

ROOTSTOCK

the official newsletter of the BELFAST CO-OP

www.belfast.coop



In January of 2016 I wrote my first article in ROOTSTOCK as the then-Interim General Manager. In that article, titled “Keep on Improving”, I spoke about the need for our co-op to continue to evolve and my belief that we could not back down from a commitment to continual improvement. At the May 12, 2016 “Member-owner Forum” the owners identified some of the weaknesses of the Co-op’s physical space that they would like addressed, including the outdated structure and the crowded feel of the store. In March and April of this year we took a huge leap forward in improving the shopping and working experience of the Belfast Co-op as we reset our center store, condensing the two previous center aisles down to our now existing one and replacing the battered shelving in the bulk liquids aisle. It was a huge undertaking, consisting of months of planning and strategy and several nights of hard work to pull it off. The result of our labor is a store that is much more accessible for shoppers and workers.

The response to these latest improvements has been positive for the most part. I understand the frustration that some shoppers might feel having to alter their shopping patterns or spend extra time finding that one product that they have bought for years. We made a concerted effort to provide plenty of customer service and maps of the new layout during the reset process. Sometimes you are not able to recognize how bad a situation is until you remove yourself from the situation, and in the case of our former working conditions I believe this to be undeniably true. Our shopping aisles were claustrophobically tight and inefficiently



CONTINUED ON P2

IN THIS ISSUE

GM Corner, “Reflecting on Awesomeness” – P1 - P3
 What’s New @Your Co-op – P2
 Just Picked – P3
 Common Cents – P4
 Board Corner, “Election Update” – P5

Love Local Profiles – P6
 Your Voice Counts – P6
 Maine Harvest Bucks – P7
 Lyme Time – P8
 Co-op Calendar – P8

123 HIGH STREET

BELFAST, ME

207.338.2532

7:30AM-8:00PM



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laid out, which made putting product on the shelves during business hours to be an exercise in futility. The fixtures were well built yet well-worn and had served their purpose for a number of years and I am happy to report that they have found a second life with Belfast Community Works, who are planning on using them in their future space. Our new modular shelves are designed to hold more product, often full cases, cutting back on the amount of back-stock that we need to store in the basement or in the stockroom. The future labor savings alone are worth the time and effort it took to replace the wooden shelves. The wide aisles allow us to wheel product directly into the aisle to stock shelves without getting in the way of shoppers trying to meet their needs.

To execute such a dramatic change we did have to reduce some of our inventory offerings, about 15% of the affected sub-departments, however upon review we found that we have several opportunities to either bring back discontinued products or to bring in new products due to the increase in the efficiency of the shelves. We are in the process of evaluating the sets and deciding how to best meet the needs of our shoppers.



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

NEW & IMPROVED PRODUCT LABELING

You will see these symbols on our new shelf tags! Here's what they mean:



**Co+op
Basics**



**FAIRTRADE
Fair Trade**



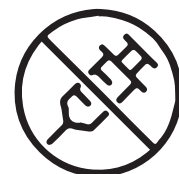
Gluten-Free



**Kosher
Kosher**



Local



**Antibiotic-
Free**



**ORGANIC
Certified
Organic**



Raw



Sustainable



Vegan



**MOFGA
MOFGA Certified
Organic**



Non-GMO



The reset has given us an opportunity that we have not had in a long time to step back and make some decisions about the products that we carry and to assess how that product mix reflects our Ends. As we work towards continual improvement we should also be in the practice of continual evaluation, always making sure that we are doing our best to meet the needs of our community.

I would like to thank all of the workers that put in extra hours and stayed awake at ridiculous hours to pull off this feat. Extra thanks and appreciation to Center Store Manager Judith O'Donovan for acting as Project Manager and ensuring that we stayed on point throughout the entire reset process. Also huge thanks to NCG (National Co-op Grocers) Center Store Retail Specialist Tom Snyder for bringing his experience and organization to the project. Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our owners for supporting your Co-op with your patronage and continuing to engage with us during the reset. I look forward to seeing where the next improvement will take us!

MEETING YOUR NEEDS. MAKING A DIFFERENCE. WORKING TOGETHER.

Saturday, May 20th



**FEST
PASS**

**VIP
PASS**

\$25
ADVANCE

\$30
DOOR

\$35
ADVANCE

\$40
DOOR

Did you know?

You can get your All Roads Music Festival advance tickets at the Co-op, at any register!

**JUST
PICKED**

HI MY NAME IS **Sarah** & I WORK IN THE
Front End HERE AT THE CO-OP.
I JUST PICKED **Brown Cow Maple
Cream-Top Yogurt** BECAUSE
It's a great whole milk
yogurt with a delicious
New England twist! Plus,
made in New Hampshire,
it's local-ish!





Each month, the Belfast Co-op provides the opportunity for the community to donate to a local organization, nominated and voted on by our Owners at our annual meeting.

MAY

Belfast Farmers' Market



The Belfast Farmers' Market was established in 1980 to provide local small growers and craftsmen with an outlet for the sale of fresh picked produce and related agricultural products; to foster an appreciation for Maine's rural resources; and to develop sources of marketing, management and agricultural information for its members.

The Belfast Farmers' Market functions as a non-profit membership organization that oversees the establishment of market guidelines, sets quality standards, promotes the market, and encourages growth of the local/regional food supply. All member-vendors must carry necessary and appropriate licenses and insurances.

JUNE

Waldo County Trail Coalition



Hills to Sea
Waldo County Trails Coalition

The Coalition's objectives are to support community wellness by creating more opportunities for outdoor recreation, environmental education, nature observation, and to deepen our sense of place. The Coalition also desires to support economic opportunity for farms, B & Bs, and area businesses through tourism.

The Waldo County Trails Coalition (WCTC) is a collaborative project of nine Waldo County organizations working to create a year-round recreational footpath stretching from Unity to Belfast. The Coalition envisions the trail as a way to raise environmental awareness, support our working landscape, and connect and strengthen communities.

In the month of March we raised

\$2,607.53

for Friends of Belfast Parks through the
Common Cents program!





BOARD CORNER

by Alessandra Martinelli
BOARD PRESIDENT

Election Update



At the time of this writing, exactly 300 ballots have been cast! Under the Belfast Co-op's bylaws, 10% of owners in good standing must vote in order for an election to be valid.

As we have passed the three week mark, our minimum election period, the election will be now be extended in order to gather at least 106 more ballots and reach a quorum.

If you have voted, thank you! If you have not, you can come into the store to cast your ballot, or download the ballot form from our website at www.belfast.coop/vote/ to print, fill, and mail.

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

Bylaws Committee
Ad hoc



for the next meetings of the

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MAY 4 • MAY 25 • JUNE 23

6 PM SOCIAL TIME,

6:30 PM MEETING

WATERFALL ARTS, 256 HIGH ST.



GLOBAL ENDS STATEMENT

**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.

love local ... PROFILES ...

May



Since 2000, GrandyOats has been mixing up their granolas from oats, honey, and a variety of other local, certified organic, and non-GMO ingredients in Western Maine. Founders Nat and Aaron seek to honor their hippie heritage as “Real Granolas” in their business with a commitment to sustainability and natural harmony. As such, Grandy Oats’ 100% solar-powered bakery in Hiram is New England’s first net-zero carbon-footprint food production facility!

June



Dulse & Rugosa started in 2012 as a way to spread the wonder of Maine’s oceans and especially SEAWEED, with everyone. The mother-daughter team wild harvest or grow their botanicals and seaweeds on Gotts Island, a tiny island off the coast of Acadia National Park in Maine.

Each flower, leaf, and piece of seaweed is hand-picked and solar dried. The dried seaweeds and botanicals are then hand-crafted into soaps, lotions, scrubs, and oils with love and care.



“Awesome! The new shelving is great!! Lighter, brighter, and easier. Yay!”

Thank you! Lighter, brighter, and easier are all wonderful things! Expect more great things to come.

-Carisa
Marketing Manager

“I was sad to hear so many long-timers did not attend the Annual Meeting, and/or have complaints about our Co-op. I have not gone in a few years because I feel my thoughts are never considered. This is sad, hearing so many are, like me, not happy!”

I greatly appreciate all of the owners that came out for this year’s annual meeting. There were a number of familiar faces present and we spent a large portion of the meeting discussing the direction that the owners would like the organization to go moving forward. The board is always looking to increase opportunities for owner engagement beyond the monthly meetings, the quarterly forums, and the annual meeting. I am positive that they would appreciate any suggestion that you might have about how to increase avenues for owner input. I am sorry that you feel you have not been able to be more active in your Co-op. Our success is dependent upon the ongoing support of our owners, and we do our best to meet the needs of as many as we can.

-Doug Johnson
General Manager

“Please move Gluten-Free rice flour further from the High Gluten flour.”

Got it! We’ll look into moving that ASAP!
Thank you for the feedback!

-Evans
Asst. Center Store Manager

thank you for your cooperation!

Maine Harvest Bucks: Promoting Healthy and Local

by Shannon Grimes & Heather Q. Hay

The Co-op has been pleased to participate in the Maine Harvest Bucks program coordinated by Maine Farmland Trust. It's now been a year since we started, and we're excited to share a little more about the program, including some successes we've achieved.

Maine Harvest Bucks is a "nutrition incentive" program that provides more money for low-income shoppers to buy local fruits and vegetables. Customers buying food with SNAP/EBT (previously known as food stamps) receive an extra \$5 to spend on local fruits and vegetables for every \$10 they spend on local foods—soon going up to \$5 for every \$5 spent on local food! It was made possible by a new federal grant that Maine Farmland Trust received from the USDA, the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program. The program not only helps those in need access more healthy food, it supports the local farmers.

This program aligns strongly with our Cooperative Core values. Jen C., one of our cashiers, puts it best: "One of the reasons I like working here, is because we have programs like MHB and Core. Co-ops are often viewed as expensive, MHB helps to make it more affordable to its participants."

This has been a learning process, we've encountered several of challenges, mostly because we're pioneers—nutrition incentive programs have existed at farmers' markets for a while, but this is the first time in Maine they've moved to brick-and-mortar stores, and ours is one of the only retail-based programs nationwide that focuses exclusively on local food.

Since starting the program, our SNAP sales of fruits & vegetables increase more than 50% (including incentives), some months doubling from the last year. More than numbers, we've heard wonderful words from customers. "First, I will say that this program is amazing," says Shannon, a participant. "It is hard to buy organic with EBT and this program makes it possible. I'm very aware that what we put into our bodies has direct link to how the body can thrive. What better way to do this than using local organic products, grown with love and care. Belfast Co-op does an amazing job sourcing from local farmers who are doing their best to grow sustainable, organic foods.

"Belfast Co-op has been vital to the success of the program," says Shannon Grimes, Nutrition Incentive Project Mgr at Maine Farmland Trust. "They've been so supportive with figuring out solutions, sharing that knowledge [statewide & nationally], and truly being an incredible leader."

We're looking forward to continuing to improve and be a part of this program in the coming year and (hopefully!) beyond. If you'd like to help support this program, please let us know!



HOW IT WORKS:

1. Use SNAP/EBT? Ask your cashier how to sign up for Maine Harvest Bucks.
2. Receive your Maine Harvest Bucks customer number.
3. Go shopping! Buy local foods to activate the bonus.
4. Check out. For every \$5 of local food you buy with SNAP/EBT, you'll get a \$5 bonus voucher to spend on local fruits and veggies the next time you shop at that market.
5. Next time you shop, buy local fruits and veggies using your \$5 vouchers.
6. Earn more vouchers every time you buy local food with SNAP/EBT!



For a full list of participating Markets, visit
maineharvestbucks.org

Supported by USDA FINI and Maine Farmland Trust

Maine Harvest Bucks incentives are also available at farmers' markets (including the Belfast Farmers' Market, currently looking for volunteers!), food hubs, CSAs, and farm stands. For a full list, visit maineharvestbucks.org.

One can sign up for Maine Harvest Bucks at Customer Service. For questions about Maine Farmland Trust's program, contact Shannon Grimes, shannon@mainefarmlandtrust.org or 207-338-6575.



LYME TIME

**Tuesday, May 16, 6:30pm @ The Belfast Free Library
with Clinical Herbalist, Steve Byers**

Lyme disease has become a modern epidemic but, there are many ways to protect yourself. This presentation will help increase confidence in preventing and combating lyme and provide knowledge of how tradition and science inform us about lyme disease. This talk will include a discussion of herbal insect sprays, how to integrate herbs that will increase your immune resilience, and herbal therapeutics.

This event is **free** to the public and will be held in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library.

For more information about this event please call the Belfast Free Library at 338-3884 ext.10 or the Belfast Co-op at 338.2532.



The deadline for Rebel Hill native plant orders has been extended to May 6th.

Order Forms are available at the co-op.

Rebel Hill plants are available in our produce section!

SAVE THE DATE



**JULY 29TH
LIVE MUSIC + GOOD FOOD**

MAY

Common Cents: Belfast Farmers' Market
Artist of the month: Rachel Hendrick

May 4 - **Board Meeting** Thurs. 6pm social time, 6:30pm meeting, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.
May 16 - **Lyme Time**, Tuesday 6:30pm, Abbott Room, Belfast Free Library, 106 High St.
May 25 - **Board Meeting** Thurs. 6pm social time, 6:30pm meeting, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.
May 26 - **Love Local Day**, featured vendor Frontier Syrup. 10% off all local products, all day long.

JUNE

Common Cents: Waldo County Trails Coalition
Artist of the month: Leo Coronado & Jaap Helder

June 1-7 - **Owner Appreciation Week, Owners save 10% off one transaction of their choosing.**
June 22 - **Board Meeting** Thurs. 6pm social time, 6:30pm meeting, Waterfall Arts, 256 High St.
June 30 - **Love Local Day**, featured vendor Dulse & Rugosa. 10% off all local products, all day long.