

Aaron Bedell

My love for food cooperatives and food systems has taken me around the world. I have visited 16 countries and studied across the US. During this time, I gained an extensive knowledge of cooperative life and how each co-op has formed to reflect the unique communities they provide for.

I attended Eastern Michigan University and have lived in Ypsilanti for 8 years. I became a member of the Ypsilanti Food Co-op in March of 2014. In that time, I served the Co-op both as an employee and as a volunteer.

I would like to see YFC continue to strengthen its ties to the community, specifically through youth outreach and education. I am prepared to dedicate my time, use my passion for co-ops and knowledge to help educate the next generation of co-ops, motivated by my affinity for the YFC. I am excited for the future of our community!



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future?

The YFC has the unique position of being a valuable outlet for healthy organic foods in a "food desert." As the co-op grows, identifies, and addresses the needs of the community. It must provide the necessary information as to why one would seek out the advantages of cooperative life.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

I've spent a lot of time volunteering, learning, and working for the local restaurant industry; and regularly supporting it. I love Ypsi and the unique food culture it has. I want to work towards organizing farm-to-table dinners, and healthy cooking lessons utilizing my ServSafe Certification to compliment the YFC.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

Co-ops are a place people go to for more than groceries. They're a place you go because you feel like you belong there. It's more than a store it's a part of the community. Co-ops are constantly changing and adapting to their community's needs, making them a part of your life.

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most and why?

The Cooperative Value that resonates most with me is Social Responsibility. It is the co-ops responsibility to meet the needs of the community and educate everyone to the advantages of cooperative lifestyle. This commitment to serving the local community is what sets co-ops apart from being just a store.

Don Broersma

Once upon a place in a far far away time..... Actually, I was in Mt Clemens and it was the mid to late 70's. I had recently returned from Viet Nam and had joined the Peace Movement. Back then there was a lot of talk about building the new society in the ruins of the old. Soon I started hearing about co-operatives. Places where people were working together for the good; food coops, farm coops, housing coops, bike coops, bakery coops. I liked the sounds of the new cooperative society being built in the belly of the beast. In 1979 I moved into Ypsilanti, found the Ypsilanti Food Co-op, and that was that. The Board of Directors offers guidance to the co-op. We set guide lines that the General Manager follows. It can be quite exciting to help steer our Ship through the troubled waters of intense competition. May we be successful on these rough waters.



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future? We will continue to be one of the biggest food mainstays in Ypsi. We will continue to be the local food store that sells organics because it's right, not just for the bottom line.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community? Besides helping the Co-op continue to exist, I also do landscaping and building repairs for the Mill Works building, helping make the Ypsi area more beautiful and inviting for visitors and co-op shoppers.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op? It's in the structure. The other grocery stores have corporate owners. Co-ops have Member Owners. We started with organics when there was very little available. We did that because organics made sense: less poisons for the farmers and our customers. Most other grocery stores became involved in organics after they became big sellers.

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most, and why?

It is difficult to say that one value resonates more than the others. Some do seem to resonate more but we need all 10. The 10 values are the 10 pillars that hold up the co-op movement. They are all important. Without all 10 we will become lopsided and fall.

Leaha Dotson

I have lived in Ypsilanti for five years and YFC is my home away from home! For 3.5 years I worked at YFC in multiple rolls while studying food cooperative movements/governance at EMU. I have seen YFC change and grow and I'm excited for its' future and the vital role I believe it plays in facilitating sustainable community growth in Ypsilanti.

I've traveled to 16 countries and presented at the International Cooperative Alliance researching cooperative models and their global and local impact on food ethics, food access, and over all community enrichment.

I believe that co-ops can fill the need for educating, training, and empowering communities to achieve food security and autonomy. I strongly believe in supporting local, prioritizing food access and bridging community gaps to increase diversity and community involvement. Co-ops are my passion.



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future?

YFC is going to be pivotal in establishing an autonomous local food economy. Ypsi already has a thriving local food system and YFC has begun an education series which I hope to grow into a thriving 'think tank' motivating Ypsilantians to truly think about their food.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

I am involved in local politics and support several local non-profits by attending events and volunteering when I can. I believe in supporting local orgs that are giving back to the community, especially youth. I have also continued leading orientations at the Ypsilanti Food Co-op.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

I shop local! There is a certain beauty about picking out your spinach and bumping into the farmer or selecting a bath bomb and the owner suggests her favorite. YFC is an experience that can't be substituted. A five-minute trip turns into a mini reunion and I love it!

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most (see page 3), and why?

Caring for others, I'm known as the 'mamma bird' friend and am happiest when caring for others. I believe that we are all in this crazy world together and that it is essential to care for one another. We must ensure people's basic needs are met and then they can become more engaged within society. When someone knows they are cared for it can be the world of a difference.

Celeste McClellan

As a lifetime supporter of environmental and social justice causes I am proud to be a member of the Ypsilanti Food Co-op. In 1993 my spouse Barbara Zmich and I settled in Ypsi. My first experience with the Co-op came during a walk through the neighborhood, when I noticed the “Open to the Public” sign. I was very pleased with the produce and grocery offerings and felt very welcomed by the staff. We began shopping there regularly and we joined shortly afterwards. Our life in Europe, where we worked as musicians for 12 years, strongly impressed upon us the importance of patronizing local shops. This also gave us a valuable perspective on social consciousness. I believe that serving on the board is something I could do to contribute to the Co-op we appreciate so much.



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti’s future?

The Co-op is a long standing, valuable community asset and member. Our Co-op provides good food and education for our community. The current emphasis on the importance of what we feed our bodies and children will determine the future health of ourselves and the place we live.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

My personal view of community is to get to know our neighbors, walk around town and see how people are doing. Find out what is happening in the city with development, express my opinions with our city council members on issues and be aware of the ideas of others as well.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

The Co-op is close to home, friendly, accessible and good quality. Patronizing a local business strengthens our community.

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most, and why?

All the Cooperative values are important. I believe in taking responsibility for my actions and decisions in life. In doing so I believe considering social justice and being responsible to my fellow human beings is adjunct to personal responsibility. All other named values should then follow naturally.

Tessa Sarapo

She is a resident of Ypsilanti who loves our local food scene. She ran for the board to become more involved in the community, and was appointed by the board this past winter to fulfill a vacated seat. Tessa has visited numerous other co-ops throughout the state and is a regular attendant of our local farmer's markets. She also has a background working in the natural foods industry and shares our passion for natural, organic and fair trade foods. Tessa works for Eden Foods and has attended many of our nation's largest food trade shows.



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future?

As sustainable food systems become increasingly important throughout the world, the need for honest food sources is on the rise. The community of Ypsilanti is also increasing and with this population increase comes an increased need for sustainable and centralized grocery. The placement of the co-op allows community members to walk or bus to a grocery store without having to travel long distances. YFC also participates in community events and supports local business contributing to the local economy. The implementation of the double up bucks program allows shoppers of different economic status to have access to healthy, honest and sustainable foods.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

New to Ypsilanti, I have been working to grow my involvement in the community. I have also been an acting member of the Ypsilanti food co-op board of directors since December 2017. I contribute to the local economy, shopping local and attending many local events.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

I choose to shop at the Ypsilanti food co-op because I love the service. The staff always treats me like I am a valued customer and, most importantly, a friend. Knowing few people in town it's nice to feel welcome and accepted. The co-op also has a wide variety of specialty items and brands I can't find at many other stores and they are always willing to order in something they don't currently carry. The proximity of the co-op also allows me to walk to get groceries, which I love!

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most, and why?

Honesty resonates the most with me because, working for a food manufacturer, I have learned how companies are able to hide details of their products from consumers. As the key words "natural" and "gluten free" becomes sought after by consumers, companies will sprinkle these words in their marketing plans to make their products more appealing while hiding synthetic ingredients, unhealthy levels of sugars and toxic packaging. It is incredibly important for consumers to be aware of the ingredients they are consuming and feeding their families.

## Steve Somers

Steve Somers was raised in Berkeley California in the 1960's and became familiar with food and housing co-op's at that time. He began studying music at an early age and has performed at many community events, concerts and fundraisers over the years. In 1979 he relocated to Michigan and began attending EMU where he received a B.S. and M.A. degree in classical guitar and music composition. He became an Ypsilanti Food Co-op gold card member in the 1980's. Mr. Somers is currently teaching the jazz combo class at WCC and also directing the Ypsilanti Youth Orchestra Jazz Ensemble (a non-profit community music education group), as well as teaching private lessons. With both the WCC and YYO he is actively performing at many community events such as NAPID, WCC Free College Day, WCC G.E.D. graduation, Huron River Days, Ypsi Food Co-op events and more. Acceptance of diverse backgrounds are an important part of both the WCC and YYO ensembles and classes. Mr. Somers has three daughters and two are currently attending U of M and Oakland University. His youngest attends Wi-Hi International High School in Ypsilanti. He is very familiar with the local community and school systems. Mr. Somers has been serving on the Ypsilanti Co-op Board of Directors since August of 2017 when he was asked to fill a vacant seat. He also serves on the newly formed WCC Performing Arts Advisory Board which helps to bring important events and guest artists to the community.



1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future?

I believe that the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will continue to be an important part of the local community. Having a community grocery store that is within walking distance for many people is very important. Also, with planned expansion of the facility, additional products, services and/or events could benefit both the Co-op and the community. Food education will continue to play an important role.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

I have been organizing community music events at the Co-op, STUFD Burrito Restaurant, Biggby Coffee, Riverside Arts, Ypsilanti Library and other local venues. These events help draw attention to Ypsilanti and help bring the community together to share their art.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

Shopping at the Co-op enables the Co-op to keep operating and functioning at a high level. I can trust that the Co-op will select quality products. It is also convenient to have a small grocery store within walking distance.

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most, and why?

Concern for Community - While focusing on member needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members. The Co-op has a genuine concern for their members. Profit is not the main concern of the Co-op. Also, the planned expansion will benefit the community and the Co-op members.

## Stefanie T. Stauffer

Stefanie T. Stauffer, PhD is an organic farmer, local food advocate, hot sauce maker, and Sociology professor at Washtenaw Community College. She is currently on the Ann Arbor Greenbelt Advisory Commission and was the Program Manager at Tilian Farm Development Center, an incubator farm for beginning farmers in Ann Arbor Township, August 2014- November 2017.



As a farmer and activist committed to food sovereignty, farm worker justice, racial equity, environmental justice, and alternative economies, Stefanie brings her unique perspective to the Ypsilanti Food Co-op community to help expand the YFC's capacity to support local farmers and producers and give member/owners access to the best sustainable food available.

Stefanie is also a veteran Ypsilanti Farmers Markets vendor who served on the advisory council for the 2013 Ypsilanti Food Ordinance, has worked for Growing Hope, organized the Local Food Summit, and volunteered with the South Central Farmers Cooperative in CA. In October 2014, she went to Slow Food's Salone del Gusto e Terra Madre in Torino, Italy as an US delegate representing Michigan family farmers, food artisans, and Slow Food Ark of Taste producers. Stefanie is often invited to speak about value-added food production, land access, beginning farmers, season extension, and the importance of regionally adapted and climate resilient seed.

1. What role do you think the Ypsilanti Food Co-op will play in the Ypsilanti's future?

The YFC will continue to help support and promote our vibrant local food community.

2. In what ways are you working to contribute to and improve the Ypsilanti community?

As a farmer and activist, I have been working to increase sustainable food access for the last 10 years.

3. If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose the Ypsilanti Food Co-op?

The community where the customers are also the owners!

4. Which of the 10 cooperative values resonates with you most, and why?

Concern for the community. That one resonates the most with me as a farmer and educator.