



### Alison Carpenter

Nine years ago, Alison Carpenter sat down with about a dozen community bicycling advocates and started talking about creating an organization where members of the Durham Community could meet to work on their bikes.

“We wanted a collective of people who all felt comfortable, who were all part of the process and felt like they had a say in how things operated,” she said.

At the time, there was only one bike shop in the downtown, and it didn’t offer the opportunity to work on your own bike.

In 2007, along with the other founding members, Carpenter helped launch the Durham Bicycle Cooperative. One year later in 2008, the co-op received nonprofit status. They created a mission to better the Durham community through sustainability and promotion of cycling as a healthy fitness and wellness activity.

In the beginning, founding members looked online and travelled to other bicycle co-ops around the country to learn the best way to operate their organization.

“We went with what worked. We had an original game plan and adapted as we went along and set up a structure for the shop,” Carpenter said. She praised the co-op as being a consensus-based organization where all members can participate in the decision-making process.

After writing the co-op’s first grant in 2008, Carpenter moved away from the Durham area for a short period in 2012. Then early in 2015, she became a part of the fundraising committee formed around construction and relocation of the co-op.

Several months later, Carpenter was nominated and elected to the co-op’s Board of Directors, and she decided to join as the Grant Coordinator.

In this position, Carpenter seeks out grant opportunities, coordinates with the treasurer and other co-op members for the correct documentation, creates strong applications to submit on deadline, and strives to maintain an open line of communication between the co-op and the agencies giving out grants.

“You have to know the organization well, you have to have a well-rounded view of the organization and figure out how different grants might be applicable to what your organization does,” she said.

In her time as the Grant Coordinator, she has authored grants to the City of Durham, Burt’s Bee’s, Tar Rails and Duke University Community Care Foundation. She has learned that grant writing involves a lot of flexibility.

“You have to figure out what a grantor really wants and how they want to spend their money. And you also have to have some flexibility in how you write the grant and understand the organization so you can give the grant a good sense of your organization fits within their mission.”

After receiving a grant, Carpenter said it’s crucial to keep up with reporting requirements.

“We want to seem like responsible recipients of the grant once we get the money,” she said.

She said the co-op has a goal of raising \$50,000 in less than a year, so fundraising has kept her busy. But she encourages all people to be a part of the organization.

“[The co-op] is a very rewarding way to spend your time and energy and it is a great resource in the Durham community. We service a lot of folks who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford a bike,” she said. “It’s a great organization that does a lot with a lot of hardworking volunteers who contribute their time. I encourage people to check us out, volunteer and donate if they want to be part of a ‘feel-good’ community organization that works on Bikes.”