IN MEMORY OF RACHEL PORTER

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By Thomas Rayfiel

During the pandemic, Rachel Porter began hearing store-wide announcements referring to “shoppers” and “customers.” Dedicated not just to the efficient functioning of the Coop but to the concepts behind its creation, she immediately wrote, in the *Line-waiters’ Gazette*:

“The Coop has never referred to members as shoppers or customers, because those phrases suggest competing interests between store owners (or staff) and those who shop. Our Coop is practically unique in rejecting that division, which is why members can trust the Coop to provide the groceries we want without advertising or deceptive practices.”

Rachel, who died recently at the age of fifty-three, joined the Coop in 1995. She was, as her friend Sara Ivry recalls, “a principled, strong-minded brilliant individual who lived her ideals in a way that few others I know do. She was fiercely committed to the mission of the Coop and was a great champion of it.” A squad leader for ten years, she then worked on both the Revolving Loan and Committee Oversight committees.

“Rachel was the driving force behind the Coop having a 40th birthday celebration in 2013,” General Coordinator Joe Holtz remembers. “About a year before that, Rachel co-founded the Revolving Loan Committee whose purpose is to financially support start-up coops that use our member labor required model. Rachel loved our Coop and was always working to encourage us to build on our foundational strengths and not take continued success for granted.”

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>
> *DAVID TEPPER*

At Edward R. Murrow High School, where she was a special education teacher, Rachel initiated and led a Restorative Justice Initiative, “striving to establish an effective, evidence-based alternative to retributive criminal justice policies and punitive school discipline, capable of reducing violence and fostering public safety.” She was also, for many years, a social justice researcher volunteering for organizations involved in progressive causes.

But Rachel’s engagement with the Coop extended well beyond serving on committees and monitoring store-wide pages. Almost everyone who remembered her raves about her phenomenal skills as both a baker and warm-hearted host.

“I have images of her cart overflowing with enormous amounts of produce, always the most straight-from-the-earth variety in terms of no extra packaging or pre-washing, of her leaving the Coop on her bike with a Garden of Eden bursting from her bags and basket, ready to be orchestrated into splendid food,” says Lara Tabac.

“As a very skilled baker,” David Tepper notes, “a voracious reader of recipes and all kinds of food writing, and an incredibly generous host who always had a crowd at her table. Rachel loved the Coop for its food and culture. (She was very upset when we stopped carrying yeast in bulk.) Moreover, she valued the structure of individuals organizing themselves for the common good. For her, I think, it was that very rare and treasured example of the world actually working as it should.”

Rachel is survived by her two sons, Ulisse and Sasha Narici-Porter, her former husband Manlio Narici, her mother Joan, and her brother Josh.