

ROOTSTOCK

ISSUE #26

MAY-JUN 2018

The Official Newsletter of the **Belfast CO+OP**

I BELIEVE

FROM THE DESK OF THE GM

THIS PAST MONTH I ATTENDED A MEETING OF CO-OP MANAGERS FROM ACROSS THE ENTIRE COUNTRY IN DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA. These meetings happen twice a year and are hosted and facilitated by the National Co-op Grocers (NCG). It is a unique opportunity for co-op General Managers and CEOs to share information regarding their co-ops and to find common ground and commiseration in what is often a solitary leadership position at our co-ops. The topics covered were far reaching and inspirational, but the one that stood out for me was the concept that co-op culture is shaped by the belief structure of the leadership. This plays out from the board to management to workers to community and back, in a circle of beliefs and supporting actions. Negative beliefs result in negative actions that reinforce negative beliefs. This is how the culture of an organization or community is unconsciously built.

So what do I believe?

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I believe that the Belfast Co-op's best days are ahead of us. We are a mighty co-op. We have a long history of overcoming challenges and coming together to accomplish our common goals and aspirations. My interactions with our owners, our community, and with leaders in our co-op lead me to believe that we have limitless potential to create positive impact in our community and in the world moving forward.

I believe that when faced with crisis, human beings bend toward cooperation. Times are hard for many in our community and around the world. Tensions are high. Threats are omnipresent. Judging by the 24 hour news cycle, modern society often appears to be teetering on the edge of collapse. History has shown that when humans are pushed to their limits by internal or external forces, they tend to come together to meet their needs rather than falling prey to isolationism. Consumer cooperatives grew out of the worker abuse and predatory practices of factory owners in England in the 1800s. In the US, there was a boom in cross-sector cooperative enterprises following the Great Depression, supported in part by the US government as a component in Roosevelt's New Deal. When most of us are pushed, our better nature comes through and we work together for the common good.

....continued on page 2....



BELFAST.COOP 123 HIGH STREET BELFAST, MAINE 04915 207.338.2532

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I believe that cooperative economics can save the world.

I don't have a lot of faith in traditional capitalism. I have seen far too many instances of the many being suppressed and the weak being trampled to the benefit of the mighty to believe that unfettered free markets benefit us all. I believe that many of the challenges that we face globally have their roots in a power imbalance, where the voice of the people is suppressed so that large companies and powerful individuals can prosper. I got into cooperatives because I loved the food that we are able to provide to our communities, but I have stayed in cooperatives because I know in my heart of hearts that a cooperative economy is a more democratic and just way of meeting people's needs than the standard capitalist economic model. I have to believe that organizations founded around a set of shared values that include self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, solidarity, honesty, and social responsibility benefit their communities more than those founded in the dream of producing profits for their executives and shareholders.

I believe that food matters.

I can think of no other aspect of my life that connects me to my family, my coworkers, my neighbors, and my community, more than food. It is fundamental to our cultural identity. It fuels us and brings us pleasure. It gives our lives purpose, either as a grower, a harvester, a retailer, or as a consumer. I can't imagine a world where the quality and production of the food that we put in our bodies didn't matter anymore, and I don't believe that would be a world that I would want to be a part of. Our community has a long history of caring for, engaging with, and joyously supporting our local farmers and producers and I believe Belfast is beautiful today because of its epicurean devotion to food.

I believe that workers are the heart of the co-op.

I have worn many hats in my 17 years working in retail food cooperatives and the one constant throughout my experiences is that great workers make a great co-op. Workers are so vital to the culture of the co-op and have the potential to shape that culture in a way that no

other member of the association have. Without their ongoing passion and extensive experience all other aspects of our enterprise would not exist, and without the enterprise there would be no association. Belfast Co-op workers may come and go, however the culture that they have built over the years is ever evolving into a kinder, more respectful, more efficient, more connected, more cooperative workplace and for that we all should be grateful.

I believe that co-ops are stronger when they work together.

It often feels like co-ops are fighting to stay relevant in a world where the concentration of wealth is making it nearly impossible for independent retailers to stay above water. Coming together with our co-op peers to share experiences and ideas reassures me that we are not alone in this fight. Whether we are discussing retail operations, board governance, owner engagement, environmental sustainability, or a myriad of other topics we are connected through our shared values and principles and together we create greater impact than we would were we to isolate ourselves. Collaboration makes us better operators. Partnering with our sister co-ops makes us a more formidable opponent in the war for relevance. Our communities are stronger when we cooperate.

I know that my voice is not the only voice that matters when we are discussing forming the beliefs of our organization, but the Board has chosen me for this role and given me an opportunity to share my beliefs with you. I intend to use my time here to create positive impact in our co-op and in our community and to add to the foundation that has been built over the years.

What do you believe?

DOUG JOHNSON
GENERAL MANAGER

SINCE
1976



meet your co-op

The staff are the heart of the Belfast Co-op. People come and they go and whether they're here for a short while or a long time, they all have something to contribute. Here's an opportunity to get to know a little something about the people that you see when you shop at your co-op!



CARLA G.

After 17 years as a Belfast Co-op customer, Carla joined the Co-op team in November, 2017 as a Deli Cashier. It seemed like a fun place to work while paying off some bills and transitioning out of full time parenting. She never expected to come to love her position and the Co-op community so much! Although she enjoyed her time as deli cashier, Carla recently chose to share her skills with the marketing department and is now Administrative Assistant and Ownership Administrator for the Belfast Co-op. You may not see her smile in the deli, but she is still here and working for you!



ROXANNE M.

Roxanne is your new Promotions Assistant! You will see her in the store making sure the current Co-op Deals, Owner+ and Co+op Basics' promotions are up-to-date and ready for members and customers. She is an avid cook, so the product variety and the co-op's focus on local, community-supported food is a complete joy! After many years in Montana, she was ready to head back to her coastal New England roots. She says, "Our co-op was my first stop in Belfast, and from here, I knew Belfast was home." We're happy she's joined the team!

WHO WE ARE:

GENERAL MANAGER

Doug Johnson

OWNERS: 4196

STAFF: 80+

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance, boardfinance@belfast.coop

Owner Engagement, boardowners@belfast.coop

Board Development, boarddevelopment@belfast.coop

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alessandra Martinelli, President

Andrew Watkins, Vice President

Ernie Cooper, Treasurer

Betsy Garrold

David Balicki

Shannon Grimes

Violet Zerbe

Richard Brown

Heather Selin

*why
we're
here*



THE BELFAST CO-OP EXISTS SO THAT OUR 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 and environmental sustainability
- An invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

Report from the Board



If you couldn't make it to this year's Annual Meeting we sure missed you, but we managed to have a pretty great time! We learned all about the Common Cents applicants from their representatives who came; we enjoyed amazing catering and local beer tasting; and we played a game of Board of Directors Bingo (you'll just have to ask around to find out which director lived in New Zealand, watched 4th of July fireworks on the White House Lawn, or had a close encounter with grizzly bear. Hint: one of those is me!)

But let's get to the meat (or tofu) of what we discussed at the meeting: the Belfast Co-op is facing an aging infrastructure and all the issues deferred maintenance has to offer; the cost of ignoring it is low and the cost of addressing it is high. Many of our lower-digit member owners remember this is not a new issue, and past boards have explored potential solutions. Yet no decisions were made, and many major issues persist while new ones arise, and still more can only be bandaged over. With our GM reporting increased occupancy costs and a higher percentage of our budget going to repairs than in years past, the board presented 6 possible courses of action, two highly unfavorable and four more that will need more research:

1. Do nothing. This option would be the intentional decision to continue as we are now, fixing things as we must but tabling larger issues till a later date. This has been the standing, unintentional decision.
2. Close the Belfast Food Co-op: everyone's least favorite option. Yet we acknowledge that if the maintenance of our facility is deferred long enough, we could face such huge liability and cost that closing becomes the only option. As one member commented, we drive the direction of this cooperative, and if we all decided we didn't want to be in the grocery business we could choose to instead be a cooperatively run casino or health insurance business.
3. Renovate the existing building.
4. Renovate the existing building with a major addition.
5. Build new construction on the existing site.
6. Move to a new facility on a different location. This option was very strongly opposed by the membership present.

You, our member-owners, and the creative ideas and constructive criticisms you share, are our greatest assets in this problem-solving process. We are hoping to continue the enthusiasm and momentum from this year's Annual Meeting so that with your help, next year's Annual Meeting will be a discussion of specific plans. The energy you all bring is why I go to monthly board and committee meetings. Please continue to give us your feedback (by sending us a message at board@belfast.coop) and keep an eye on our calendar for upcoming planning meetings and board meetings. **We need you!**

Violet Zerbe,
Belfast Co-op Board of Directors

upcoming classes

COOKING CLASS

BEGINNER KNIFE SKILLS



Wednesday May 23, 6-7:30pm
at the Unitarian Universalist Church,
37 Miller St. Belfast
Sign up in advance, as space is limited.

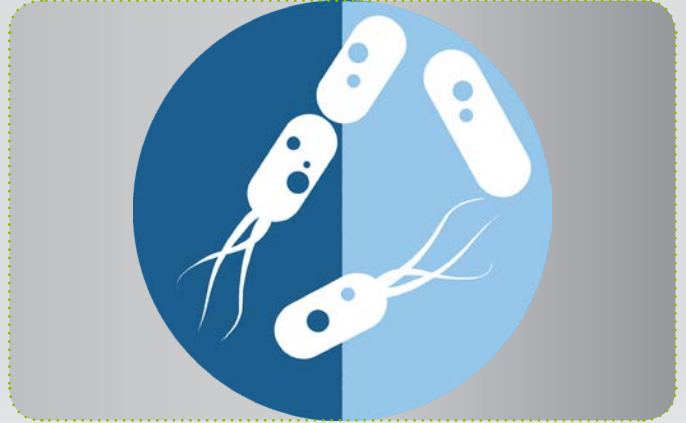
Are you interested in improving your cooking skills and abilities? The knife is arguably the most important tool in cooking and though simple to use, takes a lifetime to master. Do you want to feel more comfortable and confident with this sometimes intimidating tool? Do you want to know what the difference between large dice, small dice, and julienne is? What's a brunoise?

In this class we will go over proper and safe knife handling skills, learn some handy tips and tricks and practice typical and traditional cuts to up your cooking game. You will leave with a bunch of cut veggies ready to cook when you get home as well! This class is geared towards novice cooks but anyone who wants to add to their skills is welcome to join.

Jamie Cermak is the Co-op's new Community Engagement Coordinator. He has worked in a number of kitchens and taught several classes through a traditional skills and crafts school based in Wisconsin (www.driftlessfolkschool.org). He is excited to share with his new community!

GUT HEALTH SERIES TALK

THE MICROBIOME AND YOUR HEALTH



Wednesday June 27, 6-7:30pm
at the Unitarian Universalist Church,
37 Miller St. Belfast

Did you know that inside all of us lives trillions of bacteria and other microorganisms, collectively called the microbiota? While they live in many places of the body, most of them live in our gut, where they have profound effects on health.

Come learn about what the microbiome is and all that it does for our health. We will explore the evolution of the microbiome, starting at birth, and the many lifestyle and dietary factors that can lead to dysbiosis - a microbiome out of balance. Learn ways to tend this "inner garden" through the use of nourishing whole foods. We will also cover probiotics and where they fit in with a healthy gut.

Elisa Ross RDN, LD is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist with a private practice in Belfast, Maine. She helps clients improve their health and well being through the use of whole foods and lifestyle changes. Her particular areas of interest include digestive health, ancestral ways of eating, and optimizing nutrition while on a restricted diet. Ross writes a monthly "Nourishing Nutrition" column for the Free Press.

If you are interested in signing up for one of these classes, please call the coop @ 338-2532
Additional questions may be sent to jamie@belfast.coop

• • • YOUR VOICE *counts* • • •

Belfast Co-op

123 High St, Belfast, ME

[Write a review](#)

4.4 ★★★★★ 66 reviews

Sort by: Most recent ▾



Justin

Local Guide · 34 reviews · 23 photos

★★★★★ a month ago

Everything you need in one store!



1



Aimee

★★★★★ a month ago



joann

★★★★★ a month ago

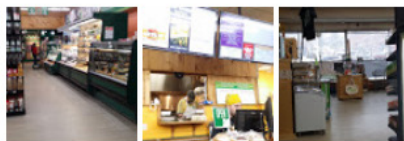


Ryan

Local Guide · 26 reviews · 77 photos

★★★★★ a month ago

Good food and service!



Like



Jim

15 reviews

★★★★★ 2 months ago -

Great coop



Like



B.J.

4 reviews · 1 photo

★★★★★ 2 months ago

Local produce, local meat, local fish, local bread and desserts... local local local with a cooperative spirit!



COMMENT:

Please build a second customer bathroom!!! It should be ADA compliant. Please post this comment.

RESPONSE

The short answer is we don't have the space. We are very aware of the limited space in the existing bathroom, let alone that we only have the one. We have been actively investigating our options to squeeze another customer bathroom somewhere in the store, but the logistics have proven to be insurmountable so far. What I am going to do this year, is have 2 porta potties available through the summer to alleviate the bottleneck during the busy season.

Thank you,
Jeremy
Operations

COMMENT:

LOVE Fieldr Chao Cheese but you sell out quickly. Also can you carry more of their cheeses?

RESPONSE

We are very happy that you enjoy this cheese. It is very popular. We will increase our ordering so we do not sell out. Lastly, we do carry all of their cheeses. All 3 flavors: original, cayenne, and coconut.

Thank you
Alex
Cheese & Meat

COMMENT:

So glad you were in Belfast Bay and Beyond magazine. Glad to find you! We stayed in Northport.

RESPONSE

This makes us happy too! We decided to go with a full page ad this year in hopes of attracting more visitors while also supporting our local Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you
Carisa
Marketing

COMMENT CARDS are located
at the front of #yourbelfastcoop.
We appreciate your feedback!

COMMON CENTS RECIPIENTS

MAY

BELFAST MASKERS is a volunteer-run community theater group which has provided people of all ages with the chance to stretch their theater wings and shine. More than 1,500 volunteers have participated in productions over the past 30 years, and everyone who wants is welcome to join.

The Belfast Maskers will be performing *The Music Man* in July, Mark Twain's *Is He Dead?* in August, and *A Christmas Story: The Musical* during the holiday season.

Learn more at belfastmaskers.com.

MAINE FARMLAND TRUST was founded in 1999 by farmers and farm advocates to help protect farmland. MFT is dedicated to protecting farmland through agricultural easement, so that the land will be forever available at its value as farmland. Since its founding, MFT has expanded its program areas to not only protect Maine farmland, but increase farm viability by helping farmers thrive, and raising public awareness about the important role farms play in our communities.

Learn more at mainefarmlandtrust.org.

JUNE



ROUND UP AT THE REGISTER in support of worthy causes - each month at #yourbelfastcoop. In March and April, co-op shoppers donated \$1777.24 to Our Town Belfast and \$2672.43 to Peace Ridge Animal Sanctuary.

Owner Appreciation Week

OUR QUARTERLY CELEBRATION OF OWNERS
You are the #coopdifference!

**USE YOUR
10% OFF O.A.W.
DISCOUNT**
on any one
transaction between
JUNE 1 and 7

**ENJOY FREE
TASTINGS**
with our vendors
daily from
11:30am - 2pm

**SIGN UP TO
BECOME A NEW
#COOPOWNER**
during the week
and be entered to
WIN A BIG PRIZE!

FRI-THURS, JUNE 1-7

Board Meetings

May 24

June 28

6pm Social Time, 6:30pm Meeting

**Unitarian Universalist
Church of Belfast**

37 Miller St.

BELFAST CO+OP SAVE THE DATE

SUMMER JAM 2018 AUGUST 4th

Sugarbush!

(@sugarbushbandmaine)

Live music, good food, great friends
outside at your co-op!

STAFF PICK



My pick is **GRANDY OATS' TURMERIC GINGER CASHEWS**. They're my go-to healthy and savory snack. I also use them to spice up my curries and stir-fries! I love that Grandy Oats is solar powered and based in Maine. I may have moved to Maine just to be closer to these little gems of spicy goodness.

CO+OP CALENDAR

5/1.....Owner Social, 4-5pm in the Café

5/2.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**

5/2.....Art in the Café:
Wendilee Heath O'Brien

5/12.....Keeping Belfast Beautiful
Spring Cleanup

5/13....Mother's Day Wine Tasting 1-3pm

5/16.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**

5/19.....All Roads Music Festival

5/23.....Co-op Class: Beginner Knife Skills

5/24.....Co-op Board Meeting, 6pm
at the Unitarian Universalist Church

5/25.....Love Local Day: Heiwa Tofu

5/30.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**

5/31.....Art in the Café: Jaap Helder

6/1-6/7.....Owner Appreciation Week!

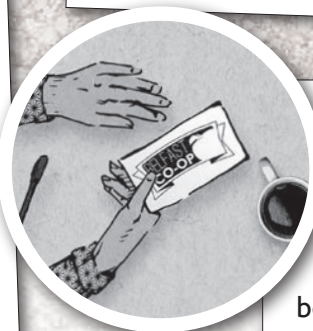
6/5.....Owner Social, 4-5pm in the Café

6/13.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**

6/27.....Co-op Class: Gut Health

6/28.....Co-op Board Meeting, 6pm
at the Unitarian Universalist Church

6/29.....Love Local Day: TBD



OWNER SOCIAL

May 1 • June 5

Get to know fellow co-op owners and
board members at our monthly gathering.

4-5pm in the Co-op Cafe