

The Plainfield Co-op

Winter 2014–2015

Looking Back



Looking Ahead



*What has the Co-op
accomplished?*

*Where is the Co-op
heading?*



Hours: 7 days a week 9AM–8PM

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

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Karen Starr
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Margie Yoder
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Newsletter Advertising Specifications

RATES		
Page Size	Single Insertion	4 Insertions (prepaid) 20% discount
Full Page	\$75	\$240
Half Page	\$30	\$160
Quarter Page	\$25	\$80

Copy Deadlines:

February 5 for the Winter Issue

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

Sarah Albert, Ad Coordinator
900 Gonyeau Road
Plainfield VT 05667

Electronic graphics files preferred, but we are able to work with any clear copy.

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Fresh Organic Pies

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At the end of 2014 now, we are looking both back at what the Co-op has accomplished, and forward to our plans and ideas for the year/s ahead. The Annual Meeting is always an occasion to do this. If you missed the meeting, you can catch up on some of the presentations and discussion by reading this newsletter.

We are grateful to Jerrie Nash for providing the art for this issue.

Do you read this newsletter? In print ? Online? Do you check the Co-op Facebook page? The website? What do you want to know about the Co-op? A

About This Newsletter

Communications Committee with representatives from the board, management collective, staff, newsletter committee, and membership will be meeting to consider such questions. We need YOUR input!

The Newsletter Committee:

Glenda Bissex, co-ordinator (454-7895)

Sarah Albert, design and layout (476-0526)

Joseph Gainza, board liason and editing (522-2376)

Karen Starr, staff liaison and writer (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. ♦

Looking Back, Looking Forward

President's report (Annual Meeting 2014) by Gail Falk

It's been a fine year for the Co-op. Our top accomplishment has been the smooth and successful implementation of our transition to Equity. Besides the work carried out by the Management Team to get the POS (computer) system ready to keep track of equity payments and train the cashier staff, the Board developed implementation policies and a multi-year capital budget. By March or April 2015 the Board will have final 2014 financial figures, and we will be able to determine the amount of the dividend we can pay members. Members will receive a check or register credit this spring.

To give us the information we needed for the capital budget, our Building Committee did a Toe-to-Tip review of our building last spring. On balance, they learned that the building is structurally sound. We are planning to remain in our building for the foreseeable future. And now we have a five-year-plan for making the most important repairs and upgrades. Your equity payments, together with the Building Committee's thorough information, make it possible for us to do this in a planful fashion.

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The Board's practical accomplishments this year included the following:

- Boundary agreements with Town and Kerrin McCadden
- Restructuring our loan with the Cooperative Fund of New England (credit for this goes to the MC)
- Reviewing the comprehensive new personnel policy
- Working with the MC to develop a policy on responding to disruptive customers.
- Approving a plan for staff raises (credit for the planning and for the operations savings that made this possible goes to the MC)

Throughout the year, the Board had numerous conversations about how to improve communication with our members, customers and the public. We started posting our minutes on the bulletin board with a link on the website. We value the thoughtfulness and quality of the Newsletter, but we don't know how many of our members actu-

ally read it. We wonder if we should do more with electronic media. We wonder what our members want to know. To really dig into these questions, we have established a Communication Committee, which will start meeting in the new year.

Other concerns include our declining level of volunteer participation, and, in particular, the inactivity of our Membership Committee—we are looking for a couple of energetic volunteers who can involve others in our Co-op.

Finally, as a Board, we keep our eyes on our Ends—are we meeting the purposes of the Co-op? Over the year we have had discussions about what we mean by "local" food, and also what we mean by "healthy." In the coming year we will be talking with the Management Collective about how to define and measure our new Ends. We told you about them earlier in the year, but, as a reminder, here they are:

The Plainfield Co-op will

1. Distribute healthy, affordable food and other goods
2. Actively seek local producers and growers, and support the local and regional economy.
3. Sustain the environment through its operations and the products it offers.
4. Increase awareness of cooperative principles and of other cooperative businesses.
5. Foster awareness about the quality and source of our food.
6. Build connections that are essential for a vibrant community. ♦

Treasurer's Report

by Bob Fancher

At the end of the third quarter of 2014, the year-to-date numbers are still looking good.

The third quarter Sales were up 2.5% over 2013's third quarter. The year-to-date Sales are up 4.3% over last year thanks to a very strong first quarter this year. Our Gross Profit (the Total Income minus the Cost of Goods Sold) for 2014 is still ahead of last year by 5.8% which is excellent. If we keep going like this through the fourth quarter, 2014 will exceed 2013.

While our Sales and Gross Profit are going up, our Total Expenses (the non-product related expenses) have been reduced 7.2% from 2013. Those expenses cover the cost of running the Co-op including utilities, labor costs, insurance and fees. Thanks to the Management Collective and the staff for all their cost reduction efforts.

Bottom line for this quarter: We are still growing sales and profit and we are still cutting expenses. The second and third quarters showed a little slowing of the growth but overall we are headed for another record year.

We have worked very hard to reduce the amount we owe our suppliers, and tremendous progress has been made. As of October 31, we are overdue to our suppliers by only \$2,216. And all of the overdue is less than 15 days late. Because of timing and other factors, we will never reach \$0 overdue (nobody does), but as of now we are close to solving our overdue payment problem.

Thanks again to the Management Collective for their fine job.

We are headed into the fourth quarter, the 'home stretch' for the year. All of our financial measures are looking very good for a strong finish to the year. 2014 was our first year for equity shares for members instead of the previous annual membership fees. Because all members are now part owners of the Co-op, they are all eligible for annual equity payments. After the year is complete, the Board of Directors will analyze the year-end profit and determine the amount of money, if any, to be returned to member-owners. We are very hopeful that we will be making equity payments early in 2015.

We can all be proud of the growing financial strength of the Co-op. As always, thanks to all our members for their continuing support. ♦



Management Report (from Annual Meeting)

by Mike Peabody

In terms of economic impact, the store has reached and exceeded the \$1M sales mark in 2013 and is set to increase over that amount in 2014. With wages now in line with budget and both expenses and cost of goods closely managed, the co-op is now seeing strong returns on its efforts. In addition to increased revenues, we are seeing a stronger profit margin, which in turn means dividends for members and more cash to be recycled into the business. It's almost weird to think about the way we used to stress about buying necessities like printer paper and bulk liquid containers even so recently as two years ago.

A notable and somewhat startling trend has emerged in the last year for our store and neighboring co-ops. Sales of bulk items, like nuts, grains, and dried products, have begun to slip into stale growth. In some cases, ours included, the overall picture is of declining sales

for these same items. Nationally, some 25% of all co-ops are experiencing some kind of withdrawal from what has been steady or even strong demand for bulk. It begs the question: Has the era of "buying in bulk" begun its decline? As commodity pricing on items like tree nuts and certain grains continues to balloon, owing to inclement growing conditions and demand overseas, obvious benefits of bulk-buying has diminished. At least, the sticker-shock of \$16/lb walnuts must play some role in this market shift. Another hypothesis which has been advanced is that bulk consumption was a phenomenon among the "Old Guard" of many of today's co-ops (referred to demographically as the "Second Wave") and is not being passed on to the younger generation of cooperators.

Owing to a pair of sizable but totally unexpected donations from very early in the year, the Community Center was able to buy both a new PA and a new digital projector. Both are remarkably useful pieces of equipment when describing what the Community Center has to offer renters and members who might want to show movies, have dances, or showcase other multi-media adventures. In the last year, we have been host to a variety of events and classes. Dance parties, birthdays, workouts, meetings, rehearsals, and even a Dave Rovics concert have been a part of the 2014 roster. Gallery shows continue.

The staff has adapted well to the point-of-sale system, now almost two



years into its installation. The benefits continue to be seen, week after week, and we wonder now what we ever did without it. We occasionally joke about the dread we feel were we required to resurrect the old registers. On an interesting point, we were asked earlier in the year by a longtime member as to whether or not we could tell him how much bulk honey he had purchased in the last few months. He was considering whether he had bought enough that he should special-order a much larger amount. The system handily provided the information he sought and, while we obviously don't advertise it as a member benefit, we welcome anyone to ask what insights the point-of-sale can provide regarding their buying habits if they think it might help them make better use of their co-op. You might learn more than think.

We welcomed Kathleen Hayes to the staff only a short time ago and she grew into the position of the Maintenance Coordinator, joining the Management Collective not long after. She is an experienced and dynamic carpenter and all-around tradesperson and we aren't

sure where we would be without her helping us navigate the nuances of day-to-day repair. You've probably seen her around, patching or hammering something or probably completing our new and very compliant access ramp. Please thank her for her great work and dedication to our co-op.

A review and revision of the 2012 Strategic Plan is currently happening. Some Plan Goals were completed while others were discarded in favor of more appropriate projects. Especially with the Building Survey done, the management sees the need for Goals which either address or at least support necessary, valuable needs for the co-op's largest physical component. A completed version of the Plan will be reviewed by the Board this winter. Members who are curious about what the future may hold for the store are welcome to request a copy. Or, better yet, join one of the great committees the Co-op needs to help get the work done.

Thank you all for a great year. It seems as though we have more to come. ♦

LittleWood Farm Plainfield, Vt. 802-454-8466

*Providing organic produce
to the community
since 1987*



Nuggets from the Annual Meeting

from Sue Chickering's minutes

- What is your favorite food to buy at the Co-op? Everyone at the meeting was asked this question. The answer is on page 10
- Produce is the Co-op's biggest seller, then groceries. Meat and fish are high as well.
- To address the ice coming off the roof, the Building Committee decided to install a new snow retention system. The Building Committee needs more members--the last meeting was attended by only 3 people! Input into the building plan is greatly appreciated as people see things that need improvement.
- Co-op member Michael Billingsley wondered whether it would be important to have an End (Goal)

related to a safe and supportive/equitable environment/workplace for the staff (living wage, health care, relationship between management and staff, etc.)

- Michael also asked how the Co-op can address foods that are organic but still have high levels of sugar and salt. Nancy Ellen responded that they try to buy things that have less sugar and salt while still being organic and locally grown.
- Joey Klein said he was unclear about who to go to with daily concerns or ideas for improvement. Nancy mentioned using the suggestion board or speaking to a staffer who is part of the Management Collective.
- Joey also raised the question of staff identifying themselves with name tags. Nancy responded that some staff feel strongly against this. A member suggested a poster board with staff photos and names.
- As a member, Mike Peabody urged considering voting by ballot. The concern is how to include the opinions of members beyond the small number present at the Annual Meetings. Much discussion pro and con.
- Board election: Gail Falk and Karla Haas Moskowitz were unanimously elected for three-year terms.
(See Karla's bio elsewhere in this newsletter.) ◆



Equity Committee Report

by Mike Peabody, Scott Harris, Joseph Gainza & Bob Fancher

Equity

- Starting Jan 1, 2014 we changed to an Equity structure for membership
- Each member now buys a share of the Co-op
- Each member is now a part owner
- As an owner, each member is eligible for dividends

Dividends

- Dividends are paid annually from the profit of the Co-op
- The Board of Directors determines how much of the profit is needed for capital improvements to the Co-op
- The remainder is issued as dividends
- Profit – Capital = Dividend Pool

Dividend calculation

- The Dividend Pool is divided between all the 500+ members

- Each member's dividend is based on how much they spent that year at the Co-op (less beer and wine)
- The more you spend, the higher your dividend
- Individual Member dividend = $(\text{Dividend Pool}) \div (\text{Total Sales by Members}) \times (\text{Member's purchases})$
For example: $(\$10,000) \div (\$500,000) \times (\$2,000) = \40

Dividend payments

- The 2014 Dividend payments will be made in early 2015, probably in March or April
- Members with dividends of \$10 or less will have their dividends credited to their Co-op account
- Other members will have their dividends sent as checks, to the address on file ◆



News from the Store

by Karen Starr

Probably most of you have noticed the new accessibility ramp at the store entrance. We're pleased to be replacing the old one which served us well for a long time, but was getting pretty rickety. Thanks, Kathleen. The ramp walkway is wider to meet accessibility codes and metal handrails will be added so people can actually have something to hang onto. We hope it makes it easier for folks with various challenges to get in the door. Keeping that in mind, we want to remind shoppers and members to please not leave offerings of clothing, books, or other items in the hallway as it can present a hazardous obstacle. Please take them to your favorite thrift store.

Although The Rassasy Food Cart is closed for the winter because Dena's hands were turning blue, we're pleased to be offering a small selection of her yummy gluten free cakes and other items. We also have some delightful new local herbal truffles on the counter from Healthy Mama to complement the treats from Amai Bijoux. Joyce Fowler's donuts remain a favorite item, especially with the cold weather. They go awfully good with coffee. For gluten free bakers, we now have almond flour in the baking section near the gluten free cake mixes. It's pricey, but we've had numerous requests, so come on in and buy it so we can keep it on the shelf. Jeannine has also been working to have more varieties of salsa available including a reasonably priced

line from Tree of Life. Winter squash are in and the apple selection is at its peak. Darker beers are making more of an appearance in the cooler with the changing season, but still lots of other great selections, including some nice gluten free beers that taste like...beer.

After the New Year representatives from the board, management collective, staff, the newsletter committee, and membership will be meeting to discuss best ways to facilitate communication within the organization and with the community at large. We'll be looking at how we use our website, social media, the newsletter, and email. We'll also be thinking about what kinds of information need to be shared and what kinds of information and input are needed from membership. So any ideas you have about this or any issues you'd like us to consider are very welcome.

We want to remind folks that we're happy to special order products for you. Just write your name and phone number on a card along with as much detail about what you want including: quantity, quality, date needed, and if you want the buyer to call you with availability and price. Be sure to let us know if you're a member, but we don't need your number. The cashier can take it when you check out. (Sorry, chicken parts from Misty Knoll are still a member only special order.) ♦

Favorite food: chocolate, especially dark chocolate!

Introducing Our Newest Board Member



Karla Moskowitz

As a lifelong educator and political scientist, I have taught in pre-school through university settings and have also served as a public school administrator, non-profit founder, director, and board member as well as social entrepreneur. I am presently a faculty member in the Education Program at Goddard College and work nationally as an education and organizational development consultant.

I am excited to serve on the Plainfield Co-op Board of Directors in order to support what I believe to be one of the most critical contributors to the Plainfield community. Through this service, I hope to contribute my time, energy, enthusiasm, and any relevant expertise to benefit the organization. I am committed to collaborate with others to perform tasks and facilitate projects that will strengthen the Co-op as a market and community hub. In doing this, I believe I will make new connections and better integrate myself in the community where I now live. This will, in turn, increase my civic engagement and, thus, enhance my quality of life in Plainfield. ♦

Mustard-glazed Roasted Root Vegetables

Adapted from *Jump Up and Kiss Me* by Jennifer Trainer Thompson

Ingredients:

Any combination of the following: carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes, sweet potatoes, beets	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil 2 tsps curry powder 1 tsp hot paprika $\frac{1}{4}$ cup maple syrup	3 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard 1 tsp kosher salt 1 tsp dried thyme 1 tsp ground black pepper
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Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°
2. Cut vegetables (approx. $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick), about 12 cups of vegetables for 6 servings. Place vegetables in large bowl.
3. In another bowl, mix together all the other ingredients and pour the mixture over the vegetables. Toss well to cover all the vegetables.
4. Spread the vegetables in a single layer on two roasting pans. The vegetables should not be packed tightly so they can roast.
5. Roast uncovered for about 1 hour, turning every so often with a spatula to ensure even cooking.

Ron Rood's "Indian Pudding" Recipe

I found this recipe in my 'recipe collection' (an old notebook stuffed with recipes written on odds and ends of papers). I remembered it being delicious though I haven't made Indian pudding in years. The recipe was reprinted from a November 1999 Ron Rood commentary. Apparently it was handed down in his family for generations. -Debra Stoleroff

Ingredients:

6 cups of whole milk	1 teaspoon salt
7 tablespoons cornmeal	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsulphured molasses	4 tablespoons flour

Directions:

1. Put 4 cups of milk into the top of a double boiler
2. While it is heating, mix the cornmeal with molasses.
3. Add the salt, cinnamon and ginger into the cornmeal/molasses mixture and stir into the hot milk.
4. Slowly stir over low to medium heat until the mixture is thickened.
Remove from the heat
5. Mix the flour with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk to form a paste
6. Add this and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk to the cornmeal mixture
7. Bake at 325 degrees for about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours or until done
Serve with plain or whipped cream and some raisins.



Busy Herb and Tea Department

by Dorothy Wallace

It's been a busy fall for the Herb & Tea department. As the gardening season ended, pickling spice and salt flew off the shelves. Now, as we ease into the colder months, sales of elderberry, echinacea, ginger, and tea herbs, bulk tea, and boxed tea are rising as we all try to stave off the germ exchange that back-to-school and chilly days inevitably brings.

There are three new-to-us items on the shelves. The first is dried cilantro, the most requested herb on a recent customer survey. The second is English Lavender. Mountain Rose recently made a decision to change the name of the herb it was selling as lavender (*Lavandula x intermedia*) to Lavandin and to add English Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) to its offerings. They generously sent us a sample and we conducted a blind taste test/free sampling with cups of warm tea. The



J. Nash

lovely, mellow English Lavender was the winner by a slight margin, though many still preferred the bolder scent and taste of the renamed Lavandin. So now we carry both, the less expensive Lavandin for those who prefer it and as craft material (think potpourri, sleep pillows, etc) and the pricier English Lavender for the authentic teatime experience. The third new item is Wild Bee Farm Chaga Chai, a delicious and healthful blend crafted by members Amba and Daniel Connors (yes, it's the same tea they offered at the Plainfield Farmer's Market). The chai spices are combined using Ayurvedic principles and the Chaga mushrooms are wild-crafted. The result is a blend with known cancer-fighting and many other healthful properties. It's medicinal tea that tastes like a luxurious treat!

Thank you for your help in making our Herb & Tea selection great! Your ideas are always welcome. Just jot them down and leave in the suggestion box next to the coffee bar. ♦



J. Nash

Plainfield Area Business Alliance

This is the first in a series of articles on local organizations we should know.

Plainfield Area Business Alliance, Inc. (PABA) is a new grass roots organization made up of local business owners. Our purpose is to help encourage a vibrant business environment through collaboration, information exchange and promotion. PABA began meeting last spring with the idea of stimulating business in Plainfield and the nearby area.

No matter what type of business you operate—a store or restaurant, growing food or flowers, construction, landscaping or other service—you may find there are times when your business needs a boost. Annual membership in Plainfield Area Business Alliance is only \$25 a year. With your membership fee you may choose to be added to the kiosk business listing in time for the next quarterly printing in the spring, be represented at local events at a PABA table and join us at our monthly meetings to share your ideas and feedback.

Our goal is to be inclusive, not exclusive. We presently represent 26 area businesses: Bartlett Hill Berry Farm, Karl Bissex, Black Bear Biodiesel, The Blinking Light Gallery, Breckenridge Farm, The Country Bookshop, Country Floors, Cushings Clutter Antiques, Ben Graham, East Hill Tree Farm, Goddard College, Greenfield Highland Beef, Hollister Hill Farm and B&B, The Health Center, Littlewood Farm, Marshfield Inn & Motel, Plainfield Co-op, Plainfield Flower Farm, Plainfield Post Office, Plainview Farm Maple Syrup, Vermont Yarn Shop at Plainview Farm, Andrew Robinson, Sam Clark Design, Vermont Pie Girl, Willow Moon Farm. These businesses offer a wide variety of goods, food, services and accommodations.

We would like to have more members, especially members who want to roll up

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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

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their sleeves and come up with ideas to bring more people into town. This summer we worked with VTrans and were able to get tourist information signs installed at no cost to the town. The idea was to get people off RT2 and into the village. Our goal is not just to attract tourists but bring community members down into town to shop and socialize more. We believe "You can have it all without the mall".

PABA SPONSORS HOLIDAY 50/50 RAFFLE

PABA is sponsoring this holiday season a 50/50 raffle. The winner will receive 50% of the take; the balance will be

shared equally with the Onion River Food Shelf and Twin Valley Seniors. These two community services can greatly use additional funding at this time of the year and probably most of us could use some extra cash as well.

The tickets went on sale Nov. 14th and will be available at PABA member and local businesses. The tickets are \$2 each or 3/\$5; our goal is to sell 500 tickets. The drawing will be held approximately mid-December (exact date, time and location to be announced).

We all love Plainfield, and as Ben Koenig (of the Country Book Shop) sings, "Plainfield Isn't Plain to Me". ♦

Potato Kale Leek Soup

I can't remember where I found this recipe but it is delicious and vegan.

—Debra Stoleroff

Ingredients

4 medium potatoes	1 cup cashew cream (recipe below)
2 leeks	2 cups kale, massaged and torn into small pieces
2 cloves garlic	1 tbsp herbs de provence
1 tbsps olive oil	salt and pepper
4 cups vegetable broth	

Instructions

1. Cover 1 cup of cashews with warm water in a small bowl and let soak for at least 2 hours or overnight. Blend cashews and water in a blender or other kitchen aid. Set aside.
2. Peel and dice potatoes. In a large pot cover potatoes with water, bring to a boil and cook until tender.
3. While potatoes are cooking, slice leeks and mince the garlic. Sauté the leeks and garlic in olive oil for about 6 minutes or until soft.
4. When the potatoes are done, drain and return to pot along with leek mixture and vegetable broth. Blend until smooth. (You can do this with an immersion blender, in a food processor or regular blender OR with a hand masher.)
5. Stir in cashew cream, kale and spices. Simmer over low heat until heated through. The longer it simmers, the more the flavors blossom.