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# NEWS FROM THE ROOTS

## Local "Solidarity Economy" News

### More than Possible, Another World has Arrived

To all of our members, committed volunteers, supporters, friends, family, and cooperators of all stripes, **Peace!** We hope this newsletter finds you as it leaves us, well during these hectic times. First and foremost, we extend our deepest and most sincere well-wishes to all of those who are sick and tending to the sick, to those who are at greatest risk due to the structure and flow of our extractive economy, and to those who are prevented, for whatever reason, from accessing the support they need to face the COVID-19 pandemic. **We encourage everyone to join the Mutual Aid Worcester network** where you can ask for and offer help, find resources, keep up to date with COVID-19 news, campaigns, and find many ways to connect with others virtually. The Mutual Aid Worcester website is [HERE](#). The Facebook group with well over 3000 members is [\(HERE\)](#)

When you're ready to volunteer, fill out this [SURVEY](#).  
When you need help or support, fill out [THIS ONE](#).

Since we last reached out, our staff/board collective has experienced significant changes. Among us are those who have experienced losses even as we have been blessed with new children in our families as well. The circle of life continues even as the sudden changes caused by the spread of COVID-19 make it clear that **the rhythms of daily life tend to repel us from each other rather than bring us together in economic bonds of Solidarity and Mutual Aid.**

Since we last reached out, we have also experienced challenges within Worcester Roots and our home in the [Stone Soup Collective and Community Resource Center](#). We are working through those challenges and look forward to growing stronger, healthier, and wiser as we move through them. The Mutual Aid network that launched in Worcester as a rapid response to this crisis (see below) uplifts values such as mutuality and authentic connection and principles such as challenging oppressive dynamics in the service of connection and trust. These are values that Worcester Roots has historically embraced as we work towards a more cooperative economy and shared ownership. We take seriously the challenges we have faced living up to our own values. Thank you for trusting Worcester Roots with overwhelming support over the years that empowers us to meet this moment with resilience and clarity in our mission.

Some things, however, have not changed. We continue to embrace the local effort to build an economy based on values of solidarity and equity in all dimensions. **We recognize the way that worker-owned cooperatives, mutual aid networks, trade unions, workers' and neighborhood councils, popular assemblies, credit unions, alternative currency/banking systems, community land trusts, and other people-powered formations stand out in full relief in this moment of crisis and signal that another has arrived.**

The habits and rhythms of cooperation, collective care, and commitment to democratic principles (not just its formalities), makes the resilience of communities in the midst of socio-economic crises. Your support helps us meet immediate needs while sustaining longer-term projects like Worcester Roots that advance the struggle for a non-extractive, inclusive economy. Please consider making a timely contribution to our mission of sprouting up green and cooperatively-owned businesses that build toward our vision of social, economic, and environmental



## Newsletter March 2020

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## Resources

Please check out these [Local and Statewide COVID-19 resources](#) put together collaboratively by the **Massachusetts Solidarity Economy Network (MA-SEN)**

## Donations Matching Opportunity!

Our treasurer has announced that he will be **matching donations (up to \$3,000 total)** for at least the next month!

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**Subscribe!** and read the first issue of the **new State-wide Solidarity**

justice. **Our Treasurer intends to match donations, up to \$3,000 total, for at least the next month.** Stay safe, stay in touch, take precautions, and take care.

Peace,  
Worcester Roots Collective



## "Mutual Aid" in Worcester and Beyond

Mutual Aid Worcester emerged on facebook on Friday, March 13th as an open platform for Worcester residents to express immediate needs and deliver timely support to address the social impact of COVID-19. At this time, the Facebook page has almost 4,000 members; the network has "officially" accumulated over 260 volunteers through Google intake forms and enabled who knows how many more connections via direct communication on the facebook page itself.



Community members organized at least 12 autonomous working groups to address needs spanning from transportation, volunteer coordination, fundraising, education, language and accessibility, needs assessment, etc. Folks, being accountable to their own capacity, flow in and out of the emergent ecosystem of working groups in order to meet needs produced by broken socioeconomic systems, which are now exacerbated by COVID-19. We are pleased, but not surprised to see members of our organization including Youth Co-op members (see section below) enthusiastically support this compassionate, powerful response to the crisis.

### A Global Rapid Response with Deep Roots

Mutual Aid Worcester (MAW) is but one of many, many mutual aid networks around the world that have emerged and/or ramped up their efforts to respond to COVID-19. **The term Mutual Aid itself entered critical social discourse toward the end of the 19th century from Peter Kropotkin's ecological observations and analysis in Siberia and Northeast Asia,** and led him to the conclusion that **mutually-beneficial cooperation within and between animal groups is a "factor in evolution."** This factor, Kropotkin argued, was harmfully down-played by theories which individualized human beings within a tendency known as Social Darwinism. **We are in this together, and being in this together means practicing mutual aid not just as a temporary response to crisis but as a**

### Economy Newsletter, "Our Common Wealth"



Vol. 1 (link above) features contributions from the Worcester Roots team in collaboration with The Center for Economic Democracy (CED), Massachusetts Solidarity Economy Network, and the Massachusetts Employee Ownership Coalition.

### Congratulations Imrana!

**Imrana Soofi** (Co-founder of Woo-Rides and Co-Director of Worcester Roots) has been **elected as the Northeast representative of the United Staets Federation of Worker-Cooperatives (USFWC).**

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**prolonged effort to build grassroots power within Worcester Roots' vision of neighborhoods that are safe for living, working, and playing.**

## Youth Members Respond to COVID-19

We hope you are all having a lovely day. We, the youth, have been working tirelessly to better help support our community through this pandemic. We have worked with many of the working groups from **Mutual Aid Worcester** to get more youth involved in this task. Everyone has something to provide to our community, and everyone can help in a way whether it's with tutoring, drawing classes, dance classes etc. **We want to encourage our youth to embrace their talents, which is why we're planning to host a logo contest**, so that young folks can embrace their artistic talents. **The winner will get to have their design be the logo for our Mutual Aid Worcester Youth Working Group**, which means a lot of other people online will get to enhance its beauty. **We will keep you guys updated on this contest when we're set to launch!**



Furthermore, Worcester Youth Co-op is also working on providing our community with healthy affordable foods for low-income families, thanks to our indoor hydroponic farm. All in all, stay safe, healthy, and practice social distancing.

Yours truly,  
Working Youth Of Worcester



## Co-Director's Reflection on Mutual Aid

"I think the most important lesson to learn from **Mutual Aid Worcester** is **dissolving the false separation between "volunteers" and "the needy."** I don't think any of us will experience the reality of Mutual Aid until we grasp this lesson. **It has always been time, but now more than ever, it is time to end the era of "volunteerism" and usher in the era of embodied Solidarity and Mutual Aid.** Sometimes change is slow, but then **"there are weeks when decades happen"**, and I see people taking this time to identify and co-construct newly possible arrangements of social relations. I feel the overwhelming possibility of a world in which real democracy, inter-generational and environmental respect, and a revolution in the way we produce and distribute value take precedence as prerequisites for **keeping ourselves, our children, and future generations safe."**

-Addison Turner (Co-Director)

**Thank you for your support.**

Every contribution, big or small, provides employment for teens, and fosters a new class of cooperative entrepreneurs! Thank you for your time, attention and continued support of Worcester Roots!

### Donations Matching Opportunity:

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or



**BECOME A MEMBER:** In addition to being able to have a say in campaigns and the direction of the organization, members participate in trips and conferences. Membership benefits also include 10% discounts at several local co-ops.

[MORE ABOUT ROOTS MEMBERSHIP HERE.](#)

All this is possible, only with your help!  
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