



## Strong Footing

**BIG NEWS!!** October 2021 saw our final payment on the \$54,200 in member loans taken out in 2014 to remodel the front of the store. *Many thanks to all the members who stepped up to make loans. Special gratitude to those who then forgave part of that debt.*

Since 2016, the board of directors has focused on securing the Co-op's financial footing. Paying down the member loans is key. With Frandsen mortgage of \$26,750 and Regional Business Fund loan of \$2,556 we now have an excellent debt ratio.

Developing new, higher-margin revenue sources is another piece of our financial strategy. We have generated \$50,863 from rental income since renovating the Co-op Loft in 2017-2018. We also have a multi-layered financial team in place.

Our financial management focus supported the extraordinary staff, board, and owners who served our community during 2021 — a year of unprecedented challenges. Like so many businesses, we faced ongoing staffing shortages and product availability issues.

Co-op Manager Kyle Wondrasch joined us in July, replacing Raya Capuzzi. Laurie Ince does payroll and pays vendors. Judy Alverson, Liana Bratton, Marie Clark continue as buyers. Patti Mattson adds her deep knowledge of store and community. Chris Tou, Juliann Carey and Claudia Balcom are our newest staff additions.

Three high school students working summers, afternoons, and Saturdays point to our deep links to the community. Ann Boland is a second-generation staffer, while Ella Cook and Isabella Crowe are the third generation in their family to add their talents and energy to the Co-op!

Have you noticed how spruced up our 100+ year old building looks these days? Artist Bonnie Urfer renewed the murals she originally did in 2005. We also installed new awnings in front and over the Loft entry.

Net Sales for 2021 were \$456,036. Gross Profit on Grocery Sales was \$128,758. Rental Income added another \$9,160. Net Ordinary Income was -\$1,302. Net Income including our Payroll Protection Program (PPP) grant and Depreciation was \$3,015. New Member Equity was \$2,925. Payroll Expenses were \$92,844, including \$5,906 in Covid-19 bonus and sick pay.

Round-up donations totaled \$2,019. April donations of \$186 went to help fund the Co-op awning.

**Donations to Outside Groups - \$1,833**

Community Referral Service	\$439
Cooked 2 Serve	\$332
Frederic & Luck School Backpack Programs	\$178
Farm Feral & Stray	\$220
Luck Fire Department	\$176
Ruby's Kitchen	\$488

Thank you for keeping us on strong footing in 2021!

*Sarah Cook, Lisa Doerr, Amy Free, Zach Mattson, Mike Noreen, Jeff Peterson*

# Board of Directors Candidate Statements

The Natural Alternative is governed by a board of directors elected by the membership. The board meets regularly and reports on the state of the Co-op at the annual membership meeting. The following four Co-op members are candidates for election to the board of directors at the annual meeting on March 22, 2022.

## **Sarah Fawver Cook**



My husband, three children and I live near Cushing. We spend most of our time outdoors taking walks, tending our garden, and getting together near Lake Superior with family.

For the last 16 years, my primary passion has been raising our children, for which I'm thankful. Over the years, I also worked at the Co-op, was involved in the insurance industry, and now run my own realty business. I am honored to be currently sitting on the Luck School board. I am involved in my children's extracurricular activities, including coaching basketball and volleyball teams.

Healthy, organic, locally-sourced food is of great importance to our family and community. Our Co-op provides this for us and is our main source of food. I am interested in working to continue to grow the Co-op by helping educate the public about who we are and what we have to offer. I would like to explore options to provide customers with more affordable products and hope to create a wave of word-of-mouth customers, making our Co-op a "must shop" stop.

Our Co-op has always been a big part of my life. I spent a lot of time in the first store 40 years ago when my mother, Ann Fawver, was coordinator. I remember those times, and this history gives me perspective on just how far the Natural Alternative has come. I envision the Co-op continuing to grow and becoming an even stronger, more central part of the community.

## **Zach Mattson**



I grew up on a farm in rural Luck, attended school here, and left for college and to start my career. About four years ago, my wife Lisa, and our two boys returned to Luck and have been Co-op members ever since. Outside of work and our boys' music and sports activities, I serve on the youth soccer board, volunteer for the Ice Age Trail, and help at various community events. In my free time I enjoy hunting, foraging, harvesting wild rice, collecting maple sap, and gardening.

I graduated from UW-Whitewater with a Bachelor of Business Administration - Management Computer Systems degree in 2000 and currently work for Hitachi Solutions as a Senior Data Architect. My business and information technology background should bring new ideas to the board, while my roots here will help bring a local perspective.

Member participation is important to maintain the vitality of the Co-op and we need to utilize our member's social networks to help increase store traffic.

## Jon Bjork



My name is Jon Bjork. My wife, Pat, and I have lived most of our lives in Polk County and in Milltown for the past 5 ½ years. We have five grandchildren -- four in Somerset and one in Colorado. I'm employed at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation in the Environmental Services Department. I've been active in county politics throughout my life, starting with working for Harvey Stower's first re-election campaign. I love gardening and home improvement projects. I also love playing guitar while hanging out with our dog Lilah.

I have an A.A.S. in Business Management and a B.S. in Accounting with a Minor in Economics. I have been a small business owner, worked for over 13 years in retail management, and have a wide range of experience in both for-profit and non-profit business operations.

I think the Co-op Board plays an important role in helping keep members informed on what is happening locally, and on how events can impact members. The Board should create opportunities for volunteerism, local engagement, and growth of the Co-op through involvement in local community celebrations, outreach programs, and an effective customer relationship management program.

I hope we are able to help the Co-op grow while maintaining a focus on relationships with members. The Co-op can be a very positive force for the health and well-being of the community and can be a leader in fostering economic growth locally.

## Peggy Tolbert



My name is Peggy Tolbert and I live outside Webster with my husband Jim, three dogs, and four cats. We have a small farm called Squirrel Ridge Farm where we raise organically grown blueberries and, more recently, hazelnuts. Jim and I were the original owners of the Chattering Squirrel Coffee Café and Acorn Pantry kitchenware store, so I have business management experience in addition to food preparation and retail merchandising experience. As shop owner, I offered cooking classes on baking, appetizers and ethnic cuisines.

From 2003 to 2020, I was the clerk of the Town of Sand Lake, responsible for meeting preparation, payroll, accounts payable, and election management. From 2016 to 2020, I was on the board of the Humane Society of Burnett County, where I was project manager for the renovation of the new shelter that opened in 2019.

Skills include website maintenance, social media posting and Microsoft Office. Interests include quilting, camping, cooking and baking, and spending time with family and pets.

Trends that developed over the past two years may be with us for a while – virtual and online shopping will the “new normal” for many people. How the Co-op competes in that environment could stimulate new ideas. Delivery service, online shopping, and accepting online donations and memberships should be explored along with ways to grow the Co-op's customer base and identify new local growers and vendors.

### How to cast your ballot:

- 1) Clip or print out the ballot at the top of the next page and mark your preferences.
- 2) Return your ballot to the store by March 18 (ballot box will be on checkout counter), or;
- 3) Mail your ballot to P.O. Box 377, Luck WI 54853 so it's received by March 18.



# BALLOT

*One ballot per membership. Vote for up to four candidates and “yes” or “no” on the proposed bylaw amendment.*

- Sarah Cook
- Zach Mattson
- Jon Bjork
- Peggy Tolbert

**Bylaw Amendment Proposed by the Board:**

SECTION 2: PURPOSE

Natural Alternative Food Cooperative is a member-owned food cooperative dedicated to serving the community by being a trusted source for healthy, sustainable, fairly-priced food and goods, and educational services. We seek to promote a robust regional economy by patronizing local producers to the extent possible.

Yes

No



Virtual Annual Membership Meeting

**Monday, March 22 - 7:00 p.m.**

Join us by logging on to: [meet.google.com/wzy-zwbk-gkh](https://meet.google.com/wzy-zwbk-gkh)

Agenda includes president’s report, treasurer’s report, manager’s report, election and survey results, and open discussion.