

Fairbanks Community Cooperative Market, Inc.
DBA Co-op Market Grocery & Deli
2024 Board of Directors Candidate Profiles



Callen Christensen

Callen is a naturalist, musician, farmer, and forager. He's passionate about nutrition, health, farming/gardening, mycology, and ecology and has always worked in this capacity. He currently runs a wild foods foraging co-op called the Chaga Co-op, is conducting sustainability research on chaga fungus, helped to start up a local hydroponics and mushroom farm, and works as a local food advocate including the establishment of a food hub working group for Interior Alaska. He is a founding organizer of the Fairbanks Fungi Festival. He teaches with Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District's AFFECT Farmer Training Program, and is working with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to evaluate barriers to USDA AMS funds for BIPOC food producers nationwide. He drives a school bus through Goldstream as his day job, and lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, lower Tanana Dene lands, with his wife and son. He loves making music, XC skiing, snowboarding, backpacking, and climbing.

What do you love about the co-op grocery?

I love that we have a mission-minded source for healthy food in our community! I believe that democratically run businesses, like co-ops, have the power to create strong communities.

Why are you running for the Co-op Market Board?

I'm running to offer my experience of running a co-op for 6 years, and to gain experience from the rest of the wonderful board members. I recently attended a board meeting and was inspired by the hard work and passion of the board, and I want to be a part of it.

Why will you make a good Board Director?

I am passionate and have a lot of energy. I have a lot to learn, and will not hesitate to say when I don't understand or know something. I believe that the co-op grocery has incredible potential, as an existing food hub, to strengthen and deepen the local food system: our farmers, foragers, and value-added producers. I want to bring this perspective to the board and dream of the future.

What do you hope to accomplish as a director?

I hope to first and foremost fulfill my fiduciary responsibilities to the cooperative corporation by being present and engaged. With stability ensured, I want to explore partnerships with other mission-minded community organizations to promote food security and food system projects.

Callen Christensen

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Professional Profile

Business Administration major with 6 years of business ownership experience, managing grants, strong leadership and communication abilities.

Skilled in food systems, education, retail, wholesale, marketing, and brand building.

Educational Background

Austin E. Lathrop High School • Diploma with National Honors Society - 4.0 GPA

University of Alaska Fairbanks • Geological Engineering on academic scholarship before pursuing a wider array of interests and trades - Alaska performance Scholarship - Full-ride Tier 1

Related Experience

Chaga Co-operative LLC • Member, CEO, CFO • 2018 - current

Harvesting, processing, and marketing wild foraged foods. Sustainability research. Data collection. Community engagement.

Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District • AFFECT partner • 2022 - current

Creating hydroponics, business, and farming curricula. In person teaching. Building hydroponics systems.

The Island: Fairbanks Fresh Greens and Food Hub • 2022 - current

Hydroponic greens farming and equitable local-food distribution. Soil farming and mycology.

Good Vibrations Music Education • 2019 - current

Private guitar and bass lessons.

Fairbanks Arts Association • Gazebo Nights Host and Sound Technician • 2012-2015

Friendly people skills, sound engineering, announcing, handling money, cleaning.

Leadership and Involvement

Truly Sustainable Chaga Harvesting: A Research Project to Inoculate Birch Trees With Chaga

Mycelium • 2021 - current

Data collection and organization, photography, and mycology.

Fairbanks Fungi Festival • 2022 - current

Principal organizer involving grassroots organizing, community fundraising, coordinating, and event management.

University of Alaska Museum of the North • Paleontology Department • 2013-2014

Sifting fossil bed sediment, picking for microfossils, preparing specimens for scope use, organizing collections artifacts.

Calypso Farm • 2013-2014

Facilitating field trips, educating children about bee ecology.

Grant Projects and Awards

ICORP Awardee • 2022

The Island: Hydroponics market research.

Na'ah Illahee Fund • Naparyarmiut Neqait (Hooper Bay Food) Yupik Permaculture Project • 2022

Identification, propagation, education, and indoor cultivation of five traditional (wild) edible leafy greens that grow throughout the spring-fall of the arctic tundra.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Services BIPOC Farmers Project • Alaskan Co-leader • 2022 - current

Evaluating USDA AMS Grant Programs Successes and Challenges with Focus on Socially Disadvantaged Communities.

2022 Local Food Economics National Agricultural Marketing Summit • 2022

Attended three day conference in Pensacola, FL on scholarship.



Jamie Guzman

- What I love about the Co-op?

I love the Co-op because it's here for the community by the community. Having a food cooperative in Fairbanks gives us all more power to enhance the lives of our families and others by offering a community focused shopping experience. More sustainable, local, and often healthier ethically sourced alternatives to the mass produced brands we see at any big chain grocer, can often be found at The Co-op. Being an Owner/ member at the Co-op makes even the mundane task of shopping more fulfilling. I know that what I bring home to my family will be well received, tasty, and satisfying. And I know my dollar is well spent.

- Why run for the Co-op Market Board?

I hope I can help the Co-op Market continue to bloom with potential and possibilities for the future.

- Why will I be a good Board Director?

Because I am focused on the future of the Co-op Market. Admittedly this would be my first Board Director experience but, my heart is in the right place. In my opinion, the future for the Co-op Market is bright and prosperous.

- What do I hope to accomplish?

It's my hope that as I learn along the way, I can help foster a future

where the the Co-op Market performs above expectations, becoming more prosperous financially. I also hope that as we move forward, perhaps the Co-op Market will be able to offer more benefits to Owners as well as Employees.



Brian Kassof

Personal Profile:

I care deeply about the Fairbanks community and the place the Co-op Market occupies in it. I've been an owner since before the store opened and have served on the Board since 2019. I love shopping there—the opportunity to buy locally produce and products, the friendly staff, knowing I'll find both finding long-time favorites and new surprises. The Co-op is a place to buy local, healthy, and sustainable foods, but it's much more than that. It reflects some of the best parts of our community—a friendly atmosphere, a focus on strengthening the community, and a deep sense of care for our neighbors. I don't think it's an accident that Fairbanks is the only community in Alaska to have a cooperative market.

The last few years have been challenging ones for small businesses, including the Co-op Market. We've survived these challenges thanks to the support and dedication of our amazing owners, and are ready to start building toward the future. I am thankful to my fellow owners for letting me to serve you on the Board these past five years. I believe my dedication to the community, willingness to work collaboratively, and the knowledge and skills I have gained from working on the Board have prepared me to help the Co-op move into the future. I would be honored if you would allow me to continue my service to the Co-op Market and community.

Brian Kassof

Summary of Qualifications

Current Occupation—Editor, Alaska Energy Transparency Project (akenergytransparency.org); stay-at-home-parent

Community and Organizational Experience:

Member, Board of Directors, Fairbanks Co-op Market Grocery and Deli, January 2019-present.

Board Treasurer (since 2023), Member Finance Committee

Member GM Search Committee (2021, 2023)

Previously served on the Board Outreach/Development Committee

Member, Governing Board, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fairbanks, July 2017-June 2022

Board President, July 2019-June 2021

Board Vice President, July 2018-June 2019

Member of Finance Committee

Youth Sports Coach—Indoor Soccer (2011), Pony League Baseball (Bronco

Division, Summer 2016), both Fairbanks Alaska

Member of Fairbanks-Yakutsk Sister-City Organization, 2011-present. Helped to organize relevant events and visit of delegation from Yakutsk in 2014.

Elected member of Curriculum Council, College of Liberal Arts (2010-12) and Faculty Senate Core Review Committee (2014-16) at University of Alaska, Fairbanks—faculty committees overseeing curricular and academic standards

Business Management experience:

Assistant Manager, Brentano's Books, Seattle, WA, 1992-93—responsible for opening and closing store, calculating daily sales and making bank

deposits, keeping track of inventory

Other Work Experience:

Editor, Alaska Energy Transparency Project, January 2022-present

Edits, maintains and writes articles for website dedicated to informing and engaging members of Alaska's electric cooperatives.

Worked as full-time faculty member at various universities and colleges from

2000- 2017, including University of Alaska, Fairbanks; Reed College; University of California, Berkeley; University of Virginia.

Educational Background:

B. A. in History with Honors, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, 1989

Ph.D. in History, University of California, Berkeley, 2000