

## Why I serve on the Co-op's Board of Directors

by Andi Briceno, Board Director, Outreach and Education Committee Chair

I ran for the Co-op's Board of Directors in 2010 with little knowledge of what that commitment would involve. A co-worker had written an open letter to employees, examining the virtue of civic duty, the need for voices from of our diverse staff to be heard, and how volunteering allowed for the opportunity to be a part of change. I was inspired! I wanted to be a part of change! I applied as a candidate and several weeks later, I was elected.

People's General Manager, Nancy Casady, gave me an orientation on board policies and responsibilities, yet the true comprehension of what I had volunteered for was still to come. Three months after joining the board, I attended The Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) conference, an annual event which unites leaders from food cooperatives around the country to improve operations, consumer education and marketing strategies. It was at the conference that I met cooperative activists who were committed to providing alternative business models in their community. These co-op activists understood cooperative history and its relevance in today's economy. As I interacted with them, I learned the influence and impact that an equitable business model had in communities that had been struggling to survive. I understood for the first time that a cooperative business is historically the most successful and available alternative to capitalism. I also learned that the co-op business model, combined with healthy food and environmental activism, is pivotal to the protection of our food and financial resources.

Since 2010, I've remained on the board because I believe that as an organized community we have the power and potential to create options for ourselves. Capitalism is oppressive for all classes of society and by volunteering on the Co-op's Board of Directors, I can offer my local community an opportunity to reject repression and respond to the economy with a functional, democratic solution.  
(March 2015)