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# The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

Winter 2023-24



## About this Newsletter

**The big news is that the Co-op now has an agreement with the Christiansens to purchase Plainfield Hardware.** The membership had voted in August to pursue, if feasible, acquiring Plainfield Hardware. Considering the purchase feasible, the Board made an offer that the Christiansens have accepted. Whether you are rejoicing, grieving or something in between, now is the time for us all to work together—to *cooperate*—in creating a store that will be

financially stable and true to our Co-op principles.

We aren't about to move yet, and your support for our little Co-op is needed now more than ever as winter is the time of year when sales drop off the most ...

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*by Rose Paul, Board President*

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Our business could be described as having poor cash flow but a manageable amount of total debt. Improvements in monthly profitability are necessary. ... [Read more](#)

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*Operation Manager's Report Winter 2023*

*by Jezebel Crow*

First Quarter 2024 has the potential to make or break the Co-op. So please do not forget us.

Come to the store for ingredients for heart-warming soup, fresh citrus, bread, cheese, coffee and tea. ... [Read more](#)

### [Building Committee Update](#)

*by Mike Brosky*

On the horizon for 2024 is to continue with the painting project, which will include replacement of worn/broken clapboards as well as replacement



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by Gail Falk, Staff Writer

Making the chewy, golden bagels is an exacting two-day process. On the first day, Labrusciano mixes the dough and forms it into balls, weighs them, and plunges her thumb into the balls to form the hole in the middle. ... [Read more](#)

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November 11, 2023 marked the ending of the 50th Anniversary year of the Co-op. As part of this Golden Jubilee we celebrated in our own Community Center, ... [Read more](#)

### [Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures](#)

Advertiser Profile by Bruce Moreton

Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures is a small primitive boys' camp in Vermont that deliberately sets out to create ... [Read more](#)

## — — Letter to Editor — —

### [It Takes a Village to Keep a Co-op](#)

Letter to Editor by Jezebel Crow

Villages need their little stores. It is integral to the character of rural Vermont. ... [Read more](#)

## Recipes collected by Debra Stoleroff

On cold winter days I find myself craving comfort foods. So I decided to share a few with you — beef stew, potato latkes and baked apple cider donuts.



- [David Palmer's Old-Fashioned Beef Stew](#)
- [Classic Potato Latkes](#)
- [Baked Apple Cider Doughnuts](#)

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# About This Newsletter Jan 3, 2024



## Newsletter Issue Winter 2023-24

by Glenda Bissex, Editor

**The big news is that the Co-op now has an agreement with the Christiansens to purchase Plainfield Hardware.** The membership had voted in August to pursue, if feasible, acquiring Plainfield Hardware.

Considering the purchase feasible, the Board made an offer that the Christiansens have accepted. Whether you are rejoicing, grieving or something in between, now is the time for us all to work together—to *cooperate*—in creating a store that will be financially stable and true to our Co-op principles.

We aren't about to move yet, and your support for our little Co-op is needed now more than ever as winter is the time of year when sales drop off the most (see Treasurer's report). Operations Manager Jezebel Crow explains in her report that "as the Co-op's sales have decreased, we have responded by getting fewer deliveries." She and the staff are working hard to keep our Co-op going. Co-op customers need to make an extra effort, too. If you don't find products you want in the store, you can learn a lot by asking and finding out why. Don't give up. Tea and herb buyer Deb Barnwell (see One Staffer's Perspective) tracked down why P.G.Tips Tea was no longer available, and ended up learning about marketing in the tea industry, and confronting the reality that "we are working with a vast, mega-industry that is working non-stop to swallow up the little independent, quality manufacturers."

As Jez points out, we're becoming more dependent on local producers. One of those is Whizzo bagels (see Gail Falk's feature article on them). Do you remember when they had an equipment problem last year and for a while there were NO Whizzo bagels? I

remember other bagels not tasting nearly as good. Debra Stoleroff's recipes are easy to print out now, and the Co-op carries all the ingredients for her winter treats—baked apple cider doughnuts, potato latkes and David Palmer's beef stew.

Also on the joyful side was the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Community Center and Gallery. Revisit it with the article, photos, and video link in this newsletter. Or get a chance to see what you missed. When the Co-op moves, what will happen to this space and the life of the arts and community gatherings that have happened here for decades? Anne Van Couvering reported in the fall newsletter on a group hoping to create a [Plainfield Area Community Trust \(PACT\)](https://plainfieldcoop.com/on-pact/), that might buy the Co-op building. She had nothing further to report for this newsletter.

This is the first issue of the quarterly newsletter in its digital format. (We published a "supplement" that was a trial run in November. Feedback was that it was easier to read online than the previous version, laid out to be printed as a booklet.) No longer needing to fit the text into a fixed number of pages fitted together in a certain way, we were easily able to include last-minute news, like the purchase agreement for Plainfield Hardware. While Co-op staff will print out several paper copies of the newsletter, available in the store for shoppers who need them, we are no longer paying to have many booklets commercially printed, folded and stapled. Thank you, Lorraine Checchi, for all your trips to Barre to bring those print copies to the store. We continue to invite everyone's feedback as well as your contributions of opinions, poems, photos, etc. Deadline for the spring issue is March 15.

The Newsletter Committee:

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# President's Report Jan 3, 2024

by Rose Paul, Board President



A lot has happened since our annual meeting vote in August to pursue purchase of Plainfield Hardware. Plainfield Co-op made a formal offer to Gaye and Rich Christiansen in late November to purchase Plainfield Hardware and General Store. After much deliberation, Gaye and Rich decided in late December that they would like to sell their store to the Co-op.

In the meantime, the Co-op Board has written grant applications, secured some grant-funded consulting help, spoken with a handful of Co-op volunteers who offered assistance, and met with two lending institutions who (unofficially) seem willing to lend us funding to make the big move. A pre-application for a potentially large grant is due January 19 and we are working to get that submitted.

In December the Co-op's relocation project made the annual top ten list of regional priority projects for 2024 as determined by the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (<https://www.centralvermont.org/regional-project-priority-list> (<https://www.centralvermont.org/regional-project-priority-list>)). The CVEDC describes the top ten projects as "community-driven, transformative projects that could bring great change to our region".

There is a lot of work ahead of us. The Co-op will fund this project with a mix of bank loans, member loans, and grants. We will launch a fundraising campaign this winter and we hope that Co-op members and interested community members will step up with pledges for loans as well as outright donations. We'll likely close on the purchase (closing date is under discussion) using a bank loan, and then work to quickly reduce the size of the loan as grant funding and member financing come through. Our target numbers for community fundraising will be refined as we work out the details of project costs, then we'll share our fundraising goal publicly and widely.

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(<https://easthilltreefarm.com/>).

This is my first time serving as Co-op Board president. I recently attended a webinar on rural co-op governance presented by the Neighboring Food Co-op Association. They emphasized the three principles of co-op governance (as compared with standard business models): co-ops are people-centered, jointly owned and controlled by their members, and democratically governed. If we succeed in making the big move to Plainfield Hardware, it will be because our members decided this was for the best, and many people will have generously contributed to make it happen.

The leanest financial months for the Co-op are January, February and March. As Co-Manager Jezebel Crow says in her letter to the editor, if everyone reading this newsletter would purchase just \$10 more per week from the Co-op, we could close the gap in our

2023 end-of-year shortfall and get current with our vendors, Then we would head into our big move in a stronger financial position. Please consider making this a New Year's resolution!

I want to thank our hard-working staff for bringing us through the holidays with thoughtful curating of our product offerings and good cheer to our shoppers. I'm also grateful to the members of our Building, Membership, Marketing and Newsletter committees who take a 360-degree view of our Co-op to help it thrive.

Together we can keep our Co-op strong, so please patronize the store during the slower winter months.

*Editor's note: More next steps in the moving process were outlined in Rose's report, "[So You Wanna Buy a Hardware Store?](https://plainfieldcoop.com/so-you-wanna-buy-a-hardware-store/)" published in the Fall 2023 newsletter.*

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# Treasurer's Report December 2023

by John Cleary, Board Treasurer



This report covers the financials from January 2023 through the end of November 2023. Complete 2023 financials will be available in early 2024. The business continues to face the long-term challenges that we have discussed before – declining annual sales, limited cash reserves, high wage costs as a percentage of sales, and lack of investment in the business. There have been some significant improvements in operations to manage these challenges. While sales have declined by 4.3% compared to last year, total operating expenses have been reduced by 14%. Labor costs have been reduced, with the store being operated by fewer staff. While this has resulted in labor savings of almost \$60,000, there is concern about the sustainability of continuing to ask staff to do more. Store-wide margins have improved from 30% to 33%. Managing margins while keeping prices competitive with other outlets is a balancing act. While we have made significant financial progress compared to last year, the Co-op is still facing a year-to-date loss of \$36,491. We have achieved small monthly profits in 5 of the 11 months covered by this report. The chart below provides more details on key Profit and Loss financials compared to last year.

Profit and Loss Summary, Year-to-Date (January - November 2023)

	2023	2022	Variance	% change	Notes
Total Sales	944,135	986,596	-42,461	-4.3%	Decline in total sales creates challenges
Cost of Goods	637,245	691,924	-54,679	-7.9%	Cost to purchase items for resale
Gross Profit	306,890	294,672	12,218	+4.1%	Amount of \$ to run the business
Operating Expenses	343,380	399,347	-55,967	-14%	Managers have cut costs significantly
Profit	-36,491	-104,675	68,184	65%	Major improvement, still a loss

The Balance Sheet of the Co-op remains stable. A Balance Sheet shows assets and liabilities at a point in time. Comparing numbers at the end of November 2023 compared to November 2022, there are some changes to cash and inventory. Cash on hand is lower (\$60,901 vs \$85,982) and the value of Inventory is higher (\$62,042 vs \$46,146). If you combine cash and inventory you see the value of our current assets to be \$124,502 in 2023 vs \$131,123 at the same time in 2022. Current liabilities (short term debt) has improved slightly but continues to be a burden on cash flow. Accounts payable (money owed to vendors) was \$93,677 vs \$114,557 last year. This is a worrying sign for a business and needs to be addressed. The only long-term debt is our loan with the Cooperative Loan Fund of New England, with a balance of \$42,743. Our business could be described as having poor cash flow but a manageable amount of total debt. Improvements in monthly profitability are necessary. Continued attention to margins, inventory and wage costs can help. Longer term, growth in sales is required to maintain the viability of the business.

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## What's New In The Store?



*Operations Manager's Report, Winter 2023*

by Jezebel Crow

### Meet your Grocer Anji Domino.

I am sure most of you know Anji. She has worked at the Co-op for 15 or 20 years. She has been the buyer for the Produce Department and Body Care, Supplements, and Household. When Laura stepped down this fall, Anji took on Groceries and Frozen and is now the Lead Buyer for the Co-op.



As the Co-op's sales have decreased, we have responded by getting fewer deliveries. It is important to be thrifty. If you are missing some favorite items, it is perhaps due to our ceasing to order from certain vendors. We are attempting to pay down debts and consolidate orders. UNFI, our main grocery supplier, is owned by Whole Foods – Amazon.

Last year, when we got in arrears with UNFI, they responded by only dealing with us if we agreed to let them automatically take funds out of our bank account within 15 days of a delivery. This borders on predatory capitalism and winds up taking funds from our local vendors.

As most of the best sellers at the Co-op are produce, milk, eggs, cheese, and other local items, we have responded by turning our focus more toward these local products and trying to pare down the grocery and frozen sections of the Co-op, while also sourcing smaller vendors of grocery items. Case in point, Cabot popcorn, potato chips, and macaroni and cheese. Also snacks and candy coming in from Faire, an on-line wholesaler of local items. Coming soon: bulk fruit and nuts from Equal Exchange.

So please bear with us as we attempt to adjust the Co-op away from the Amazon behemoth that is sucking the life out of the local economy. If you are really missing an item, consider Special Ordering it. You will get a price break and help the Co-op. Do you know of any local vendors? Please let us know. Concerns and requests can be directed to [jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com>) or [anji@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:anji@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:anji@plainfieldcoop.com>)

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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 [cabotcheese.coop](http://cabotcheese.coop)



<https://cabotcreamery.com/pages/about>



### Meet your new Bulk Buyer: Deb Bothfeld.

Deb has been working for the Co-op for a couple of years now. You will be familiar with her cheerful presence at the register. When Cullen decided to step down from his position as the Bulk Buyer, Deb stepped up to the challenge. Once again, we are working on streamlining the bulk department to carry what sells, and cull what doesn't. Any

concerns or requests can be made directly to Deb, or sent to [jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:jezebel@plainfieldcoop.com>) and we will be sure she gets them. Once again, please feel free to Special Order anything that you use a lot of.

### Meet your new Gift Buyer: Deb Barnwell.

Deb Barnwell has been buying for the Bulk Herb and Tea department for over a year now. When Laura stepped down, she agreed to purchase for the Gift Department. So if you need prayer flags, incense, candles, scarves, mittens, or other sundries, address inquiries to: [deborah@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:deborah@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:deborah@plainfieldcoop.com>).

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New and Returning Faces at the Register: While shopping at the Co-op, you might run into Shay or Rosemond, who are both former staff members who have returned to substitute, and help with receiving, respectively.

Christine Austin is a new substitute with a regular closing shift on Sundays. She is a true local and most famously, Rinny's Mom.

And last but not least, Al Guy is a young social justice warrior from D.C. who does wonderful work in the produce department.

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A final word, we are heading into the leanest months of the year. First Quarter 2024 has the potential to make or break the Co-op. So please do not forget us. Come to the store for ingredients for heart-warming soup, fresh citrus, bread, cheese, coffee and tea. Stop by in the mornings for free coffee and to chat with the staff. Check out the freecycle store upstairs in the Community Center. Buy a friend a gift card so they can learn about the Improbable Store that is the Heart of Plainfield Village.

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# Building Committee Update

by Mike Brosky

2023 has been a very active year for the Co-op Building Committee. Probably the single most impressive project was, of course, the painting of the main facade of the building, facing the parking lot. Building Committee member Jason Mallery, who is a lead-abatement specialist, offered to spearhead the project. Jason not only led the project – he was the driving force behind it, dedicating numerous sunny mornings to the tedious task of setting up staging, scraping paint and repairing clapboards. Thank you Jason!!! Work began in earnest in the May-June timeframe and was wrapped up for the season by mid-October, when all the painting that required scaffolding was completed. Around this time the rest of Committee came together on a Sunday morning in October to collaborate on the installation of 3 new second-story windows. The committee is hoping this goes a long way to improving comfortability in the Free Store space in the Community Center and in the stairwell.



*Jason Mallery and Joe John installing windows*

On the horizon for 2024 is to continue with the painting project, which will include replacement of worn/broken clapboards as well as replacement of the first floor windows. The Committee expects this work to proceed at a faster pace since the staging will no longer be required and all the unpainted surfaces can be reached by ladder.

If you're interested in joining the Committee please reach out to Mike Brosky at [michael\\_a\\_brosky@yahoo.com](mailto:michael_a_brosky@yahoo.com) ([mailto:michael\\_a\\_brosky@yahoo.com](mailto:michael_a_brosky@yahoo.com)).

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# Staff, Board, Committees – Dec 2023

## Co-op Staff

- Anji Domino: Lead Buyer. Grocery, Frozen, Supplement, Body Care, Household.
- Annie Reed: Floor Staff.
- Chris Thompson: Maintenance, Building Committee.
- Dan Seigel: IT, Floor Staff, Errand Boy.
- Deb Barnwell: Buyer Bulk Herbs, Tea, Gifts, Artist in Residence.
- Deb Bothfeld: Buyer of Bulk, Floor Staff.
- Eben Markova Gold: Buyer of Bakery, Lead Floor Staff.
- Jezebel Crow: Operations Manager. Buyer of Meat, Produce, Refrigerated, Dairy, and Coffee.
- Dragon Domino: Floor Staff.
- Leah Tedesco: Marketing and Membership. Community Center.

## Board Members

- Rose Paul, President, [rosegeo@myfairpoint.net](mailto:rosegeo@myfairpoint.net) (<mailto:rosegeo@myfairpoint.net>)
- Anne Van Couvering, Vice President, [annevanc@gmail.com](mailto:annevanc@gmail.com) (<mailto:annevanc@gmail.com>)
- Walker Blackwell, Secretary, [wblackwell@gmail.com](mailto:wblackwell@gmail.com) (<mailto:wblackwell@gmail.com>)
- John Cleary, Treasurer, [johnclearyvt@gmail.com](mailto:johnclearyvt@gmail.com) (<mailto:johnclearyvt@gmail.com>)
- Claire Dumas, [cdumas8406@gmail.com](mailto:cdumas8406@gmail.com) (<mailto:cdumas8406@gmail.com>)
- Kathleen Sueltz, [kathleensueltz@gmail.com](mailto:kathleensueltz@gmail.com) (<mailto:kathleensueltz@gmail.com>)

*All Board members are volunteers*

- Rin Austin: Produce and Floor Staff.
- Stanzi Scribner: Administration Manager.
- Tim Llewelyn: Buyer of Beer and Wine.
- Al Guy: Produce and Floor Staff.
- Brook Deschamps: Floor Staff.
- Sara Putnam: Substitute.
- Christene Austin: Floor Staff.
- Shay Matthews: Substitute.
- Rosemond London: Receiving.
- Adrienne Allison: Substitute.
- Margie Yoder: Substitute.

## Committee Contacts

- Building: Chris Thompson, [owhillfarm@gmail.com](mailto:owhillfarm@gmail.com) (<mailto:owhillfarm@gmail.com>).
- Community Center: Leah Tedesco, [membership@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:membership@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:membership@plainfieldcoop.com>).
- Community Center Gallery: Alexis Smith, [VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com](mailto:VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com) (<mailto:VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com>).
- Marketing: Leah Tedesco, Alexis Smith
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*Except for Co-op Staff, all are volunteers*

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*Co-op Blog* (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/>).



# Making Whizzo Bagels

## Featured Local Producer

by Gail Falk, Staff Writer

For shoppers with flexible schedules, the best times to shop at the Co-op are midday on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. That's when Anne Labrusciano delivers Whizzo Bagels, fresh out of the oven from her home on Hollister Hill.



Making the chewy, golden bagels is an exacting two-day process. On the first day, Labrusciano mixes the dough and forms it into balls, weighs them, and plunges her thumb into the balls to form the hole in the middle. She lays out the raw bagels on baking sheets and sets them in a large refrigerator to rise for 24 hours.

The next morning, she boils the bagels in a large pot of water, tops some with poppyseeds, sesame seeds, salt, or minced onions, and then bakes them until they are golden and fragrant. After the bagels cool, she packages and labels them, and loads them into her car for delivery.

Plainfield shoppers are lucky to be the first stop on the Whizzo delivery route, so we get the freshest bagels. Originally, Labrusciano delivered the bagels in open baskets or crates, but, like so many things, the pandemic changed that. Now they come bagged for hygiene, four to a package — some plain, some with toppings and, on Wednesdays, cinnamon raisin.

Whizzo (the name comes from Monty Python) is a one-woman operation located in the roomy kitchen of Labruciano's farmhouse on Hollister Hill Road. Before becoming a bagel baker, Labrusciano worked at a variety of gigs and jobs that sound like a



directory of counterculture Vermont businesses: seamstress for Wild Oats, baker at Horn of the Moon Café, popcorn popper and video staff at the Savoy Theater, hatmaker selling her creations at regional craft fairs, and student at Adele Dawson's herb school.

----- Article continues after ad -----

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(<https://empowr-transformation.com>)

It was a moment at the herb school that brought Labrusciano permanently to Marshfield. She recalls standing on Dawson's porch on Lower Deport Road looking out into the village of Marshfield and seeing it as the quintessential rural Vermont village she had been yearning for after years of living in Burlington and the Mad River Valley. That was 1987, and she has lived in Marshfield ever since, eventually moving to the large traditional wooden farmhouse where she raised her three children and now produces bagels.

Labrusciano started baking bagels for her family about 20 years ago because she couldn't find bagels around here that tasted like the New York City bagels she loved. She found a recipe for long-rising bagels

that produced the puffy, chewy texture she wanted, and then she adjusted the ratios of salt and sugar until she got the flavor to her liking.

At first she sold bagels at the Plainfield Farmer's Market. In 2010 she took a plunge and bought an industrial Hobart dough mixer. Our Co-op was her first retail outlet. Bob Messing invited her to start selling at Hunger Mountain, and after that her business took off. In addition to Plainfield and Hunger Mountain Co-ops, you can find Whizzo Bagels at the Marshfield Store, Buffalo Mountain Co-op, Craftsbury General Store, Fox Market and Farmers to You.

*Photo credits: Gail Falk and Anne Labrusciano*



Anne Labrusciano

## One Staffer's Perspective – PGTips

by Deb Barnwell



Where's My P.G. Tips Tea?

This may seem like a little thing, but for the few of you who loyally buy PGTips tea at the Co-op, I'm sure you've noticed the gap in the shelf for a while. It's not for lack of trying to fill that gap, but I've gotten the consistent message from our distributors that it's not available, so I decided to go digging and figure out why.

PGTips, our beloved, quintessential British tea, is actually owned by Lipton Tea Company. Surprise! The company has been dealing with somewhat declining sales as the cost of living crunch in Great Britain has meant that lots of customers have been substituting less expensive tea for PGTips tea. Lipton also did some marketing research and discovered that a lot of British customers have been brewing their tea for less than a minute, which was leading to inferior flavor. So the company did a full product redesign, creating tea granules and changing the iconic bags to square bags. They also eliminated as much plastic as possible in their packaging and tried to make the whole product as eco-conscious as possible. The results, however, were less than satisfactory. The new tea tasted terrible. So, the whole product line was halted somewhere around this past April.

No wonder I can't get it in the shop! No one could! From what I have been able to glean from the web there is soon to be a re-launch of a new and improved brand of the tea. It may not look, both in actual tea bags and the package, like what we're used to. It may not be actual tea leaves in the bags any longer. They are striving to make a product that tastes like what we're all used to and love, but one



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more suited to the brief steeping that modern life seems to have brought about in our overly busy cultures. Britain isn't much different than America when it comes to stress and busy-ness.

So the short answer is, PGTips is coming back. It's most likely going to look and maybe taste somewhat different. It's been a long and not overly successful product redesign process from Lipton. When I can find some from our distributors I will stock some and you can be the judge if it's worth keeping or not. The sad truth is that the vast majority of the small labels we are familiar with in the food world are mostly owned, as many of you probably know, buy a handful of giant multi-national corporations. PGTips is just one. So, try as we may to keep our products as local, organic and pure as we can, we are working with a vast, mega-industry that is working non-stop to swallow up the little independent, quality manufacturers.



I've been running into stocking issues with some of the herbs in the herb corner as well. Some things have been out of stock for a long time or don't come in when I order them. I'm working on finding my way around these issues, as are we all, and doing what I can to keep the shelves stocked with all the things we rely on. And if you love chilis, do give the new Urfa Biber Turkish chili flakes a try! I've recently added them and they are one of my new favorites with a deep, subtle, earthy heat and a touch of sweetness that adds depth to anything you put them into. You only need a pinch but they add a lovely undertone to whatever you're cooking up.

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# A Love Letter To The Plainfield Community Center

*From Jerome Lipani and Alexis Smith*

November 11, 2023 marked the ending of the 50th Anniversary year of the Co-op. As part of this Golden Jubilee we celebrated in our own Community Center, honoring the year-long 50th Anniversary Group Art Show. As you can see from the several photos posted from the video shot by Chris Belcher, we enjoyed presentations by a number of artists who have performed and exhibited there since the early 70's and up to the present. The evening was especially dedicated to the late Eliinor Randall, "Randy," who along with all the other artists here devoted herself to creating work that defied the typical commodification of the arts in the capitalist hegemonic art gallery system.

The evening began outdoors with Jason Mallery singing a welcoming candlelit tribute to the Co-op surrounded by art hanging on the exterior building and in surrounding trees. Deborah Stoleroff organized the delicious potluck entrees and desserts upstairs, including Alexis' Garlic Spaghetti, recalling all the early years of the weekly Spaghetti Dinners.



Jason Mallery

The PCC gallery displayed artworks which spanned 50 years, opening with a performance by the Umlaut band. Alexis Smith introduced the night's performers with customary brio. These included Avram Patt, who spoke about theatre pieces performed there in the early 70's by Barney and Fred Carlson and Bread and Puppet as well as the PCC launch of the ground-breaking "Not Afraid of Falling", which subsequently enjoyed a heralded Off-Broadway run in NYC.



Then Bread and Puppet performed a cantastoria which related directly to the present genocide in Gaza. This was followed by Peter Schumann's intense Fiddle Rant on this tragic Nakba, which was then somehow gainfully completed by the precocity of a delightful toddler.

Brian Tokar and Jerome Lipani offered their tributes to Elinor Randall, several of whose pieces are hung in the space, while showing a biopic documentary of her life and art: [Elinor Randall – Journey with Horses \(https://youtu.be/5EzGm\\_7Jyqo\)](https://youtu.be/5EzGm_7Jyqo)



Ellis Jacobsen, Erok Gillard and Heidi Wilson presented theatre, poetry, collective song. Jerome offered Eric Satie's dada Gnossienne No.1 on the newly tuned piano. Then suddenly a surprise dance performed by a legendary B&P Garbage man!

In a mini-history of the restoration of the space over the years, devotedly headed by Alexis Smith since the late 80's – early 90's, she recalls, "Before 1989, when I arrived, the space was condemned. I was looking for spaces to create a community center in Vermont, in the Plainfield area. . . . The space was totally condemned by Labor and Industry. I did a lot of research to figure out what it would take to get it legal and open."

She then recollected a partial list all of the amazing projects that we achieved:

- dismantling the old library
- installing a utilities sink and partial kitchen (thanks to Randy's encouragements and too many potlucks without a kitchen!)
- gallery track lighting (thanks to Salaam)
- new wiring and energy efficient lighting (thanks to John Draper)
- a few new windows (thanks to our Building Committee and Chris Thompson)
- restored emergency exit
- creating the lobby and the gallery space walls
- installing the mirrors to facilitate dance classes
- Wi-Fi access for the public
- meeting and work space
- the massive removal of the old wood stove
- installing propane heater
- the floors, multiple times! (Paul Bales helped out and another good friend, Tommy, who's since passed away)
- painting and repainting and painting again in between art shows that changed several times a year, which is how Alexis earned her title of Curatrix
- the painting of the whole building, and now again, a refreshed front side, more recently by Jason Mallery and Chris Thompson, who's always up to something in the improvements department
- the community action of bringing in the baby grand piano through a second-floor window, and subsequently scheduling its bi-annual tunings
- new signage by Matthew Denton and Erok Gillard
- many evolutions of the "free store"

The list goes on and on. . . .

"We've hosted thousands and thousands of movers, dancers, meeting people, kids, weddings, funerals, music events, birthdays, bar mitzvahs, the Plainfield Gamelan, every kind of yoga, wellness clinics, upstart Vermont bands, experimental theatre, contact improvisation, Bootcamp, African, ballet and modern dance; and of course, Bread &

Puppet every single year for the 25 years I've been working there!!!” recounts Alexis. And more art exhibitions than you can shake a stick at! So consider staging your own event! See Co-op website for rental details. The Community Center is available at a discount for Co-op members, with no rental charge if events are offered to the public for free.

We still have the work before us to create disability access for folks who cannot climb the stairs.

We hope that the creation of non-profit status via the newly formed Community Trust will help us to achieve this long-term goal, so that this wonderful space will be able to be open to All for years to come!

In Solidarity!

Jerome Lipani & Alexis Smith

Contact: [jeromelipani@gmail.com](mailto:jeromelipani@gmail.com) (<mailto:jeromelipani@gmail.com>) or [VTPieGirlCo@gmail.com](mailto:VTPieGirlCo@gmail.com) (<mailto:VTPieGirlCo@gmail.com>)

For complete video by Chris Belcher of the Golden Jubilee Opening of 11/11/2023, see JeromeLipaniYoutube or click below: [Plainfield Co-op Golden Jubilee Celebration](https://youtu.be/PFZDegzwabw) (<https://youtu.be/PFZDegzwabw>)

Photo credits: Chris Belcher



*Jerome on piano, with dancing B&P garbageman*

## 📣 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/](https://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

(<https://plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/>).

[Co-op Blog](https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/) (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/>).



# Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures

*Advertiser Profile by Bruce Moreton*

Founded in 2000, Night Eagle Wilderness Adventures is a small primitive boys' camp in Vermont that deliberately sets out to create a world that's significantly different from the one we normally live in. We invite boys to simplify their lives, to explore and be daring, to examine themselves and their values, and then to look beyond themselves and toward their relationship with the earth and others.

Our program is designed to build a boy's self-confidence as he learns to simplify his life, to teach him to live competently in the woods, and to foster a better understanding of native peoples, their culture, and their relationship with the earth.

From the time a boy arrives at Night Eagle, he knows he's not in a typical sleep-away camp. He shoulders his backpack and, accompanied by others, he walks along a trail that weaves through the forest. When he reaches camp and the tipis come into view, the magic truly begins.

Night Eagle is about simple pleasures: enjoying the haunting call of a loon, trudging through a wetland and watching a moose as it feeds, creeping up on a group of otters as they frolic in the lake, going barefoot whenever you want without being told to put your shoes on, and baking homemade bread in a clay oven and then slathering butter on it while it's still warm.

Activities tend to spring from the environment and teach boys to rely on their ingenuity. Soon after their arrival, campers are carving bows and arrows, paddling canoes, throwing darts with atlatls, learning the art of camouflage, identifying wild edibles, and building

fires with flint and steel. Through these activities and the slower pace of life in camp, boys naturally develop a deeper respect for the land and an authentic sense of personal accomplishment that will last a lifetime.



**NIGHT EAGLE  
WILDERNESS  
ADVENTURES**

A unique summer camp for boys, 10-14, in the heart of Vermont's Green Mountains

tipi living ◊ nature crafts ◊ hiking  
wilderness skills ◊ backpacking  
canoeing ◊ swimming ◊ atlatls  
tomahawks ◊ archery  
cooperative work and play  
and much more!



1, 2, 3, 4, 6 week sessions available

**[www.nighteaglewilderness.com](http://www.nighteaglewilderness.com)**

<https://www.nighteaglewilderness.com>

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*Co-op Blog* (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/>).



# It Takes A Village To Keep A Co-Op



## Letter to the Editor

by Jezebel Crow

Writing this on the New Moon before the Solstice, I have been reflecting on the darkest days of the year. It is promising to be a wild winter. It seems every Monday morning, the roads have been slippery, and folks are dealing with electricity outages. It is the opposite side of the coin from the floods in Mid-July, when there were many roads completely washed away and it took us weeks to get back to “normal.”

It seems that tricky, unpredictable weather is the new normal. And, with that, keeping resources local is of the utmost importance. If we could all walk down to the village store to shop and work, how much driving would that reduce? How easy does it make your life, people of Plainfield, to be able to walk across the street for coffee, and eggs, bacon, and milk? How much do you depend on your neighborhood grocery store?

How would you feel on the day that you wake up, the river is high, the roads are icy, trees are down, and lo and behold, the “Plainfield” Co-op is now in East Montpelier? I bet the folks at Maplefields will really appreciate your business.

Villages need their little stores. It is integral to the character of rural Vermont. I live in Woodbury. The first Summer I lived there, the General Store was still open. I was in awe that I could walk a mile down the hill, get a pizza, fill a growler, pick up butter or potatoes. Woodbury lost its little store in town. That building is now an apartment and the store is probably never coming back. I think of this often when I must drive to Hardwick or Cabot for supplies.

Here in Plainfield, we have a darling little store. It’s been here for 51 years. Its roots go deep. Sure, it is not competitive with Price Chopper or Hunger Mountain Co-op, but the Plainfield Co-op is here when you need it. And you might find that, with weather chaos and changing climate, you need it more and more.

In the past year as Operations Manager, I have worked hard to streamline the business. We have chipped away at debts accrued by previous mismanagement and slowed down our spending to reflect need. We might not net \$1,000,000 this year. It would be the first year since 2013. But it is OK to be small. It is OK to be local.

By the end of October 2022, we had lost \$102,658. This year, as of the end of October we were only \$25,170 in the red. This is still a loss, but not a huge one. If we could make \$2500 more per month, which is an average day’s sales, we would break even. Which is all we really need to do.

It takes a village to keep a Co-op. If everyone who is reading this newsletter would pledge to spend an additional \$10 a week at the Co-op, that would close the gap.

These are the darkest days of the year, but they say it’s always darkest before the dawn. We will be here this winter, the improbable store, with local roots and syrup and bacon and eggs and greens and candles and fresh baked bread, and milk and butter and whatever you need from us. It’s my wish and my intention that we will continue to serve the Village of Plainfield from the Village of Plainfield for many more years to come.

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[Co-op Blog \(https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/\)](https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/)

# David Palmer's Old-Fashioned Beef Stew

Collected by Debra Stoleroff

I rarely eat meat, especially red meat, but David Palmer's beef stew was always hard to pass up. It was filled with big chunks of potatoes and carrots and so simple to make. So good and so comforting in the middle of winter.

## Ingredients

- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 pound beef stewing meat, trimmed and cut into inch cubes
- 5 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 1/2 cups beef broth, homemade or low-sodium canned
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
- 5 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch rounds
- 2 large baking potatoes, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 2 teaspoons salt



1. Combine the flour and pepper in a bowl, add the beef and toss to coat well. Heat 3 teaspoons of the oil in a large pot. Add the beef a few pieces at a time; do not overcrowd. Cook, turning the pieces until beef is browned on all sides, about 5 minutes per batch; add more oil as needed between batches.
2. Remove the beef from the pot and add the vinegar and wine. Cook over medium-high heat, scraping the pan with a wooden spoon to loosen any browned bits. Add the beef, beef broth and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a slow simmer.
3. Cover and cook, skimming broth from time to time, until the beef is tender, about 1 1/2 hours. Add the onions and carrots and simmer, covered, for 10 minutes. Add the potatoes and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 30 minutes more. Add broth or water if the stew is dry. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Ladle among 4 bowls and serve.

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## Preparation

# Classic Potato Latkes

*From the New York Times, Melissa Clark; Collected by Debra Stoleroff*

Last year I went over to my friend Hannah's house to borrow a stroller for my niece. When I got there Hannah was in the middle cooking potato latkes. She pulled one out of the pan, threw it onto a paper towel to soak up the grease and handed it to me. I don't know if it was because the pancake was hot and just out of the pan, but it was the best potato pancake I have ever had. Of course I asked for the recipe. Here it is — straight from the New York Times and someone named Melissa Clark.

Yield: About 3 dozen

## Ingredients

- 2 large Russet potatoes (about 1 pound), scrubbed and cut lengthwise into quarters
- 1 large onion (8 ounces), peeled and cut into quarters
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons coarse kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt), plus more for sprinkling
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Safflower or other oil, for frying



## Preparation

1. Using a food processor with a coarse grating disc, grate the potatoes and onion. Transfer the mixture to a clean dish towel. Squeeze and wring out as much of the

liquid as possible.

2. Working quickly, transfer the mixture to a large bowl. Add the eggs, flour, salt, baking powder and pepper, and mix until the flour is absorbed.
3. Into a medium, heavy-bottomed pan over medium-high heat, pour about 1/4 inch of the oil. Once the oil is hot (a drop of batter placed in the pan should sizzle), drop heaping tablespoons of the batter into the hot pan, cooking in batches. Use a spatula to flatten and shape the drops into discs. When the edges of the latkes are brown and crispy, about 5 minutes, flip. Cook until the second side is deeply browned, about another 5 minutes. Transfer the latkes to a paper towel-lined plate to drain and sprinkle with salt while still warm. Repeat with the remaining batter.

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# Baked Apple Cider Doughnuts

by Erin Jeanne McDowell, Collected by Debra Stoleroff

This recipe makes delicious apple cider donuts without the grease!

Yield: 12 doughnuts or muffins

## Ingredients

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 1 3/4 cup/ 225 grams all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 cup/ 225 grams unsalted butter (2 sticks), at room temperature
- 3/4 cup/ 165 grams light brown sugar
- 3/4 cup/ 150 grams granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup/ 120 milliliters apple cider



## Preparation

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease 2 (6-cavity) doughnut pans (or a 12-cup muffin tin) with nonstick spray. In a medium bowl, add flour, baking powder, salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and the nutmeg and whisk to combine. Set aside.

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream 10 tablespoons/140 grams butter, brown sugar and 1/4 cup/50 grams granulated sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time and mix until well incorporated after each addition, scraping the bowl as necessary. Beat in the vanilla extract.
3. Add the flour mixture and mix on low speed until incorporated. With the mixer running, add the apple cider in a slow, steady stream and mix to combine. Scrape the bowl well to make sure the batter is homogeneous.
4. Spoon the batter into prepared doughnut pans, filling them about 2/3 of the way. (You can also do this using a disposable piping bag or a resealable plastic bag with a 1/2-inch opening cut from one corner.) Bake until evenly golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center of the thickest portion comes out clean, 12 to 15 minutes. Rotate the pans halfway through baking. (If you are making muffins, divide batter evenly between the prepared cups and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, rotating halfway through.)
5. While the doughnuts bake, whisk the remaining 1/2 cup/100 grams granulated sugar and 1 teaspoon cinnamon together in a small bowl to combine. In a separate small bowl, melt the remaining 6 tablespoons butter in the microwave. Let the doughnuts cool for 5 minutes after baking, then unmold them from the pans, brush with the melted butter and dredge them in the cinnamon sugar while they are still warm. Serve immediately, or let cool to room temperature.

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*Co-op Blog* (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/blog/>)

# So You Wanna Buy A Hardware Store?



by Rose Paul, Board Secretary (now President)

Reprinted from Plainfield Co-op Newsletter: Fall 2023

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One hundred ninety Co-op members held a decisive vote to pursue, if feasible, acquiring Plainfield Hardware. Eighty-two percent of voters were in favor of acquiring and running the store pretty much the way it has been—hardware, groceries, seasonal greenhouse—with typical Co-op fare as well as clean, conventional food. So what are the next steps?

We've hired real estate attorney Keith Roberts of Darby Kolter & Roberts to advise us through the process. It is time to have some in-depth conversations with owners Rich and Gaye Christiansen and then send them a letter of intent spelling out terms that we mutually agree upon.

And we need to get started on fundraising. Our financial model specifies a certain dollar value of bank loans and a certain dollar value of member loans we'll need to raise. In a few weeks we hope to begin reaching out to a small number of members individually to get a sense for how willing individual members might be to lend the Co-op money with a guaranteed interest rate on their loan.

The financial model did not include any funding from grants, but the Board wants to dig in and try to raise as much grant money as possible. One of the first we'll apply for is called REDI—the Rural Economic Development Program run by the Vermont Housing and

Conservation Board. REDI provides a small amount of seed money to hire help from a group of private consultants. The Co-op can decide what kind of help we most need, such as writing a business plan and writing grant applications.

The models exist for how to manage this kind of ambitious project. Both Buffalo Mountain Co-op and the East Calais General Store have been very successful in their recent fundraising. The Morrisville Co-op opened six years ago with help from member loans. And in the spirit of co-operatives, they have been willing to share their stories with us.

If you have expertise writing a business plan or writing grant applications, the Board would love to hear from you. Other skills are very welcome—it will take a big team to make this transition happen. Please tell a Board member if you're interested in helping out! [emails for individual Board members are on p.2.]

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# On PACT

## (Plainfield Area Community Trust)



by Anne Van Couvering

Reprinted from the Plainfield Co-op Newsletter: Fall 2023

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Assuming the Co-op moves, one of the ideas being passed around regarding the Co-op building in Plainfield Village is to sell it to PACT. So, you might ask, what is PACT?

We are a group of Plainfield Area residents in the early stages of setting up a non-profit with the following mission statement: “To foster community, support sustainable economic growth and development, and maintain the historic integrity of the Plainfield area.”

The idea is that we are an umbrella non-profit to help facilitate projects spearheaded by community members. People with an idea for how to improve or preserve or maintain the community, who want to apply for grants or state money and need non-profit status to do so, could use PACT for that purpose without having to become a full non-profit. (Details still being hammered out.)

Ideas that have already been floated run the gamut from affordable housing to a day care center or youth center to tool lending library and — most salient for this newsletter — to purchasing the Co-op building so as to be able to access grants to repair it, upgrade it and make it ADA compliant. Once that is done, the model suggested by Preservation Trust is to find an entity (business or non-profit) to lease it that can pay maintenance costs and taxes while they are occupying the building. Models for reduced rent, etc. are available for

projects that enjoy wide community support and are beneficial for the health of the town (e.g. community center, youth center, cafe with Co-op distribution, etc. In other words, PACT would not be on the line for upkeep costs unless that’s agreed on in advance and money is coming in from some source to support that.

Please keep in mind that we are painting in very broad strokes here because PACT is still in its infancy and none of the details have been hammered out. If you would like to be a part of creating this non-profit and/or being part of a fundraising committee for your dream project (including the purchase and improvement of the Co-op building if the Co-op chooses to sell to us) please reach out to Anne Van Couvering ([annevanc@gmail.com](mailto:annevanc@gmail.com)) (<mailto:annevanc@gmail.com>)).

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