

# The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

*Spring 2023*

*Plainfield Co-op*



*Pastel by Susan Ross Grimaldi*

***Open Seven Days a Week***

*Monday-Saturday 9 AM–7 PM      Sunday 10 AM–7 PM*

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Deb Bothfeld- Receiving, Front Staff  
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Jezebel Crow- Produce, Operations Manager, Buyer  
Laura Conklin- Buyer  
Leah Tedesco- Marketing & Membership Coordinator  
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# About This Newsletter



Much has been happening behind the scenes or, for a more seasonal metaphor, under the snow, as staff, administrators, Board and volunteers have worked to keep our

Co-op ship afloat and moving ahead. (How's that for a mixed metaphor?) There's cautiously hopeful news — nothing dramatic, like our Route 2 dreams, but grounded.

Read on to learn of the Building Committee's plan to get the parking lot side of the building painted. Susan Grimaldi's painting on the cover of the digital edition, shows what it may look like, glowing with new color. The snow on the roof? Who knows what spring will bring? Check out the new website at [www.plainfieldcoop.com](http://www.plainfieldcoop.com).

A voice that has been missing from the newsletter for too long is that of the staff. Now Deb Barnwell has offered to write a regular column, "One Staffer's Perspective." It's off to a great start as you will see on p. 10.

If you want to find joy in the present moment whatever else is going on in the world, enjoy Lucy Blue's poem "Lemon Yogurt." Buy some of your favorite yogurt or other food from the Co-op, and focus on relishing it in this very moment. Make one or two or all three of Debra Stoleroff's recipes, and just enjoy the pleasure of home-cooked, nourishing, delicious food. Your Co-op is here to help with the ingredients.

As you read through this newsletter, one message comes through loud and clear: THE CO-OP NEEDS YOU! If you value the Co-op, if you want it to still be here when you need it, you must support it — first of all by shopping more. Become a member if you're not one already. Volunteer to work. Nobody else can do that for you, and many are counting on you to help our Co-op survive and thrive. It's spring, a time for new growth. May it be spring for the Co-op!

We welcome your contributions of letters, photos, cartoons, poems, whatever, sent to the editor. Deadline for the summer issue is June 15 to be published in early July. ❖

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# On Board!

by Cat Klarich, Co-op Board President

“Don’t panic, it’s organic” has been my Co-op mantra during my time on the Board. It serves as a reminder to keep pushing forward even when things get difficult, like peeling a farm fresh hard-boiled egg. (What’s the trick, anyway?) While our local co-op is a staple in our free-range community, we’ve seen a decrease in sales over the past couple of years. We felt the effects Covid had on business, and the bridge closure caused a significant loss for the Co-op during an already slumping quarter. The bridge is fixed, it’s a new quarter, and we’re looking ahead to the future. I invite you along for the ride!

The Marketing Committee is regrouping with some creative ideas—please see Board VP Anne Van Couvering’s call for volunteers (p. 18). Treasurer John Cleary’s report offers a deeper dive into the financials (p. 14). John deserves a ton of credit for securing forgivable loan funds that buoyed the Co-op with additional cash flow for operations. It went fast but helped immensely by clearing up some overdue balances with our vendors.

The Board has been busy working with volunteers and consultants moving the

*On Board, continued* >>



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*On Board* ➤➤

USDA Rural Development Grant forward. I want to give special recognition to Rose Paul who does an excellent job explaining where we're at in this process. This is a must read! (p. 7) As the board liaison for the grant, Rose continues to go above and beyond.

Volunteers, we are grateful for the gift of your valuable time and rely on the support of our member-owners. Lucy, I'm looking at you, kid! It's perfectly ok if you aren't in a position to volunteer—you can lend your support simply by coming in and shopping, and writing a poem (p. 18)! We appreciate the folks that take the time to read this quarterly publication—one of the ways the Board, staff, and newsletter contributors connect with you, the membership.

Engage with the Co-op online by visiting our beautiful new website: <https://plainfieldcoop.com/> Thank you member-owner Julia Wilk for volunteering your expertise on behalf of the Plainfield Co-op! The Community Center is open and classes are back in session! Everyone is welcome to shop with us and rent out the Community Center, but if you want to have a vote in our Co-op's future, please consider becoming a member-owner. Member dues are just \$20/year, capping out at \$180.

A shout out to the new Co-Managers, Jez and Stanzi, who are deftly leading the staff in the day-to-day operations. They are doing an impressive job, naturally supported by the rest of the team—the Co-op employees. We are so grateful

*On Board, continued* ➤



## HEALING SESSIONS

Community Circles \* Nature Retreats  
Pagan Events \* Culture Building Programs  
Equity Consulting \* Facilitation Services  
at

**Grandmother Cherry Sanctuary**  
*Community healing, gathering, respite & retreat  
space in the forest, Plainfield VT*

**EmpowR-Transformation.com**

to all of them for their dedication and keeping the Co-op's doors open for business. Did you know beer and wine is our fastest growing department? I may have something to do with this, but I am not going to take all the credit!

Personally, the Co-op isn't just a grocery store, it's a lifesaver—and not just in the kitchen. This winter my child was running a fever and I couldn't find a working thermometer. I went to the gas station—no thermometers. I went to the Co-op and sure enough the apothecary is stocked with an inexpensive digital thermometer and fever reducers. That day the Co-op saved my you know what and I vowed to return the favor by trying the Co-op before the gas station every time. When I need something, the Co-op

is there for me, and right now I need to be there for the Co-op. It makes me feel better to give back to the Co-op, our Co-op, to show how much I value having this community grocery store.

Staff member, Deb Barnwell, suggests that if folks spent an extra \$50 per month at the Co-op, it would improve our bottom line. Challenge accepted, Deb! Will you join me and swear off gas station eggs and thermometers? Don't panic, it's organic!

I'll see you at the Co-op! ❖



# EAST HILL TREE FARM

Nursery for Fruit Trees, Nuts, and Berries



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

# Charting the Co-op's Future: Update on Our USDA Grant

by Rose Paul, Board Secretary

Last year the Co-op received a \$29,931 grant to help us chart our future. Yes, it is that big a deal.

As reported by Treasurer John Cleary, our Co-op struggles financially. How can we change this situation? There are two possibilities that involve significant financial investment — expand in place, or move to Route 2. We are using the grant money to hire specialists who can help us estimate the cost of each option and how much revenue we might expect over the next ten years.

## USDA Small Business Development Grant Goals and progress so far:

### 1) Update designs for an expansion of the Co-op's existing structure at 153 Main Street in Plainfield's historic Designated Village Center.

We have hired Coe & Coe Architecture based in West Glover to draw up a conceptual plan for a Co-op expansion and estimate the cost of construction. A volunteer Expansion Committee met in mid-February with architects James and Nella Coe, a friendly, experienced couple who asked us a lot of questions about how we'd like to use the expanded space.

They are going to make a quiet (unannounced) visit to the Co-op on their own to get a feel for shopping there, and then have an on-site meeting with members of the Building Committee to talk about the building and all its charms and quirks. After drawing up a conceptual expansion plan that meets the approval of the volunteer committee, Coe & Coe will provide us con-

struction costs estimates. This work will be done by mid-June.

### 2) Analyze and compare the economic viability of that expansion versus purchasing, retrofitting, and relocating elsewhere.

We have hired a team of three finance experts from Columinate, a consulting firm that specializes in helping co-ops. A volunteer Finance Committee met with consultants Debbie Suassuna, Don Moffitt and Sarah Lebherz in late February to talk about our Co-op and its setting in the landscape of other nearby stores. The team asked a lot of good questions to help them learn about our Co-op, and then we sent them information they requested.

Debbie will update the 2018 Market Study she did for us (find it on the Co-op website under governance/board of directors and scroll down). Don and Sarah will give us their opinion on whether we can afford to expand our building or move to Route 2. (They will use Coe and Coe's cost estimates for the expansion, and current market rates for a move to Route 2.) One possible outcome is that we can't afford either option! Don and Sarah will also give us a workbook with ten years of expected annual revenues if we expand in place or move. This work is expected to be done by mid-June.

*Update on Grant, continued >>>*



Update on Grant >>>

### 3) Engage the Co-op's membership in choosing its best option.

We are waiting to receive bids on work to facilitate Co-op membership meetings and design a communication plan to reach all our members with the information on future options. A volunteer Engagement Committee has met once to talk about what our role is. After we have hired a contractor to work alongside the committee, we'll begin to figure out how best to share the information we learn from the architects and the financial consultants. We anticipate holding informational meetings for the commu-

nity, and surveying members and the community during the summer. We hope to be ready by our August annual meeting for our members to vote on what direction to take: expand, move, or stay the same.

### 4) Develop an Action Plan in response to the member vote.

This work will involve Co-op staff, Board members, and Co-op members who volunteer to map out how we take action on the membership vote.

Questions or ideas? We'd love to hear them. Please contact us at:

[board@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:board@plainfieldcoop.com) ❖

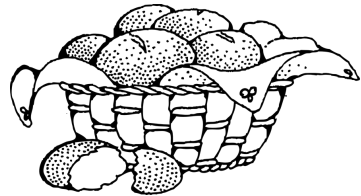
## Recipes collected by Debra Stoleroff

### Christine Ahern's Irish Soda Bread

Christine Ahern was one of the cooks on the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater during the 1980's when I was also a cook on the sloop. She made the best Irish Soda Bread. Thankfully, she shared the recipe.

Mix together:

- 6-7 cups whole wheat pastry flour
- 1½ tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 tsp. caraway seeds
- 1¾ cup currants



Mix together then add to the dry mixture and blend well:

- 2 tsp. grated lemon peel
- 1 cup cold water
- 1½ cup buttermilk
- 2-3 Tbsp. honey
- ¾ cup oil (*I use canola for breads*)

Knead briefly and shape into 2 round loaves.

Place on oiled sheet. Cut a slit across the top to prevent cracking.

Bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 1 hour, then at 375 for 45 minutes.



# Operations Manager's Report

by Jezebel Crow

Plainfield Co-op — Love it or Lose It.

Greetings and spring is on its way! The Plainfield Co-op is under new management. And we can say it's Womanagement. Stanzi and I are here, working hard to keep the Co-op open and doing the best we can with multitasking and general frugality.

In addition to being the Operations Manager, I buy Produce, Refrigerated, Coffee, Cheese, Dairy, and Meat. If you have any requests for any of my departments, I am here for you. I am here for you in general, to address any concerns. You can email me or come talk to me. I am here Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 8-2.

This is a little store and we are willing to cater to our customers. We need you. Sales are down from last year and way down from 2021. Here I am, using this format to ask you why? Do you want a co-op in your town? Do you want to continue to drive past us and head out to Montpelier for groceries? How about when you just want some half and half and eggs for your Sunday breakfast? Or when the roads are icy? How would you feel driving past this place, once a community hub, only to notice it shuttered? We are doing our part here, I promise, and now we need you to do yours, because as a store, we cannot exist without our customers.

I understand that we are all feeling the pinch of inflation. We are always strategizing to keep our prices down. I have heard of a rumor circulating that we double the cost of our products and pass the bill on to our shoppers. This is not true. We strive for a 35% margin and often obtain a 25% margin. We try to

carry generic products so we can have beans, for example, that don't cost \$4.99 or more per can. We also try to have a line of organic food for people who feel so inclined. We want to have clean, healthy food, without being elitist. However, we don't get the volume discount that larger grocery stores and co-ops do. Often Hunger Mountain can afford to sell items at the cost we pay for them.

I have worked here since 2015. When I first started working here, the Co-op had its first million dollar year. We were busy. We had a fleet of working members coming in and many deliveries every day. I saw the Management Collective turned over to General Management, and I have now seen three GMs come and go. All the while, I have seen sales drop off precipitously. Last year at this time, I sounded the alarm that we were paying more in wages than we were grossing. We have adjusted—consolidating jobs, multitasking, not rehiring when positions are lost through attrition. We have cut labor and slowed spending. But it does not seem to be enough.

It's your Co-op. I am asking you, what do you need from the Co-op in 2023? How do we change for these grueling times? Do we switch to more of a General Store vibe, Milk, Eggs, Produce, Bread, Chips, and Beer? Do we give up on competing with the big grocers? Please stop by and talk to me or send me an email. I am here for you.


[jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com)


P.S. We need our working members to return, you are the heart of the Co-op and we miss you. Work 2 hours a week, get a 7% discount. ❖



# RENT THE COMMUNITY CENTER



 **Plainfield Community Center is OPEN**

**Free Wi-Fi and Baby Grand Piano** 

Space available for a variety of events:

- ◆ Classes/Workshops
- ◆ Meetings
- ◆ Parties
- ◆ Special Events
- ◆ Art Gallery Exhibitions

◆ **Co-op sponsorship**  
*may be available for  
 community-based  
 not-for-profit events*

More information: See [plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/](http://plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/)

Questions: Contact Leah [membership@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:membership@plainfieldcoop.com)

Art Gallery: Contact Alexis [VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com](mailto:VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com)

Co-op members \$9/hour; others \$15/hour

Events: Co-op members \$35; others \$50

## Intro to One Staffer's Perspective

by Glenda Bissex, Editor

I'm excited that Deb has offered to write a regular column from a staffer's perspective, a perspective that is too often missing from this newsletter. Not that we haven't reached out but staff are busy people, often with other jobs and family responsibilities, and writing for the newsletter has never been part of their job description. But Deb saw the need and opportunity and stepped up. As she did to paint the mural in the entranceway. Here's what she says about her new column:

"The newsletters can get heavy with all the bad financial news. I wanted to keep it light and personal to enhance the community and human aspect of the Co-op. The title keeps it clear that what I write, while I will always be running these through Jez and whoever else if I'm highlighting a staff member, will be MY perspective. I am loathe to be any kind of official VOICE of the staff. I'll leave that burden up to Jez."

# One Staffer's Perspective

by Deb Barnwell



My husband and I retired to Plainfield in 2017, the moving van bringing the remainder of our furniture from Massachusetts during peak mud season, over Cutler Corner. It took them an hour to navigate that stretch of mud and I'll bet they still tell that tale.

Back in Massachusetts I was a site coordinator for Farmers To You. As we became dissatisfied with the increasing crowding, among other things, I had several chats with my FTY driver whom I met each week. I had already fallen in love with the quality of food being delivered from Vermont weekly, but our conversations sometimes included the town she lived in—Plainfield. One thing led to another and here we are.

I was told the best way to get to know Plainfield and its people was to work at the Co-op. It wasn't long before I became a member, then a working member helping to stock the herb corner. Volunteering led to subbing, then to regular register shifts, and this past fall I assumed the role of Buyer for the herb corner. I am also buying for the tea section and it feels like such a natural progression. And yes, it has been a good way to get to know my new community.

Learning the role of Buyer has been, and still is, quite a learning curve. I was already very familiar with what the Co-op carried but now I had to learn where each of my over 200 items came from, learn the ebb and flow of how much, and when to buy what. Every once in a while something

that is a regular seller is out of stock and I need to decide whether to wait or find an alternate vendor, which could bring quality and pricing changes. And the costs! They are going up all the time, everywhere, for everything. It's not just us, but because we are so tiny those fluctuations are magnified. We can't spread out the increased costs when we're only buying one pound of tarragon or six boxes of Sleepy Time Tea, like bigger markets do.

So I'm learning the Buyer's dance, as is Laura, who took over grocery buying from Shay. We're juggling, researching, shopping around, trying to meet the desires of a broad community, knowing that all that work and, in some cases, all those hours, will yield just a few sales. Meanwhile, we are having to cut back staff hours in the coming month, and currently ordering is almost (but not quite) frozen as we try to eke our way into spring. Hopefully, as local produce season returns, so will our ability to stock everything you have come to rely on us for.

I have come to love our little Co-op and this community. While I do make semi-regular trips to a larger grocery to stock up on items we don't carry, I do the bulk of my shopping at our tiny Co-op, which feels so comfortable and meets my values. It feels authentic and so much more down to earth here, which is something I can't find elsewhere. And money spent at the Co-op stays local, supporting local and Vermont farmers, makers and vendors rather than corporate shareholders.

# Curried Cauliflower Soup

From Cookie and Kate

I recently had dinner with friends who made this delicious vegan curried cauliflower soup. I liked it so much I thought I'd share the recipe. It is from a website called "Cookie and Kate".

Prep Time: 15 mins

Cook Time: 45 mins

Total Time: 1 hour

## Ingredients

- 1 large head of cauliflower, broken into small florets, stems chopped
- Up to 4 tablespoons melted coconut oil or olive oil, divided
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2-3 Tbsp. Thai red curry paste (*depending on preferred spice level; I love spicy so I'd use 3!*)
- ½ tsp. lemon zest
- ½ cup unoaked white wine, like Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio (*optional*)
- 1½ cups vegetable broth or stock
- 1 can (14 oz.) light coconut milk
- ½ tsp. sugar
- 1-3 tsp. rice vinegar
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped green onions or chives
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil
- Thinly sliced jalapeño, Serrano or birds-eye peppers (*optional*)



*Photo: Cookie and Kate*

## Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss the cauliflower with enough oil to lightly coat it (up to 3 tablespoons). Spread the cauliflower in a single layer on a large baking sheet and roast until the tips of the cauliflower are golden brown, about 25-30 minutes.
2. In a Dutch oven or large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat, warm 1 tablespoon of the oil until shimmering. Add the onion and a dash of salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is turning translucent, about 3 minutes. Add the curry paste and lemon zest and stir to incorporate. Raise the heat to medium-high, add the wine, and cook, stirring frequently, until most of the wine has evaporated.
3. Add all of the roasted cauliflower stems and half of the florets to the pot. Add the vegetable broth, coconut milk and sugar. Bring the mixture to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally. Continue simmering for 5-10 more minutes to meld the flavors, reducing heat as necessary to maintain a gentle simmer. Remove the pot from the heat.

*Curried Cauliflower Soup, continued >>*

## Curried Cauliflower Soup >>

4. Let the soup cool for a few minutes, then carefully use an immersion blender to blend until smooth. (*Or transfer the soup in small batches to a blender, blending until each batch is smooth. Don't ever fill your blender past the maximum fill line, and beware of the steam escaping from the lid.*)
5. Stir in 1 teaspoon vinegar and salt and pepper, to taste. If the soup needs more acidity, stir in 1-2 additional teaspoons of vinegar, to taste. Ladle the soup into 4 bowls. Top each with ¼ of the cauliflower florets, a sprinkle of basil and chives and hot peppers (*if using*).

## Administrative Manager's Report

by Stanzi Scribner

Since taking over as Administrative Manager, I've been working to learn more about the Co-op's finances. I'm working on the budget and learning about the other financial reports I need to write for the Board. My other new responsibilities include changing the credit card information for payments to insurance and various accounts, keeping track of tax payments, and changing contact information from previous management to current management as we transition from a general manager to a co-manager model.

Jezebel and I have been working together, trying to come up with ideas to increase sales and improve our financial situation. We've adjusted shifts to save labor hours, created coupons to bring more folks in and increase the average sale, and met with Kari Bradley (the general manager at Hunger Mountain Co-op) to get his input and figure out our division of responsibilities.

A normal day for me is mostly paperwork. I submit invoices to our bookkeeper on a weekly basis, scan those invoices, respond to emails, attend ops meetings and monthly Board meetings. I handle onboarding for new hires when

needed, and do DLC certification and SNAP training. Twice a week I go to the bank to make change and deposits, and pick up mail at the post office while I'm out. I order supplies for the Co-op (labels, tags, bags of all sizes, gloves for repack, office supplies, etc.). I print and mail checks to our vendors every week, as well as ensure that tax payments are made on time, and I process payroll biweekly.

I was the Administrative Assistant for about a year, and in that time I learned most of what I needed to know to do this job. Thankfully I had a pretty good understanding of the situation we were in before I took this additional responsibility. It's a lot to take on.

It's no secret that the Co-op has been struggling, sales are down and we need to bring them back up so we can continue to keep our doors open and provide food to the community. What we need is your continued support. Keep shopping with us! Come volunteer as working members—we'd love to see more community involvement and get some more friendly faces in here. If there are specific products you wish we had on the shelves, ask us. We're here for you. ❖



# Treasurer's Report

by John Cleary, Board Treasurer

Most of our members are aware that 2022 was a difficult year for the Co-op. Changes in consumer shopping patterns post-Covid, inflationary expenses, and the high overhead costs of operating a small store resulted in a significant loss for the Co-op in 2022. I will summarize key results from our 2022 Profit and Loss statement and our 2022 Balance Sheet. A profit and loss statement reports monthly income and expenses over the course of the year and details the cash flow and profitability of the business. The Balance Sheet provides a snapshot of the assets and liabilities of the business on a certain date each year, usually the last day of the year. Comparing the balance sheet from one year to the next is useful to understand long term trends of a business. Looking at these two reports together gives you a picture of the health of the business.

## Excerpts from Profit and Loss Statements

	2020	2021	2022
<b>Total Sales</b>	\$1,229,983	\$1,204,209	\$1,071,350
<b>Cost of Goods (COG)</b> (amount paid to purchase items for resale)	\$814,520	\$795,185	\$729,009
<b>Gross Margin</b> (amount of money to run the business after COG)	\$415,463	\$409,024	\$342,341
<b>Gross Margin %</b>	34%	34%	32%
<b>Net Profit</b>	\$21,496	(\$38,713)	(\$91,969)

Here are several observations about the above numbers.

- Covid related grants in 2020 brought in some one-time income leading to a net profit.
- The sharp decline in total sales in 2022 leaves less money to cover overhead costs such as wages, utilities, insurance, etc. The Main St. Bridge closure during our busy fall months clearly impacted our sales during that period.
- The decline in gross margin was due to vendors increasing their prices but the Co-op not passing the full increase on to the members. Prices rose dramatically throughout the year and re-pricing on the shelves didn't always keep up. While this helped keep costs down for members, it resulted in greater losses for the Co-op. Gross margin is also affected by spoilage/shrink and items that are unable to be sold.

*Treasurer's Report, continued* ➤➤

*Treasurer's Report* >>

From Balance Sheet (snapshot from 12/31 each year)

	2020	2021	2022
<b>Cash</b> (checking/savings)	\$114,719	\$76,931	\$88,906
<b>Accounts Payable</b> (money owed to vendors)	\$27,415	\$51,198	\$113,101
<b>Debt</b>	\$22,230	\$15,171	\$38,910

The Co-op received a forgivable loan from VEDA in February 2023 of \$17,298 which was used to pay down Accounts Payable. This is not reflected in the charts above since it was received in 2023.

Because the Co-op owns the building, there is no mortgage payment and very little outside debt. The debt listed in the above chart is a line of credit from the Cooperative Fund of New England (\$45,000 max. available). Loans payments continue to be made on time.

*Treasurer's Report, continued* >>

## Our Farmers Thank You

Since 1919, the farm families of Cabot Co-op have been passionate about making the world's best cheese. We use only the purest ingredients to craft our creamy, delicious classics. Just maybe, that's why we've won every major award for taste. Learn more at [cabotchese.coop](http://cabotchese.coop)



Progress was made throughout 2022 to reduce expenses and improve profitability.

	January 2022	December 2022
Monthly labor cost (provided as one example of expense reductions)	\$28,325	\$26,505
Monthly profit (loss)	(\$18,343) loss	\$10,480 profit

Going forward into 2023 there is a high priority on achieving monthly profits in order to pay vendors more promptly and work towards financial security. This is being done through better management of margins, decreasing labor costs and reducing other expenses. The General Manager position has been eliminated and those duties have been taken over by promoting existing staff who are now operating as co-managers. While reducing labor costs is necessary, we need to be careful that staff are not overburdened. Continually asking them to do more with less is not sustainable. Please thank them for their hard work!

It is clear that the current situation is not financially sustainable. There is a short term plan to manage our way through the next year and a long term plan to pursue some significant changes to help grow the business for the future. Work being done through the current USDA grant will help clarify these options and present them to the membership. The Board plans to pursue a state (VHCB) Working Lands Grant to help implement the next stage of the Co-op's plan. In the meantime, the best thing you can do to support the Co-op is to shop there as much as possible. ❖

## News from the Building Committee

by Mike Brosky

The Building Committee has had a relatively quiet fall and winter, with the exception of a few repairs to the coolers because of excess condensation. This issue was handled over a weekend in early September. As the Staff will attest, the veggie and fruit coolers were suffering from clogs in the condensate drain, requiring them to empty collection buckets repeatedly throughout a shift (especially during the hot and humid days in summer).

Recent meetings, however, have focused on discussing what repairs/projects should be a priority for the spring and

summer. Given the condition of the building, and the financial straits the Co-op is currently in, members of the Committee have felt that options are, unfortunately, quite limited. One project that was discussed at length, which has been a topic for years, is the need to do something about the exterior condition of the building. As most customers would notice as they enter the store, the paint is chipping and the clapboards are in need of replacement. In fact the back side of the building is in much worse

*Building Committee, continued >>*

shape, and because of the way in which the land slopes away from building on these sides, access for painting and repairs is going to be challenging. So it was decided to focus on painting one or more faces of the building at some point this year.

Questions that the committee will need to work with the Board of Directors on are:

- Although painting projects can lend themselves to being done by volunteers, is this the best approach for painting the building given the heights involved?
- What funds are available from the Round Up campaign for building

maintenance this year? Can these be used for painting the exterior?

- Should the current color scheme be maintained or should the membership consider changing the color. If so, how best to accomplish this?

So, be on the lookout for announcements regarding painting the building this year. We're thinking that this will mainly be done by contractors because of the heights included, but volunteers could always be helpful in prepping/scraping the lower parts of the building.



Contact Mike Brosky  
michael\_a\_brosky@yahoo.com ❖

## Membership and Marketing Report

by Leah Tedesco, Membership and Marketing Co-ordinator

Thanks to our amazing web designer, Julia Wilk, the Co-op now has a modernized website! We did a soft launch of the site at the end of February so that we could work out any kinks. Take a look at [plainfieldcoop.com](http://plainfieldcoop.com) and let us know what you think!

The design feasibility fundraiser has ended. Through individual donations, the silent art auction, and the sale of merchandise, we were able to raise \$3,439 since January 2022! Many thanks to all the folks who donated their time, art work, and cash to pay for an updated design for an expansion at our current location, along with construction cost estimates. This work, funded by these donations and the USDA Rural Business Development Grant award, will help to analyze the economic viability of ex-

panding in place versus purchasing, retrofitting, and relocating. The fridge magnets, posters, and books are still for sale at the store. The proceeds will go toward the staff-initiated fundraiser for building improvements.

When you shop at the Co-op, you may see a nice person holding a clipboard at the register. They just have a couple of quick questions for shoppers right after they make a purchase. The collection of this data is being done on behalf of the financial feasibility consultants we have hired to help us get the USDA Grant. Thanks for your input! ❖



# Marketing Announcement

by Anne Van Couvering, Board Vice President

GET THE WORD OUT! Marketing help needed. If you have ideas on what the Co-op should be doing to get more people in the door and want to make them happen, the Marketing Committee needs you. We are down to a skeleton crew and are eager to flesh out. Whether you are old school and can write a press release, someone who understands the ins and outs of social media, or just like networking and talking to people, we welcome your talents and energy. Please email me [annevanc@gmail.com](mailto:annevanc@gmail.com) if you want to join our fun-loving group or have any questions.

## Ode to a Lemon Yogurt



Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Oh, sunshine yellow so artfully intermingled with soft white, like clouds that fill the sky, you too bring delight and catch the eye.

Oh, yogurt, dear yogurt, so pleasing to the tongue art thou. You creamy temptress, why do you attract me so?

Slipping down the gullet so smoothly do you flow, in flavorful silken rivulets, spoonful by happy spoonful, each to their digestive destiny do you go.

Ah, the simple joy of taste buds titillated and heartily fulfilled by the mouth-watering merger of maple syrup and that tart fleshy fruit.

Who knew what luscious, lip-smacking goodness could come of this union?

A willing captive in acidophilus heaven am I!

May God be praised for wonders such as this beautiful bovine offering coupled with nature's fool's gold.

And not to be forgotten or overlooked, the not-so-plain vanilla bean playing an equal role in this gastronomic scene,

We recall another type of being, whose true nature is revealed by offsetting that sometimes human tartness with an ingredient at once mellifluous, mysterious and miraculous, that honey essence of the heart called love.

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# Advertise in the Newsletter

Deadline for the Summer issue is June 15. The newsletter is published quarterly in a black & white paper version and in color online. To place an ad, contact Elizabeth Mathai, ad co-ordinator, [elizabethmathai@yahoo.com](mailto:elizabethmathai@yahoo.com)

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

Page Size	Ad Dimensions width x height	Single Issue	4 issues; prepaid, consecutive
Full page	5" x 8"	\$75	\$240
Half page	5" x 4"	\$50	\$160
Quarter page	5" x 2" horizontal	\$25	\$80
Quarter page	2.5" x 4" vertical	\$25	\$80

## Maple Oatmeal Bars

From The Shallbergs' Foster Hill Farm, North Calais, VT

I was working on my grandmother's rugelach recipe to share in this issue but noticed in the Times Argus that Dick Shallberg passed. Dick and Ann Shallberg milked a herd of sweet, gentle jerseys, grew and sold blueberries and sugared in the spring. The Foster Hill Farm in North Calais was just below the Bachman Farm at which I lived for two years after graduating from UVM. The Shallbergs were the first farmers of several for whom I worked milking cows. Since it is maple season I thought I'd include their maple oatmeal bar recipe.

### Ingredients

- ½ cup shortening
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. Vanilla
- 1 cup flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ cup chopped nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans or a mixture)
- 1 cup quick cooking oats



### Preparation

1. Cream the shortening and sugar together.
2. Mix in the syrup, the egg and vanilla until smooth.
3. Sift in the flour, baking powder and salt and blend well.
4. Stir in the nuts and oats.
5. Pour into a 9x12 inch rectangular cake pan and bake at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 30-35 minutes.
6. Let cool on a rack. Make two lengthwise cuts and five crosswise.
7. Makes 18 2x3 inch bars.

# Community Center and Gallery

by Alexis Smith, Curatrix

It's our 50th year and our Community Center, our little gem, is finally open after this pandemic closure, and it's popping with action and beautiful art work. We have over 10 incredible artists exhibited upstairs with room for more! Most of the folks we've invited are local artists we've exhibited over the years as part of our community. The exhibition is open the same hours as the Co-op, and if the door is locked just ask for the key at the register.



*Bedsheet painted by Bread And Puppet's Peter Schumann with Jerome Lipani and Alexis Smith celebrating the 50th anniversary Group Show arm in arm*

Please enjoy the space, including free Wi-Fi and a small, more organized free box. (Please be selective with your donations and only nice stuff—it's not a dumpster!) We are always looking for volunteers to help keep the place clean and spiffy. If you have a class or a workshop, a party, celebration or community event, the rent is affordable and even cheaper for members. Free if it is an of-

fering to the community at no charge. The grand piano has been tuned, the mirrors polished and we are gearing up for the 50th anniversary group exhibition art opening event. Look for the party date coming right up with music, a Bread And Puppet show, art sales, performances, food and drink.

Happy 50th to our little Plainfield Co-op! ❖



*Helen Rabin's painting, Dispossessed, is one of the works hanging in the PCC 50th Anniversary Group Show*

## Background from the artist

In the old days, we used to get the NY Times on Tuesdays from the Red Store in the village. Sometimes I found photographs in the paper which suggested subjects for paintings. This painting was based on a photograph (around 1982, I think) of young men standing on the rubble of a newly destroyed house during the war in Lebanon. I was struck by their gaze: as they looked at the photographer, are they angry, defiant, accusatory, helpless in face of this dispossession?

— Helen Rabin