

Community Partner Spotlight: David Cobb of Cooperation Humboldt

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Community Partner Spotlight: David Cobb of Cooperation Humboldt

By Stacy Becker

David Cobb is the Director of the local nonprofit Cooperation Humboldt. David has been active in community organizing ever since he arrived in Humboldt 15 years ago. In 2017 he helped to co-found Cooperation Humboldt, which has been providing HSU students valuable learning experiences. Cobb also has an impressive history as a “people’s lawyer.” He ran for Attorney General of Texas in 2000, was the Green Party nominee for President in 2004, and managed the Jill Stein for President campaign in 2016.

Describing his organization and purpose, David explains that Cooperation Humboldt exists to build a “solidarity economy” in our community. “A solidarity economy puts people and planet before profit, and ensures that everyone can not only survive but can truly thrive in a sustainable and regenerative way.”

How is this theory implemented? “We know that our current institutions are fundamentally racist, sexist, and class oppressive because social, political and economic systems incentivize domination and exploitation of women, people of color, and poor, homeless, disabled, queer, undocumented, and Indigenous people. We also know that it is possible to create new institutions that incentivize cooperation, love, compassion and kindness. So we lift up and support groups that are doing grassroots organizing with working class people

and people of color, building long term strategies to resist fascism and create new models for a joyous and collaborative new future reality.”

How have HSU students been involved with Cooperation Humboldt?

We have too many concrete projects to list them all here, but a few where HSU students have played pivotal roles include our Annual Artists Dismantling Capitalism Symposium, a Community Health Worker cooperative, Public Banking, and creating a food forest: mini gardens for low income residents, public fruit trees, and little free pantries.



Editor’s note: You can see [a map of Cooperation Humboldt Food Resources here](#), created by Gil Trejo and Sarah Powell, students in Professor Amy Rock’s Community Geography pilot Service Learning course.

We convened 150 people at the Arcata Playhouse for this year’s Artists Dismantling Capitalism, and hosted 12 different participatory workshops.

We are collaborating with multiple organizations to incubate a Community Health Worker (CHW) cooperative. CHWs are lay members of the community who work in association with the local health care system as frontline agents of change, helping to reduce health disparities in underserved communities.

We planted 300 mini gardens for low-income people, 90 fruit trees in publicly accessible places, and there are now 20 little free pantries across our community.

We helped to pass resolutions in support of Public Banking by the cities of Arcata and Eureka, and several community organizations.

HSU students helped make all those things happen. Some helped as formal Service Learning or internship projects, and others just because it was the right thing to do.

In addition, we have already assisted over 500 people who are self-isolating through COVID, and helped to feed hundreds of evacuees during the recent fires. HSU students were (and still are) integral to these efforts.

Were there any particularly successful experiences your organization had hosting HSU students?

Ameera Foster came to us through Environmental Studies. As an intern she worked with us to help explore a child care cooperative. After graduation she stayed with us, and is now co-coordinating one of our internal study group cohorts.

Sam Papavasiliou interned with us through the Journalism Department. He helped us get news stories in the Lumberjack, North Coast Journal and the Times-Standard. He also interviewed me for a segment on KRFH, the student-run radio station.

Nick Vasquez created the database we use for the COVID response team, and collated and coordinated the data into an easy to understand report and

summary. He has stayed on to become a valuable member of the Care & Wellness Team.

What kind of energy do HSU students bring to your organization and community you serve?

I have deeply appreciated that HSU students bring a sense of “we can do this” to every project. I certainly hope they benefited from participating with Cooperation Humboldt, but I can say with certainty and conviction that Cooperation Humboldt is a better organization because HSU students organize with us.

Some older folks think we are “too radical.” I have never heard that criticism from an HSU student. I find it refreshing that they have no qualms about naming the oppressive, power-over nature of white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. They share our belief that another world is possible, and join us in working to create that new world.

David enthusiastically recommends that other organizational leaders consider hosting HSU students: “Absolutely! HSU students bring a level of enthusiasm and energy that is contagious.”

In the current climate of addressing emergent community crises, Cobb ultimately shared, “I want to acknowledge that when the shelter in place orders were issued, several HSU students stepped up and helped to create a broad and deep program to provide direct assistance to folks in need. When the fires were blazing all around us and evacuees came streaming into Humboldt, HSU students helped to assist feeding and sheltering those evacuees. These students made a direct, positive impact on people’s lives, and we are grateful.”