

Candidate for Open Board Seat

Caleb Bailey



My name is Caleb Bailey, and I moved to southeastern CT in the summer of 2015 after I was chosen as the new Executive Director of the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. In this capacity, I provide strategic direction to the Board of the ECSO, manage all staff, raise funds for the organization, coordinate marketing, act as the primary spokesperson, and perform myriad other duties to execute our mission. I have a B.A. in Communication Studies, and am in my element when speaking about subjects that I hold great passion for with a wide variety of constituents. In my day-to-day role, this is music, but some of my other deep passions are sustainability, the slow food movement, and all things that nourish our bodies and the planet.

In my home state of Nebraska, I come from an agricultural background, where I helped my family raise crops for bulk sale to our co-op (Open Harvest, Lincoln, NE), and our own CSA (community-supported agriculture) share.

What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

I believe that many of the skills I utilize in my career will translate to increasing membership, as the ECSO provides a subscriber-based platform for our product, but the specifics of advising strategy to impact membership will take time for me to learn more about the organization from the inside. Similarly, the way that the ECSO stewards and cultivates our donors could inform strategy for the servant leadership model in how Fiddleheads treats its member owners. I was appointed to a Board vacancy last year and have deeply enjoyed my time with the Fiddleheads Board so far.

What is your vision for the future of Fiddleheads during your potential three year term (and beyond!)? How would you impact this vision?

The way that I see each organization that I am involved with is that everyone's viewpoint is of value, and holds a piece of what that organization can do for the community. As a member-owned co-op, it is crucial to be sure that we are serving our members, and the overall community with the services provided. I believe Fiddleheads is and can be so much more than a grocery store, and should serve all in our community as an inclusive resource. With income disparity being a large issue in our state, Fiddleheads has the opportunity to demonstrate what equitable access looks like, and our long-term strategic vision can continue to build around the thriving community that already exists. New London, and Southeastern CT, is in need of organizations and businesses that grow and contribute positively to our downtown region, and Fiddleheads is socially and physically positioned to fulfill this role. I believe with some of the great work we as a Board have been doing surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion, we can continue to make great strides towards this vision in the next three-year term.

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Monica Chapman



I moved to New London in 2015 and I think I made the right choice buying my first home in this close-knit, eclectic city. I became a member-owner soon after and this little grocery store only a few blocks away has been a weekly stop ever since. More than a place to shop, I feel that Fiddleheads is a community, one that we'd all like to see thrive. The co-op has become such a part of my life here and I'd like to do more to give back and ensure the continued success of this community. I'd love to be part of helping Fiddleheads achieve its goals here in New London and in Southeastern, CT as a whole.

What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

I currently work in mortgages, which involves a lot of attention to detail, financial analysis and a great deal of paperwork. Though I'm sure I'd have much to learn as a board member, my experience working with financial documentation on a daily basis could prove a valuable contribution to the co-op. I would also bring an interest in food justice and sustainability.

What does the term "Cooperation" mean to you?

Our contributions, whether they be our annual dues, our commitment to shop locally, or the knowledge we share with one another browsing the aisles (today a local farmer taught me about raw milk) are all part of our cooperation towards creating this community that is Fiddleheads.

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Carol A. Connell, R.N., Ph.D.



Fiddleheads is a community treasure! We are so lucky to have a locally owned food co-op in New London county. Several years ago, I became an owner of Fiddleheads and experienced the co-op as a consumer. As I became more familiar with the issues and trends that affect food justice within our community, I accepted a position on Fiddleheads Board, my appointment was ratified last year, and I have now served on the Board for 2 years. I would appreciate your support of my candidacy to continue my work on the Board of Directors.

What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

I believe my background provides insights and experiences that will be valuable as Fiddleheads addresses the issues of food justice in our community while fostering a diverse and inclusive culture. Professionally, I am a registered nurse and hold a PhD. Over the course of my career, I have held various positions, always with the intent of improving the health and welfare of those around me. In addition to raising 2 girls of my own, I have raised 3 of my grandchildren. I am currently employed by Pfizer and volunteer for the Southeast Connecticut Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).

What does the term “Cooperation” mean to you?

As a Fiddleheads’ Board member, I will continue to support activities that make our co-op a vibrant community that is welcoming to all members of our community and will support Fiddleheads in its work to be a positive influence on the various aspects of food justice. I have worked for non-profit organizations in the developing world and have seen first-hand the impact that food-chain issues can have on a community and how when all people in the community come together, bringing diverse skills and cultures, obstacles can be overcome. This is co-operation; the ability to recognize the value of diversity and bring a community together to accomplish good things.

Thank you for supporting me in the past. I look forward to continuing my work on the Board and envision that Fiddleheads will become a strong model of diversity and inclusion in our community through its work to positively influence food justice in Southeastern Connecticut.

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Brenda De Los Santos



Hi, I'm Brenda De Los Santos and I would love to be Fiddleheads newest Board Member! I am a New London native, and have owned my photography business, Brenda De Los Santos Photography, which is based right here in downtown, for 13 years.

What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

As a small business owner, I am familiar with the organizational, communication and leadership skills a board member needs.

In addition to running my own business, I choose to give back to my community in a few ways - through photography, I give back to those experiencing loss and hardship

as a volunteer with *Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep* and *Help- Portrait*. I also mentor a local teen through *Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters*.

My philosophy as a small business owner is that while my business serves a specific purpose in our local market driven economy, it can also play important role in bettering the community it is in. I strive to use my business to give back to my local community in Southeastern Connecticut and one of the reasons that I want to be a board member is that I know Fiddleheads does the same.

What is your vision for the future of Fiddleheads during your potential three year term (and beyond!)? How would you impact this vision?

As a Board Member, my priority would be to guide Fiddleheads in giving back to New London. Our community is one full of varying cultures and food traditions - but one of the things that rings true for all of them is that access to healthy, affordable food is crucial in creating a just food system for all. As a person of color who grew up here in New London, I know what food injustice looks like, and I know that Fiddleheads is uniquely poised to address it locally.

While Fiddleheads has already made large strides in creating a more just food system here in southeastern Connecticut, there is much more that we can do. I would like to see Fiddleheads make a concerted effort towards inclusion and community outreach to better serve people of color and the lower income segments of our local population. This vision is what has motivated me to run for the Board, and with your support, I would love to help it become a reality.

Candidate for Open Board Seat

Sehar Mahmood

What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?



I bring to the board 9 years of experience as a Project Manager in IT Consulting. My abilities to bring an objective from a simple vision to execution and keep people on task and accountable aligns well with the responsibilities of a Board member. I have strong organizational and management skills, and am also hard working, motivated and driven. Further, I have experience in online blogging and would love to use that skill to connect with more owners(members) and raise awareness about the Co-op within the community.

I currently work at Pfizer, managing the development of innovative technologies that are used by patients in clinical trials. I also devote a

part of my life to community service and volunteering (I currently volunteer at a crisis hotline) I've been a devoted customer of Fiddleheads for the past 2 years and member for the past year.

What is your vision for the future of Fiddleheads during your potential three year term (and beyond!)? How would you impact this vision?

My vision for the future of Fiddleheads is to encourage more community and owner (member) participation in the co-op, as well as to collaborate with local small businesses. I would impact this vision by starting and contributing to a blog on the website that would have short snippets of information or news related to a new product or local farm. A different topic on a weekly basis to keep people engaged.

I also want to organize both fun and educational community events that could bring more members to the co-op as well as increase community awareness of how food is sourced – such as for instance hosting a community film screening on a food or co-op-related documentary or hosting a speaker series where local farmers talk about what they do.

To drive continued collaboration with local small businesses - I'd also like to partner with more local food makers to bring their products to the co-op.

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Adrian Paulsen



What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

I bring a modest but earnest enthusiasm and a body of relevant knowledge and experience to contribute to Fiddleheads's ongoing success as a food cooperative and seed of living food justice in the New London-adjacent community. I have a diverse background, having juggled at one or another point some 35 jobs across a range of fields, including midnight gas station attendant, support coach, support coordinator, and web designer. I am currently mostly a busy graduate student in the Master of Public Health program at Southern Connecticut State University. But I am almost done! (yay!) – I should be graduating on May 15th, barring unforeseen shenanigans. I am also a proud father of three children, Dmitri (12), Llessenia (6), and Emerson (4) – these guys definitely keep me on my toes (unless I am napping). Of course, I do my best to deserve and not schlepp my way through love with my life partner, Jaime.

Through the application of my knowledge, my intense curiosity, my strong work ethic and my other virtues I believe as a board member I can be of great service to Fiddleheads, its board, all the member-owners, and the New London community.

How do you feel Fiddleheads can best serve the New London Community or Southeastern CT?

Fiddleheads can best serve the New London community by maintaining and expanding its network of local growers, producers and craftsmen, deepening and broadening its ties with other organizations seeking to improve health, food access and wellness in the New London county, and deepening the strength of its ties to its owner-members through sustained communication and the development and implementation of quality control goals and practices.

What does the term “Cooperation” mean to you?

To me, cooperation can take many forms, but the underlying concept is to set aside negative energies to the best of our abilities and to work with someone else or a group of people to achieve a shared goal. In the context of a food cooperative, cooperation emerges through member-owners' agreement to pay for privileges of part-ownership of a local food cooperative and engage; cooperation also means growers and producers working with Fiddleheads employees and (indirectly) member owners to provide high-quality foods with an emphasis on local and organic foods at affordable prices that enable all workers in the supply chain to be paid fairly. At the highest level, cooperation in a food cooperative context means the members of the Board of Directors working with the community at large, the food cooperative management and employees, with the member-owners and with one another to learn and accomplish what is required to advance the total stated ends of the Cooperative.

What is your vision for the future of Fiddleheads during your potential three year term (and beyond)? How would you impact this vision?

I envision Fiddleheads improving its ability to assess the quality of its offerings, the level of engagement and satisfaction member-owners experience at Fiddleheads, its achievement of goals related to food justice, as well as to improve communication strategies and techniques between Fiddleheads' Board of Directors, its management, its member-owners and the broader New London community. In addition, I envision Fiddleheads being able to begin offering patronage payments to its member-owners. I would help to further this vision by offering my skills as a researcher, writer, photographer, justice advocate, statistician, communicator, practical philosopher, and analyst to both directly and indirectly support the Board and Fiddleheads. Naturally I would attend all meetings, maintain regular correspondence with other Board and owner-members and the broader New London community as appropriate, and attend training and networking opportunities as they present themselves.

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Joseph Peterson



What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

I am concerned about people's health.

What does the term "Cooperation" mean to you?

Co-operation to me means everyone being like neighbors to each other.

Ratification of Appointments



Caleb Bailey

Caleb was appointed to the Board in June 2018 to complete a term ending in 2019. Caleb is also seeking election to a new three-year term -- please refer to his candidate statement.

Ratification of Appointments

Robin L. Harris

Robin was appointed to the Board in March 2019 to a term ending in 2020.



What do you bring to the Board (experience, skills and abilities) that will contribute to Fiddleheads ongoing success?

For the past 18 years, I have served in Southeastern Connecticut on a few Boards in various capacities. Through this service, I've developed useful skills that I will contribute to Fiddleheads. At the Integrated Day Charter School, I have served on their Foundation as the President, Vice President and Treasurer. During my tenure, we created a donation grant program for the teachers, held multiple silent auction events, as well as applied for (and received!) several grants. Within the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition, I had the opportunity to serve on a Designated Regional Service Organization of the state of CT. Our impact was broad and helped serve many local organizations with art, cultural and historical impact in our region. On the Otis Library Board, I served as Treasurer which had a significant role within the functioning of the Library Administration. We received the largest donation in our history (\$3 million!) and I had the pleasure of paying off our mortgage and investing the large remainder of the funds. All of these events helped teach me to be a better Board member.

In all these experiences, I learned the function of Board member covers a broad spectrum of activities. That meant attending meetings regularly, serving as an ambassador for the organization and dedicating time to researching and understanding Board events. From the basics of using Robert's Rules of Order properly to creating a network of supporters, each task is meaningful. Professionally, I have worked in the financial industry for the bulk of my career. This has provided a knowledge base that is useful for an organization's financial solvency. My auditing experience as well as familiarity with financial statements are put to use on a regular basis. I believe all this development will help my service to the Fiddleheads as a valuable Board Member.

How do you feel Fiddleheads can best serve the New London Community or Southeastern Connecticut?

Fiddleheads provides an opportunity for our community to understand and appreciate food's impact in their life. In my childhood, my family grew, or raised, a large part of our food. The experience of eating food that hasn't been transported many miles or modified to increase profits was a great exposure. I learned about flavor and the importance of fueling your body properly. For those in the community without the luxury of being a part of their food source, Fiddleheads can provide that knowledge and experience.

What does the term "Cooperation" mean to you?

Cooperation means working together towards a mutual goal. Each task is important when collaborating. The time I spent setting up for the O'Tis a Festival fundraiser was as significant as researching money managers for Otis Library donations. By dedicating our efforts together towards producing the best results, achievements are more plentiful. I look forward to cooperating with all members of the Fiddleheads community to benefit the whole organization.

What is your vision for the future of Fiddleheads during your potential three year term (and beyond!)? How would you impact this vision?

As members of Fiddleheads, we have an understanding of its importance and value for our community. It has been my experience that isn't common. My hope is that more members of the extended community understand Fiddleheads and support its role. Many community members have formed their opinion based on one visit or on what they've learned from others expressing their opinion. It is my hope that the greater community is educated to the value of the Coop.

My role in this vision is to share my Fiddleheads experience and support outreach initiatives. A simple pledge is to invite friends to join me shopping at Fiddleheads. I dedicate myself to learning more about the value and history of Fiddleheads. Further, I will work with the general manager and team to find other opportunities to help spread the message. As I learn what keeps potential members from returning, I will defend the Coop principles as an informed Board member. Hopefully, this will support my vision effectively.