

## Oshkosh Food Co-op Board Self-Nomination: Samantha (Sam) Larson

### ***Address of Residency***

2760 Edgewood Ln  
Oshkosh, WI 54904

### ***What would you bring/offer to the Oshkosh Food Co-op Board?***

- **Locavore Spirit:** I grew up on a farm and ranch in North Dakota, so my first relationship with food came from planting an enormous garden with my family each spring and filling our freezer with beef from cattle raised in our pastures. Over the past 10 years, I've reconnected with those roots. Along with my partner, who was raised on a Wisconsin dairy farm, we have found immense joy in planting and saving seeds from our gardens, canning and filling our pantry every fall, throwing harvest parties, and brewing our own cider and beer. We have felt the emotional, physical, and social benefits of growing our own and supporting local food systems. I would love to do so on a broader, community level by joining the Board.
- **Previous Nonprofit and Board Experience:** I moved to Oshkosh in August of 2017, so I'm a brand new member of the community (and member-owner of the Co-op)! That being said, I have 12 years of experience working for nonprofits, serving on boards, and chairing citizen advisory boards. This experience has enhanced my skills in many areas that would benefit the Board, such as strategic planning, program evaluation, and community development.
- **Grant Management Skills:** I moved here from Colorado, where I worked in both nonprofit philanthropy and as a research analyst for various federal grants. I moved to Oshkosh to take a position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Public Administration at the University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh, where I recently taught a graduate grant-writing course. I have a strong understanding of fund development and am eager to utilize these skills to help the Co-op achieve our financial goals and sustainability in the long-term.

### ***What is your dream for the Oshkosh Food Co-op for the coming years?***

I would love to see the Co-op open its doors during my time on the Board! Of course, many objectives will go into making that dream a reality. First, I envision highly-engaged members that feel a greater sense of place through the Food Co-op and are committed to making it thrive. Second, the Co-op will serve as a model for what a diverse and socially just organization looks like in Oshkosh, ensuring access to healthy food for all. And finally, I visualize a creative, care-centered process that will lead to the development of a thoughtfully crafted physical space that inspires people to connect with each other, their food, and themselves.

### ***Why do you think the Oshkosh Food Co-op is important to the greater Oshkosh community?***

In addition to improving food security and building a more inclusive community, I believe the Co-op plays an important part in revitalizing the heart of the City. When I first moved to Oshkosh, one of the top things on my list was to check out the local farmer's market. Upon attending for the first time, I was instantly impressed by the number of vendors, attendees, and how vibrant and welcoming it felt to be out and about downtown. The Co-op will play a vital role in further contributing to this growing momentum and energy.

***Why cooperatives?***

As an activist scholar, one of my primary professional goals is focused on making democracy work for all people, particularly historically underrepresented groups. This is a critical component of the cooperative model, which I believe holds the key to ensuring more resilient and connected communities. Cooperatives open doors for residents to become active and involved in making their own choices and working with others to achieve collective goals. Furthermore, they are vital to mitigating the environmental impacts of the capitalist modes of food production that have increasingly given precedence to profits at the expense of people.

***Please offer any additional thoughts you would like Oshkosh Food Co-op member-owners to know about you.***

Although I am new to Oshkosh, I have become familiar with Wisconsin and this region over the past 20 years. I frequently visited Madison between 1996-2002 while my sister was living there. In addition, my in-laws still live on the farm where my partner grew up on the other side of Lake Winnebago. We have enjoyed many weeklong visits on the farm since 2009, collecting hickory nuts and blackberries, harvesting my mother-in-law's lavish garden, fishing with my father-in-law, and exploring local favorites like the Little Farmer and LaClare Family Creamery. Moreover, we got married on a farmstead in Door County in 2016. We selected the spot because it reminded us of what brought us together, our shared values gained from farming families and a dedication to caring for the land and each other. Furthermore, we fell in love with the agricultural movement in that region and Wisconsin more broadly. One of the main reasons I decided to take the job at UWO and move to this area was inspired by a greater opportunity to build our own farm and further support sustainable food systems. I would be grateful to draw on my personal passions and professional skills to do so by serving on the Oshkosh Food Co-op Board of Directors.