

**Sarah Jensen:** Co-operative identity is at the heart of who we are as human beings – we search for that connection to community in everything we do, and through fostering that strength in community we can come together and make the world a better, more co-operative community for all.

**Juwon Seo:** My cooperative story begins in 2016. The effects of a major operation led me down a different path for my future and brought me to a community of cooperative members. I participated in a cooperative study run by the Cooperative Value Sharing Center with a curiosity about how to create a community that can lean on each other. During this study, I saw the trust and cooperative relationship between the members of the Cooperative Value Sharing Center, and I was lucky to eventually work together with them and become a fellow member and cooperator.

**Sylandi Brown:** Electric cooperatives, including Middle Georgia EMC, brought electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies deemed the effort too costly. Today, we demonstrate the cooperative difference by powering our communities not only as a local energy provider, but as a key agent in community and economic development to support the people and businesses that make up who we are

**Smayah Uwajeneza:** I work as a quality manager and a roaster at Question Coffee. Coffee has given me a professional focus. I feel proud, strengthened and connected through it. I was brought up in a lovely community that taught me the use and value of life, and the treasure of giving back to the community. Cooperatives are the best way to forge equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Iwan Doherty:** I discovered the co-operative movement about 5 years ago while investigating a number of political problems and how worker ownership in the economy could hold the solution. Co-operatives held part of the solution to a vast number of political problems captured my attention and since then I have written more and more about co-operatives.

**Parinaz Asareh:** My first encounter with the cooperative was within my family. Most of my family is situated in Dezful which is a southwest city in Iran. About 25 years ago they formed a cooperative, and with the limited resources they had, they were able to buy some land on the outskirts of Dezful and built some greenhouses to grow and provide fresh vegetables for the community. But that was only the beginning. Today, my this cooperative provides families whatever they need ranging from holding classes and also organising cultural events for the towns people.

**Camila Frozza:** At the age of 5 months, I came to Mato Grosso with my parents, and they ended up founding the Educational Cooperative of Campo Verde - COOPERCAMP, where I studied until I was 14 years old. Later, my father, together with 19 other producers, founded COOPERFIBRA, which is a cooperative of cotton producers in the city of Campo Verde. This cooperative is important in my life because it encourages the inclusion of young people in agribusiness and cooperatives, and encourages the family to stay together. Always the family.

**Juwon Seo:** I believe that the spirit of cooperative solidarity will give the youth a new perspective, like it did for me. I believe that it will help the youth be free from society's view that competing with others, is the best way to succeed.

**Parinaz Asareh:** It has been a rewarding journey for me to work alongside people and teachers who have given their time and energy for me to be where I am today, and I hope for more people to have the cooperative experience.

**Guilherme de Oliveira:** It is something that I want to pass on to my children, that my children pass on to my grandchildren and it is something that I want people when they look at me to feel different. I want them to think I have something different and then ask themselves what it is, and see that it is because I am a cooperator.

**Iwan Doherty:** Core to the cooperative identity is putting ordinary people in charge of their community and their local economy. Cooperatives are the building blocks that allow power to be equally distributed, which creates a society that is fairer and more prosperous.

**Sylandi Brown:** For as time changes elements of the world we live, it only strengthens and reinforces the foundational principles of who we are. It is up to us to stay at the forefront of the issues affecting our communities each day, using our light that shall never burn out, to pave the way for cooperatives around the globe to build better communities and a better world.

**Guilherme de Oliveira:** It is something that fascinates me, that leaves me with a warm heart, and it is what I hope to keep for my whole life: it is cooperativism.

**Sarah Jensen:** I hope our stories will inspire you to look for the same opportunities in what you do to make the co-operative difference, too.