

Sara Herrmann Info

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

I believe in the co-op community and want to invest my time in working together with others to ensure its sustained growth. I am proud to have been a member of the volunteer team that came together a few years back to move the East Aurora Co-op from a great idea to a beautiful brick and mortar store. I am interested in serving on the Board to help build on the co-op's solid foundation and to advance core co-op priorities like building community, ensuring quality, partnering with local farmers and producers, and understanding cooperative ownership.

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.

From 2014 until the co-op's opening in June 2016, I chaired the volunteer marketing committee responsible for developing the co-op brand and communicating the value of the co-op throughout the community in order to raise awareness, build member-ownership, and reach our capital campaign goals. I have served as an elected trustee on the East Aurora Village Board and as an alternate member of the Town of Aurora Planning Board, as well as a member of the executive board of the Westfield (NY) Development Corporation and an appointed member of the Westfield Village Planning Board.

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?

My professional background is in corporate communications. I believe transparent communication is the cornerstone of the cooperative ownership model, providing member-owners both the information we need to make informed ownership decisions and creating opportunities to be as involved as possible in co-op matters. My professional experience also includes strategic planning and execution. I believe I can contribute to the Board by helping to advance current plans and build out frameworks for future planning.

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

I have had the good fortune throughout my career to work in organizations built on a culture of collaboration. In my current work as a communications and management consultant, I create a collaborative process with clients where everyone contributes, helping bring teams together to elevate issues, set priorities, determine a course of action, build consensus, and create a framework to communicate with stakeholders and track progress.

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

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

In the near term: continued growth in member-ownership, expanded educational programs, fostering knowledge of our local food community (farmers and producers), focusing on sustainability initiatives, and building a greater understanding of the benefits of the cooperative ownership model.

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

In the longer term: cultivating new generations of member-owners interested in stepping into roles that influence the co-op's future growth.

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

The co-op management/staff and their ability to be resilient in the face of big change (Covid) and adapt and respond to customer feedback – all while maintaining a consistently warm, enjoyable, and efficient co-op shopping experience.

What do you think needs improvement at this time?

I think all co-op stakeholders could benefit from a deeper understanding of what a co-op is and how the cooperative ownership model differentiates us from other for-profit stores. Understanding the difference can lead to more informed decision-making in where we invest our dollars and our time.

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

A perfectly poached egg on toast.