

JANUARY GM: MEMBERS VOTE TO RAISE THE WORK REQUIREMENT AGE TO 22

February 28, 2024



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE



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By Walecia Konrad

There was a lot of voting going on at the January Park Slope Food Coop General Meeting, held in person at the Picnic House in Prospect Park. Members voted to raise the work requirement age from 18 to 22, giving PSFC households with college students much sought-after clarity on how young adults should be represented.

In another vote, members voted yes to disband the Committee Oversight Committee,

a member committee designed to make sure other committees were meeting their work slot and reporting requirements. Going forward, Coop staff will provide that oversight.

OPEN FORUM

Before the votes, the meeting kicked off with the Open Forum, a time reserved for members to ask questions or bring up concerns not included in the meeting's agenda. During this time, a group from the Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine took turns voicing their concerns about the war in Gaza and asking Coop staffers to consider an online meeting to discuss a boycott of Israeli goods. This issue has come up during Open Forum in several recent GMs.

The speakers pointed out that more than 1,000 members had signed a petition in support of a boycott. Many asked for a status update on the General Coordinators' efforts to find a venue to discuss the matter that is large enough to accommodate the anticipated number of members expected to attend. Others reiterated their request to have an online meeting for discussion and voting, adding that the emergency in Gaza required this approach.

One Coop member for Palestine asked about fact-checking at the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, pointing to a recent letter that claimed—erroneously according to the speaker—that the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement promotes violence. Later, the letter's author, Jesse Rosenfeld, defended his submission, saying the included links proved his assertion.

AT THE MOST RECENT GENERAL MEETING, MEMBERS VOTED TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' RESPONSE

General Coordinator Joe Holtz then took the mic for the Treasurer's report but began by answering some of the questions from the Open Forum.

Holtz said the General Coordinators were looking to rent a space large enough to accommodate a BDS discussion, which would likely include 2,500 members. So far coordinators have been turned down by places like the King's Theater, BAM, and many Brooklyn schools, Holtz said. In addition, Holtz reminded members that the Coop held a meeting at Brooklyn Tech High School in 2012 to discuss the referendum to join BDS, and voted no. At the end of the meeting, police asked Coop staff to inform them if the Coop ever had a meeting like that again, he said. Holtz also said that the police told the Coop to hire private security and that Brooklyn Tech said we should have alerted them in advance as to what we would be discussing.

Because of that 2012 event and the limited space, the coordinators took an "extraordinary action" shortly before the November General Meeting and removed the boycott discussion item from the meeting's agenda, Holtz said.

He added that in-person general meetings are mandated by the Coop's bylaws, which require the Board to meet in person at a time that members are invited to join them. As a result, having a Zoom meeting to discuss the boycott issue couldn't happen without a change in the bylaws.

During COVID, GMs were held on Zoom because of the emergency nature of the pandemic and the fact that public spaces were locked down. "We had guidance and rules on that from three governments," Holtz said.



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

COOP FINANCES

Holtz then moved to the Treasurer's report. The Coop's finances continue to recover nicely after the pandemic. Sales for the 48-week period ending Dec. 31, 2023 were \$50,533,000—a \$6.5 million increase from the same period last year. The Coop reported \$181,201 in operating income, a significant increase from the slightly more than \$266,000 loss reported last year. Holtz also reported that the Coop lowered its markup from 25% to 24% in late January, which was ahead of schedule.

Holtz also pointed out that the Coop's gross margin increased to 19.75% from 19.5%. The increase is great news, Holtz explained, because gross margin is crucial for the Coop's financial sustainability. He encouraged members to consult page two of the Jan. 30, 2024 financial summary for a detailed explanation of gross margin and its im-

portance to the Coop.

During the question and answer period after the Treasurer's report, a member asked if it would be possible to access current and past financial reports and GM agendas on the website. Holtz answered that he would discuss this with the other coordinators and look into this good suggestion.

CHILDCARE UPDATE

Next, General Coordinator Lisa Moore updated members on the Coop's longstanding attempts to bring back childcare after last year's vote to restart the service. Coordinators have not been able to find an insurer that will cover childcare at the Coop because it is not a licensed New York State childcare facility. Licensing requirements are quite stringent and the Coop's childcare room does not meet requirements.



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

After many frustrating attempts to find an insurer that will cover a non-licensed facility, Moore reported that the coordinators recently got a bid from an insurance company for \$3 million per year, nine times the \$335,000 the Coop is paying for business insurance now. Since then, the coordinators approached three insurance brokers look-

ing for help. One said no, another didn't reply and the third said they are working on it. Moore said she is hoping to hear more from that broker soon.

COOKING CLASSES ARE IN FULL SWING—BUT STILL ON ZOOM

Jeff Bonar of the Food Coop Cooking Class squad reported that the committee has conducted six online cooking classes in the last six months. The next one, featuring “Personalized Chili” will be held on February 22. Bonar also announced that the committee is looking for guest chefs to lead future classes in return for work slot credit. For more information on guest chefs, future classes and links to past recipes, Bonar encouraged members to check out foodcoopcooks.org. He also said the committee is looking forward to holding classes in person soon.



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

DOES THE PSFC NEED A COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE COMMITTEES?

Coordinator Jana Cunningham presented the first agenda item up for a membership vote: her proposal to disband the Committee Oversight Committee (COC). As the proposal describes, the COC was started almost two years ago to reduce Coop staff time

spent overseeing member committees, to make sure committees post their mission statements on the Coop's website and to assist committees with reporting requirements and tracking work slot credit.

Cunningham explained that the COC oversees member-originated "initiative" committees, such as the Environmental or Food Safety committees, and not the operational or essential committees that make up the vast majority of work slots at the Coop. Only 80 members are part of an initiative Coop committee.

The COC is not meeting its objectives, Cunningham said, using a report card to make her point. While the COC has ensured that about 60% of committee mission statements are posted, in 2023 very few committees met the requirements to report to a General Meeting once a year (10%) or publish submissions in the Linewaiters' Gazette twice a year (1%), Cunningham reported. She also said that the Committee has not been effective in tracking work slots and thus was not saving staff time. As a result, Cunningham asked members to vote to disband the committee.

During the discussion period, the chairman of the COC vigorously defended the existence of the committee and expressed his surprise that the committee was "on the chopping block." There was also some discussion that disbanding the committee, which was started by longtime and extremely active member Rachel Porter, who has since passed away, would hurt her legacy at the Coop.

The vote was taken and the proposal passed 84 in favor, 34 against.

A NEW MINIMUM AGE FOR COOP MEMBERSHIP

Holtz presented the final agenda item—a proposal to amend the age for working at the Coop, which would help clarify the definition of a Coop household. Holtz explained that after hearing from many members that the current household requirement for 18-year-olds to join the Coop could be confusing and cumbersome for families with college-age children who were living away from home, the general coordinators decid-

ed to propose some changes.

Holtz proposed defining an adult person as someone who has reached the age of 21, and that all adults in a household are required to join the Coop and fulfill membership requirements. In addition, any person between the ages of 18 and 21 who wants to join the Coop will be allowed to become a full Coop member, but they will be exempt from the work requirement.

Holtz explained that the work exemption would apply to all 18-to-21-year-olds, even if they were a household of young people who were, for example, working or attending Brooklyn College and wanting to join the Coop. “We wouldn’t make some 18-year-olds work just because they’re not living with their parents. That wouldn’t be fair,” said Holtz.

During the discussion period, several members took exception to the work exemption for all 18-to-21-year-olds, arguing that if someone lives in the community and is a Coop member, it isn’t an unfair burden for them to work.

One member pointed out that many 21-year-olds are still in college, so 22 might be a better age for the upper limit. Holtz agreed and changed the proposal to age 22.

Members voted to amend the age to join the Coop from 18 to 22, with 69 in favor and 50 opposed.

The Board of Directors then voted to accept the advice of members and the meeting was adjourned.

COMPOSTING UPDATE: A COORDINATED EFFORT IN PROSPECT HEIGHTS

February 28, 2024



By Liora Fishman

The Prospect Heights Community Farm (PHCF), on St. Marks Avenue between Vanderbilt and Underhill Avenues, stands as a testament to the power of collective environmental stewardship. The farm provides the opportunity to grow fresh produce, to share it with the local community via efforts like Victory Garden and a communal herb

garden, and to teach neighbors about urban agriculture, plants and vegetables alike. One of PHCF's lesser-known green initiatives is a dynamic composting partnership with the Park Slope Food Coop, fostering a closed-loop system that transforms organic waste into nutrient-rich compost. In an interview with Compost Coordinator Brian Thompson, he explained how PHCF partners with the Coop to further the mission of sustainable urban living.

Thompson shares his duties with fellow compost guru and Coop member Pamela Tuffley. Thompson has been an active member of the Coop for over 20 years and a dedicated participant in the community at PHCF for 16 years.

COMPOSTING PROCESS



PHOTO BY © 2023 PROSPECT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY FARM

Steps of the composting process.

To get good compost, it generally needs to be turned every three or four days. Yes, there's a shift for that.

The Coop "Turner" shift at PHCF, established around a decade ago, involves the cooperative effort of members like Thompson who make sure the composting system runs smoothly. He says when he started doing this shift, it felt like, "a no-brainer... I was already doing regular turning shifts at the garden, so why not get credit for my labor at the Coop?"

"THE IDEA OF CREATING SOIL WAS A WINNING CONCEPT."

—JOE HOLTZ

The Coop's relationships with gardens for composting began in the 1980s. "The Coop initially started a partnership with the Garden of Union because it was mutually beneficial," said Sherry Showell, the Compost Squad leader. "The Coop didn't have to pay for heavy food scraps to be hauled away in the garbage, and the newly forming Garden of Union was in dire need of soil improvement."

Joe Holtz explained that the Garden of Union approached the Coop, asking what they did with food scraps that were not in good enough shape to be donated. "The answer was that we were putting it in the dumpster. We immediately stopped doing that because the idea of creating soil was a winning concept."

As the Coop grew, Garden of Union was unable to handle the full amount of compost each load contained. The Coop expanded their partnerships—which now include eight other gardens—to accommodate the increase. The Compost Squad, once only 15–20 people, now has about 100 participants.

Holtz also explained that the Coop covers the cost of compost bins and their maintenance. By having lighter trash loads, the Coop saves money, which it can then reallocate toward maintaining the composting system and the relationships the Coop has with gardens.

The composting process involves combining collected food scraps, known as “greens,” with locally procured leaves and sawdust, or “browns,” in a 1:1 ratio. This mixture is weighed, logged and processed through a four-bin system, with regular aeration and flipping. “Time in the system varies depending on weather, temperature, organic content and other nerdy factors,” noted Thompson.

Once the compost is cooked to perfection, it undergoes a cooling period before being sifted into the finished “black gold” available to both members and the wider community. Harmony in composting relies on the diligent hands of haulers, “browns” gatherers, turners and garden coordinators. From collecting food scraps to blending “browns,” managing piles and overseeing operations, each role contributes to the symphony of sustainability, ensuring our composting gardens thrive daily.



PHOTO BY © 2023 PROSPECT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY FARM

This orange food waste is called “greens” in the compost cycle.

On Sundays, PHCF receives food scraps from members and the community at large, typically around 200–300 lbs. per week. However, this figure has recently declined due to the introduction of the city’s orange “smart bins” and expanded curbside compost collection.

Participation in New York City’s compost programs has historically lagged behind that in other cities, according to an investigation into the new orange “smart bin” program. In February of 2023, Mayor Adams announced that curbside composting would be available in all five boroughs by the end of 2024. *Curbed* reporter Clio Chang notes that some environmentalists have called the city’s program “greenwashing” due to the claim that the excess methane from the compost will be used to produce renewable energy. “Biogas is branded by the gas industry as ‘renewable energy,’ which obscures the fact that the result is still natural gas that produces emissions when burned,” Chang writes.

“OUR MEMBER LABOR SYSTEM SUPPORTS DOING THE RIGHT THING IN REGARD TO FOOD WASTE.”

—**JOE HOLTZ**

Ultimately, GrowNYC, one of the associated composting organizations, estimated that New York’s community composting programs divert an estimated 4,150 tons of food scraps from landfills each year. To put that into perspective, Thompson shared that in 2023, the Coop provided approximately 1,800 lbs. of compost to the community farm.

And while the city-wide composting efforts have had an impact on the compost delivered to the PHCF, that might change soon. Mayor Adams has proposed a budget cut that would eliminate the composting effort’s budget almost entirely, making communi-

ty composting efforts like the one at the PHCF all the most integral.

Composting controversies and looming budget cuts aside, Thompson participates in the compost program because it's given him an opportunity to be "outside, in the garden, getting my hands dirty and communing with the birds that invariably take an interest in our aerating of their backyard, buffet and snacking station."

In the symbiotic relationship between these local gardens and the Park Slope Food Coop, a shared commitment to composting not only enriches the soil but also cultivates a greener, more interconnected community. "Our member labor system supports doing the right thing in regard to food waste," Holtz said. "It's yet another example of the Coop difference, and something our members should be proud of."

Liora Fishman lives in Prospect Heights, and has a dog named Ollie.

AISLE SEVEN TEMPTATION: COOKIES, CHOCOLATES AND ENERGY BARS,
OH MY

February 28, 2024



By Zach Schiffman

With Valentine's Day behind us, maybe you recently grabbed some extra chocolate bars from aisle seven while waiting in line to check out. While the Coop doesn't have the traditional impulse-purchase bait found in checkout lanes of privately owned grocery stores, there's a level of temptation built into the cookies, chocolate and energy bars accompanying the wait for express checkout.

CHOCOLATE BARS



Shoppers peruse the chocolate offerings.

While aisle seven is not explicitly designed to encourage last-minute purchases, according to Receiving Coordinator Gillian Chi, it's been that way for the seventeen years she's worked at the Coop. Chi says the sales in that aisle are "relatively consistent from week to week," with brands like Divine Chocolate, Chocolove and Tony's Chocolonely remaining popular mainstays over the years.

SOME SHOPPERS GO FOR THE ENTICING TREATS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE LINE IS MOVING SLOWLY.



The sweet offerings come in all sizes.

New treats can pop up in the aisle in a few different ways: from samples sent to the Coop directly from distributors, product suggestions from members, or new items researched by the coordinators themselves. “Some aisles, like the baking aisle, we’ve been selling the same items for years. But I don’t think we’re specifically more adventurous with chocolate,” Chi said. “We try to bring in new products all across the store.”

ARE YOU AN IMPULSE BUYER?



Buying by the fistful.

Waiting in the express checkout line one afternoon, patient members talked about their last-minute basket grabs.

Lots of people claimed to not buy anything extra, no matter how long the line was. “I live in a 250-square-foot apartment, and have a mini fridge, so my shopping is very intentional,” one member, named Ruthie, told me. “If I shop on impulse, it’s from the sale rack. I’m on a budget.”

That said, plenty of shoppers do fall victim to the enticing treats, especially when the line is moving particularly slowly. “I feel like it’s the last chance,” said Sarah, who often finds herself adding various nut mixes at the start of the aisle. “I’m like, okay, the line is long. And I’m not going to get back into the line. So I need to grab as many things as possible.”



Reaching for the just-right bar.

A member named Scott said “the sole purpose of this aisle is to purchase the specific chocolate that my wife asks for, which is anything 80% cocoa or more.”

Many shoppers said their last-minute cart additions are for their children. Others said their favorite random purchases include the Quadratini double-chocolate wafer cookies, the mint Newman O’s and the Chocolate Love’s Orange Peel bar.

PLENTY OF SHOPPERS SAY THEY DON’T GRAB ANYTHING EXTRA, NO MATTER HOW LONG THE LINE IS.



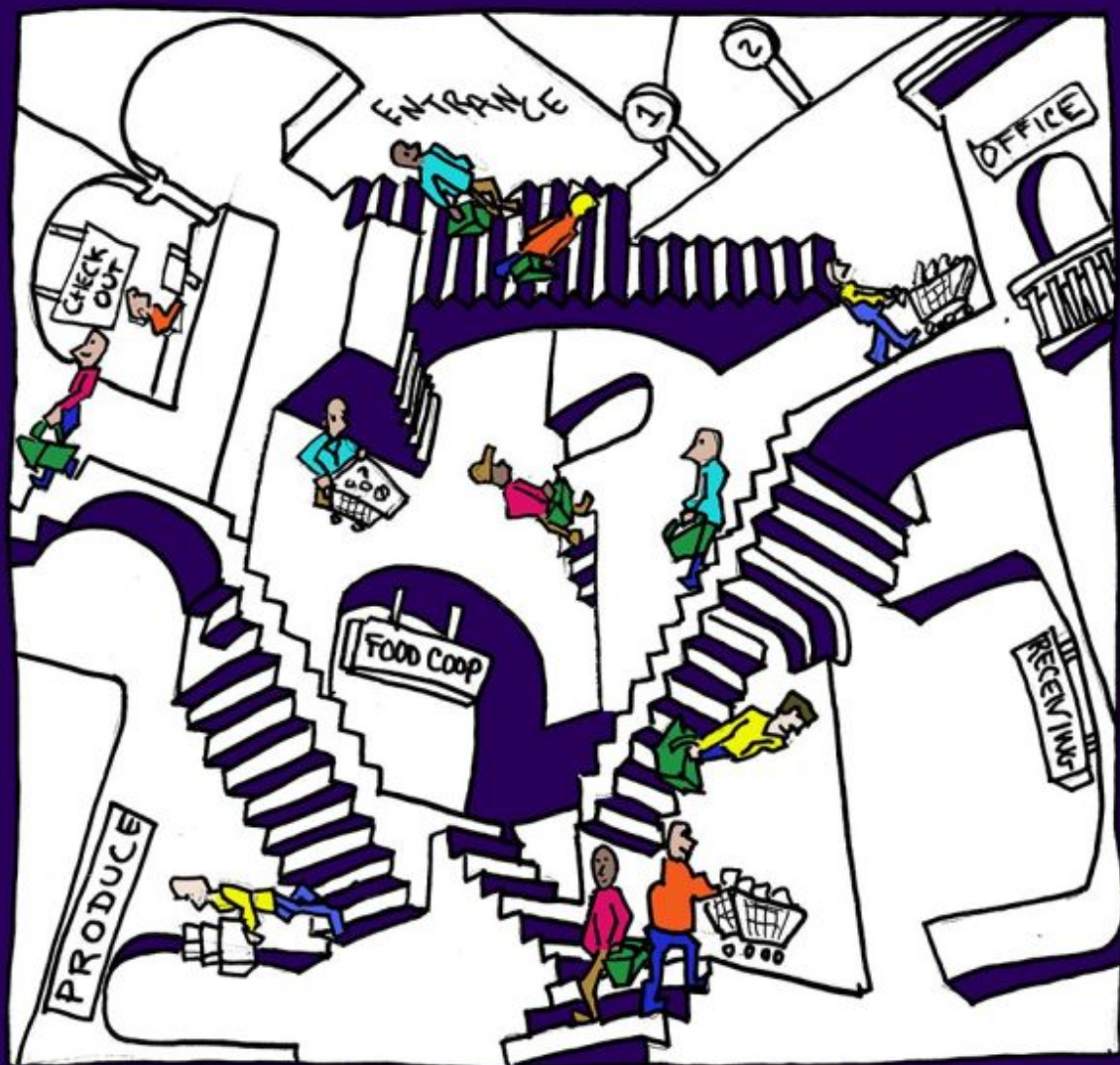
Chocolate choices are serious business.

When the express line wraps all the way into aisle six, as it did on the day these interviews were conducted, some members find themselves impulse-grabbing crackers or canned goods, as well. "I discovered the canned grape leaves when the line was really bad one day," member Allie says.

The bottom line on impulse buying? "The same happens over in the other aisle," member Kate said of the regular checkout lane. "It's just less exciting. It's soap over there."

MISSED CONNECTIONS

February 28, 2024



YOU: TALL MAN BUYING SORREL AND PASTRIES

You're a tall man with glasses who was buying sorrel. We talked about how you sometimes replant it in your parents' backyard. You also bought a bagel, a muffin and another kind of pastry, and had your own cloth bag for them. This was probably nine months ago.

A CONVERSATION ABOUT ACUPUNCTURE

You: an older gentleman with a beard working the express checkout. I mentioned I just finished acupuncture school, and you said you and your wife regularly see someone who "changed your life." And then... you blanked on his name! Oh no! You said he's in Park Slope and practices out of his apartment. I would love to have this acupuncturist's name to continue to cultivate my acupuncture community in Brooklyn.

OCEAN VUONG EVENT INFORMATION FOR A CHEESE AND OLIVE PACKAGING FELLOW SHIFT WORKER

We worked a cheese and olive shift together on Wednesday, Jan. 17, and our group talk turned to Vietnam and Vietnamese American culturators. You were delighted to learn that my Professor Ocean Vuong would be giving a FREE livestream talk hosted by MoMA and Asian American Writers Workshop (rescheduled to March 9th). Here's the link. Until the next time we slice cheese and bag spices, stay well!

YOU WERE MAKING PEACH SUNDAES LATER

It was a hot Friday afternoon in August, I was working the express checkout and you were roasting special peaches later to make peach sundaes. You couldn't find corn syrup, which you needed to make the homemade caramel sauce. I don't remember what you look like, but you're funny and you have a really nice voice. Also, I found the corn syrup and it makes no sense where it is.

Dear Gazette Reader: In order to read and respond to unabbreviated versions of the missed connections above, please join our private Reddit community. To do so, please sign up for a Reddit account, sign in, visit this link in a web browser and click "Request to Join." Note that the "Request to Join" button is only shown in a web browser—not in the Reddit app. Should you wish to reach out with thoughts, questions and/or ideas, please email me at psfcmisconnections@gmail.com.

*Stay warm,
Arpita Dey*

FILM NIGHT: A WONDERFUL KINGDOM

February 28, 2024

A WONDERFUL KINGDOM

VACATIONLAND
presents

{Um Reino Maravilhoso}

A film by Carlos Carneiro

Directed by **Carlos Carneiro** Written by **Miguel Torga** ENG Narration by **Malcolm McDowell** PT Narration by **Simone de Oliveira**
Produced by **Carlos Carneiro** and **Nicholas Weissman** Cinematography **Nicholas Weissman** Editor **Faisal Azam** Sound **Gonçalo Sousa**
Sound Design **Marcelo de Oliveira** Music Composer **Shervin Shaeri** Cape **Clinton Hollister** Associate Producer **João Valente**

A Vacationland production © 2021

In the mountains of Portugal, amid the stunning, timeless vineyards of the Douro Valley, lies the heart and soul of old-world winemaking. Once a year, a divine ritual begins: the season's grapes are harvested by the generations-old families who pick, carry and stomp their way through September with blood-red feet, stained by grape juice.

Celebrating tradition over mythology, *A Wonderful Kingdom* is an homage to these hard-working folks, the lifeblood of the region. Narrated by Malcolm McDowell and set to prose by the iconic poet Miguel Torga, this hypnotic, observational documentary unfurls across the epic beauty and austerity of both nature and humanity.

This documentary will be screened at this Zoom link on Thursday, March 21, at 7 p.m.

Director and Coop member Carlos Carneiro will be present for a Q and A after the screening.

To be added to our email listserv for future screening announcements, please send a request to jlymiller@me.com.

IN MEMORY OF KATIE ZABRONSKY

February 28, 2024

By Thomas Rayfiel



PHOTO BY JUN TAN

Katie Zabronsky, who was a Coop member for only four years but made a lasting impression, died on Nov. 18, 2023. Katie joined the Coop in 2019. She worked mostly in food processing, receiving, and stocking. Her partner, Harry Shock, recalled how: "Katie loved the Coop and all its quirks. She always came home from her shift having purchased something new and intriguing. She dubbed these her 'PoW' or 'Purchase of the Week.' It was a very necessary part of every shop. As friends and family returned to NYC, post-pandemic, they all moved into the neighborhood to be near Katie, and, in turn, Katie persuaded them to join the Coop as well."

This is borne out by the testimonies of her many friends. Liz Hart wrote: "Katie adored the Coop and was a huge champion and spokeswoman for it. Before I even moved to New York she made sure to give me a tour during a visit. Katie was so warm. She loved food, cooking, feeding her friends and family, and would often be heard saying, 'It's from the Coop,' whenever she was hosting."

Another friend, Naomi Sabbah, added: "Katie is the reason I joined the Coop! Every time I went to Katie's she would put a snack out on the table or share a new skincare purchase and laugh when I asked where she got it, responding with a smile and a shrug: 'The Coop!' She was a true, pure member in the best sense, never pressuring me to join, or sticking up her nose at me that I hadn't, just being generous with the joy (and items) the place gave her."

Katie was a social worker with the Sanctuary for Families at Queens Family Justice Center, supporting children and teens who had witnessed domestic abuse. Before that, she had worked with the health care consultant Rabin Martin, partnering with the Gates Foundation to broaden access to maternal immunizations, and studied in Uganda where she supported PDI Uganda, an organization in rural, eastern Uganda that supports children's education.

Diagnosed with ovarian cancer at twenty-six, she underwent surgery and chemotherapy. Ten weeks later, she ran a half-marathon to raise \$25,000 for cancer research at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Despite her illness, she received a Master's degree from

the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College.

Katie is survived by her loving parents, Rob and Lorri Zabronsky; her sister, Rachel Zabronsky and brother-in-law, Jake Sabbah (both Coop members); and her partner, Harry Shock (also a Coop member).

During the first few days of COVID, Katie did a hectic shift in the stock room. At one point, a coordinator yelled, “Forget the goji berries! Focus on cheddar cheese!” (Apparently, hard cheese is a good source of protein and does not go bad quickly, so everyone was rushing to buy it.) For Katie, who told this story to many friends, this epitomized the eccentric, hilarious, but also very touching tone of the Coop, one with which she obviously identified.