

The Plainfield Co-op

- Buying for a Better World -

Fall 2012



Hours: *Monday–Saturday 9AM–8PM Sunday 9AM–6PM*

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

Management Collective



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Dawn Rose Kearn
Dorothy Wallace
Jeannine DeWald
Jessi Robinson
Karen Starr
Margie Yoder
Mike Peabody
Nancy Ellen

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Plainfield VT 05667

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Questions: 802-454-4675 Or
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- Massage Therapy

About This Newsletter



Our gorgeous cover design is the new Co-op logo created by Kaitlyn Kearn. Staff member Karen Starr describes the process and meaning of the logo this way:

Several months ago the staff began discussing how to make the Co-op more visible in the community and surrounding areas. One of the things we agreed on was the need for an updated logo. We decided to accept Dawn Rose's offer to ask her sister to design something for us. After reviewing several proposals from graphic artist Kaitlyn Kearn, we happily chose the new logo on the cover of this newsletter. We especially like that it strongly conveys the commitment we, as staff, feel to the community.

Bumper stickers big enough to stand out on your car and small enough to fit on your bike will soon be available at the store. The staff is also negotiating with the town to erect a new sign which we hope will make it easier to find us. Many thanks to Kaitlyn for so skillfully translating our mission into art!

"Buying for a Better World" is the theme of this issue. Karen Starr has woven together comments from all the staff buyers on how they decide what to put on the Co-op shelves. If you've ever wondered, complained or rejoiced at what you found (or didn't find) in the store, you will be enlightened by this article. The decisions the staff make about what to buy enable us who shop at the Co-op to also "Buy for a Better World."

The newsletter committee is delighted to welcome Karen to our committee. We hope she will help us be more aware of the needs of our Co-op staff, who are working for us every day.

And dear readers, young and old, we would love to hear from you--letters, commentary, art work. Next deadline for submissions is Nov. 5 for the winter issue.

Glenda Bissex, co-ordinator (454-7895)
Sarah Albert, design and layout (476-0526)
Joseph Gainza, board liaison and editing (522-2376)
Karen Starr, staff liaison and writer (232-4646)
Debra Stoleroff, editing and recipes (476-3154)
Alan Taplow, advertising and distribution (454-4675) ♦

Littlewood Farm



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By the time this article goes to print, it will be close to autumn, which means it is time to start planning for the annual meeting. Since this year we will be looking for people to run for three board seats, I will devote much of this article to what it is like being a board member. Despite our what appears to be super human abilities, all seven of us put our pants on one leg at a time and live fairly “normal” lives (normal by Plainfield standards). We just happen to take on a little extra contributing to the direction of the Co-op.

Overall, the job of the board is to lead the organization while remaining accountable to the membership. We do this through reviewing policies and changing them as needed. This system of Policy Governance has worked fairly smoothly since it was implemented three and a half years ago, and has made the board’s work more focused and not as overwhelming.

As you may know, we meet once a month, typically at a board member’s home, for what lately has been about an hour and a half. An important part of the meeting is providing a final review of the Management Collective’s monitoring report for the month (each month’s report focuses on a different aspect of Co-op operations). We also review one of our own policies, and make amendments if agreed to. The rest of the meeting is usually spent on updates on other projects, planning, member engagement, scheduling future meetings, and drinking tea. There is some prep time leading up to this which includes reviewing minutes,

looking through reports, and preparing comments. The meetings are run by consensus, with the president facilitating and keeping time. The secretary takes minutes and records issues with reports. Other board members are active in various committees and will report on their work, along with contributing to the regular board business.

What’s the payoff? Well, being an integral part of creating a sustainable, just, creative local economy for one. Also, the 8% discount at the register isn’t so shabby either.

We hope that several members take up the challenge to run for the board seats. All it really takes is a passion for what the Co-op provides to our community. After the general election at the annual meeting, we will hold board officer elections for president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. If you have any questions about the board, as always, contact me at kairos.chris@gmail.com, or call at 802-595-3623.

Finally, I want to recognize the Co-op career of Jill Frink. Jill worked at the Co-op since 2006 and was the driving force behind the creation of the Management Collective. After a period of intense transition among the then Management Team, it was Jill who did the research and talked to the right people to find out what it would take to make a management collective system work. Jill also contributed greatly in the vitamin and herb department, imparting her vast knowledge as a master herbalist to anyone coming into the store. We wish Jill well on her new job in Montpelier. ♦

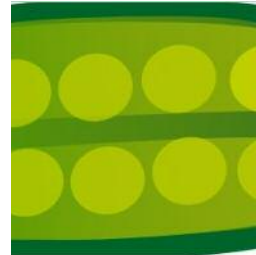
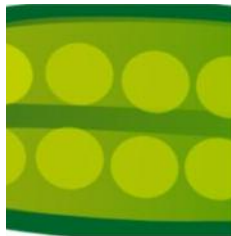
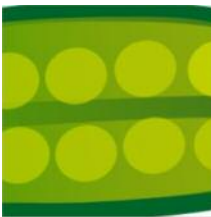
Plainfield Co-op Financial Summary, 2008-2012

Profit & Loss Statements, 2008-2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Jan-Jun 2012
Sales	804,805	803,121	883,455	942,072	468,864
Cost of Goods Sold	547,849	545,612	601,457	654,211	314,664
Gross Profit	256,956	257,509	281,998	287,861	154,200
Operating Expenses	250,337	267,150	271,609	289,837	154,718
Net Operating Income	6,619	-9,641	10,389	-1,976	-518
Other Income/Expenses					
Other Income	14,821	14,285	12,187	17,483	13,157
Other Expenses	10,925	2,100	5,933	4,274	1,300
Net Other Income	3,896	12,185	6,254	13,209	11,857
Net Income	10,515	2,544	16,643	11,233	11,339

Plainfield Co-op Balance Sheets, 2008-2012

	12/31/08	12/31/09	12/31/10	12/31/11	6/30/12
ASSETS					
Current Assets					
Checking/Savings	41,982	23,359	43,510	21,763	27,890
Accounts Receivable	153	520	0	646	0
Other Current Assets	50,380	51,080	51,002	43,226	43,530
Total Current Assets	92,515	74,959	94,512	65,635	71,420
Fixed Assets	80,384	84,846	99,463	99,463	100,724
Accumulated Depreciation	-49,793	-49,793	-65,772	-65,772	-65,772
Cap. Imp. Deferred Revenue	0	-24,282	0	-7,958	-7,958
Other Assets	0	44,095	10,078	47,131	47,385
TOTAL ASSETS	123,106	129,825	138,281	138,499	145,799
LIABILITIES & EQUITY					
Liabilities					
Current Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	37,623	46,527	52,497	39,056	38,532
Other Current Liabilities	3,134	3,280	4,276	14,433	15,836
Total Current Liabilities	40,757	49,807	56,773	53,489	54,368
Long Term Liabilities	43,755	36,182	27,926	20,194	15,466
Total Liabilities	84,512	85,989	84,699	73,683	69,834
Equity					
Common Stock	5,972	5,972	5,972	5,972	5,897
Retained Earnings	22,107	35,320	30,967	47,611	58,729
Net Income	10,515	2,544	16,643	11,233	11,339
Total Equity	38,594	43,836	53,582	64,816	75,965
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	123,106	129,825	138,281	138,499	145,799



Co-operatives Around the World and Here at Home

by Les Snow

The United Nations' declaration of 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives has allowed the cooperative movement to further highlight the co-operative movement's unique and powerful place in enhancing people's lives around the world. While caught up in our daily activities it is easy to lose sight of the co-operative threads that connect our food co-op with co-operative organizations of many types here in Vermont as well as across the globe.

From the beginning of the co-operative movement in Rochdale, England—where, in 1844 a group of cotton mill workers facing poor working conditions and low wages, pooled their resources and efforts in order to access basic goods at lower prices—the movement has grown to include hundreds of thousands of co-operatives employing more over 100 million people. More than a billion people are members of co-operatives worldwide. Though the basic co-operative principles of jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises have remained, the model has proven flexible enough to expand beyond its consumer co-operative roots to other sectors of the economy and to include other ownership categories.

- Co-operative banks (credit unions) got their start in the mid-1800s through the life's work of Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen, who was the mayor of Heddesdorf, Germany when the first credit union was established there in 1862.
- For more than a hundred years farmers have created and operated co-oper-

atives to jointly purchase goods and services for production, as well as process and market their farm output.

- Housing, marketing and utility co-ops work in some of the other economic sectors co-operatives have taken root.
- Co-operatives can be owned by individuals (the consumers or the workers) or by other organizations.

There are almost 30,000 co-operatives in the United States, about 350 of which are food co-ops. Vermont has about 130 co-operatives, 15 of which are food co-ops. Relative to its population, Vermont has the most food co-ops of any state and is one of the top states for co-operative organizations relative to population. US citizens tend to be more likely (1 in 4) to be members of a co-operative than the average person world-wide (1 in 6). Vermonters are fortunate to have more co-operatives to patronize than most people have, and it is fair to say that any Vermont community with an unmet economic or social need would more likely be successful establishing a co-operative to meet the need than would a community in most other places around the world.

To highlight the contributions co-operative enterprises have made to their communities over the past 160+ years, the UN 2012 International Year of Cooperatives has created 10 key messages:

- Cooperative enterprises build a better world.
- Cooperative enterprises are member owned, member serving and member driven

- Cooperatives empower people
- Cooperatives improve livelihoods and strengthen the economy
- Cooperatives enable sustainable development
- Cooperatives promote rural development
- Cooperatives balance both social and economic demands
- Cooperatives promote democratic principles
- Cooperatives and gender: a pathway out of poverty
- Cooperatives: a sustainable business model for youth

Those active in the co-operative movement hope that the additional attention co-operatives receive in 2012 will lead to increased growth in the number of co-operatives and co-operative members in the years ahead. To help get the co-operative message out to a broad audience, a number of resources have been developed, initiatives begun and events planned. These three organizations have done most of this work:

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA - www.ica.coop) has created a website focusing on the International Year of Cooperatives - www.2012.coop. The ICA's www.stories.coop is the world's first global, digital campaign to spread the benefits of cooperation through the tradition of story-telling.


The National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA - www.ncba.coop) also has a website focusing on the International Year of Cooperatives - www.usa2012.coop

The National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA – www.ncga.coop) has created a series of videos highlighting the

many ways food co-ops help build a better world – www.StrongerTogether.coop. NCGA has also developed a website to highlight the importance, benefits and prevalence of co-operatives as a business model for us as individuals and as a society – www.go.coop.

As you shop at and are otherwise involved with the Plainfield Co-op, take a moment to connect what the Co-op means to you and our community with what the co-operative movement has meant to millions of people and their communities. Co-operatives have built a better world and our Co-op has helped build a better community. This year is a good year to reflect on this while helping the co-operative movement in general and co-operatives here at home take yet larger strides. ♦

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— Alex Noyes, student, Plainfield, VT

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The Mystery and Challenges of Department Purchasing or...Why We Carry One Damn Thing Instead of Another *by Co-op Staff*

Members and shoppers often wonder out loud why the Co-op carries one product instead of another. "Why don't we carry more Cabot products?" or "Why do we carry Cabot products at all?" "Why isn't everything organic?" or "How can I afford to shop here when everything is organic?" "Why don't we have bulk nut butters?" As a small Co-op which serves as the town's only grocery store, buying decisions become complex for department heads. It's hard to please everyone, but we really take a serious shot at it!

Navigating the food system in this day of global markets and grocery chains is no small feat for any of us. Decades ago, when tofu was bean curd and few knew what the heck to do with it, there was little competition from mainstream markets. Now "natural food" is a big market that corporate chains position themselves to profit from. As a small store we don't have access to the price breaks extended to larger outlets, yet we still struggle to be competitive.



The Co-op's buying practices are also affected by our mission. The membership charges the staff to support producers in the local and regional economy, serve as a market for healthy food and other goods, foster a sense of community in the village and surrounding area, and encourage awareness of the quality and origins of our food. These are ambitious goals which also affect buying decisions in a variety of ways.

Nancy perishes to please

For example, Nancy Ellen, buyer for Perishables (milk, dairy, refrigerated), Frozen (including all meat), and the Beer and Wine Departments, strives to strike a balance between affordability and sustainability. This can be difficult, as too often it means choosing between two completely different products. Limited retail space means priority is given to products that move off the shelves in a reasonable length of



time. As a result we're often unable to carry more than one line of many items. She says, "Ideally, I will of course try to carry an item that meets both criteria, but there just aren't enough of these products out there. When I have to choose, I will usually try the local/sustainable option first, if it isn't prohibitively expensive,

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then see how well it sells." These principles especially hold true for the Perishable and Frozen Departments.

But it's not always easy to predict product sales. Sometimes she'll get a number of requests for an item more on the sustainable side of the equation and eagerly order it, only to have the product sit on the shelf for a very long time and/or go out of date. "I have tried several times to carry products from VT Soy and wines from Grand View Winery, and they just do not sell." However, occasionally, an item that she's sure won't sell because of its comparatively high price ends up selling like crazy. Angel's Salsa is a good example of this.

We are lucky to have good local wines and beer that aren't outrageously expensive. Nancy notes, "Yes, they do cost more, but they are still very reasonably priced. I have enough space that I am able to dedicate a whole shelf to local wines; they sell more slowly, it's true, but they do sell. These departments also function quite differently. People count on being able to get their same butter, cheese, and meat, but when it comes to beer and wine, variety is good. People insist on a few standbys (mostly local) but, when I don't have enough new and interesting bottles, sales can start to drop off."

Nancy says most members are pretty understanding about the difficult choices buyers have to make, but a few with strong views don't always understand why things can't go their way. She points out that the membership seems pretty evenly split on the importance of sustainable vs. affordable. "We do our best to make everyone happy but, com-

promise is necessary for all of us, both buyers and members."

Margie didn't use much arnica in the hospital setting

After working in traditional western medicine for many years, Margie Yoder knew there would be a learning curve when it came to working with homeopathic and herbal preparations. "After all, we did not use much Arnica in the hospital setting... as a matter of fact, none. Buying for the Vitamin and Herbal Department is an ongoing learning experience," she says. She has found it exciting to learn about a more natural approach to health care and prevention.



Health issues are to some extent seasonal, so during winter she makes sure cold and flu remedies are available and also supplements such as Vitamin C and Vitamin D. Allergy season brings its own focus, and so on. The Co-op's commitment to supporting local businesses, especially local cottage industries, heavily affects her buying decisions. Standards on the shelf include: Urban Moonshine's bitters and tonics (Burlington), Samhain Herbs tinctures (Plainfield), Mountain Cultures fire cider (Plainfield) and Honey Gardens tonics (Ferrisburgh.) Experience has taught her that distributors' best sellers, or even top selling products at nearby Hunger Mountain, do not necessarily sell well at the Co-op here. Cost is an especially challenging factor as supplements and tinctures tend to be expensive in general. However, Margie says,

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"Please price compare at other local co-ops and you will find that the prices here are more than competitive." She really appreciates when customers use the suggestion box for requests and enjoys talking with people about what products they would like to see on the shelf.

As buyer for the Taxable Grocery Department, Margie searches for the most sustainable cleaning and paper products. For example, our new line of trash and yard bags, Pride Green, are made with recycled plastic and are biodegradable. If You Care paper products are unbleached, sourced from well-managed forests, and utilize recycled wood and fiber. Natural Valley brand products are also unbleached and chlorine free. Other new brands include GreenShield and Earth Friendly cleaning products. These are natural/plant sourced, phosphate and caustic free. Some are certified organic. We also carry the HE brand of laundry soap for energy efficient machines. Sustainable cleaning and paper products are also sometimes pricey. Whenever possible she tries to offer product choices in this department.

Anyone who wants a free loaf of bread, see Aaron



Aaron James finds that stocking the Bread Department with locally made Vermont offerings has been relatively simple. "I try to supply the shelves not only with local bread, but also artisan breads like Bohemian Bread and organic breads from bakeries such as Vermont Bread Company, O Bread, and in some cases La Panciata. Grab-and-go-style foods from Nga's Food For You and

Vic's The Next Generation are also included in this department." Most departments in the store provide a lower mark-up for locally made products (beneficial to both our suppliers and our customers), and bread is no exception. In fact, most of our suppliers set their own retail prices, which Aaron is happy to honor since they allow credits for any bread that doesn't sell. In the end, vendors and the Co-op all benefit from the arrangement.

Occasionally difficulties do arise. A recent example is Patchwork Bread. While they were our only suppliers in recent memory of artisan and organic bread, they could not afford to give us credits on bread that didn't sell, nor were they able to deliver a low enough volume of bread to allow us to carry their products without taking a loss. Until we can make different arrangements, the store will be unable to include Patchwork bread in our lineup. One solution would be finding a member worker willing to drive from Buffalo Mountain in Hardwick to Plainfield at least once, but preferably twice, a week (Monday, Wednesday, and/or Friday). Anyone interested who wants a free loaf of bread and some member hours can talk to Aaron. He works weekend mornings.

Dawn Rose chooses cheeses (say that 10 times fast!)

Dawn Rose Kearn steers the Cheese Department with her love for the full spectrum of cheeses available. She says, "It has been my goal from the beginning to provide a variety of local,



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domestic, and international cheeses at the Plainfield Co-op, while still maintaining the basic 'must haves' for everyone's daily life." From cheddar to gorgonzola, her decision-making process incorporates a variety of factors.

For example, Dawn Rose has reduced the number of cheeses in the department which contain milk produced using Artificial Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). She feels strongly that we should support the humane treatment of the beautiful animals who make cheese possible, but also believes as a co-op we need to support agricultural sustainability and the overall health of the world we live in. In the last year many members undoubtedly noticed a jump in the price of all dairy products, which has had a tremendous impact on our cheese department.

She works hard to find a happy medium between high quality cheeses that shoppers enjoy and affordable pricing. "It is a continuous research project, but I am appreciative that the community continues to be supportive and enthusiastic about the variety of cheeses we have been able to offer." For the surprising number of patrons who can consume goat's milk but not cow's milk a variety of choices are available. Some of the goat/sheep milk cheeses we now offer (some regularly, some seasonally) include: Mt. Sterling Co-operative Goat Cheddar and Mozzarella, Vermont Butter & Cheese Chevres, Lazy Lady Bloomy Rind Cheeses, La Petite Goat Brie, Willow Moon Marinated Feta, Nettle Meadow Cheeses, and Sheep's Milk Romano made in Italy." Dawn Rose says she is well aware of the challenges of the present economy and works hard to find a balance that will

Soba Noodle Salad

from Randy

1. Cook soba noodles.
2. Saute in toasted sesame oil:
 - 2 T chopped garlic
 - 2T chopped ginger
 - 2T chopped onion.
3. In a bowl large enough to hold the noodles, mix:
 - 1T chili powder
 - 1/4c. almond butter
 - 1/4c. water
 - 1T molasses
 - 1 or 2T cider vinegar
4. Stir in the saute and the noodles.
5. Garnish with:
 - toasted sesame seeds
 - scallions or chives
 - chopped cilantro

allow shoppers to afford and enjoy sustainably, humanely produced cheeses.

Dorothy juggles star anise and Spanish paprika

Plainfield Co-op shoppers want the finest bulk herbs, spices, and teas. Dorothy Wallace orders these from the best national and local suppliers and farmers.

Frontier Natural Products Co-op and Mountain Rose Herbs sell sustainably grown products, many of them Fair Trade. She also buys from three local farmers who sell organically grown or ethically wild-harvested herbs. The bulk teas come from two Vermont suppliers that use sustainably grown, organic teas, herbs, and spices in their products.



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Many of the products in the herb aisle sell seasonally—star anise for holiday baking, hibiscus for iced tea blends, and dandelion root as a spring tonic. Spices, particularly, go in and out of favor depending on the latest culinary trends. Customers suggest the latest—Spanish paprika, for instance. On the other hand, if a once popular product just sits on the shelf, it's time to discontinue it. Dorothy comments: "The vendors sell us the purest, freshest, sustainable products. However, the customers are the ultimate quality control. If a product has the color, texture, aroma, and taste the shoppers want, the Co-op will continue to carry it."

"Would I dump this into my septic system?" asks Jessi



Jessi Robinson took over buying for the Health & Beauty Aids Department (HABA) about a year ago and says the inventory was pretty well established. She is enthusiastic about the department as she finds

shopping for things such as soaps and lotions rather enjoyable. "As I read the catalogs for new, useful products I think about whether I would be willing to dump them into my septic system or smear them on my children. I avoid things containing sodium lauryl sulfate, parabens, fragrance, FD&C color pigments, propylene glycol, diethanolamine (DEA) and triethanolamine (TEA)."

Jessi tries to pick the best available option of any specific product because there's not a lot of shelf space to carry a wide variety. Products selected have the purest ingredients from the closest source, produced by companies with

business ethics in line with those of the Co-op." I buy local as much as possible and luckily we have some great in-state producers. I currently carry Ambrosia Herbals bug spray/lotion, healing salve, baby balm, luxurious soap, and more. All are made right here in Plainfield village with tremendous attention to ingredients. It doesn't get much better than that." She also tries to have everything you might need for hygiene and first aid, to save a trip into town. Jessi welcomes suggestions, since she sees no better way to ensure the department carries what members want.

Bargain hunting with Jeannine

When Jeannine DeWald buys for the Grocery and Bulk Departments her ultimate goal is to balance the highest quality products with the best pricing. This is an ongoing challenge during a time of rising food costs. She buys organic and local wherever possible, while also offering lower cost conventional alternatives to meet the needs of Plainfield's diverse economic community. In the past year, Jeannine took on two new major distributors, Hillcrest Foods and Tree of Life, to have access to more diverse product and pricing options. "The addition of Hillcrest has allowed me to introduce a greater number of local grains and flours from Champlain Valley Milling into our bulk department without an increase in retail price. I've also been able to reduce the price of many organic bulk products significantly without compromising on quality." For example, our bulk rice is now being sourced from Douget's Organic Rice in Texas, US at a much



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lower price than is available from our previous supplier. Organic olive oil has been reduced by more than two dollars per pound, and many of our previously conventional bulk products, such as Canola oil are now organic, with little to no increase in price.

Jeannine notes that last year was a difficult year for nut production with crop failures driving the price of nuts and nut products up considerably. In response, she's located the best possible pricing on bulk nuts and switched some of our conventional nut products to organic where the price difference comes within a few cents per pound. Conventional almonds have also been added alongside organic because the price difference is considerable. The problems with the nut harvest also spilled over into the grocery department for most of the year with prices climbing to over \$8.00 per pound for organic nut butters. Recently we've been able to obtain Field Day brand organic peanut butter at \$5.99 per one pound jar, and are finally able to offer an affordable organic nut butter option. Across the shelf, there are conventional and organic options for nut butters, including peanut, almond and tahini with prices starting as low as \$4.95." I try to mimic this type of product diversity throughout the packaged grocery aisles with the goal of maintaining an inventory of healthy food options for every budget." Jeannine says.

For example, the breakfast cereal section includes many organic and conventional options priced at \$4.49 or less. Jeannine also just introduced a new line of conventional Italian pastas available

Shredded Red Cabbage and Carrot Salad

by Martha Rose Shulman, *NY Times Recipes for Health*

$\frac{3}{4}$ pound red cabbage, cored and finely shredded
1/4 pound carrots, peeled and finely grated
1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 teaspoon minced fresh chives
1 teaspoon minced fresh dill
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar or white wine vinegar
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 small garlic clove, finely minced
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or canola oil (or a mix of the two), or use 2 tablespoons plain low-fat yogurt or buttermilk and 4 tablespoons oil

1. Cover the shredded cabbage with cold water, and let sit for 15 minutes while you prepare the remaining ingredients. Drain.
2. Toss together the cabbage, carrots, parsley, chives and dill.
3. Whisk together the lemon juice, vinegar, salt, pepper, garlic and Dijon mustard. Whisk in the oil. Toss with the vegetables and herbs. Taste, adjust seasonings and serve. Alternately, allow to sit for 30 minutes to an hour in the refrigerator, then serve.

Yield: Serves four.

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in six different shapes and sizes priced at \$1.69 for a one pound bag. She's been keeping her eyes peeled for good deals on conventional pasta sauces with natural ingredients, but so far our organic options are still the best price available. All of our organic pasta options are still available, with most shapes priced at \$2.99 per pound, still a great deal for organic. Gluten-free pastas have been expanded to include conventional and organic, with Asian style rice noodles starting in the \$2.00 range. If you're looking for condiments, we now have many conventional and organic options for you to choose from.

While focusing on product variety, Jeannine is constantly alert to which supplier is offering the best deals. Adding Tree of Life has allowed her to set many grocery and bulk items at everyday lower prices. When prices shift between different distributors from month to month, she changes her buying habits to maintain shelf price, but also so she can offer the best specials available. The small size of the store requires this level of bargain hunting to keep prices competitive. Jeannine notes that customer feedback is very important to her as a buyer. "While I may not be able to carry every product someone wants, I play close attention to trends in customer requests and do my best to be responsive. Healthy affordable food is my absolute goal for our community and in an economy of ever increasing food prices it's become a real challenge to succeed at bringing prices down and keeping them stable, but I'm up for it. Please keep the suggestions coming and I'll do my best to continue to accommodate everyone I can."

In the winter, Mike waits and pounces

Mike Peabody, buyer for the Produce department, says his purchasing decisions are very much affected by what time of year it is. "During Vermont's growing season all the local farmers in our area grow pretty much the same products for roughly the same prices. In many cases, it comes down to reliability of supply, delivery availability, and product quality." So, during the local growing season he's much less likely to do price comparisons between vendors. He's thought about doing contracts with farmers but, realistically, our volume is too small to provide much of a draw.



In the cold weather, prices vary widely, almost nothing comes from one source, and local produce is limited. The quality and range of produce is similar, but various distributors have different deals, case prices, and "splitting fees" (the extra markup for buying a partial case). Mike says, "Buying produce in the winter means a lot of waiting and then pouncing on a good deal. The trick is maintaining a consistent selection of product when availability and cost change so rapidly." He says he generally settles on the best average competitive shelf price he can manage rather than constantly changing prices by a few cents. He feels this helps people who shop the Co-op on a regular basis

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to confidently reference their last purchase of a lemon or a pound of potatoes. Mike tries to find a balance between meeting the specialty produce needs of the community's more cosmopolitan shoppers and having a reliable, standard array of product for sale.

Items like green beans, cucumbers, and eggplants, which have previously been seasonal, at best, are now year-round offerings. Mike works hard to find reasonable pricing on small volumes of product so they can be available to community shoppers. He feels there's enough pressure in the world today to do this or do that, including demands to eat locally and organically. So, he tries to stay away from telling shoppers what they should do and instead focuses his attention on offering the best produce he can find for the best price available.



We hope this short overview of the processes buyers use to select products

makes it a little easier for people to understand what's involved in stocking the store week to week. The world has changed tremendously since the Co-op was organized in the 70s, but our commitment to the community remains the same. The Co-op staff rely on your requests and feedback to help them make the best purchasing decisions for the store. We're always happy to hear about new products and suppliers or to answer any questions you may have. We do our best to bring the items you want to the shelves at the best price we can find. We'd like to be able to please everyone, but of course the diverse nature of our town and community means we all need to compromise here and there. So, fill out a request form, talk to a buyer, or talk to each other. Get involved in whatever way you feel comfortable because Plainfield Co-op is your home town co-op, run by neighbors for neighbors. That's pretty special in this crazy world right now. ♦

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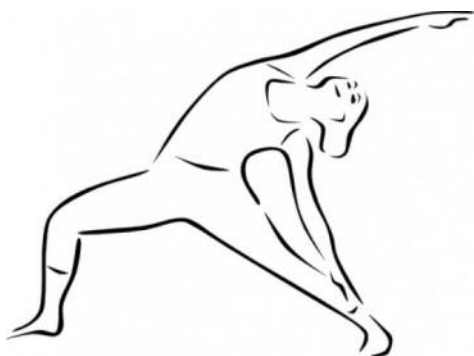
Community Center Report *by Doni Cain*

There are several ways decisions are made in the Community Center. Depending on what the issue is that needs to be decided on, there are different people/groups who make decisions. But before we explain how decisions are made, we need to better understand the different parties involved. The Management Collective (MC) has total control over the Community Center. It is part of the operations of the Co-op and any Community Center finances are dealt with by the Co-op. The MC has entrusted me to manage the Community Center. The Community Center has a Committee to help give direction and resources to the space. Our committee is made up of about six community members, who each help run an aspect of the Community Center. Alexis Smith is the chair of the committee as well as the gallery coordinator. We also have working members who help organize events and keep the space clean.

If the MC has an issue or any request for the Community Center, they will ask that I deal with the issue. I will then either make a decision as to how best to resolve the issue or I will bring the issue to a Community Center Committee meeting to be decided on.

In the committee meetings we talk about what maintenance items need to be dealt with, like piano tuning or gallery wall painting, as well as what our resources are and how to best use them. We talk a lot about upcoming events and next gallery shows. If renters or community members have small issues with the space, often scheduling or cleanliness issues, I usually deal with them promptly and in the fairest way possible.

The issue of the Free Box is a great example of how this process works. Over the past few months the Free Box has constantly been misused. People had been bringing in way too much clothing and other things that did not meet the lax standards of the Free Box, and too many people who went through the box did not help keep it organized. There were also issues with specific items that were being left in the box like medicine, bullets and other non-kid friendly things. The staff said that something had to be done to limit the amount of clutter and unsafe items in the Community Center due to the Free Box. I made the decision to temporarily remove the Free Box. We posted all around the Co-op that we would discuss the future of the Free Box at the upcoming Community Center Committee meeting. Several people from the community who came to the meeting volunteered to put more energy into the Free Box to relieve some of the burden from the staff and working members who keep the space clean. With input from the community, the committee decided that the Free Box would come back on limited terms for a trial period.



At our last committee meeting we also spent time discussing our number one concern for the Community Center which is handicap accessibility. Two of our committee members can no longer make it up the stairs and one committee member has not been able to climb the stairs for a couple months due to a surgery. We know that there is no simple fix to this issue; we can't just put a lift on the stairs. We have decided that we, as a committee, need to keep searching for new options to make the space handicap accessible. We are now looking into a grant through Washington County that the town would apply for on our behalf. Any grant of this size will take a lot of planning and lot of input from all parties of the Co-op. This specific grant covers 75% of the cost of the project; the Co-op would have to come up with the other 25% (in-kind donations and other grants could count towards this). We are also looking into other grants and resources to help realize this dream of a completely accessi-

ble Co-op so that everyone can use the space and participate in all of the great events that happen in the Community Center.

We have many ongoing classes in the Community Center like Bootcamp, Yoga, and Ecstatic Dance. We are awaiting the return of several ongoing classes/events that will be starting again in the fall, like Shape Note and Movie Night. A full calendar of events can be found in the entryway of the Co-op as well as on the Co-op's website, PlainfieldCoop.com. The space is open for all to rent for one time events and ongoing classes. The Community Center will also sponsor community events by paying the rental fee if the is free and is open to the entire community. If you wish to rent the Community Center you can do so at the register at the Co-op.

For any questions about the Community Center feel free to email me at CommunityCenter@PlainfieldCoop.com or call me at 454-1478. ♦

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: \$30 for Members, \$50 for Non-Members

Scheduling Book at Co-op Register

More Information? Call Jessi 454-8579

Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op



The Community Center Art Scene *by Alexis Smith*

The Community Center has been enjoying some exceptional art shows and events in the last quarter. Mark Dannenhauer, our most recently exhibited artist, had an amazing photographic exhibition of Bread and Puppet over the last 10 years. In addition we hosted a remarkable event, An Emergent Mosaic, with a panel of 10 Bread and Puppet theater members, spanning the last 50 years of the theater's existence. Nearly 100 people attended, including Possibilitarians, folk historians, documentarians, reporters, media, artists, B&P fans and Plainfield's own early B&P performers. The exhibition then toured to Goddard's Haybarn Gallery for the 2nd Presidential award for Activism in Arts honoring Peter Schumann.

The totally controlled arts committee--Randy, Jerome and myself--are working on an annual show called Plainfield Heroes, highlighting historical individuals and those recently passed in our community. We have also been networking

and sharing resources with the Winooski Valley Arts Coalition. After a PCC visioning meeting, handicapped accessibility and related grant opportunities have become our priority project.

Thanks to Amy Levanthal and PCC volunteers, we have a nicely remodeled lobby and a newly tuned piano. Cavan Meese has been contracted to design new gallery lighting, and we have acquired some lovely antique, velvet movie house curtains for the return of Movie Night, as well as our own billboard. Our next exhibit will be a Children's Art show, followed by a slideshow by John Ryan of his photographs of abandoned public buildings. Bread and Puppet will be returning early fall with their new touring show. Please check the Co-op's website for scheduled events, great classes and rental availabilities. Any folks interested in having an art event or gallery show call me (Alexis 802-371-7239). ♦

September is National Hunger Action Month and in an effort to get people involved in the fight against hunger, the Vermont Foodbank is teaming up with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association, and orchards around the state to promote **Pick for Your Neighbor**.

Pick for Your Neighbor is an easy way for Vermonters to help fight hunger in Vermont. During apple season (September–October), community members are encouraged to visit their local participating orchard to pick and purchase extra apples for donation to the Foodbank.

This season there are 16 participating u-pick orchards including **Burt's Orchard in Cabot**.

You can visit the Vermont Foodbank's website for an interactive map that will help you locate an orchard nearest you, www.vtfoodbank.org.



Become a Co-op Board Member

- Would you like to learn more about how the Co-op works?
- Would you like to share in crafting Plainfield Co-op's vision and future directions?
- Would you like to work on increasing member participation?
- Would you like to help assure that the Co-op remains financially healthy?



This fall, two of our board members are retiring from the board when their terms end. The board is seeking members to replace them.

Board members commit to a monthly meeting and some committee work as needed. Typically, a board member will spend five to seven hours per month on board work. Plainfield Co-op adheres to the principles of Policy Governance. Training for new Board members will be provided.

Any member is eligible to run for the Board. Elections will be held at the annual meeting in November. If you are interested, contact Chris Jackson, board president. 595-3623.



Strafford Organic Creamery

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Strafford, VT 05072

(802) 765-4180

info@straffordcreamery.com

<http://www.straffordcreamery.com>

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