Wind Through the Pines

a newsletter for the alumni members of the Spartan Housing Cooperative

November 2024



We Are SHC



Housing for people, not for profit.

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Editor's Introduction

The SHC has an intimate and rich cultural history. Outside of intentional community, shared housing situations, this particular flavor of interpersonal, multigenerational culture must be quite difficult to replicate.

What is the SHC? A collection of properties? Another haven for student shenanigans? A respectable nonprofit with an extensive micro-local history? An intriguing sociological phenomenon? Just another bunch of kids?

Yes.

SHC is more than a physical reality. There are our houses, which we can see, smell (!), and touch, and then there are the members. Generation upon generation of co-op members have breathed life into this community, keeping it alive with every house meal, every chore day, every party, and every quarrel. Each time a set of keys is handed over during interim week, the SHC feels another heartbeat, gains a new voice to fill the rooms, raises new hands to paint the walls.

I can easily understand why this might not be observed by too many members. *It's just somewhere I live now. Later on I'll leave and live somewhere else. So whatever.* I can say that during my time around the SHC, which began at the tail-end of 2017, I've observed that it is indeed a minority of members who become invested in the co-op beyond the scope of getting their chores done to avoid fines.

It is very, very easy to get caught in the here and now. We are so often in a hurry. We run the water full blast. We rush through brushing our teeth. We wait for someone to barely finish talking so that we can insert what we have planned to say. It's a broken tile here, a dirty bathtub there, and when will I get my window screen replaced? There's just so much to complain about! While we badgered on and on for a new kitchen stove, we missed what surrounded us: four walls that had enclosed people our age, people like us, and people different from us, decade after decade after decade.

We don't hear their voices ricochet, we don't know what the phrase tagged all around the house means, we don't know who painted that monstrous—or beautiful—mural on the wall. And they—those members who stood in that kitchen before us—they weren't thinking about us, dozens of years down the line from them. Through all this time, all these batches of housemates evolving into new ones, we perpetuate this culture. We don't try, we don't know, and we're often not paying attention, but we carry on the SHC.

The co-op is special. And though with every year that passes since you and I have moved out, our years here become a smaller proportion of our lives, I hope we will retain the memories we made and the humble pride of carrying on this organization for those unknown members who will come next.

Emily Tyler Toad Lane 2017-2018, Vesta 2018-2021 Vice President of Education 2020-2021

Three Cheers for Ten Years with Holly Jo as SHC's Executive Director

Holly Jo Sparks's cooperative journey has been long and rich, beginning in the early 1990s. She spent time at the Inter Cooperative Council of Ann Arbor as a member (Sojourner Truth, Ruths', Nakamura and Lester [now Riviera] houses) and was a staff person (assistant member services coordinator). She has also been involved in the co-op scene in California, having served as an Americorps VISTA at the Santa Cruz co-ops and as the executive director of the Santa Barbara co-ops. She has also worked as the director of development with the North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO). All of this spanned many years prior to her beginning at the SHC.

In 2007, Holly Jo pivoted back toward studying: she earned a Master's in city planning at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). This experience was immediately followed by a health crisis that involved long term recovery. Within a couple of years, she began to ask herself: what do I want my legacy to be? Do I want to make a mark by contributing literature to academia around housing and planning? Or do I want to be remembered for building relationships and doing on-the-ground work?

For a few years, Holly Jo was engaged in cooperative related "odd jobs," including strategic planning, consulting, contracting, and the like. In the midst of this, she received a lead toward SHC: at an Equitable Pioneers retreat at Circle Pines Center, Holly Jo got the word from Mike McCurdy (maintenance staff at SHC) and Jim Jones (Co-op Hall of Fame icon) regarding the opening up of the position of executive director at SHC. This was at the beginning of the year 2014.

Following competitive multi-round interviews with SHC for the ED job, Holly Jo felt confident when she was given tours of some of our houses by the incoming SHC president, Dan Birkholz. By the end of April 2014, Tabitha, the outgoing SHC president, informed Holly Jo that the Board

of Directors voted for her to fill the position. However, a few months passed before she received an official job offer. Holly Jo's start date with the MSU Student Housing Cooperative was July 1st, 2014.

Holly Jo and I shared three companionable interview segments, during which I gathered the above stories, as well as posed a handful of questions to her about her time with the SHC, which has now reached a tenure of 10 years.



Holly Jo and Dan Birkholz, 2014.

When asked what were some things that she never would have seen coming, she replied, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. This societal crisis brought unprecedentedly high vacancy in the co-op. The SHC budget had been in deficit for years at the time she began with SHC; but after years of diligently working to steadily turn that around, the co-op had reached a stable position. This meant it could survive the financial impacts resulting from those COVID vacancies.

Other things she hadn't anticipated included the City of East Lansing becoming much more strict with code and fire requirements, leading the SHC to tighten up on adherence to these, and being more proactive with safety measures; a complete turnover of staff around herself during her time; and becoming a parent.

I asked Holly Jo, don't be modest: what are some major triumphs you've made for and contributed to the SHC? She replied, enthusiastically, about the SHC achieving 501(c)3 non-profit status. She is also proud of leading the co-op toward financial stability after years of deficit, and shaping the co-op into top form in terms of its organizational state. Along that vein, the co-op has come to possess an internal political will for the organization to better its outward appearance, to commit to responsibility within the community, and to be self-accountable.

Another accomplishment: buying, developing, and launching the All Nations (131 Whitehills) coop is huge. "Because it's been a multi-year process, it feels like there hasn't been a consistent drive amongst members advocating for it. We've looked at buying it since the 70s." Finally having achieved it feels like "nothing short of a miracle," given how many changes in circumstances occurred and pivots in strategies that had to be made.

All Nations is the first "true" expansion since Phoenix in 1994, the first purchase since then made with the co-op's accumulated capital, and not made as a result of an exchange for another property– as in the case of selling the Bogue Street house to gain Apollo (239 N Harrison) and Harambee (427 W Hillsdale)–and that wasn't pre-existing co-ops merging, as with Rivendell and the Shire.

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Becoming a parent was no small feat! In the midst of an intense career, building and maintaining stability for a multidimensional (not to mention multi-million dollar) organization, she feels it's a huge accomplishment for her to have finally felt at a place comfortable with expanding her personal life into creating a family.

When I asked about what she saw as areas for improvement within the SHC, she described how the governance of the co-op has matured and reached a higher functioning and more aspirational level, but that there is still room for greater stability within the co-op's governance. Ideally, directors of the Board would be longer serving, more firmly established with experience and knowledge, and not flip-flopping on a semesterly basis: four months is not enough time to understand and appreciate the organization's needs, governance process and purpose, and to make well informed decisions. Holly Jo commented, "Speaking as someone who's served on [one given] board for nine years or so, it takes a long time to understand enough to make good decisions."

Holly Jo emphasizes, though, that "we do have eager, excited members who are in a learning season of their life." She describes this as both a weakness and a strength: "It's student co-ops' superpower that they're able to change and adapt so quickly" because of the shorter board service periods and overall member turnover rate. She notes, also, that "It only takes three years to go by for new members to think that this is the way it's been forever." For those of us who have been around a little while, we know this is a classic illusion regarding things that are quite recent developments, things just beyond the awareness of a given member's tenure with the co-op, with average membership being just around 2 years.

"We have eager, excited members who are in a learning season of their life... It's student co-ops' superpower that they're able the change and adapt so quickly."

I asked Holly Jo about the benefits and drawbacks of having such longevity for a staff person. A major benefit is "the ability to carry projects to completion over the long term, despite changes in capacity." Holly Jo adds, "the co-op is kind of like a garden: I'm trying to cultivate growth, and different seasons have various elements; different weather allows different parts of it to grow." Having a long-term staff person also helps with the outward-facing reputation of the co-op to the greater community.

The biggest drawback? Burnout. Holly Jo also notes that there's the possibility that members may perceive the co-op as going in a direction that is "tone deaf" or veering off track of what they think it should be doing, in line with the previously mentioned high turnover of

membership tending towards rapid evolution (yet also forgetfulness).

What are the hardest parts of your job? I asked her. She replied: "The constant need to have thick skin. I don't think most people know how sensitive I am to difficulties in relationships, to feelings of rejection and exclusion."

She also described learning to navigate the changes in her own personal and professional life. "My peers - the members, who I do consider my peers - stay at a stage of development in life that is constant [with the perennial turnover and entry of new youth], while mine is changing." With a majority of the SHC's members being in their early 20s, every generation of co-opers brings individuals at more or less the same stage of life development. "It's not like I'm a professor," she says, who's around the younger folks for part of the day but then retreats to the realm of other professionals her age who are aging along with her.

What's the best part of the job? Holly Jo highlights the evolving direction of youth that she's been delighted to observe. "I think that increasingly, young people are more aware of mental health, wellness, and the fact that they impact other people in the world. My workplace is full of compassionate and understanding people." This has contributed to her own success in being a mother, with the co-op personnel understanding her changing needs, and recognizing that she now has other demands on her that are non-negotiable.

She concludes by emphasizing how awesome it is "being surrounded by brilliant young leaders. Being able to be a brief part of their life, as a mentor or a witness, is really rewarding."

Thank you, Holly Jo Sparks, for your excellence in leadership, irreplaceable contributions, and dedication to the Spartan Housing Cooperative. Cheers!

Farewell, MC! We'll See You Around!

MC Rothhorn has been a staff person for the SHC for several years, and now he is moving onward with his journey. He started working for the co-op in late summer of 2015, as an independent contractor cranking out bookkeeping work to help the co-op catch up with share returns and other financial needs. Before long, he became a full time staff member, as the finance cooperator.

In 2020, he stepped away from the co-op for a while to serve on the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, contributing to the fair and transparent redrawing of

Michigan congressional districts. Happily for us, he returned to the SHC in 2021, as part of the maintenance team in a "dispatcher" (communications relay) role.

Here are some words from Nola Warner, the SHC's former Member Services Coordinator, 2015-2021:

"MC was the SHC's multi-tool. From 2015-2024, he contributed to the cooperative in financial work, through facilities development, maintenance, human resources, and office management. He, throughout his entire tenure, maintained a consistent level of infectious joy. It was wonderful sharing an office environment with him everyday, because he was a humble yet diligent worker. MC is a true team player. He often would drop what he was doing to help out another member or staff, many times, I'm assuming, because he is (self proclaimed) addicted to change. He converted me to the yoga-ball-as-office-chair world, and I'll never go back.

"MC means Merry Christmas. MC means Mucky Compost. MC means Man of Change. MC means Much Cheer.



MC at the SHC office in a typical position: atop an exercise ball.

"MC made a lasting impact on the co-op's health by both making our houses safer through facilities and making our community stronger by being an ace "second in command." He led by letting others learn to lead. He supported every team member in ways they needed support.

"I know his heart will stay with the SHC forever. MC originally got involved with SHC after applying for the Member Services Coordinator position. I am thankful that even though he didn't get that position (I did), he and I got the opportunity to work with one another anyway. He's persistent about his convictions, and he was committed to getting involved with SHC. His persistence paid off when he began as the Financial Cooperator.

"Thank you, MC, for being a person of integrity who is always kind. Thank you for your long term dedication to the Spartan Housing Cooperative. You've made a difference in the lives of many co-op members, and the houses shall forever creak your praises."

-Nola

Where's he off to now? He's here in Lansing, still living in the Genesee Gardens Cohousing community, but now he's turning his full focus to his passion-fueled business, Eastside Compost. He and his business partner are driving cyclical momentum in the local food system by routinely collecting compostable food waste from clients all over Lansing (by bike!) and returning fresh compost, perfect for growing gardens and closest-to-home food.



MC (right) and his Eastside Compost business partner, Mike Dombrowski.

Here are some words from MC:

"Thank you for an excellent, cooperative journey, dear SHC staff and members. I know I'm not gone 'forever,' because I've got good roots with SHC and am drawn to the synergistic, cooperative energy that comes in waves and sprouts in our SHC homes and office. It's an exciting time for the Maintenance Team as I depart the Maintenance Dispatch position and Zach grows into the Maintenance Coordinator position (he is now the real M.C.). The next phase of cooperation for me is growing a worker cooperative, picking up food scraps and making gardens bloom with Eastside Compost. I'm never far away, whether at work or living next to Rivendell Cooperative in Genesee Gardens Cohousing, and I plan to lean on y'all in our collective cooperative future. Thanks again for the cooperative opportunities y'all have given me over the years."

Choosing Co-op: Reflections by Clay Griffith, Current Phoenix Member

Clay has served the SHC as Vice President of Education, President, as a Board director, and has held multiple house officer positions. I moved into the SHC in August of 2021, and that is when I heard one of my favorite co-op ice breakers: "Why did you move into the co-ops?" I felt like I had the perfect answer, almost straight from the mission statement off a website about intentional community, sustainable living practices, and democratic engagement.

See, I learned of cooperative houses from movement houses and common man activists. I joined the co-ops because I dreamed of being radical. And now when people ask me if the SHC was what I expected: wonder if I like living with 20-some people, worry if I get frustrated with old buildings and new people but the same issues, question if I will stay in what they expect to be temporary school housing; all I can say is I love being a co-oper. I've been a member at my house, an officer on committees, and a part of the EC [executive committee] and I am grateful for every experience. I am constantly learning so much. Not just SHC code or how to prepare for our next fire inspection, but how to deal with conflict and what it is like to live with the repercussions of not doing so.

In the cooperatives, I am internalizing that it is okay to fail forward, to understand what it is like to care for something that won't be utilized by just me forever. These homes have given me people I will love long past when we are no longer in close proximity to each other, and the insight to recognize the person behind every position. I love being able to know my community and feeling empowered to find out what is going on in it for me or on the behalf of others.



Clay in front of their bedroom door in Phoenix house.

This doesn't mean the SHC is perfect, myself included, but the community improves upon the imperfections instead of destroying you for them. Moving into the co-ops made me stop dreaming of being radical and start living in the reality of how relational the mundane and radical are. Not just posters and protests but debating on how to do dishes and where to get groceries, it's sitting in long meetings to figure things out and turning late night rants into tangible action, and it's skinny dipping when you need a break from strategic planning. Thank you, SHC, and all who steward you–past, present, and future.

"The SHC is brought to you by Members Like You"

All About All Nations, SHC's Newest Co-op



All Nations is the new cooperative house that the SHC launched early this year. As a refresher on this property: it is 131 Whitehills, the building right next to Bower house, and has sometimes been referred to as "Left Bower." The SHC has been considering purchasing this building since the 1970s.

Here's a general timeline:

In 2020, after 131's owner passed away, Jim Jones (first SHC president, first SHC staffer, co-op hall of famer) purchased the building with the plan of later selling it to the SHC. In the spring of 2021, at the time of annual member elections of the SHC executive officers and president, a member referendum passed approving the purchase, along with the Board of Directors' review and consent. Last year, the SHC closed on the purchase of the property. Later in 2023, the rental license from the City of East Lansing was granted, which finally allowed for the co-op to begin member recruitment. The first member to move in had been a resident of the building prior to the renovation; he moved in shortly after the rental license was granted.

All Nations, as suggested by its name, is a cooperative with the priority of providing affordable and inclusive housing to persons who are participants in or alumni of education abroad or international programs; households with member(s) pursuing a degree or career with an international purpose; or are members or referrals from partner organizations. These partner organizations include:

- Refugee Development Center of Lansing (RDC), "created in 2002 to provide critical services for refugees in mid-Michigan."
- **Haven House**, a next-door neighbor (121 Whitehills) organization which works "to guide and support families who face homelessness on their paths to stable homes."
- ★ Visiting International Professional Program at Michigan State University. "VIPP's mission is to provide transformative learning experiences to international professionals and organizations by connecting people, knowledge, cultures, and ideas."
- Beginning next year: The **Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program** is "a Fulbright Exchange which brings accomplished mid-career professionals from developing countries to the United States for a year of study, professional development, and networking." This program is at MSU, too.

Quotes are taken from each organization's website.

Applicants are screened with questions intending to recruit members who will actively desire to live in this unique housing situation, who will have the values for community and inclusivity which are the mission of the house, and who possess multi-cultural awareness and respect.



All Nations has several differences from, as well as similarities with, the other SHC houses. Being structured as apartments, it is composed of individual units rather than personal bedrooms like the other houses. There are nine units: four 1-bedrooms, two 1-bedroom "efficiency" units, two 2-bedrooms, and the hospitality suite.

This last unit is occupied by the "House Coordinator," a role dedicated to facilitating community, providing support for the residents, assisting with orientation, and similar services. This role is currently filled by Andrew Dembowski, who moved into All Nations in August of this year, and in October began a term of Americorps VISTA service to the SHC for the fulfillment of this position. Andrew also engages in outreach and member recruitment. The hospitality suite includes a common room, a place for members to socialize and share activities.

All Nations has another member who helps with these functions, and who, along with Andrew, did the work of drafting house policies, a chore system, and a constitution. This member is Flip, who moved into All Nations at the beginning of this year. Together, Andrew and Flip also assisted incoming members with the logistics of moving in.

At the present, all units are occupied. In January, there will be new members moving in, with some members moving out. This will be the first instance of member turnover. Due to the nature of the housing needs of the members, their contracts with the SHC are more tailored–meaning that their contracts may be a year long, or they might be a semester long.

As for the physical set-up of All Nations, the building has three floors, with the lowest being a sort of "garden level," that is halfway below and halfway on ground level (like Bower next door, the property is built on a slope). On this garden level, there is a laundry room and the furnace room; there is another laundry station on the second floor. The chore system of All Nations differs from the common structure of the other SHC houses' systems, because of the difference of its design. Naturally, there are fewer common areas, so their shared chore system entails the maintenance of the hallways, the laundry areas, the parking lot, and the yard; there are no other shared areas such as living rooms, kitchens or bathrooms, as those facilities are present in each unit.

The SHC feels accomplished to have launched this new cooperative, as an expansion of the types of housing opportunities we offer. With this new foray into cooperative housing options, the SHC strides further toward our Global Ends policy. Some relevant points from this policy include:

- 1.2 Under-served communities will flourish through cooperative support
- 1.4 The cooperative movement will:
 - 1.4.3 End isolation in sub-cultures that suffer institutional oppression
 - 1.4.4 Grow and become more diversified

The Spartan Housing Cooperative always strives to provide equitable, quality, and affordable housing opportunities, and we are so glad to work on realizing our goals for the improvement of our society through promoting the cooperative movement.

Rowan Price Serves SHC as MI Healthy Climate Corps Member

It's widely agreed upon at this point: climate change is happening, and it's happening fast. We humans are to blame, and we humans must act, and act now, in order to mitigate the effects of what we've brought unto the planet. So what do we do? Many entities, both private and public, from the scales of home to city to nation, are striding briskly toward engaging in initiatives and projects to try to make a positive difference.

Here at the SHC...

Rowan Price, an alumni member of the Inter Cooperative Council in Ann Arbor (Escher house), as well as an alumni member of our own Hedrick house, is serving the SHC again as a member of the Michigan Healthy Climate Corps. This is a program administered by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) and the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan. It is a state-level program akin to the American Climate Corps, a federal program recently launched as a sort of reborn version of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the '30s. He first served the SHC while he was a member at Hedrick, as an Americorps VISTA from mid 2022 through mid 2023, conducting projects related to upgrading and organizing our co-op's maintenance systems and coordination work. His MHCC service term began in March of this year, and goes through November.



Rowan with his cat, Sam.

The Michigan Healthy Climate Corps program organizes cohort members at service sites, serving on a wide variety of issues related to addressing climate change throughout the state. At the Spartan Housing Cooperative, Rowan's service project is focused around assessing and evaluating energy consumption and efficiency of the co-op houses. Based on the data he collects, in combination with other research, he'll be making recommendations for how the SHC can change and adapt to have a greener, cleaner, and ultimately a lesser impact on the environment.

Specifically, Rowan is collecting and analyzing data around SHC houses' resource usage: water, gas, and electricity. In addition, he has been surveying members on lifestyle activities that impact our environment: what they use for transportation, their heating and cooling habits in their homes, and how often they go grocery shopping, as a few examples. With around 40 responses from members collected by the beginning of August, he was able to note some patterns in the lives of our members. Many members indicated that they would prefer to use bicycle transportation more than they already do, but that there are some real barriers to this, including bike theft trends in East Lansing, lack of easy bike infrastructure around the city, and the cost of purchasing and maintaining a bicycle.

As far as the energy consumption, Rowan has been looking at figures of kilowatt hours of electricity used, and MCF (thousands of cubic feet) of natural gas consumed. With help from members doing Office Labor and members on the Green Team, diligence and effort has been poured into gathering and processing over a thousand paper bills–but the data that Consumers (gas) and BWL (Board of Water and Light) make available only goes back approximately three years, and the paper bill records are too sporadic, so there is not an effective way to truly recognize patterns in usage over time.





However, Rowan has been able to gather meaning from his data through comparison with larger data pools outside of the SHC, as well as larger scale recommendations for usage. The Michigan Healthy Climate Plan, a report published by EGLE in April of 2022, recommends that a low-income household should spend no more than 6% of its annual income on powering and heating their homes – and Rowan's analysis has found that the SHC houses spend nothing above 3% of their income on heating and power.

"I actually gave us a harder standard to make things more interesting," Rowan says. "I took the total annual spending on gas and electricity for each house (from audits data, FYE23), divided by the number of members to get the energy burden of that house in dollars spent on heating and electricity per year per person. Then, I found the Extremely Low Income limit for the area, which is \$19,700/year. Rivendell, the house with [the] highest energy burden, was [at] 2.95% of that, and Raft Hill, with the lowest, was at 1.54%." Well done, co-opers!

Besides looking at numbers, what else is the co-op doing to keep it clean, keep it green? Grants! Holly Jo (executive director) and Rivendell member Marshall Clabeaux have been working on applying for a grant from EGLE, \$100,000 for solarization of homes. (Rowan can't make this grant application, because it'd be a conflict of interest with his service.) If received, SHC leadership would determine how to strategically use the funds to maximize the benefits, meaning figure out which houses would be best situated for the transition to solar power.

In striving toward a lesser environmental impact, it's necessary to keep in sight the ultimate goal: climate resiliency. The climate is changing, and it will continue to do so. The resiliency part is doing the work of mitigating the negative and harmful changes that result from climate change. For example, in Michigan we're experiencing more frequent occasions of heavy rainfalls, which result in more frequent flooding. Will SHC houses be able to withstand the higher flood risk? Phoenix recently had a full dry-in job done to address the issue of their flooded basement. Summers are getting hotter: will the SHC houses be able to stay cool, and at what cost? The cost-environmental and financial-of energy usage is only increasing. Will SHC houses be able to stay warm in the winters in the face of this? These aren't hypothetical questions, but very real inquiries, and are key to the longer term planning of maintaining our beloved, historic, and aging houses.

Rowan has more goals for his service term. He would like to have made a contribution, in whatever way, of leading the SHC to solarization of houses. (Do note, of course, that Bowie–FKA Elsworth–already has solar panels!) He also wants to find a way to ensure the SHC Green Team, a group of members engaged in various environmentally relevant projects, is sustained. He wants to find a way to preserve projects for longer-term impact, "after The Guy moves out," as he put it.

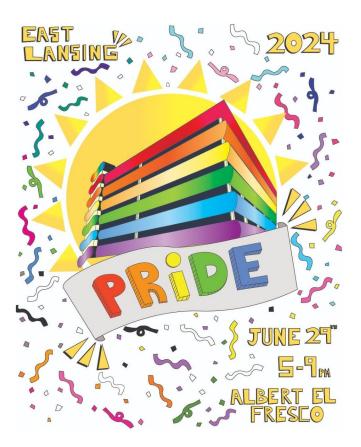
What else does Rowan have to say? A few suggestions for how individual members and the SHC as an organization can create more positive change: be intentional with large appliances, and particularly with HVAC system usage; solarize energy; engage in collective house shopping, and buy and eat food that is produced close to home; and vote in elections, especially local elections. He stresses that in local elections, a citizen's voice through their vote can make a much bigger impact than they might realize. Speak through your vote, and make change through your actions: this is how we can survive climate change, together.

Recent Events @ SHC

Co-opers Collab: SHC Yard Sale

On the sunny Sunday afternoon of August 25th, SHC members hosted a co-op wide yard sale, on the front yards of Orion and Vesta, 501 and 505 MAC Ave, respectively. Beal, 525 MAC, is visible in the background. There were multiple tables of secondhand wares for sale, as well as a table with snacks, and a circle of members chilling on a blanket in the grass.





Above: Co-op members pictured left to right are Theo, Howland; Eric, VP Facilities, Howland; AJ, VP Membership, Vesta; James, SHC President, Orion; and MacKenzie, VP Education, Orion.

For the third year in a row, the SHC partnered with the City of East Lansing to host the EL Pride Festival on June 29th.

September 13th, 2024: Phoenix House's "Black Tie Blackout" Party Tradition Lives On



Ah, houses and their 'time immemorial' annual party themes. I don't know how long the famed Black Tie Blackout party has been hosted at Phoenix, but I know when I attended my first in 2018, my friend at Phoenix told me it had been an annual party by the house for several years. I also heard from Nola Warner, SHC Member Services Coordinator 2015-2021, that the party had been a tradition for several years predating her time with SHC. PHX knows how to show us a shindig!

SHC Represents in MSU Homecoming Parade

Michigan State University's annual Homecoming parade took place on the evening of Friday, October 18th. Pictured are AJ (Vesta/505 MAC) and James (Orion/501 MAC), current Executive Committee members, displaying a cooperative banner. Behind them, Josh Shaltry, SHC Maintenance Tech, drives the SHC work truck with more members representing the co-op as parade participants. Just another example of the SHC showing its faces in the East Lansing community.



The Empowerment to Initiate Change

by alum Sam Berndt

Sam lived in Bowie Sept. 2016 - May 2018 & Montie May 2018 - Aug. 2018. He served on the SHC Board Sept. 2016 - May 2018.

One thing I will always remember about living in the SHC is the sense of empowerment it gave me.

Before joining the SHC, I knew something had to be done about climate change, the existential threat of our time. Yet as an individual, any actions to reduce my carbon footprint felt insignificant. Climate change is a systemic problem, with every aspect of our lives—food, transportation, energy—contributing to the crisis. One's personal consumption habits have minimal impact on a globally orchestrated issue.



I recall sitting in the back of Bowie's living room during my early days in the co-op while the Jobs Manager was requesting volunteers for the various house jobs. The Board Representative role was described as a low-effort position where you simply attend monthly board meetings and represent the house's interests if issues arose. As they described the role, something clicked. For so long, I had developed and advocated for my political beliefs regarding what needed to be done to save our people and our planet. In that moment, I realized I had an opportunity to put my words to action: to use the collective power of our organization to make an impact larger than myself. Empowered, I raised my hand and announced my candidacy to be the Board Representative, stating my intent to start a Green Energy Initiative to fight climate change.

This decision sparked a two-year campaign that led to significant achievements: approximately a 16% reduction in electricity consumption across the SHC and a 4.2kW solar array on Bowie's roof. Of course, none of this could have been accomplished without the help of the team and the broader community, including: Mike McCurdy, Marshall Clabeaux, Jimmy Coyer, Sydney Baade, Nikki Phan, Ryan Ortiz, Holly Jo Sparks, and so many more. Beyond the tangible outcomes of my time at the SHC, that moment of empowerment has changed the course of my life and taught me that by believing in yourself and taking the next step, you can lead the change you want to see.

Former SHC Alumni Coordinator Shares What Came Next

By alum Ester Lee

Ester was a member of Bower house while serving SHC as an Americorps VISTA position 2022-2023.

It has been over a year since my time in the SHC - since then I moved to Detroit and am a bookkeeper/financial consultant to small co-ops and other nonprofit organizations. After my stint as the Alumni Engagement Coordinator for the SHC, I jumped into helping ELFCO [local Lansing food co-op] with some of their accounting needs in their first year of operations. Some alumni might remember that ELFCO closed its doors back in 2017 after Whole Foods opened across the street (boo) and stole their customers. After years of work by local farmers and community organizers, the food cooperative reopened in a little storefront in the Allen Neighborhood Center in Lansing's Eastside.

I had years of experience in corporate accounting, so I loved that I was able to bring that level of knowledge to the co-op - keeping the finances accurate, advising the Board of Directors on managing cash flow, and helping with grant applications. Helping other people is the core reason why I am in this line of work, and I'm glad I can help the cooperative movement in this way. Financial know-how is important at all levels of membership. Housing cooperatives still need to survive under capitalism, after all.

I miss the housing cooperative but I'm thankful that the co-op alumni connections I made introduced me to the vibrant community I live in now - I still get to help cooperative organizations around Michigan, meanwhile I'm exploring Detroit's rich cooperative scene. From urban farms to worker cooperatives, I see so many innovative ways people are coming together.

And now, let's take a little trip back in time...

From the Archives: SHC Photo Slides of the 1970s and 1980s



Above: February 1988: a band playing, house unknown. Below: February 1985: party scene, likely at 415 or 425 Ann St (New Community).

Right: February 1988, members in PJs eating in their kitchen. Photo slide bears "K L" - as in Key Largo, ie. 146 Collingwood, now known as Ferency.

The SHC office has an annex space across the hall, often referred to as "the stacks." Within this room is a repository of documents and files from the past decades, including material since the inception of the SHC (as well as some predating even that).

This includes precious archival materials which represent and hold the spirit of SHC cultural iterations gone by, along with members of yore. The photos in these pages are from photo slides, those little two-inch squares that you can view by holding up to the light. The captions include all information that can be gleaned from the individual slides.



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Left and below: "Key Largo" at 146 Collingwood, view of the kitchen, sometime in the 70s. Looks like back in the day, they used tablecloths!





"Cooperation Feels Fine"



Above: Howland, April 1977, a few paint jobs ago...



Bottom left: SHC member in bedroom, likely at 501 MAC - note the "501" on the poster. February 1988. Below: House meal by candlelight. Unknown house, sometime in the 70s.





BEAL COOPERATIVE INC. 208 BEAL ST. EAST LANSING, MICH.

208 B_

EAST LANSING, MICH.

Dear Mr. Secretary - Steve Thanks for your wonderful letter. It's a swell idea to form a Beal House alumni I am now working at Burndy Corporation, norwalk, Conn. This is an electrical connector manufactures and is planning to establish a joint venture in Japan with Sumitomo Electric Industries Co. and Furukawa Electric Industria Co. I'm expected to go back to Japan in september 63 and work with the new organization . Burndy- Japan, Ital. I hope to form a Beal House alumni association in Japan alot of luck, Sincerely.

3 FEB. 1963

MEMBERS OF BEAL HOUSE!

I AM QUITE INTERESTED IN THE WELFARE OF BEAL HOUSE.

I HOPE THAT THE PRESENT
MEMBERS, PROGRESSING WITH
THE GOALS OF BEAL HOUSE
INCLUDING THE PLANS FOR
A NEW HOUSE WHICH THE
MEMBERS INITIATED IN 1969.

I AM VERY INTERESTED

IN A BEAL HOUSE ALUMNI

ASSOCIATION BECAUSE I

MADE MANY FRIENDS

IN MY UNDER GRADUATE

OAYS AND DID CONSIDER

BEAL HOUSE A SECOND

HOME, IFWISH TO GET

IN TOUCH WITH ME, MY

PRESENT ADDRESS IS

1430 I SPARTAN VILLAGE

EAST LANSING, MICH.

PH. 355-1064 YOURS, Peter A. LOWY

As deduced from these postcards, a member of Beal house named Steve Sniderman wrote a letter and sent it, along with a pre-addressed postcard each, to many past members of the Beal Cooperative house, regarding the initiation of a Beal Alumni Association. This was Beal in its previous iteration, at 208 Beal St - our Beal now is at 525 MAC Ave.

Address: Richard J. Mackie, 714 3rd Avenue N., Lewistown, Mont. Left Beal House 1956 (?), Graduated Mich. State U., 1958. Graduate study Washington State U. 1958-60 (MS). Employed Montana Fish and Game Dept.—Research Biologist 1960 to present. Presently also continuing graduate studies toward fulfillment of requirements for PhD degree at Montana State College, Bozeman. Married 1957, 2 sons age 4 and 2 years.

Best wishes to you in your attempt to form an alumni assoc., and to past and present members of Beal House. Though my stay at Beal was of relatively short duration, my membership was very important to my being financially able to complete studies during that and subsequent years at MSU. I hope that Beal continues to serve as well in this respect in the future as it has in the past.

Wick Mackie

Freb. 2, 1962 Dear Blad House Members; Richard Cardew 1168 Marlhorough Detroit 15, Mich.

Association is a very good one. It has been talked about in the fact, but no one has done anything about it until now; congratulations! I am at present employed by Brawful + Co. as an insurance adjuster in Detroit. If I can be of any assistance in this proposed association let me know. Sincerely yours, Richard Carden

Gwinn, Michigan, Box D 1-26-63

Ico A. Hill Les a. Kee

Beal House Members

Surprised to get your letter but am glad that the members of the house have shown interest to form a new alumni assoc. I believe that an Alumni assoc would have more meaning if the House members would also take part. I would like to see Beal House made a focal point for contact, for both present students and former students. I would like to know what is happening at school and what the alumni are doing.

As for me, I have been with the Internal Revenue Service of the Treasury Dept for the past 18 months, and am now working out of the Marquette Office. I am a Revenue Officer. Am married and have 4 boys, ages 1 year to 6 years. Belong to Negaunee FOEagles, Gwinn VFW, and Bowl once a week. Hope to start a HOBBY of collecting different Post Office Cancellation marks, something different. I have a few already. Maybe the students from the scattered parts of the country can help. THANKS,

25

Mr. Sniderman requested of these Beal alumni to write back with their current mailing address and anything they'd like to share about themselves, where they are (were), and what they were doing in their post co-op lives.

January 25, 1963 Chelsea, Michigan Dear Steve: I'm married with a two year old boy. I've been employed by the Chelsea behal District for 41/2 years, The courses time teaching are because agriculture + Phys. Ed. Ill complete masters in June 1963. mailing list It like a copy of it upon completion. Dr Lumby & Mrs. Lee, are they street wasveraled with you! Stephen a Hayden

Dear Mr. Sniderman;

am happy to hear Beal House is a continuing Institution. I have not been in East darsing since June 1952 so I have lost track of many things. I have been living in Pittsburgh soince 1957 and like it. I am an engineer for Westinghouse at the Bettis atomic Power Saboratory, My current address is as addressed. yours trulg of awrence of Helgecock 5 430 World Day 7 FEB 63

21 FEB 63

1. LEFT BEAR HOUSE JUN 53 JUN 53 - MAR 54 UPIN OF DETROIT MAR 54 - PRESENT US ARMY SEP 59 - SEP 61 DETAILED BY ARMY TO STUDY AT MSV B.A. (PERS ADMIN), MSV SEP 60 MBA (PERS ADMIN) MSU SEP 61 2. APPRECIATE THE LETTER

3. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SOUNDS CIME GOOD IDEA

BEST REGARDS Michael & Circult Dear S. Shidenman, 20 Felo3 You have a great idea. Sorry for The Delay in Answer THIS will be write A job for you - First ausstian - When I LEFT BEAL House June 1954, I Heried IN AT Chev. MOTOR, Worked for one year waiting to go in the Air Force. Spent 24rs 55-57 IN myntle Beach S.C. with USAF. Them worked AT Vicker's Hypraulics in Birminghon 57-59. hot Enough money ? SLOW FUTURE SO got A JOB with Aerojet General - Sacramento Calif. where I Still Am. my present position is Group Supervisor of Polaris Test operations. We STATIS TEST Fire THE POLARIS missile. Pensonnel History - Markied, 3 Boys - 6-4-2 4rs Good Lock IN your project. E.T. Hendrickson

Sherman D. Fox 54 184 Kuchoa Pl. Kailva, Hawaii

Employed at DOLE CORP. as a Project engineer

Married and has 3 daughters.

I'm inderested in getting an annual newsletter.

thank-you-

Thank You For Reading!

Visit us online at spartan.coop

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Credits:

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"We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant."

co-op proverb



