



All are welcome!

Open seven days a week from 7:30am - 8pm

BELFAST CO-OP NEWS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2012

Co-operatives Build a Better World

by Annie Cheatham, Executive Director of New England Farmers Union and Erbin Crowell, Executive Director of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association

Happy New Year! Another year has passed with ups and downs for farmers and Northeast agriculture. Demand for regionally produced food continues to grow; consumers are energized about food policy issues; young and beginning farmers are coming to New England to learn how to be successful at this most demanding profession; and in spite of a global and regional recession, the New England Farmers Union (NEFU) is stronger. We have more members (over 1400, 95% of whom are farmers and fishermen); more programs (carbon crediting, farm bill policy, apple slices for institutional buyers); more Board members (all 6 New England states are represented); and strong partnerships with New England members of Congress and the National Farmers Union in Washington, DC.

We at New England Farmers Union have a lot to be thankful for, and are especially thankful for all the partnerships we have developed over this past year. Outstanding among the many is our relationships with the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) and food co-ops around New England. Farmers and their customers are hungry for alternatives to corporate greed and stock

market speculation. As we look at challenges such as climate change, unemployment and growing disparities of wealth and ownership, people are looking for opportunities to grow resilient regional food systems and economies. In this context, co-operatives are viable enterprise models that do business by putting people and community first.

In October 2011, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly officially designated 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives with the slogan, "Co-operative Enterprises Build a Better World."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said simply, "Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility."

This is not news in New England. Agricultural co-ops sustain New England's family farms and rural communities.

Businesses such as the Pioneer Valley Growers Association in Western Massachusetts and Deep Root Organic Co-op in Vermont enable produce farmers to access major regional markets while building shared infrastructure and distribution. Dairy co-ops such as Cabot Creamery Co-op, Our Family Farms, Rhody Fresh and Organic Valley help preserve both agricultural livelihoods and landscapes while helping family farmers compete with corporations many times their size.

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2012 International Year of Co-operatives

Deli kitchen to temporarily close Jan. 8 - 9

From 1:00 on Sunday, Jan. 8 through the morning of Monday, Jan. 9 the Deli kitchen will be closed for replacement of our exhaust hood. **We will fully stock our grab 'n go case and soups and hot entrees will be available.** We apologize for any inconvenience.

Monthly wine tastings will resume in April

Thank you to all who participated and supported our monthly wine tastings. We would like to remind you that we will not be hosting any tastings over the winter months but look forward to seeing you again in April.

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Belfast Co-op

123 High St.
Belfast, ME 04915
(207) 338-2532
Fax: (207) 338-5234
www.belfast.coop
info@belfast.coop

Hours

7:30 am - 8 pm

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

General Management Team

Chris Grigsby
Joe Jordan
Mylisa Vowles

Board of Directors

Bindy Pendleton, president
Debbi Lasky, vice president
Jerry Savitz, treasurer
Phil Prince, secretary & staff rep.
Jeanne Gail, co-scribe
Paul Sheridan, co-scribe
Zafra Whitcomb, staff rep.
Russ Barber
Wayne Kraeger
Paul Nyren
Kip Penney

Newsletter

Kate Harris
kate@belfast.coop

Issues available online at:
belfast.coop

Members:
3,042

Last two months' local
food sales: **\$ 126,855**



Printed on 100% post-consumer
recycled paper by a unionized
worker-owned collective shop.

JANUARY EVENTS**January Featured Artist - Elsie Gawler**

"From the Farm," oil on canvas paintings by Monroe artist Elsie Gawler, inspired by her life as a farmer. On display in the Café during January. Jan. 6 opening.

Senior Discount Day - every Tuesday Belfast Co-op customers 62 years young and up receive a discount if they inform the cashier of their eligibility. Member-owners receive a 10% discount; non-members: 5%.

Art Opening with music by (some of) The Gawlers! - Jan. 6

Fri. 6:30-8:00 pm, Belfast Co-op Café - art opening with free refreshments. Elsie and her parents, John and Ellen Gawler, will bring their instruments!

Common Ground Radio - Jan. 6, 10:00 - 11:00 am (1st Fri/month)

Live & call-in radio program on WERU with MOFGA 89.9 FM and weru.org .

Living Gluten-Free - Jan. 11 - Details on pg. 7

Wed. 6:30 pm, Belfast Free Library - free presentation with Dr. Kerri Vacher.

3rd Thursday Donation Day - Jan. 19

1% of sales donated to Waldo County Family to Family Fund; helpvivialian.org .

By Land & By Sea: Leveraging Co-ops for Business Success - Jan. 19

Thurs. 9:00 am - 5:30 pm, Common Ground Education Center, Unity - one-day conference for Maine farmers & fishermen on the co-operative model of doing business. Online at: www.bylandandbysea.eventbrite.com .

Cheryl Wixson's Kitchen In-store Cooking demo & sampling - Jan. 24

Tues. 11 am - 2 pm - Cheryl Wixson will give a cooking demo & provide sampling opportunities for her new product line. Online at: cherylwixsonskitchen.com .

Gluten-Free Cooking Demo - Jan. 24 - Details on pg. 7

Tues. 6 - 8 pm, Waterfall Arts - pre-registration required. \$10 materials fee.

FEBRUARY EVENTS**Feb Featured Artist - Maine Agriculture: Views From the Past**

Exhibit of historic Maine agricultural photographs from Eastern Illustrating & Publishing Co., courtesy of Penobscot Marine Museum's vast archives.

Senior Discount Day - every Tuesday Belfast Co-op customers 62 years young and up receive a discount if they inform the cashier of their eligibility. Member-owners receive a 10% discount; non-members: 5%.

Common Ground Radio - Feb. 3, 10:00 - 11:00 am (1st Fri/month)

Live & call-in radio program on WERU with MOFGA 89.9 FM and weru.org .

Digging Deeper into the Eastern Illustrating & Publishing Co. Collection with Kevin Johnson, Penobscot Marine Museum - Feb. 9

Thurs. 6:30 pm, Belfast Free Library - free talk by photo archivist Kevin Johnson will explore the varied places and subjects captured by the cameras of the Eastern Illustrating photographers. For more info, visit: penobscotmarinemuseum.org .

3rd Thursday Donation Day - Feb. 16

1% of sales go to Cooperative Maine; online at: www.cooperativemaine.org .

Organic Home Orchard - Feb. 21 - Details on pg. 5

Tues. 6 pm, Belfast Free Library - free workshop with C.J. Walke of MOFGA.

Meet Your Farmers & Fishermen: A Celebration of Community**Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Fisheries (CSF) - Feb. 26 - See pg. 3**

Sun. 1 - 3 pm, UU Church of Belfast, 37 Miller St. - Free & open to the public. Co-sponsored by UU Belfast's Green Sanctuary Committee & the Belfast Co-op. Held in conjunction with annual CSA-CSF fairs MOFGA hosts around Maine.

For more info about Co-op events, contact: kate@belfast.coop or 338-2532.

The Co-op needs your voice on the Board

by Paul Sheridan

Essential to the Co-op's existence are member-owners who choose to serve on the Board of Directors, which sets the goals for the Co-op and guides the management team in carrying out the running of the store. If you want to be more involved and make a difference in your community, here's your chance! Or, if you know of any other member-owners who might be interested, please encourage them to apply.

Candidates need to have been a co-op member for at least six months prior to January 2, 2012. The deadline to declare candidacy is February 12. The Nomination Form, which can be picked up at the Co-op, lists the benefits and responsibilities of being a Board member. This same information will be available on the Co-op website (www.belfast.coop). You can also talk to any director or a member of the Election and Nominations Committee—their contact info is below.

We encourage anyone who is interested in joining to attend a board meeting. Dates are posted on the website and in this newsletter, meetings are typically the 4th Thursday of each month from 6:30 - 8:30 pm at Waterfall Arts on 256 High St., Belfast. At 6:00 pm, there is a social time with refreshments when you can meet with board members before the meeting. Reserve Sunday, March 25 for the Annual Meeting.

For more information, contact Bindy Pendleton at upstairsmac@myfairpoint or 338-4256, Phil Prince at pap.1@myfairpoint.net or 338-1681; Paul Sheridan at sheridanpa@earthlink.net or 338-0350; or leave a note for the Nominations Committee at the Co-op, with your name, phone number and/or e-mail address.

— Meet Your Farmers and Fishermen —

A Celebration of Community Supported Agriculture & Fisheries

Sunday, February 26 from 1:00 - 3:00 pm

UU Church of Belfast, 37 Miller St. (behind the Belfast Free Library)

Free and open to all.

Meet local farmers and fishermen to celebrate and learn about the many ways to enjoy local foods while supporting these enterprises in a meaningful way.

Farms with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs ask you to commit to purchasing a share of the coming harvest before the season begins. The benefit? You get to provide the farm with much-needed capital in the off-season while getting your locally grown food direct from the farm at a fair price.

Meet Your Farmers and Fishermen is taking place in over a dozen locations across Maine. Each location is sure to have plenty of local flavor, including local foods tastings and sales of food and other products from local farms. In addition to farms with CSA shares, local fishermen with Community Supported Fisheries (CSF) shares will also be present in some locations.

A statewide list of event locations is available online at www.s.coop/csafair. The Belfast event is co-sponsored by the Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (MOFGA), the Belfast Co-op and the Green Sanctuary Committee of the UU Church of Belfast. For more information about the Belfast event, please contact Belfast Co-op's Education Coordinator Kate Harris, kate@belfast.coop, 207-338-2532.

Belfast Banks offer CSA Savings Accounts

The City of Belfast, seeking to increase the number of households able to annually purchase a share of fresh produce from local growers, have contacted several local banks about setting up "CSA Savings Accounts." The following Belfast branches have all agreed to offer fee-free savings accounts with bank checks made out to the CSA farm of your choice: Bangor Savings Bank, Camden National Bank, Damariscotta Bank and Trust and Key Bank. For more information, visit www.cityofbelfast.org/CSA online or contact any of the participating banks.

Board of Director Meetings

Thursday, **January 26**

Thursday, **February 23**

6:00 pm social time

6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.

All Are Welcome!

Board Committees

Member-owner participation is essential. Contact the person listed for additional information.

Board Development

Oversees board procedures, policies, orientation and training. Meets 1st Tue., 3:30 pm.
Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256

Building and Grounds

Advises on the store's physical plant and environment. Ad hoc.
Chair position open

Elections and Nominations

Oversees board member recruitment and election process. Ad hoc.
Paul Sheridan, 322-3961

Finance

Serves as financial advisor to management and oversees Co-op finances. 3rd Tue., 3 pm.
Jerry Savitz, 338-1492

Long-Range Planning

Guides long-range planning process. 2nd Fri. at 11:30 am.
Chris Grigsby, 338-2532

Management Oversight

Meets regularly with the general management team and evaluates team members.
Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256

Purchasing Policy

Reviews our purchasing policy and process. Ad hoc.
Paul Sheridan, 322-3961

Membership

Advises on membership policies and matters, including education. 1st Tue. at 11:30 am.
Mylisa Vowles, 338-2532

Patronage Dividend for Fiscal Year 2011

by the General Management Team

As we put the finishing touches on Fiscal Year 2011, which ran from Oct. 1, 2010 through Sept. 30, 2011, we would like to highlight some of the ways we spent our earnings. But first, a definition is in order: a patronage dividend is the distribution of the net income attributed to the purchases by members in a given fiscal year. This distribution happens on net profits only. At the Co-op, dividends are returned to the membership as a gift card, which can be exchanged for a cash payment, used to purchase product, or be given back to the store for equity assistance and capital improvements.

For Fiscal Year 2011 the Co-op experienced a net loss of roughly \$25,000 for the year, therefore a dividend will not be issued. In recent years the dividends have been: \$23,000 in 2008, \$45,392 in 2009, and \$21,920 in 2010.

The patronage dividend is only one of many ways that the Co-op gives back to its member-owners. The other ways are in the form of discounts. The total amount of discounts given in fiscal year 2011 was \$256,214.71. Of these discounts, \$217,433.51 were given to members. This equates to an average of \$80 per member. In addition, over the past year we invested heavily in equipment and facility maintenance. These upgrades were paid without requiring financing. Many of these fixes are one-time costs, as is the associated labor. Below is a list of improvements made during Fiscal Year 2011 that total \$78,205 of which \$51,687 was capitalized. The capitalized portion will be added to our expenses over the next few years.

- Parking Lot - \$26,686 Plus additional labor costs for researching, obtaining quotes, and committee planning.
- Walk-in Freezer - \$25,001 Plus additional labor costs to reorganize and clean the basement to make space.
- Upright Meat Freezer - \$4,987 Plus minor additional costs for removal of the old freezer.
- Propane Heater for Receiving Room - \$2,190
- Electrical upgrades - \$7,363 Includes emergency lighting on sales floor and other upgrades to bring the Co-op up to code.
- Plumbing upgrades - \$1,082 Includes moving grease trap, drain for bulk walk-in cooler, and other up-to-code improvements.
- Deli Equipment - \$3,215 Includes immersible blender, smallwares, and small equipment purchases.
- Computer Equipment - \$4,980 Upgraded scanner scales to comply with new coupon structure as well as new monitors and other hardware.
- Customer Bathroom upgrades - \$915 Floor tiling, new toilet, and paint plus labor.
- Office Equipment - \$809 Computer upgrades and additional terminals.
- Cedar Picnic Tables and chair - \$1075 Outside seating.

Produce Row

by Chris Grigsby, Produce Buyer

Happy New Year from the Produce Department! We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for making 2011 a tremendous year for our department, particularly with local purchases. We were able to make great gains in what we purchased from local farmers in this region. The commitment of our customers to support this movement has been staggering.



Producer meetings have begun and planning is well underway for the 2012 season. We have particularly been focused on attaining as much product in the "shoulder seasons" as possible. Our producers have responded positively and are focused on providing salad greens, spinach, and radishes among other things potentially as early as February. On the flip side, we were able to provide local salad greens and spinach well into December.

As our product mix moves from locations near to those further away, we are well stocked with storage crops. You can find potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, carrots, cabbage, celeriac, apples, and beets, as well as chard and mesclun from the Troy Howard Middle School Garden Project. We will once again be offering garden seeds from Johnny's, High Mowing, and Fedco starting in early February and seed potatoes and seedlings beginning in April.

West Coast Report: citrus is in full swing with pricing and availability strong. Most of the winter varieties should make their way to us by January with cara cara navels, blood oranges, tangelos, clementines, and minneolas joining the offerings. Avocados have stabilized and the pricing is back in line from the summer highs. With weather hampering production on greens and lettuces, we are seeing some quality issues but the price remains consistent.

That's all for now, thanks for shopping locally!

OUR CO-OP IS GUIDED AND INSPIRED BY THESE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES:

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives
7. Concern for Community

Cooperatives *continued from front cover*

Farmers also use co-ops to obtain supplies and inputs. Examples include the Greenfield Farmers Co-operative Exchange in Massachusetts (founded in 1918), and Maine Organic Milling, a farmer-owned feed mill in Auburn, ME. And of course we shouldn't forget the Farm Credit system, a network of farmer-owned financial co-ops that provide lending services to their members.

Co-ops also play a key role at the other end of our food system. The Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is a co-operative of more than 20 community-owned grocery stores in Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut, with a combined membership of 90,000 people. Together, NFCA's co-ops have annual revenue of \$200 million and employ over 1,400 people. And food co-ops buy a lot of regionally grown and processed food from New England farmers and fishermen. An independent study found that NFCA member co-ops purchased more than \$30 million in local products in 2007 and that number continues to grow.

Food co-ops do many things of benefit to our economy:

- represent genuine community ownership and control
- focus on meeting member needs before accumulating profit
- develop local skills and resources
- pool limited financial resources to create successful community enterprises (most food co-ops in our region are based on member shares of \$200 or less)
- have a low business failure rate and tend to be long-lived
- are difficult to move or buy-out, rooting business in the community
- separate community wealth from speculative markets
- create regional efficiencies by pooling purchasing power.

As a result of these factors, farm and food co-ops contribute to a more stable food system. The UN's designation of 2012 as the Year of Co-operatives represents a growing recognition that co-operative enterprises—including food co-ops, farmer co-ops, credit unions and worker co-ops—have been remarkably resilient in the current economy, preserving livelihoods, wealth and community infrastructure at a time of great instability.

We have begun to spread the word about this UN initiative. In May, both NEFU and NFCA approved resolutions dedicating themselves to "efforts to raise the profile of co-operative enterprise, to demonstrate the benefits of co-ops in building local ownership and wealth, and to apply the co-operative model to new challenges and opportunities in our communities." Both resolutions noted, "a majority of our country's two million farmers are members of about 3,000 agricultural co-ops, helping them to sustain their farms, livelihoods and communities."

So on this January 2012, let us resolve to support New England's vibrant co-operative community. Let's celebrate and educate about our co-operative economy and make the benefits of co-operation available to people who want a different way of doing business. Let's build on the extraordinary efforts of generations of co-operators as we address new challenges and opportunities to building a thriving New England economy and food system. Let's demonstrate how co-ops can build a better world.

For more information, visit www.NFCA.coop and www.NewEnglandFarmersUnion.org.

Organic Food Production workshops

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) in cooperation with the Belfast Co-op and Belfast Free Library will hold a three-part series of free workshops on organic food production. The series, scheduled monthly beginning in February,



will focus on three topics: organic home orcharding, season extension and growing your own organic garden. The series will be taught by MOFGA's Organic Orchardist, C.J. Walke, and all of the workshops will be held in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library starting at 6 pm.

Tue., February 21 - Organic Home Orchard

Learn the basics of growing tree fruit using certified organic methods and materials. The presentation will include soil building and fertility, pest and disease management, pruning and tree care. Plenty of time will be made available for answering questions.

Tue., March 20 - Season Extension

Learn techniques to help extend the growing season in your gardens to increase vegetable production for home use. The presentation will include ways to get an early start on the season, as well as extending the fall harvest to maximize garden yields.

Tue., April 10 - Grow Your Own Organic Garden

Are you concerned about the rising cost of food? Unsure what the term "certified organic" means? Interested in learning how to grow your own vegetables in a sustainable manner? Join us for this evening long workshop on how to grow your own organic garden. We'll talk about the basics of soil science and how to enrich your soil to produce healthy, high-yielding plants. We will also cover the basics of making and using compost, the principles of crop rotation and how to incorporate green manures and manage nutrients in the garden. Other topics will include how to tell the difference between cultivated plants and weeds, basic weed control strategies and common insect pests and methods of natural insect control.



Waldo CAP's Executive Director, Keith Small, and Board member Vyvienne Ritchie receive their 3rd Thursday Donation Day check from the Co-op's Human Resources Manager, Kimalee Szumilas.

The Game Loft Seeks Community Support

The Game Loft, Waldo County's community after-school program, provides 160 Waldo County youth with a supervised and constructive environment. They also serve about 20 youth in their Unity satellite program. The Game Loft serves one meal a day four days a week and two on Fridays. For many of these youth, it is the only full meal they get outside of school. The Game Loft recently had its annual funding cut by \$34,000 resulting in significant cuts to staff and programs.

If you are able to help, please contact them at 338-6447 or pestabrook@spurwink.org. For more info, visit their website at thegameloft.org.

The Game Loft's mission is: "To promote Positive Youth Development through non-electronic games and community involvement." The program was established in 1998 by Patricia and Ray Estabrook, owners of All About Games in downtown Belfast. In 1996 when All About Games opened on High Street there were tables for young people to play games as well as a sales area. Within days the store was mobbed by young people playing games at every table, on the floor, next to the sales displays, and spilling out into the hallway. As a business model it was a disaster because there was no room for sales. In 1998 they moved to Main Street and divided their time between the upstairs youth center and the downstairs retail store.



They have created a unique service model which uses the 8 keys of Positive Youth Development to help young people feel safe and secure, learn who they are, and give back to the

community. These same principles are used effectively by the Girls Scouts of America and 4-H. What makes their program different is their focus on non-electronic games and a daily hot, nutritious meal. The games and the food draw youth to the program. They come back for the friendship, safety, and respect they receive and the chance to be of service.

The Game Loft serves 160 young people between the ages of 6-18. Each day they have 25-45 youth playing games, eating nutritious food, and learning to become effective community members in the Belfast location and another 20 on Wednesdays in Unity. Young people come to the program by choice and mostly through word-of-mouth. The program serves mostly boys (about 75%) and mostly low income youth. They serve many students who have behavioral issues in school but who are charming, capable, and respectful at The Game Loft. They attribute that success to their well-trained staff and simple but effective rules. In addition to playing non-electronic games there is a community service component. Last year participants donated more than 1,000 hours of volunteer service to The Game Loft and to the community. Adult volunteers gave another 1,000+ hours to the program.

They measure their success by their alumni who repeatedly inform them that their most significant friendships were forged at The Game Loft. It was where they learned self-respect, kindness, and how to make group decisions. They felt included and emotionally supported by their peers and adults. Their opinions were respected and they were given important volunteer work to accomplish. Most of all they felt safe to be themselves and to express their opinions without ridicule or isolation. A recent survey conducted by Spurwink Services of their participants showed that Game Loft youth are far less likely to participate in risky behaviors including sexual activity and substance abuse than their peers.

Being a small, independent program is extremely difficult and in 2009 The Game Loft merged with Spurwink Services, Maine's largest social service provider. In November they learned that Spurwink lost \$2.5 million in the first quarter due to "a perfect storm" of funding problems. Many Spurwink programs were cut drastically including The Game Loft, which was cut by \$34,000.

The Game Loft has taken emergency measures to keep running. One full-time staff person was laid off and all part-time staff have had their hours reduced significantly. The Game Loft will be closed on Wednesdays beginning January 1 and their food program will not run on Thursdays. These cuts are devastating to everyone but especially difficult for the young people who depend on the dinner served at The Game Loft as their evening meal.

The Game Loft invites the community to visit the program. For more information or to arrange a visit, please call The Game Loft at 338-6447.

Meet a Member-Owner: Erica Buswell

by Roger Quehl

A painting of a wintry Maine seascape by Winslow Homer brought this member-owner to mid-coast Maine. After graduating from Holy Cross University with a degree in Religious Studies, Erica Buswell found herself in Portland, Oregon considering life as a Buddhist nun in California. Instead, she took a left turn at Salt Lake City and began a



cross-country journey visiting numerous friends and family—finally ending up in Maine.

Born and raised in Helena, Montana, Erica would have been the fifth generation had she stayed. Erica's sister, brother, and parents still live in and around Helena and she makes it back at least once a year to visit them. Erica however, enticed by Homer's painting, decided to look for employment on the coast of Maine. Interviewing at a museum in Liberty, she became more interested in the curator's suggestion to consider employment at the Belfast Co-op, especially since she had previous experience working at a natural foods store in Helena.

Erica herself picks up the story: "I thought I was hired to be a brunch cook: spent one day in the kitchen and was never invited back, so I worked instead as a deli cashier on the weekends (which wasn't all bad because it provided me with ample opportunity to flirt with the man who would eventually become my husband. Wouldn't have met him otherwise, I don't think). After a year, I had trained to be a floor manager, and within weeks of that promotion, an opening on the General Management (GM) team opened up and I was essentially nominated by the staff to be a representative on the new GM team. I will always be grateful to Fran and Tom Clemetson for setting an example of co-operative leadership which deeply influenced my own management style. I worked as a member of the GM team for about 3-1/2 intense years, then deciding to give myself a break, resigned from the team and went back to being a floor manager and cashier."

All together, Erica spent six years at the Belfast Co-op before moving on to the Maine Farmland Trust. There she works with farming landowners who want to ensure that their property remains a working farm. This work is very meaningful to her and provides an opportunity to develop working relationships with local food producers and their

families, often going back several generations.

In her free time Erica likes to cook, is involved in homesteading with her husband Scott Giroux, and likes to play badminton. People who have had a major influence in her life are Russell Libby of MOFGA, cookbook author Debra Madsen, Julia Childs and her husband Scott.

Erica does miss her daily interactions with the community while working at the Co-op. One particularly memorable experience occurred one night during a power failure. Erica was in the basement helping customers with brewing supplies. Torn between remaining with the customers or going in search of a light, like in the painting and cross country journey, Erica went in search of a light.

"Living Gluten-Free" presentation

On **Wednesday, January 11** at 6:30 pm at the Belfast Free Library, join the Belfast Co-op for a free talk entitled "Living Gluten-Free: Meeting the Challenges, Making it Work" with Dr. Kerri Vacher, ND.

Dr. Vacher maintains a gluten-free diet and understands the issues of gluten-intolerance and Celiac disease personally as well as professionally. She will share the complexities of gluten-intolerance, diagnosis and treatment as well as the complications of food buying, food preparation and life-style changes necessitated by this condition.

Dr. Vacher practices Naturopathic medicine at Belfast Natural Medicine, located at 39 Main Street in Belfast. To learn more about Dr. Vacher, please visit her website at: www.belfastnaturalmedicine.com.

This free event is sponsored by the Belfast Co-op. For more information, contact Education Coordinator Kate Harris at kate@belfast.coop or (207) 338-2532.



Gluten-Free Cooking demo

On **Tuesday, January 24** from 6-8pm at Waterfall Arts, join the Belfast Co-op for a gluten-free cooking demonstration with natural foods chef Pam McKeen. McKeen, who has a diploma from the Chef Training Program at the Natural Gourmet Institute for Health and Culinary Arts in New York City, will demonstrate how to make great gluten-free bread, gluten-free crackers, and portobello mushroom tapenade with samples for tasting.

Pre-registration is required; there is a \$10 materials fee and a twelve participant limit. Pre-register at any register in the Co-op or call (207) 338-2532 to pre-register with a credit/debit card. Waterfall Arts is located at 256 High Street in Belfast, less than 1/2 mile north of the Belfast Co-op on High Street. For more information about this class, contact Education Coordinator Kate Harris at kate@belfast.coop or (207) 338-2532.

Cheryl Wixson's Kitchen

by Cheryl Wixson, MOFGA Organic Marketing Consultant

Almost four years ago, our family decided it was time for a life-path change. My husband sold the family business, and we moved to Stonington, on the island of Deer Isle. We took the Local Food Challenge literally as a life-long mission and decided to start living off the land. We dig clams, hunt ducks and deer, root cellar our vegetables, raise rabbits, grow certified organic apples and make cider, cut wood, and preserve all our winter supply of food...over 400 jars.

On Nov. 3, 2011, my husband and I began a specialty food company. Identified by the red and black buffalo-checked plaid of early Maine lumberjacks, our products include pasta and pizza sauces, pickled vegetables, fruit and apple sauces, jams and jellies, dressings, marinades, and condiments like ketchups, relishes and salsas.

In preparation for producing these pantry-type items, this past harvest season we purchased over 12,000 pounds of organic heirloom tomatoes, 3,000 pounds of organic red and green bell peppers, organic blueberries, strawberries, pears, peaches and cranberries, organic cucumbers and zucchini, organic garlic, scapes, leeks, basil, parsley and onions, organic eggplant, rhubarb and hot peppers, organic yellow and green beans, cauliflower, and over 6,800 pounds of six varieties of organic apples from more than 20 Maine farms.

A primary goal of our company is to provide a market for organic Maine crops, particularly the grade B and excess produce that farms may otherwise feed to livestock or compost. And we are interested in farms that wish to scale up their operations. A large part of my job as the Organic Marketing Consultant for the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), is to connect farmers and their products to markets. One of my first projects was the development of the "Maine Local Twenty," 20 foods that Maine can produce for its residents to enjoy all year. My research looked at Maine's capacity to produce these foods, market penetration, and barriers to processing, storage, distribution and marketing these foods. This work is part of a larger, strategic conversation about creating a more sustainable and secure regional food system.

The good news is that Maine does have the land-base and capacity to provide its population of 1.3 million with a balanced, nutritional diet. Indeed, Maine farms are currently producing enough food, in terms of calories, to feed our population. And market analysis indicates that Maine consumers want more Maine food. The challenge lies in getting the food to the consumer. Direct marketing to consumers, through sales at farmers' markets and farm stands, remains the primary means of selling local, seasonal, organic foods. This is a limited and seasonal market. Local

food co-ops and health food stores also provide markets for local foods. However, during the winter months there are few options for anyone wanting to eat locally grown, organic Maine foods.

My research on MOFGA's Maine Local Twenty helped identify the products that would allow consumers to enjoy Maine foods year round. We decided to use Community Supported Agriculture as part of our business model and sell "kitchen shares."

In our commercial kitchen (currently located in Bangor, plans may include locating a facility in Belfast) we hand-craft batches of pantry products, basically doing the traditional work of "putting things up." Purchase a share for \$300, and then every month for six months you will receive your "share" of the harvest: eight jars of product plus an occasional surprise from the chef, delivered to our retail partners like the Belfast Co-op.



It was our intention to start small, and use shareholder feedback to further develop and refine products for a larger market, and to develop the data needed to create a business plan that will allow us to scale up and build a factory.

We recognize that a hallmark of a regionally focused food system is that economic returns stay within the region. This requires collaboration between communities, farmers, educators, businesses, entrepreneurs, public policy makers, and especially you, the consumer. Can we build build a vibrant Maine food system? The answer is yes! One bite at a time.

The Co-op carries Cheryl's pasta & pizza sauces, ketchup, relish and marinade in Aisle 3. To learn more about her products, visit: cherylwixsonskitchen.com.

Cooking demo with Cheryl's products

Tuesday, Jan. 24, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm at the Co-op



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