

BOARD STORIES



WHY I SERVE . . .

By Brennan Allsworth, Oneota Co-op Board of Directors

We spent time with first-year OCC Board Member Brennan Allsworth on a recent sunny, crisp early-November morning. Brennan's a lyrical speaker; his words are carefully chosen, but together they play like a song - the verses are individual, but collectively tell a story. Each board member's "Why I Serve" testimony speaks to interests and skills they contribute to our board. Brennan's (below) reflects a deep commitment to the cooperative model, local food systems, and the landscape that fosters them:

My spouse, Mo, and I relocated to Decorah in February of 2022, and Oneota Co-op was a large 'draw' in our decision to move here. Playing some broomball and joining the Co-op were some of the first things we did. The Co-op's the type of place that helps one build a sense of home. It's a pivotal hub for those who want to eat well and foster community-building.

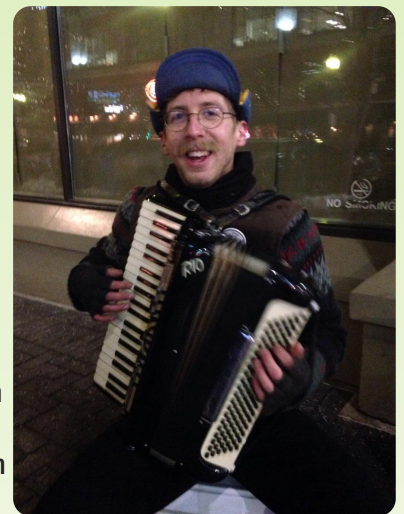
I ran for a spot on the board to involve myself more with our local food system. I am fascinated with local food systems and organic farming practices. Being on the Co-op board offered an excellent way to pursue these internal goals and missions. In my experience with this direct community, I've found the farmers and producers incredibly welcoming, inspiring and helpful in wanting others to succeed. We've got a strong local network, and we're in an incredible spot in terms of growing capacity. We're truly a "bread basket" of sorts. And with all of the amazing farms around here, it was a delicious draw moving us here

I'm a proponent of the cooperative model in the workplace and especially in agriculture. The importance of cooperation in our local food system can be undervalued. In a moment where we all seek more connection with our people, our land, and ourselves, it provides a great opportunity for us to reconnect. I previously worked for and grew with the Snake River Seed Cooperative in Boise, Idaho

- an employee and member-owned seed company - and found the folks involved in this project to have excellent camaraderie, working towards an incredible mission, and were the best seed freaks around!

I've found incredible support in my first year as the Co-op's newest board member. Serving on the Co-op board is an opportunity to learn, and my experience thus far is that board meetings kind of remind me of a classroom - everyone shows up to accomplish something and learn from each other. There's a support network in place and we want each other to succeed. When we face large projects, they're broken down into manageable chunks cooperatively. It's nice to be held accountable, support each other and do the physical work of conversing, debating and problem-solving toward the greater good. I'm really glad to have worked with Scott and Dettra while they're still on the board. They've been kind, knowledgeable and humble. I look forward to "carrying the torch" they've laid before me.

If you have any inkling or desire to help your local community in many facets - from community build projects to providing wholesome food to people - there's myriad ways you can connect and serve the Co-op through service on the board. I would recommend this to those thinking of becoming a board member or to those who have never considered it: Reach out to us. Say hello. Stop by a board meeting - and watch us in discussion.



IS IT YOUR TIME TO SERVE?

The Co-op welcomes all interested member/owners to confirm candidacy in our next board election cycle.

There will be two open seats on the 2024 election ballot.

[Applications](#) are due Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024. Learn more by [clicking here](#).

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE NUMBER TWO

Democratic Owner Control. Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their owners, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the ownership. Owners have equal voting rights - one owner, one vote.