Pedal People is a worker-owned cooperative located in Northampton, Massachusetts that provides bicycle-powered delivery of groceries as well as hauling for yard waste, recycling, and trash. The co-op has been expanding in recent years, reflecting community interest in more sustainable ways of living, and now includes twelve members.

“I have wanted to be part of a worker co-op since I worked in one in college, and Pedal People in particular has been a great fit,” says Alison Wilson-Pierce, a worker owner since 2010. “Sometimes I can’t believe that I work hauling trash through the snow on a bike, and that I have never felt as positive about another job.”

Supporting the cooperative movement through development of resources and collaboration with other cooperatives is a core interest of the worker-owners at Pedal People. As a member of the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (VAWC), a regional association of worker-owned cooperatives in western New England, the collective helps to educate and develop community awareness about the worker co-op model of democratically owned and managed enterprise.

In 2010, Pedal People worker owners made a decision to use surplus profits for the good of the cooperative economy, by investing in the Cooperative Fund of New England, in accordance with the cooperative principles of cooperation among cooperatives and concern for community. “We didn’t particularly want to put our funds in a bank, and the idea of putting it into a cooperative fund fit with our ideals as a cooperative,” explains worker owner Alex Jarrett. Pedal People’s investment in CFNE increases the resources available to other cooperatives in the region, strengthening financial options for start-up cooperatives, and providing access to technical assistance.

Pedal People actively demonstrates cooperation among co-ops. Working with the River Valley Co-op Market, they sponsor bike stations at special events to encourage bicycling to the food co-op and offer outdoor, theft-proof maintenance stations. Pedal People also delivers local food for Valley Green Feast, a local foods delivery co-op, and do all of their printing with the worker co-op Collective Copies, a digital copying and finishing center. “One thing I like about worker co-ops is the power of the culture we are creating together. While most new workers coming into our co-op have some experience with co-operation, I’m impressed by how quickly new people fit into our culture of working together,” says Alex Jarrett. Visit www.pedalpeople.com to learn more.

- Profile by Kalista Aird (updated 8/2012)