



## **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, March 28, 2018**

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## Intercooperation, Our Annual Meeting in May, & Education

VAWC's co-op calendar fills up in the spring with annual meetings of partner co-ops, of which we will give highlights here. Conference season approaches and we are busy proposing workshops and presentations. Our own annual meeting is coming up, too, so prepare for that. Lastly we will update you on the progress of there being three interns in the VAWC system this spring. They will advance our research agenda as well as sales for some individual co-operatives.

### Interco-operation and collaborating with co-operatives in our region

*Neighboring Food Co-op Association*

The board and staff of VAWC was invited by the Neighboring Food Co-op Association to attend their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting that to be part of the presentations and discussion. Doug O'Brien, recently chosen as CEO for the National Co-operative Business Association, presented on how co-ops are making the "Inclusive Economy" real and accessible.

Built on concepts like participation, sustainability, growth, equity and stability, inclusive economics has taken hold of the debate around economics and no other model is better built to deliver on these concepts than co-operatives.

VAWC held their board meeting during a break out session. Our regular agenda was augmented by strategic thinking around how to maximize the opportunity to collaborate with NFCA and the 35 food co-ops and start-up members they have.

## Building an Inclusive Economy: The Co-operative Difference



*The cover of NFCA's program for their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Member Meeting (printed by Collective Copies) co-ops and inclusion.*

Partnering with NFCA continues to be exciting as we are working together on the multi-stakeholder Amherst Community Co-op, our next topic.

*Amherst Food Co-op "Here We Grow"*

AFC has completed their feasibility study and the good news that the town of Amherst can support a co-operative has begun to spread. The next step is to reach a new threshold of members - 800 - which will then advance the project to choosing one of a list of sites and to launch a member loan campaign.

If you haven't joined yet go to [amherstfood.coop](http://amherstfood.coop) and be part of the growth of the voice of worker co-operation here in our region.

*Franklin Community Co-op*

VAWC represented at FCC's annual meeting, too, and

joined a number of worker co-operatives who recognize the value of intercooperation. PV Squared, Artisan Beverage Co-op and Real Pickles all represented the voice of worker co-ops.

### Internship Update

Three interns in VAWC system, two of them are researching the impact of worker co-operatives and VAWC's work supporting the co-operative economy.

Jack Fischer and Michael Ruther are both

gathering data about worker co-operatives and how best to support them. Michael is working on building information on conversions, best practices and case studies. Michael's final project will be presenting new information on how VAWC can support conversions both during the shift to worker co-operative and over time as a successful business.

Jack is gathering data for worker co-ops throughout New England. This will be information with the



*Felicia, board member of Amherst Food Co-op, presents their approach to making healthy food safe and affordable at "Here We Grow".*



*NFCA staff and interns from the Co-op Enterprise Collaborative took a moment to be pictured by their display on co-ops and education at their 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering.*

goal of showing the impact of worker co-operatives as a whole for basics involving revenues, membership and related impact.

Both of these enhance our current members' stance in our co-op community and our economy. This is another example of how our educational work has elevated the profile of our system. Special thanks to the Neighboring Food Co-op Association for their support of the New England data gathering.

All interns will present final reports near the end of the academic semester. All VAWC Member Co-ops are encourage to attend.

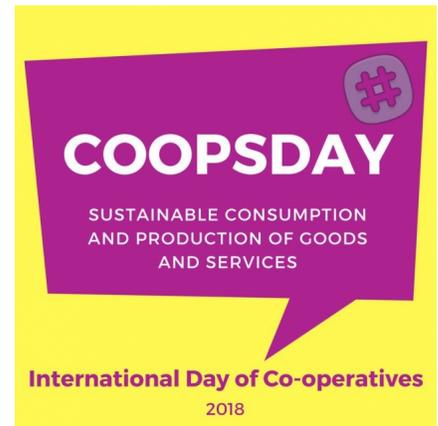
## The Theme for the 2018 International Day of Co-operatives Announced

The Theme for the 2018 International Day of Co-operatives on July 7 is "sustainable consumption and production of goods and services". It gives an opportunity for co-operatives to show how they run successful businesses while respecting our natural environment and the resources it offers.

“Co-ops...allow people to take control of their economic future and, because they are not owned by shareholders, the economic and social benefits of their activity stay in the communities where they are established” said Ariel Guarco, President of the International Co-operative Alliance.

### Why this theme?

Co-operatives have two centuries' experience building sustainable and resilient societies. The Theme is aligned with that of the 2018 High-



level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF): "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies"

## Upcoming Events

### Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives Annual Meeting

Late May, location TBD

### Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:30pm

Location TBD

## First time reading a VAWC Report?

VAWC is itself an expression of co-operative principles — a co-op of worker 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 Representatives attend meetings, direct staff and resources while defining the goals of our organization. Interested in being a Representative or running for the Board? Contact [adam@valleyworker.coop](mailto:adam@valleyworker.coop). Here's some of our main 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;
- 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 undergrad Certificate program we co-created.
- Operating the **VAWC Intero-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