

WORDSPROUTS: IRVIN SCHONFELD

March 3, 2026



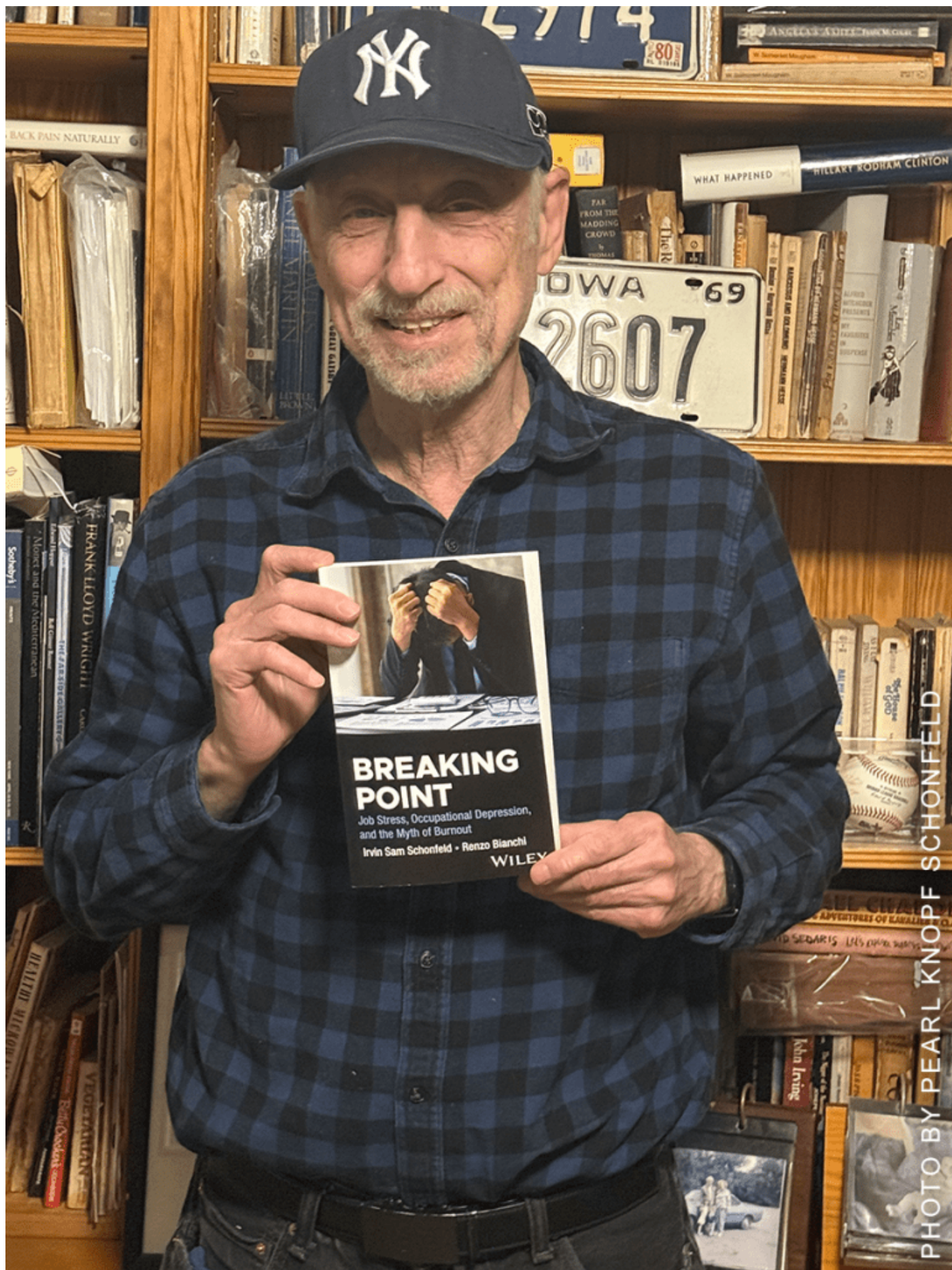


PHOTO BY PEARL KNOPF SCHONFELD

Come join us for our next WordSprouts event in partnership with the Old Stone House, featuring psychologist Irvin Schonfeld, PhD, MPH, Professor Emeritus at the City College of New York and the CUNY Graduate Center.

Irvin will present on his most recent book, *Breaking Point: Job Stress, Occupational Depression and the Myth of Burnout* (Wiley, 2025), co-authored with Renzo Bianchi, Professor of Psychology at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. Irvin and Renzo take a subversive view of burnout.

WordSprouts is a long-running PSFC author series featuring Coop authors sharing their work and their creative process.

## **OUR NEXT EVENT**

Author: Irvin Schonfeld (PSFC member)

Genre: Nonfiction (Occupational Health Psychology)

When: Wednesday March 25, 2026 – doors open at 6:45 PM; the event begins at 7:00 PM.

Where: Old Stone House, 336 3rd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Format: In-person only

RSVP [here](#).

Irvin and Renzo approach job-related burnout from an angle that is both skeptical and subversive. They co-developed and currently research the Occupational Depression Inventory, and examine the impact of job stressors on people who work (e.g., teachers, civil servants, etc.). They are particularly interested in burnout/depression overlap. Irvin described the research underlined in the book as delineating the impact of toxic

working job conditions on depressive symptoms and how to address the problem.

Irvin's early experience as a math teacher in the New York City public schools influenced his future studies, as he described, "I informally observed that the chaotic, and sometimes violent circumstances of my school had a baleful effect on many of my teacher colleagues, particularly women teachers. These observations contributed to a future line of research I would not have anticipated at the time I was a teacher."

Irvin has been a Coop member since 1978. His favorite item from the Coop is Le Petit Ecolier European Milk Chocolate Cookies. Now retired from the Coop, Irvin's favorite work shift was the early morning FTOP shift when he and his coworkers put out the produce and took the excess to the CHIPS soup kitchen.

Irvin's presentation will be followed by an audience question period. Drinks and snacks will be provided courtesy of the Coop.

Irvin will be available to sign copies of *Breaking Point: Job Stress, Occupational Depression and the Myth of Burnout* (Wiley, 2025), and will have copies available to sell.

Copies can be ordered from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or from the book's publisher John Wiley & Sons.

To get updates about WordSprouts events, check the *Linewaiters' Gazette* and sign up for the mailing list at [psfcwordsprouts@gmail.com](mailto:psfcwordsprouts@gmail.com). You can also follow us on Instagram at [@foodcoopwordsprouts](https://www.instagram.com/foodcoopwordsprouts).

*The WordSprouts committee includes committee leader Sarah Schenck and committee members Susan Horwich, Ruthie Nachmany, and Tamar Nachmany.*

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# FILM NIGHT: CUBBY

March 3, 2026



**"THE LOVE CHILD OF  
NAPOLEON DYNAMITE & LADY BIRD"**

*Terry Messard, Fresh Tomato Review*



**"DISARMINGLY  
ENTERTAINING"**

*Rich Cline, Fresh Tomato Review*



a film by  
**Mark Blane**



# Cubby

2020 BURIED TREASURE AWARD  
CHLOTRUDIS SOCIETY OF INDEPENDENT FILM



## ***CUBBY (2019)***

With a bold voice reminiscent of heyday 1990s independent cinema, *Cubby* gives a whole new meaning to “adventures in babysitting.” Written and directed by breakout star Mark Blane and shot in crisp 16mm, this quirky dark comedy tells the story of an anxious Midwestern twenty-something who moves to NYC in hopes of becoming an artist. We follow Mark as he navigates his new life in this overwhelming city and with chemically imbalanced flights of fancy, all while fostering a friendship with Milo, a precocious six-year-old he begins to babysit in Park Slope, Brooklyn. This simultaneously off-the-wall and oddly charming debut features a superhero named Leather-Man, a bizarre closet-dwelling roommate, psychedelics and a heartwarming performance by Emmy Award nominee Patricia Richardson (*Home Improvement*). *Cubby* is sure to make you reconnect with your inner child. (Credit: NewFest New York Film Festival)

Mark Blane is an actor, writer, and director living in Brooklyn, NY. His films include the feature *Cubby* (2019) and shorts *Ghost Bike* (2024), *American Assassin Amnesiac* (2024), and the forthcoming film adaptation of *Medea* titled *Needle Road* starring Sinéad Matthews, Heather Burns and Ajay Naidu. He co-wrote and produced the Netflix documentary *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson* (2017). His work has been supported by Kodak, Brooklyn Arts Council, NYSCA, Sundance and Leslie Lohman Museum of Lesbian and Gay Art, among others. He can be seen on six episodes of the Apple TV show *Little Voice* as well as indie films including *The Apology* and *But I’m Your Brother* (Dir. Noah Morse). As an actor, he is repped by Tyler Kahl at Allegory Talent and Nelson Paredez and Garrett Lindsey at The ESI Network. [www.markblane.com](http://www.markblane.com)

This film will be screened by Zoom on **Thursday, March 12, at 7pm**. Writer and director Mark Blane will be present for a Q+A after the screening.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88425591770>

Meeting ID: 884 2559 1770

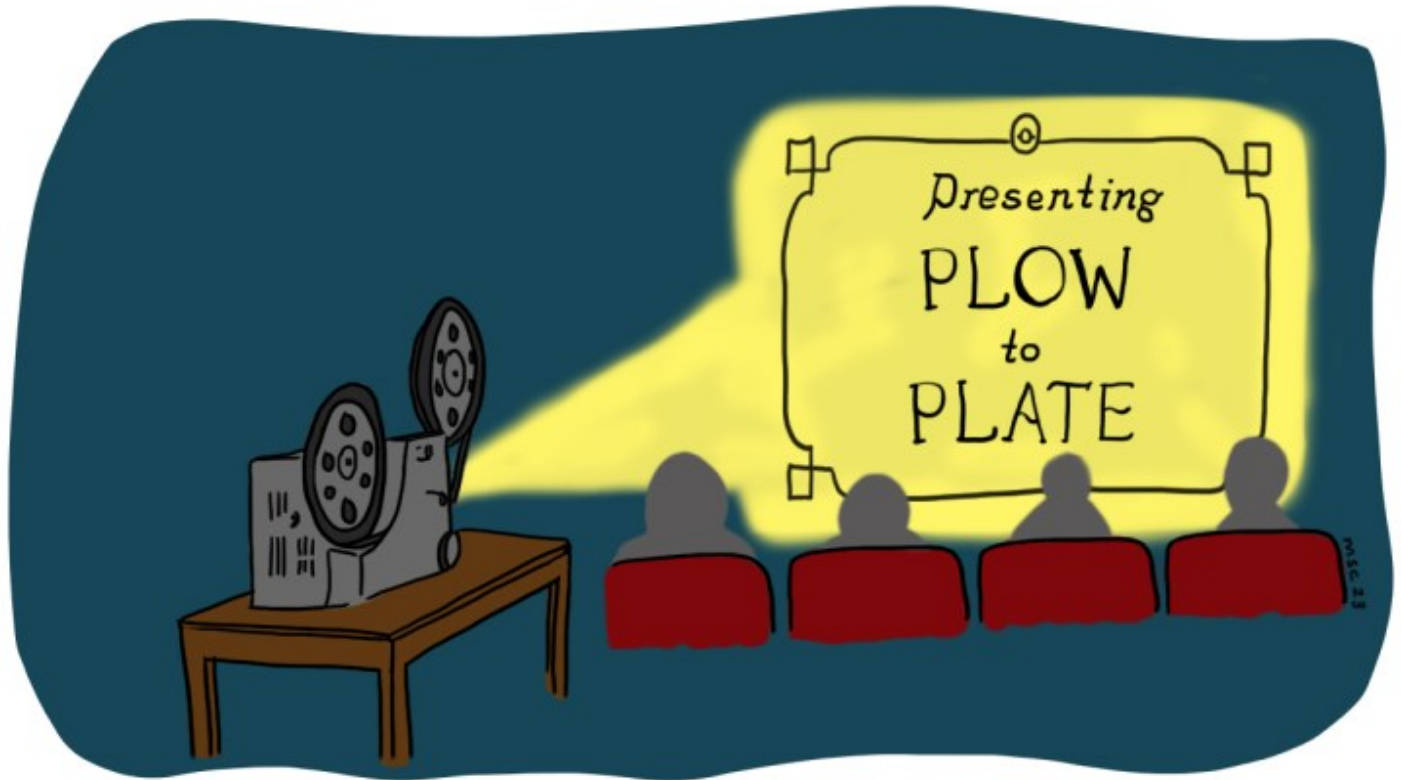
To be added to our email listserv for future screening announcements, please send a

request to [jlymiller@me.com](mailto:jlymiller@me.com).

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## PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: FRUITS OF LABOR

March 3, 2026



March 3, 2026

*By Adam Rabiner*

A drone shot above a farm. Below, people are picking strawberries. It looks like California. A conventional tableau. Another film about the exploitation of migrant labor. Yet the 18-year-old narrator is one of the people in the field—Ashley Solis Pavont tells us that she was born in the United States to a family of Mexican healers. So were her three younger siblings, all of whose names, like hers, start with “Ash.” Their mother, Beatriz, told them it symbolizes a meadow of trees with roots that establish the family here in the U.S. After that initial scene, the rest of the movie takes place in their

crowded, rundown house shared with 12 other families; Watsonville High School, where Ashley is a senior; a shop where Ashley is trying to find the perfect graduation dress; a fruit processing plant where Ashley works the 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift; and other parts of town. This is not a film about migrants, but rather of a mixed-status family—an undocumented mother raising citizen children. Twenty-two years earlier, a deathly ill Beatriz was brought to the U.S. for urgent medical care and granted a temporary visa. In her fevered state, the nurses caring for her as she lay in her hospital bed appeared as angels.

Beatriz, a spiritual and religious woman, works seven days a week as a house cleaner. Since she is divorced and without financial support from her ex-husband, Ashley must also work to support the family. Ashley observes that her younger brother, 16-year-old Ashford, whose nickname is “Barron,” meanwhile, acts like a little kid, skateboarding, playing video games and hanging out with his girlfriend Ximena, who becomes pregnant by him. Ashley says that he lives in a fantasy world where all the burdens fall on women. While Beatriz encourages her eldest daughter to complete high school to get a better-paying job, she reinforces traditional patriarchal roles and expectations, magnifying Ashley’s challenges. Often too tired from her night shift to go to school, Ashley’s poor attendance jeopardizes her graduation.

*Fruits of Labor* takes place in 2018 in a more threatening America. There are no video news clips of I.C.E. raids, but Beatriz and Ashley nervously hover around an iPhone listening to reports of arrests, detentions and family separations. Fearing her deportation, Beatriz has Ashley designated as the legal guardian of her siblings. Despite this ominous backdrop, not every American institution is indifferent. Ashley’s high school teaches the history of the United Farm Workers Union and New Deal legislation that exempted domestic and agricultural labor from worker protections—a 12-year-old can legally work in the fields. Hanging from a wall are college and pre-college posters, and the school’s motto echoes Beatriz’s wishes, “Dream Big, Work Hard.” Teachers, guidance counselors and the principal are sympathetic and caring.

Ashley also has support from a girlfriend and a devoted boyfriend, Adrian, with whom

she takes long walks in the countryside or along the shore, discussing matters such as their spirit animals and reincarnation. Ashley is thoughtful, intelligent, curious, articulate, self-aware and yet uncertain and scared. She's a teenager who wishes her life could be more normal, like Ashford's, but who has been prematurely thrust into an adult life of burdens and responsibilities. Her chosen animal is a turtle who just wants to hide in its shell.

Like the family profiled, the film itself is steeped in spirituality. Time-lapse cinematography shows flowers blooming, and animations depict fruits ripening. Imagery of bees and Monarch butterflies suggests ancestral forces and cycles of nature (and perhaps the ties between the U.S. and Mexico, where the Monarchs make their arduous journeys). These forces also help to sustain.

Hanging in the Pavon home is a print of a red, white and blue American flag waving above the word "freedom." This is a family that loves America, even though some aspects of America do not appear, at this moment, to fully love them back. The country depicted in the film has two faces. One is foreboding, while the other is welcoming and encouraging. Like Beatriz long ago in her sickbed, this family chooses to see our better angels.

*Fruits of Labor* Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Please join the *Plow to Plate* mailing list by emailing [plowtoplate@gmail.com](mailto:plowtoplate@gmail.com) to receive a screening link.

From October 2025 through March 2026, *Plow to Plate* is exclusively featuring films distributed by *Grasshopper Film*. Reversa Films produced *Fruits of Labor*.

*Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina.*

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## RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE: COOP MEMBERS SUPPORT SNAP RECIPIENTS DURING SHUTDOWN

March 3, 2026



PHOTO BY KATE PREVITE

December 9, 2025

By Lora Kelley

On November 1, the Park Slope Food Coop posted on Instagram requesting donations to support members affected by disruptions to SNAP benefits. Within a week, members had given more than \$20,000.

The PSFC SNAP Assistance Fund was organized to provide relief to those who rely on benefits from SNAP, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, for their Coop

shopping. During the 43-day shutdown of the federal government, which began on October 1, the nation's largest anti-hunger initiative was mired in uncertainty and legal challenges that jeopardized people's ability to access groceries. While officials, lawyers and administrators were scrambling to figure out what was happening, and whether eligible recipients could continue getting benefits, people needed to eat. About one in eight Americans, or 42 million people, rely on SNAP benefits—that includes some 3 million people in New York state.



PHOTO BY KATE PREVITE

There was a lot of collective energy, both among Park Slope Food Coop members and the broader national coop community, to find ways to help people who rely on these benefits.

More than \$5,000 was distributed to Coop members registered for SNAP benefits in the first week after the fundraiser went live, General Manager Joe Szladek said in an interview, and about half of the fund was used overall. Now that the shutdown has ended and SNAP benefits have resumed, excess donations will be diverted to CHiPS

(Community Help in Park Slope).



Now that the shutdown has ended and SNAP benefits are resuming, excess donations will be diverted to CHiPS (Community Help in Park Slope).

As it became clear that SNAP would be interrupted, Coop staff began discussing what to do, Szladek said. He noted that there was a lot of collective energy, both among Park Slope Food Coop members and the broader national coop community, to find ways to help people who rely on these benefits. (The United States Department of Agriculture forbade stores from offering discounts to SNAP recipients.)

“THERE WAS AN OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT FOR EACH OTHER AND FOR THE COMMUNITY.”

*GENERAL MANAGER JOE SZLADEK*

Some of the staff's ideas included setting up a food pantry at the Coop, or asking members to purchase items to donate to food kitchens. The idea of creating a member-driven fund would be more complicated than those actions—but setting up such a fund seemed like the best way to “honor the dignity of those losing benefits,” allowing them to keep shopping as usual, Szladek said. So the team moved forward with the fundraiser.

“Members stepped up,” Szladek said. “There was an outpouring of support for each other and for the community.” In fact, within 48 hours, more than \$10,000 in donations had come in. The fundraiser was advertised through a single Instagram post and through announcements over the intercom in the Coop. The fundraiser didn't have a hard number goal, Szladek noted, but the aim was to cover average weekly spending for about a month for members who use SNAP at the Coop.

Many members were enthusiastic about the initiative. Rita Wenxin Wang, a member since 2021 who has interacted with SNAP recipients on their checkout shift, said that, as someone “deeply interested in the redistribution of wealth,” they were “glad that the massive Coop community could come together to support members.” Bryony Romer, a member of 30 years who saw the announcement about the fundraiser on Instagram, said that she “was excited to see the Coop leading to mobilize the vast resources in our community to help those at risk of starving.” She added that she loves the Coop because it is a “people-organized place where we all pitch in to make something good happen.”

“I WAS EXCITED TO SEE THE COOP LEADING TO MOBILIZE THE VAST RESOURCES  
IN OUR COMMUNITY TO HELP THOSE AT RISK OF STARVING.”

*BRYONY ROMER*

Once the fund started coming in, Szladek explained, the next step was to alert eligi-

ble members. Members of the Coop's information technology team wrote an email to about 450 people, letting them know that this was happening, and what amount they were eligible for. Eligibility was based on past SNAP usage at the Coop, and the amount of support available per member was determined based on that data. In other words, the Coop took the average amount a member spent weekly (based on sales data from prior weeks) and gave eligible members that weekly amount. Members were advised to shop normally, check out, and then suspend their receipt. Then, they could bring the receipt to a staff member, who attached a ticket, and the bookkeepers took care of things from there.



Members eligible for the PSFC SNAP Assistance Fund were advised to shop normally at the Coop during the lapse in SNAP funding due to the government shutdown. This fundraiser was the first of its kind for the Coop, Szladek said, as it "was driven by a gap in members' ability to purchase food." He added that, if in the future, another emergency like this arises, "this mechanism is there."



PHOTO BY KATE PREVITE

Szladek noted the Coop has long supported other efforts to keep participation accessible and help feed neighbors facing food insecurity. Each week, about 100 Coop members volunteer with CHiPS, representing 5 percent of overall member labor. Those efforts amount to about 14,000 total hours each year, he added. Szladek encouraged members to keep volunteering at and donating to CHiPS.

“It’s heartening to be part of a community where members will readily help members,” Szladek reflected.

*Lora Kelley is a freelance writer in Brooklyn.*

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# UPHILL BATTLES: THE CHALLENGES OF REPLICATING THE SUCCESS OF THE PSFC

March 3, 2026



December 9, 2025

By Kim Velsey

When the Park Slope Food Coop opened in 1973, it was one of some 3,000 coops started in the United States during that era, according to Anne Meis Knupfer's *Food Coops in America*—part of a movement to bring lower-priced, healthy foods to communities through a noncorporate grocery model. Only a fraction of that number exists today—somewhere closer to 300—but the Park Slope Food Coop has thrived, growing from a small second-floor bulk-buying operation to a 16,000-member cooperative that is the busiest grocery store in the United States by sales per square foot. Members travel from around the city to shop here, while those hoping to join clamor to secure the

limited spots available for new member enrollment.



Many food co-ops that have closed their doors.

“COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE PRECIOUS AND THERE WILL BE SOME CHALLENGING INITIAL TIMES. IS IT POSSIBLE? YES. IS IT EASY? NO.”

*JOE HOLTZ*

Over the years a number of groups have tried to replicate the Coop's success in other neighborhoods. The density of New York City, combined with the lack of healthy affordable foods in many neighborhoods, makes the coop model an especially attrac-

tive one here. What's more, the Park Slope Food Coop offers not only advice and mentorship to other coops interested in following its model, but also low-interest loans. Even so, most attempts to replicate Park Slope's model here have faltered or fizzled out. The Bay Ridge Food Coop never got beyond the buying-club stage; the South Bronx Food Co-op closed after three years, in 2010; the East New York Food Coop had a similar run; and the Bushwick Food Coop closed after 13 years, hobbled by a fire, Covid and the inability to secure a new affordable space.



#### Four New York City food co-op success stories

Others however, have managed to find their footing, notably the Greene Hill Food Co-op in Clinton Hill, which follows the Coop's mandatory member labor model, and the Windsor Terrace Food Coop, which does not. The Flatbush Food Coop is a cooperative that dates to the mid-1970s but has no member labor at all, and the 4th Street Food

Co-op in Manhattan, which opened as the Good Food Coop the same year as the Park Slope Food Coop, exists entirely as a member-run space that is also open to non-members.



Joe Holtz, the Coop's co-founder and former General Manager, retired over the summer.

Why has it been so difficult for others to follow in the Coop's footsteps?

## **Space Challenges**

"Space is a big challenge in New York City," said Joe Holtz, Park Slope's recently retired general manager, noting the challenge of "finding a space that is big enough and affordable enough." This, he says, was the problem Bay Ridge Food Coop faced and was ultimately unable to overcome, despite considerable interest from the com-

munity (Holtz recalls that 2,000 would-be members signed up). If a space is too small, or a coop never moves beyond the buying-club stage, members will find themselves doing a lot of work for a coop that offers supplemental groceries at best. Even if a coop starts off strong, it usually needs to scale to allow for staple shopping at some point, which is where a lot of coops fall apart.



PHOTO BY FROD MORRISON

Sarah Chinn, pictured outside the Green Hill Food Co-Op. The store is located on Fulton Street, at Classon Avenue.

Sarah Chinn joined the Park Slope Food Coop in 1991 and was a member until the mid-2000s, when she joined the effort to open Greene Hill as one of its founding members. She said that finding a space was definitely the biggest challenge early on. Greene Hill needed something “flexible, that had a basement we could put storage in, that we could put a walk-in fridge in, that was affordable, that was in the neighborhood,” she said. The founders also wanted a place that had good foot traffic, which their Putnam Street store didn’t really have, but the coop nonetheless eked out an existence for its first few years, managing to just barely stay afloat. Then they found out their landlord was selling essentially the whole block and they’d have to leave. The board told the membership that they had to close: Not only did the coop not have the time or wherewithal to move, it didn’t have the money. Chinn and a few other members decided to look for a new store anyway and after touring many spaces, found the coop’s current spot, a few blocks away on Fulton Street. It was that rare phenomenon in New York real estate: a better deal. The Greene Hill Food Co-op’s new space is bigger, has better foot traffic, and “sales just went up and up and up.”

## **Merchandise and Pricing Challenges**



Sarah Chinn was a PSFC member before co-founding the Green Hill Food Co-Op. Figuring out where to buy merchandise, and how much to buy, is another early hurdle: Coops need to find high-quality food suppliers who will offer bulk pricing that makes shopping at the coop less expensive and justifies member labor, in turn helping keep costs low. “When we opened, our Coop understood we had to get fruits and vegetables from the Hunts Point Market in the Bronx,” said Holtz. “We also knew we didn’t have the wherewithal to do it, but there was a small distribution company that wanted to sell to coops and daycares, and they sold to us at very low cost.”

Chinn said, however, that the supplier landscape is more difficult now than it was in the 1970s. The Greene Hill Food Co-op still isn’t big enough to get bulk discounts so their mark-up, which started at 30%, is now 35% for most items, compared to Park Slope’s 25%. Moreover, on “luxury” goods like chocolate and personal care products,

it's 40%. But by leaning heavily into bulk bin items Greene Hill has managed to offer a solid and growing inventory of affordably priced groceries, expanding to bulk cleaning supplies (like laundry detergent) without taking up too much of the limited shelf space. In the beginning, there were also divisions over whether Greene Hill should carry only non-GMO, organic, local foods or add in mass market brands that would help draw in new members and the community on Sundays, when the coop opens its doors to non-members at no extra markup—something that the membership felt was important in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood like Clinton Hill. Greene Hill settled on a solution that for every organic item, there would be a nonorganic alternative. Bananas also became a year-round staple, even if they weren't local because, said Chinn, “no one is going to shop at the coop if they can't pick up bananas.”



The Green Hill Co-Op is a well-stocked, neatly laid out, and welcoming store.

## Membership Challenges

Greene Hill, which started as a buying club in 2011, opened about a year later, and is now going on nearly 15 years—it has one full-time and one part-time employee. The coop recently started doing \$25,000 a week in sales, a milestone, but Chinn said they still sometimes have to close early when someone cancels a shift. And every week, an email goes out listing emergency shifts that need to be filled.

Large-enough membership is a key factor in a coop's success but can be hard to build, especially in the early years when members must put in a lot of time for something less than a full-fledged grocery store. A too-small membership was a big factor in the South Bronx Food Co-op's closure, leading to erratic hours and falling sales, which caused the coop to fall behind on rent. After a deal to sublease part of the space to city greencarts was nixed by the landlord, the coop folded. The Lefferts Community Food Coop, which lasted five years, also struggled with membership. When the landlord listed their building for sale—the coop had what one of its founders described as a “super-generous landlord” who required “minimal rent”—the board decided it was time to throw in the towel.

“PARK SLOPE WASN'T PARK SLOPE RIGHT OFF THE BAT. PARK SLOPE IS A REALLY MATURE BUSINESS THAT HAS BEEN DECADES IN THE MAKING.”

*SARAH CHINN*

For Holtz, the ability to overcome early crises like Greene Hill's store loss comes down to member labor, and the sense of connection necessary to keep a coop running. “When I hear members talk about our Coop, sometimes I hear them saying things like, ‘Well, they don't have that at the Coop,’ or the neutral, ‘the Coop doesn't have that,’ but most of the time it's ‘We don't have that at the Coop.’”

## Managing Expectations, Nurturing Mission



The Lefferts Community Food Coop folded after just five years.

There is another, less tangible but no less significant, challenge for any coop trying to follow Park Slope's model: managing expectations. As Chinn noted, "Park Slope wasn't Park Slope right off the bat. Park Slope is a really mature business that has been decades in the making."

And while there have been plenty of would-be coops that disappeared before ever opening their doors (like Greenpoint) or folded after a few years of not quite making it (like Lefferts) new ones keep trying to open, underscoring the appeal of the coop model, despite all the difficulties of making it work in New York City. For example, the Central Brooklyn Food Coop, which has been trying to find a storefront since September 2022, recently announced that they finally secured one on the ground floor of a newly

constructed building in Bed-Stuy. They are currently building membership, according to their website, so that they'll have enough community members to run it.



PSFC jam-packed with shopping members pre-Thanksgiving

As a leader of the food coop movement, the Park Slope Food Coop will continue to encourage and support others to follow. Offering cause for optimism, however cautious, Holtz reminded, "Community organizations are precious and there will be some challenging initial times. Is it possible? Yes. Is it easy? No. But are there other people that want to help? Yes."



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

*Kim Velsey has been a Coop member since 2020. When she's not writing for the Gazette, she's a staff writer at New York magazine.*

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# OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING REPORT

March 3, 2026



December 9, 2025

By Oluwakemi Aladesuyi

Since the Coop began offering work credits for meeting attendance, General Meetings

have been well attended, and the October 28 meeting was no exception.

## **Open Forum**

The Open Forum session focused on how the Coop could support the community as SNAP benefits faced expiration during the government shutdown. A small discussion group was proposed to address this concern. While it appears that SNAP benefits have since been extended for at least another year, the discussion raised important questions about how the community can continue supporting its members through ongoing economic challenges.

## **Reports**

General Manager Joe Szladek made a financial report for the last 36 weeks. Several one-time expenses contributed to higher personnel costs, including a retirement party for Joe Holtz, consulting fees to help recruit a new general manager and IT support.

Other trends of note:

- Debit transaction fees have increased, though the Coop will be switching vendors soon and will charge lower fees.
- Healthcare expenses are growing faster than inflation each year, becoming an increasingly large portion of personnel costs.
- Sales per member have declined since the Coop switched from a four-week to a six-week work cycle (that is, post-Covid).

On a positive note, sales in the prepared foods section continue to expand.

Looking ahead, the Coop is considering hiring another receiving coordinator as well as staff with significant financial expertise.

One member questioned whether the Coop could rely more heavily on member-led squads rather than hiring additional staff, noting that some coordinating roles had previously been handled by members. The response to that question emphasized that work remains in members' hands, with staff primarily helping to speed up processes.

General Coordinator Matt Hoagland reported on the recurring shift system. Popular positions like office work and checkout fill quickly, but early morning lifting shifts have been difficult to staff.

The International Trade Education Squad (ITES) then presented information about how current tariffs are creating uncertainty across the supply chain.

## **Elections**

Several elections took place during the meeting. The first was for the Hearing Administration Committee, which hears disciplinary issues. The vote tallies were as follows:

Irene Bunnell: 123 YES 2 NO

Stephen Klein: 80 YES 23 NO

Sam Klugman: 121 YES 2 NO

Members also voted to fill several open seats on the Agenda Committee, which reviews items proposed for discussion at General Meetings. Since the October 7, 2023 attacks in Israel and the subsequent war in Gaza, what is and isn't allowed to be discussed at Coop General Meetings has been particularly contentious, especially regarding whether the Coop should support the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement.

Dominique Bravo explained that those who had spoken publicly about "political issues" were not considered eligible candidates for open seats on the Agenda Commit-

tee, a criterion that was decided by current committee members. Agenda Committee vote results are below:

Dominique Bravo: 94 YES 29 NO

Matt Cecil: 99 YES 20 NO

Robbie Gottlieb: 126 YES 3 NO

Alice Procter: 125 YES 2 NO

Finally, Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones was elected Corporate Secretary, a result which met with boisterous applause.

## **Member Presentations**

The pandemic served as a revealing moment for the Coop, exposing fundamental questions about how the Coop operates and how members engage with one another. One of the most significant issues that emerged was the question of how members should meet and participate in decision-making processes.

Yejia Chen presented a proposal to introduce online asynchronous voting, a system that would allow members to review agenda items in advance and vote on them remotely.

Chen gave a robust presentation arguing that this approach would increase participation by making the voting process more accessible to members who might not be able to attend meetings in person as well as for the neurodiverse.

Following the presentation, the proposal sparked a lively discussion that touched on several practical and philosophical concerns. Members raised questions about the costs of implementing voting software and what post-pandemic communication

should look like within the Coop more broadly.

A central concern centered on the Coop's parliamentary procedures: how would on-line asynchronous voting accommodate the spontaneous amendments and adjustments that typically occur during live meetings? In traditional in-person elections, members have the opportunity to comment and make slight modifications to proposals in real-time. Would an asynchronous system allow for similar flexibility? Some suggested that voting software could enable discussion forums and commenting features, though this raised additional questions about whether such forums would require moderation.

Members also expressed concern about potential drawbacks of a hybrid voting system. Would early voting actually disincentivize attendance at meetings, causing people to miss important discussions? If votes were tallied both asynchronously and in person, would this create equity concerns between different voting methods? There was uncertainty about whether asynchronous participation would truly increase engagement or simply fragment it.

Overall, the discussion revealed concerns that the proposal felt somewhat haphazard in its approach to timeline and synchronicity. While the intention to increase accessibility was clear, questions remained about how to preserve the deliberative, collaborative nature of the Coop's decision-making process in a hybrid model.

*Oluwakemi Aladesuyi is a journalist, yoga teacher and potter.*