

CGN Board to Retreat at Up & Coming Food Co-op Conference

By Ellen Michel

As we go to press with this issue of *Cooperative Grocer*, the Cooperative Grocer Network (CGN) board is planning its involvement in the Up & Coming Conference taking place on March 10–11 in Milwaukee, Wis. On the day before the conference, we will hold a CGN board retreat, our first since 2015 and my first as executive director.

A board retreat offers a special opportunity to work intensively face-to-face, achieving alignment around a chief initiative and key objectives. Because of our proximity to Up & Coming, we will also have a chance to connect directly with many other stakeholders—co-op consultants, grocery experts, startup teams, and vendors who serve our stores.

The Up & Coming co-op host this year is Outpost Natural Foods, one of the consistent leaders in our industry, with four stores and a café in the Milwaukee metro. Up & Coming is coordinated by the Indiana Cooperative Development Center and Food Co-op Initiative, with support from CDS Consulting Co-op and other organizations.

I've been involved with Up & Coming since it began in 2009 and can attest to the impact of this inspiring and beneficial conference. Although focused on food co-op startups, especially those groups working to get "doors on the store," the information shared is relevant to co-ops of any age. Affordable and intimate, the gathering offers a terrific skills-development opportunity to staff and board members.

Most memorable of all is contact with those people who are determined to establish new stores in their communities. They understand the value of what food co-ops offer and are doing the work of introducing others to the co-op business model. They have the passion, vision, and drive to remind the rest of us why we dedicate so much sustained energy to our common project.

Check out Up & Coming at the conference website (upandcoming.coop) and consider attending or supporting the conference, sending a clear message of solidarity to the many people across the country who want food co-ops in the places where they live.

These are our newest ambassadors, bringing a wealth of talent to our fold. ♦

Welcome to Meg Torrence

I would like to welcome Meg Torrence to CGN, where she has begun providing administrative support services to the organization and its members. Meg will process dues and other billing, supporting CGN in delivering both the collaborative platform and *Cooperative Grocer* magazine. Meg has worked with numerous cooperatives in several capacities over the years, providing bookkeeping, event planning, store management, and administrative services. She brings with her an enduring love of food co-ops, a deep knowledge of cooperative operations, and a tremendous sense of humor. You can contact her at: MegT@grocer.coop.

Please note that we are moving CGN bookkeeping to Bloomington, In. You'll see a new address on invoices and other communications: Cooperative Grocer Network, PO Box 8399, Bloomington IN 47407.

CGN Board Welcomes Allison Hermes of P6

In November we welcomed Allison Hermes to the CGN board. Allison lives in the Twin Cities and is the national director of the Principle Six Cooperative Trade Movement: (P6.coop), one of our newest CGN Associate Members. She has previous experience on the marketing team at Organic Valley Cooperative.

Allison was invited to join the CGN board to fill a seat vacated by Bella Waters, who recently resigned from her position at North Coast Co-op to take a job as administrative and development director for the Northcoast Environmental Center in Arcata, Calif. We want to thank Bella for her service, too. As a previous operations manager of CGN, she brings valuable insights into the organization and its history, and has offered to continue to be available informally for advice.