

Bios for candidates nominated for Steep Hill Board of Directors

Amy Jo Ehman: Amy Jo Ehman is an author and local food advocate. In the past, she was a food columnist for the Saskatoon Star Phoenix and Prairies North Magazine. She has published two books on local foods and recipes: "Prairie Feast: A Writer's Journey Home for Dinner" and "Out of Old Saskatchewan Kitchens" (and a non-food book called Saskatoon: A History in Words and Pictures). She lives in Nutana and considers Steep Hill to be her favourite local grocery store.

Abtin Safaeian: I am currently in my fourth year at the University of Saskatchewan, studying Neuroscience with a minor in Mathematics, and I serve as the 2026-27 President of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, representing over 21,000 undergraduate students. In that role, I sit on the University's Board of Governors and chair our weekly Executive meetings, which has given me real experience with organizational governance, financial oversight, and representing the interests of a large and diverse membership.

I came to Saskatoon as a teenager, arriving with very little English, and I know firsthand what it means to rely on a community that shows up for you. That experience shapes how I approach leadership: listen first, then act.

This past year, affordability has been the centre of my work at the USSU, including building a student discount partnership with Steep Hill. That work gave me a close look at how the co-op serves its members and the Broadway neighbourhood, and it left me wanting to contribute more directly.

I care about local, organic, and affordable food, and about co-operatives as a model that puts community ownership ahead of profit. I would bring steady governance experience, a collaborative approach, and a genuine commitment to Steep Hill's continued growth as a board member.

Cathy Holtslander: has been Steep Hill's President since April 2023 and also chairs the Newsletter Committee. She has been active for many years as a leader, administrator, staff person or board member in other cooperatives and non-profit organizations that work for a more democratic society and a more ecologically sound food system. She and her partner also farm certified organic grain near Mont Nebo, SK. She recently retired from the National Farmers Union where she was Director of Research and Policy for 15 years. Cathy believes Steep Hill Co-operative has been nurturing Food Sovereignty -- where people democratically control their food system -- for nearly half a century! She sees Steep Hill as an important alternative to the mainstream grocery retailers. Here, people work together creatively to develop and celebrate a vibrant local food culture and make our store a friendly, welcoming community that serves our members and strengthens our local economy.

JoAnn Jaffe: is a willful optimist who moved to Saskatchewan 30+ years ago, intrigued by its history of co-operation and its (then) potential for meaningful, emancipatory politics. She has been a Steep Hill board member since 2023 and is currently serving as Vice-President. JoAnn is a rural development sociologist (supposedly) retired from the University of Regina, but is still supervising graduate students and conducting research on the sociology of agriculture, environment, rural automobility and transportation, rural societies, and eco-social development. She is an active member of the National Farmers' Union, although she and her partner

Michael recently sold their organic farm, which they had been farming in an informal co-operative arrangement with their neighbours. A former scholar with the Canadian Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, JoAnn believes that co-ops are a key institution for building meaningful democracy and alternatives to the domination of the food system by corporate agribusiness. With members working together, Steep Hill Co-op can help to build community and a more just and sustainable agrifood system in Saskatoon.

Reuben Kellen-York: was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and moved with his parents to Canada in the late 1980s. Originally landing in Saskatoon, Reuben and his family relocated in 1991 to Winnipeg, where he grew up and received a BA in Philosophy and a JD from the University of Manitoba. After exploring a range of career possibilities, he found his calling doing union-side work in the post-secondary sector and spent eight years working for the University of Victoria Faculty Association.

Since July 2023 Reuben has been serving as the Professional Officer with the University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association (USFA). Reuben is a strong proponent of negotiated resolutions of labour-management disputes as opposed to adversarial contests over right and wrong. His commitment, however, is to support the less powerful in conflict, and he still believes in a better world where the workers own the means of production. The co-operative model of organization is one that resonates with his personal values, and as a happy member and customer at Steep Hill he is looking forward to contributing to its ongoing presence in the community. In his spare time Reuben enjoys cooking and quality time with his wife Emma and their two feline companions, Chase and Keats.

Louise Ranger: Steep Hill has so many important contributions to make, particularly during these seemingly unpredictable times. Great produce, great suppliers, great community, great partners - all aligned to bring the best to our great membership. And it is the great membership who is at the heart of the co-op, without whom Steep Hill cannot be sustained. With a few years under my belt as a resident of Saskatoon, I'm honoured to be a part of the continued legacy of the co-operative, and I look forward to expanding our membership, our board and our volunteer base to keep this little grocery store on Broadway flourishing.

Gary Wilson: has over 35 years of experience working collaboratively with community, business, industry, and government across a broad range of initiatives to achieve strategic social, environmental, economic, and community development outcomes. Gary has been involved in a variety of projects over the years where success was ensured through working collaboratively with diverse stakeholders in the development of long-term sustainable solutions. Gary has effectively facilitated and led numerous feasibility studies, business plans, and planning processes. Gary is entrepreneurial by nature and has applied these skills throughout his career. Gary was born and raised in Kindersley, Saskatchewan and attended the University of Saskatchewan. Although Gary has lived and worked in several places during his career, he and his partner have recently moved back to Saskatoon, and they are very happy to be surrounded by family and close friends. Gary brings a depth of experience, a life-long commitment to community, and immense passion to serve Steep Hill in this time of rebuilding.