

ROOTSTOCK

ISSUE #32

MAY - JUN 2019

The Official Newsletter of the **Belfast Co+op**

IN REMEMBRANCE

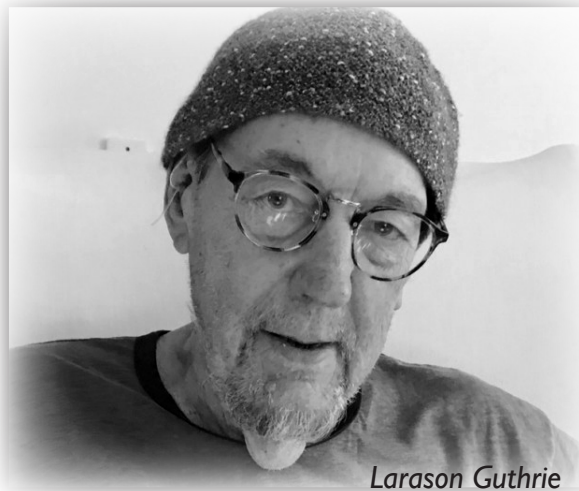
FROM THE DESK OF THE GM

Doug Johnson General Manager

A bright light in our cooperative community went out this past March as our friend and long-time Co-op supporter Larason Guthrie passed away at the age of 84. Larason has been a familiar face in the Co-op for decades and served on the Board of Directors during our most recent expansion.

He was a brilliant student of architecture and saw the limitless potential in small things. Anyone who visited his home studio would see beautiful and intricate models of wooden structures he created. I will miss him pulling me aside in the aisles to discuss what was possible for our Co-op. I am saddened to think of him not being there to see us achieve it.

For me, Larason's passing is a reminder of the impermanence of things and the inevitability of change. The history of our co-op extends back over a number of decades and Larason is neither the first nor the last of a long line of passionate, dedicated individuals that made this co-op what it is today.



Larason Guthrie

Like so many of our brother and sister co-ops that were formed in the 1970s, we have changed and adapted with the times and we continue to evolve as the world changes around us.

The Belfast Co-op of today would be unrecognizable to our founders, however I am so grateful for those that have stayed with us throughout this journey, recognizing that the co-op enterprise is just a vehicle for an idea that is bigger than all of us.

This tremendous loss is also a reminder of the legacy that we craft for ourselves in the way that we interact with our families, our coworkers, and our friends, as well as with strangers that we are meeting for the first time. Larason was a memorable and authentic personality who cared deeply for those around him and for his community. We all have an impact on the world around us that extends far beyond our homes and workplaces, one that

lives on after we are gone, and I know that Larason will live on in the collective hearts and minds of the Belfast Co-op for years to come.

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in this issue:

P3 & P4

**OWNER ECONOMIC
PARTICIPATION &
AUTONOMY AND
INDEPENDENCE**



....IN REMEMBRANCE continued from page 1....

Excerpted from Larason Guthrie's obituary:

Larason had a wonderful life that included seven years at Yale University, as a scholarship student, studying art and receiving two degrees in art and architecture. He took time out from his studies to serve in Korea and was a top sharpshooter, but being in a war zone changed his heart and, eventually, he became an avid protester and marcher against war and for civil rights.

After a career in San Francisco, that included working at Lawrence Halprin & Associates designing large projects such as the Oakland Train Station, Larason chose to spend time with his family; traveling, living simply, and enjoying nature, especially the ocean.

He found his way to Waldo County about 40 years ago and began designing and building many organic structures including homes, additions, and barns. He also designed the rear addition to the Belfast Co-op. His masterwork is the Rothrock House in Thorndike, ME

Our thoughts are with his family during this difficult time and we grieve with a community that has lost such a dynamic comrade.



Rothrock House- Thorndike, ME

who we are:

OWNERS:

4200+

STAFF:

70+

GENERAL MANAGER

Doug Johnson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shannon Grimes, President
Andrew Watkins, Vice President
Ernie Cooper, Treasurer
David Gibson, Secretary
Alessandra Martinelli
Betsy Garrold
David Balicki
Heather Selin
Annie Bussiere
Crystal Howard-Doliber
Edward Sheridan
Evans Goff, Staff Representative

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance:

boardfinance@belfast.coop

Owner Engagement:

boardowners@belfast.coop

Board Development:

boarddevelopment@belfast.coop

Expansion:

expansion@belfast.coop

**WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR MORE PEOPLE TO JOIN OUR BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S COMMITTEES.
TO FIND OUT MORE PLEASE EMAIL: BOARD@BELFAST.COOP**

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, nutritious, affordable food, and water

An efficiently managed, democratically governed inclusive cooperative retail store

A greater understanding of health, food systems, cooperatives and economic and environmental sustainability

An invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace



7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

1. VOLUNTARY AND OPEN OWNERSHIP
2. DEMOCRATIC OWNER CONTROL
3. OWNER ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
4. AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE
5. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION
6. COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
7. CONCERN FOR THE COMMUNITY

The Belfast Co-op adheres to the seven international cooperative principles which are guidelines by which cooperatives put their values into practice. Over the past year, we have discussed the 7 cooperative principles in this newsletter. This volume discusses the remaining principles 3 and 4. Elizabeth Archerd (formerly of Wedge Co-op) in a column for Co-op Consumer News, has succinctly described the underlying concepts and practice of these 2 Cooperative Principles. Her writing is quoted in italics.

Principle 3: Owner Economic Participation states that owners contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of the cooperative. The economic benefits of a cooperative operation are returned to the owners, reinvested in the co-op, or used to provide services to owners.

“No. 3 spells out the responsibilities of members to their cooperatives, and how money is to be treated in the cooperative business association. ...

It is important to remember that cooperatives are businesses that exist to improve the lives of the participants, by providing goods and/or services that the members need. The Third Principle makes it clear that members have a responsibility to capitalize their cooperative, and that by pooling funds they agree to participate in an association that exists for the good of the whole group, not just a few individuals.

This principle also makes it clear that cooperatives are not non-profit organizations! However, the profit, or “surplus” generated by the cooperative does not benefit a small group of owners or investors, but the entire cooperative membership. It is not the fact of profit, but the uses to which it is put, which differentiates the cooperative enterprise from private business.”

P3 & P4 AT THE BELFAST CO-OP

Principle 4: Autonomy and Independence states that Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their owners. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their owners and maintain their cooperative autonomy.

“Underlying this thought is the basic concept that cooperatives exist to serve the interests and needs of their member-owners, period. They do not serve any ideology whether defined by politics, religion or business theory! The cooperative principles outline a basic framework without specifying goals or purposes. If there is any such thing as one overarching goal of cooperatives in general, it is to provide goods and/or services to the member-owners who participate in it, and to do it in a manner consistent with the cooperative principles.

<The Statement on the Cooperative Identity> states: ‘A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.’ Notably absent from the definition is any ideological statement such as ‘Co-ops must eliminate the bosses and pay everyone the same wage’ or ‘Co-ops are vegetarian, pacifist social service organizations’ or even ‘Co-ops must maximize profit (or reduce costs) for member-owners.’

Members of co-ops may define their organizational goals in any way they like (including the above) and set policies aimed at achieving them. The fourth principle makes it clear that democratic governance by the members is such a fundamental part of cooperatives that it is not to be surrendered for any reason, even for business partnerships or capital. This also echoes the third principle, member economic participation, which indicates that in cooperatives, unlike profit-driven organizations, money does not buy control of the business.

As food cooperatives grow and expand, values that have guided the co-op movement for over one hundred and fifty years will be critical guideposts.”

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

CUSTOMER COMMENTS ON RECENT CHANGES

The history and situations which preceded and ultimately decided this change to our “senior discount” were discussed at our Annual Meeting this past March on a snowy day. A lively, engaged, and robust discussion was had with all the Owners who attended along with the Board of Directors. These comments shown here are a fair representation of feedback the Co-op has received since the discount change—with fairly equal parts responding positively and negatively to the change.

“Please don’t eliminate the senior discount!!!

Thank you ♥ ”

“I have been a member of the co-op since before they had a store and have always felt I could trust the BOD’s decisions. I feel that way now even as they decide they can no longer sustain the ‘senior discount.’ I would much rather see the co-op sustained! I would also like to see employees getting better wages/ benefits. I appreciated the discount but accept that it no longer works for the co-op.”

“Getting rid of the senior’s discount was a huge mistake.”

“Just want to let you know that though I have enjoyed the senior discount I would much rather see the co-op stay viable than have the discount. And if the Co-op had to close, well there would be no discount then, no food! Having lived in Boston and been a member of the Harvest Co-op for 40 or so years, from when it was a pre-order through when it had two storefronts, I was very sad to see it go out of business last year.”

In addition to all that **Larason and Susan Guthrie** have brought to our Co-op over the years, we received this letter (abridged) in support of the change to the discount structure from the couple just weeks before Larason’s passing:

“No discount? No problem. The Belfast Co-op has stopped their senior discount program and, as senior members, we support this move, and here’s why. Years ago, the senior discount was, in fact, a huge promotion for the coop. Bringing shoppers from miles away to the coop, and at the time it helped pull the coop out of the red.

Times have changed and there are more coops in the region and other commercial stores, with more buying power, are beginning to provide more pure, organic and local foods, farmers have their own markets, all of which is fine. But the senior discount is no longer supporting the Belfast Coop and it needs to go. We purchase 100% of our groceries at the co-op and received a \$15+/- weekly discount. This does not rock our world one way or the other.

As retired folks, on social security and working part-time, we have more freedom to cook all our meals ourselves from scratch, keeping our food budget low, while eating completely organic. But as Americans, we have grown up with a subsidized, industrialized food system. We have been trained to expect and even demand unreasonably cheap food.

This system of cheap food has led to the enslavement of a population of farmworkers with low wages and poor working conditions, not to mention planet degradation, and the enslavement of other species against their will, who are most often treated cruelly in the extreme. We don’t want to be part of that.

....Pure, sustainable and humanely raised food is not cheap, why should we expect it to be so? Farmworkers deserve adequate wages, animals deserve to be treated humanely, the Earth should not be gobbled up for profit. Who disputes this? Who is unwilling to pay a bit more so that others can have a better existence?

The co-op buys our food at the lowest prices possible, adds a reasonable overhead to sustain the organization and pay fair wages. There is no international corporation exacting profit from this system. And instead of high-paid management, we have volunteer board members donating hundreds of hours overseeing the operations. very hard work from which the rest of us reap many benefits.

We love and support our management, our employees and our board. We believe they all do what is best for our mutual benefit in continuing to provide the members with the best, most pure and local food and goods possible, at the lowest prices possible.

Sincerely, Susan and Larason Guthrie



Restorative Justice Project
of the Midcoast



common cents

IN COMMUNITY WE TRUST

Belfast Area
Child Care Services



MAY

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT OF THE MIDCOAST promotes fundamental change in the justice system and schools. The organization's responses to crime and wrongdoing seek renewal and safety for the community, support and healing for victims and accountability and reintegration of the offender. The Project focuses on the implementation of three programs: Prevention, Intervention, and Reintegration.

Our society's response to crime has largely been punitive, ignoring the victim's needs and the skills that offenders must have in order to avoid making destructive choices. Both the criminal justice system and, increasingly, our schools, focus on laws and rules that have been broken, rather than on the harm that has been suffered.

More info at www.rjpmidcoast.org

BELFAST AREA CHILDCARE SERVICES

offers dynamic programming where children engage their senses, bodies, minds, and spirits. Natural curiosity is nurtured in arts rich environments complimented with multifaceted opportunities for investigating the natural world.

Believing in the respect of the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of the individual, they are a unique community that fosters close ties between children, their families, and their centers.

Originally incorporated as a non-profit in 1973, **BACCS** Inc. includes two centers-Belfast Area Children's Center in Waldo and Starrett Children's Center in Belfast. The programs now have a combined enrollment of 73 children and 18 staff members.

More info at childcareinbelfast.org

JUNE

ROUND UP AT THE REGISTER in support of worthy causes - each month at #yourbelfastcoop.

In March, co-op shoppers donated \$4,223.66 to New Hope for Women.

At time of printing (4/22), our community donated \$2,058.68 to Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition.

UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES WATCH OUR BULLETIN BOARDS & FACEBOOK FOR MORE INFO

discussion & workshop

HERBAL SALVES AND TINCTURES

**ANDREA GAYLOR OF
MOTHER BEAR HERBALS**

**Wednesday,
May 8 | 6-7:30pm**

at the Unitarian Universalist Church,
37 Miller St. Belfast

Classes are
free to attend,
please register
in advance,
space is limited.

If you are interested in
signing up for one
of these classes,
please call the Co-op
@ 338-2532

and ask to sign up for a class.
Additional questions may be
sent to

jamie@belfast.coop

lecture & discussion

FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

**DEBORAH HAWKINS OF
COOPERATIVE FUND OF
NEW ENGLAND**

**Wednesday,
May 22 | 6-7:30pm**

at the Belfast Free Library,
Abbott Room

lecture & discussion

THE POWER OF FOOD ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND FOOD

**CASEY HESS
ENERGY EFFICIENCY
COORDINATOR**

**Wednesday,
June 12 | 6-7:30pm**
at the Unitarian Universalist Church,
37 Miller St. Belfast

hands-on workshop

KITCHEN KNIVES: CARE AND SHARPENING

**NEILL PETERSON OF
ACE SHARPENING**

**Wednesday,
June 26 | 6-7:30pm**
at the Unitarian Universalist Church,
37 Miller St. Belfast

OBSERVATIONS: CO+NNECT CONFERENCE

HEATHER Q HAY ~ IT COORDINATOR

On March 12th and 13th, I had the pleasure of traveling to Minneapolis, MN to attend the NCG Co+nnect conference, which brings together IT and Finance employees from co-ops around the country. The theme of the conference was **Building Community & Delighting Customers**. From an IT perspective, this is an interesting theme to think about. *How do we use technology to make stronger connections in the community and really WOW our customers?*

It's easy, as an IT person, to be enamored with the Next Big Thing and push toward the bleeding edge of innovation. At this conference, we looked at what is being offered for advancements in Retail Technology and we discussed how to determine what is best for our customers and owners, at our co-ops. While online grocery shopping and drone delivery can seem really cool (or really creepy), it's more important to have seamlessly functioning scales, automated temperature monitoring of our refrigerators, and the little technology fixes that happen behind the scenes to make everyone's experience better. **Making operations run smoothly allows everyone to better serve and connect with our owners and customers, creating the co-op experience that we all love.**

Several sessions were dedicated to online shopping, in regards to "click and collect", which is where you place your order online, someone at the store bags it up for you, you drive over to the Co-op and pick it up. While large box stores are pushing this at the next phase in grocery, it hasn't yet proven to be worth the logistical and technological investment for smaller shops (*even the large box stores aren't seeing the use they expect*). Looking at our customers and community, it doesn't look like this type of thing would be highly valued yet. Our community comes together, chatting in the wine aisle while sharing jokes with the Meat and Cheese guys. We share our summer plans with each other while picking out gorgeous produce. We value the time talking with the Wellness staff about the new, amazing tinctures that the co-op is stocking. **We are a face-to-face community and we value that deeply.** So, faceless grocery shopping is not in the cards for us right now. Not to say that we aren't looking at new, valuable ways to serve this area- because we are. **We are taking the time to observe and identify what that will look like.**

Observe and Identify was another take away from the conference. I enjoyed that there was a central theme of analyzing what would most benefit our Owners and customer. As opposed to just pushing technology, we were digging into the What, Who and How - Before picking a technology solution or goal, we will spend time observing What we are trying to solve, identifying Who will use the solution or be impacted by it, and then experiment with How we will create that change and inform everyone, then examine the results and repeat the process. For me, this became a new mantra: **Observe, Identify, Experiment, Repeat. It is something I will bring to all of the projects we work on.**

I returned to the Belfast Co-op excited to continue working on my current projects and with new tools to take on upcoming projects. Behind the scenes, since my peers and coworkers are also my customers, IT is helping with new reporting features - which will help us all stay informed of our financial goals and progress - tightening up operations and aligning the vision. We are also looking at small technology solutions that will help smooth out processes for our Ownership Administration. Small solutions, when put in the right place, can make a huge impact. **We will move forward, observing and identifying ways to better serve our Owners, customers and community.**

OBSERVE

What is the business need? What are you trying to solve? What can be improved or changed?

IDENTIFY

Who are you trying to help? Think about their life, patterns and needs - Are you addressing them?

EXPERIMENT

How will you solve the business need? What does this look like when you are done? Who is involved in the process and do they have everything they need? How will you measure what success looks like?

REPEAT

Failure is helpful. If you were not successful, begin again and modify things based on what you learned! If you were successful, what made it work so well? Apply this to future projects!

Members of our Board of Directors, Co-op staff, and the General Manager all attended the recent 6th Annual Principle 6 conference in Lewiston, ME. This event, hosted by the Cooperative Maine Business Alliance, provided an opportunity for co-op representatives from across the state to get together in a rare networking opportunity. Representatives of consumer food co-ops, worker co-ops, and individuals interested in forming or transitioning to a cooperative structure were present and involved in a variety of workshops. Topics included public policy and organizing, basic business and financial reporting, initiatives to address climate change, equity and inclusion, and financial development.

An inspiring key note was given by John Crane, GM of Portland Food Co-op, Melissa Hoover E.D. of the Democracy at Work Institute, and Esteban Kelly, E.D. of the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives.



6th Annual Principle 6 Conference

presented by

COOPERATIVE MAINE BUSINESS ALLIANCE

COOPERATIVES BUILD A BETTER MAINE

BUILDING SKILLS, CONNECTIONS, AND A MOVEMENT

Many conversations were centered around the recent passage of the **Main Street Employee Ownership act of 2018.**

The bipartisan MSEO Act expanded SBA loan programs to encourage broad-based ownership

structures like co-ops. Maine Cooperative Business Alliance and the Cooperative Development Institute have been instrumental in growing and expanding the reach of cooperatives in our state.

A few Maine businesses that are part of the wave of employee ownership and have restructured to worker cooperatives include Rockland's Rock City Coffee, the Island Employee Cooperative (serving Deer Isle and Stonington), Baldwin Apple Ladders in Brooks, and Insource Renewables of Pittsfield. All of these businesses have adopted and incorporated cooperative practices and principles in order to ensure their businesses remain healthy and thriving for their workers and their communities. In a state like Maine with so many aging business owners, Conversion to employee ownership may be the best choice to meet all of those goals. In many rural communities, it may be the only choice.

We here at Belfast Co-op (a consumer cooperative) celebrate and encourage the growth of the cooperative economy in our state and beyond.

OWNERSHIP UPDATE

CARLA RENZI
OWNERSHIP ADMINISTRATOR

**101 NEW OWNERS IN
FIRST 3 MONTHS OF 2019**

JANUARY	48
FEBRUARY	19
MARCH	34

**60 FULLY VESTED OWNERS
AS OF MARCH 10 2019**

(Since the change in equity of January 2019, owners may choose to pay full equity of \$200: no more annual installments and better financial health of the Co-op)

Belfast CO+OP

BOARD

of directors

VOTING UPDATE

This election had the biggest turnout and fastest quorum of any election in Belfast Co-op history. Over 17% of the owners voted, most were online and 80 voted in paper. 782 (17.6%) of 4433 electors voted in this ballot.

The BOD staff representative election ran the week after. Nominees from both elections were elected and results were ratified at the April 25th Board meeting.

BOARD MEETINGS

May 23
June 27

6pm Social Time, 6:30pm Meeting
Unitarian Universalist
Church of Belfast
37 Miller St.

love
local
...DAY...

Everyone
saves 10% on
all local items
all day!
#lovelocalfood

SAVE THE DATE

June 1st-7th
*co-op owner
appreciation week*
all owners may take 10% off one transaction
between June 1st and 7th

STAFF PICK



JANNE
WELLNESS

AUNT POLLY'S OLDE TYME COLESLAW is my favorite deli item because it is so satisfying! It is made with simple ingredients and has a great balance between sweet, savory and tangy. It is often my item of choice for a quick, healthy lunch or snack.

CO+OP CALENDAR

5/1.....New Sales Cycle
5/4.....Keeping Belfast Beautiful
5/8.....Co-op Class:
Herbal Salves & Tinctures
5/12.....Mother's Day
5/15.....New Sales Cycle
5/17-18.....All Roads Music Festival
5/22.....Co-op Class:
Financial Literacy for small businesses
5/23.....Co-op Board Meeting,
6pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church
5/24.....Belfast Art Walk
5/27.....Memorial Day
5/31.....Love Local Day - Demo TBD
6/1-7.....Owner Appreciation Week
6/5.....New Sales Cycle
6/8.....Belfast Has Pride
6/12.....Co-op Class:
The Power of Food
6/19.....New Sales Cycle
6/26.....Co-op Class:
Knife Care and Sharpening workshop
6/27.....Co-op Board Meeting,
6pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church
6/28.....Love Local Day - Demo TBD
6/28.....Belfast Art Walk

for more community info: ourtownbelfast.org