

COOP SCOOP

FOR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE KALAMAZOO PEOPLE'S FOOD CO-OP • KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

Manager's Report: Is the Co-op Really Going to Move?

by Chris Dille, gen. manager

HAVE YOU BEEN asking yourself: "Is the Co-op REALLY gonna move?" I suspect that at least a couple of you have. After all, we did our early loan campaign and reached our goal; we're doing great on our equity goal; we've achieved our goals around profitability; we know the market is there...and, still, NO MOVE. Not even an announcement of the new site. You might figure that the economy has given us pause. You'd be right about that, but the reality is that we don't see that as so great an impediment and are still moving full speed ahead toward an expanded and relocated People's Food Co-op.

The challenge is finding the right building. What makes a building the "right" building and why is it so hard to find? To answer those questions we must consider several factors:

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The Greatest Story Always Told: Need for Co-op Education

by Christopher Tower, co-op veep

LAST MAY, our neighbors at the Ypsilanti Food Cooperative received a \$36,000 state grant to add solar panels to both its store and to City Hall.

What does this have to do with organic and local food? Nothing? Everything?

Food Cooperatives are about more than just providing healthy food to their customers. Cooperatives have a greater vision for what it means to (as our co-op phrases it): "culture mindfulness...[about attaining]...healthy, sustainable, environmentally conscious lives for all people."

Does this news about Ypsilanti surprise you? Unaware that co-ops have vision statements called Ends that dictate their business practices? Of 300 business schools in the United States, none of them have dedicated a single class to studying cooperatives. Beyond the halls of Academia, there's a general lack of knowledge about cooperatives and the differences between them and other types of businesses.

"Cooperatives are a different type of animal," says Brent Hueth, director of The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC). "There's a fundamental lack of understanding about what cooperatives are. Their market



Ray Jackson (left) and David Spalvieri-Kruse (right) are the newest members of the PFC team.

behavior is not well understood."

UWCC is conducting a research project funded by the federal government to alleviate the problem of the general public not knowing enough about cooperatives.

"The results may surprise a lot of people," says Paul Haze, president and CEO of the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA). "We hope the data prove that co-ops are a better business model. In the end, it may prompt the creation of new co-ops and the expansions of existing co-ops."

Sound familiar?

Last May, I wrote about advocating the

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WHAT DO YOU think of when I say “comfort food?” I polled some of the smiley folks here at the Co-op and found out what people that spend their days circling around a store filled with great food find comforting.

What makes a market goddess giggle?

Could it be chocolate? Or what about bulk Maple Syrup from Jack and Jill Brown in Paw Paw? It’s local. Jack and Jill are passionate about delivering a great product to their local community. It’s Grade B syrup (translation: it’s higher in minerals and lower in sugar than Grade A.) Elizabeth is confident that this local, “liquid gold makes everything better!”



Lee Hauser loves miso!

What does it take to fuel a body to unload and stock thousands of pounds of products multiple times a week?

Medjool dates! Yes, medjool dates fuel our living

foods enthusiast, Joel Rakowski through the grueling loading and stocking of our UNFI deliveries each week. Medjools, soft like pudding, sweet like a tropical flower, can be eaten anytime!

What do you eat after a wet and dirty day of creating Kalamazoo’s most magnificent, organic produce display?

Well, if you were Abbie you would find yourself tempted by the Oskri Organics Quinoa bars. Made with 4 simple ingredients and filled with the complete protein of quinoa; Abbie says these bars remind her of “peanut brittle, but with quinoa.”

Let’s just say that you were one of the talented folks that diligently prepare all those tasty sandwiches, muffins, treats, and hot soups everyday, then what would you eat?

Well, it certainly wouldn’t be lavender sachets, but you could make some, like Lin does with her favorite product, the lavender essential oil from Now Foods.

What do kind and smiley folks that love to schmooze with Kalamazoo’s greatest customers everyday of the week like?

In alphabetical order: A is for Aimee who loves the Kaia Foods Cocoa Bliss



Aimee Cook is a huge fan of the Cocoa Bliss raw granola from Kaia Foods.

buckwheat crunchies granola. Kaia granola is gluten-free, raw, sweetened with agave nectar, and receives a huge Aimee smile!

E is for Erik who loves the organic Michigan blueberries that he can find year round in our freezer. Straight from Pleasant Hill Farm in Fennville, Erik “likes ’em local!”

L is for Lee and a love for South River’s dandelion leek miso. Lee’s affection for South River’s miso is, in part, due to the quality and small-batch process that it is created with, as well as all the delicious things that you can make with it. Make a broth, a dip, or a killer dressing with tahini and lime juice.

M is for Molly and Stacy’s Multi-grain Pita Chips. Molly likes them because “they’re good to put in stuff,” like Co-op hummos and other dips. Of course, as with most of us, picking just one thing wasn’t easy! ☺



The People’s Food Co-op of Kalamazoo provides good, safe food to the community at reasonable prices, and educates the community about issues related to food, health and environmental responsibility.

Manager: Chris Dilley

Staff: Heather Colburn, Aimee Cook, Lin Digby, Rosie Florian, Elizabeth Forest, Lee Hauser, Ray Jackson, Abbie Miller, Molly Mitchell, Erik Moisiso, Joel Rakowski, Julianne Russell, David Spalvieri-Kruse

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COOP SCOOP

The Coop Scoop provides a quarterly forum for communication between the membership, staff, board and community about issues related to the store, our mission and our community.

Communications Committee:

Chris Dilley, Editor
Brakeman, Design

If you are interested in advertising, carrying *The Scoop* at your establishment, or helping out with production, contact Chris Dilley at (269) 492-6468. Contributions are due in the store by the 15th of Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. for the following month’s issue.

Note: Opinions expressed in *The Coop Scoop* are those of the authors and not necessarily of the People’s Food Co-op. *The Coop Scoop* is not a replacement for a trained healer; please consult with a qualified professional before using any information herein.

PRODUCE CORNER

Blown Away by Grow It Yourself Day

by Rosie Florian, produce manager

“LET’S JUST MOVE the music inside, to the top of the coolers,” I said as I tried not to feel defeated by the buckets of rain pouring down outside. “We still have plants to sell, customers are still coming in the door, it’ll be okay.”

It’s true, this amazing day I had been planning for months, was blown away by high winds and a torrential downpour. I watched as tents, tables, and even an occasional half empty flat of plants literally flew away, and as “Who Hit John?,” with their high energy, old-timey folk tunes full of a variety of strings and exciting vocals, played only four songs as, behind them, a thunderous and all-mighty dark cloud grumbled up. That’s not exactly how I planned the first ever “Grow It Yourself Day,” but it was more than okay.

Grow It Yourself Day was a day to connect with the community and share gardening resources. People’s had

starter plants and seeds for sale. Kazoo Books came and sold a variety of gardening books. The Growing Matters Garden along with Fair Food Matters came to talk about growing vegetables, composting, and vermiculture. We had a volunteer from the Master Gardener program who joined in with at least two other seed saving experts to help demonstrate how to save seeds. Wild Ones, an organization that educates people about native plants, came to talk about their mission. I saw kids dance with their parents, friends help friends find heirloom plants they’d read about, and a seed saving demonstration from Lori Evesque. Even with the inevitable storm, we had a successful day. We sold three times as many plants on Grow It Yourself Day alone than we did all last year.

In the end, we moved inside, “cool-



Rosie Florian

er top bebop” style, with musicians playing on top of the grocery coolers. Performances from the Super Snails and David Teske helped keep the party going! At the beginning of the day, every time there was a table to unfold, a tent to put up, or plants to move around, there would be not one or two sets of hands, but four or five making the setup and breakdown smooth (thanks to the supportive volunteers that day). Reflecting now, almost a month later, I’m ready to say that I’m excited to do it all over again next year. ☺

The Greatest Story Always Told: Need for Co-op Education *(continued from page 1)*

co-op. Here’s the same message dressed in a different suit of clothing.

It’s time to say it again: EDUCATION.

Lots of people who are not co-op owners—especially those who have never stopped in for a shop-around at ours or any co-op—don’t know about cooperatives and how they differ from other types of businesses.

A poll taken by an organization of nearly all the co-operatives in the country (and Canada) found that two-thirds of those surveyed would choose to patronize a co-op over any other business once they learned the principles of cooperation. And there’s the key to that survey result. **Once informed of the core principles guiding co-ops, 66% of people**

prefer to give their business to their local co-op over a big chain franchise or even a locally-owned commercial business. But the information is the key, knowing about the co-op and what it provides the incentive to get new customers in the door and to keep them coming back for more.

Don’t get me wrong. This isn’t a message of woe because the co-op is hurting. Your Kalamazoo co-op is doing GREAT!! Despite the current economic environment of the country, People’s has enjoyed 6.5% year to date sales growth; however, in the last two months, sales have flattened out to only about 2% growth, proving that even a thriving business like the co-op is not immune

to the economic downturn of these recessionary times. But over the last five years, People’s sales have increased 20% a year, which is a tremendous success story and one that the co-op wants to continue in a new location, for which projections are even more impressive in terms of sales potentials.

But we need your help. Tell people about the co-op. Work it into conversations. Encourage people to patronize the co-op. Currently, the co-op has 568 owners, which is 216 more people than when I shared this same message last spring. For the co-op’s expansion to succeed, we need 1000 owners.

But there’s still more to do, there’s more education that can take place on

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www.peoplesfoodco-op.org

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Manager's Report: Is the Co-op Really Going to Move? *(continued from page 1)*

Size: 4,000 – 5,000 total sq. ft. Our goal with this expansion is to quadruple our overall store size and, proportionally, our retail space. Our current space is 1,100 sq. ft. on the main floor, with a sales floor of 800 sq. ft. To end up with 2,800 – 3,200 sq. ft. of retail space, we will need a total of 4,000 – 5,000 sq. ft. If we go any smaller than 4,000 sq. ft., we risk having to do this all over again sooner than later, and it is unlikely that we could afford a space larger than 5,000 sq. ft. at this time. Spaces of this size are out there, and I have looked at more than 40 of them.

Parking: 26 off-street spaces. Retail grocers have found that they need a parking space for every 130 sq. ft. of retail, in order to ensure that shoppers have a decent place to park. In a downtown area it would be tempting to

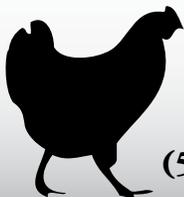
say, “but there is on-street parking...”. It is important that we be in control of parking for our customers to ensure it is there for you when you need it. This part has proven to be kind of tricky.

Location: Attractive to folks throughout the community. An expansion and relocation of the sort we are working toward will take an expansion of our current shopping base. Many of you have been shopping at People’s for a long time (nearly four decades, for some!), and many of you will follow us wherever we land. However, the success of this project depends not only on making sure that People’s is still a place that you LOVE to shop, but also making it a place that others in the community start to shop in a regular way. To do this, we will want to be visible and attractive.

Location: Downtown! Repeatedly we have heard our owners and shoppers say how important it is that we stay a part of a thriving downtown business community. If we were willing to settle for a location somewhere besides downtown, it is likely that we’d already have a place, and possibly even be open in that new store. But, downtown is our goal! So we keep looking . . .

Ours is an ambitious goal. We look to quadruple our store size and, in the first year, double our sales volume. We cannot do this in just any space. It will take the right balance between all these factors. And, don’t worry, we’re not looking for perfection. We’ll take 20 parking spots. We’ll take a location that is visible but not central. We’ll find that space. And when we do . . . watch out Kalamazoo! ☺

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The Greatest Story Always Told: Need for Co-op Education *(continued from page 3)*

a grassroots level, and that’s where you come in. UWCC and NCBA are doing their part to increase national awareness of cooperatives and their principles. Ypsilanti made the news with its solar panel project, and People’s made the news recently

with its new and exciting 100-Mile Market.

Help us grow. Educate people about cooperatives. And if we’re successful, next spring I can write an article about how we have doubled our growth from last year. ☺