

Amanda Punaro Info

Why are you interested in serving on the co-op's board of directors?

I believe in the Co-Op's mission statement to provide community access to healthy food.

Summarize any experience you may have with cooperatives and community organizations. Be sure to note any leadership roles you may have held in these organizations.

My experiences include being involved in the EACM since inception through early member ownership, and helping to ready the store for opening day (stocking shelves, putting outside tables together, checking price tags, etc.) as well as undertaking the role of Recording Secretary for the past 3 years. Therefore I have a well rounded understanding of where we are at this point in the Co-Op's history, and where we want to go. With the Board's direction turning more focus towards serving Member Owners and their involvement, I feel that my current career as a teacher, and my past experience as a volunteer consultant with Explore and More, and volunteer coordinator with the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation could be quite useful.

With my time spent at Explore and More as a consultant, I assisted the group in coming up with an organized plan for their docents. In doing so, I became a docent myself, and assisted with many different events. For my role at the Central Terminal, I was in charge of assisting in the planning of events, scheduling over 200 volunteers for these events, and managing these volunteers during events. I also facilitated docent training, and scheduling tours of our building.

Summarize your professional experience and skills relevant to service on this Board. What unique skills, personal qualities, or perspective will you bring to the board?

As a teacher, I understand how to engage people, and plan for a learning experience. I have taught multiple different grade levels, but also was a New Hire Trainer at M&T Bank. With these experiences I am prepared to engage our member owners in their Co-Op!

Describe your experiences working collaboratively with others in a group setting.

Teaching is a collaborative task no matter what you are teaching. Even though I am the only grade level in my building, I still have to keep in close contact with Kindergarten and 2nd grade to ensure that we are all working on student growth together. This ensures that we are continuously leading students into the next grade level with knowledge that will ensure their success. We meet frequently throughout the year to discuss lesson plans, curriculum, and student progress. In doing this we gain insights and ideas on how to present material to our classes, and share successes and difficulties we face.

Based on your current knowledge and experience with being a Coop member, what is your:

a. Vision for next 3-5 years (near term)?

I believe that we will find a new building to grow in, and meet our profitability goals. I would also like to see us have a larger cafe area where groups could meet and have lunch, students could gather to get coffee and study, or you could go to grab a dessert after dinner.

b. Vision for next 10- 15 years (longer term)?

I know that East Aurora and the surrounding suburbs will be utilizing the EACM as a hub of community involvement and to continue to get fresh, healthy groceries. I also see us continuing to be a market that other co-ops aspire to be like, and come to for guidance.

What do you think is currently the greatest strength of the Coop?

I honestly think our GM is our greatest strength. She has proven time and time again that she is up to the challenge of ensuring the success of our little market. With everything she has had to deal with since taking the role, she has continued to learn how to better handle our finances, employees, and offerings. She is empathetic to her employees, and listens to board suggestions. When difficult times have come up, she has taken the opportunity to grow and think outside the box.

What do you think needs improvement at this time?

Member owner engagement needs to be addressed. This is something I have been passionate about for a long time. This is not an ordinary grocery store! We have member owners, and they need to be made aware that we need them not only to shop at the store, but to also take ownership of it! Be proud of it, and share that feeling with others in the community who are not yet involved!

Just for fun...What is your favorite food?

Anything Asian!

Please add anything else you feel is relevant to your candidacy.

This is my store! I truly want to help make it the best it can be, and ensure its longevity far into the future!