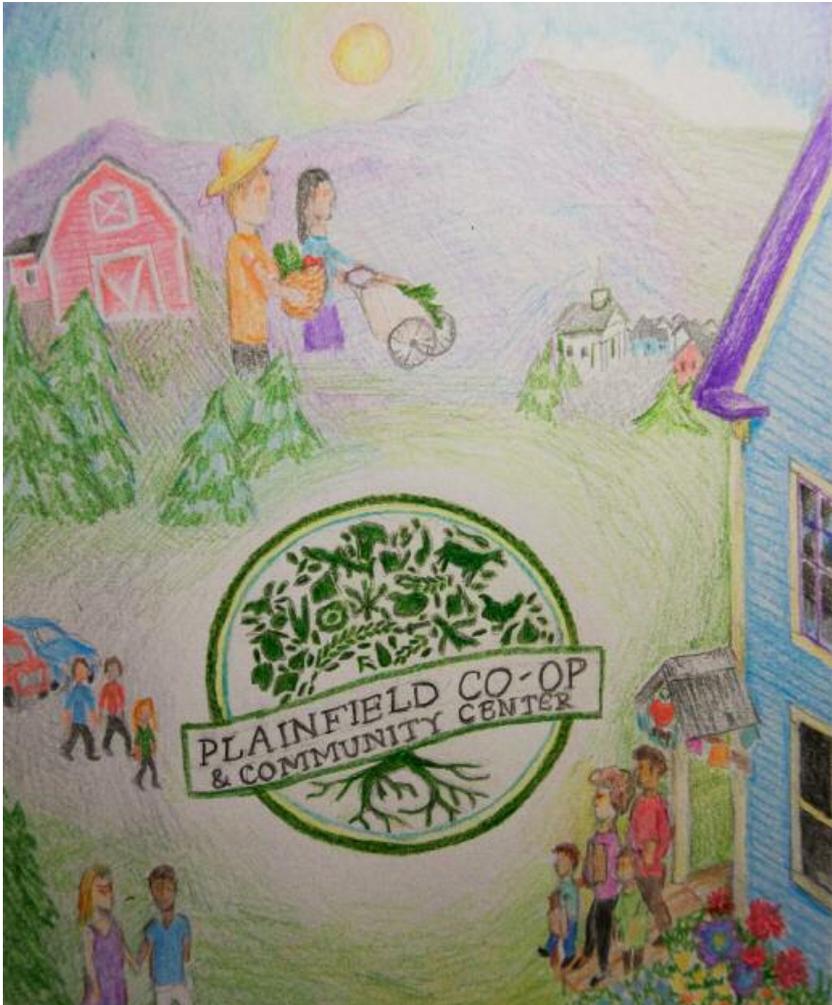


# The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

*Fall 2016*

*Co-operating in a Vibrant Community*



**Hours:** 7 days a week 9AM–8PM

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## About This Newsletter

In the old days--the 1970's and into the '80's--the Co-op's shelves weren't filled with local products because there weren't that many. Today, buying from local producers—small farmers, backyard orchardists, specialty bakers, soap makers, dairies, cheese makers, and more—is a large part of the Co-op's business. We support our local businesses and they support us as we change and grow together. This newsletter focuses on the many ways the Co-op and our community interact and, looking at the Co-op's goals for the future, how we can serve more of our community.

The Newsletter welcomes your feedback, letters, and art work. Deadline for the winter issue is November 15. Contact anyone on the Newsletter Committee:

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# EAST HILL TREE FARM

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**3499 East Hill Rd. Plainfield, VT**  
**Check: [www.easthilltreefarm.com](http://www.easthilltreefarm.com)**

# President's Report August 2016

by Gail Falk

By the time this newsletter comes out, you will have seen copies of the Co-op's Strategic Plan in the store or on our website, or at our August Public Forum. It's taken nearly a year to complete the study and listening necessary to write our Plan. We are grateful for the hard work of the Strategic Planning committee: Michael Billingsley, Bob Fancher, Dawn Fancher, Petra Gates, Ryan Gillard, and Karla Haas Moskowitz. As we head into the fall, the Board is ready to finish planning, and to start working to make our plan real.

For the Strategic Plan to become reality, we need two main things:

- We need strong, steady sales to provide enough income to afford to pay back equipment and building loans, and
- We need member energy and enthusiasm on the five committees that will be implementing the Strategic Plan.

**We Need Strong, Steady Sales.** The steady increase in sales that our Co-op has enjoyed for several years has slacked off in recent months. We are not alone. Shoppers have many more places to buy organic food than they used to, and co-ops throughout the region are feeling the pinch. Our own co-op was slower than most others to feel the

effects of competition from conventional grocery stores, but now our sales too have become sluggish.

We are asking members to support our Co-op by buying a larger share of your groceries at the store. When you go to the Co-op, take one of the shopping carts, and buy your supplies for the week. Stock up on sale items, Take advantage of our great local produce, bread, and dairy sections. Look at the variety of our frozen foods. Take a little extra time to buy from the bulk section. If there's something you are used to getting at another store, fill out a Suggestion Card, or tell the cashier you want to put in a special order. In turn, our staff are working hard to identify bargains and keep basic items affordable.

## **Participate in our new committees.**

We are forming five new committees to implement the Strategic Plan and broadening the mandate of an existing committee (Communications). The new committees are

**Food Access**

**Building Construction**

**Internal Layout**

**Building Financing**

**Membership**

What area of the Co-op's growth most interests you? What skills can you offer? Talk to any Board member or Management Collective member to find out more about the committees and what is involved, or contact me at [gail.falk@gmail.com](mailto:gail.falk@gmail.com) (phone: 595-4614). I'm always happy to hear from our members! ♦



Credit: Bram Tobin

# Treasurer's Report

by Bob Fancher

**2016 Second Quarter.** Our year-to-date Sales are up 1.3% over the same period last year after adjustment for inflation. Our Gross Profit on those Sales is a healthy 35%. That translates to: for every dollar of products we sell, we sold it for 35 cents more than we paid for it (on average). Those 35 cents are used to pay all the expenses of running the store—wages, utilities, professional fees, credit card fees, insurance, etc.

For the first 6 months of 2016, our expenses were greater than 35 cents per dollar of Sales. So, we have minus 0.76% Ordinary Income year-to-date. Our goal is +2.0% Ordinary Income. In other words, the goal is to have 2 cents of every dollar of Sales as profit. Those 2 cents are what we use to pay the dividends to our member-owners each year (after some adjustments for taxes, the Community Center and some other items).

Thus far this year, we have minus 0.76 cents instead of plus 2 cents. Most of this problem occurred in the first quarter. The second quarter was much better but still below the 2% goal.

How do we fix this? There are basically three things that will correct low profit: 1) increase sales, 2) lower expenses and 3) increase the mark-up. We really do not want to increase the mark-up because we want to keep our products as affordable as we can.

As for the other two, the Management Collective (MC) is aggressively pursuing corrective actions. They have put

in place cost control measures to minimize variable expenses. And they are investigating innovative ways to increase Sales.

**Strategic Plan.** The Co-op Strategic Plan has been released and is available on our website, [PlainfieldCoop.com](http://PlainfieldCoop.com)

The Plan has four major goals that we will be focusing on in the near future. One of the goals, the Building goal, will be a major financial undertaking for the Co-op. Our plans include a 660 square foot expansion on the river side of the building and some major repairs/modifications to the existing portion of the building.

We plan to fund a large portion of these with grants and gifts. We will probably need to borrow some money also.

At his time, we do not know enough about the costs or the funding to provide you with specific dollar amounts. We may or may not be able to afford all the changes we want to make. We will learn more as the project progresses and we will keep you informed.

As always, thanks to all of our members for their continuing support. ♦



Bob and Loona at Public Forum  
Credit: Bram Tobin

# Missing Jeri Healey

Word has slowly trickled out that our community lost a treasure sometime in May. The date and time was not known to many of us because this treasure, true to his humble nature, chose to pass without recognition or notice. He wanted no funeral, no obituary, no memorial. But, Jeri Healey, you were dear and important to us. We mourn your passing. You are missed. Your absence is palpable.

Jeri grew up in Plainfield. He attended Plainfield public schools, and was an early member of the Plainfield Stonewall Gang. (He showed Ellen Bresler, Co-op manager at the time, proof with a photo of his lanky five-year-old self sitting on the Stonewall in the 1950s.) He and his wife Jeanne owned the Plainfield Hardware Store for many years when it still occupied the awkward corner intersection of U.S. Rt 2 and Main St.

Jeri always had a hard time sitting still. After he and Jeanne sold the hardware

store, he approached Ellen Bresler (manager of the Winooski Valley Co-op at the time) to see if he could “help out”. He was such an incredible volunteer that he was soon hired. His “what can we do for you today?” and glinting smile welcomed shoppers and members for years. Jeri wanted to know how you were. He not only remembered what had been on your mind when last you spoke with him but added to the conversation with his afterthought.

A most forgiving person, Jeri was the only worker to return to the Co-op in the aftermath of firings that wounded our Co-op community in the late 90s. Jeri was a healing salve during those painful after-months and -years.

Jeri touched the lives of the people with whom he worked and interacted. The following are stories shared by current staff who cherished him dearly. All of us chose the word ‘treasure’ to describe Jeri. This is not coincidental, nor redundant.

Debra Stoleroff



The first time I met Jeri Healey, we spoke about growing up in villages just twenty miles from each other. And though our childhoods were separated by decades and the Groton Forest I believe we both felt a certain kinship. The very next time we saw each other, even before the usual pleasantries, Jeri said, 'I've got a Ryegate name for you!' It turned out to be my grandfather, and we had a good chuckle over the smallness of our Vermont world. After that I had the pleasure of Jeri's company just

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about every Tuesday morning at the Co-op for the last couple years.

I cannot convey the depth of the feeling of home, warmth and continuity that those too short years of friendship with Jeri brought me. As someone raised in the same small town where my mother's family has been for seven generations, who chose to go out and return decades later, Jeri was a treasured oasis of welcome; he seemed to have both feet firmly planted in that familiar old world and open arms for the rest of the world outside it.

Jeri was truly a treasure and I miss him very much; we are all lucky to have known such a sweet and open hearted human being.

Petra Gates

After knowing Jeri for years as the friendly and knowledgeable owner of the Plainfield Hardware Store (way back in the early 1980s), I lost touch with him when he retired. In time, however, I started working at the Co-op and there was Jeri, a long-time working member, bagging the sticky raisins, hammering the chocolate blocks, and keeping the

repacked items in stock. In the last couple of years I was fortunate that our shifts coincided most weeks. He always took time to ask about my garden, my hip, my family ('Say Hi to Bob!'). Our conversations were easy, low, slow, and so welcome in the sometimes-hectic back room. His humor was dry and his observations direct. He always made it a point to stop by the herb back-stock aisle and say 'Goodbye, have a good day,' when he left. Jeri was a genuine treasure: a sincere, honest, and kind human being.

Dorothy Wallace

I got to know Jeri through his regular presence as a working member at the Co-op. He carried with him a calm, caring energy that was shared freely, even with the folks who were new to him. That sharing of energy made my day better every time. Thanks, Jeri, for sharing your time and energy with us.

In loving memory, Chloe Budnick

*NOTE: Petra Gates and Debra Stoleroff will be gathering Jeri Healey stories, memories and photos to gift to Jeanne. If you have one or more to share please send them to [debra@vtlink.net](mailto:debra@vtlink.net) or leave them with Petra Gates at the Co-op. ♦*

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Plainfield, Vt.  
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*Providing organic produce  
to the community  
since 1987*



# Management Report

by Karen Starr

Hard to believe August is here and gone! It's been a dry summer overall and only with the last couple of rainstorms has the Great Brook swelled to normal proportions. Across the Northeast, scarce rain sent bears and squirrels into folks' back yards looking for food and provided more excitement than we are used to. People have also been noting birds other than hummingbirds visiting their nectar feeders, presumably in search of hydration. No doubt about it, 2016 has been a hard year so far for farmers and critters. For the Northeast, from Maine to Pennsylvania, this is our second year of below-average rainfall nested within a decade of record dry weather. Though it's not the five year drought California and the Southwest are struggling with, the dry, hot weather has stressed farms and gardens, caused wells to go dry, towns to institute water use restrictions,

and increased the risk of wildfires. Still we've had some stunningly beautiful days that remind us all why we love this place. And some of us, considered insane by a good portion of the population, are getting excited as we begin to feel the crispness and smell the tannins of Fall in the air.

The Plainfield Co-op is experiencing its own challenges and potential opportunities. It's not only the weather that's been chaotic and unpredictable! The retail markets are always challenging for small businesses, but the first half of the year has been a slow six months for sales nationally and the Co-op has not been immune to this trend. Additionally, we have substantial local competition which has whittled away at our share of the market this year. It's clear that if the Co-op wants to continue to be a viable institution serving the community, we need to be flexible and creative in meeting both weather and business challenges. We can absolutely do this, but it means we all need to come together to be successful! There are a good number of folks who have served on committees, answered surveys, worked in the store as members, shared with buyers ideas about products they'd like to see on the shelves, and been involved in many other ways. This involvement is more important than you might imagine.

The Co-op has experienced many crossroads in the past, and the Management Collective feels we are at an important one right now. In addition to the MC brainstorming ways to generate more



Karen and Dawn

Credit: Bram Tobin

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sales revenue, the Strategic Planning committee (including MC, Board, and members at large) has been meeting for the last six months to consider where we want to be in the next 3-5 years. By the time you read this newsletter, the public meeting to discuss the committee's work will have happened, but much more remains to be done. We are all busy in our lives these days; more than ever it seems hard to find time to support community projects and organizations. However, if you have ever considered becoming more involved in supporting the Co-op with your patronage, time, or energy, now is an excellent time to do that! Please watch the Co-op's newsletter, store, and website for more information about how you can become more involved. And please don't hesitate to ask about opportunities to become involved or make suggestions.

As to other more mundane things, the buyers continue to work hard to identify new products and competitive prices to benefit members and shoppers. Chloe has been rotating cheeses through that department, so there have been some really outstanding tasty things in her display case. If you are a dairy hound, you'll want to check it out. Nancy continues her fine job of finding unusual and excellent values in the beer and wine department. Much of what is on the store's wine shelves has been sampled at wine tastings and/or vetted by staff. The Grocery department consistently benefits from Jeannine's expertise. She is always looking for case deals and better products based on member feedback. The MC is looking into how to expand our offerings of ready to go foods. Check out what we have at the

moment, however. You may be surprised by what's available, and don't forget we have a microwave available to heat food. Anji and Petra continue to work closely with growers to bring in the best of what's available locally. It's been a bad year for strawberries, but a terrific year for other berries. We have some great farmers growing food for us! Margie and Karen have been giving the Supplement and Body Care departments the eye. Please share any suggestions you have for things you'd like on the shelves in those departments. Karen has brought in some new shower gels, men's shaving products and nail polish for whoever wants to use them. We'll be talking about some small gift offerings for the Holiday season coming up. Matt has really honed the coffee department and read everyone the riot act about how coffee should be brewed. Look for a better cup, some coffee samplings, and more variety in that department. Dorothy remains a presence in the store through the herb and tea department. Look for the same excellent selection of both and be sure to share any requests.

Finally, we could really use some member workers in the Produce department to help with things like bagging greens, prepping, stocking, and culling. Please be in touch with Petra or Anji before 2pm most days if you are interested. Experience is helpful, but not necessary. We also would very much like to find one or two members who would like to take on upkeep of the grounds on a regular basis. We are looking a little ragged around the edges! If you are interested, please ask to speak to Chloe or Karen. Thank you all!! Looking forward to seeing where our Co-op adventure takes us. Love and Peace. ♦

# Showing Up at the Plainfield Co-op

by Bram Towbin

Joey Klein and Betsy Ziegler's lettuce. The Colman-Wiswall family tomatoes and their son, Peter Colman's charcuterie. Jack and Anne Lazor's yogurt. Nutty Steph's chocolate. Sharon Peck's goat cheese. Annie Bakst and Robert Hunt's wood-fired bread. Janice Walrafen's art tiles. The Plainfield Co-op is filled with our food, our art, our people. And by "our" we mean anyone, with good intention, who shows up and says "hi." Showing up is the only real price of admission. Oddly, that price is too steep for most products to make their way into the Plainfield Co-op. Because corporate efficiency has no face and so cannot pay the fee we require.

Behind the 400 sq feet of creaky wood floors, filled with a small but brilliant

variety of goods, lies a bulwark against the onslaught of corporatism that makes food—and therefore our experience—flavorless at best, dangerous at worst. The hallmark of our time is a "convenient" shopping experience distinguished especially by uniformity, but the price of this convenience is high, even for the end-buyer. It's understandable that this appeals to many shoppers, given the nightmarish daily news cycle—who has the energy at the end of long day to ask what the Hawthorne extract is for? (your heart) — but Plainfield says, "Not here." In Plainfield, we will actually be HERE now. And that means locating a source of Lavender Kombucha because a member says it's

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*Credit: Bram Tobin*

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delicious. That product might be placed on the shelves by a person wearing an 18th century costume. It might also be rung out by a cashier wearing a bowler hat or anarchist t-shirt or a paisley sweater. What prevents this from being a calculated mirror image of the chain mentality is the sincerity of the people and the genuineness of the products. It is not uniformly pleasant. Uniformity and pleasantness are superseded by plain honesty.

It has been said that the first rule of bartending is, “Never ask anyone how they are...they might tell you”. The Plainfield Co-op turns that folk wisdom on its head by having an unspoken motto that speaks to having everyone tell everyone how they are...with no one asking...or judging. This institution (which would

cringe at the thought that it is such a thing)—and the community it presides over—is not a utopia by any means (many will attest). Nor does it have a regressive vision. But it’s radically inclusive, and since 1972, has formed the heart of the community. It simply insists on living on a human scale and this is a real feat in the year 2016. While we are still forced to plead with the behemoth of a phone company to turn our phone back on and beg our monstrous health insurer to stop sending large erroneous bills, we can at least munch on the best baby kale salad the earth has to offer, made available to us by neighbors who have the same expectation: that we do and we will all share the same table. Come as you are. And while you’re here...buy some food...or not. But show up. That’s what the *Co-op* really cares about. ♦

## Cold Cucumber Soup

### Ingredients

2 large European cucumbers (2¼ lbs.), halved and seeded—½ cup finely diced, the rest coarsely chopped  
1½ cups plain Greek yogurt  
3 Tbsp fresh lemon juice  
1 small shallot, chopped  
1 garlic clove  
½ cup loosely packed dill  
¼ cup loosely packed flat-leaf parsley  
2 Tbsp loosely packed tarragon leaves  
¼ cup olive oil & more for drizzling

### Preparation

In a blender, combine the chopped cucumber with the yogurt, lemon juice, shallot, garlic, dill, parsley, tarragon and the ¼ cup of olive oil. Blend until smooth. Season with salt and white pepper, cover and



### Salt

Fresh ground white pepper  
½ red onion, finely chopped  
(optional: 1 avocado – blend half with the rest of the soup; dice the second half to put in the soup. )

refrigerate for at least 8 hours or overnight.

Season the soup again just before serving. Pour the soup into bowls. Garnish with the finely diced cucumber, red onion and a drizzle of olive oil and serve.



## New Board Member Sarah Phillips

I moved to Plainfield village in 2001 with my partner, Jeff Swift, and we joined the Co-op on our second day in town! As

a grocery and gathering place, the Co-op is part of why we choose to make Plainfield our home. We now live at New Hamburger (a housing co-op) with our three kids, and our family berry batch sells fruit to the Plainfield Co-op. I believe deeply that co-ops build strong communities because of the way they help us learn to work and grow together. While a graduate student, I stocked shelves at the People's Food Co-op in Ann Arbor, and I was a member of the Plainfield Co-op's last capital campaign team. Through these experiences and

others, I have a deep appreciation for the work of Co-op staff, management, board and members. I want a Plainfield with a lively working landscape and local food system, and the Co-op is key to making that happen. For these reasons, it is a privilege to serve the Co-op on the Board. Currently, I lead the Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity in the Agency of Human Services, which provides funding and support to community organizations across the state working to address poverty and homelessness. I am joining the Board of Housing Vermont in September. In previous lives, I worked at Capstone Community Action and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guinea. Phone: 802-476-8360  
email: sa\_philli@yahoo.com

*Sarah was voted onto the Board at the June Board meeting. ♦*



# Suggestion Box

## (selected Suggestions & Answers)

**S:** Vermont Salumi Co. Chorizo, please!

**A:** We have this! We carry other flavors as well, and every flavor comes up every 2-3 weeks.

**S:** Bring back Breakfast Blend juice, please

**A:** Do you mean Morning Blend? To keep prices low, we rotate juices according to what is on sale through our vendors. Morning Blend will be back. Meanwhile, try Santa Cruz Orange Mango. Yum!

**S:** OXO-Brite laundry supplement. We used to have it. It's a great eco-friendly alternative to bleach, and it really works!

**A:** We now have it! Located in the Laundry Aisle.

**S:** Machine that grinds peanuts into peanut butter.

**A:** These are very expensive and messy and we don't have a space for one at this point. Also, the peanut butter would not be much less expensive than the jarred butter we sell.

**S:** Traditional Medicinals

Linden Tea, please.

**A:** Our boxed tea distributor does not carry this.

However, we have both linden flower and hawthorn berries in bulk herbs. If the boxed works better for you, it is available online.



# Plainfield Co-op Supports Our Community

by *Chloe Budnick*

As a buyer for the Cheese and Bakery departments, I am amazed at the local options I have to fill our shelves with...and I do! 100% of our bakery department is local and many items are hand delivered by the producer themselves. I get to meet these creative folks and even help taste test new products--I do love my job! From Erica at the Happy Bite who delivered gluten free Margarita Whoopie Pies and Brownies this week to the well loved Oma Jean's chocolate chip cookies, you'll never want for treats made by local hands...even if it makes checking out at the register a bit crowded.

The cheese department is just as blessed with VT goudaness...look for Shadagee Vermont Artisan Gouda as our Cave to Co-op sale in October! 75% or more of our cheese sales come from Vermont producers. PLEASE--let me know what cheeses you'd like to be enjoying!

Looking to the store overall, from May 1, 2015 to April 30, 2016, almost half our adjusted-gross sales minus tax came from local and regional products (local is defined as within 100 miles, regional is within 250 miles of the Co-op). If we look at the dollars the Co-op pays out to local/regional producers, staff, and local businesses, we put over \$562,000 back

into our community in 2015 (that was about half of our sales).

As many of you know, the Co-op also supports the Community Center in the top half of our building. From Maple Hill School art shows to birthday parties to Amy's boot camp class, good energy is expended in this beautiful space. Members get a discount on rental at \$9/hour (available to the community at large for \$15/hour). I'd be happy to give you a tour. You'll often find folks making free usage of the space as it is open as long as the Co-op is open: piano playing, studying, perusing the free bin (well stocked with clothing and books at the moment), checking out the current art show, yoga, or some quiet time poking around on our wi-fi.

Our entrance is full of local postings from the village as well as posters for events coming up and local folks looking to make connections for work, housing, etc.

The Co-op supports many local groups in the form of gift cards, free usage of the Community Center, and Co-op products. We have a special connection with the Twin Valley Senior Center, assisting with fundraising dinners, donations of veggies, herbs and tea, and along with the Onion River Food Shelf, as a recipient of unclaimed equity and register donations.

The Co-op serves as a local hub for conversation and connection...we even got to see the beautiful trout caught by a member this year! Every day is full and varied, and I'm so thankful to work and live in this community. ♦



*Credit: Bram Tobin*

# Public Forum on the Co-op's Strategic Plan

by Gail Falk

The roll-out of the Co-op's Strategic Plan took place August 26. Members, staff, and the public were invited to react to, comment upon, and sign up to participate in the Plan's four Goals (see President's Report, page 4). You can find a copy of the Strategic Plan on the Co-op website <PlainfieldCoop.com>.

The biggest goal in terms of financial and human resources is Goal One – Develop a Master Plan for the Building. Bob Fancher described the target areas for upgrade and expansion with vivid photos of areas currently overcrowded or in disrepair. He projected a design sketch of the footprint for a one-story expansion on the back (river) side of the building. He told the audience that the Plainfield Design Review Board will conduct a hearing and site review of the expansion plan on Wednesday, September 14.

In general, those present supported the plans for expansion and upgrade. One person suggested that a comprehensive Energy Audit should inform the building plan because energy efficiency is a paramount concern in these times. Another suggested adding basement storage area in the expansion. There were comments about the potential availability of grant funding for some aspects, and the need for a comprehensive financial cost estimate before proceeding. Bob expressed complete agreement with both these comments, and said they would occur when we get the go-ahead from the Design Review Board; he said these critical steps will be the responsibility of the new Building Finance Committee. One person said the expansion plan is a mistake because the Co-op can't afford it

and it could lead to financial ruin. Several people signed up for the Building Design Committee.

There was a lively discussion about how to carry out Goal Three – Become More Welcoming to Everyone in Our Community. One person said that, if the Co-op wants to reach out to Plainfield/Marshfield residents who do not identify with the Co-op and the culture it represents to them, it is important to avoid an appearance of righteousness about the correct way to eat or the correct kinds of products to buy. There was disagreement about whether the staff needed to be more friendly, with some people saying that they sometimes or often experience staff as unwelcoming and others saying the staff try hard to be welcoming.

With respect to Goal Four – Address Food Insecurity, there were unanswered questions about how many people currently use SNAP cards to shop at the Co-op. Several people signed up for the Food Justice Committee, which will spearhead the Co-op's work on food access.

Turnout for the public forum was disappointing, and someone present questioned whether we should proceed without a greater show of member support. All the comments at the forum, including this one, will be typed up, posted on the website, and considered by the Board when the Plan is finalized in September.

Meanwhile, sign-up sheets for the Plan's six implementation teams are posted at the store. If there is a part of the Plan that excites you, contact a member of the Board or staff, or just sign up! ♦

# Plainfield Community Center: Part of a Vibrant Community

by Glenda Bissex

For many years before the Plainfield Co-op bought its building in 1972 from the Ivy Grange, formal, private Grange meetings were held in the upstairs space. A grange, according to Wikipedia, is “a fraternal organization that encourages families to band together to promote the economic and political well-being of the community and agriculture.” The Ivy Grange’s ways may have been different from the young co-op’s ways, but our hearts were in the same place.

Soon the old Grange Hall was filled with new sounds. Quoting the first Co-op Newsletter (winter 1972-3): “Every Saturday afternoon, 1 pm, children’s film series. Free, adults not admitted

without a child along.” The first film was shown to about 100 little and big people. And there were community supporters: “Last night we held our third community supper. We made about \$160 to help pay the building maintenance expenses. Special thanks to the Midnight Plowboys and the Whitehearts for the sounds that shook the building.”

For years, Rick Winston and Chris Wood showed movies at the Community Center. This preceded Rick’s movie series at the Pavillion which preceded the Savoy Theater. Former and beloved Co-op manager Ellen Bresler recalls watching a Charlie Chaplin film festival and one of the Muppet movies. The

fledgling Onion River Arts Council staged early programs there, and Plainfield’s gamelan, a loose assortment of percussive instruments and players, practiced every week and stored its equipment in the community center. It also hosted board meetings, community groups, dance, music, aerobics, and acted as an improvised gym for school children in the winter.

Longtime Co-op member Pat Mayhew remembers “Friday night family movies, during which the projector usually broke down. Christmas bazaars, crowded with craft tables, and smelling of pine boughs and cinnamon. The big room was like a market place in a third world country.” There were



*Clairvoyants Barney Carlson and Ellis Jacobson*

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also Dick Hathaway auctions, and yard sales of stuff stored in Randy's barn, when the parking lot would be full by 8 a.m. And Barney Carlson birthday celebrations and productions augmented by garlic spaghetti dinners prepared by Fred Carlson (Barney's brother) and Suzy Norris. The entertainment included rehearsed and/or improvised theater plus a number of serialized performances such as "The Universal History of the World," an interview show, and a TV news show, "The WIMP News of the Week."

Pat Mayhew remembers a contradance with music by the Azarian family and dancing by a packed crowd of adults and children. "When I happened to go downstairs, I saw, with some apprehension, the ceiling/floor bobbing up and down with the dancing."

All this came to a halt abruptly in 1989 or '90 when an insurance inspector informed us the space was not up to fire or electrical codes, and could no longer be used to hold more than 50 people. "It was condemned," said Alexis Smith, a Co-op Board member and a primary motivator behind the Center's reopening. Alexis took the project under her wing, and the community pitched in. "I'm amazed at the energy people have put into this," she said.

Yet after the main floor of the Co-op building was made fire-retardant, and a new roof was built, and the old oil furnace removed, and an electrical breaker box relocated, "Someone would come along and tell us something else was needed," recalled Bresler. "It was pretty disheartening for a while."

## **Baked Sliced Apples**

(kid-friendly) 6 servings

6 tart apples

½ c. raisins

1/3 c. orange juice

3 T flour

½ c. packed light brown sugar

½ t cinnamon

3 T butter or margarine

1 T grated orange peel

⅛ t salt

2 T peanut (or other nut) butter

½ c. chopped peanuts (or other nuts)

Pare and core apples; cut in eighths; arrange in a shallow baking dish.

Add raisins and orange juice.

Combine flour, sugar, cinnamon, butter, orange peel, salt and peanut butter; mix until crumbly, add peanuts. Sprinkle over apples and raisins.

Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes or until apples are tender. Serve warm with cream.

Adapted from *Apple Kitchen Cook Book* by Demetria Taylor.

Finally, in November, 2000 the Plainfield Community Center reopened, its old wood floor gleaming with new urethane and the walls glowing with fresh paint. "Boneyard white" the color was called, which was what came out when the donated gallons of paint were mixed together. It was named in honor of the old cemetery visible through the windows.

Smith hoped that, like the paint, something great would emerge from mixing together an eclectic assortment of artists, musicians, dancers, community programs, massage therapy, potluck dinners and activism under the same roof. Anne

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LaBrusciano and Debra Stoleroff stepped right up to the challenge by offering First Friday Films, old movies for families with favorites like *Bringing Up Baby* and *Casablanca*, complete with popcorn and cider, from 2000 until 2005. Main St. passers-by recollect hearing choruses of sacred harp music every month or smelling the delicious food for Thanksgiving dinners and community seders. Alexis Smith curated many art shows.

Today the eclectic mix is bubbling, though the floor no longer shakes alarmingly--like a trampoline, as Barney Carlson described it. There are classes, workshops, performances (including Bread & Puppet Theater), dances, art exhibits, shape note and world music sings, and a donated piano—something for almost everyone except those who can't navigate the steep stairway. The Board and Building Committee are working to make this space accessible to everyone in our community. ♦

## **Zucchini Pancakes**     Adapted from Aytekin Yar, Dardanel

Time: 30 minutes

### **Pancakes**

3 medium zucchini, shredded  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 large eggs, beaten  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
1 cup crumbled feta cheese  
3 scallions, finely chopped

1/3 cup finely chopped dill  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
4 to 6 Tbsp vegetable oil, or as needed

### **Yoghurt Sauce**

2/3 cup plain yogurt  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1/2 teaspoon salt.

### **Preparation**

1. Preheat oven to 250°. Place zucchini in a colander over a bowl, and mix with 1/2 teaspoon salt. Allow to drain for five min. Transfer to cloth kitchen towel, and squeeze hard to extract as much moisture as possible. Squeeze a second time; volume will shrink to about half the original.

2. In a large mixing bowl, combine zucchini and eggs. Mix well with fork. Add flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt, olive oil, feta, scallions, dill and 1/2 teaspoon black pepper. Mix well, add baking powder, and mix again.

3. Place a cast iron skillet or other heavy skillet over medium heat. Add 2 tablespoons vegetable oil and heat until shimmering. Place heaping

tablespoons of zucchini batter in pan several inches apart, allowing room to spread. Flatten them with spatula if necessary; pancakes should be about 3/4 inch thick and about 3 inches in diameter. Fry until golden on one side, then turn and fry again until golden on other side. Repeat once or twice, frying about 5 to 6 minutes total, so pancakes get quite crisp. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels, and keep warm in oven. Continue frying remaining batter, adding more oil to pan as needed. Serve hot.

4. Yogurt sauce: In small bowl, combine yogurt, garlic and salt. Mix well, and serve on the side or on pancakes.

*Yield: 12 pancakes.*

# For your consideration: on buildings and businesses

by Ian Maas

I know there has been some recent talk again about trying to put an addition onto our Co-op. It would be great to expand the retail space, make the store more accessible and improve the functionality of the space. I do not, however, think it would be a great idea to dig deeper into this current space with a big investment without at least considering the idea of building new in a better location.

One of the important features of a small town is that it have a local grocery store. Our store is the place that fills the critical role in making a small town work. We have, at this point, a responsibility to keep our store not only running, but to be vibrant, fresh and continue to evolve in that role of being a grocery for a small town.

Part of this responsibility, I believe, is to stay current with the way stores and

buildings work. Our building feels rundown, and having crawled around a lot in its nooks and crannies, I know it is rundown. This is fine for a little coffee shop, or gallery space, but for the staff of the Co-op, the shoppers and as the town's primary grocery store, it needs to be better.

Is this the time for us to think big, and create the excellent building and business that the Plainfield Co-op could become? Not only a bustling grocery store with a great deli, but a real gathering place over morning coffee and grabbing groceries on the way home, a chance to mingle and shop with everyone in our town. Situated in a better location, in a clean, modern and accessible building, our store could fully grow into itself and not only continue to fill its role for Plainfield, but offer some local competition to our new neighbor up the street. ♦

## 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?

Contact Chris Carnes at [libertyloungevt@gmail.com](mailto:libertyloungevt@gmail.com)



*Using the Community Center benefits The Plainfield Co-op*



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