



It's a new year, a time for self-assessment and goal-setting. While we can point to many accomplishments in 2017 (new bylaws, Bloomingfoods2U, Bloomingfoods For All, \$3 Dinners, sale of Elm Heights building), the year was still financially challenging. Competition in the grocery industry continues to be fierce and our cash reserves are very low, severely limiting our ability to invest in new opportunities. We also carry a significant amount of debt, mostly in the form of unsecured loans to owner-members who lent money to support the creation of the Elm Heights store. These are our friends, neighbors, and co-workers, who are now in the painful position of being put on hold for repayment.

Additionally, we face the challenge of replacing our general manager, Tony Alongi, who will be moving on to another cooperative in mid-January. I firmly believe that without Tony we would have gone out of business. He made great strides in straightening out our finances, making tough decisions in order to reduce expenses, and introducing innovative programs like Bloomingfoods 2U. I am grateful for all he has done and am sad to see him go. The board will appoint an interim general manager this month and begin searching for a permanent replacement, a process that will likely take most of the year.

While our financial and operational challenges are daunting, perhaps the most significant challenge that faces us is that we still are recovering from a loss of community trust. During the last few years we have often operated in crisis

mode, unable to make time for long-term planning or address anything beyond basic operations. In our struggles to survive, we have not always done our best to foster a community of mutual respect, shared values, and clear communication. We lost some of the warm fuzzy feeling that is hard to measure but essential to making a co-op thrive. We forgot that we are all in this together. In short, we forgot who we are. It is time to remember. It is time to rebuild our community, to reassert our values, to reinvent our identity.

We are a cooperative, founded on core values. We are owned and controlled by our members. We are here to provide an example of a successful democracy in action, a business that supports and is supported by its community. We have an ends statement that guides our actions and calls us to support our local food system, to support access to healthy and organic food. We exist to provide a true alternative to the unsustainable industrialized food system - an alternative that meets our needs today and strengthens our community for an uncertain tomorrow. We exist to educate, to model successful cooperative ownership, and to meet the needs of both consumers and producers.

What does that look like in 2018 and beyond? Now is the time to think seriously about who we are and where we're going. We need your ideas, your opinions, and your voice. **Please join us for a future-focused owner-member forum on Thursday, March 1st** to help determine our vision for this year and years to come. Why is Bloomingfoods important to you? What do you want to see and how can you contribute? We can survive and we can begin to thrive again but only if we work together as a community of people with a shared purpose. Not just a store or provider of food, but a community with common goals, with love and trust, a place to belong.

How do we do it? Together! We invite you to actively join the planning process. The details are not yet clear but the board has identified three general goals.

1. Earn back the trust of our owner-members and staff members.

Things have been rough and we have strayed from our core values. We are sorry. We truly do want Bloomingfoods to be an amazing place to work and shop and to belong. We are a community and we are all in this together.

2. Reinvent ourselves. How can we innovate to keep our niche in an increasingly crowded marketplace? Let's figure out what sets us apart from corporate grocery and embrace it, because I know we have something unique to offer this community. We just have to figure out how. Destination grocery focused exclusively on organic, local, and fair trade? Food hub supporting the growth of local food production? Prepared foods only and no groceries? Something far removed from a grocery store?

3. Recapitalize. We need to find a way to get enough working capital to move forward, and we need to do it in a way that supports our owner-members who have already loaned significant sums of money and continue to wait for repayment.

There are infinite possibilities but only with your input can we reflect the values of our community.

This is where you come in. What do you want Bloomingfoods to be? What would get you excited to see? What would you be willing to spend your time, money, and/or energy creating? Come to our owner-member forum at 7:00pm on Thursday, March 1 and let your voice be heard. Can't wait? Start having conversations with the rest of the Bloomingfoods community now. Continue to shop, to dine, and to meet with friends and neighbors at the co-op. Send ideas, questions, or concerns to me directly. This is a democracy. I represent your values, your hopes, your dreams. Please tell me what they are.

Thank you,
Maggie Sullivan
Bloomingfoods Board President
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In the month of December, our shoppers chose to support the homeless and underserved by rounding up **\$8,858.76** for Shalom Community Center! Shalom Center is an all-inclusive resource center in Bloomington, IN for people who are living in poverty and experiencing its ultimate expressions: hunger, homelessness, and a lack of access to basic life necessities.

Huge thanks to our cashiers and shoppers for helping raise money for this very worthy organization!

The campaign continues at all three Bloomingfoods locations. This month, the co-op is raising funds for [Area 10 Agency on Aging](#).



Area 10 not only provides a home meal delivery program, they also operate a mobile food pantry. The agency's most current project is the Area 10 Garden, which is an extension of the home delivered meal and food pantry programs. They plant raised beds for accessibility, volunteer planning and nurturing

through partnerships with the garden club and Edgewood Primary School students. The seasonal produce from the garden will augment the home deliveries and provide much-needed organic, healthful options for our home-bound citizens.

Click the link below to see our 2018 Positive Change Recipient Roster!

[2018 Positive Change](#)



Love local art as much as we do? Come check out the Near West store's deli seating area after January 8 to experience our schnazzy new wall and our brand new Artist Showcase program! Each quarter, we'll be featuring a new local artist's work, and you can buy it!

For the months of January, February, and March, we're featuring Claire Woods. Claire is an artist who was born and raised in the heart of the Midwest. Her art often depicts her feelings about our connection to the earth and the simplistic beauty of the outdoors. She grew up in Bloomington (and was once a Bloomingfoods employee!) and spent her summers surrounded by the gardens, flowers, hiking, and lakes of Southern Indiana. She works predominantly in painting with watercolors and ink. Her love of art comes from hours spent working alongside her mother in the garden and with her father painting and hand-lettering. She immerses herself in the woods and emerges with colorful, vivid, creative designs.



Are you a visual artist looking for a new space to display and sell your work? We're on the search for artists to help us fill the roster for the rest of the year. If you're interested in a slot in our new quarterly Artist's Spotlight, click the link below to read the guidelines and apply!

[Apply Now](#)



Fresh Muddy Fork Croissants at East on Saturdays!

One of our beloved local favorites, Muddy Fork Bakery, will begin selling their yummy fresh croissants in our East store's patio room on Saturdays this winter!

If you're missing their beautiful, handmade treats, pop in to our East store between 8:30am and 1:30pm any Saturday in January, February, or March to say hi to the Muddy Fork folks.



So long, farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, adieu...

As I am sure you know by now, this will be my last article for our newsletter as your General Manager as I will be leaving Bloomington Foods effective January 12th. I want to take this opportunity to thank you, the owner-members, for the opportunity to have led Bloomington Foods. It has been an incredibly trying few years but I am proud of the work that we have done here. There were difficult (and, at-times, highly unpopular) decisions that had to be made. I want to thank all of you who have stood by Bloomington Foods through all of this. Many of you have reached out to me over the past few weeks to express your gratitude for what has been done and to thank me for my candidness and transparency. I was just doing my job the only way I knew how but those personal notes and calls have been very much appreciated (very much!)

I wish all of you reading this the very best in everything that you do and thank you for your continued support of Bloomington Foods.

Tony Alongi
General Manager

Upcoming Board of Directors Meetings:

Regularly scheduled monthly board meetings are held the last Thursday of the month at 6:30pm. Board Meetings are open to co-op owner-members and guests of the board. Familiarity with the Bylaws, Policies, and the Policy Governance Method will enhance your understanding of the board meeting process.

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Thursday, February 22, 2018

Thursday, March 29, 2018

Community Connections

Bloomington Winter Farmers' Market - Saturdays @ Harmony School,
December 2 - March 31

Parks & Recreation Gardening Classes

24th Annual Soup Bowl

To benefit the Hoosier Hills Food Bank
Bloomington-Monroe County Convention Center
Sunday, February 18, 2018
5:00pm

The 24th Annual Hoosier Hills Food Bank Soup Bowl is coming right up! Starting January 2, you can purchase tickets at our East and Near West locations, as well as Hoosier Hills Food Bank and By Hand Gallery.

\$30 gets you entry into the event, a hand-made bowl, and soup. Children's tickets are \$6 and are available at the door only.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Sponsored by the Indiana Forest Alliance
Buskirk-Chumley Theater
Sunday, January 14
5:30pm

The Wild & Scenic Film Festival is an inspiring night of short films about our natural resources and the brave people striving to protect them. On the big screen, you'll see the beauty of nature, amazing wildlife, and stories of citizens speaking truth to power – including local citizens involved in defending our forests. Be there for a night of music, prizes, food & drink, and networking with people who love Indiana's wild places.

Tickets are available at Bloomingfoods East & Near West Side. \$24 for Adults;
\$15 for Youth under 18 and Students with valid ID

Happy New Year!



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