

# 2020 PFC Board Candidates

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**\*\* Note: Applicants listed alphabetically**

Name: Nina Bennett

Owner #: 97



**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I am interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors because it is needed. I am at a place professionally and personally with a job that I can leave at work, and kids who are becoming more independent, and this combined with the constant catastrophes of current events, has galvanized me to search for ways that I can support the ideals I hold in a tangible way. Also, it really seems like the Prairie Food Board of Directors needs people who believe in its mission to stand up and do all that they can to help get this institution born and built!

**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

Most of my work history has been in the non-profit sector and I have grant writing experience. Most recently before taking a decade off to raise my children, I worked helping to run recreational activities for individuals with Cerebral Palsy in New York City. Currently, I am employed as a paraprofessional in a multi needs classroom. My children are 10 and 13 years old.

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

I have been involved in the establishment and operation of the Elmhurst College Student Organic Community Garden since its inception in 2017. Since 2017 the Elmhurst College Student Organic Community Garden has donated over 3,000 pounds of organically grown vegetables to the Elmhurst-Yorkfield Food pantry. Additionally, the Elmhurst College Student Organic Community Garden provides a direct learning environment for the both the Education and the Biology departments, who have customized classes which take place in the garden to educate future generations of gardeners. The Elmhurst College Student Community Garden also hosts its space for the Elmhurst Learning and Success Academy, (known throughout the Elmhurst College community by the acronym "ELSA" which is a four year, post secondary certificate program for young adults with differing abilities).

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Management, Fundraising, Grants, Gardening

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

I have experience with fundraising, including personally raising over \$20,000 from individual fellow alumni to save my Alma Mater, Antioch College. I have a degree in Cultural Anthropology and know that I can contribute to the bottom line through my fundraising and grant writing experience. I have experience in, and will be effective at, identifying potential grants to apply for, writing them, and submitting them. Grants are something I enjoy writing, so hopefully I will secure money to benefit Prairie Food Cooperatives' construction budget. I have a contagious passion for the food cooperative movement and will be able to help with not only securing funds, but vetting the core fiscal and cultural practices that embody the food cooperative movement.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

My personal goal, and I think it is a collective goal for all of us, is to help bring Prairie Food from the drawing board to a brick and mortar facility. I can't wait to hear the peanut butter machine whirring away, and see the bulk bins stocked within a vibrant space that brings our DuPage communities together! I know that many people have worked tirelessly towards this epic goal for the last several years and I believe that it is my turn to step-up and see what needs doing after having watched from the sidelines. I want to be a part of something greater than myself in these trying times, and to me, food is power. With the right food we have the power to not only feed ourselves sustainably and responsibly in these strange times, but we have the power to help make the world a better place with a much needed cooperative economic focus. Being a garden type person, I am also passionate about supporting small and local farmers.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

Some of my earliest memories and conceptualizations about food are centered around the various co-ops that I have known. The strange variety and fun of the bulk bins, the smell and sounds of fresh peanut butter at the peanut butter machine, and the allure on a hot day of 25 cent Blue Sky sodas. I have known food cooperatives throughout all of the decades of my life and in just about every place that I have lived. It is deeply important to me to manifest the physical and cultural spaces that these co-ops have provided for me in my lifetime and to insure that new generations of children get to grow up with the lifetime of memories that I have. It truly is a cultural legacy to me.

Between myself, my husband, grandmother and mother, we have been members of various food cooperatives since 1969! This gives me about 50 years of experience with food cooperatives in the following places: Taos, New Mexico, Ann Arbor, New Mexico, Tucson, Arizona, Middlebury, Vermont, Grass Valley, California, and Albuquerque, NM.

Name: Stephanie Wills Eby

Owner #: 3



**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I am committed to seeing this project through to opening and beyond!

**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

Registered Nurse - Home Health

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

Prairie Food Co-op Steering Committee and then Board of Directors since 2012

Prairie Food Co-op Ownership and Outreach Committee

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Fundraising, Marketing/Public Relations, Event Planning, Communications

As a Board Director, I've gained knowledge in all aspects of our development. I hesitate to say I am an "expert" in any specific area, but when it comes to PFC, I've participated in planning and decision making regarding almost every aspect.

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

My most valuable experience has been working directly with Prairie Food Co-op, as a Board Director and member of the Ownership & Outreach Committee.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

My heartfelt goal is for Prairie Food Co-op to open its doors and be a thriving hub in the community! Before this can happen, however, there are crucial steps to be achieved, one of which is a successful Community Investment Program to raise the capital needed to secure financing. Along with this, our ownership numbers must continue to grow. My personal goals are to work with our CIP team as we launch our capital campaign and continue serving on the O&O Committee to educate, plan, and grow our co-op!

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

Prairie Food Co-op, past and present. I am proud Owner #3, entrenched in where we've been and where we're headed. My experience with PFC will contribute to the smooth continuation of our work to get this done!

Name: Myha Ginger

Owner #: 722

**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I want to thank you for the opportunity to run for the board. I believe I would be an asset to the board for my ability to discuss and investigate decisions, organization/management skills and my passion for clean eating. I think I will be a good board member for the Prairie Food Co-op because I have the ability to see issues from many sides. I am not quick to judge and like to discuss issues. I also have wonderful organizational skills; I have been operations manager for a small financial planning office for five years. I am very accustomed to using technology in a variety of ways. I can run and maintain a CRM (customer relationship program) and am excited to learn new technology. I also have a passion for the mission of the co-op. I have been a nearly lifelong resident of Lombard. I love Lombard and can't wait to see the value the co-op will bring to our community. When I first heard that a co-op was being started in Lombard, I was instantly excited. While visiting friends in San Diego I was fortunate to visit the Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Market, I was impressed by the beautiful store, the ecofriendly options, the community involvement that the store offered, and the way it functioned in an area with few grocery options. I also am passionate about clean food. I know how eating a well-rounded diet can improve not only one's health and mental well-being. Lombard is an amazing place to live and I believe that the co-op will only make it better.

**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

I am operations manager for a wealth management company.

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

I have been a member of the Moose Lodge 2350 for eight years.

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Finance

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

I don't have any co-op experience but have 20+ years of customer service experience. I was a server in restaurants for 15 years and am now an Operations Manager for a small financial office that is quickly growing. When I started it in 2015, we were an office of two people, we are now an office of six people. I have helped coordinate the forward progress of our office, from on boarding new employees, creating guidelines for the office and to maintaining office supplies and files. I have wonderful organization skills and have a great passion for learning.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

My goals for the Prairie Food Co-Op are for it to be a financially viable business, a gathering place for the community, for it to be a place that educates people on the importance of eating locally and the benefits of a large bulk foods section. My first goal for the Co-op would be that it is a financially viable business that also helps and improves the community and the others that surround it. I hope that it will show our community that shopping local helps everyone involved, the farmers, the consumer and the environment. I also want the co-op to serve as a gathering place where community organizations can meet and continue to serve Lombard. I also want the co-op to be a place that treats its employees fairly and have another great option for employment for the people in our area. I really am excited about the bulk foods section of the store. I think that buying as much food as you want, or need is fantastic for the environment. It eliminates waste of resources and goods. One bulk item I would like to see in the store is cleaning products and soap. So many resources are wasted on disposable plastic.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

My many years being employed in restaurants have taught me about food handling and customer service.

Name: Marie Henning

Owner #: 1020

**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I am passionate about sustainable, healthy food. This is a great opportunity to give my time and experience to support an organization that supports our farmers and community.



**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

I currently work for JPMorgan reviewing legal documentation for treasury services.

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

Illinois Volunteer Legal Service - Volunteer Attorney

Illinois Legal Aid Online - LiveHelp Operator

Cabrini Green Legal Aid - Expungement Help Desk Volunteer

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

I am a licensed attorney with project management skills and finance background

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

I have a great deal of food knowledge. I have been plant based since 1997 and have learned about nutrition, ingredients and cooking techniques since then.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

I would love to see the Co-op open and become a part of our community as more than just a store, but a resource for education related to our food system and cooking.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

I was a member of the Dill Pickle Co-op when I lived in Chicago.

Name: Kathy Nash

Owner #: 2



**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I would like to continue to help with organizing efforts and see this thru to opening day. Having served from the very beginning, I have a good depth of knowledge and understanding on what needs to be accomplished. I also have great relationships throughout the co-op industry.

**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

Senior Software Engineer at U of I for past 18 years

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

I have dedicated a large part of my life to develop Prairie Food Co-op over the past 8 years.

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Management, Marketing/Public Relations, Event Planning, IT

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

Having served on the Board, and elected as President for several terms, I feel I bring much knowledge and industry expertise to this endeavor.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

I am so excited to see us open soon at 101 South Main in the heart of Lombard! I'm excited to help Owners provide input on the store they'd like to see.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

Member and volunteer at Common Ground Food Co-op in Urbana, IL as a UI student and employee. I have worked with peer start-up cooperatives since 2012 to collaborate and learn best practices and have presented at numerous co-op conferences about our highly regarded (and award-winning!) start-up.

Name: Beth Peluse

Owner #: 6

**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

Our community needs a democratically-run grocery store that focuses on local, sustainable products now more than ever. I also see PFC as being so much more than a grocery store by providing a space for our community to gather and learn. I want to do my part to make our community even stronger and to ensure that PFC opens its doors.



**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

Marketing Director and Travel Guide for Zephyr Adventures and Taste Vacations

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

I am a Current PFC Board Member and member of the Ownership & Outreach Committee. I volunteer with Humanitarian Service Project, Inspiring Communities Outdoors (Sierra Club), and the Morton Arboretum.

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Marketing/Public Relations, Event Planning, Communications

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

I have served on the board for three years and understand the dedication it takes to continually progress to our goal of opening a community-owned grocery store. I have also been a member of the O&O committee for all three years where I've organized, led, and participated in a wide variety of outreach events to help us gain awareness in the community and find new owners.

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

I want to see our doors open in the near future - and to see a PFC yard sign on nearly every house in my neighborhood.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**

I have led food, wine, and beer tours in various locations.

Name: Maria Vaccaro

Owner #: 531



**Will you be able to attend Board Meetings that occur on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 7pm - 9pm?**

Yes

**Why are you interested in serving on the Prairie Food Board of Directors?**

I would like to volunteer to help grow the co-op and lend any expertise to this organization.

**Employment: Please tell us about your Past or Present Employment**

Founder of Vaccaro & Associates, we are an industry-leading consulting firm in the small business sector committed to helping our clients achieve their goals of business expansion. I just completed a one-year commitment as CEO of Poly Energy, a South Carolina based solar contractor. I am not leading a team opening operations in Illinois in solar and energy efficiency consultants called Muddy Megawatts Energy Consultants.

**Volunteer: Membership/Affiliations past and present:**

I was a long term volunteer and leader in Cubs Scouts and Girl Scouts including the role of Cubmaster. For 8 years I held various positions in my local PTA where I served as President and VP of Fundraising for Butterfield Elementary in Lombard.

**Which of the following areas do you have expertise?**

Management, Fundraising, Marketing/Public Relations, Event Planning, Finance

**What experience, education, and skills do you have that you feel will contribute to your effectiveness as a Prairie Food Director?**

As a small business consultant, the majority of my work has been to grow and foster small businesses in growth and stability. For 6 years prior to opening my firm, I ran a local non for profit called Everyone Reading Illinois that assisted kids and adults with learning disabilities. I believe my vast background in business can help the coop move forward in its goals,

**What are your personal goals for Prairie Food Co-op?**

I have been very excited about the coop since 2016 when I became an owner. I cannot wait for us to open the store. Now that I have more time on my hands I would like to get back to community involvement projects.

**What experiences have you had with food co-ops in the past?**