

Syracuse Real Food Co-op  
President's Report 2013

A time to grow...

**Syracuse Real Food Cooperative Ends Policy:**

*The Syracuse Real Food Cooperative is a sustainable, thriving, cooperative commerce in our local community centered on an excellent grocery store built upon participation and ownership.*

I hope that 2013 will come to be viewed as the year that the tides turned, and the Syracuse Real Food Co-op began to move forward with intentionality and purpose to achieve the Ends articulated above. We have seen many changes this year. In January I became board chair, and I have worked hard to build on my predecessor Dan Sanders' work in developing a sense of camaraderie and equality within the board. Over the course of the summer we had two resignations from the board, Jamie White and Amanda Wada. In September we welcomed our new interim General Manager, Garland McQueen.

Our financials this year show the latest chapter a story which has perhaps been ongoing since the co-op was founded. At the board's retreat this month we acknowledged that until we expand or relocate the current operation, it will not be possible for us to be a "sustainable, thriving cooperative commerce".

**What are our strengths?** We have talent. Our staff is committed, energetic, and constantly learning and growing. Our interim GM has a strong track record of successful relocation and expansion projects. We have vision, as articulated in our Ends and as demonstrated in the store every day. We have systems. The board has become adept at accountable empowerment, and is working to bring our Ends to life. Under Garland's leadership, staff has been developing and implementing systems for operational excellence.

**What are our opportunities?** The market for retail natural and organic foods continues to explode in 2013. It is the fastest growing segment of the food industry right now, and within the co-op community, all eyes are focused on that growth. If there is going to be more natural and organic food sold in Syracuse, we want it to be sold by a co-op. And it might as well be us.

**What are our limitations?** We cannot expand in place: the building is a nonconforming commercial use in a residential neighborhood. We cannot continue indefinitely in the current location without an additional source of revenue to support our charming but aging building. We will need creativity to raise capital for a project since we are just now beginning under Garland's leadership to build sales and profits after the most recent downturn in our financials which have waxed and waned throughout our history.

**What are our options?** We need change. We are looking at new locations, both in our neighborhood and downtown. Which change should come first? Relocate in the neighborhood or open a second store downtown? Should we rent or buy? Renovate or construct new? What will be feasible? The answers to these questions will largely be driven by data. We are in the process of collecting the information that is needed to identify and plan a successful project. And as we move forward we must continue to discuss and to reflect on our Ends Policy: what does it mean to be a thriving cooperative commerce in our local community?

This then is the threshold upon which the board stands in 2013. The democracy represented by our retail food co-op can be seen as an ongoing conversation about the future. As a board, we are committed to having more conversation about the future with you and with our future members. It is time to grow.

Respectfully submitted by Thane Joyal 12/9/13