

ROOTSTOCK

the official newsletter of the BELFAST CO-OP



www.belfast.coop



GM
CORNER

by Doug Johnson
Belfast Co-op General Manager



Does it seem like there is something different at your co-op?

You may have noticed that recently we made some changes to the layout of the store, some of which opened up spaces while others have created additional congestion. We opened up the customer service area to create a larger area for community and owner announcements. We expanded the refuse area in the café to gain floor space and improve diner flow. We have begun a full reset of the wine section and the accompanying chip/juice aisle to create a more efficient use of space and to lessen the effect that previous inefficiencies have played on workers. All of these physical changes are in service of creating a more spacious and open shopping experience to better meet the needs of our community and to improve the workplace experience, however we are playing a long game that will take several months of hard work and dedication on the part of the co-op workers as well as patience on the part of our shoppers to allow us to get where we need to go.

Similarly, we are looking at changing up the way we involve our community in the work of the co-op. The board and I understand the desire for owners to feel connected to their co-op and we are exploring what that means in the current reality of a consumer cooperative. The Membership Committee is currently looking at ways to partner our member-owners with local non-profits that align with our ends. The overarching idea is to facilitate co-op ambassadors going out into the world and spreading cooperative values and principles, making positive social change in the name of, and supported by, the Belfast Co-op. We are in the early stages of formulating a plan to realize this concept, but the drive to bring owners into the conversation in a greater capacity is felt heavily at both the board and operations level.

Finally we are looking at making changes to our equity structure to better serve the long term health of the co-op. It is my hope that in the near future we will be able to eliminate the annual member fee in favor of an increased

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123 HIGH STREET

BELFAST, ME

207.338.2532

7:30AM-8:00PM



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equity share. This would result in the co-op losing a source of income, yet I feel that it is more representative of the cooperative model and will foster greater buy-in from co-op owners. In my opinion, there is something fundamentally unjust about an equity holder losing their voting voice if they neglect to make an annual payment and I hope to end that practice. More immediately, I have proposed to the board including two bylaw revisions to the March ballot that will allow us to address significant shortfalls in our equity structure and that will ultimately result in an improvement on our balance sheet. These changes will further solidify the long term financial health of our cooperative.

So in summation, bear with us. There are a lot of positive changes coming to your co-op in the years ahead. We need your support and your patronage. We need your voice, your talents, and your patience if we are to get through this period of reimagining.

In cooperation,
Doug



for the next meetings of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 26

February 23



The Belfast Co-op exists so that our member-owners and our community will have:

- A thriving, just, and sustainable local food economy
- A source of healthy, affordable food
- An efficiently managed, democratically governed cooperative retail store
- A greater understanding of health, food systems, and economic & environmental sustainability
- An invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

GENERAL MANAGER

Doug Johnson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Alessandra Martinelli, president
- Ron Braybrook, vice president
- Zafra Whitcomb, Secretary
- Lindsey Schortz, Treasurer
- Andrew Watkins
- Bindy Pendleton
- Betsy Garrold
- Justin Howard, staff rep.

BOARD COMMITTEES

- Finance Committee
boardfinance@belfast.coop
- Membership Committee
boardmembership@belfast.coop
- Board Development Committee
boarddevelopment@belfast.coop
- Elections and Nominations Committee
boardelections@belfast.coop
- Annual Meeting Committee
Ad hoc
- Public Interaction Committee
Ad hoc
- Bylaws Committee
Ad hoc

BOARD CORNER

by Ron Braybrook
CHAIR, BYLAWS COMMITTEE

Bylaws: By-laws: Bye-laws

No matter how you spell the word, bylaws are an important part of the way we run our Co-op. Bylaws are the rules or laws established by an organization to regulate itself, as allowed by some higher authority. In this case the State of Maine. The Belfast Co-op's bylaws are intended to align us with the 7 co-operative principles, our global ends statement, and also bring us into compliance with changes in state law.

Best practice indicates that bylaw review is an ongoing process and from time to time those areas of the bylaws which are unclear or not in compliance need to be addressed.

Two areas of our bylaws that need to be addressed are those of "abandoned equity," and a clarification, within the bylaws, that the purchase of equity shares (member contributions) is an "at risk investment."

Abandoned Equity is defined as equity share(s) in a member-owner account that has been inactive for a period of time, as defined by the board of directors, and for which we do not have valid contact information. There is a need to revise the bylaws in order to clarify the status of such funds and to allocate them to a reserve fund, an educational fund, or similar.

Purchase of equity shares in the Co-op is an "at-risk Investment," an investment for which there is no guarantee that the amount paid in will ultimately be paid out. Owner equity in a co-op, or any business, is subordinated to all other debt. If the business is liquidated, creditors will be paid in order of claim, with owners at the end.

The Bylaws Committee is meeting to review



these areas of the bylaws and develop language for the bylaws. Other clarifications of bylaw language will also be addressed.

Over the next two months, a proposal will be developed and an opportunity for discussion, comment, and input will be available at the member forum in January. The finalized proposal will be available at the Annual Meeting in the spring.

Our current Bylaws are on our website, www.belfast.coop. They can be found on our Board of Directors page, under the Membership tab.

This does not mean you have to wait until then to get involved. As always, all Board of Directors meetings and committee meetings are open to the member-owners. Those with a strong interest can also come to one of those meetings or contact a board member.

What's **NEW** @ your coop!

COMMON CENTS

You contributed a whopping \$4,572.96 this November for the Belfast Soup Kitchen!

PRODUCE

We've sold 410k in local produce this growing season! This represents:

- a 12% increase over last year
- \$275k paid out directly to growers in our local community, most within 25 miles of the store.

Good job farmers!! Good job us!

PRE-ORDERS

To simplify and improve the Pre-Order process, there will no longer be different discounts by department – all eligible pre-orders are now 15% off shelf price! [Check our website for full details.](#)

SENIOR DISCOUNTS

In the new year, for your convenience Senior Discounts will no longer be confined to Tuesdays! One time per week, starting Sunday, Seniors may use a one-time 10% discount, just like an Owner-Appreciation Week discount, and save!



by Emily Berry

In early October the Membership Committee hosted Member-Owner Forum to discuss Cooperative Principle Six (P6) – Cooperation Among Cooperatives and celebrate October as National Cooperative Month.

In keeping with P6 – Cooperation Among Cooperatives, the Belfast Co-op has a variety of relationships with co-ops both locally and nationally. The relationship that is most common is one of vendor/retailer, where we purchase goods from cooperative businesses that we can then distribute to our owners and patrons. Co-ops that we purchase from include La Riojana, Organic Valley, Equal Exchange, Crown O' Maine, Port Clyde Fresh Catch, and Fedco.

In addition, we have several other cooperative connections. The Belfast Co-op itself has equity shares in NCG, Frontier Co-op, and Fedco. NCG is a cooperative of cooperatives that helps to unify its members in order to strengthen their purchasing power and optimize operational and marketing resources. And Frontier Co-op is a consumer cooperative (owned by its customers, just like the Belfast Co-op), which supplies a wide variety of natural and organic herbs, spices, teas, and much much more.

The Belfast Co-op looks to partner with other cooperatives across different cooperative business sectors whenever possible. For instance, we work with Down East Credit Union and we have a strong relationship with CDS Consulting Cooperative. CDS is a cooperative of consultants who specialize in co-op governance, leadership development, expansions, retail improvement, marketing, member services and human resources.

In a less customary approach to P6, we recently established a buying relationship with Marsh River Co-op in Brooks. As a larger co-op, we are able to help them purchase quantities of goods that works for their space at a viable price point.

Highlight Local Co-ops

Our seafood department stocks fish and shrimp supplied by Port Clyde Fresh Catch, the country's first community-supported fishery. Port Clyde Fresh Catch is made up of roughly a dozen ground fishing vessels that harvest fresh fish and Maine shrimp from the Gulf of Maine using environmentally conscious fishing methods, providing you with quality, freshness, and 100% supply chain traceability. By supporting Port Clyde Fresh Catch you are helping protect healthy fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

Our produce department stocks fruits and veggies from Crown O'Maine Organic Cooperative. Crown O' Maine distributes locally grown produce and value added products across the state. Operating since 1995, Crown O' Maine is now a cooperative of 109 producers and growing.

CONTINUED ON P6



In the spring, you can stop by the Co-op and grab a current copy of Fedco's seed catalog or pick up a packet or two of seeds off the rack. Fedco is one of the few cooperatively owned seed companies in the US, structured so that consumers own 60% of the cooperative and worker members 40%. Fedco has been in the seed business since 1978, adding tree, bulb, and potato orders along the way. Currently, Fedco is filling over 34,000 orders totaling \$4 million annually.

National Cooperative Month

October 2016 was National Co-op Month. Co-op month exists to raise public awareness of cooperatives and celebrate their accomplishments.

To raise awareness of cooperatives, during the Forum we discussed co-ops within our state. The types of co-ops in Maine include credit unions, housing, art galleries, preschools, tennis pros (yes tennis pros), blueberry growers, potters, spiritual healers, publishing, electricity, sheep breeders, potato growers, and housekeeping, just to name a few. I would encourage everyone to continue to support food co-ops and look for cooperatives in other areas of your life.

By supporting cooperatives you are supporting your community. Financial is the easiest way to see how co-ops benefit communities. Cooperatives in the US generate \$514 billion in revenue and more than \$25 billion in wages. There are 9 food cooperatives in Maine which

collectively produce more than \$23.8 million in annual sales. The Belfast Co-op alone generated \$2million in wages in 2015.

I asked our attendees to look beyond financial benefits to the community and asked them what the social capital of our Co-op is, why do they belong?

- The Co-op is the community anchor, social center, it feels like family, it provides comfort and refuge.
- The Co-op embodies solidarity and promotes an alternative economy; it is the change, the revolution.

The theme of of the 2016 National Co-op Month is "Cooperatives Build". What does our Co-op build?

- The Co-op builds relationships and connection.
- The Co-op builds confidence and encourages leadership.
- The Co-op builds awareness, provides education, and gives purpose.

Our next Member-Owner Forum will be held January 11 at 6pm in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library where we will be discussing proposed bylaw changes. All member-owners are encouraged to attend and bring a friend: all are welcome.

If you have any questions about our previous or upcoming Forums please contact Emily, Marketing and Membership Assistant at the Belfast Co-op, at 338.2532 or emily@belfast.coop.



January
Big Brothers Big Sisters

February
Troy Howard Middle
School Garden Project



Your customer comments and Belfast Co-op
Management responses

"You just discontinued a good gluten-free bread - I tried an alternative but didn't like it at all."

Which bread? Please let us know and we would be happy to look into it.

-Judith
Center Store Manager

"Can you look into carrying soap nuts?"

We have tried this product more than once — we agree they are a great product! When we've had them, only a few sell & the rest expire on the shelf. I can pre-order them for you but the order minimums are steep, so gather some interested friends and let me know!

-Judith

"Soy allergies are very common! Could your soups be made with olive oil in lieu of Earth Balance w/ soy? Several of us come to eat here, and we love your soups but so many have Earth Balance."

Thank you for your input. We currently offer dozens of different soups. The vast majority are made with olive oil, two are made with Earth Balance and one is made with coconut oil. Whenever possible we choose ingredients to ensure that our soups are vegan and gluten free, aside from that we try to factor in allergies except when we feel the integrity of the recipe requires a specific ingredient such as Earth Balance. Everyday we ensure that at least one soup offered is made with olive oil. Thanks,

-Poly
Deli Manager

thank you for your cooperation!



The Belfast Co-op is in the process of recruiting new Board Members, especially those willing and qualified to help guide the co-op toward a productive and sustainable future.

The Board of Directors serves a critical role in overseeing and guiding our success. Serving on the Board is the most responsible position that a Member-Owner can assume.

Election of board candidates will commence at the Belfast Co-op Annual Meeting next March.

interested Member-Owners should contact us at
boardelections@belfast.coop

Thank you for your cooperation!



Sugar Cravings: 15 Herbs You Need to Know

Taught by Steve Byers, Herbalist.
Tuesday, January 10, 6pm @ Waterfall Arts

Retrain your body to appreciate sugar in smaller amounts with herbs. In this class taught by Steve Byers, Clinical Herbalist, we will discuss how herbs can support blood sugar regulation and even down-regulate your taste preferences for sweets with herbs such as Gymnemma, known in Ayurvedic herbal medicine as “The Sugar Destroyer”. Want to know more about digestive bitters? Learn how to make your own digestive bitters formulas in your own home to support healthy digestion and curb the sugar cravings.

Since the age of 10, Steve Byers has been studying medicinal plants. He has studied Western Herbalism, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Cherokee Traditional Medicine. While studying over 500 medicinal herbs, his focus is on regional botanicals that provide the most locally abundant and accessible medicine available. He has runs the Herbal Medicine Wellness Clinic in Belfast at 96 High St. Steve is a teacher at heart. He loves sharing the wisdom and science of medicinal plants and has taught classes, medicinal plant walks, and therapeutic workshops up and down the east coast.

Free Event for members, \$5 for non-members, sign up at the registers.

JANUARY

Common Cents: Big Brothers Big Sisters
Artist of the month: Rachel Littlefield

January 10 - **Sugar Cravings: 15 Herbs You Need to Know**, Tuesday, 6pm at Waterfall Arts.
January 11 - **Member-Owner Forum**, Wednesday, 6pm to 8pm, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St.
January 26 - **Board Meeting** Thurs. 6pm social time, 6:30pm meeting, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.
January 27 - **Love Local Day**, featured vendor TBD. 10% off all local products, all day long.

FEBRUARY

Common Cents: Troy Howard Middle School Garden Project
Artist of the month: Linden O’Ryan

February 8 - **Educational Event, TBD**. Wednesday, 6:00pm at the Belfast Free Library, 106 High St.
February 23 - **Board Meeting** Thurs. 6pm social time, 6:30pm meeting, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.
February 24 - **Love Local Day**, featured vendor Resurgam Hot Sauce. 10% off all local products, all day long.