

The Plainfield Co-op

Spring 2015

Rejuvenation



Credit: Lila Humphries

Hours: 7 days a week 9AM–8PM

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

Email: info@plainfieldcoop.com

Management Collective



Dawn Fancher
Dorothy Wallace
Jeannine DeWald
Jessi Robinson
Karen Starr
Kathleen Hayes
Margie Yoder
Mike Peabody
Nancy Ellen

Stephen Bosserman

Regular Staff

Drew Sy
Jack Campellone
Jonna Wissert
Kristin Brosky
Petra Gates

Substitutes

Anji Murphy
Chloe Budnick
Rose Roetker

Co-op Board Members

Gail Falk, President 802-777-0528
Bob Fancher, Treasurer 860-993-4595
bfancher@hollerithdesign.com
Scott Harris, scott.harris@goddard.edu
Joseph Gainza, jgainza@vtlink.net
Art Chickering, 223-0762,
jodawnc@gmail.com
Karla Moskowitz 454-1273

Committee Contacts

Building: Allen Banbury,
mathman209@yahoo.com
Newsletter: Glenda Bissex,
songboat@vtlink.net
Equity Committee: Bob Fancher,
Joseph Gainza, Scott Harris,
Mike Peabody
info@plainfieldcoop.com

Cover art by Lila Humphries

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:

Sarah Albert, Ad Coordinator
900 Gonyeau Road
Plainfield VT 05667

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

Questions: 802-476-0526 or sarah@vtlink.net



The Plainfield Co-op
Spring 2015

Rejuvenation



Artist: Lila Humphries

Hours: 7 days a week 9AM-8PM
Phone: 454-8372 Website: www.PlainfieldCoop.com
Email: info@plainfieldcoop.com

About This Newsletter

Spring, maybe. Rejuvenation, yes! Regaining our youthful strength. Sip some rejuvenating tea. Feel the energy from the new communication committee.

Enjoy your first ever Plainfield Co-op member rebate. From a broader perspective, learn of the resurgence of the cooperative movement world-wide. It's all here--and more--in this newsletter.

And speaking of youthful, the art work in this newsletter was created by Twinfield High School Art students Lila Humphries (cover), Josie Kennedy, Braden DeForge, and Leticia Nascimento. Thank you all for rejuvenating our newsletter.

Thanks to another Twinfield student, Erika Farnham, for her help in getting our printed newsletters ready to go in the mail.

We want your contributions, too—recipes using foods from the Co-op, op-ed pieces, drawings and photos, Co-op anecdotes (historical or current). Send to newsletter editor Glenda Bissex: songboat@vtlink.net

The Newsletter Committee:

Glenda Bissex, co-ordinator

Sarah Albert, design and layout,
sarah@vtlink.net

Joseph Gainza, board liaison and editing, jgainza@vtlink.net

Karen Starr, staff liaison and writer,
ravenbadger@gmail.com

Debra Stoleroff, editing and recipes,
debra@vtlink.net ♦

LittleWood Farm
Plainfield, Vt.
802-454-8466

*Providing organic produce
to the community
since 1987*



The Flourishing of Our Co-op

President's Report - February 2015

by Gail Falk

We are entering 2015 in a strong financial position (see the Annual Financial Report). Membership is increasing, we have been able to give our hard-working staff a raise, and this spring our owner-members will receive a dividend of 1% of the amount of their purchases in 2014.

With the perspective of our first year as an equity/member-owned co-op, the Board believes that the Annual Meeting should be a time when we report on our year-end financial health, let the membership know the amount of the annual dividend, and explain how the figures were arrived at. For these reasons, we are going to change the schedule of Annual Meeting from the fall to the early spring, so that we can bring complete year-end figures to you. This means our next Annual Meeting will be in March 2016. We plan to replace the fall Annual Meeting with a Fall Festival in late October or early November. Stay tuned!

With our transition to equity ownership and policy governance completed, it is time to turn our attention to the future. The Board has made a commitment to lead a process of developing a long-

range vision and strategic plan for our Co-op. We are fortunate to have here in Plainfield (and a member of the Co-op) Andy Robinson, a nationally respected consultant who works with small non-profit organizations that work for "human rights, social justice, environmental conservation, and community development." Here is a link to Andy's website: <http://andyrobinsononline.com/>. We are excited that Andy has agreed to work with the Co-op to develop our vision and long-range plan during the coming year.

As we look ahead, communication with our members and the public is a priority. Since Annual Meeting, our brand-new communication committee has been looking at ways to use various media for richer information sharing about our products and about what's happening at the Co-op.

We have a vacancy of one seat on the Board. If you are interested in joining the Board, or just finding out more about what the Board does, please contact me at 802- 777-0528, gail.falk@gmail.com. ♦



Board members: Art Chickering, Joseph Gainza, Karla Haas Moskowitz, Bob Fancher, Scott Harris, Gail Falk

2014 Annual Financial Report

by Bob Fancher

A Year of Change

In January of 2014, the Plainfield Co-op changed the way it was structured. In prior years, the Co-op was a membership organization where members paid dues for a year and in return members were given a discount on their purchases. Starting in 2014, as a result of voting at the Annual Membership meeting in 2012, the Co-op changed to an Equity based organization. Now Member-Owners purchase a share of the Co-op. Each Member-Owner purchases one share. This is a one-time purchase that can be paid once for \$180 or spread out over a period of years (with a minimum of \$20 per year).

This builds equity for each Member-Owner in their Co-op. Each Member is truly an owner, much like owning stock in a corporation (although legally it is much different). As owners, each Member-Owner is eligible for a Patronage Refund each year. The Co-op Board of Directors determines how much, if any, Patronage Refund will be issued based on how the Co-op did financially that year. For 2014, the Board of Directors has voted to pay the Member-Owners a Patronage Refund of 1% of their purchases, to be distributed in early 2015.

A Year of Growth

The Plainfield Co-op continued its trend of growth in 2014. It was a year of growth in Sales and growth in membership.

For the second consecutive year the Co-op has exceeded \$1,000,000 in Sales. 2014 yielded an increase of 3.8%

in Sales over 2013 and more than doubled the net income. More Sales means a busier store. The average daily number of purchases at the register increased almost 10% from 146 in 2013 to 160 in 2014. The Management Collective did an outstanding job in increasing Sales and controlling expenses to produce these results.

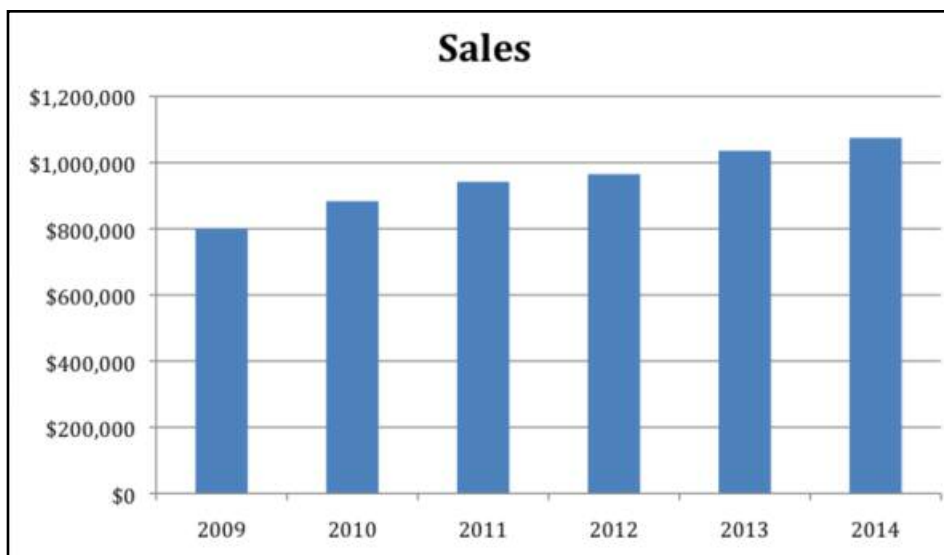
These healthy financial results have allowed the Co-op to invest in its infrastructure. In a comprehensive survey of the Co-op building in 2014, items were identified that needed repair or replacement. The Board voted to expend capital funds to work on the most urgent of these items. Projects are being completed in all areas of the building. You may have noticed the re-built children's play area or the new access ramp outside. There are many other projects going on underneath the floor and in the rear of the building.

There was also a growth in Membership in 2014 with 651 members at the end of the year, up from 553 in 2013. Member-Owners invested \$16,345 in their Co-op in 2014. ♦

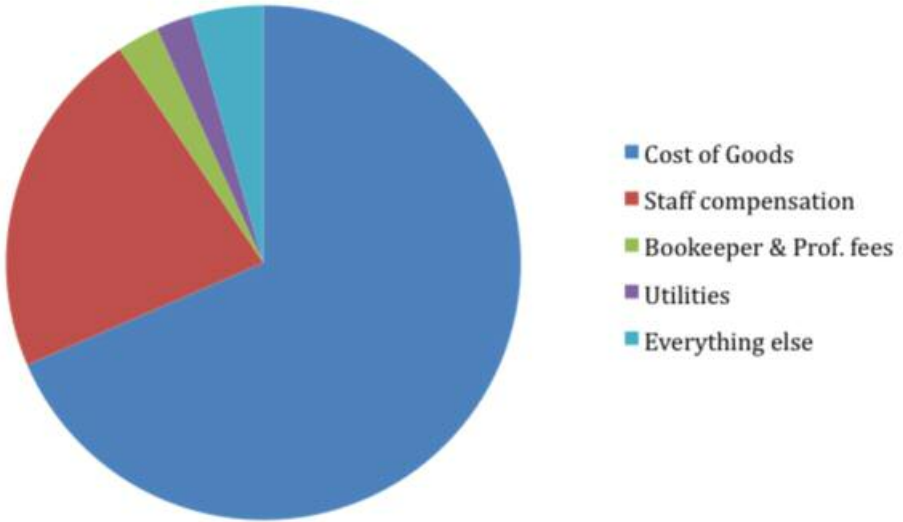
Note: charts & financials accompanying this article are on the following pages. An explanation of the dividend system adopted by the Co-op is also here.

2014 Profit & Loss Comparison

	2014	2013	% change
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income	1,074,877.60	1,035,831.84	3.8%
Cost of Goods Sold	712,483.92	686,485.43	3.8%
Gross Profit	362,393.68	349,346.41	3.7%
Operating Expenses			
Personnel	230,680.94	240,313.86	-4.0%
Administrative	36,997.93	39,596.89	-6.6%
Building	10,932.87	7,674.95	42.4%
Operating	49,048.69	53,033.73	-7.5%
Total Operating Expense	327,660.43	340,619.43	-3.8%
Net income from Operations	34,733.25	8,726.98	298.0%
Other Income	9,513.19	18,743.88	-49.3%
Other Expenses	2,739.55	7,544.82	-63.7%
Net Income (before depreciation)	41,506.89	19,926.04	108.3%



2014 Expenses



Dividend information excerpted from pg. 9 of Winter 2014-15 newsletter

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 =
(Dividend Pool) ÷ (Total Sales by Members) X (Member's purchases)
For example: (\$10,000) ÷ (\$500,000) X (\$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 ♦

What's New in the Co-op Store?

by Karen Starr

This year has been a regular New England winter with plenty of snow and a good dose of freezing temperatures to go with it. It's also been a busy cold and flu season, and folks have been stocking up on medicinal teas and elixirs. Kathleen has been sealing up various drafts as they've made themselves known throughout the store. The entryway has definitely benefited from her attention. Thank you, Kathleen!

Kristin Brosky has stepped down as Bakery buyer. We are grateful for the kind, capable attention she brought to the department. She will still be in the store, but on a more limited schedule. Chloe Budnick has stepped up as the new Bakery buyer. She is full of enthusiasm and we're delighted to have her on board.

High Mowing Seeds are in! Yes, there are several feet of snow on the ground, but it's never too early to start planning and scheming. Of course this year's garden will be the best one ever! And



Credit: Braden DeForge

we will manage somehow to keep up with all the weeds. Remember you can use food stamps to purchase vegetable seeds.

We want you to know the price of Vermont Salumi Sausage went down recently. This is the second time Pete Coleman has reduced the price of his splendid sausages. He has chosen to make his product more affordable by passing on some of the savings realized from more efficient production. We think that's pretty awesome in itself.

It's still getting dark earlier than most of us would like and one solution to that is . . . candles! I think Margie has just about every color imaginable in tapers, two kinds of beeswax, several varieties of pillars, and birthday candles of course. You can't go wrong whatever you bring home.

Doni Cain whipped up beautiful new wine shelves for us. Thanks, Doni! It gives us significantly more space which Nancy has been busy filling with additional fine and affordable wines. Come in and check it out! Remember if you find something you really like, we can try to get a case of it for you.

Well, before we know it, spring will be around the corner. Until then stay warm, check in on your neighbors, and be sure to take time to appreciate the sun when it shines for that occasional 10 or 15 minutes. ♦

Asparagus, Leek, and Gruyere Quiche

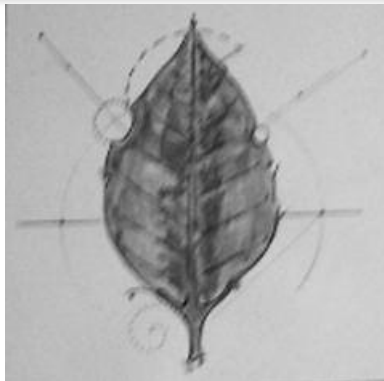
Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 medium onion (diced)
- 1 clove of garlic (minced)
- 1 leek (white and light green parts only), halved and thinly sliced, then well washed
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 1 bunch (1 pound) asparagus, tough ends removed, thinly sliced on the diagonal
- 4 large eggs
- 1¼ cups half-and-half
- Ground nutmeg
- 1 cup shredded Gruyere cheese (4 ounces)
- Your favorite pie crust fitted into a 9-inch pie plate, well chilled

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Saute the onion and garlic. Add leek and asparagus; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until asparagus is crisp-tender, 6 to 8 minutes; let cool.
- In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, half-and-half, 1/2 teaspoon salt, teaspoon pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg.
- Place pie crust in a pie plate.
- Pour the vegetables into the pie plate.
- Cover with cheese (leave some cheese to sprinkle on top at the end).
- Pour egg mixture on top of veggie and cheese. Then sprinkle the last of the cheese over the egg mixture.

Bake until center of quiche is just set, 50 to 60 minutes, rotating halfway through. Let stand 15 minutes before serving.



Credit: Josie Kennedy

Our Community Radio – WGDR

by Kris Gruen, Station Manager



This is one in a continuing series of articles about organizations that serve our community. For more information about WGDR, including its program schedule, go to wgdr.org.

As it enters its 42 year, WGDR is continuing the development and implementation of Best Community Radio practices, both on and off the air. Many of these practices have been part and parcel of GDR's experience all along, while others are brand new, both to the college and to our regular listenership. New tools like Unattended Operation, and new initiatives like our credit bearing academic programs (True Stories and Indie Kingdom) are driving a shift in culture and service. This is requiring the WGDR community to examine motivations on the air, within the college, and throughout its listening area of Central Vermont.

Here are some of 2015's overarching developments and initiatives, station and department wide:

WGDR is building community partners throughout Central Vermont. Non-commercial educational community radio has become a hub of connectivity in many communities throughout the country. Here in Central VT, WGDR focuses on the non-profit community,

with such recent partners as the North Branch Nature Conservancy, the Cabot Agricultural Network, the Center for an Agricultural Economy, the Hunger Mountain Coop, the Buffalo Mountain Coop, the Green Mountain Film Festival, the Summit School and the Plainfield Business Alliance. You can learn more about all our partners at www.wgdr.org.

In fall of 2014, WGDR launched a granting program for local radio producers of programming relevant to national audiences. This program is called Local2National. In addition to developing an online presence for their national content, WGDR's Local2-National grant winners have been collaborating to boost their web presence on wgdr.org by adding new images, information, and audio files to the site, which in turn has helped to raise awareness about the entirety of WGDR's great locally produced programs.

continued on next page



Photo of Alan LaPage: Josh Larkin



Training coordinator, Jackie Batten, with Cabot students

Check out recent shows from WGDR programmers Jeff Lindholm <http://www.wgdr.org/geezer-rock/> and Alan LaPage <http://www.wgdr.org/curse-of-the-golden-turnip/>

In the training program, Jackie Batten has welcomed six new programmers to the WGDR/WGDH community in the last six months. Look for new programs, like Suzanne Podhaizer's Kitchen Counter Culture Radio Vermont on Tuesday's from 12-2pm, and John

Hopkin's Dollar Bins And Local Players on Thursday's from 2-4pm!!

In winter 2015, WGDR's Indie Kingdom program director, Jackie Batten, partnered with Montpelier High School Environmental Applications Educator, Tom Sabo, to produce "Seed Stories," a seed-saving focused interview series completely produced by Montpelier High School students. Also this winter, Carl Etnier expanded the Indie Kingdom program by training U32 students in news production and including their reports on GDR's local news program, Home Grown Radio News, which airs every Friday, 12-12:30pm. Indie Kingdom is supported by an Innovations and Collaborations grant from the Vermont Community Foundation.

In January of 2015, WGDR's first dual enrollment program, "True Stories: Adventures in Nonfiction Audio Storytelling," made a successful launch! True Stories is a three-credit college

continued on next page



Annual meeting

continued from previous page

course open to high school students in Central and Northeastern Vermont. The course is offered through Goddard College's Undergraduate Studies Program in collaboration with WGDR/WGDH, Goddard College Community Radio.

Every private college and community radio station that receives funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting requires the assembly of a Community Advisory Board (CAB), made up of listeners from as many zip codes within the signal range as a station can manage to gather. WGDR's CAB is nearly ten members strong and has listener representatives from Plainfield, Marshfield, Calais and Hardwick. Our CAB is coveted by other stations around the country for its

ability to retain members, participate actively and just have fun!

Look for these WGDR advancements in spring/summer 2015:

- Current Listener Survey of all programs
- Potential Listener Survey, i.e., 400 non-profits in CVT
- Demographics of broadcast service area
- Quarterly Reporting of all Programmatic and Programmer activities
- New Mission

And please, don't be a stranger! There are many ways to get involved with your local community radio station--programming, volunteering, underwriting and more. If interested, contact us via www.wgdr.org. ♦

Rainbow Slaw

Ingredients reprinted from Foodie.com

Dressing:

¼ cup honey	½ tsp salt
¼ cup lime juice	¼ tsp ground pepper
2 tbsp vinegar	½ cup olive oil
1 tbsp ground cumin	

Salad:

3 cups shredded red cabbage	1 sliced red pepper
1 cup grated carrot	1 sliced yellow pepper
4 thinly sliced green onions	1 cup chopped cilantro
1 cup sugar snap peas, sliced	

Prepare and combine salad ingredients in a bowl. Combine dressing ingredients and pour over the salad ingredients.

Plainfield Co-op Communication Committee

by Karen Starr

The Committee has met three times as a full group and twice each as Media and Outreach focus groups. There is also a small focus group of two who will be working with buyers on in-store informational signage. The committee is an enthusiastic and creative group comprised of about a dozen folks including board members, members, and management collective members. One of the best things about the group is that it's large enough that people can work on things that are of particular interest to them. Members are: Bob Fancher, Joseph Gainza, Alex Thayer, Art Chickering, and Karla Hass Moskowitz from the board; Adrienne Allison, Sarah Norton, Angella Gibbons and Jamie Spector from the membership; Glenda Bissex, editor of the newsletter (Joseph and Karen are also on that committee); and Karen Starr and Chloe Budnick from the staff and management collective. Cindy Wyckoff, a local graphic designer also plans to participate at future meetings. We are hoping that Karen can bring Joey Klein to the next meeting as well since he has voiced an interest. A big thanks to everyone for their commitment and contributions!

Some of the things we are discussing include the website redesign engineered by Bob Fancher, the role and content of the newsletter, the use of email and electronic social media to keep in touch with members, increasing visibility in the community, partnering with other community organizations, advertising, taking advantage of radio and other existing media, and organizing more

face to face events in the community. Of particular concern are how to communicate what the Co-op is to the community at large and how to invite folks to be involved, become members, and feel welcome. A few ideas that are cooking include organizing monthly community dinners, finishing the website, revising the member brochure, looking into having a presence at town meetings, setting up weekly at the farmer's market in town, filling a guest radio slot on WGDR, partnering with the Library, Opera House and the Senior Center in town, and having "new" member get-togethers. The committee is looking for additional folks interested in working on any of these projects, so if any of them catch your fancy please be in touch with one of us. The more the merrier! ♦



Credit: Leticia Nascimento

Building a More Sustainable, Co-operative Future Together

by Erbin Crowel

Imagine what our world could look like if business was driven by our ideals. What if economic success was measured not by market value or how much profit was generated for investors, but by our ability to provide ourselves with the goods and services we need to live meaningful lives in our communities? What if people around the world saw themselves as the answer to our shared social and economic challenges?

Over the past few years, there has been an exciting dialog around the role of co-operative enterprise in a changing world. In the wake of the global recession, the United Nations declared 2012 the International Year of Co-ops, recognizing the resilience of the co-operative business model in times of economic upheaval. Then in 2013, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) released its Blueprint for a Co-operative Decade, an ambitious document that envisions co-ops as the acknowledged leaders in social and economic sustainability, the business model preferred by people across the globe, and the fastest growing form of enterprise in the world by 2020. In 2014 UN bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) promoted the important role of co-operatives in building food security for producers and consumers as part of International Year of Family Farming celebrations.

All of this attention has created an unprecedented opportunity for building real community ownership, empowerment and sustainability through co-operative enterprise. Across our region and around the world, co-ops have been working together to build on the vision of the Blueprint, which focuses on five key priorities: Elevating member participation; positioning co-ops as builders of sustainability; strengthening the Co-operative Identity; ensuring legal frameworks to support growth, and developing sources of capital that support growth while reinforcing member control.

Member ownership is one of the key characteristics that make the co-operative model of enterprise unique. In contrast to sole proprietorships and investor owned businesses, co-operatives are designed to empower their members to meet their own needs and goals. Unlike non-profits and charitable organizations, co-ops are owned by and accountable to their membership—the people who use the business to provide themselves with goods, services and employment. This relationship is a key advantage in a competitive marketplace where loyalty is an important factor for business success.

Sustainability is both an urgent and complicated issue. And while co-operatives must always push themselves to do more, their basic structure is a pow-

continued on next page

continued from previous page

eful tool for addressing challenges of economic instability, social upheaval and global climate change. Because their priority is service to their members rather than maximization of profit, co-ops focus less on growth for its own sake. Scale is matched to member needs rather than being driven by the need to extract profit. In this way, the cooperative model represents a more sustainable form of enterprise over time.

Another area of opportunity is in communicating the co-operative difference to a world hungry for alternatives. Despite the recent interest in co-operative enterprise, there is limited understanding of the model among governments, development organizations, academic institutions, and the general public. The ICA's efforts to raise the pro-

file of the movement and unite co-ops behind a common identity are an exciting shift in the dialog. But it will be up to individual co-ops to make the most of their co-operative identity and move beyond marketing their individual business to promoting the wider cooperative movement. The ICA's promotion of an international co-op marque or logo and the ".coop" internet domain make it easier for co-ops to communicate their difference, and easier for the public to identify the broader impact of the co-operative movement as a whole.

One of the key areas of opportunity we have now is the explosion of interest in the co-operative business model among community activists and young people. Unfortunately, legal statutes for the incorporation of co-operatives in the United States vary greatly from one state to another, and do not support the

continued on next page



Credit: Braden DeForge

continued from previous page

development of the full spectrum of co-op sectors. As a result, we are losing a new generation of potential co-opreneurs who are instead choosing other business models as vehicles for their creativity. One example of success in this area is the New England Farmers Union's manual "Growing a Food System for the Future," which compiles co-operative statutes for all New England states (download a copy at www.newenglandfarmersunion.org).

Updating co-op statutes in the United States to include all sectors, including relatively new models such as multi-stakeholder co-ops, which include combinations of members including producers, workers, and consumers, could open the floodgates for co-operative development in our own country. In Italy, for example, the national co-operative movement advocated for the creation of a whole new legal category—the "social co-operative"—in response to the withdrawal of governments providing of social services. The result has been the establishment of thousands of new businesses empowering people to meet their own needs through member-owned and controlled enterprises.

While we encourage new growth in co-ops, we also need to be careful to defend the integrity of the "co-op" name and legal statutes to ensure that they represent co-operative principles. For example, the Neighboring Food Co-op Association, which represents over 30 food co-ops and start-up initiatives across New England, recently approved a Resolution on the

Cooperative Legal Identity which promotes enforcement of legal restrictions on the use of the co-op name by entities other than co-operatives as well as the development of new statutes that reinforce "democratic member control, allocation of surplus based on patronage, and limited return on capital." (For a copy of this resolution, please visit nfca.coop/resolutions.)

Finally, expansion of our movement will require the development of sources of capital that do not compromise member control or the social purpose of co-ops. In this area, a new wave of co-operatives and conversions is demonstrating the potential of organized co-operative capital in fulfilling growth while reinforcing the Co-operative Identity. Food co-ops in our region, such as River Valley Market, Old Creamery Co-op and Brattleboro Food Co-op have been very successful in organizing member loan campaigns to support new growth. Real Pickles, Simple Diaper & Linen and other worker co-ops have used non-voting investment to convert existing businesses into cooperatives, creating a viable alternative to "selling-out" that retains vital community infrastructure. Individuals can also invest in the Cooperative Fund of New England, celebrating its fortieth anniversary this year, while member co-operatives of the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-ops are pooling their funds to support co-op to co-op investment.

Are co-ops perfect? Of course not. However, cooperative values and principles—including self-help, equality, democracy, education, solidarity and concern for community—reinforce a

continued from previous page

very different approach to business. For 140 years, co-ops have offered a concrete, participatory, and successful economic alternative that is also more common than one might think. From farmer co-ops to food co-ops, worker co-ops to credit unions, energy co-ops to housing co-ops, co-operatives are locally owned by a billion people worldwide — more than own direct stock in investor owned businesses.

As we consider some of the key challenges of our time, including climate change, economic inequality, and feeding a rapidly expanding global population, cooperative enterprise will continue to a powerful tool for people to meet their own needs and aspirations.

The question becomes how co-ops and their members can best use our shared resources to build a better world for future generations. For more information on how you can get involved, visit www.nfca.coop/go.

Erbin Crowell serves as Executive Director of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (www.nfca.coop), a co-operative of over 30 food co-op s(including the Planfield Co-op) and start-ups, locally owned by more than 90,000 people. He is a member of the board of directors of the National Cooperative Business Association and an adjunct lecturer at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he teaches courses on the co-operative movement. He may be contacted at erbin@nfca.coop. ♦



Spring Teas

by Dorothy Wallace

Beneath the frozen ruts and plowed-up banks, beneath the leafless trees and strata of snow, lies spring. Frogs and dragonfly larva suspended at the bottom of the ponds. Fiddleheads and buds curled snug, just waiting. Seeds, holding tight until the time is right.

We, too, wait—patiently or not—for stronger sun, melting ice, robin song, and the first snowdrops peeking out. We crave color for our spirits. Purple crocus. Red maple bud. Yellow dandelion. Greens, fresh from the garden greens, for our bodies. But wait we must.

In the meantime we turn to herbs. The colors, scents, and healing properties of herbs are ready and waiting in their dried forms. Some hot water is all it takes to release the goodness. Brew decoctions of roots and berries, tisanes of leaf and flower—singly or as inventive blends.

Roots are powerhouse tonics. Just as they support their plants, they support our flagging, cold-weary selves. Our winter diets tend to be a rough mix of excess and deficiency. Roots such as angelica, burdock, dandelion, elecampane, and valerian detoxify, restore balance, and replenish our mineral stores. To rebuild our beleaguered immune systems, we turn to three superb adaptogens: ashwaganda (winter cherry), licorice, and astragalus. Adaptogens build up our resistance to stress, including toxins and radiation. They have a tonic effect, provide stamina, and add to our general well-being, with few or no side effects.

While we long for leaves on the trees, we can benefit from the green goodness stored up in herbs. Catnip and all the other mints—*anise hyssop*, *lemon balm*, *peppermint*, *skullcap*, *spear-mint*—aid digestion. *Comfrey leaf*, *nettle*, *milky oats*, and *raspberry* provide essential minerals. *Holy basil (tulsi)* is the adaptogen star of the leafy herbs.

Berries provide a refreshing lift. *Hawthorn* soothes the heart and *Schisandra*, the adaptogen, brings vigor and vitality to ready us for the irresistible urge to play and work harder as the snow and ice melt.

And finally but, in many ways, first: flowers. Not the fresh, bright blooms of summer fields and gardens but equally welcome. Dried herb flowers give us mellowed scents and lovely muted colors. *Red clover* is a detox agent that is rich in nitrogen, calcium, and iron. *Calendula* soothes digestion, repairs cells, and is antiseptic. *Chamomile* benefits digestion, is anti-inflammatory, and promotes relaxation. *Hibiscus* is an antibacterial antioxidant that reduces blood pressure and controls cholesterol. *Lavender* or *lavandin* reduces stress and stimulates appetite. *Rose buds* are antioxidant and rich in vitamin C. *Saint Johns Wort* brings relief from jangled nerves and winter blues.

Herbs bring health and hope at the end of winter. They usher in spring and hold the promise of summer. ♦

Rhubarb Upside-Down Cake

Ingredients

Topping

3 cups sliced fresh or frozen rhubarb ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
1 cup sugar ¼ cup butter, melted
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Batter

¼ cup butter, melted 2 teaspoons baking powder
¾ cup sugar ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 egg ¼ teaspoon salt
1½ cups all-purpose flour ⅔ cup milk

Sweetened whipped cream (optional topping)

Directions

1. Place rhubarb in a greased 10-in. heavy oven-proof skillet.
 2. Combine sugar, flour and nutmeg; sprinkle over rhubarb.
 3. Drizzle with butter; set aside.
 4. In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar until blended.
 5. Beat in the egg.
 6. Combine the flour, baking powder, nutmeg and salt.
 7. Gradually add to egg mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.
 8. Spread over rhubarb mixture.
 9. Bake at 350° for 35 minutes OR until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean.
 10. Loosen edges immediately and invert onto a serving dish.
- Serve warm. Serve with whipped cream if desired. Yield: 8-10 servings.

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