

Belfast Co-op News & Commentary

A natural food and products store serving Midcoast Maine since 1976

MAY/JUNE 2010

Scan-able dividend and

Patronage dividends to be distributed soon

Patronage dividends will soon be making their way into your pockets. We are distributing them later in the year than has been our custom, but with good reason.

In the past, the dividends were sent out in February. But this was problematic for the Co-op's cash flow, as deep winter is our store's slowest time of the year.

So, we've moved the time-frame for getting dividends out to members to late spring. This lessens the danger of us depleting our cash balance as members use their dividends.

This year the dividends will again equal 2 percent of members' annual purchases—the maximum our membership program allows.

Another reason for the change is that we are developing a scan-able dividend card that is a better fit with our point-of-sale system—

that is, our registers.

The new cards, which are replacing paper notices, will be easier to quickly redeem at the register. They will also make it easier to keep track of dividend use and to replace lost dividends.

As a side benefit, this will also allow us to replace our gift certificates with more-convenient gift cards. We are planning to use cards printed in-house using tree-free card stock made of 75 percent post-consumer recycled paper and 25 percent hemp.

The new dividend and gift card system should be up and running by mid-May. By federal law, we are required to distribute any patronage dividends by June 15.

We hope you like the new cards and find them convenient. Please speak to a member of our general management team if you have any



Vendor Spotlight: *Coast of Maine grows gardens*

By Coast of Maine Organic Products

There's a long composting tradition in Maine and Maritime Canada, especially among salmon, wild blueberry and shellfish processors. In the 1980s the State formed the Maine Compost Team to help these processors set up composting programs.

Coast of Maine Organic Products in Portland was founded in 1996 as a result of this effort. The Co-op carries a full line of our quality organic bagged soils, composts, mulch and fertilizers. It's a rite of spring to see our bags with their bright lettering stacked in the parking lot.

We are now in the midst of a significant expansion at our salmon composting facility in Washington County. The site is convenient to the region's salmon aquaculture farms, wild blueberry barrens and vast softwood forest, which yield the ingredients needed for our composts.

Coast of Maine also works closely with other composters in Maine and the Maritimes. We've added kelp, lobster, hen manure, aspen bark and sphagnum peat to our ingredients.

Our products recently garnered na-

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Co-op recipes online at Facebook, Village Soup

Wondering how to prepare meals with local and seasonal ingredients? Turn to a friend—your Co-op—for help. Become a friend of the Co-op on Facebook and search our new recipe database. Just search for "Belfast Co-op" at www.facebook.com. Your additions

are encouraged: let our many friends know what you're cooking for dinner!

You can also catch our local foods recipe of the week online at the Republican Journal, <http://waldo.villagesoup.com>. Click on "Business," then "bizBriefs," then "Dining."



Belfast Co-op Store

123 High St.

Belfast, ME 04915

Phone: 207-338-2532

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Web site: www.belfast.coop

E-mail: info@belfastcoop.com

Hours:

7:30 a.m.–8 p.m. daily
(Check for winter hours in season)

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

Allen Ginsberg, treasurer

Paul Sheridan, scribe

Phil Prince, staff representative

Zafra Whitcomb, staff representative

Russ Barber

Jeanne Gail

Wayne Kraeger

Kip Penney

Jerry Savitz

Jerome Weiner

Newsletter

Erica Buswell, editor

Mary Ruoff, copy editor and

graphic designer

Sales for a cause

Every third Thursday of the month the Co-op donates 1 percent of that day's sales to a community organization. See "Events," page 2, for upcoming beneficiaries. The program's April launch on Earth Day raised money for Troy Howard Middle School Garden Project.

Co-op Events: May–June

Cafe Gallery Art Shows **May:** "Portal," paintings by local artist Katenia Keller. This recently painted series was inspired by her work on her recently published Pythias Sacred Geometry Tarot, Major Arcana cards. The cards were created in her home/studio, a former Knights of Pythias Hall. The creative process spanned 18 months and included dreams, meditation, intense study and self-reflection. Her fascination with the ratios and proportions of natural forms and the geometrical and mathematical patterns of life led her to express facets of the human psyche through geometric symbolism. The show's opening is Fri. May 7; see wine tasting/art opening information below. **June:** "Violin Compositions," woodcut prints by local artist Martha Briana. Artist Statement: "The process I use to make the woodcuts is a reductive method, meaning I carve the wood multiple times to achieve different colors, Thus I am left with a limited edition, because the block has been progressively altered. I print them all by hand, without a press, and usually make small editions of eight, a few more, if I'm not bored with my image yet." The show's opening is Fri. June 4; see wine tasting/art opening information below.

Belfast Co-op Board of Directors Meetings 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Thurs. May 27 and Thurs. June 24, Waterfall Arts Center, 256 High St.

Wine & Food Tastings and Art Openings 7–9 p.m. Fri. May 7 and Fri. June 4 in the Co-op Café. The events are also openings for café art shows (see above). 10% off featured wines. You must be 21 or over to attend. *Note:* Tastings will be held on the first Friday of the month through December.

Good Life Fest 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Sat. May 8, Belfast Armory, U.S. 1. Sponsored by the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, which the Co-op belongs to. Learn more about "The Good Life," including local foods, complementary health care and the green home. Samples, workshops and product sales. \$5 (children 12 and under free).

Growing Local Film Series 6:30–8:30 p.m. on three successive Tuesdays in May at the Belfast Free Library, 106 High St. Co-sponsored by the Co-op, the library and Maine Farmland Trust. May 11: sneak preview of "Meet Your Farmer" TV series. May 18: "DIRT." May 25: "Transition 101." Free.

Maine Farmland Trust Fund-Raiser One percent of Co-op sales on Thurs. May 20 will be donated to Maine Farmland Trust.

Solar Energy Talk 6–7:30 p.m. Thurs. May 27, Co-op Café. Danny Piper of Sundog Solar Store in Searsport will talk on solar energy, highlighting the availability of state and federal incentives to use solar energy and its growing affordability.

Quarterly SuperSale Day Tues. June 1. Members-only get 10 percent off all purchases except wine, beer, cigarettes and periodicals.

Hands-On Herb Class 6–7:30 p.m. Thurs. June 17, Co-op Café.

Gretchen Heilman Piper of Montville, a clinical herbalist and certified holistic health counselor, will lead this class (see article page 6).

Herb Walk 6:30–8 p.m. Wed. June 23. Co-op president and local herbalist and nurse practitioner Bindy Pendleton will talk about herbs, including the medicinal variety, while leading a walk through the herb garden at her East Belfast home. Pre-register by contacting Fran at the Co-op after June 1 (see contact info below).

Tanglewood 4-H Camps & Learning Center Fund-Raiser One percent of Co-op sales on Thurs. June 20 will be donated to Tanglewood 4-H Camps & Learning Center in Lincolnville.

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

Board Report: The past year in review

By Bindy Pendleton, Board President

Editor's note: This article recaps remarks presented on behalf of Bindy Pendleton, board president, at our annual meeting in March.

Overall it has been a good year for the Co-op even though we were challenged by economic and management uncertainty. For our fiscal year ending September 2009, net sales were down slightly from the previous year. Yet the cost of sales decreased even more, giving us a net profit from operations.

Patronage dividend is 2 percent

We can thank management, including our department managers, for finding ways to cut costs while still delivering the same quality products and services. We were happy to again give members the maximum patronage dividend: equal to 2 percent of their annual purchases.

The other big challenge we faced this past year was a change in general management. After months of interviews and meetings that included input from staff, there was a

“passing of the torch.” We selected an entirely new general management team made up of three people, all existing Co-op staff: Mylisa Vowles, Joe Jordan and Chris Grigsby.

Deli turns a corner

Other highlights from the year: the deli has stabilized its finances and reduced staff turnover; our basement was cleaned and organized, providing us with more storage space; and overall employee turnover continued

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to decrease, resulting in lower labor costs and improved customer service. This is definitely a sign that working conditions at the Co-op have improved.

Experienced managers

Our department managers, meanwhile, have continued to gain expertise and experience in running their departments. Customer service continues to be a priority. We presently have more than 3,000 active members. Last year sales of local products and goods exceeded \$500,000.

“Thank you” former GMs

As we look back on the past fiscal year, we want to extend thanks to our present management team as well as its predecessor, made up of Ronald “Goldy” Goldstein, Erica Buswell and Sanford “Pepper” Bush. They helped provide us with a foundation for our current growth.

Confident that the Co-op is in a stable position, the board is looking at our long-term directions and goals. We are hoping for member feedback to help guide our future course. To keep informed, check out our web site, www.belfast.coop, and look for future reports in the newsletter.

I want to close by thanking you for your membership and support—and for shopping at our store.

Annual meeting, election update

By Paul Sheridan, Board Scribe

The Belfast Co-op held its annual membership meeting on Sunday, March 21 at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church on Court Street. This was a new location for us, and a very comfortable one. About 30 members (including 4 staffers) attended in addition to our three general managers and nine members of our Board of Directors.

Reports presented

Reports were presented from board committees, the management team and our president, Bindy Pendleton (*see article above*). There was a question-and-answer period about the contents

of the reports. Copies are available at our web site, www.belfast.coop.

We also heard from the two candidates who were running for re-election, Debbi Lasky and Kip Penney. Congratulations to both of these long-time board members, who retained their seats. Voting began at the annual meeting and continued for four weeks (until a quorum of 10 percent of the membership was reached).

Uncontested election

The election was uncontested as no new candidates came forward during the nomination period. Since one board member retired, the board actually shrank by one.

This is of concern as there is always more than enough work to be done by our 12 current members. Our bylaws allow up to 15 members on the board, plus two more from the staff, for a total of 17.

Member sign-up

Serving on a board committee (*contact numbers are in every newsletter; see page 5*) is one way to become familiar with the board's work and learn what's expected. At the meeting, 11 members signed up to get involved with committee work. Maybe some of the eleven will be inspired to run for the board in the future.

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PRODUCE ROW . . . *BY CHRIS GRIGSBY, PRODUCE PURCHASING MANAGER*

The unusually early spring means the Co-op is stocking up fast on local produce. We are already seeing hoop house and greenhouse production of early greens, including spinach, mesclun and Asian greens. Pea shoots, tomatoes, radishes and



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

rhubarb and asparagus should be available soon.

May 1 should see the beginning of the seedlings season. Both Roots-n-

Shoots farm in Montville and Village Farm in Freedom are providing the Co-op with high quality organic starts. Seeds from High Mowing in Vermont, Fedco Seeds in Waterville and Johnny's Selected Seeds in Winslow are flying out the door. Seed potatoes from The Maine Potato Lady are here and of superior quality. We have a full line of soil amendments and bagged composts for sale as well (*see Coast of Maine article on page 1*)

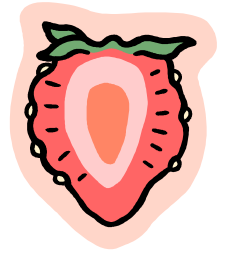
West Coast Report:

After a fairly tumultuous transition to produce from the desert growing regions of California, the market seems to be leveling out. Greens are still high priced but the quality is

also high, and lettuces remain fair in quality and price.

Strawberries continue to be a good value as the cold Florida weather delayed their normal ripening period. What this means for the customer is that the California and Florida crops have both come to market at the same time, bringing supply up and price way down.

Look for stone fruits to take center stage soon, with peaches, plums, nectarines and cherries becoming available sometime in May.



Financial update: *FY 2009 good overall*

By Joe Jordan, General Management Team Member

The following is a summary of the Co-op's past fiscal year (FY) and the first half of its current one.

Overall, FY 2009 (ended Sept. 30) was a good year for the Co-op. Assets rose to \$1,300,435, up from \$1,261,859 in FY 2008. Our total liabilities dropped from \$1,020,205 to \$983,061. Member equity increased to \$317,374, up from \$241,654 the previous year.

Net sales drop, just a bit

Our operations did well, too. Inventory was stable and even showed a slight increase: from \$260,296 in 2008 to \$262,879 in 2009. Our net sales were down 1.5 percent, dropping from \$5,233,725 to \$5,155,225. But considering the overall economic conditions, we feel sales performed admirably.

The cost of sales fell during the same time period, from \$3,463,349 in 2008 to \$3,316,132 in 2009. This decrease—\$147,217, a 4.25 percent drop—reflects well on our purchasing managers. They took advantage

of savings when available and passed those savings onto customers, offering lots of great deals.

The Co-op's net income after taxes rose to \$75,400 in 2009, up from \$53,894 in 2008. The Co-op will pay \$59,512 to the membership in patronage dividends for 2009 (*see article page 1*). We are planning to distribute them in May. New this year,

So far FY 2010 has been going well. For our first two quarters, revenue increased compared to the same period last year. The figure climbed to \$2,472,411.

members will receive scan-able dividend cards.

FY 2010 going well so far

So far FY 2010 has been going well. For our first two quarters, ended March 31, revenue increased compared to the same period the previous year. The figure climbed from \$2,413,748 to \$2,472,411, an increase of \$58,662. This 2.4 percent

jump was ahead of the 2 percent we had budgeted for.

On the other hand, cost of goods sold and expenses are up, too. This is partly the result of our many recent and ongoing projects, including new cafe chairs, a new deli cooler, a new security camera system, upgrades to credit card readers, computer software upgrades for our new dividend and gift card system, new adjustable shelving in the grocery department, the reconfiguration and cleaning of the basement, plus a few other small maintenance projects.

Annual fees pay off for Co-op

The larger projects were paid for with our annual membership fees, which added up to \$13,970. Some of the projects did not require any investment other than additional labor.

In finishing up I would like to thank our staff for all its hard work, the membership for its loyalty, the Belfast community for the opportunity to serve and meet its needs, and the board for its guidance.

We are all looking forward to busy and productive spring and summer

BELFAST CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMITTEES

Call the contact person listed below for more information and meeting times. Not all committees meet regularly.

Board Development and Election Committee

Oversees board orientation, training, handbook, meeting and election process. Debbi Lasky, 589-4546.

Building and Grounds Committee

Advises on the store's physical plant and environment. Wayne Kraeger, 567-3261.

Membership and Community Interaction Committee

Responds to communications, complaints and grievances that are directed to the board. Kip Penney, 722-3112.

Finance Committee Serves as financial advisor to management, oversees Co-op's finances. Allen Ginsburg, 338-1757.

Long-Range Planning Committee

Guides long-range planning process. Chris Grigsby, 338-2532.

Management Oversight Committee

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

Purchasing Policy Committee

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

Recycling Committee Reviews our recycling policy. Bindy Pendleton, 338-4256.

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cashew or tahini), ½ c honey or fruit spread, 1½ c powdered herbs (ashwaganda, astragalus, shatavri, eleuthero, reishi or triphala), 1 c trail mix (cranberries, raisins, dates, apricots, cocoa nibs or dark chocolate chips), 1 tsp cinnamon, ½ tsp nutmeg and ½ tsp cardamom. Mix to "cookie dough" consistency; divide into balls. Roll balls in 1 c topping (shredded coconut, sesame, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, walnuts or almonds). Chill. Freeze or keep in the fridge for a week. Eat 1 ball per day!

Clinical herbalist Gretchen Heilman Piper, MS (Master's of Science in Herbal Medicine from The Tai Sophia Institute for the Healing Arts), CHHC (Certified Holistic Health Counselor), is a Co-op member. She enjoys sharing the practical wisdom of healing with food, herbs and a healthy lifestyle and lives "mold free" in Morrill with her husband, hound dog, cat and new baby.

SuperSale Days: We have 4 again!

Mark your calendars now for every quarter of the year.

The Co-op is again offering member-only SuperSale Days four times a year. Members get 10 percent off all items except beer, wine, cigarettes and periodicals on these quarterly sale days.

SuperSale Days were launched when our membership program was given a major overhaul several years ago, increasing benefits to members. But as a cost-saving measure the sale days were later reduced to twice a year. We are happy to expand our member benefits by again offering them four times a year.

The next SuperSale Day is Tuesday, June 1. These annual sales will take place on the first day of March, June, September and December. So get your pens out, mark your calendar ahead, and save!

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Also at the meeting, the board reported on its recent retreat, which centered on long-range planning. This was also the focus of a discussion with members. We separated into three groups (according to individual interest)—building/distribution, marketing/networking, and board/members—then reported back to the meeting. The board will be using this member input as our long-range planning process moves forward.

One especially pertinent question came up from the audience: Does the fact that just 31 members were present—only about 1 percent of the membership—show apathy on the part of members, or does it simply say that things are running fine?

The meeting was followed by a delicious dinner provided by the Co-op Café, along with members' potluck desserts. Everyone pitched in afterwards for a cooperative cleanup.

A shopping win

Beginning in June the Co-op will have a monthly product contest. Each month a different department will be highlighted with a five-question scavenger hunt. Those who answer all the questions correctly will be eligible to win a prize from that department. Look for the scavenger hunt forms and the monthly prize at Customer Service. Good luck everyone, and we hope you learn a few new things about your Co-op!

(Continued from page 1)

tional recognition. Quoddy Lobster compost was used in an NBC Today Show gardening segment in March. Our compost made a photo layout in the March issue of Vogue magazine.

Wondering which of our products is best for your garden? Check out the instructional videos at our web site, www.coastofmaine.com.

Adapt with adaptogen herbal tonics: an ancient solution for modern stress

By Gretchen Heilman Piper, Clinical Herbalist and Co-op Member

Although no one knew they were “stressed out” until Hans Selye coined the term in 1956, it’s now a common part of our daily language and experience. This type of “freeze, flight, fight, or fright” response can be helpful for taking action in the moment but harmful over time. It can actually result in chemical imbalances in the nervous system, immune system and diurnal rhythms and even cause changes to structures in the brain.

Stress: perception matters

At 8 ½ months pregnant while preparing to turn my home office into a bedroom, I found mold on the bottom of our eco-friendly mattress. My mind soon linked a musty odor in one room with spots on the ceiling in another; a moldy jacket with a suspicious looking shelf. After reading horror stories about black mold and SIDS I was searching apartments on Craigslist: “We’ll just move!” seemed the logical response.

It’s not “what happens” but rather the perception of what happens or “the story” that creates stress. Understanding and practicing this simple yet profound distinction between perception and reality is the key to a life of health and happiness or fatigue and disease.

As a holistic practitioner my job is to awaken in my clients the ability to create a new reality, to respond to their boss, loved ones, finances, kids, insomnia or the weather with ease and grace. Along with eating well and exercising, it helps to know a thing or two about my favorite category of herbs: “adaptogens.”

The term adaptogen was defined

in 1947 by Nikolai Lazarev as an agent that allows the body to counter adverse physical, chemical or biological stressors by raising resistance toward stress. It refers to



Some adaptogen herbal tonics are added to teas and some to foods.

substances that increase the body's resistance to stress, trauma, anxiety and fatigue.

Tonics from China, India

These “qi tonics” or “rasayanas” have been used for thousands of years in China and India to restore the natural ability of the immune and endocrine systems and promote longevity. The cool thing about adaptogens is that they actually have a normalizing influence on physiology, either toning down hyperfunctioning systems or strengthening hypofunctioning systems, thus bringing balance.

Here are three adaptogens I suggest and how to use them.

Withania somnifera or Ashwaganda is a calming, grounding root that promotes deep relaxation. I use it for people who are tired, stressed, can’t sleep, and are depleted and needing to build up reserves. It’s useful in supporting a

healthy immune and cardiovascular system and in stabilizing blood sugar and emotions. In India it’s served in warm milk with honey and cardamom before bed. I like to make “Adapt-o-kins” (see recipe below)!

Schisandra chinensis is a balancing herb containing all five flavors: sweet, sour, salty, bitter and pungent. This beautiful red berry is a deep restorative that protects and rebuilds the liver, increases physical endurance, improves memory and focus, and is used specifically in respiratory, digestive and skin ailments, and in fatigue with muscle pain. It’s great for the person who is so exhausted they can’t sleep. I recommend it be sipped as a tea throughout the day.

Ganoderma lucidum or Reishi mushroom is the “mushroom of immortality,” and Chinese medicine considers it a *qi* (life force) tonic and longevity promoter. Research shows it enhances liver, respiratory and immune function, is antibacterial, antiviral and antioxidant, and suppresses cancer growth. It prevents blood clots that trigger heart attack, reduces cholesterol and blood pressure, and stabilizes blood sugar. I recommend it in a powdered form in apple sauce or yogurt.

Just like birds fly, plants grow, and spring becomes summer, you too can be alive and awake to the miracle of your mind-body-spirit and live in balance.

Recipe for “Adapt-o-kins”

Think “munchkins” but with herbs! In a mixing bowl combine: 1½ c nut butter (almond, peanut,

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