

The Plainfield Co-op

Spring 2014

Marching Forward



Plainfield 4th of July parade, 1976 (Bread & Puppet)

Hours: 7 days a week 9AM–8PM

Phone: 454-8579 **Website:** www.PlainfieldCoop.com

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Photo credits

4th of July parade: Henry Bissex
Old Home Day: Kristin Brosky

Newsletter Advertising Specifications

RATES		
Page Size	Single Insertion	4 Insertions (prepaid) 20% discount
Full Page	\$75	\$240
Half Page	\$50	\$160
Quarter Page	\$25	\$80

Copy Deadlines:

May 5 for the Summer Issue

Send check made out to **Plainfield Co-op** when your copy is submitted
Ad copy and payment should be submitted to:

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Fresh Organic Pies

Horse Drawn Rides

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About This Newsletter

It's hard to find anything but good news here. Our finances are up, we have great foods on our shelves,

the Community Center is humming, and equity payments are piling up so we are now positioned to look ahead to improvements to our building. We are indeed marching forward.

Note that this month's recipes are in honor of Pete Seeger, who led many of us forward, singing.

The newsletter committee is still looking for someone who can handle advertising, help create or procure art work, and bring some new ideas to our congenial quarterly meetings. Not

an onerous job. If interested, contact any member of the committee listed below.

We also appreciate your feedback, letters, and art work. Deadline for the summer issue is May 5, 2014. Do you, or your kids, have a drawing, photo or other art-work you'd like to see on our cover? Or little sketches suggestive of summer to decorate our pages? Send to glenda@bissex.net.

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Karen Starr, staff liaison and writer (802-249-2301)

Debra Stoleroff, editing and recipes (476-3154)

Our thanks to Erika Farnham for her help in getting our printed newsletters ready to go into the mail. ♦



Plainfield 4th of July parade, 1976 (Hobo Band)

President's Report

by Gail Falk

This is my first report to you, the members, as President of the Co-op Board. I took over as president in November after Chris Jackson finished his term.

Let me start by telling you a bit about myself. My husband Strat and I moved to Plainfield from Montpelier almost five years ago because we wanted to have a big garden and live in a beautiful place. From the first time we visited, the Plainfield Co-op became our go-to place to shop. We loved its comfortable feeling and manageable size. I became a working member and have continued to work one or two hours per week in the produce section for most of the last four years. I love watching our produce labels turn from yellow (from far away) to white (local!) as the seasons change. I love meeting our local farmers as they bring us the first rhubarb and fiddleheads and asparagus in the spring, and the stalwarts who bring us celeriac and potatoes and parsnips to get us through the winter.

In 2010 the Board needed new members, and I decided to give it a try. I had a lot of experience with local, non-profit organizations, but knew nothing at all about the retail grocery business. The main thing I've learned over the past three plus years is how difficult it is to run a small grocery store nowadays. Wholesale prices fluctuate wildly and favor big stores. Margins are very tight. Keeping up with freshness and preventing spoilage require skill and constant vigilance. A store like ours needs to be dependable (you want to

know there will be eggs and milk and bread when you dash in on your way home), but customers also crave novelty. Our customers tend to be passionate about what they want to eat – passionately different! Some of us will only eat organic; some of us won't eat meat; some of us hate to cook and want prepared food; some of us (I'm one) are passionate locavores.

As a community grocery, we take seriously our responsibility to offer food that people with low incomes can afford. Yet it continues to be a sad reality that in our country at this time, the term "affordable locally produced healthy food" is almost an oxymoron. Our buyers struggle every day with the challenge of finding affordable healthy products for us.

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Plainfield 4th of July parade, 1976

Equity: Off and Running Well

by Joseph Gainza

“It’s off to a running start, it’s great.” That’s how Mike Peabody responded to my question about how the shift from a dues paying to equity membership model has fared one month after its inception at the Co-op.

Mike, a member of the Management Collective and the “Link” between the MC and the Co-op Board, cautioned that it is too soon to say definitively whether the move to equity has been the primary driver in a spike in memberships and unusually strong sales in January. But he believes that “the presence of equity has made people newly invested in the Co-op.” The up-tick in membership Mike sees as a sign that people “want to own it.”

Equity “adds value” to Co-op membership as members build toward higher end of year dividends each time they shop. Mike also pointed out that if the board decides that some of the profit be plowed back into the Co-op, rather than distributed to the members as dividends, the value of the Co-op rises and therefore also the value of every equity share.

The Co-op Building Committee met recently to plan for a basement to roof survey to assess maintenance and expansion needs over the next several years—see Gail Falk’s article “This Old House” on page 10 in this newsletter. They will also be looking at the possibility of making the upstairs Community Center accessible. All this will cost money, lots of it, so the board, in conjunction with the Building Committee, the MC, and interested

member/owners will be considering how to use the income provided by sale of equity shares, and other capitalization sources to improve the physical plant of the Co-op and thus increase share value.

But that’s down the road some; right now things are looking good. January sales were “stronger than ever” Mike reported. Equity contributions this year, compared to dues for last year, are nearly 50% higher, he added. And member head count is “way ahead.” Mike thinks this is partly attributable to members having the option to pay for their equity share all at once or at the rate of \$20.00 per year, or more if they so choose.

When asked for the downside of equity, Mike had to think. Finally he did say that some members, who needed only to renew their membership, mistakenly signed up as new members. They then had to fill out the new membership form and were at first counted twice as a member. This is being cleared up but Mike wants us to know that if we were members in 2013, all we have to do is pay a minimum of \$20.00 before March 31 to be a member/owner in 2014. If there is a change in your information (new address, phone number, etc.) then you will need to fill out a form so the changes can be made in the Co-op database.

Of course, if you encounter problems, or if you have questions, please contact a member of the Board Equity committee: Bob Fancher, Scott Harris, or me. Our contact information is on page 2. ♦

Our \$1,000,000 Co-op! *by Bob Fancher*

WE DID IT! The year-end results for 2013 are in and our sales for the year exceeded \$1,000,000 for the first time.

Thanks to all our members and customers who helped to make it possible. And, congratulations to our staff who worked so hard to get us there. Reaching this milestone shows us that our Co-op is financially healthy and growing.

There are more signs that we are getting healthier, too:

- We ended the year with a profit of over \$24,000 which we can put to good use improving our building and services this coming year.
- We were able to pay off a substantial portion of a loan we had with the Co-operative Fund of New England.
- The amount of money we owe our suppliers went down over 17% during 2013.
- The year-end numbers also show that the Management Collective had

forecasted our sales to within 3% of the actual numbers. Having an accurate budget is critical to financial success and this is another sign of our Co-op's growing financial health.

The Management Collective and staff worked hard in 2013 to implement the Point-of-Sale system. Our customers see the system as the bar code scanners and new computers that make check-out much faster. But, there are many more benefits that are not as visible. The system gives us a detailed view of what items are selling and our inventory levels. The MC can use that information to make more informed business decisions about our products.

Thanks again to our members and staff for making 2013 a successful year. Now, it is time to look ahead to 2014. The Management Collective and the Board of Directors are working to make it an even better year! ♦

LittleWood Farm
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Spring Greenhouse Sale:
May 10th - June 22nd



How to Run a Food Co-op! *by Karen Starr*

I've been a member of many Food Co-ops over the years and worked as staff at several. Each community has its own style and of course Plainfield Co-op is no exception! At various times, the store has had a general manager or coordinator, but for the last 4 or 5 years management has been the responsibility of a collective of staff who've come together both formally and ad hoc to ensure the Co-op is healthy and successful. In this short piece I'll try to outline how the Management Collective works beginning with a bit of an overview.

For the Co-op to run effectively, four groups need to work well together: the Membership, the Board, the Staff, and the Management Collective. There is a fairly complex give and take between all four that makes it difficult to say any one of them has the upper hand in matters, but generally speaking and especially with the new equity model, the Membership owns the store and entrusts the Board to ensure that the store is managed prudently and for the benefit of the equity holders and community. The Board monitors the performance of the Management Collective through the use of a Policy Governance model. This requires both the Board and the Collective to periodically report on their success in meeting agreed upon criteria that indicate healthy fiscal performance and adherence to the goals of the Membership, among other things.

The Management Collective is comprised of staff who have been employed by the Co-op for a minimum of 9 months and have shown a willingness

to take on increasing responsibility for the operation of the store. Staff may become part of the Management Collective by application and must be approved unanimously by the existing collective team. Decisions by the Board and Management Collective are made by consensus, with very few exceptions.

The Management Collective holds staff meetings one or two times a month. Any other interested staff are welcome to attend. Here we thrash out decisions that need full collective discussion or we may send something off to a committee to finalize with our blessing or bring back to the full group after needed research. There are also standing committees of the Management Collective; these include Finance, Personnel, and Buyers. In addition there are ad hoc committees that meet occasionally and only as needed such as the Hiring committee and the Strategic Planning committee. We also have Outreach, Maintenance, Community Center, and Collective Coordinators. In addition there are Management Collective representatives to the Building committee and the Newsletter Committee as well as a Collective Management Liaison to the Board. All of the management pieces interface more or less organically as needed depending on the issue at hand, as well as what is going on in the Co-op at the time. The flexibility of the management structure is a particular strength, given that all members of the Management Collective are part time.

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What's New on the Shelves?

by Nancy Ellen

In the beer and wine department, it's all about hard cider these days! I can barely keep up with all the new brands and varieties that seem to be popping up almost overnight. We've been carrying Citizen Cider's products for less than a year, but they are already going strong, and they are always playing with new flavors and techniques (and with great success, I might add). We've got a full line of their ciders—Full Nelson (dry-hopped), The Dirty Mayor (lemon ginger), Cidre Bourgeois (crisp organic), Americran (cranberry), BRose (blueberry), and of course their flagship Unified Press, which is now available in cans as well as bombers. The Citizen folks have also started selling us a great new beverage made down in Greenfield, MA called Ginger Libation, a delicious and unique ginger wine. If you like ginger, be sure to give this a try!

You may be familiar with Boyden Valley's ice wines and cider which usually show up in the Co-op around the holidays, but recently they've also started making a barrel aged hard cider of their own, which is quite reasonably priced—check it out!

Champlain Orchards has added a honeycrisp cider to their offerings which is very good—we're selling it in 750 ml. bottles. We're happy to have Artesano Mead's raspberry mead back on the shelf (my favorite) plus one of their newer meads, a sparkling cranberry.

We have a few new beers at the moment (well, I always try to have at least one or two new beers!)—the new Shed

Nosedive, a vanilla porter 22 oz., is my current favorite. Shed is planning on doing rotating varieties in this size, so hopefully this is a sign of more good things to come. For the gluten-free folks, we have Harvester back in the cooler. For the hopheads—High Res from Sixpoint. We've also picked up a couple of beers from Caldera, an Oregon brewery that gets great reviews. But of course by the time you read this, I may have completely different beers in the cooler!

In the meat department, we are starting to carry VT Salumi's products more regularly, instead of sporadically. This has been made easier by the fact that Pete Colman has actually LOWERED his prices—as his production has become more streamlined, his costs have gone down, and in an almost unheard of move, he has decided to pass those savings along to all of us—what a concept, huh? They've also added two new flavors—Rosemary and Red, and Bello (mushroom)—which is great, unless you happened to be a fan of the 2 flavors that were discontinued: maple breakfast and Great Expectations. I know some of the staff have been sad about that last one going away. In any case, the next time you see Pete, be sure to thank him for making his delicious sausages more affordable! Also on the affordable meat front, we've just started carrying a great product from North Country—4-5 lb. packages of applewood smoked bacon ends and pieces for under \$20 (the current price is \$15.55). What a deal!!

continued on next page

Herbs as You Like Them

by Dorothy Wallace

People want what they want when it comes to herbs and spices. Turns out there are some very strong opinions about cinnamon—some like it hot and some like it mild. We now carry both Sweet and Cassia varieties. We carry smoked paprika and chili flakes along with the standard. Onion comes in powder or chopped; garlic comes in powder, chopped, or minced.

Even though choices abound in our little herb cabinet, the world of herbs and spices is enormous—especially given the explosion of interest in global cuisines. So how do we decide what to carry? Bottom line—it has to sell. If it takes a year to sell a jar of something,

it's time to discontinue it. If a product is suggested again and again, it's time to bring it in. The suggestion box on the coffee and tea bar is an effective way to send the message.

Another great tool members of the Co-op have is special ordering. If we don't carry what you need, you can special order a pound at a time (split with a friend?). Depending on the variety and the source, many varieties will arrive within a couple of weeks and others will take longer. Leave your order with a Co-op staffer and I will get back to you with the particulars. We'll do our best to help you get what you want. ♦

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Fermented foods. Gillfeather Sauerkraut from right here in Plainfield has returned to the shelves with a classy new label. We have their caraway and curry flavors, and we also finally have Blackwell Roots's kimchi back in stock—yay! I personally am missing Michelle's kimchi from Craftsbury, which was my favorite, but she has ceased production for now. Miso fans will already be aware of Rhapsody's sweet white miso, which they started producing last year; they have now added mellow red miso to their offerings.

Mochi. I am occasionally asked whether we stock mochi in the store, and I can now answer yes to mochi lovers—assorted flavors, in the freezer, all for you!! ♦



Plainfield Old Home Day, 2013 Co-op float

This Old House *by Gail Falk*

Our Co-op building is like many vintage Vermont houses. Our mortgage is paid off, we've become comfortable in it, and its walls hold memories and the imprint of much history. But like those old houses, there are parts of it that are wearing out, and other parts are not adapted to our modern uses and energy sources. Plus, our family is growing, and sometimes it feels too small.

Motivated by the need for long-range capital planning because of our transition to equity payments, we are embarking on a process to come up with a ten-year plan for our building. The process will be led by our Building Committee. We are very fortunate to have a Building Committee whose core members have a long history with our building; many are themselves skilled builders.

Several years ago, when our Co-op was in its greatest turmoil, there were many ideas for housing the store. Some wanted to sell our building and buy another, such as the Red Store or Maple Valley. Others wanted to build anew from the ground up. The third direction was to upgrade our existing building. The board and membership chose at that time to

renovate our current building, and much work has been done in recent years, including heat, insulation, front and back of store renovation and new bathroom.

The Board, the Management Collective, and the Building Committee are all in agreement that, at this time, we will stay that course. Our ten-year plan will be a plan to continue to repair and renovate our current building.

The first step will be a top-to-bottom building inspection, to be conducted this winter, under the supervision of the Building Committee. The inspection will identify problems that exist now or that may arise in the near future (for instance, the roof may be okay now, but the inspectors may predict it will need to be replaced in a few years).

As we look at the maintenance needs of the building, we will also be thinking about how we want to improve or change the building in the coming years so that we can budget for this. For that, we want your ideas and proposals. How would you most like to see the building renovated? What are your priorities? At this point, we are looking for your ideas and proposals. In a few months, we will be seeking a few key proposals that we can develop with detailed cost elements to be presented to the membership. Please send your proposals for the building in writing to Allen Banbury <mathman2009@yahoo.com>, chair of the Building Committee, and to me, Gail Falk <gailfalk@gmail.com>, chair of the Board. We'll keep you posted! ♦



Eat More Bread *by Kristin Brosky*

What do you call a loaf of bread when you've cut off both ends?
Endless bread!

Ba-dum-dum!

Here at the Plainfield Co-op bakery department we've been working to supply our customers with endless bread or at least with a hearty selection of grainy goodness on any given day. All of the bread that we offer is locally baked so it's wonderfully fresh. Come in on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday and just TRY to resist the aroma of Whizzo Bagels! Swing by Thursday on your way home and grab a four pack of Klingers Bakery croissants to surprise your family with for breakfast or dinner, always a hit at my house! Friday morning we stock the bread shelves to the ceiling to ensure that there's bread on your table all weekend. It really is a sight to behold, more bread than you can shake a baguette at, all displayed in style on our new—PURPLE!—bread racks. Next time you run into Ian Maas, give him a big hug, hearty handshake, a clap on the back, and thank him for building us those gorgeous shelves! He certainly



Plainfield Old Home Day, 2013

has a talent for making the functional beautiful!

Swing by soon and check out our new Sweet Treats display on the coffee bar. You'll find pies, pastries, sweet breads, brownies, and cookies to enjoy with your hot coffee or tea. We're happy to have brought in new items, too! Nora's Noshes offers scrumptious baklava, Graham's Baked Goods of E. Montpelier fills our baskets with delicious scones and pumpkin bread, and, as many of you diehard donut fans have already discovered, we now carry Joyce Fowler's practically-perfect-in-every-way Buttermilk Donuts!

It's winter, go ahead and give over to that urge to EAT MORE BREAD! Yum. ♦

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Report, *continued from page 4*

Once a year the Board evaluates the performance of the Management Collective, the nine staff who work together to manage the operations of the store. We don't evaluate them as individuals, but as a group. In our annual evaluation last month we concluded that it has been a very good year for the Co-op. Our financial situation has improved from precarious to stable. Membership and sales have grown. We were able to pay off part of one of our loans early. Staff have implemented and become skilled at using our Point of Sale (POS) computer check-out and sales management system. The Management Collective drew up and have started to implement a three-year Strategic Plan; early evidences of that are our new coffee counter (thanks, Sam Clark), our corner herb and tea

shelves (thanks, Doni Cain), new bread shelves (thanks, Ian Maas), and our beautiful new sign out front. Allen Banbury also helped with these projects. The staff have accomplished a seamless transition from membership dues to the new equity payment system we members voted to adopt.

As we look to the year to come, one of our challenges as a Board is to develop a plan to use your equity payments wisely. Elsewhere in the Newsletter, I have described the process we will be using to look at our long-range building needs. We welcome—no, we really want—your thoughts about the building and about our Co-op's direction overall. Please contact me (gailfalk@gmail.com, 802 777-0528) or any of the other six Board members with your ideas. ♦



Recipes from Debra Stoleroff



In honor of Pete Seeger, one of the inspirational/influential people in my life and countless others, I have gone back to the *Clearwater Cookbook** (a compilation of recipes from various Clearwater cooks, including yours truly) and the *Pumpkin Crazy Cookbook* by Erik Knud-Hansen (the Clearwater's

Pumpkin Sail cookbook) to get recipes for this issue of the Co-op newsletter. As Pete would say, "It's time to keep carrying on..." or, as we so coincidentally titled this issue—keep *Marching Forward*.

Clearwater Tempeh Sandwich Salad

From the *Clearwater Cookbook*; contributed by Annie Wynn, Boston, MA
"...a boat staple and great for an easy introduction to balanced vegetarian meals. The "tempeh sandwich salad" can be made far in advance...You can add absolutely anything to the basic mix—good to recycle those refrigerator leftovers."

Serves 20

5 lbs tempeh

1 cup plain lowfat yogurt

8-10 stalks celery (chopped)

1½ cup tofu mayonnaise (or regular mayo)

6 tsp. mustard

½ to 1 cup relish

pepper to taste

1. Steam tempeh for 10 to 20 minutes. It helps to dice the tempeh prior to steaming.
2. Mix in large bowl with the rest of the ingredients. Try adding walnuts, onions, peppers (red or green), herbs, other compatible veggies, tahini (substitute for ¼ cup of the yogurt).
3. Stuff into whole wheat pitas, or your favorite bread.

*See more recipes from the *Clearwater Cookbook* and *Pumpkin Crazy Cookbook* on pages 15, 16 & 18.

Cheese that Pleases

by Mike Peabody, *cheese herder**

I'm still refining the selection and trying to stabilize the offerings. I've added a delicious Danish blue cheese at a great price. It's very tart and crumbles so nicely. But the pursuit of the perfect "bleu" made me realize something about the way our store offers cheese. Rotations of more and wider varietal cheeses work for fromagerie-style settings but the truth of our store is that we mostly sell "sammich cheese" like provolone and sharp cheddars for sandwiches and snacks. The ridiculous markups that make boutiques viable don't work here and so we offer our triple creams, quark, and cave-aged cheddar free of costly pretense.

One other project I've been exploring is the idea of labeling GMO-free cheese which isn't organic. Genetically Modified Organisms are a noteworthy subject and between surveys and casual conversations, it's obvious that is just as true for our members. Manufacturers and processors of many foods are choosing to label as Non-GMO verified, in lieu of organic certification, which is more strict but still precludes GMO's from their ingredient sourcing. Even Cheerios are going over to non-GMO oats. So I figured finding non-GMO cheese would be a snap. Nope. It turns out, and according to Mark Kastel of

the agribusiness watchdog group, Cornucopia, that almost no dairies or cheesemakers verify non-GMO, opting for either straight organic labeling, hormone-free, or nothing at all. It's not worth the effort and expense for them, he says. While we can be reasonably sure that imported cheeses don't use GMO's (they are banned in the EU, UK, and many other places), it's much harder to say for domestics. For all intents and purposes, assume that the only cheeses in our store which are definitely, absolutely free from GMO's are the organics.

On a seasonal note, as we get deeper into winter and towards spring, sheep and goat cheese will become less common from small producers like Woodcock and Lazy Lady. The milk needed to make these cheeses is less common, more expensive, and produced in smaller volumes. By this point in the cheesemaking season, it's mostly cow milk in many products. But don't despair. Classics like Roquefort and Pecorino Romano are sheep cheeses and Vermont Creamery (formerly Vermont Butter & Cheese) has a steady supply of chevre to meet your needs. It's the short-run specialties like Petite Tomme which are disappearing until after the new milk comes in, sometime in mid-spring ♦

*In addition to managing the cheese department (and soon developing our deli offerings), Mike manages the rental and scheduling functions of the Community Center. He also serves as Link, the go-between for the Board and Management Collective. AND he does office work and basic administrative duties, serving as IT and sometime Membership Coordinator. Whew!

Garlic Primavera Sauce

From the *Clearwater Cookbook*; contributed by Debra Stoleroff, Plainfield, VT

Serves many

¼ to ½ stick butter

at least 1 whole bulb (not clove) of garlic (minced)

6 large onions

12 to 15 mushrooms sliced

6 small-medium zucchini (quartered and sliced)

3 yellow summer squash

8 large tomatoes (chopped)

½ cup olive oil

½ to 1 cup water

¼ cup nutritional yeast

Salt and pepper to taste

In a large pot, sauté onions and garlic in butter.

Add vegetables in the order listed. Sauté each vegetable for a minute or two before adding the next vegetable.

Stir in the oil, water, yeast, salt and pepper. Cook until veggies are tender, but not mushy.

Serve over pasta. ♦

How to Run a Co-op,
continued from page 7

We are also fortunate to have one of the most convivial Board/Management relationships of any Co-op I have worked at. Of course disagreements and difficulties come up from time to time, but even when they do the focus is always on finding solutions and serving the Membership. That for me is one of the great pleasures of working at Plainfield Co-op! ♦



Produce Update

by Steve Bosserman

The Produce Department is having a wonderful winter. Vegetables from California and Florida have been vastly improved over last year's damaged and expensive produce. An early freeze in California did damage much of the citrus crop, but that has been balanced by a bumper crop of local apples which continue in very good availability and quality. We are also able to stock other local items ranging from carrots to pea sprouts. A sure sign that spring is approaching is the arrival of High Mowing Seeds that can be found next to the cash registers. ♦

Correction: Art Chickering, new Board member

Apologies to Art for inadvertently cutting off the last few words of his bio in the last issue. Here's his complete statement:



Jo and I, with our children Alan, Susan, Peri, and Nancy, were members of the Co-op when it first started in 1972. We helped with “breakdowns,” cutting up large rounds of cheese, dividing up nuts, raisins, and other orders, while we slapped the kids’ hands as they reached for morsels. We left our home at the dead end of what became Chickering Rd. in 1977 and returned in 1996. We have long identified with Co-op values and their associated political and social activism. Until recently I have been heavily involved in domestic and international professional commitments. Now I am free to get

more involved locally and appreciate the opportunity to contribute whatever I can to this long standing community enterprise. ♦

Pumpkin and Orange Soup

the *Pumpkin Crazy Cookbook* by Erik Knud-Hansen

with forward by Pete Seeger



Serves about 6

2 Tbs. butter

1 onion

2 cups orange juice

¼ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. pepper)

2½ cups pumpkin puree

¼ tsp nutmeg

½ tsp ground fennel seed (or try dill)

1 cup light cream

grated orange peels (grate until white of orange shows)

Wash the oranges well, grate and peel. Then squeeze the juice. Two oranges should be sufficient.

Heat butter in a saucepan. Add chopped onion and cook until tender. Mix in the remaining ingredients (except the cream) and simmer for 30 minutes.

Lower the heat and slowly add the cream, making sure the mixture does not boil. Serve immediately.

Busy, Busy Community Center

by Mike Peabody

The Plainfield Community Center is busier than I've seen it in years. I hope everyone's been enjoying it as much as I.

If you've been around the store during the midday in the last month and heard a noise upstairs like a small horse race, that's the Eurhythmy group from Central Vermont High School Initiative. It's been great having them for January, as they breathe so much life and excitement into the space. We're excited, too, to hear they are planning on returning in March. They do adult classes in the evenings, from time to time, so check in with them (cvhsi.org) to see when the next one will be.

Aikido and the return of Amy Leventhal's Boot Camp have given us a very full calendar recently. In fact, Aikido with Petra just picked up a second slot, Tuesdays at 3:15, just in time to catch the afterschool set. The stalwarts like Shape Note Singing and ecstatic dance keep things steady, in terms of monthly events.

It's also important to mention the return of the Workshops at the Co-op. So far, we've had two baking workshops (one gluten-free, one whole-grain), a detox workshop, and the solstice sing-along. Donations are requested for Co-op workshops, which go to the people who are offering them. Attendance is essential to keeping these lovely events in play. If you have a workshop or training you want to host for the benefit of your Co-op community, please call for Karen at the store. Leave a message with your phone number.

A Poetry Slam was held upstairs for the first time in my memory. I'm just surprised that no one had done it, yet. The space's natural acoustics make for awesome small-scale oratory. By accounts, the slam was productive and invigorating. I am finding little poems left in the foyer. I have heard the organizers, Eliza and Ira, will put together another one. Grateful Dead Dances are still happening but they usually don't end up on the calendar. If you are interested, give a call and someone may be around who can tell you when the next one will be. These are the kinds of events which are served well by word-of-mouth.

The Community Center recently hosted a fundraiser event for East Montpelier farmer (and occasional Co-op member) Graham Unangst-Rufenacht, who was recently heavily fined by the Department of Agriculture for an infraction involving on-farm slaughter. The event was a smashing success, with musical, puppetry, and theatre performances by

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Andrea Young's Famous Congo Squares

From the *Clearwater Cookbook*;
contributed by Laura Snyder,
Astoria, OR

"This recipe was passed to me from another cook who had worked with Andrea aboard the Schooner Roseway in Maine. Andrea...was the originator of many, many quick, delicious boat and woodstove workable recipes..."

Makes 15-20 squares

Sift together and place to the side:

2½ cups flour

2½ tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. salt

In a saucepan, melt:

¾ cups butter or margarine

2¼ cups brown sugar

When melted, remove from heat and add:

3 eggs (one at a time, beating well after each addition)

Add dry ingredients (the flour, baking powder, salt). Mix well.

Add:

6 oz. chocolate chips

1 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Spread batter evenly into 1 greased 9x13 inch pan and bake 25 minutes at 350° or in a wood stove medium oven until sides pull away and tops are golden.

It is easy to overbake these. Better to pull them early, as they will continue to bake in the pan as they cool, than late and have them dry and hard.

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talented, passionate folks, including a moving speech from Alan LePage, members of Vermont Vaudeville, and RPM Puppet Conspiracy. There was also a great band, Mostly Hank, doing, well, mostly Hank. Thanks to your support, Graham raised enough to pay his fine, with enough left over to cover some of his cost for the meat he is not legally allowed to sell.

Lisa Moroz and Miriam Bernardo had a winter concert of folk songs, along with Aliza LaPaglia and Anais Mitchell, on December 20th. The Central Vermont High School Initiative also had a presentation of wintery melodies, the night before, and the Co-op hosted a Solstice Sing the following Sunday. It's a sing-along time of year, I see. We should have more holidays which involve music as integrally. And cookies.

The last trunk sale was held upstairs on February 1st, with more to come, as I understand it, until the farmer's market starts in June. These are really beautiful events, with great products (like tinctures and fibrecrafts) and wonderful vendors, some of whom you may not see much during the winter months. Try to visit at least one and you will be pleased.

Lately, I've noticed a particular upswing in rentals for one specific purpose: private parties. I'm not sure if this is caused by the closure of the Plainfield Town Hall for its repairs or if it really is (as I believe) just the best place to have a shindig. I have to reiterate that if you have a large function, private or no, the parking lot nearest the building is really

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just for loading equipment/decorations, etc. and not for parking your cars while in attendance. The fire chief has indicated that their designated spaces have been blocked or used up by Community Center attendees and, as a result, they are concerned for increased risk in an emergency. The municipal lot is used by the Co-op at the discretion of the town; our mutual responsibility is very important for both the Community Center and the Co-op. Please make sure people coming to your event know this and plan accordingly.

A very generous donation was made to the Community Center, just following the New Year. I want to thank the anonymous donor. It will go a long way toward revamping the Center's sound system, and will combine with the John Wires Memorial donations to provide us with a projector, thus granting us audio/visual capacities for events, showings, and performances.

Finally, on a less lively note, locks will be installed on the doors to the storage area (AKA the Gamelan Room/Allen Banbury Room). This has been some time in coming. While it makes me

unhappy to do it, renters have experienced vandalism and theft of their belongings held here at the Co-op quite a bit in the last several months. As the space sees more use, it is almost inevitable that it sees more misuse. And when we get new equipment like projectors and microphones, they can't be just left where people may walk off with them. That's being disrespectful to the donations and love which have made the purchase of those things possible. So, if you have items stashed away up there and you aren't a regular renter, you should come talk to me about other options for keeping your stuff around, if you absolutely can't take it home. And if you need to borrow our chairs for any reason, you are still welcome to ask. We'll just have to find someone with a key to let you in to get them.

As always, see our web calendar for more details on events and contacts. Or check in the lobby of the Co-op.

Note: The Community Center financial numbers are included in the overall Co-op numbers. They show up as 'other income' and 'other expenses.' The net income from the Center was about \$1800 last year. ♦

PLAINFIELD COMMUNITY CENTER



Space available for your:

**Classes
Meetings
Parties**



Workshops

Art Gallery Exhibitions & Special Events

\$9/hr. for Co-op Members, \$15/hr. for Non-Members

Events: \$35 for Members, \$50 for Non-Members

Scheduling Book at Co-op Register

More Information? Call Mike Peabody 454-8579

Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op