

LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE

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Breaking Point?

Coop Basement Overflows to Meet Needs of Growing Membership—Price Is Paid by Stressed-Out Staffers

By Willow Lawson

It's late Thursday morning, during the middle of the delivery that will get the Park Slope Food Coop through the weekend onslaught. A woman's voice, audibly peeved, is heard on the paging system for a second time: "Can someone PLEASE answer me

unloaded by two hurried workers in the freezer. An egg delivery is being wedged into the yogurt cooler. At the scales next to the meat cooler, two Coop members are pricing parts of two entire hogs. Nearly every aisle is filled with u-boats, much of it

shoppers upstairs, Gillian Chi, a receiving coordinator, says, "We feel bad. We want people to be able to shop. But the more stuff we have [in the basement], the harder it is to get to the stuff they need." U-boats that used to simply shuttle goods around the store are now deployed as movable shelves to store products that can't fit on shelves. If shoppers need more Brussels sprouts in the produce aisle, 10 heavy boxes of fennel may need to be relocated just to get to the sprouts. And there may be four carts of prepared salad blocking easy access to those sprouts. Quickly responding to shoppers in need of an out-of-stock item has become much more difficult.

The near-daily frenzy in the basement is a consequence of the Coop's growth—both in the number of members and the amount of goods they are buying. In the last year alone, membership has increased 10% to over 15,000. Also in the last year,



PHOTO BY WILLIAM FARRINGTON

A morning delivery of produce from Albert's Organics being unloaded at the Coop.

and let me know if there is any more cashew cheese in the basement?"

Downstairs, several u-boats of ice cream pints are being

holding food that must be quickly refrigerated or kept frozen.

Asked how she feels about the pages from impatient

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ILLUSTRATION BY DIANE MILLER

Burgeoning Coops Provide Quality Services While Empowering Workers

By Erica S. Turnipseed

When the *Linewaiters' Gazette* reported on We Can Do It! Women's Cooperative in March 2007, it was a new housecleaning cooperative business birthed at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (www.cflsp.org), a neigh-

borhood-based, nonprofit organization founded in 1978 that serves 13,000 residents of Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Today, We Can Do It! is thriving, with 20 members who make a living wage through their housecleaning service.

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Next General Meeting on May 26

The General Meeting of the Park Slope Food Coop is held on the last Tuesday of each month.* The next General Meeting will be on Tuesday, May 26, at 7:00 p.m. at the Congregation Beth Elohim Temple House (Garfield Temple), 274 Garfield Place.

The agenda is in this *Gazette* and available as a flyer in the entryway of the Coop. For more information about the GM and about Coop governance, please see the center of this issue.

* Exceptions for November and December will be posted.

JOB OPENING AT THE COOP!
SEE PAGE 16 FOR DETAILS

Coop Event Highlights

- Sat, May 23 • **Bag and Shoe Exchange** 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
- Sat, May 23 • **Electronics Recycling Information Session** 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.
- Sat, May 30 • **Kids' Toy and Book Exchange** 10:00 a.m.–1:30 p.m.
- Thu, Jun 4 • **Food Class: Malaysia** 7:00 p.m.
- Fri, Jun 5 • **Film Night: Flow** 7:00 p.m.
- Sat, Jun 13 • **Plant Swap** 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
- Fri, Jun 19 • **The Good Coffeehouse**: 8:00 p.m.

Look for additional information about these and other events in this issue.

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Help New Members Feel Like Royalty!



The **Orientation Committee** has no openings at the moment, but we need members who are trained and ready to step in when a vacancy occurs.

We are looking for energetic people with a teaching or training background who can work Sunday afternoons, Monday or Wednesday evenings, or Wednesday mornings. FTOP shifts are also available. Orienters lead sessions every six weeks, and on the week midway between sessions you must be available as backup for emergency coverage. Only Coop members with at least two years of membership will be considered.

Workslot credit will be given for training sessions. An annual meeting of the Orientation Committee is part of the work requirement.

We are especially interested in members who speak fluent Spanish or Russian. For more information, contact the Membership Office or write to karen_mancuso@psfc.coop.

PHOTO: JOHN H. SHEALY / THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT (VIA GOOGLE)

Burgeoning Coops

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The success of We Can Do It! has inspired the creation of two more cooperative businesses: We Can Fix It! Cooperative and BeyondCare cooperative child care service. All three businesses, incubated at the Center for Family Life, fill the important role of providing members with professional opportunities and economic self-determination while offering much-needed services to the greater Brooklyn community.

These cooperative businesses, like the Park Slope Food Coop, subscribe to the same internationally recognized cooperative principles. (Learn more about cooperative businesses at www.ncba.coop.) But these coops are much smaller; the largest has 25 members. And these newer cooperative businesses give voice to an often-marginalized population of immigrant workers who traditionally have been denied the dignity of equitable employment terms and living wages because of the barriers of language, immigrant and socioeconomic status, and lingering stigmas associated with certain kinds of domestic and service professions.

A Better Way to Work

When we met with Vanessa Bransburg, LMSW, the Center for Family Life's cooperative coordinator, she spoke passionately about the progress

that each cooperative has made. Before joining their coop, Bransburg explained, members had experienced such contractor abuses as refusal to pay agreed-upon wages, usually a result of worker and client ignorance about workers' rights. As members of workers' cooperatives, however, members have enforceable contracts with their clients. Not only do cooperative members have an advocate, in case there's a misunderstanding between them and their clients, they also set a standard of service to which both parties agree, creating balance in the working relationship. For their efforts, coop members earn 100 percent of the fee paid for services rendered.

We Can Do It! a Model for Success

Speaking first of We Can Do It! (www.wecandoit.coop), Bransburg noted that the coop is both an income source and a social support for the women who are members. With 20 founding members (additional members are acquired through their yearly open house and interview process), the coop assures that each member has a stable amount of work, whether part-time or full-time, allowing all of them to make a living wage. Members earn an average of \$20 per hour. By creating detailed job estimates, having written client agreements and charging by the job rather than per hour, the members seek to create a climate of excellence and

mutual satisfaction. The cooperative encourages clients to provide the most effective and least toxic cleaning products available for a safe and healthy work and home environment.

These businesses give voice to an often-marginalized population of immigrant workers.

Bransburg explained that clients have been enthusiastic about We Can Do It! Not only are they pleased with the work product, but they also feel good about supporting a socially responsible cooperative business. Notably, the cooperative is in the process of incorporating, which will allow members to apply for group health insurance while also further protecting their work status.

We Can Fix It! and BeyondCare Make a Difference

We Can Fix It! (www.wecanfixit.coop), by contrast, was established in October 2007 and was originally composed of men who were day laborers in the construction field. It has since become a gender-inclusive coop and has refined its focus to such residential handiwork as painting, plumbing, electrical work, carpentry, and masonry. Operating on the consensus decision-making model, the cooperative is developing bylaws and will soon begin its incorporation process.

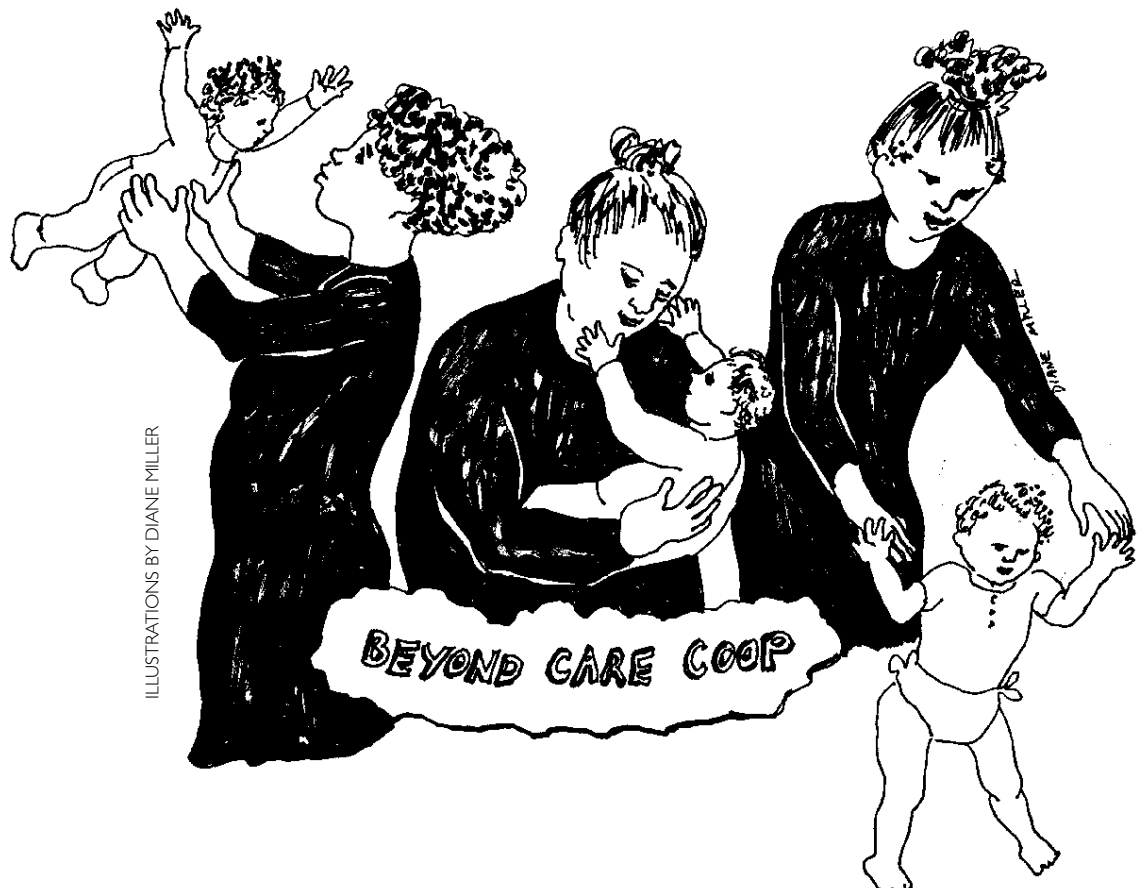
GREENE HILL FOOD CO-OP

CREATIVE? WRITER? TALKATIVE? LAWYER? SOCIAL-BUTTERFLY? WEB-DEVELOPER? HELP US GET STARTED AND MAKE YOUR OWN WORK SHIFT!

PSFC members will receive FTOP credit in exchange for their help. To receive credit, you should be a PSFC member for at least one year and have an excellent attendance record.

MORE INFO

www.GreeneHillFoodCoop.com
info@greenehillfoodcoop.com | 718-208-4778



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DIANE MILLER



BeyondCare (www.beyond-care.coop), a cooperative of 20 women founded in June 2008,

They set a standard of service to which both parties agree, creating balance in the working relationship.

provides members with an eight-week curriculum in topics such as CPR; child development; child safety; and health and nutrition. It also offers ESL classes for members to further enhance their skills. In

developing their cooperative, members were resolute about wanting to offer holistic, loving and progressive child care, not mere babysitting. Beyond-Care offers competitive rates for services administered by trained child care professionals who have been reviewed and cleared through the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment: It charges \$550 per week for full-time care of one to two children, or \$15 per hour for part-time care of one child.

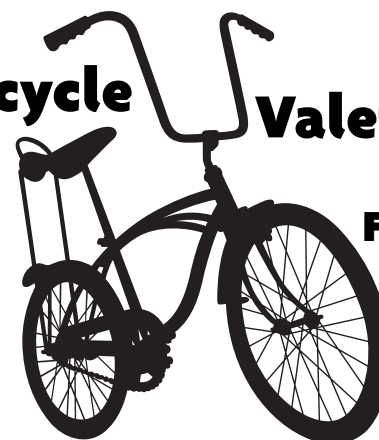
All three cooperative businesses are empowering men and women to effect positive changes within their families, Sunset Park, their immigrant communities, and the broader community of people who support economic justice and nonexploitative work environments. As an established, successful member of the community of cooperatives, the Park Slope Food Coop welcomes the opportunity to highlight the progress of other burgeoning cooperative businesses. ■

THE WEB COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR...

1. An experienced developer who is a Drupal expert with some PHP and MySQL skills. You should be familiar with installation, configuration and theming, as well as the most common modules. Super strong HTML, CSS, JS and JQuery skills are a plus. We want you to help us:
 - Duplicate the feature set of our existing (custom PHP/MySQL) site using Drupal
 - Write custom modules (or have experience with configuration and overrides of third party modules) for features that don't exist in the Drupal Core
 - Port data from the existing site
 - Optimize the application for performance needs and future scalability
2. An experienced front-end coder and Drupal themer to:
 - Help us create and implement a custom theme.
 - Move easily from digital design (e.g. Photoshop/Illustrator) into production-quality (X)HTML and CSS

If you are interested, please send a link to your résumé (or include it in the body of your email) as well as links to some of your past Drupal work by June 4 to dust@monica-lisa.com.

Bicycle Valet Parking



FTOP credit available

Join in the Coop's effort to provide members with safe, plentiful bike parking. Become part of a valet bike parking trial on Saturday afternoons this June. You'll get FTOP credit as we establish monitored bicycle parking outside the Coop.

How does it work? Just like a coat check. Coop members arriving by bicycle leave their bikes with a bicycle monitor and receive a numbered ticket, which they will use to identify and retrieve their bikes when done shopping. There will be a range of shared responsibilities for the shift, including setup and takedown of the check-in station and bike racks, bike check-in and bike security. We'll work rain or shine. If all goes well, we'll expand to additional days and create permanent squads.

If you are interested in working, please contact the Membership Office to sign up.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN RYAN

