces!

We are thankful for our volunteers who are always finding more ways for us to reduce waste and our ecological footprint. Because of them, we were able to reduce straw usage in the cafe and were able to train staff and volunteers on better waste practices. We also want to note that we also continue to use sustainably-made, compostable disposable items.

Members are always providing the cafe feedback on ways we can improve. Currently, we are looking to implement CBD infused items, new and improved bakery items, and utilizing the best ingredients for our food. Our event license has been renewed and we are looking forward to participating in summer street events around the neighborhood. Because the vegan/vegetarian restaurant scene is growing across the city, we are committed to always progress and continue to get better at what we do!



Gretchen, Rhiannon and Sebasteon serve up vegan-vegetarian favorites regularly in the Cafe. Breakfast, lunch and dinner—it's all so good!

The Co-op by the Numbers

2018 Overview:

Greetings Members,

2018 was a tough year financially, specifically in the café. We lost a substantial amount of money due to an increase in labor costs and a decrease in sales during the last quarter of the year. There have been practices put in place to address these issues and the Board and Workers Collective are working together on ways to bring a profit to the Co-op.

On a positive note, the store made a healthy profit thanks to cutting purchases without sacrificing too much selection. We expect to maintain this balance while looking for ways to increase sales. When it comes to natural, organic, local, or vegan products there are a lot of choices on the market, but as a volunteer and community driven cooperative we have things to offer that others cannot.

2019 Budget:

The Board has approved a 2019 budget that uses 2018 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.

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*



2018 Numbers

Total Sales for 2018:

Cafe..... \$ 396,817
Store..... \$ 607,463
Total..... \$ 1,004,280

2018 Net Operating Income:

Cafe..... \$ - 46,343.54
Store..... \$ 19,652.67
Total..... \$ - 26,690.87

Cash in Bank Accounts (minus
outstanding liabilities):
\$160,608 as of the end of
December 2018.



Twin Pins Bowling League met Monday evenings at the Falcon Bowl, right across the street from the Co-op. Thanks for everything, Lynn Okopinski!!

RIVERWEST CO-OP						
Profit and Loss						
2019 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	396,817.19	100.00%		0.00%	396,817.19	39.51%
Store Sales		0.00%	643,630.58	100.00%	643,630.58	64.09%
xMember Sales Discounts		0.00%	(20,896.47)	-3.25%	(20,896.47)	-2.08%
xVolunteer Discounts		0.00%	(15,270.47)	-2.37%	(15,270.47)	-1.52%
Total Store Sales	\$0.00	0.00%	\$607,463.64	94.38%	\$607,463.64	60.49%
Total Sales	\$396,817.19	100.00%	\$607,463.64	94.38%	\$1,004,280.83	100.00%
Total Income	\$396,817.19	100.00%	\$607,463.64	94.38%	\$1,004,280.83	100.00%
Cost of Goods Sold		0.00%		0.00%		
Cost of Goods Sold		0.00%	1,224.80	0.19%	\$1,224.80	0.12%
Materials & Supplies	25,500.00	6.43%	386.81	0.06%	\$25,886.81	2.58%
Purchases	137,179.70	34.57%	441,284.75	68.56%	\$578,464.45	57.60%
Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$162,679.70	41.00%	\$442,896.36	68.81%	\$605,576.06	60.30%
Total Cost of Goods Sold	\$162,679.70	41.00%	\$442,896.36	68.81%	\$605,576.06	60.30%
Gross Profit	\$234,137.49	59.00%	\$164,567.28	25.57%	\$398,704.77	39.70%
Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Administrative Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Board Expenses	668.22	0.17%	668.23	0.10%	\$1,336.45	0.13%
Conference Expenses	650.00	0.16%	650.00	0.10%	\$1,300.00	0.13%
Donations	500.00	0.13%	500.00	0.08%	\$1,000.00	0.10%
Office Supplies	113.25	0.03%	113.25	0.02%	\$226.50	0.02%
Professional Fees	2,500.00	0.63%	2,500.00	0.39%	\$5,000.00	0.50%
Total Administra- tive Expenses	\$4,431.47	1.12%	\$4,431.48	0.69%	\$8,862.95	0.88%

2019 Budget Projection

	Cafe		Store		TOTAL	
Advertising & Promotion	1,704.64	0.43%	1,679.07	0.26%	\$3,383.71	0.34%
Licenses & Fees	62.50	0.02%	62.50	0.01%	\$125.00	0.01%
Occupancy Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Insurance	5,492.12	1.38%	4,528.12	0.70%	\$10,020.24	1.00%
Licenses & Fees	452.21	0.11%	452.21	0.07%	\$904.42	0.09%
Rent	7,200.00	1.81%	7,200.00	1.12%	\$14,400.00	1.43%
Repairs & Maintenance	1,775.91	0.45%	1,212.98	0.19%	\$2,988.89	0.30%
Security	340.04	0.09%	340.03	0.05%	\$680.07	0.07%
Utilities	14,054.36	3.54%	14,054.45	2.18%	\$28,108.81	2.80%
Total Occupancy Expenses	\$31,448.28	7.93%	\$29,895.86	4.64%	\$61,344.14	6.11%
Operating Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Bank Charges		0.00%	667.99	0.10%	\$667.99	0.07%
Cash Over/Short		0.00%	1,720.43	0.27%	\$1,720.43	0.17%
Credit Card Fees	9,317.66	2.35%	9,346.96	1.45%	\$18,664.62	1.86%
Equipment Lease	665.00	0.17%	665.00	0.10%	\$1,330.00	0.13%
Materials & Supplies	784.84	0.20%	979.25	0.15%	\$1,764.09	0.18%
Printing	230.81	0.06%	230.80	0.04%	\$461.61	0.05%
Telephone/Internet	3,127.58	0.79%	3,178.95	0.49%	\$6,306.53	0.63%
Web Fees	8.24	0.00%	8.25	0.00%	\$16.49	0.00%
Total Operating Expenses	\$14,134.13	3.56%	\$16,797.63	2.61%	\$30,931.76	3.08%
Payroll Expenses		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Payroll Taxes	15,079.05	3.80%	7,288.06	1.13%	\$22,367.11	2.23%
Wages	143,647.82	36.20%	87,121.96	13.54%	\$230,769.78	22.98%
Total Payroll Expenses	158,726.87	40.00%	94,410.02	14.67%	\$253,136.89	25.21%
Solar Costs		0.00%	795.80	0.12%	\$795.80	0.08%
Total Expenses	\$208,740.75	52.60%	\$145,534.99	22.61%	\$354,275.74	35.28%

2019 Budget Projection

	Cafe		Store		TOTAL	
Net Operating Income	\$25,396.74	6.40%	\$19,032.29	2.96%	\$44,429.03	4.42%
Other Income		0.00%		0.00%		0.00%
Interest Income		0.00%	466.18	0.07%	\$466.18	0.05%
Sales Tax Discount	(81.03)	-0.02%		0.00%	\$(81.03)	-0.01%
Total Other Income	\$(81.03)	-0.02%	\$466.18	0.07%	\$385.15	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%	1,871.00	0.29%	1,871.00	0.19%
State Income Taxes		0.00%	706.00	0.11%	706.00	0.07%
Total Income Taxes	\$-	0.00%	\$2,577.00	0.40%	\$2,577.00	0.26%
Profit Sharing	0.00	0.00%		0.00%	0.00	0.00%
Total Other Expenses	\$-	0.00%	\$2,577.00	0.40%	\$2,577.00	0.26%
Net Other Income	\$(81.03)	-0.02%	\$466.18	0.07%	\$385.15	0.04%
Net Income	\$25,315.71	6.38%	\$16,921.47	2.63%	\$42,237.18	4.21%



Communications Committee: The Co-op's Voice

The mission of the Communications Committee is to expand the business and increase awareness of the Riverwest Co-op and Café. The Committee is also responsible for Co-op events, advertising and promotions, as well as maintaining the Co-op's website, social media, and internal communications.

The Committee currently meets once a month in the Co-op office. If you're passionate about the Co-op and want to help us reach out to our neighbors, please contact Paula (paulag@riverwestcoop.org).

We'd like to thank the hard work and dedication of both our veteran committee members as well as several key new members. The biggest strength of the Co-op is its membership and the people power of our volunteers, so please reach out if you have marketing or event planning experience!

Volunteer Opportunities in 2019

Here's a sneak peek of projects we're hoping to work on in 2019:

- Attending more community events—look out for sign-up sheets and newsletter volunteer
- Requests
- Boosting our social media presence
- Creating more in-store product and farmer highlight signage
- Generating recipes using Co-op ingredients and making them available in-store and online

New Website

Early in 2019, we launched our new website, led by Caresse Reiland. The new site is easier to update and mobile-friendly! We think it looks pretty snazzy—what do you think? See it at: www.riverwestcoop.org

Member Survey

In an initiative that kicked off in 2017, we began surveying our members to get to know you better! After discovering some key insights in our 2018 survey,



Volunteer Hesper Juhnke and Quasi Mondo Physical Theater created street theatre pantomiming the importance of farmers to the Riverwest Co-op.

we're working on updating this year's survey. You'll get a chance to share your thoughts, and we'll get a chance to better serve you. Plus, participants will be entered to win one of several Co-op gift certificates!

Community Involvement and Donations

We participate whenever possible in community events, and this year we sadly had to scale back based on volunteer and worker resources we had available. Our board still found a way to get involved—they had a blast at the Center Street Daze's Art Cart Race! We also attended Locust Street Festival with a pop-up performance about growing food, led by volunteers with Quasi Mondo Physical Theater. If you have ideas and a willingness to represent the Riverwest Co-op at various neighborhood events, let's connect and make something happen! We also had the opportunity to offer in-kind donations to many local groups including Maryland Avenue Montessori, WAVE, Victory Garden, MKE Vegan Expo. We organize the Annual Spaghetti

Dinner held at Falcon Bowl. Over 130 people enjoyed meeting neighbors, eating spaghetti and enjoying the music by Trio du Monde. Also, we're a member of Local First Milwaukee, an organization that promotes the growth of local business in the Milwaukee area.

Monthly Newsletter and Advertising

We send out a monthly e-newsletter, Fresh News, to our members and create a monthly advertisement for the Riverwest Currents. Tommasina is our new writer for the newsletters and Jess Poisl and Glenda Puhek create the advertisements as well as other artwork. If you are not receiving our Newsletter and would like to, you can update your email address at membership@riverwestcoop.org or at the store register. If you use Gmail, we have instructions to adjust your promotions filter, which can be found on the website and on the "Board board" in the cafe

Growth in Social Media

In the last year we have really tried to expand our creative energy through Instagram involvement and Facebook events. We noticed the trend on IG as more of a food-based, "tag a friend who needs this" type of platform, with the most liked posts going to chzcake and cafe dinner specials. This year we really tried to tie in the store with the daily discounts being posted as "stories" instead of actual picture posts for those followers who are less likely to physically click on our page and go into our pictures.

For the regular posts, Alyssa Russo attempted to make "home specials" using all the amazing products we have in the store and hash-tagging them to help promote how amazing the Co-op is with local, vegan, and alternative products. This was a really fun way to help people see how easy it can be to cook healthy and

unique foods at home, while cross-promoting weekly discounts like bulk or produce day. The stories have been moderately successful in keeping the membership involved by having access to information about early closings, meetings, call for action invites, and just general Co-op vibes.

We can only gauge based on how many replies we received or by how high the number of views was. We noticed last year that people were not getting the information they desired in a timely enough fashion, so working towards more transparency through social media has been an uplifting experience. One hardship is that Alyssa is a volunteer who is not there all day or even every day, so the regularity of posts seems to be lacking. The Workers' Collective is considering ways that the Co-op can integrate this into a staff position to maintain consistency in our frequency of posts, voice of the messages, utilization as a platform for information sharing, and marketing methods to continue to reach new potential members. Facebook has now been attached to the IG so we can cross-promote for some of the membership who are not on IG. Facebook is seen as more of an events calendar available to the public, so this is a way to remain transparent with our events. Many people also check Facebook for customer reviews, so we must remain aware of how we are perceived by the community.



Our annual Spaghetti Dinner held in January each year always brings out the best of Riverwest. In 2018 artist Tonya Kountz and her table companions wasted no time putting crayons to artistic purpose.

Your Membership Matters

Membership: A Co-operative Idea

Since 1999, 5,114* friends of our Co-op have purchased memberships. 1,644 of them are “active” members, those who are up to date with their equity and thus receiving their discount, and have brought in \$489,685 in sales since the last GMM on May 6th, 2018. 538 of these are lifetime members, 5 of which paid

the lifetime membership up front in the last year. 207 of our customers became new members, and 271 renewed their memberships (59 of which became lifetime members) for a total of almost \$10,670 in added equity. Thank you, fellow members, for supporting your Co-op!

This year we overcame some challenges with the COPOS system through the heroic efforts of Katie Jesse, who was able to communicate with the COPOS programmers to solve some ongoing problems we had last year and early this year with members being erroneously identified by the system as overdue. Another major accomplishment was the implementation of the new equity level for lifetime membership.

Again due to Katie’s diligence, the COPOS system handled the transition seamlessly. Thank you Katie!

We should also shout out to Josh Holt, who continues to handle an increasing array of tasks related to the membership and volunteer databases. On a sadder



2018 Center Street Art Cart Race awarded to Riverwest Co-op!



The Riverwest Co-op supports the Riverwest 24 Bike Race by staying open for all 24 hours, making certain we have food and drinks for sale to sustain the riders. We look forward to this year’s race—No. 12!

We are looking for new recruits to the Membership Committee.

Routine tasks include entering renewals and new members into the COPOS database, adding new members into the email distribution list for the newsletter, notifying members when to renew, maintaining proper discounts, investigating and resolving discrepancies, and conducting related member communications. It will be easier for new volunteers to jump in due to the revamping of our outdated instructions by Courtney. Yay! There is much database maintenance as well as member outreach we could accomplish with more volunteers. If you enjoy the Zen of data entry or would like a peek into the membership aspect of the Co-op, we would welcome new fingers, eyes, and minds! This is a good opportunity for people who would like to help the Co-op but cannot fit in a regular shift in the store or cafe. For more information email Ousia at ousia@riverwestcoop.org.

note, we regret having to say goodbye to Sheryl, who moved to the East Coast to be closer to her family. We wish her well, though we will miss her encyclopedic knowledge of the database and her exacting attention to detail.

**Numbers listed are from reports ran on March 14, 2019*

Sustainability Committee Report by Hannah Glasson

A Greener Future: Improving Our Environmental Impact

The Sustainability Committee serves as an advocate for the environment, implementing best practices to reduce our carbon footprint and further integrate sustainability issues into the operation of the Co-op.

The committee has been active since May 2018. We have held five community events since then, a film night, a bike maintenance workshop and three street clean-ups. The clean-ups are part of a series of efforts to reduce plastic pollution in this community, to increase awareness of waste and encourage people to reduce the amount of plastic they use in their daily lives. These efforts included a Waste Awareness Week, which was held from January 20-28. Committee members, with the help of staff, spent the week training all staff and active volunteers (80% success) on appropriate use of the trash, recycling, compost and soft plastics bins. We hope this will reduce the contamination in our bins and helped to build awareness around waste issues. Cleanup and training events will continue.

In other news, the committee also manages the store Boomerang Bag rack and there are now over 400 Bags available. Most of these are in circulation around the neighbourhood. We would like customers to return bags they are no longer using, but we love that many are being used on a daily basis. We have had continuous positive feedback about this initiative since the Co-op got its first bags in April 2018. These bags aim to encourage people to avoid plastic and to create a habit of bringing their own bag to the store.

Finally, the committee has been working on several other in-store projects since May. These are mostly based around signage and café plastic. Straws are now only given on request and we have either paper or compostable straws. All to-go packaging has been compostable for some time but we are starting to encourage customers to bring their packaging back to our café compost bins for appropriate disposal. This packaging is best kept out of the recycling stream and landfill. There are several committee projects still in progress, for example, bulk bins for snacks and sweets, further café plastic reduction, unnecessary delivery

packaging and selling straws/beeswax wraps and produce bags in store. We love supporting the Co-op with these projects and are always looking for more volunteers. Please contact Ousia if you are interested in getting involved (ousia@riverwestcoop.org).



Bylaws Committee Report by Debbie Powers

Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee Report

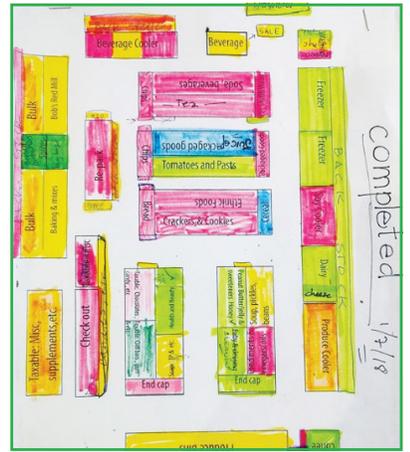
At the 2018 General Membership Meeting, the Board of Directors proposed two changes to the bylaws. Several members raised the opinion that there should be a more holistic review of the entire bylaws document, so a Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee was formed to carry out this task and involve the membership. Through multiple mediums, the Membership was invited to participate; these mediums included the newsletter, the "Board board" in the café, and on the website. One member and several board members gathered on a monthly basis for six months. The committee went through each bylaw and discussed whether we felt that changes were needed. This document will continue to require review over time, but the group believes that the proposed changes for 2019 are a good start.

Due to a raised concern regarding communication around bylaw proposals at the 2018 GMM, we have focused much energy on making sure that the Membership has had multiple opportunities to review the proposed changes and discuss them with the Board. To allow for more focus and discussion around the proposals it was decided to have a special membership meeting rather than simply an agenda item at the 2019 GMM. The proposals will be voted on by the Membership at a special membership meeting; stay tuned for details to come.



Cooperative Principles:

For over a decade, 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

Riverwest Cooperative 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."

