

Food Co-op Initiative Welcomes New Staff

BY STUART REID

Please join all of us at Food Co-op Initiative (FCI) in welcoming Suzi Carter as our new director of programs and partnerships. Carter will be providing advice, resources and training to startup co-ops and working to build our network of development collaborators and supporters. This new position was born from the increasing demand and growing needs of communities around the country that want control over and access to fresh, organic, and local foods (not to mention the myriad other benefits that co-ops bring). Due to this demand, FCI is needed more than ever, and long-term financial support is required to ensure new organizing teams and co-op developers have the free front-line support and resources that FCI provides.

Carter's previous experience is the ideal background for this challenge. As the outreach coordinator for Friendly City Food Co-op in Harrisonburg, Va., she led this recent (2011) startup's successful membership initiatives and capital campaign with the co-op's founding board. She then shifted gears to become Friendly City's marketing and membership team leader, where she developed its marketing and brand strategy, hired and trained staff, and assisted General Manager Steve Cooke with opening and operating the store.

Most recently, Carter was the program director of the Northend Greenway for the nonprofit New Community Project and secured over \$1.3 million in public and private funds to design and implement Harrisonburg's first



PHOTO COURTESY OF FCI

FCI staff (left to right) Rosie Weaver, Stuart Reid, and Suzi Carter.

bicycle and pedestrian pathway. On the side, she planned communications and marketing for nonprofits and businesses and has worked with CDS Consulting Co-op to assist startups with their outreach programs.

Carter has already worked with FCI as a presenter at the CCMA conference and other events and has provided consulting support to FCI-affiliated startups. Anyone who has met her will remember her cheerful and enthusiastic commitment to food co-op development. Beyond working with grassroots startups, she will forge connections with established food co-ops and co-ops from other sectors to

create new partnerships and synergy in co-op development.

As Carter transitions in to the FCI fold, we are saying a bittersweet goodbye to our former Co-op Development Specialist Jake Schlachter. Recently married, Schlachter will travel before he relocates to Madison, Wis., where he will continue to work with food co-ops in new ventures. Although we will miss him, we're fortunate to apply his insights in member and community engagement and to utilize the tools he created to advance startup development, especially during the ever-important organizing phase. ■



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