



Oberlin Student Cooperative Association

Alumni Newsletter 2008-2009

Dear Alumni,

We are sending you this newsletter in the hopes of updating you on activities, future plans, and amusing anecdotes relating to OSCA. We have also included some articles from alumni.

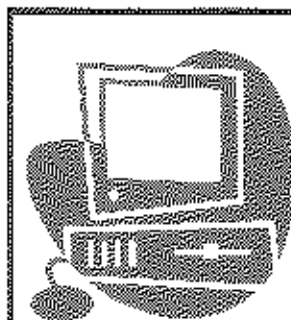
So far this year we have been working on a number of things. I started my job in the last days of February, collecting articles for the newsletter and compiling a more coherent and more available version of OSCA's history, which we hope to get online by May. I have also been getting in touch with some OSCA alumni residing in Kendal and am hoping to have Al McQueen, one of the original members of the first Pyle Inn Co-op, come speak and show his slides. If you are interested in coming to see this or sharing your own story with current OSCA members in person, please e-mail us.

We are in the process of creating an online version of the alumni newsletter, which will be accessible via the OSCA web site, and perhaps creating a facebook group for interested OSCA alumni to improve communication. We are hosting the annual alumni picnic on May 23 (for which we would be happy to take food or activity suggestions). Finally, we would like to create an e-mail list serve for any interested alumni with the following options:

- e-mail me about anything related to OSCA alumni
- e-mail me about any current events/policies/decisions in OSCA today
- e-mail me **only** with information from OSCA pertaining to my class year
- e-mail me with all of the above

This information will not be released to the College, and you will not be asked to contribute money. It will be challenging to get started, but I am hoping that talking to all of you about this in the newsletter will inspire people to get involved. Feel free to e-mail us at osca@oberlin.edu. We really want to increase alumni communication through a variety of channels in order to improve and compile a more thorough and clear version of OSCA's history.

With much excitement for OSCA's future,
Susan Silverman
2008-09 Alumni Coordinator



Visit OSCA's

Web Site!

<http://oberlin.edu/osca>

Words from the President

Well, OSCA is still here. Just like so many of us here, I'm sure you alumni couldn't imagine Oberlin any other way. Where else could we get a 6am phone call from a friend who needs to get a fresh batch of bagels from Tank to Keep, or snuggle by a fire to listen to a story with thirty of our closest friends? [Note 1] I may have only been here for four years, but it seems safe enough to say that not a lot has changed - save for minor things. Many pizza nights - still Fridays! - are now cooked on baking stones in super hot ovens (and some OSCAns are working on a brick oven!). Special meals are the same old over-the-top extravaganzas. Flags are still flown, and stolen. And, amazingly, none of the co-ops have burned to the ground.

I suppose some things have changed, though. Many alumni likely remember the tofu production in Harkness. While, in recent years, equipment troubles have caused fits in the project, it seems we finally have it going again (we hope!). To this OSCA has added in-house yogurt production in many of the co-ops. The pro-biotic revolution has begun! Rumor has it that some yogurt makers sleep with their batches at night [Note 2], but don't tell that to the Health Inspector...

As in the past few years, OSCA's garden and canning projects have continued. While some members have questioned the financial and programmatic stability of these projects, the OSCA membership as a whole remains committed to the values of environmental and self-sustainability the projects represent. In this regard, OSCA is quite the leader at Oberlin. It has been mentioned that the College is now exploring a local food preservation operation, much like our own canning. In addition, OSCA has begun developing plans for a cooperative farm, like the one in Oberlin roughly thirty years ago, to be organized by a full-time coordinator. With some luck, and a lot of hard work, this could be an exciting new stage in OSCA's march toward sustainability.

OSCA's other current long-term project, the eventual replacement of Old Barrows, has unfortunately hit a few snags. Establishing how an OSCA-owned dorm would fit into the

College's existing housing program has proven quite difficult, especially with the opaque box of bureaucracy that is the Office of ResEd. While the other Officers and I remain determined to push for a new housing co-op, some interesting alternatives have come up. Included in these is the option of moving Brown Bag Co-op to a larger off-campus space, possibly to be shared with a new OSCA office. In the short term, though, it seems OSCA faces a small membership decrease (due to the College's decrease in the student body).

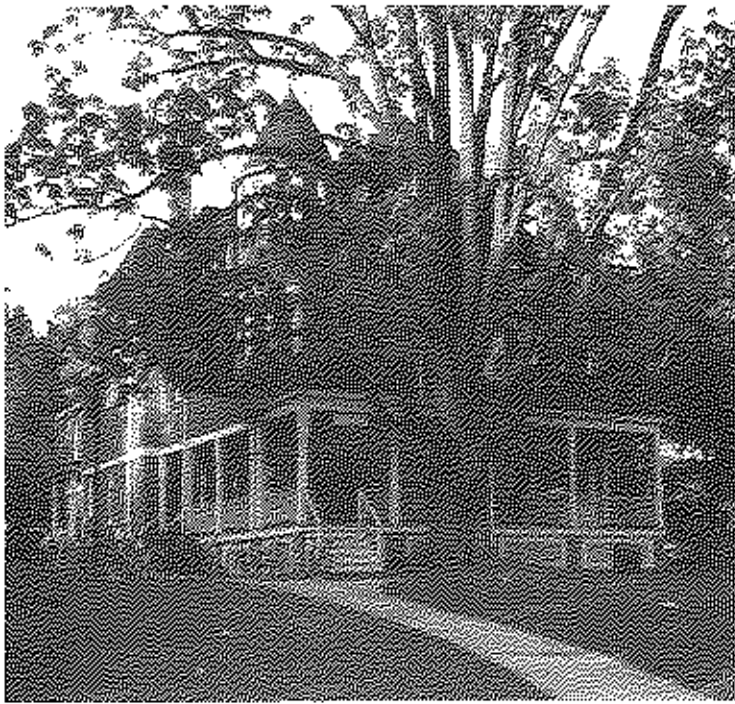
In the current year, OSCA has enjoyed a renewed interest in increasing the accessibility of our dining and housing spaces. In the fall semester, the Board approved a policy to help members with food allergies get into the best co-op for their needs. We have also been working with Campus Dining Service to develop a similar process for students whose needs are not met by their College board plans. We continue to make co-ops more accessible to transgender students and others outside the traditional gender binary. Finally, the Accessibility sub-Committee on Privilege and Oppression has been working for several semesters on making individual co-op efforts to address accessibility interesting and fun.

I would be remiss if I failed to at least touch on OSCA's financial situation, given the nature of the greater economy. While we have seen some increases in food prices, OSCA continues to remain very financially stable. Thanks to years of conservative accounting - and, not least, the tremendous efforts of Iris Hunt, Financial Manager - OSCA is more able than most to negotiate changing economic conditions. I'm glad to say that, from what I can see, OSCA will continue to define many students' Oberlin experience for years to come.

In cooperation,
John Siddall

Note 1: Whoever said you need New York water to make good bagels was lying. Also, we can't use the fireplaces anymore, but we can at least imagine!

Note 2: Yogurt is *supposed* to sit for several hours at around 100°F, so this makes some sense.



Please Join Us

for the

OSCA Alumni Picnic

May 23, 2009

Saturday - Noon

Tank Co-op

OSCA's Future: Thoughts from the President-elect

My name is Emma Dorst and I have been awarded the honor of serving as OSCA President for the 2009-2010 academic year. In my time at Oberlin I have been a member of both Keep and Harkness Co-op. I sat on the Board of Directors as a representative of both co-ops (one semester each) and was all-OSCA Operations Manager for 2007. These experiences have helped me to realize and cultivate the skills necessary to work effectively and rewardingly with both the OSCA membership and the College.

As you may know, the coming year is a rent contract negotiation year. The OSCA Officers, OSCA/College Liaison and a Member-at-Large (with the support of the recently refurbished Long Range Planning Committee and/or a Rent Contract Negotiating Committee) will tackle the challenge of working with the College to ensure that the interests of the membership are upheld and respected and that the input of all or any member is heard and taken seriously. I believe

that with a realistic, responsible and communicative approach, these goals can be realized.

Obviously, as with every rent contract year, some changes will be made and both OSCA and the College are going to have to adapt to new realities. It is my goal to use the rent contract negotiations to OSCA's advantage and to open new avenues for the growth and ever-increasing dynamism of our association. I hope to end next year on a positive note having simultaneously strengthened and directed OSCA's future as well as maintained a relationship with the College based on cooperation and mutual respect.

Some of these plans may sound overly simplistic or naively optimistic, but I feel that while going full speed ahead into a new challenge with unforeseeable obstacles and many potential outcomes, any other attitude would be misguided. At this point, all I know is that I will do my best and work my hardest to make both you and our current members proud to be OSCAns!

Yours in Co-operation,
Emma Dorst '10

Cooperation in the Cold: Winter Term OSCA 2009

Januaries in Oberlin are not known for being cheerful. Overcast skies, unwelcome precipitation, and below-zero temperatures have been keeping down the spirits of Oberlin students since the school was founded. But a record number of people found community and good food this January in OSCA's winter term co-ops.

Four co-ops were open this year, up from two or three in recent years. Fairchild, as usual, provided good food, a detailed food policy, and community-building events. Keep, with more than 60 members, was the largest of the winter term co-ops. The 11 members of Kosher Halal Co-op banded together to serve wonderful dinners despite their small numbers. Pyle Inn was home to a special interest co-op: the Queer Co-op, for students who identify as queer and/or transgender. All in all, more than 150 people joined co-ops this winter term; more than in any previous winter term.

Many winter term co-ops were trying out co-ops for the first time. A large number of these new members fell in love with OSCA, and are now in co-ops for the spring semester. Regularly updated listservs made communication within co-ops much easier.

One powerful moment of co-operation occurred near the end of the month. On January 20th, nearly 1,000 people packed Mt. Zion Baptist Church and the Root Room of the Carnegie Building to watch the inauguration of Barack Obama. Preparing the events was a huge effort involving both the College and town. The winter term co-ops stepped up to help in their own way, with Fairchild and the Queer Co-ops baking hundreds and hundreds of cookies for the historic event.

Whether it was because of the economy, high travel prices, a desire to try something new, or the warmth and community that co-ops provide, many students found a home this year in winter term co-ops. Here's hoping that your January was as cozy as ours!

Jym Sandberg
2009 Winter Term President

The Benefits of Composting

Composting is simple to implement and provides environmental and economic benefits. Furthermore, composting creates a closed-loop system, where inputs become outputs, creating zero waste. Beyond reducing landfill waste by up to 23%, compost builds healthy soils by increasing the moisture, nutrient content, and developing structure. Soil is essential to life. Compost produces the most effective type of fertilizer, increasing agricultural yields, as well as suppressing plant diseases and pests. Compost prevents soil erosion and removes solids, oil, grease, and heavy metals from storm-water runoff. Compost can also regenerate contaminated soil by absorbing odors and treating volatile organic compounds (www.epa.gov).

How to Create Your Very Own Compost Pile

If you have a backyard, start by choosing a dry, shady spot. If you have less space, use a bin. Compost relies on a combination of "greens," "browns," and water: ideally, 25 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen (more "browns" than "greens"). "Browns" typically include any wood material, dead leaves, or straw. "Greens" typically include food, plants, and animal manure. Make sure to chop or shred larger pieces. While eggshells are great for compost, do not compost egg yolks or other dairy products. Oils and meat should also not be composted. Turning the pile is important because it creates aeration, which is necessary for decomposition. If well-maintained, the pile should not smell foul or attract rodents or pests. Finished soil can be produced within two months, but may take as long as two years to develop depending on aeration, temperature, and the carbon to nitrogen ratio. Keep the pile moist with a light spray. When the material at the bottom of your compost bin is "dark and rich" in color, it is ready to be used.

For more information or answers to composting questions, check out www.epa.gov and their guide to composting.

Stacia Thompson
Composting Coordinator

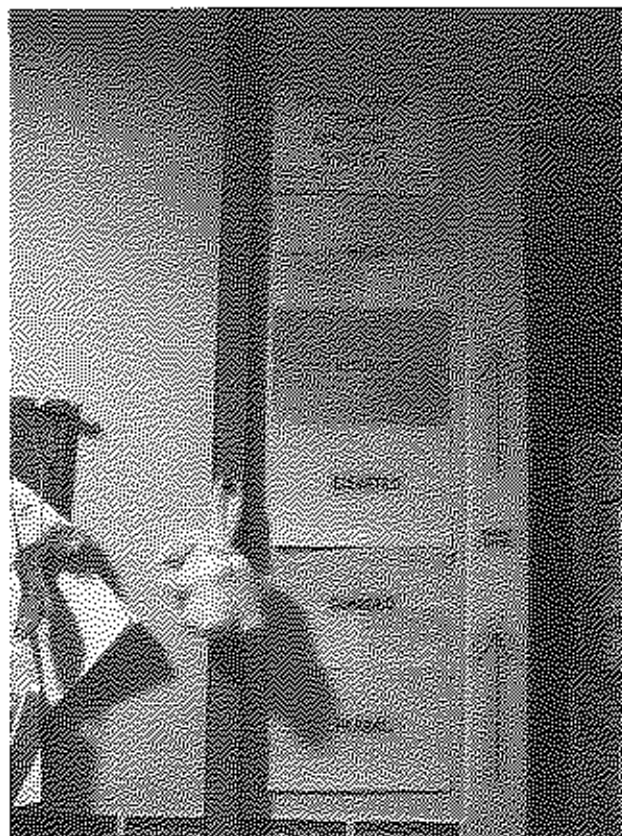
Of Food, Filth, and Facilities: A CMC's Uphill Battle Against the Odds

How could one ever forget OSCA's eternal battle with the Ohio State Health Code? Now that I am the 2009 Cleanliness & Maintenance Coordinator (CMC), I know that I never will. Those of you who noticed that I am a member of the class of 2012 may be wondering how I managed to get such a position as an OSCA rookie. Believe me when I say it was not easy! During my first semester at Oberlin I unwittingly accepted a nomination to be a Harkness Kitchen Coordinator (KitchCo) and somehow managed to win the election. As you may recall, in recent years Harkness has built a reputation of being extremely dirty. In my one semester as KitchCo, I am nearly positive that I completed a full year's worth of crews in order to make sure that Harkness passed its inspections. Many times I felt like giving up. It seemed like the kitchen would never be clean! At one point, I considered going on strike. I would not get the co-op new hairnets, cleaning chemicals, or more chef knives until the rest of Harkness stepped up to fulfill their responsibilities. I changed my mind when I started to receive positive feedback from my fellow Harkies. Though several of them strongly disliked my way of handling things, many others expressed their gratitude for all of the work I did. It was a relief to hear that not everyone hated me and that the extra time and effort I was putting in was not in vain.

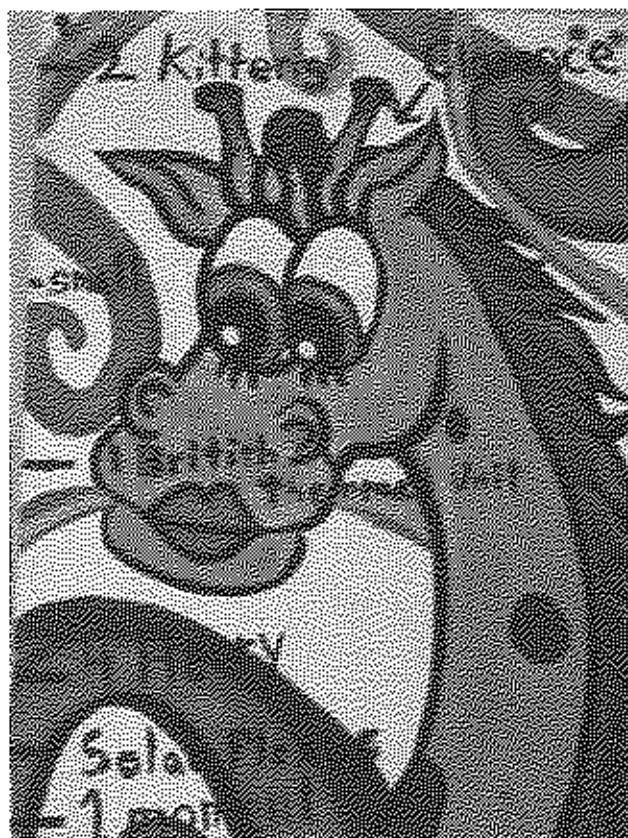
Now, as CMC, I get to be the "bad guy" on an all-OSCA level. With People Coordinators (PoCos), Cleanliness Coordinators (CCs) and KitchCos as my intermediaries, I educate and chide the masses on co-op kitchen cleanliness and food safety. In doing so I have come to realize that Harkness is not the only place that struggles with cleanliness. Throughout the co-ops I see the same problems with mopping the floor, cooking food to the correct temperatures, and labeling and logging leftovers properly. Worse yet are the widespread problems with maintenance. Dish machines, refrigerators, and chemical dispensers are constantly

malfunctioning. These issues concern me the most because they are the only things in the kitchen that cannot be fully controlled by the students. Hobarts break unexpectedly, with no one at fault. Stack ovens refuse to heat with old age. As good as most OSCAs are at monitoring the functionality of such items, none of them can prevent the unexpected. With the current College budget cuts, it is difficult to know what assurance we really have against the unknown. This summer, will we be able to get Harkness the new stack ovens it desperately needs and get Pyle Inn a walk-in refrigerator? Or will the College suddenly recant our plans in the name of frugality? Or should I worry more about making sure that Harkness passes its inspections and is actually able to make use of the new stack ovens once they arrive?

By Raven Davis
Cleanliness & Maintenance Coordinator



This is a Service Master Advisory Chart made by Adrienne Hoshi, one of the Cleanliness Coordinators. It is meant to inspire people to stay clean and is located on the first floor of Harkness.



This is a creative height chart Maurcen Farrell and friends made for Harkness. The giraffe's name is Clarence.

What OSCA's Been Up to This Year

I bet you are waiting with bated breath for me to tell you about this year's history in the making. You must be intensely curious to hear about the hubbub and stirrings within OSCA during the 2008-2009 school year. So I'll tell you.

As I flip through this year's binder of board packets, a few things catch my eye that I would like to inform you of:

1. OSCA now uses meta-consensus: it is the only thing more confusing than modified-consensus!
2. We passed a dietary needs access proposal, which allows students with extreme dietary needs (documented by a physician) to change co-ops as needed.
3. The "Nicaragua Sister Co-op Committee" has changed its name to the "Nicaragua Sister Partnership."
4. The OSCA canning project will continue on this summer! It was re-approved.

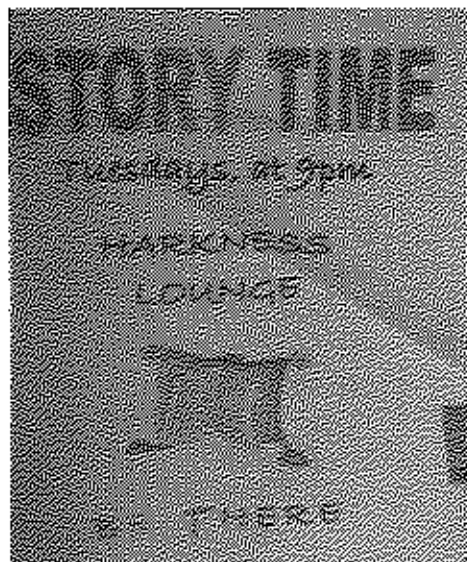
5. We had a caucus about the future of the OSCA publication.
6. We held a caucus on the possibility and feasibility of creating an OSCA farm.
7. OSCA is fiscally stable. Yay.
8. The Bike Co-op renewed its lease for Keep's basement! Yay.
9. We passed a proposal to change some of the language in continuing policy to be more trans-inclusive.
10. We stressed out about the upcoming rent contract negotiations.

Other exciting things from the OSCA-front this year:

1. Celebration of OSCA's anniversary with a roller-rink party.
2. All-OSCA pizza night.
3. Harkness' and the Environmental Concerns Committee's attempt to grow a potted herb garden.

If there is anything I have learned as the Theory & History Coordinator this year, it is that OSCA will persevere and with style. The library contains a rich history. Thanks for building all that has come before us. You are giants - we stand on your shoulders.

Affectionately,
R. Karasick
Theory & History Co-ordinator



This is a poster for Story Time, a weekly event where alternating co-ops will read children's and

Aboard the Harkship

Ahoy Alumni! This year's group of budding young Harkies has been particularly active and excited. First off, music is abundant! Harkness is home to numerous instruments and glorious players. The hallways are riddled with a myriad of sound, so let us take a quick tour. We begin our promenade in the lounge, where you might find a few student bands practicing or someone playing the piano. For a short time we borrowed an electric organ from Tank Co-op and it resided in harmony with our grand piano before it returned home. Continuing through the first floor may bring you a flute, banjo, ukulele, guitar, or violin. As we ascend to the second floor (where I make my humble abode) you might be met with all sorts of guitars, a bass, jambe drums, a keyboard, a trombone, a banjo (gourd or otherwise), or perhaps a homemade mountain dulcimer! Finally, as you walk down the hallway of the third floor you might hear a guitar, didgeridoo, trumpet, or some beautiful electronically generated sounds courtesy of our resident TIMARA major. On that note, we have hosted a number of excellent bands and musical vagabonds passing through this lovely little town, adding some new sounds to our carnival.

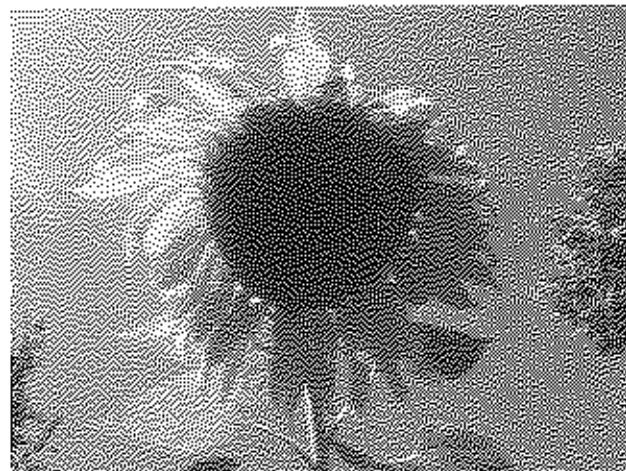
Arts of all kinds have been thriving recently, mostly centered in the lounge. Frequently, we have borrowed a projector to show both homemade and professional grade films on our walls. There are many new additions to our mural as well as some new collaborative paintings. In addition, our lovely aesthetics coordinator has done a great job sprucing up the public spaces by allowing her plants to live with us, patching furniture, and encouraging everyone to put love into the house.

Hopefully when spring comes again we'll begin to move these activities back outside. I can't wait to see Harkies out on the bowl playing music, studying, making art, and just enjoying the sunshine. Sometime this spring my fellow HLEC and I hope to plan a day-trip to the Arboretum where co-opsers can splash in the brook and play among the trees.

Our dining community has also been thriving. Harkness has no shortage of talented cooks and makers this year! Most meals have been tasty, healthy, and fun. Pizza night proves to be an ever constant party. Every Friday our valiant pizza cooks create circular masterpieces to be served to a hungry crowd. I am always so happy to see the co-opsers and other students filling the dining room eagerly waiting for vegan, non-vegan, gluten-free, and dessert pizza.

All in all, Harkness has been simply wonderful. Everyday I return home from class to find something new that a Harkie created or some plunder dragged back to be shared. I could not have asked for a better community to facilitate and participate in this year.

Maureen Farrell
Harkness Housing and Loose Ends Coordinator



OSCA Farm?

For decades, OSCA has shown a commitment to buying food locally. For the past ten years, over one quarter of all foods purchased by OSCA have been grown locally. With concerns increasing about costs, quality, and sustainability of food, OSCA has heightened its awareness of where our food comes from. Three years ago, OSCA started a summer garden project at The George Jones Memorial Farm in Oberlin. OSCA members

have been paid to grow produce to sell in the fall to dining co-ops. The project has provided a great educational resource for students living in Oberlin over the summer and we have been very thankful for the support at the George Jones Farm. However, the project only provides OSCA with a small portion of food consumed throughout the year. This year, OSCA began a committee charged with investigating the idea of an OSCA farm. The farm could provide many of the foods that are not currently available locally and could hopefully also be a space available for educational and creative projects. OSCA members seem enthusiastic about bringing to life Oberlin's motto of "Learning and Labor," and we have begun exploring how a farm could make OSCA more sustainable and affordable.

Though the project has just begun, we are eager for input and advice from alumni. To get in touch with the committee and members who are working on the project e-mail osca@oberlin.edu.

David Vohden
Chair, Long Range Planning

An article about NASCO, a yearly conference for co-operatives around the country to meet up, go to workshops that pertain to co-operative life, and learn from one another.

NASCO Fiasco! ...psych

We were excited, excited to get out of the cornfields and experience the Big City: Ann Arbor, Michigan. But we were even more excited to learn if there were others like us in the great, glittering world beyond Oberlin. Did they understand Viking Meals and organ steals and all-squash winters and screwing the man? We were lost children hoping to be nurtured by the great, girthy bosom of NASCO Institute. I know I was.

The first thing that I learned was that I don't want to join the Twin Oaks commune in Virginia. I mean, they do some cool stuff, like sell homemade hammocks and grow their own vegetables and have a dairy operation. They

make tofu and fold the byproducts into the fertilizer and cow food. They feed themselves on a dollar a day according to Bucket, who lives there. He said that because they do things like have one person who makes one trip in one car and shops for all of them in town, and because they have pooled their wealth and look super poor on paper and qualify for free health care through the University of Virginia, Twin Oaks people use a lot fewer resources than most people. Also, they can get labor credits for protests!

However, also according to Bucket, "Twin Oaks is the worst place in the world to break up with someone." They are 100 people who have rejected mainstream society and mostly have to date each other. Like one incestuous Harkness in the middle of nowhere. I also got the impression that their primary form of conflict resolution is to avoid it and wait for folks to leave. Yeah, no thank you.

Next I went to a workshop about facilitating good meetings by Laird Schaub. I had a few revelations, namely that OSCA's facilitators are not as responsive as they could be - there are ways to be very active while maintaining neutrality. Like, Laird would have it mandated that the facilitator be allowed to cut off comments that are repetitive or off topic. Put bitches in their place! Hey did you know some groups use guided visualization in times of trouble ("Imagine that it is one month from now and we have resolved this: What does it look like?")? Whoa.

The most important lesson I learned was about institutional memory: Let's preserve it. Our culture isn't recorded or shared in a terribly systematic way right now, but imagine if every OSCAn found a detailed history of their co-op on their bare bed at the beginning of the year. I want each co-op to keep track of what happens within its walls in a way that outlives its own generation. Let's record decisions made in housing and dining meetings, but also the thought that went into them. Let's make co-op historians who also pass on their methodology. Let's build opportunities for reflection into our processes.

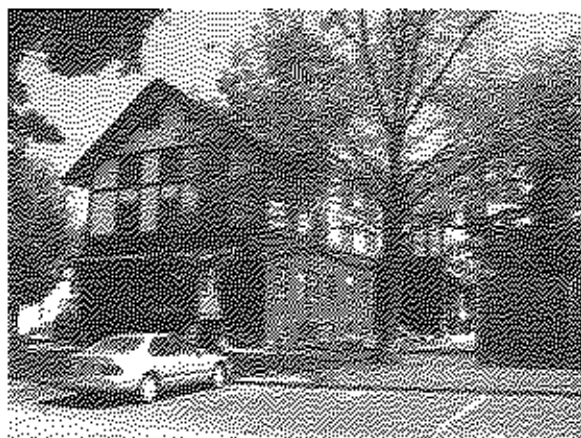
Jacqui Shine suggests conducting a "history audit," in which a period of time is

designated to collect as much history as possible. This could mean contacting alumni, transcribing oral histories, researching the origin of weird customs and objects, creating accessible and searchable files, and maybe even self-publishing through somewhere like lulu.com. Ah. History.

Yeah, NASCO was mostly pretty great, though they could have fed us more. I met beautiful co-ops from all over America with their own quirky names for things (some folks call crews "loveshifts"), their own hand signals (some folks "glitter" their fingers to express approval in meetings), and their own cooperative ideals ("I don't believe in personal property"). In conclusion, RAID ANN ARBOR SPECIAL MEAL THIS SUNDAY!!!!!!

Sarah Schaffer

Raid On Keep



When we took a table for Keep's restaurant special meal one Saturday night, what we noticed first was that we were actually sitting at a table. The plates and silverware and cups had already been laid out for us. There would be no Battle of the Beans tonight, no arduous crowd-dodging for that last loaf of green. But when we finally sat down and really looked at the room, it was clear that this would be no relaxing dinner-for-eighty. Tonight was the Roman special meal at Harkness, you see, and what would Rome be, really, without a raid of epic proportions?

Upon receiving this news, we had taken a hostage, and, though bound with aprons and

dishrags, he was cordially invited to dine. People came and went, bringing updates from the front lines, their cheeks flushed from the cold. We continued to dine in peace, however, despite these fearful claims of loosely-worn togas and bulk quantities of glitter. We'd even made it to the main course with nothing more than a laudable escape attempt from our hostage.

It happened while we were awaiting desert—which, in case you were wondering, involved citrus, chocolate, and vegan and non-vegan cake. The dining room doors were thrown open and an ominous wind from outside nipped at our ankles. Though out of breath, our messenger found the strength to shout our final warning. "The Harkies are coming!" he cried, gesturing wildly behind him. "The Harkies are coming!" "And they want our shit!" someone corroborated from out in the lounge. "Let them eat cake," I heard another diner murmur, obviously in anticipation of the wonderful delights being mixed in the kitchen by the very best.

It wasn't long after the doors were secured and half of Keep had evacuated to the dry foods room for arms that our fortress was infiltrated. In the madness that ensued, we lost our hostage, three loaves of bread, a painting, and our couch. Once the spoils had been divvied and the casualties counted, a cardboard horse head duct-taped to a grocery cart was thrust into the dining room and the low buzz of a vacuum cleaner could be heard throughout the house. "Thank you for letting us raid you," was what the horse meant, and it was filled with yummy cookies to double the thanks. The glitter and oobleck were cleaned to the best of the faulty vacuum's abilities, and the Harkies departed with genial words.

In spite of all the recycled historical utterances, this was an event unlike any other. Our lounge was strewn with sad, orphaned cushions for weeks and echoes of "Yeah, Keep! Screw Harkness!" can still be heard today. December 6, 2008 truly is a date that will live in infamy. Afterword: We reclaimed our couch in a revenge raid before the semester ended. To this day we retain our couch and our OSCA honor.

Jen Graham

Alright, alright, enough about current OSCA business. Let's hear from some alumni about their memories of OSCA.

About the Starting of the Co-ops

Al McQueen and I met in a noisy Black River Restaurant. I found him in the long line of people waiting to get a table, and we were both excited to meet one another (though perhaps I was far more nervous). I knew his name from some of the articles he wrote about OSCA history in the OSCA office, and he seemed more of a legend than flesh and bone.

After waiting a while longer, we sat down at his favorite table in the back left of the restaurant. He started telling me about some of the reasons for starting a co-op in the first place. He mentioned that he, along with a number of other students on campus, were no longer kids. They had served in the army and lived away from home and were displeased with the College administration's "in loco parentis" treatment of its student body. As he puts it, this was a different era, and the College was much stricter about a number of things.

"How did the co-ops get started?" I asked. He spoke about an event called Arch 7, created by Paul Willen and modeled after a tradition in Hyde Park, London where residents would come and voice their opinions and concerns in an open forum. This idea was taken and converted to a 7pm event taking place at the Memorial Arch where students could freely voice their opinions about College policy and activities, as well as their specific concerns. This was one of the ways students realized just how many people were strongly concerned with the rising cost of college board. The cost to dine at Oberlin in those days was more expensive than at Harvard or Yale, and yet the College still made expensive purchases for new china (far from the cheapest brand available). The students wanted to save money, and as mentioned earlier, they wanted independence.

"Who or what was it that finally convinced the administration to let the students have a co-op?" He mentioned the Dean of Women at the time being very strict and not receptive at all to the idea of more freedom and

control on the part of the students. However, Blair Stewart, Dean of Students, said that students should be allowed to try out their idea for a year. If it failed, it would not be repeated. If it succeeded, they would consider repeating the experiment the following year. However, the College refused to let them be completely on their own without adult supervision. A woman named Mary McCullough resided with the students and provided eyes and ears for the Administration, though she herself could not enforce the rules. She could only "make recommendations."

He said that the best position to have as a co-uper was janitor because you were allowed to go up to the women's living quarters to clean (which would otherwise be against the rules). They made a rule that the janitor would have to say "Janitor Up" before entering the women's quarters. The janitor would do as he was told, and, in his softest whisper would say "Janitor Up."

The students decided to hire a woman named Mrs. Thompson, who they called "Mrs. T," to help them plan menus and help them with the cooking. However, Sunday meals, like the special meals of today, were planned and cooked only by the students. The first Sunday night in the co-op the President came to visit along with the Dean of Women. The "girls" cooking this meal had decided to make ham and leave it in the oven overnight (with the oven off) so that they could turn it back on and warm it up the next day. Unfortunately, they accidentally left the oven on, really low, all night. The ham had to be eaten with a spoon. But, McQueen said, it was the best tasting ham he'd ever eaten.

Other events in the co-ops included the yearly Arts Festival, started by the co-ops their 2nd year. The co-ops themselves were responsible for raising money for the event. They had a committee to decide what art would go into the show. Lots of people came and brought their art with them. There was also a Halloween Day where everyone got dressed up and celebrated. There were hanging apples from the ceiling that they had to race to eat and see who could finish first.

Interview by Susan Silverman

Co-op Memories From the Late '70s

I spent 4 years in co-ops at Oberlin. Junior year, I lived in Tank. In those days (late seventies), Tank was Oberlin's equivalent of "Animal House." There were jokes that "Tank is the last stop before dropping out of school." Yes, it was a crazy place. But we had the best food. And some of the best people on campus, hands down, hung out at Tank.

One set of great memories is around Sunday Brunch. Sunday Brunch was a special meal that did not conform to the plans, personnel, or budgets of the rest of the week. Individual chefs could volunteer to plan and execute this meal. There was usually a theme for brunch, such as a particular food ethnicity. (While this is a commonplace aspect of eating now, it was still exotic in those days to have "Indian" or "Mexican" or "Chinese" brunch.)

One Saturday night we noticed the name of the chef for Sunday and we were suspicious. You see, he was not known to be a cook, so we wondered what was up. On Sunday morning we found out. It was Junk Food Brunch. On every table were footlong sticks of bubble gum, cases of Twinkies, boxes of horribly sweet red and purple popsicles, and box upon box of sugary cereals -- Captain Crunch, Super Sugar Crisp, AlphaBits, all the sweetest available at the time. We found this meal tremendously entertaining. But once the roofs of our mouths peeled off thanks to all that sugar, we were actually glad this meal was not served any other Sunday!

Another great Sunday Brunch story concerned the plans for a Chinese brunch. On Saturday night, there were strips of white paper and pens on every table. We were instructed to write fortunes for the fortune cookies to be made that night and served with the next day's meal. At Sunday's dessert we opened our fortune cookies and took turns reading them aloud to a rapt dining room audience. What did they say? Well, the sort of things you might expect college students to put in a "fortune." For example, my cookie said, "Do Drugs."

I hear there was a Nude Brunch at Keep Co-op in 1980 or 1981. You HAVE to find someone who can write to you about that!

Rachel Abelson Hickson, '80



OSCA Memories

The last time I heard from OSCA was quite a few years ago, when the organization was in trouble, at risk of collapse (!). I guess the officers had all resigned, and the acting officers were struggling, or some such. I attended my 25th reunion (!) in 2007, and it was so nice to see the co-ops, even though empty.

I was OSCA pres from 80-81, and I have tons of stories to tell. No time to write them all up now, but I'd like to try. One personal thrill was that at my 10th reunion, in the OSCA office (top floor of Wilder -- still there?) there was a big poster in the office closet that read: "Franklin sez: Date EVERYTHING!"

Wow... I couldn't believe it. When I was elected OSCA pres in the spring of '80, the OSCA office was a tiny room on Wilder 2nd floor, just to the left of the stairs as you face the stairs in the hallway. TINY.

I asked Michele (?) who was Wilder staff director if OSCA could have a bigger office -- and we got the top floor room! After we moved everything up, I started looking for history that would be helpful -- and it was a mess. Almost everything was stacked in vertical piles. But worse, there were almost no dates on any of the paper. It was like archeology, trying to guess a date from the distance in the pile from the nearest dated document.

So I became a real nag about dating documents -- with the YEAR, not just the month/day. It can be so hard as a student to

imagine life beyond the moment. Then I bought a ton of "hanging file folders" and we started filing things. When I wandered into the OSCA office on one of those reunions I was amazed to see that the filing system had itself gotten a bit out of control -- there were SO many file categories... But that still has to be better than "vertical files."

The second big office-related success I had was buying and installing big bulletin boards, with my own drill. The old office had maybe a 1 x 2 ft. bulletin board that no one could really use. Finally, we made a nice seating area in the back of that office for the facilitation committee to go over board proposals, or other meetings.

I have lots of other stories about consensus process, "Owners Manual" book, relations with Housing & Dining, Building Fund, the OSCA 30th reunion we had in May '81 with 5 consecutive OSCA presidents attending (maybe that photo is still in the office somewhere?) and other challenges... most of which I can't remember.

I will always remember crunchy bean loaf at Harkness (the cooks started too late...) and pink chicken in Old B (my home co-op) because EVERYONE who arrived peeked in the stack oven to see what was cooking, so the temperature was way too low. I remember debates in Tank about whether co-op funds should be used for coffee (exploited workers, and caffeine is a drug, why should non-users support users' habit?), or even more controversial, whether to buy pot for the big party.

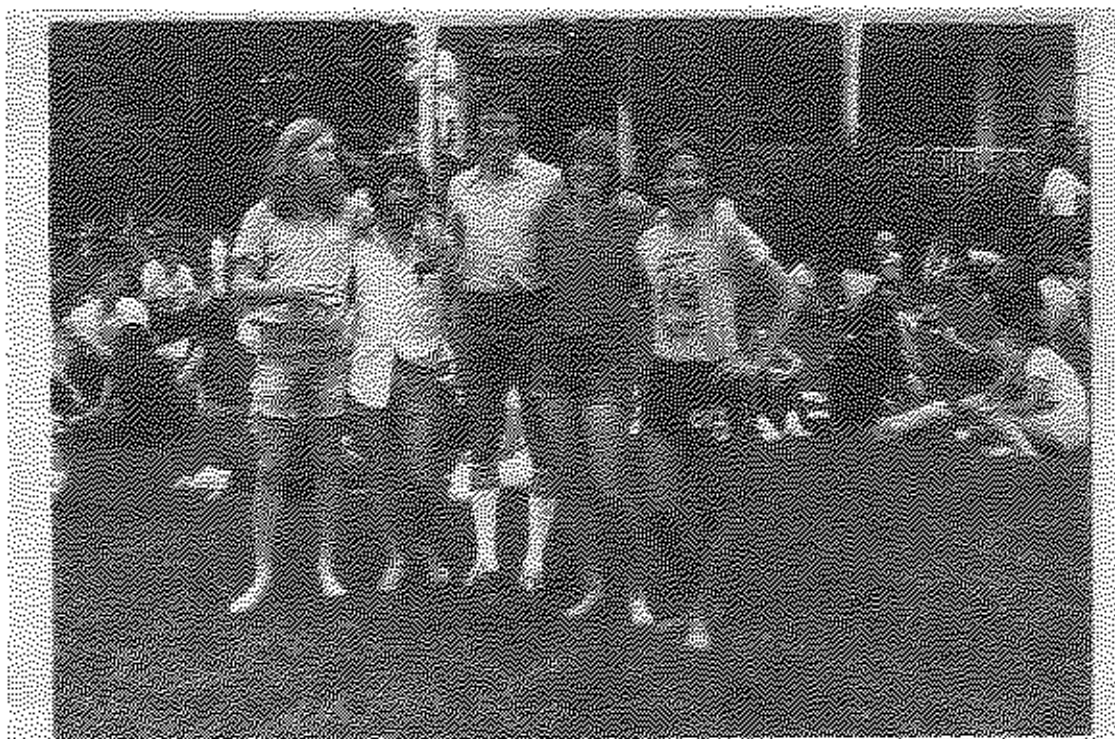
Wow, it's so nice to think back. That was one of the very best experiences of my whole life so far, and I'm (gasp!) 52. Don't feel much different than I felt then, but I sure look different.

In cooperation,

--Franklin

(Haven't signed an email that way for ages!)

Franklin Davis
OSCA President 80-81

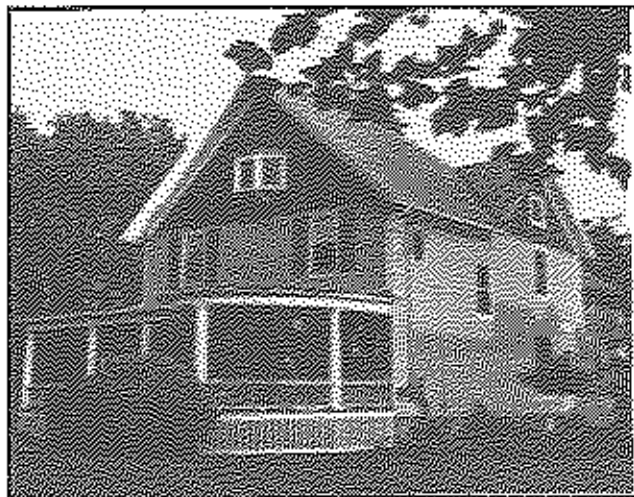


5 Years of OSCA Presidents

OSCA 30th Reunion Picnic

Spring 1981, Tank Co-op

L to R: Peter Hiark '81, Matt Hieshberg '80, Franklin Davis '81, Francis Ferguson '79, Stuart Kohl '78



Fuller House

OSCA Properties

Through the history of OSCA, "We Own It!" has been a motto we have been proud to embody. Though currently OSCA rents its nine properties from Oberlin College, in 1985 OSCA purchased Fuller house and the next year Bliss, and in 1997 OSCA split to form a separate sister corporation by the name of OSCA Properties.

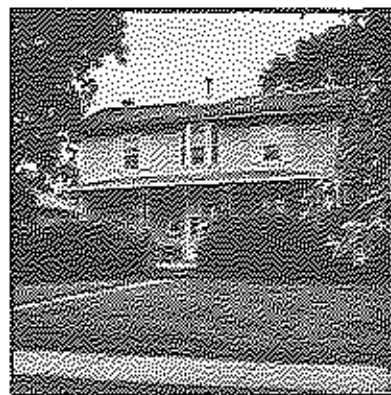
In the time since, OSCA Properties has come to embody the ideals of OSCA in many ways. Today OSCA Properties still owns Fuller House, which provides low cost housing to both students and community low-income members. It is a place where cooperative ideals can flourish beyond the Oberlin College bubble. OSCA Properties provides scholarships to OSCA members, finally fulfilling a goal that has existed since OSCA's inception. And this year OSCA Properties has been working to further these goals of strengthening ties with the Oberlin Community and making cooperative structures accessible to as many people as possible.

OSCA Properties is currently working to develop a Strategic Plan that will establish goals for the next two, five and even ten years. We've been discussing a few different ideas that all embody a goal to facilitate people working together and sharing skills. The basis of our Strategic Plan is to continue to work within the community and bridge the "town and gown" gap. We would love to develop dynamic spaces where connections can be

made and exciting projects can be worked on by all members of the Oberlin community, college students and residents alike.

In a more tangible sense, we are continuing to work on greening Fuller House, and working to make it a more ecologically sustainable and attractive place for both community members and college students to live in. In January an ecological design group developed a plan for a sustainable garden based on Fuller's location, and we're examining the feasibility of implementing this plan. Like many other corporations we're experiencing the economic pinch but we are still providing many scholarships that support people becoming members of OSCA. We are constantly exploring our role both within the College and community and try to accomplish our ideals more successfully. OSCA Properties represents an important expansion of OSCA and its ideals. While OSCA makes the principles of cooperation and cooperative living available to students within the College, OSCA Properties expands these to the rest of the Oberlin Community. Cooperation shouldn't be a privileged experience. Access to the benefits of cooperative houses, kitchens, gardens and businesses shouldn't come with a \$40K a year price-tag. OSCA Properties is proud that not only do we own it, but members of the Oberlin community own it too.

In Cooperation,
Johanna Valente
OSCA Properties President '08-'09



Bliss House (sold in 2002)

Investing in Communities

When OSCA members pay their room and board bills they are also contributing to OSCA's future growth through an annual contribution to the General Operating Fund. This fund is used for, among other things, outreach programs that assist other co-ops and organizational projects.

The OSCA loan policy was developed out of three beliefs. First, OSCA wishes to use its resources to strengthen other cooperatives. By making loans to the greater cooperative community, OSCA seeks to strengthen the cooperative movement and itself as an entity within that movement. In addition, OSCA desires to make loans to, and investments in, organizations that more accurately reflect our economic, political and social values. Finally, OSCA appreciates the satisfaction of helping those in need.

Whatever the program, whether it be in Oberlin or elsewhere, special consideration is given to projects that enhance local economics, which in OSCA's experience tend to be more just and efficient than centralized economic models.

The Finance Committee frequently reviews OSCA's financial status to make sure that it is doing the most with its money. We believe that expanding investments in local communities is a very good alternative to investing in the stock market.

Although most of OSCA's loans have been small portions of larger loan packages, OSCA's loan policy makes an effort at increasing co-op development activity and supporting the broader co-op movement. In past years OSCA's loan policy has played a small but significant role in cooperative development in Oberlin and the United States. OSCA has provided loans to:

Co-ops

Brady Lake Area Development Empowerment
Consumer Cooperative Alliance
Federation of Ohio River Cooperatives
Good Food Co-op
Kent Housing Cooperative
North American Students of Cooperation
Oberlin Bike Co-op

Oberlin Cable Co-op
Oberlin Farm Co-op
Oberlin Pottery Co-op
Sexual Information Center

Organization & Small Businesses

Common Wealth Revolving Loan Fund
Ecological Design Innovation Center
Fund for an Open Society
Mind Fair Book Store
Oberlin Sustainable Agriculture Project
Sustainable Community Associates
Women's Self-Employment Fund
Zion Community Loan Fund

OSCA currently has \$94,000 in loans committed for the following projects:

Appalachian Center for Economic Networks

\$18,000 for 5 years at 3%

ACNet has been active since 1985 in growing a local economy in Athens, Ohio. They have invested over \$1.6 million in regional businesses through loan funds, including microloans, and provide trainings, marketing programs and direct technical assistance. They manage incubator space that houses 22 business tenants that provide local jobs, and they run a commercial kitchen that serves over 120 businesses that produce over \$3 million of local food products. OSCA's loan supports the remodeling of the food manufacturing facility and business incubator that will serve 30% more food clients totaling 200 annually by 2010.

Cascadia Revolving Fund

\$15,000 for 5 years at 3%

The Cascadia Fund focuses on providing loans and technical assistance to small businesses and non-profit organizations that often do not have access to traditional sources of support such as banks. Specifically, they lend to businesses owned by low-income people, minorities, women, and immigrants; childcare businesses; businesses in rural communities; businesses that create family-wage jobs in low-income communities; non-profit organizations; and cooperatives.

Cooperative Fund of New England

\$15,000 for 5 years at 3%

CFNE advances community based, cooperative and democratically owned or managed enterprises with preference to those that serve low income communities through: provision of prompt financial assistance at reasonable rates; provision of investment opportunity that promotes socially responsible enterprise; development of a regional reservoir of business skills with which to assist and advise these groups.

Lakota Fund

\$17,000 for 5 years at 3%

The Lakota Fund provides technical assistance and loan capital to established or expanding small businesses owned by resident members of the Oglala Sioux tribe who currently do not have any access to credit and whose local economy on the Pine Ridge Reservation is almost nil.

North Country Development Loan Fund

\$15,000 for 5 years at 3%

NCDF is a cooperative owned and operated financial intermediary that exists to act as a catalyst for the development and growth of cooperatives. They offer a means to pool surplus funds from co-ops and socially motivated institutions and individuals for reinvestment in the community. They provide access to capital to a range of small consumer, worker, housing and agricultural producer cooperatives across 11 states of the Upper Midwest.

Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative

\$14,000 for 5 years at 3%

WWBIC is a non-profit, statewide economic development corporation with an emphasis on low-wealth individuals, women, and people of color. They provide loans and access to other capital, individualized business assistance, quality business education and financial awareness education programming. OSCA's loan is used to create opportunities for people who are economically disadvantaged to achieve economic independence and to address the needs of women of racial or ethnic minorities.

Iris Hunt, Financial Manager

WHAT'S NEWS WITH YOU?

*New Address? New Job? Just want to say hello?
We'd love to hear from you . . .*

Name: _____

Co-op(s) & Year(s): _____

Your News: _____

Change of Address: _____

Comments: _____

YES! I want to support OSCA

I can offer a winter term project
specify: _____

I can offer an internship, job or housing
specify: _____

I'd like to visit or speak at an OSCA event
specify: _____

Other: _____
specify: _____

Here is my donation to support:

OSCA Alumni News

Financial Scholarship Fund

Nicaragua Sister Partnership Project

Other: _____

Please make check payable to OSCA.

Note from the OSCA Treasurer:

*Did you know that if you donate money to
Oberlin College you can specify that it go to OSCA?
Support OSCA's mission at Oberlin College!*

Oberlin Student Cooperative Association
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