

Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976

MAY/JUNE 2009

All on board: Co-op elects new directors

After several weeks of voting, elections for the Co-op's Board of Directors were successfully closed on Friday, April 10. We are pleased to announce that all candidates running were elected to serve three-year terms through 2012.

Before introducing the newcomers, we want to heartily thank outgoing directors Susan Lauchlan, Richard Brown, Scott Giroux and Mike Marino for their dedicated and cooperative service.

Our Newly Elected Directors:

Jeanne Gail has been a Co-op customer for more than 11 years and looks forward to using her time on the board to help us grow in our commitment to offering healthy and local food. She also wants to help the Co-op collaborate with our business neighbors on creative marketing.

Jerome Weiner is a familiar face around the Co-op and brings to his board service experience establishing cooperative ventures for food and bicycle and auto repair, as well

as 32 years of experience as a non-profit social services executive. You may have also enjoyed one of his vegetarian cooking classes, sponsored by the Co-op through Belfast Adult & Continuing Education.

Russ Barber is hoping to use his time of service to help the Co-op

See the Co-op's five newly elected board directors in action.

Our board meetings are from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month at Waterfall Arts Center, 256 High St.

expand and improve its mission. He and his wife have been living in this area since 2000, when they embraced the Co-op, and have been very active in our community ever since.

Paul Sheridan has been elected to serve a second term and feels that he has been "privileged to serve you since 2007." We appreciate

Paul's fine work as our scribe and look forward to the energy he is planning to put into making the board more efficient and responsive to the members.

Wayne Kraeger has been elected to serve a third term. We look forward to drawing on his extensive management oversight experience as our general management team undergoes a transition. Wayne plans to continue to serve on our Environmental Committee. He also wants to put energy into expanding our ability to serve consumers in new markets and to create reliable local markets for local products.

Tony Swebilus has declined to serve, due to an unexpected job offer he received out-of-state, but will gladly serve on a board committee as time allows.

See our new directors in action. Board meetings are from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month at Waterfall Arts Center, 256 High St.

New shopping bag policy will help the Co-op curb shoplifting



The Co-op has been brainstorming strategies to reduce theft and the opportunities that lead to it.

While compiling the nearly 270

responses to our recent member survey, we've noticed how many of you have expressed disbelief we could be struggling with this problem: "Not at

the Co-op!" Sadly, it is true, and we've reached out to the Belfast Police Department for help creating strategies to deal with what can be a preventable problem.

Our goal is to reduce theft and close the financial black hole that sucks away resources when products walk out the door unpaid for. This will result in more money to reinvest in our Co-op. With your cooperation

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Co-op returns to regular hours

With spring sprung, the Co-op will extend its Sunday hours. Starting Sunday, May 3, the Co-op will be open 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Thank you to our members and regular Sunday customers for helping us to conserve resources during the challenging winter.

Belfast Co-op Store

123 High St.

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: 207-338-2532

Fax: 207-338-5234

Web site: www.belfast.coop

E-mail: info@belfastcoop.com

Hours:

7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily

Closed on New Year's Day, Easter,
Thanksgiving and Christmas

General Management Team

Erica Buswell

Ronald "Goldy" Goldstein

Sanford "Pepper" Bush

Board of Directors

Bindy Pendleton, president

Debbi Lasky, vice president

Allen Ginsberg, treasurer

Paul Sheridan, scribe

Phil Prince, staff representative

Zafra Whitcomb, staff representative

Russ Barber

Jeanne Gail

Wayne Kraeger

Kip Penney

Jerry Savitz

Peri Tobin

Jerome Weiner

Newsletter

Erica Buswell, editor

Mary Ruoff, copy editor and

graphic designer

Co-op is part of Midcoast women's health conference



Visit the Co-op's booth at the second annual Midcoast Maine Women's Health Conference on May

15-16 at Point Lookout Resort and Conference Center in Northport.

The theme for this year's conference is "Nutrition for a Healthy Heart: Body, Mind, and Spirit." Our booth will display healthy heart products, offering food and herb tea samples. To learn more visit www.midcoastwomenshealth.com or call 930-2694.

Can't make the conference? Make

Co-op member Bindy Pendleton's Healthy Heart Tea at home:

Bindy's Healthy Heart Tea

3-4 inches cinnamon stick broken

2 tbs lemon balm

2 tbs oatstraw

5 tsp hawthorn (leaves and ground berries)

1/2 tbs dandelion

5 tsp linden

2 tbs whole red clover blossoms

1 whole stevia leaf (used to sweeten tea; if not available dried use drops or powder to taste)

All herbs are dried and measurements are loose, not packed. Place the herbs in a stainless steel pot. Pour 1 quart of hot boiling water over the herbs and let it sit covered, 20-30 minutes. Next, strain and serve or refrigerate in airtight jar up to 3-4 days. Makes about one gallon. (If you are on blood thinners consult your doctor before consuming.)

Co-op Events: May-June

Café Gallery Art Shows May: "Wildlands," a photo display by the Sheepscot Wellspring Land Alliance. June: George Henry Jennings of Camden will show a collection of historical nautical photos.

Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings 6:30-8:30 pm, Thurs. May 22 and Thurs. June 25 (fourth Thurs. unless otherwise announced), Waterfall Arts Center, 256 High St.

Wine & Food Tastings 7 to 9 pm, Fri. May 15 and Fri. June 19 (always the third Fri.), Co-op Café. 10% off wines being tasted. Attendees must be 21 or over.

Hands-on Cooking Class: Eggs and Dairy 1-3 pm, Sun. May 3, Belfast Unitarian Universalist Church, 37 Miller St. Free. Part of our Eating Healthy on a Budget Series. Erica Buswell and Fran Clemetson will lead participants through the process of making Huevos Rancheros, a tasty, healthy, economical meal of cheese, corn tortillas, refried beans and eggs seasoned with salsa. Preregister at the Co-op (338-2532, ask for Fran; education@belfastcoop.com); space is limited.

Redefining Weight Loss Thurs. June 4, 6-7:30 pm in the Co-op Café. Free educational talk. Join Gretchen Heilman, holistic health counselor and herbalist with Alive and Awake Healing Arts in Morrill, for an interactive discussion on redefining diet and weight loss. Ready to love your body, love yourself, and really love your food? This evening is for you! Bring calendar and notebook. Tasty treats to enjoy!

For more information call Fran Clemetson at the Co-op, 338-2532, or e-mail her at education@belfastcoop.com

Now in the Co-op Deli:

**Nitrate-, nitrite-,
hormone- and
antibiotic-free
deli meats!**

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fries, so 25,000 cwts makes 12,500 cwts of fries. There are about six servings per pound of fries, and McDonald's sells each serving for \$1. Granted, they are adding value, but McDonald's is getting \$6 per pound compared to the farmer's six cents.

This mean that potatoes from the same 75 acres net the farmer \$150,000, McDonald's \$7.5 million, and the state of Maine, taxing at a seven percent rate, \$525,000 (more than three times what the farmer gets). After the farmer pays expenses for growing, harvesting, labor, insurance and taxes, his \$150,000 gross may net \$10,000.

If the farmer got just one penny more—seven cents per pound of potatoes—it would mean an additional \$25,000 for him and only reduce McDonald's share to \$7.475 million. Or, the chain could charge customers one penny more per serving and give it directly to the farmer.

What's the alternative?

To thrive, local agriculture needs relationships that provide farms with enough income to repair soils and raise food quality levels. It is not enough to say a food product is "organic." There is a whole lot more to the story.

Consumers need to know about things like nutrient density, soil nutrition and agricultural economics. They need to embrace the concept that human health starts with soil wealth. How are soil and atmospheric elements transformed by nature, through the acts of the farmer, to become food on the table? That should be common knowledge.

Each major crop has a story to tell. Stay posted for my upcoming article, "Small Grains Return to Maine," in the Co-op newsletter or at my web site, www.lookfar.org/agriculture.html.

Co-op management changes

*Dear Members and Customers,
I'm writing to inform you that I have submitted a letter to the Co-op Board of Directors requesting that I be relieved of my general management duties, effective Sept. 30.*

As our business continues to grow, and as I have continued to try to grow my limited retail management skill set along with it, I have come to realize that I do not have the needed skills or desire to try and keep a \$5 million business afloat. My present position requires a level of financial and operational oversight I am not confident that I can provide. I feel now is a good time for me to step aside to make room for another individual who can better fulfill the duties expected of a general manager.

I hope to continue to be able to work as a Co-op employee, and to serve in a capacity that will allow me to continue to work in outreach and community-building. I have enjoyed my work in these areas immensely. I will leave my position with a solid belief that the cooperative business model is a tangible vehicle for creating greater prosperity and justice in the world.

My work as part of our general management team has instilled in me great hope for our global community's future. It's also inspired understanding of the power of food (especially local food) to bring people to the table and fill the chairs with folks whose skills, ideas, schemes and dreams make Belfast such a vibrant, inspiring community.

The management oversight committee of the board is presently considering how to reconfigure our general management structure, and is looking for a dynamic, experienced manager to help lead the Co-op's team. I am confident that if all Co-op stakeholders can work through this period of transition in the spirit of cooperation, the talent and skills needed to keep the store thriving will emerge. I

would hope that my stepping down from my position as a general manager encourages all of you to put forth your very best cooperative efforts to keep the heart of our community healthy and vibrant.

Thank you for the opportunity to grow and to serve as part of the Co-op's GM team. I wish the very best for the continued success of this cooperative effort.

Sincerely,

Erica Buswell, GM team member

HELP WANTED: GM Team Leader

The Co-op is reconfiguring its General Management and is looking for a dynamic experienced manager to help lead the Co-op's team. We are the oldest cooperative food store in Maine, with 2,700 members, an active Board of Directors, \$5.5 million in sales, and 70 full- and part-time employees. We have been an anchor in downtown Belfast for 33 years and play an active role in the community. We need someone with excellent communication and interpersonal skills, comfortable and skilled at personnel management and team building, a strong background in retail operations, organic and local foods familiarity, and a commitment to co-op principles. Responsibilities include overseeing day-to-day computerized operations and long-range planning with department managers and the board. Must be able to work well in a community of diverse personalities and perspectives. Imagination, initiative and creativity a plus. Competitive salary, benefits and in-store discount. Application available www.belfast.coop.

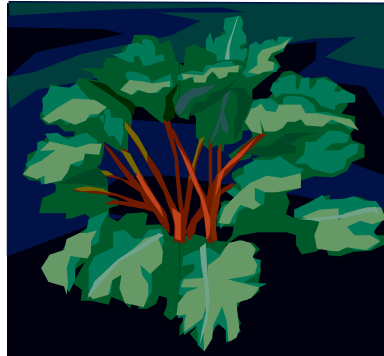
PRODUCE ROW . . . BY CHRIS GRIGSBY, PRODUCE BUYER

The produce department is gearing up for prime time—our local growing season. May 1 should see the beginning of the seedlings season, with offerings from Teltane Farm in Monroe and Roots-n-Shoots Farm in Montville. Organic seedlings will be available by Mother's Day.

The Co-op had a record year for seed potato sales. Seeds from Fedco Seeds in Waterville, Johnny's Selected Seeds in Winslow and Vermont's High Mowing Organic Seeds are flying out the door. The Co-op also carries a full line of soil amendments and bagged composts. We stock local mulches, compost, top soil and manure from Coast of Maine in Portland and Kinney Compost in Knox Ridge.

We are already seeing hoop house and greenhouse production of early

greens: spinach, mesclun, Asian greens, pea shoots, tomatoes and



Look for local rhubarb in our produce department soon. Look for it in your yard, too!

some early lettuces are making their way to our store. Wild harvested fiddleheads as well as rhubarb and

asparagus should be available soon.

West Coast Produce Report:

Broccoli and cauliflower markets remain tight with high prices continuing through May. Chard supplies are solid, but the kale market is volatile, with limited shipments until June. Spinach supplies are very tight, with quality fair at best. Leaf lettuces are plentiful with good pricing.

The talk of the fruit world is stone fruit. Plums, peaches and nectarines have begun shipping from Mexico, and the California fruit should be shipping by mid May. Cherries and apricots should start shipping in May, followed by pluots in early June. Melons have become available from Mexico, and West Coast grapes should arrive in late May.

That's all for now. Thanks for shopping!

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and assistance, you just might see more money coming back to you in your patronage dividend. After all, when theft occurs, all of our owners lose out on potential profits because we have to sell more to make up what was lost.

Upon police recommendation, we will be moving to a new store policy, effective June 1, requiring all customers to use the provided shopping carts and baskets for collecting items you wish to purchase. The use of personal bags, reusable bags and backpacks as shopping vessels will be prohibited. We will reserve the right to inspect any customer bags and backpacks at the checkout counter to verify that all contents have been purchased.

We realize this new policy will pose an inconvenience to many of you accustomed to using your bags and backpacks as your shopping carts. The Co-op strongly encourages our customers to cultivate sustainable shopping habits by bringing

bags to package your purchases and storing them until checkout.

Any concerns or questions on this matter can be directed to the management team. We appreciate your cooperation.

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well-being of America, its people, and the American land depend upon the stewardship of family farmers who are the true husbandmen of their soil, plants and animals."

Cornucopia is calling on farmers and consumers to stand up for and protect organic and sustainable local farmers. "Organic, local producers of high quality foods are part of our nation's food safety solution—not part of the problem," said Fantle.

An action alert released by Cornucopia provides talking points and guidance for consumers and farmers interested in contacting their legislators to urge protection of organic and local food production. It can be found on Cornucopia's web page at <http://www.cornucopia.org/2009/03/>

action-alert-critical-pending-food-safety-legislation/.

Editor's note: Sample letters you can send Congress on this issue, including one on Co-op letterhead, are available at www.belfast.coop.

Groups like the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) also have action alerts and position statements on this issue. MOFGA executive director Russell Libby echoes Cornucopia's views:

"So far the discussions, and proposed legislation, focus almost exclusively on potential microbial contamination. There's no consideration of the potential health impact of pesticides or GMOs. There's no consideration of the off-farm environmental and health impacts of CAFOs or a corn monoculture. These are food safety and public health issues, too—and they can't be treated in isolation. . . ." *To read the full statement: go to www.mofga.org, click on "Programs," then on "Public Policy Initiatives," then on "Position Statements" and then on "Food Safety."*

Want to exchange babysitting for gardening help or a yoga class? Join the “Community Exchange”

By the Waldo County Community Exchange

When we look back at previous economic recessions and depressions, we find not only that they were times of suffering and hardship, but that they also provided new opportunities for community members to collaborate and cooperate. Many present day cooperative enterprises were born in that era as people pooled individual resources and skills to meet their needs.

Though it doesn't go back to the Great Depression, an organization in Waldo County offers residents an opportunity to help themselves and others by sharing skills and talents. As you may be surprised to discover, money is not an essential ingredient as individuals and families access a variety of services, from babysitting to yoga classes to transportation services to yard work.

Many Co-op members take part

Many Co-op members and community members participate in Waldo County Community Exchange (WCCE), a free member-run service that invites and enables residents to share their skills, often drawing out

hidden talents and unfulfilled aspirations. Together, members are building networks that provide true security and a high quality of life. Unlike a barter club, members value the community connections they make as much as the services exchanged.

The basic concept behind how a time exchange works is that members “bank” hours by providing a service to other members and then redeem these banked hours when they need services. Members are encouraged to value all skills equally at one Hour (the WCCE currency) per hour worked, although the details of each exchange are negotiated by the individuals involved.

Members balance giving, receiving

When a task is done, the Hours are entered into the WCCE accounting system. The goal over time is to balance giving and receiving services, even if a member has to go into debt by asking for more help than they might have in Hours. Coordinators earn hours by helping members with exchanges and managing accounts.

WCCE is not just another organization that demands your time in order to participate. Instead, it creates a

mutual opportunity for members to use time as a basis for sharing skills, building community and meeting needs. The organization assumes that everyone who lives or works in Waldo County has skills to share and benefits to gain by participating. Membership is free and open to all.

List of services is online

A sampling of services currently offered by Exchange members includes animal care, bookkeeping, life coaching, hiking companions, tutoring, hair cutting, running errands, computer help, cooking, sailing lessons, reading aloud, gardening advice, housecleaning, yard work, sewing, sustainability info, taxi service and videography. Services are updated frequently online; members can update their services and account activity themselves.

WCCE planning meetings are on the second Sunday of the month at 4:30 p.m., St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, 100 Court St. A potluck follows at 5:30. To learn more visit www.WaldoExchange.org, e-mail info@waldoexchange.org, or call Carolyn, 338-0842, or Norma, 338-4254.



Pondering potatoes (and industrial agriculture)

By Mark Fulford, Co-op member and co-owner of Teltane Farm, Monroe

“Let Food Be Thy Medicine”--Hippocrates

Want to know the real economic situation for most of Maine's potato farmers today? Read on for an agricultural reality check, also known as French Fry Economics 101.

Start by asking yourself the following: Does industrial agriculture leave anything left over to reinvest in building a sustainable soil for the future? What does it cost in lost nutritional quality and flavor? How about the environmental impact from crop protection products?

Now back to our french fry lesson, which I learned from an anonymous Maine potato farmer.

One Penny More

Suppose a farmer had 25,000 cwt (a cwt is a 100-pound unit) of potatoes to sell, which represents approximately 75 acres of potatoes in a good year. He is hoping to get six cents per pound of potatoes, for a gross income of \$150,000.

A pound of potatoes makes half a pound of french

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Rash of food contamination cases feeds appetite for federal food safety legislation

This press release on federal food safety legislation is from the Cornucopia Institute, an economic development, research and advocacy organization seeking to empower farmers and consumers in support of ecologically produced local and organic food. For more information visit www.cornucopia.org.

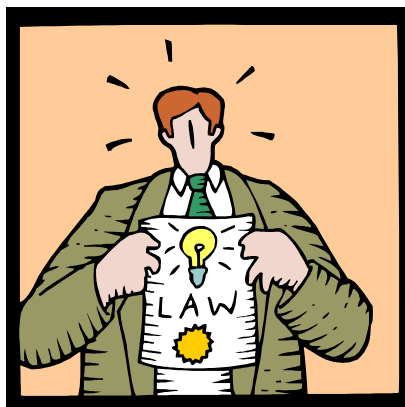
CORNUCOPIA, WI: Momentum is building in Congress for new food safety reforms aimed at addressing the growing cycle of food contamination outbreaks. But concerns are also being raised cautioning legislators not to trample organic farmers, backyard gardeners, and consumers of fresh local foods in the rush to fix the nation's food safety problems.

"There is no question that our increasingly industrialized and concentrated food production system needs a new regulatory focus," said Will Fantle, research director for the Cornucopia Institute, a Wisconsin-based organic food and agriculture watchdog. "No one disputes that our food safety system is broken."

In the last several years, contamination of bagged spinach, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, beef and peanuts have sickened thousands of Americans. Currently, a massive recall of food products containing pistachios is underway.

After years of industry-friendly regulations and deteriorating budgets for inspections, holes in the food safety net have prompted some in Congress to push for new laws and increased oversight.

But the legislative process has sparked a flurry of internet and e-mail activity, with some warning that agribusiness and biotechnology lobbyists are conspiring to pass legislation outlawing organic farming and home gardens. One of the bills pending in the U.S. House of Representa-



tives, the Food Safety Modernization Act (HR 875), sponsored by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), has been a lightning rod for criticism.

As a result of the blowback, Rep. DeLauro is scrambling to assure organic advocates that they are not the target of her bill: "The purpose of this bill is to improve the safety of

Concerns are also being raised cautioning legislators not to trample organic farmers, backyard gardeners, and consumers of fresh local foods in the rush to fix the nation's food safety problems.

food products derived from large industrial processing facilities by increasing the inspection frequency and safety standards at these plants."

Attempting to quell concerns in the blogosphere, which has gone viral, Rep. DeLauro also stated, "Organic farmers have a strong record in providing safe, high quality foods to American families and I will continue to work toward making sure that organic farming continues to thrive."

Hearings have already begun on food safety legislation in the House. Of the multiple bills being considered, the FDA Globalization Act

(HR 759), sponsored by the House's most senior member, Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), appears most likely to be voted on, with elements of the other bills, including Rep. DeLauro's, possibly incorporated.

"We have closely examined the various legislative proposals and have been talking with our contacts in Congress," said Fantle. "We don't believe that harming organic and local producers is the intent of these bills, but we must engage consumers and local food producers in this process to clearly express our concerns that a 'one-size fits all' regulatory focus could very well seriously damage some of America's best growers of wholesome, fresh food."

While some of the nation's food safety issues have farm origins—largely due to the inability of huge industrialized conventional livestock facilities to properly manage their mountains of manure, contaminated with lethal pathogens—many E. coli and salmonella outbreaks originate at processing facilities. This year's outbreak of salmonella in peanut products has been traced to unsanitary conditions at a massive processing plant. Now, the Food and Drug Administration has issued a warning about contaminated pistachios, which appear to have also been tainted during the processing or storage of the nuts or finished processed food products.

"We don't want organic family farmers to be made scapegoats and lose their markets because of objectionable food treatment practices or recalls put in place due to sloppy practices at giant food processing facilities," said Dr. Jesse Schwartz, the President of Living Tree Community Foods, a manufacturer of organic nut butters. "The health and

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