



## **Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives**

**Supporting the Success of Worker Co-operation in the Valley & Beyond**

### **Report from the Executive Director**

**for VAWC Member Meeting, December 6, 2017**

Adam Trott

Executive Director

[adam@valleyworker.coop](mailto:adam@valleyworker.coop)



## Co-operative Education leads to Co-op Success

With internship applications, VAWC co-founding a scholarship for co-op education and a world renowned co-operative thinker, Sonja Novkovic, speaking at UMass, we've had a big month for the Fifth Principle in our valley.

We're continuing our direct member support, too, and are working with Co-op 108, Green Mountain Spinnery and Pedal People on various projects.

### Education Grows: Internship Applications now in Spring and Summer

Last year we instituted a second session of internships at the UMass Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative (UMCEC). Based on the success of our summer internship programming we have opened up the spring semester for students in our Certificate of Co-operative Enterprise.

Interns perform @150 hours of research as well as @150 hours of "on-the-floor" labor. Updates will follow from members.



### Education Supports: the J. Kevin Crocker Fund

We're honored to work with the

Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) and the New England Farmers Union to launch the J. Kevin Crocker

### Principle 5. Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

From the Co-operative Identity, Values and Principles of the International Co-operative Alliance

Scholarship Fund for Education in Co-operative Enterprise. This fund honors Kevin's service, dedication and contribution to co-op education. It is made available to students studying the Certificate of Co-operative Enterprise in the UMass, Amherst, Department of Economics.

Kevin was a worker/member of Pelham Auto before he worked at UMass and was instrumental in the creation of our certificate program.

To make a contribution to the Scholarship Fund please visit [www.newenglandfarmersunion.org](http://www.newenglandfarmersunion.org), click on the "Donate" button, and indicate that your donation to the NEFU Education Foundation is for the "J. Kevin Crocker."

To make a contribution by mail, please make your check out to "NEFU Education Foundation" with "J. Kevin Crocker Fund" in the memo line and send it to:

NEFU Education Foundation  
176 Avenue A, Suite 2, Turners Falls, MA 01376



### Education Connects: Our Co-op Certificate Program Draws attention to members, VAWC

During the first week of December, the St. Mary's Co-operative Management Education Program Director visited our area and half our member co-ops.

Through our participation in the UMCEC, VAWC and NFCA had Sonja Novkovic chosen as the speaker for the UMass, Amherst Political Economy Workshop this semester.



Sonja is Professor of Economics at St. Mary's University. Her research is in the field of cooperative firms, social economy, and comparative economics. Her first full day in western Massachusetts was spent visiting co-ops from NFCA and VAWC. Sonja, the Chair of the International Co-operative Alliance's Committee on Co-



operative Research, spoke with VAWC members about their challenges and successes to build into the St. Mary's programming and the potential research topics of the ICA.

Her talk involved how membership in co-operatives is more important than ownership, which in itself is not sufficient for co-operation. Likewise that hiring "experts" from outside the co-operative sector can be valuable yet must be coupled with training. The dual nature of co-operatives is unique and forms an integral part of systems like marketing, human and social capital management, education and financial decision making.

Sonja's visit was also a strategic maneuver to draw attention to the

work VAWC and NFCA members are doing to promote co-operative education for our region. We now have a live-wire contact with the only Masters in Co-operative Management in the english speaking world. Our Certificate, the only on-going undergraduate program on co-operatives in the United States, has secured dozens of interns for more than 10 worker and consumer co-operatives.

For more on this talk or results of internships, contact Adam.

### Go Co-op this Season

If you are searching for a gift for the holiday season, Go Co-op. Whether it is a gift card to a food co-operative like River Valley,

Leverett or Franklin Community Co-operative or for our own members you can have your co-op values speak during the holidays.

Collective Copies is holding a sale on Equal Exchange and Co-op 108 products as well as books from their publishing wing, Levellers Press including *Building Co-operative Power*, *Wealth of the Commons* by David Bollier and more.



### Upcoming Events

#### Anniversary of the opening of Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Store

On a cold, windy night on Toad Lane on December 21, 1844 a group of activists and out of work weavers opened their first store. Candles were in there first shipment because the gas company refused them service. Thanks to those and all other pioneers of co-operation the world over for making our co-operatives possible.

### First time reading this Report?

As a co-op of worker co-ops that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of our core goal is to provide ourselves with the resources and support we need to advance our co-operatives, empower our members, and benefit more people in our communities. VAWC Representatives attend meetings, direct resources while defining the goals of our organization. Interested in being a Representative or on the Board? Contact [adam@valleyworker.coop](mailto:adam@valleyworker.coop). Here's some of our core activities:

- Ad/PR campaign through area food co-op newsletters, local and movement media;
- Maintain your **VAWC Owners' Manual** aimed at educating, training, and empowering current and especially new members of all member co-ops;
- Measures of economic and environmental impact and a shared identity among VAWC members; and
- Developing our co-operative economy especially with inter-VAWC purchasing and cross sector collaboration.
- Education of many sorts including directing the UMass, Amherst Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative (on Facebook) and the Certificate in Co-operative Enterprise we co-created.
- Operating the **VAWC Interco-operative Development Fund** made from 5% of VAWC Member surplus, owned and controlled by VAWC Members.

Worker co-operatives and our movement are made stronger through shared identity, statutes and structural provisions that preserve our individual autonomy while clearly identifying our organizations as co-operatives united in the common cause of developing a co-operative economy.

#### Definition

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

#### Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

#### Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Information and Training
- Co-operation among Co-operatives
- Concern for Community

The worker co-operative identity is further detailed by the World Declaration on Co-operative Worker Ownership established by CICOPA (The International Organisation of Industrial, Artisan and Service Producers' Co-operatives) in 2004.

The Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (VAWC) is rooted in the ideals of co-operation, mutuality and solidarity. VAWC is itself an expression of co-operative principles — a “co-op of co-ops” that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of our individual co-ops to develop their businesses, serve their members, and contribute to the wider co-operative economy. Our core goal is to provide ourselves with the resources and support we need to advance our co-operatives, empower our members, and benefit more people in our communities.

## VAWC Member Co-ops

Broadfork Permaculture Co-op  
Collective Copies  
Co-op 108  
Green Mountain Spinnery Co-op  
Oxbow Design Build Co-op  
Pedal People Co-operative  
Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics

## VAWC Board of Directors

Philippe Rigollaud  
Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics  
Faith Seddon  
Collective Copies  
Lauren Yohe Von Krusenstiern  
Green Mountain Spinnery  
Suzette Snow-Cobb  
Franklin Community Co-op  
– Stakeholder Director

[www.valleyworker.coop](http://www.valleyworker.coop)

**Working**  
for a Co-operative Economy