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The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

Spring 2024

Co-ops and Caterpillars



About This Newsletter

Co-ops and caterpillars in the process of transformation seemed like the perfect theme for this Spring newsletter when member Jan Waterman's article was suggested to us. That the caterpillars' transformation into moth or butterfly is not a neat, step-by-step process may be

reassuring to our Co-op members and staff experiencing the transition from village store to highway, multi-department store as unsettling and disorienting. It's messy, uncertain—will we really turn into a butterfly? ... [READ MORE](#)

[President's Report April 2024.](#)

by Rose Paul, Board President

I am excited to report that on April 6, the Board signed the purchase agreement for our Co-op to acquire Plainfield Hardware ... [Read more](#)

[Treasurer's Report March 2024.](#)

by John Cleary, Board Treasurer

This report covers the financials for the first two months of 2024. ... [Read more](#)

[A Note from the Backstock Room](#)

by Anji Domino (for the Co-op staff)

We know it's been weird. Uncertainty of a new location. New products on the shelf, old favorites missing from the shelf ... [Read more](#)

[Co-ops and Caterpillars: What do these have in common?](#)

by Jan Waterman

Cooperation is a skill we're not born with; it takes conscious and conscientious ... [Read more](#)

[The Salt of the Earth](#)

One Staffer's Perspective

by Deb Barnwell

So what is the difference among different salts and does it really matter? ... [Read more](#)

[Only You Can Break This Vicious Cycle](#)

by Glenda Bissex

Looking at some partially stocked shelves at the Co-op, I asked a staff member ... [Read more](#)

[Plainfield Community Center and Gallery](#)

[Appreciations of Jezebel Crow](#)

from fellow workers

We would like to thank Jezebel Crow for her dedication, hard work ... [Read more](#)

from Alexis Smith, Curatrix, and Jerome Lipani

Exhibition updates, Call for Spring cleaning fairies, Jerome's exhibit ... [More here](#)

[Overnight Oats](#)

When soaked overnight in milk, oats become tender ...



[Tasty Red Lentil Soup](#)

This soup is simple, easy and so tasty!



[Lemon Frost](#)

Simple to make, no-bake and most delicious low fat dessert.



[Storm Causes Power Outage in Village, but Co-op Staff Prevails!](#)

by Rose Paul

This is a special shout-out to Chris Thompson, Co-op Maintenance ... [Read more](#)

[Call for Cleaning Fairies](#)

—for the Community Center
[More information here](#)

Thanks from the Co-op Staff

Thanks to everyone who has stuck with us and kept shopping while the Co-op is in transition.

The way you see the store now (in April) is not the way we want our Co-op to be. It's just temporary belt-tightening.

Spring is coming, brighter days are ahead for all of us.

[Hiring Store Manager](#)

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[Staff, Board, Committees - April 2024.](#)

Co-op Staff list, Board Member list, and Committee Contacts

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About This Newsletter April 2024



Newsletter Issue Spring 2024

by Glenda Bissex, Editor

Co-ops and caterpillars in the process of transformation seemed like the perfect theme for this Spring newsletter when member Jan Waterman's article was suggested to us. That the caterpillars' transformation into moth or butterfly is not a neat, step-by-step process may be reassuring to our Co-op members and staff

experiencing the transition from village store to highway, multi-department store as unsettling and disorienting. It's messy, uncertain—will we really turn into a butterfly? Right now we're in the soup, which Jan tells us is the necessary dissolution on the way to a caterpillar's transformation.

The Board has signed an agreement to buy Plainfield Hardware; the transformation is underway. Board President Rose Paul explains some of what's ahead. Treasurer John Cleary gives us the sobering numbers of our present position—definitely in the soup—but with the prospect of transforming into a successful business. (And speaking of soup, Debra Stoleroff offers a recipe for red lentil soup—a soup you can enjoy.)

If you don't want to think about soup, you could think about salt. Deb Barnwell, recently back from travels, gives a glimpse into the fascinating history and variety of salts.

There are many ways you can help our Co-op during this time of transition. I suggest some in my article "Only You Can Break This Vicious Cycle." The President's report offers more ways, and they don't all involve money. We are a cooperative, which means we work together, giving what we can (time, talent, encouraging words, a smile, or a check) for the benefit of all.

We want to hear from you—opinions, history, poems, photos. Deadline for submissions to the summer newsletter is July 15.

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President's Report April 2024



by Rose Paul, Board President

I am excited to report that on April 6, the Board signed the purchase agreement for our Co-op to acquire Plainfield Hardware and General Store. Getting to this point has been a months-long effort of negotiations, grant writing, and shopping for a loan, and we have a lot of work ahead of us. But first, a word about the current status of our Co-op.

What's up with the store right now?

I'm sure you've noticed that the shelves are understocked. This is a belt-tightening measure to get us through the very lean winter months. We have fallen in arrears with many vendors, so we are slowing the purchase of new inventory until we can build up our available cash and pay vendor bills. While financial projections done last summer predicted that our Co-op couldn't last over the long term in its present location, this downturn is happening faster than anyone thought. High inflation over the past year seems to have compelled shoppers to search for lower prices on groceries, hurting our sales.

Low sales aren't the only problem though. We have consistently missed our target profit margin on goods sold. To address this problem, the Co-op Board has hired Management Consultant James Morrell to re-train staff to ensure that every step in the process of selling goods is aimed at meeting our margin goals. The Board is funding James' work privately, not with Co-op funds.

We are currently recruiting for a Store Manager and for a Maintenance Coordinator. The job descriptions are on the Co-op's website, go to plainfieldcoop.com/careers (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/careers>). The new Store Manager will receive job coaching for success from consultant James Morrell. I want to thank our hard-working staff who have been stretching their job duties to keep our store running, and a special shout out to Anji Domino for her staff leadership. This is also a first opportunity to say thanks to Chris Thompson of Owl Hill Farm, who is the Co-op's long time Maintenance Coordinator. Chris has been quietly, skillfully keeping our elderly building and its physical plant in good working order for years. Thank you, Chris, for your dedication to this vital piece of Co-op operations, and we'll look for your fine organic produce at the Co-op and the Plainfield Farmers Market!

As fresh produce season ramps up, we hope that shoppers return to spend more of their food dollars on the Co-op's locally sourced, low-food-miles produce, such as Blackbird Organics' fresh spinach and Rinny Austin's microgreens. Your money spent at the Co-op supports over 125 local farms and food producers, keeping your shopping dollars circulating locally. Fun fact: at last count, 50% of the Co-op's goods came from local producers!

Relocation project update

Back to the future of the Co-op's relocation. There is a very strong, positive financial forecast for the Co-op when we acquire and move to Plainfield Hardware and General Store. We'll have double the grocery space compared to the current building, and we'll still sell hardware, pet food, farm and garden supplies, and we'll operate the grab-and-go deli and the seasonal greenhouse. We'll be able to blend the customer base of both stores and we're projected to double our grocery sales alone in the first year of operation at the new store. We will be able to buy more produce from local farms and offer a wider variety of groceries, at less cost, due to better volume pricing.

The financial projections for the Co-op's future in the Plainfield Hardware location indicate strong positive cash flow with steadily increasing cash reserves, even as we pay the debt service on our loans. The Board truly believes this is the only path to keeping our Co-op vital and serving our community, and members last August agreed with a strong majority voting for the move.

We have signed a purchase agreement with Gaye and Rich Christiansen to purchase Plainfield Hardware. The closing date for the purchase of Plainfield Hardware is July 17. The Co-op will take some time to move our operations, so there will be a period of transition.

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



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Project finances

The total cost of the relocation project is \$2.2 million. This includes the purchase price for the Real Estate, Equipment and Business. We are buying not just the building and land, but the contents of the building and indeed, Plainfield Hardware as a business. A real estate appraisal (paid for privately) was done to validate the cost of the real estate. The Co-op is purchasing a "turn-key" operation, allowing us to purchase the Hardware Store on July 17 and keep it open for business the next day. The Hardware Store's trained staff

wish to continue working there, a huge asset for the Co-op. The Christiansens are agreeing to provide coaching and advice for a period of time after the sale. Their experience will be invaluable while staff of both former stores adjust to the new store.

The Co-op will be purchasing all the existing inventory of the Hardware Store. The existing inventory in the store will be tallied by a third party over two days just before our closing date of July 17. The actual value of the inventory will be used to adjust the overall purchase price at the time of closing.

In addition to these tangible assets, there are transition and operating costs included in the overall project cost. These are a variety of things needed to make the transition successful. The total project cost includes paying off our existing line of credit with the Cooperative Fund of the Northeast so that we start fresh with one consolidated loan. It includes the cost of some new equipment, particularly two new produce display coolers. There is a loan origination fee, and extra cash to pay off any outstanding Co-op vendor invoices and to provide initial working capital in our new location.

There is funding for legal fees and various permit fees (examples: several state permits needed to sell liquor, operate the deli and the greenhouse). There is funding for management consulting support to ensure our new, blended staff team gets off to a good start. There is also a Year 1 expanded Marketing/Promotions budget, and the cost of one additional staffer. Finally, this includes the cost of cleaning and making the former Co-op building ready for its next occupancy.

This project will be paid for by a combination of loans (mostly), grants and donations. The sellers are providing a small proportion of the financing. The Co-op has applied for a \$1.4 million business loan from the Cooperative Fund of the Northeast, the lender with whom we've had a line of credit for years. CFNE understands co-ops and is more flexible than traditional banks. We will know on April 12 whether we've been approved for our loan, and what conditions might be placed on the loan agreement.

Community Fundraising Campaign

One of those conditions is already known: the Co-op has to raise some funds locally, a mix of loans and donations. Anyone can make a loan to the Co-op, you don't have to be a member, but you do have to be a Vermont resident. Our goal is to raise at least \$300,000

from the local community by July 1, and a total of \$570,000 by December 1. However, our lender might require that all \$570,000 is raised before closing, which would delay the closing date. Donations will be managed by a third-party nonprofit so that donors can realize a tax break.

The Board is working with local fundraising consultant Emily Boedecker (funded by a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board) and assisted by Co-op member Andy Robinson, a national fundraising consultant who happens to live in Plainfield and is generously donating his time.

We are almost finished developing a fundraising packet to share with individual donors/lenders. This packet provides specific information about the relocation project and about making loans and gifts to the Co-op. These materials will be available on request to interested individuals.

In the near future, the Board and volunteers will be making calls to community members to schedule a time to visit and discuss the opportunity to help the Co-op succeed in this campaign. If you'd like to have a confidential conversation with a Board member, please contact us at board@plainfieldcoop.com (<mailto:board@plainfieldcoop.com>) If you can help us make connections to other community members or have ideas for innovative funding sources, we'd love to hear from you.

What about 153 Main Street?

The Board would like to convene community conversations about the future use of the Co-op building at 153 Main Street. Stay tuned for an announcement as we work out the details. We have time to work out a transition plan for the existing Co-op building, and community conversations will be important in shaping what happens. If you would like to help the Board in this planning, please let us know at board@plainfieldcoop.com (<mailto:board@plainfieldcoop.com>)

It is an exciting time for our Co-op as we begin the next 50 years of serving our members and our community. Transitions can be hard, but together, we can make this work!

Treasurer's Report March 2024



by John Cleary, Board Treasurer

This report covers the financials for the first two months of 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. Wages as a percentage of sales must be reduced and this effort is underway. Our Columinate consultant is working with store Buyers to better manage purchasing and margins. While we are excited to move forward with the hardware store expansion and move project, we need to keep the current store running in the meantime. The chart below provides more details on key Profit and Loss financials compared to last year.

The Balance Sheet of the Co-op shows that losses from last year were covered using funds from savings. A Balance Sheet shows assets and liabilities at a point in time. Comparing numbers at the end of February 2024 compared to February 2023, cash on hand is significantly lower (\$31,322 vs \$91,249) and the value of Inventory is slightly lower (\$45,121 vs \$55,223. Current liabilities (short term debt) has improved but continues to be a burden on cash flow. Accounts payable (money owed to vendors) was \$66,513 vs \$113,917 last year. In January 2024, our VEDA Forgivable Loan (\$17,303) was forgiven. The only long-term debt is our loan with the Cooperative Loan Fund of New England, with a balance of \$44,554. 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.

Profit and Loss Summary, Year-to-Date (January - February 2024)

	Jan/Feb 2024	Jan/Feb 2023	Variance	% change	Notes
Total Sales	126,130	150,487	-24,357	-16%	Decline in total sales creates challenges
Cost of Goods	87,197	103,027	-15,830	-15%	Cost to purchase items for resale
Gross Profit	38,933	47,460	-8,527	-18%	Amount of \$ to run the business
Operating Expenses	60,254	62,165	-1,911	-3%	Cost savings have not off-set decline in sales
Profit	-21,321	-14,705	-6,616		
Other Income	19,569	3,750			VEDA Loan was forgiven, showing as income (\$17,303), Community Center Income
Net Income	-1,783	-10,955	9,171		

It is my assessment that the project to purchase Plainfield Hardware and expand at that location is the only viable path forward for the Co-op. If the Co-op were to stay at the current location and current trends continued, the business would likely become insolvent and close by the end of the year. The good news is that the Route 2 expansion is financially viable and the 10 year projections show the business quickly becoming profitable and in fact, doing very well. We have signed a purchase and sale agreement with the hardware store owners and are moving forward quickly. Our financing plan (loans and capital campaign) will fund the purchase of the hardware store business as well as providing money to cover current debt and adequate cash for operations both during the transition and beyond. The entire project has a budget of around \$2 million dollars. The financing plan is coming together very successfully so far, with \$1,550,000 secured. The remaining balance will be raised through member loans. This capital campaign is being launched with the help of several experienced fundraising consultants. Keep your eyes out for the loan offering details, which will be released as soon as the review and approval process has been completed by the VT Department of Financial Regulation. The Board of Directors has worked hard on this plan with our consultants and feel confident that it is realistic and achievable if the community works together to support our Co-op.

A Note From The Backstock Room

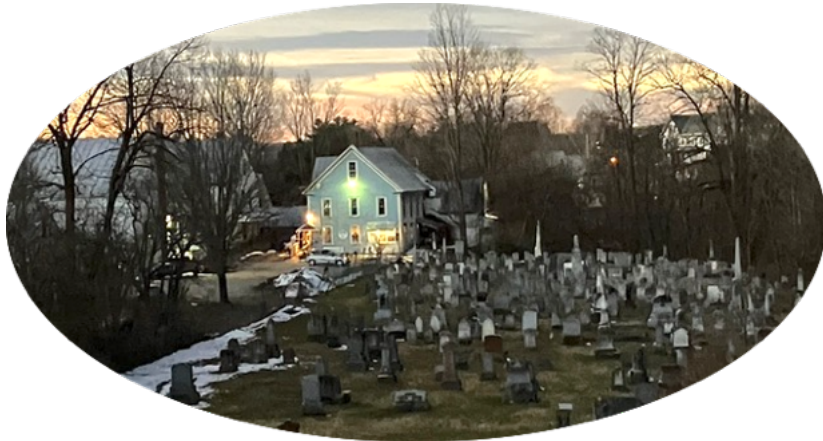
by Anji Domino (for the Co-op staff)

Thanks! We know it's been weird. Uncertainty of a new location. New products on the shelf, old favorites missing from the shelf, and sometimes, just plain nothing on the shelf. We know it's been hard to find everything you are looking for at the Co-op. One big factor has been that our biggest distributor of organic goods has been bought by Amazon and has drastically changed how they work with our tiny, rural store. We have been scrambling to find similar offerings of high quality and affordable pricing, as prices are going up everywhere. I'm sure you've all noticed, anywhere you shop. Since we often cannot sample product before buying it for the store, there have been some fails, but we have also found some new favorites (we're looking at you, Gator Tators), and re-established connections with old favorites (did you get your Local Donut on eclipse day?).

We can promise, it has been just as hard from the other side. We see it, too. We feel it, too. And we want to acknowledge and appreciate you. Yes, You! Thanks for sticking with us through thick and thin. There is hope on the horizon and it gets closer every day.

We really want to hear from you, so please find the Customer Communication Board located on the side of the drink cooler (by the kids' area). Responses will be posted there, too. Thanks again for keeping your dollars local. Your shopping power increases our buying power! See you at the Co-op!

From the Editor: The conjunction of the cemetery, the lighted Co-op building and the dark but transient eclipse is food for thought at this point in the Co-op's life story. Is an eclipse, like the caterpillar and butterfly, another metaphor for the Co-op's life changes?



Co-op during the solar eclipse, April 8, 2024, from the nearby cemetery. Photo credit: Fred Pond

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Appreciations Of Jezebel Crow

Appreciations of former Store Manager, from her fellow workers

We would like to thank Jezebel Crow for her dedication, hard work, blood, sweat and tears over the years. We would also like to thank her animals for patiently waiting for her love and attention to return to their farm while she carved out time to give to the Co-op. We wish her all the best on all her next adventures. She will carry her bright spirit and knowledge of the stars to whatever she does. We will miss her presence, fun facts, wacky sense of humor and delicious cooking that she brought as we worked beside her during our shifts. We will also miss the way she cares for those often overlooked; the under dogs of this world are safe when Jez is around. It's not always apparent who is doing the heavy lifting behind the scenes, but she left some very big boots to fill. We will do our best, but there is no replacing her. Thanks, Jez! For Everything! We miss you. Yes, even your terrible, punny jokes. "Nothing!"

— from Anji Domino and some other staff members

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Jezebel Crow worked hard and dedicated her life for over 10 years helping to improve the store, as well as getting staff closer to a livable wage, and keeping the basic principles of our cooperative as part of the daily workings of the store. She will always be remembered and respected as a great leader, who brought her knowledge, understanding and love for the community and local values to our Plainfield food cooperative.

She made us laugh almost every shift, while she maintained good supervision and helpful guidance as she did her best to help rehabilitate the Co-op when we were struggling. I will always think of her as one of the best “bosses” that I ever got to work with, and I will greatly miss working alongside her. We wish her the best on her next adventure.

P.S. Her locally made goat milk soap is available in our store.

— from Eben Markova-Gold, Lead Floor Staff, Bakery Buyer

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Jez stepped in when the Co-op staff desperately needed some on-the-floor leadership. She worked tirelessly to keep this place running, and did a damn good job. Soft spoken, yet assertive (traits I share), it’s not lost on me that she shares my sister’s name and approximate birth year, and has always felt like family. And she is, like the Co-op, “adopted family.”

Life is constant change, but what a void the Plainfield Co-op has right now. Dang, I miss her—her devotion and how much she brought to this place.

— from Chris Thompson, Maintenance Coordinator

Co-Ops And Caterpillars: What Do These Have In Common?

by Jan Waterman

[This piece was originally generated for the [March Arts Marathon – Central Vermont Refugee Action Network \(cvran.org\)](https://cvran.org/march-arts-marathon/). (<https://cvran.org/march-arts-marathon/>)]

All around our home we have access to co-ops of various sorts. Just to name a few, there’s a dairy cooperative, an electric co-op, a worker-owned cooperatively run chocolate shop, an artist’s co-op The co-ops that figure most prominently in my life are the food co-ops. Nearest us we have a small one (a throwback to the ‘70s) in our village a couple miles down the road. There’s also a large shiny one about 20 minutes away in town. You can find a food co-op in most towns around Vermont.

Generally, co-ops structure their business models in a way that invites and involves all stakeholders (consumers, staff, vendors, and the community at large) in shaping and sustaining them. Food co-ops around here are generally also committed to strengthening healthy local food systems, supporting sustainable agriculture, and providing quality food for all.

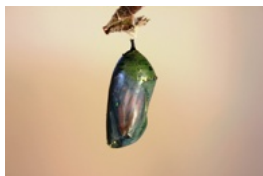
Wonderful ideals; mighty hard work. Usually a co-op will form a council or board of directors, a smaller number of members who strive to represent the wishes of the larger membership as they go about setting policies and overseeing those who oversee the business. Respectfully including the perspectives everyone brings to the table (including

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random interested stakeholders) can be difficult and frustrating. Consensus decision-making is an arduous process, requiring terrific patience and time and faith. Even the somewhat more “efficient” majority decision-making models can be painfully complicated, when those basic cooperative principles of inclusion, transparency and respect are foundational. Cooperation is a skill we’re not born with; it takes conscious and conscientious practice — like looking at a stranger and deciding to think, “You are a part of me.”

Meanwhile, things change. Demographics change. Cultures change. Economies change. So both of the food co-ops mentioned above are in transition now. The small one needs to move to a larger space that’s more visible and easily available to more people. In short, a substantial increase in the volume of business is required for its survival. This prospective move has opened the store’s atmosphere to significant upsets among staff, board and the community. The big co-op is struggling to balance corporate-style efficiency with basic cooperative principles, after a scandal hit the newspapers last summer which resulted in large upheavals in management and council membership. The ways forward for each co-op are unclear; the future is looking risky. It’s not so easy right now to imagine how things will turn out.

As for caterpillars, here’s a fun factoid: When they seal themselves into their chambers of transformation, which is the necessary next step in their life cycle, they are caterpillars. You knew that. When they come out, they’re winged marvels. You knew that, too. Did you know that what happens inside the chrysalis is not (as I imagined) the slow rearrangement of parts of one form to another, morphing of caterpillar legs into butterfly wings or some such? No. That caterpillar becomes something else altogether, not caterpillar or butterfly or some form in-between. Not at all. It becomes soup.



The previous form is altogether abandoned, and it literally digests itself into soup. Really. However: “*Certain highly organized groups of cells known as imaginal discs survive the digestive process.*” (I cannot overstate my delight in that term—*imaginal.**) “Once a caterpillar has disintegrated all of its

tissues except for the imaginal discs, those discs use the protein-rich soup all around them to fuel the rapid cell division required to form the wings, antennae, legs, eyes—all the other features of an adult butterfly or moth.” [1]

This marvel and its implications for everything from co-ops in transition to massive global, cultural change is a concept shared with me during a conversation about the Science of Transformation with Angelita Valencia Borbón, a Native Scientist. [2] It resonates so strongly with me now. I think that before much longer, we’ll all be in “the soup,” and groups of organized imaginal cells will begin to build something unrecognizable from what was. Caterpillars, co-ops, every living creature—what all might we imagine, and purposefully dream?



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\* Imaginal: of or relating to [imagination](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination>), [images](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/images) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/images>), or [imagery](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagery) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagery>) (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

[1] [How Does a Caterpillar Turn into a Butterfly?](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/caterpillar-butterfly-metamorphosis-explainer/) | [Scientific American](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/caterpillar-butterfly-metamorphosis-explainer/) (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/caterpillar-butterfly-metamorphosis-explainer/>)

[2] Angelita Valencia Borbón (Yo’eme) personal conversation, 2023

For pretty photos of caterpillars and moths and butterflies: [The Caterpillar Lab](https://www.thecaterpillarlab.org/art) | [The Art of Caterpillars and Natural History](https://www.thecaterpillarlab.org/art) (<https://www.thecaterpillarlab.org/art>)

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# The Salt Of The Earth



## One Staffer's Perspective

by Deb Barnwell

*"Salt is the sea that could not return to the sky."  
– Piranske Soline website, Slovenia*

So what, you might ask when you're bored, is the difference among different salts and does it really matter? After doing some traveling in Italy, Croatia and Slovenia this February we came across ancient Slovenian salt pans, over 700 years old and still worked today. I brought home some table salt and some Fior di Sale (or fleur de sel, salt flower) to try.

Salt pans, historically, seem to have been shallow pools lined and bordered by low clay walls into which sea water or salt spring water flowed. From there, wind and sun created and evaporated the brine and people raked and harvested the salt that formed. Modern technology has changed harvesting techniques quite a bit over the centuries. Our most common table salts like Mortons have been boiled and purified, creating a more pure salt but often lacking in many of the natural trace minerals.



Salt pan harvesting



Mounds of salt on flats



Celtic sea salt flats

At the Co-op we have recently gotten in a large bag of Redmond Real Salt from Utah, which will be replacing the Himalayan Pink Salt for a little while. All this prompted me to do some research.

What are some of the differences among, say, Real Salt, Celtic salt and Himalayan salt? Celtic sea salt, much like the Piran sea salt, is harvested from ancient salt pans flooded periodically by high tides. These pans have a clay coating that acts as a biofilter, ensuring the salt doesn't mix with silt from the sea and allowing it to remain white and clean.

The Celtic sea salt we are accustomed to comes from Brittany, off the coast of France, and has been tested for purity and micro-plastics, which it does not contain—something I have been wondering about for a while.

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

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[.https://easthilltreefarm.com/.](https://easthilltreefarm.com/)

Celtic salt and Himalayan pink salt are both sea salts. One being ancient, the Himalayan, comes from ancient sea salt deposits from long gone seas, just like the Redmond Real Salt. Celtic salt is fresh and some might contend is somewhat more prone to contain traces of what is polluting our oceans today, although the salt companies do test for impurities. The

pink color of Himalayan salt comes from a higher level of potassium which in a pure mineral form is pink. Most of the Himalayan salt comes from the Khwera salt mine in Pakistan. There are several mines in that region, known as the salt range of the Himalayas.

In Brittany, as in Piran, Slovenia, the sun and wind dance upon the sea water in the pans, creating a mineral-rich brine that forms crystals that are then gently raked off with wooden rakes. The damp gray Celtic salt still contains some of the rich bioactive brine which is why it seems so wet. The rock salt of the Himalayas and Utah has been solidified and dried over centuries and is just as mineral dense, containing anywhere from 65-85 trace minerals. They are all good and each adds a slightly different character to foods. The Redmond Real Salt has a smaller carbon footprint though so we will be giving it a try for now. Try both the pink or the Celtic salt to make your own sauerkraut or any kind of pickle or ferment.



Redmond Utah salt mine

If you're interested in learning more about the interesting world of salt, its ancient history throughout the world and some fascinating food preservation recipes, you may want to check out the beautiful book THE MIRACLE OF SALT by Naomi Duguid.

*Photographs provided by Deb Barnwell*

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

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# Only You Can Break This Vicious Cycle

by Glenda Bissex

Looking at some partially stocked shelves at the Co-op, I asked a staff member what the problem was. "Not enough people are buying," I was told.

As a Co-op shopper, I had to see myself as part of the problem. When my favorite chocolate bars were gone for weeks, I gave up and stocked up on them elsewhere. And I didn't look around then to find other things I could buy, like cans of a soup I enjoy, a package of pasta, a bottle of wine—things I might not need right now but that would keep until I needed them.

"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 [debt]," wrote former Store Manager Jezebel Crow in her report in the winter 23-24 newsletter.

Instead, faced with a reduced inventory, it's easy for shoppers like me to spend less.

So then the Co-op must buy less.  
So I shop there less.  
So the Co-op has even less money to purchase products. . . .

It's a vicious cycle. Where is the end to it? There is only one way to stop the momentum of this ever-contracting spiral. There is only one place it can begin to reverse—with shoppers buying more.

Then the Co-op can buy more.  
Then shoppers will buy more.  
And we'll all feel happier.

You know who you are—shoppers who can afford to pay a little more for some goods in order to pump life blood into our Co-op. Or members who don't already have a "gift card," which pre-pays your grocery bill and gives the Co-op additional funds to buy products. Are we a cooperative in deed as well as in name? We will survive and thrive together or wither and die together.

It isn't just about money but about spirit. About giving a smile to staff when we're in the store, and appreciating the efforts they're making to keep the shelves stocked when suppliers refuse to deliver some products until invoices are paid. It's about being grateful the Co-op is still here instead of being grumpy that it isn't everything we want it to be right now. If we can't find something we want, maybe something we're used to buying, ask a staff member why and listen to their side of the story—listening is a gift, too. There are many ways of giving. Decide which you can do, and do it!

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# Plainfield Community Center And Gallery

*Notes from Alexis Smith, Curatrix, and Jerome Lipani.*

- [Current and Upcoming Exhibitions](#)
- [Call for Spring Cleaning Fairies](#)
- [Jerome Lipani's Exhibit](#)

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## Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

**The 50th Anniversary Group Show:** The exhibition is coming to an end! We want to thank all the participating artists for their beautiful artwork, and invite you to come and pick up your pieces before the end of April. Please confirm your pick up plans with me at [VTpiegirlco@gmail.com](mailto:VTpiegirlco@gmail.com) (<mailto:VTpiegirlco@gmail.com>) or [Jeromelipani@gmail.com](mailto:Jeromelipani@gmail.com) (<mailto:Jeromelipani@gmail.com>).

**Upcoming Exhibition:** We are looking forward to hosting Peter Schumann in an anti-war giant painted bedsheet exhibition and performance celebrating his 90th birthday and the 50+ years of Bread & Puppet at the Community Center.

**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/>).

As the Co-op transitions to its new location (Plainfield Hardware) we want to recognize the 50 years of service to the community that the Co-op and Community Center have provided. Our Community Center has been a gathering place, arts center, educational venue, event center, meeting space, dance hall, party central, kids space, endless incarnations of the Free Store, political and social hub, free wifi workspace, art gallery, grand piano and music concert hall; class space for yoga, meditation, cooking, dance, theater, child care, self-care, kettle ball, exercise, sustainability, permaculture, nutrition, pot lucks, tag sales, fund raisers, Co-op meetings and gatherings, and so much more!

The Co-op will continue to own its present building for another three years, and the Board would like to convene community conversations about its use. Stay tuned for an announcement as they work out the details. Your energy and ideas are welcome as we look to generate possibilities for the future, including accessibility and non-profit status.

If you are interested in using the Community Center or finding out what's going on, check out the calendar and rental information on the Plainfield Co-op website at [plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/](https://plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/) (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/community-center/>).

## Call for Spring Cleaning Fairies

Looking for any self-motivated individuals to help clean the Plainfield Community Center and spruce it up for spring. Here are the areas and jobs in desperate need of attention:

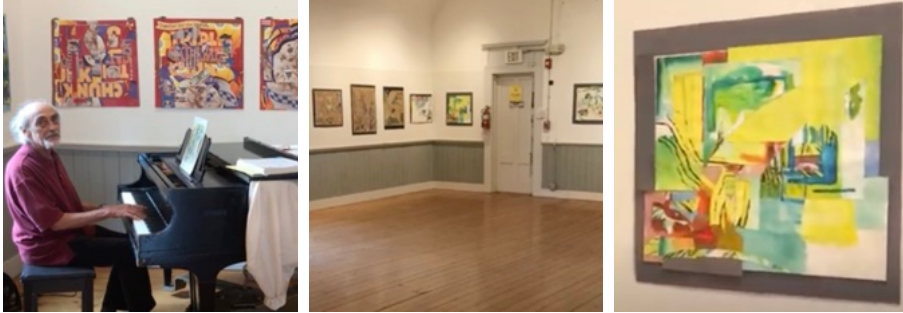
- Stairs: Dust stairwell, vacuum stairs, wash window.
- Landing: Clear out the donated items currently dropped there, and vacuum.
- The Free Store/Lobby: Ruthlessly eliminate all donated items that are unlikely to be “adopted” (out of season, unmatched, broken, dirty, unusable). Dust all surfaces, wash windows, vacuum and mop floor, empty trash and recycling.
- The “Big Space”: Dust, vacuum and mop floor, wash windows.
- Emergency Exit: Sweep the stairs, clear and rake the walkway around the building.

There are very few tools or supplies for these jobs. Please bring your own weapons: rake, broom, vacuum cleaner, rags, dusters, windex, floor soap, mop, mop bucket, paper towels, trash bags, elbow grease.

Contacts: Alexis Smith [VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com](mailto:VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com) (<mailto:VtPieGirlCo@gmail.com>), Leah Tedesco [membership@plainfieldcoop.com](mailto:membership@plainfieldcoop.com) (<mailto:membership@plainfieldcoop.com>)

## Jerome Lipani’s Exhibit

Here is the link to view Jerome Lipani’s PCC exhibit in 2022, which few people could see because of the pandemic. It is but one example of the creative work the PCC has exhibited over many years. Video: <https://youtu.be/6QcK-PsX1hY> (<https://youtu.be/6QcK-PsX1hY>); stills from the video shown below



*Filmed on an i-Phone 7 plus by Tamar Schumann, this Virtual Tour attempts to integrate in a very real way the elements of improvisation in painting and in music. Jerome Lipani exhibits a never-before seen series from the 2010's in exploration of the legacy of the Bauhaus, left to us by Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Walter Gropius, in his attempt to follow the thread of their philosophical and culturally analytical search as mid-20th Century artist/innovators. Beginning with the use of a chime sculpture created from found-object steel plates of graduated sizes, played with stick mallets found in various beaver dams, Lipani explores the awakening tonal capacities that these remnants of industrialization are able to reveal melodically and sonically. From his Cabot, Vermont home on September 11, 2022, we are brought to the nearby Plainfield Community Center Gallery, where his Visual Fugue/Analytical Abstraction Assemblage Show has been hanging pandemic-long, with almost no one able to see it. The film ends with an Allegrria piano improv played to the score of one of his abstract paintings.*

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## **Storm Causes Power Outage In Village, But Co-Op Staff Prevails!**

*by Rose Paul, Board President*

This is a special shout-out to Chris Thompson, Co-op Maintenance Coordinator, who got the generator running and kept shoveling ahead of the continuous snowfall; and to Anji Domino who monitored the coolers and kept the groceries at safe temperatures during the power outage. Cashiers Dragon Domino and Marty Sealey used paper and pencil to record sales for ringing up later, and they did a bang up job of dusting and stocking shelves too.

The April 4 snowstorm that dumped a foot of snow in Central Vermont led to a power outage in Plainfield Village and beyond. The power went out about 2:00 pm and didn't come back till mid-evening. While many of us were home tending to generators, not opening refrigerators, and heating water to wash dishes, our Co-op staff were on the job in a big way.

As Chris was shoveling snow outside the Co-op, a shopper was worried about how long the generator might have to run and who would keep the gas tank filled. Chris, with his characteristic brevity, replied "...slept here before..." and kept on shoveling.

***Thank you Chris, Anji, Dragon and Marty! We were in good hands and we appreciate you!***

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

# Hiring Store Manager

*Posted April 2024*

Are you interested in contributing your leadership skills to a local community-owned business? Would you be inspired by running the daily operations of a growing and evolving mission-driven organization? Do you enjoy a working environment where members of the community gather and connect? If this is you, then you may be cut out to be the Store Manager of the Plainfield Co-op! We are a member-owned grocery store focusing on natural foods, in operation since 1972.

## **Why Choose Plainfield Co-op?**

- Lead and manage a beloved cooperative with coaching from a professional management consultant to help you succeed
- Work alongside a dedicated team committed to providing outstanding service
- Make a difference by becoming an integral part of a supportive and caring community
- Help to shape the future of our Co-op

## **What You'll Bring:**

- Strong leadership skills and a collaborative approach to management
- Experience in retail or grocery management preferred
- Commitment to upholding our cooperative values and mission

## **Position Details:**

- Full-time, non-exempt opportunity with competitive pay ranging from \$22-\$24/hr (based on experience)
- Opportunity for growth and advancement within the organization

► For the full job description and to apply, click here: <https://plainfieldcoop.com/careers> (<https://plainfieldcoop.com/careers>).

Embark on a rewarding career journey as Store Manager at Plainfield Co-op — where your passion and leadership skills can thrive!

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# Overnight Oats

by Genevieve Ko, collected by Debra Stoleroff

Time: 5 minutes, plus overnight soaking

When soaked overnight in milk, oats become tender and creamy. Unlike oatmeal, the uncooked but softened oats retain a fresh flavor and, of course, they're delicious cold. Soaking dried fruit — use your favorite — alongside the oats sweetens the mixture nicely, but you can stir in additional sugar, maple syrup or honey to taste just before eating. Then, just before you dig in, top it with nuts for an irresistible crunch against the creamy oats.

Yield: 2 cups

## Ingredients

- 1/2 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1/4 cup dried fruit, cut into small pieces, if needed
- 1 tablespoon chia, flax, poppy or sesame seeds
- 1 cup milk or unsweetened dairy alternative, such as almond or oat milk
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- Maple syrup, honey or brown sugar (*optional*)
- 2 tablespoons chopped or sliced nuts, toasted, if desired



## Preparation

1. Mix oats, dried fruit, seeds, milk and salt in a pint jar or 2-cup airtight resealable container. Seal tightly and refrigerate for at least 5 hours or up to 5 days.

2. Uncover, stir well, and taste. If you prefer more sweetness, stir in some sweetener. Top with the nuts just before eating.



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

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# Tasty Red Lentil Soup

Collected by Debra Stoleroff

This soup is simple, easy and so tasty!!

Yield: 4 servings

## Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste or 15 oz can of diced tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt and black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne, plus more to taste
- 1 quart chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 1/2 cup red lentils
- 3 large carrots, peeled and diced
- Juice of 1/2 lemon, more to taste
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

## Preparation

1. In a large pot, heat olive oil. Add onion and garlic, and sauté until golden, about 4 minutes.



2. Stir in tomato paste or diced tomatoes, cumin, 1/4 teaspoon each salt, black pepper, chili powder and cayenne. Sauté for 2 minutes longer.
3. Add broth, lentils and carrot. Bring to a simmer, then partly cover the pot and turn heat to medium-low. Simmer until the lentils are soft, about 30 minutes. Taste and add salt if necessary.
4. If you want a smoother soup purée half the soup, then add it back to the pot. Skip this step for a chunkier soup.
5. Reheat the soup if necessary, then stir in lemon juice and cilantro.

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# Lemon Frost

*from Ellen Bresler, collected by Debra Stoleroff*

I was trying to think of recipes I haven't yet shared with the Co-op newsletter (not an easy task considering how long I've been submitting recipes). Then I remembered the simple to make, no-bake and most delicious low fat dessert. It's a great alternative to ice cream.

Ellen Bresler shared it with me ages ago and I was hooked on its sweetness for years but it has been years since I prepared it. I worried I wouldn't be able to find the recipe. I searched for about 45 minutes before finding – tucked in the folds of other recipes – the little scrap of paper on which Ellen had written the recipe. –Debra Stoleroff

## Ingredients

- 1 egg white
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup nonfat dry milk
- 1/3 cup sugar or 1/4 cup fructose
- 1 egg yolk (slightly beaten)
- Dash of salt
- 1/4 teaspoon grated lemon peel
- 3 Tablespoons lemon juice



## Crust

- Crumbs of 3 graham crackers

## Preparation

1. Combine egg white, water and milk powder



2. Whip till stiff peaks form
3. Mix together yolk, sugar, lemon peel, lemon juice and salt
4. Stir yolk/lemon mixture into the egg white mixture
5. Spread 2/3 of the graham cracker crumbs in the bottom of an 8×10 glass pan
6. Spread the mixture into the dish
7. Sprinkle the rest of the graham cracker crumbs on top of the mixture
8. Freeze for at least 3-4 hours (overnight is best)

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# Staff, Board, Committees – April 2024

## Co-op Staff

- Anji Domino: Lead Buyer of almost everything. See exceptions below.
- Annie Reed: Floor Staff.
- Brooke Deschamps: Floor Staff, Produce.
- Chris Thompson: Maintenance, Building Committee.
- Christine Austin: Floor Staff.
- Dan Seigel: IT, Floor Staff, Office jobs.
- Deb Barnwell: Buyer Bulk Herbs, Tea, Gifts, Artist in Residence.
- Deb Bothfeld: Bulk and coffee Buyer, Floor Staff.
- Eben Markova Gold: Bakery Buyer, Lead Floor Staff.
- Dragon Domino: Floor Staff.
- Jay Ekis: Floor Staff, Produce.
- 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>)

- Marty Sealey: Produce, Floor Staff.
- Rin Austin: Produce and Floor Staff.
- Rosemond London: Receiving, Substitute.
- Stanzi Scribner: Administration Manager.
- TIm Llewelyn: Beer and Wine Buyer
- Adrienne Allison: Substitute.
- Margie Yoder: Substitute.

## Committee Contacts

- Building: Mike Brosky, [michael\\_a\\_brosky@yahoo.com](mailto:michael_a_brosky@yahoo.com) ([mailto:michael\\_a\\_brosky@yahoo.com](mailto:michael_a_brosky@yahoo.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
- Membership: Leah Tedesco, Paula Emery, [pemery@pshift.com](mailto:pemery@pshift.com) (<mailto:pemery@pshift.com>)
- Newsletter: Glenda Bissex, [songboat@vtlink.net](mailto:songboat@vtlink.net) (<mailto:songboat@vtlink.net>)
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