

FOOD CONSPIRACY ELECTIONS 2019

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES



Fiore Iannacone

I have been fortunate to serve as a Board Member of the Food Conspiracy Co-op for the past 8 years, working cooperatively in a team environment. I am motivated by my desire to help others, contributing to our community in a positive way for a greater cause than myself. My strengths, skills, and experiences are a reflection of over 40 years in real estate and restaurant business.

Our Cooperative, almost 50 years old, is one of the oldest Co-ops in the country and for many good reasons. I have been a customer since the beginning, and although many things have changed in our world over that time, what remains the same is our core values and mission. Our Values and Mission are the very foundation and backbone of everything we do. In these uncertain times, our Co-op provides certainty.

In September our Board of Directors reaffirmed the Food Conspiracy Values and Mission by approving our 5 year Vision Statement and approved our 5 Year Strategic Plan for priority projects and long term goals. I am proud of the good work we have completed, but we have much more to do.

These are exciting times for our Co-op. I encourage community collaboration and personally invite you to attend one of our Board Meetings. This is you Co-op, your input helps guide us all. Here in our Co-op, with our own hands, we can govern together that which we own together. Thank you for your support.

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Gontran Zepeda

Born and raised in Tucson, my connection to the Food Conspiracy began only after my daughter was born and I needed a source of reliable food for her. Over time, my affection for our desert cooperative grew and in large part thanks to the Staff. From a distance, our workers represent, to the person on the street, a high expression of equality. They labor not only for their wage, but for our community interest, for our shared equity.

The promise and the premise of our collective has drawn me to it, as an animal to water. The constant expression of our collective values and principles has been the greatest attraction for me, over time, to our cooperative. This gravity only seems to increase as the organization widens in depth, scope and potential. To labor again in service to our community would be an honor and a privilege.

Beyond the joy of service to others, my motivation is selfish. I have anxiety about both the practical and existential challenges that face us as Tucsonans, Arizonans, Americans and Global Citizens. As yet, I haven't found any better outlet to assuage this condition than to effect positive change in a local context.

It's my pleasure to offer my organizational and creative skills; I have strong qualifications in a technical arena with respect to digital and programming which have served us well in the past.

In previous service to our Cooperative, I have demonstrated competency in collaboration, compassion for others and achieving consensus objectives. It's been my experience that cooperative work is not an intellectual exercise so much as a visceral one and that from this posture I have been able to participate in our collective effectively and with positive results.

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Meredith Keith-Chirch

I have supported small, local businesses much like the Food Conspiracy Co-op for many years. I believe that it's important to support these businesses so that they continue to grow and thrive in our communities, which can be a challenge these days amidst all of the larger options that may charge less for their products. I'm a health educator, so I teach others to find places like the Co-op, where they can find products that are safe and healthy for them. When we moved to Tucson, it was so important to me that I have access to Food Conspiracy that we only looked at homes that within a two-mile radius of the store, as we are car-free and travel by foot or bike. I joined the Co-op within days of moving to Tucson, and I've shopped there weekly ever since.

I love the Food Conspiracy Co-op and would appreciate the opportunity to serve it as a member of the Board. In addition, I have learned that one of the goals in the 5 Year Strategic Plan is to ensure a diverse Board. I can help make this happen.

I have excellent organizational skills and have a track record of dependability and a willingness to bring new ideas to a group. I'm also a health educator and have quite a bit of knowledge about products that would help support the Co-op's value of promoting safe and organic products.

I spent 10 years in the corporate world, working on teams in a Human Resources Department. I have also served several different boards, so I have experience with how boards members can work together to make decisions and support one another, as well as the organization.

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Michael DeSantis

Visiting Tucson in 1974, my first stop was the Food Conspiracy. There I found both great food and a vibrant hub of diverse community. I moved to Tucson, joined the Co-op and developed lasting friendships there while bagging dried fruit. Since those early days, the Co-op has faced challenges, but we have evolved and thrived. Our mission guided us and has never been more relevant. I have served on the Board for the last three years, two as President of the Board, and believe that being part of the Co-op community means caring. In families, neighborhoods or on this blue-green ball hurtling through space, we're in this together and there is no more universal expression of caring than sharing good food. That is what the Food Conspiracy means to me. The last three years have only deepened my commitment to the Co-op and I am ready for its next Chapter.

The Board has done great foundational work, creating a comprehensive 5 Year Strategic Plan, bringing on an exceptional General Manager and developing a vision for expansion that truly responds to our Owner's needs. We laid a great foundation and I want to be part of the next round of work.

I am passionate about the Food Conspiracy and its mission. As a project manager, I know how to use that mission to bring people together and guide our important decisions. I am a trained mediator with listening and communication skills. As a long-time small business owner, I understand business management.

I gained important organizational and communication skills managing community-based projects such as a nature center in Prescott and a co-housing project in California, along with community building and group facilitation as program coordinator with the Sacramento Tree Foundation. I continue to learn every day from the people that I work with.

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Mike Wahl

I moved to Tucson from Rochester, NY in 2011, together with my wife Margaret, for reasons of her health. She needed a hot dry place to live in, and Tucson was an ideal location. I loved Tucson's Sonoran Desert environment and richness of culture. Previously I had taught in the Peace Corps and had just retired from the US Postal Service, where I had become interested in the famous Mondragon cooperatives of Spain. There had been a lot of workplace strife and authoritarian, bullying behavior toward the Post Office workforce, and I saw cooperatives as progressive, egalitarian, and democratic alternatives to what I was experiencing. I kept reading more about cooperatives, and once in Tucson, I discovered and joined the Food Conspiracy.

I am eager to promote Food Conspiracy and cooperatives in general to achieve their healthy, egalitarian, democratic and community-oriented goals, mission, and values, which I share, promoting the successful cooperative principles and structure endorsed by Food Conspiracy and the International Cooperative Alliance. I believe that practicing workplace democracy has a benign, positive influence on all of society.

I have taught General Science, English and Math, have developed consensus-building skills from working in groups, and I am cooperative in outlook. I am acquainted with the history and literature on co-ops, and I have ran a small, service-oriented business. My wife and I have a large garden, free of pesticides and chemicals.

I am currently serving as Secretary of the Food Conspiracy's Board Organization Committee, learning associated skills. I was Chair of a Global Issues Project from 1981-1983. At the US Postal Service I was active on Employee Involvement (EI) Teams, and IN the NALC (Union). I also played guitar in a musical group from 1978-1982.