ROOTSTOCK the official newsletter of the BELFASTCO-OP

looking at FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE by Hannah Rreitzer

We in Waldo County are blessed with a landscape of visibly abundant resource: rolling pastures, fertile farm fields and old, dense forests illustrate the rich potential of our own backyards. Yet Maine, for all its bounty, is not exempt from the specter of hunger: over 200,000 of its citizens lack access to adequate nutrition. As of 2014, Maine ranks first in New England for food insecurity, and twelfth in the nation overall. Sara Trunzo, director of Veggies For All (VFA), explains that "food insecure Mainers are often facing big challenges that lead to limited money and/or time to commit to food...health crisis, under- or-unemployment, working at minimum wage, juggling multiple jobs and family obligations, living in a very remote area... The food security issue in Maine is part of a larger deficiency in the industrial food system."

Hunger is not a simple issue – it affects people in rural and urban landscapes alike, across a broad range of income levels – and bringing fresh locally sourced foods to those in need is a complex effort. Often food that is most affordable is highly processed and nutritionally lacking, and much of the knowledge that previous generations held about food growing and preparation (even in rural areas) has diminished over time. Embedded in these logistical knots is also a moral issue: nonprofits and food banks don't want to play the role of benevolent nutrition counselors to people who don't get to choose what they're receiving or perhaps lack the kitchen know-how to turn raw materials into meals their families would enjoy. How should aid groups provide resources without bias or pressure toward the people they service? This is a very blurry line to toe, and one that is continually being redrawn as organizations refine their tactics.

One approach is to empower low-income Mainers as consumers through programs like the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant (FINI). A component of the 2014 Farm Bill that aims to incentivize produce consumption, FINI is modeled on a program piloted by Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) and Maine Local Foods Access Network (MLFAN). In partnership with national nonprofit Wholesome Wave, this USDA initiative is concerned with getting fresh vegetables and fruits to low-income populations. Based on research showing that many U.S. citizens are not consuming enough produce to meet their basic nutritional needs, proponents of FINI reason that promoting healthy patterns of nourishment may trigger a positive ripple effect at the community level. It's the old ounce of prevention vs. pound of cure adage in action – boosting overall health will eventually decrease the amount of income people will need to funnel into healthcare treatment costs.

Under this program, SNAP/EBT benefits can be applied in several ways. As summarized on the MFT website: "Sometimes incentives are offered as direct discounts. For example, a shopper might purchase \$40 of produce, but their card is swiped for just \$20. The farmer is still paid full price, thanks to the incentive funds. Sometimes incentives are offered as "bonus bucks" to be used on future market visits...a shopper purchases \$40 worth of food, and their EBT card is swiped for \$40. They are then given \$20 of bonus bucks to use on a future visit." The program, which will support SNAP/EBT efforts at more than thirty Maine farmers markets over the next three years, has the added bonus of promoting local agriculture and self-sustaining communities. Mike Gold, Farm Viability Program Manager for MFT, explains that "using nutrition incentives to help those in need gain better access to fresh produce is leading to increased sales for farmers, which is critically important with so many young and beginning farmers taking root in Waldo County."

Additionally, MFT attained another FINI grant to provide comparable SNAP benefits at some alternative venues, including food hubs, food co-ops and similar markets. MFT also offers a Community Farm Share opportunity to Mainers who receive SNAP/EBT benefits, which gives access to local farm goods at reduced prices.

123 HIGH STREET BELFAST, ME 207.338.2532 7:30AM-8

CONTINUED ON P8

TED ON 1005

IN THIS ISSUE

2015

NOV.-DEC.

ISSUE 10

Looking At Food Insecurity In Maine - PI Member-Owner Forum - P2 Creating A Culture Of Accountability - P3 From Round Up To Common Cents - P3 Being A Co+op Member In A Changing Economy- P4 ROOTSTOCK newsletter by Kate Harris & Doug Johnson

Farmers Union Taking Action - P5 New Faces @ The Co-op- P6 Turkey Pre-Orders-P6 Know Your Farmer - P7 CO-OP Calendar - P8



Please join us for our first Member-Owner Forum!

The board of director's Membership Committee cordially invites all Belfast Co-op member-owners to participate in our first quarterly Member-Owner Forum, taking place on Wednesday, November 11 at 6pm in the Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library, located at 106 High Street in downtown Belfast. The topics will be: Co-operative Principle I – Voluntary and Open Membership; followed by a discussion of Co-op pricing. Each topic will be introduced with a brief presentation, followed by a facilitated conversation.

The purpose of these forums is to encourage, welcome, and grow member-owner engagement in our Co-op community. Our goal is to provide our member-owners with a better understanding of our co-op, a venue where all can feel heard, and authentic opportunities for active participation in shaping our co-op. Please mark your calendars and plan to join this ongoing conversation and effort to engage our member-owners with their co-op! All member-owners are encouraged to attend and bring a friend; all are welcome.

Subsequent forums will be held quarterly with topics to be announced.

If you have any questions, please contact Emily, Membership Services Administrator at the Belfast Co-op, at 338.2532 or **emily@belfast.coop**.



GENERAL MANAGEMENT Brittany Baird BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Braybrook, president Alessandra Martinelli, vice president Jerry Savitz, treasurer Phil Prince, secretary Bindy Pendleton Debbi Lasky Betsy Garrold Patti LeClair Kip Penney Zafra Whitcomb Doug Johnson, staff rep. Judith O'Donovan, staff rep.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance Committee boardfinance@belfast.coop Membership Committee

boardmembership@belfast.coop

Board Development Committee boarddevelopment@belfast.coop

Long Range Planning Committee boardlongrange@belfast.coop

Elections and Nominations Committee boardelections@belfast.coop

> Annual Meeting Committee Ad hoc

Public Interaction Committee Ad hoc Bylaws Committee Ad hoc



CREATING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

by Alessandra Martinelli Belfast Co-op Board Vice President

As the leaves change outside the Co-op, we find some leaves turning over inside as well. A large part of the Board's work over the past year has been taking steps to increase accountability throughout the organization, principally through our adoption of policy governance. Policy Governance is a tool that boards use to empower their general manager and themselves to do the work of the Co-op through adherence to set policies agreed upon by the entire board. These policies are reviewed and reported upon monthly, and compliance or non-compliance with these policies determines how well the co-op leadership is doing. Encouraging a culture of accountability throughout the Board and management has a direct effect on the success of the store and the well-being of the workers.

As of this writing, your board is finishing our search for the next general manager of the Belfast Co-op. Part of the process for making this incredibly crucial decision has been for each director to contemplate which qualities and virtues they wish the next cooperative leader would bring to the Co-op. The person we are seeking must embrace the dynamic nature of our food system and be able to adapt with flexibility and assuredness to changes in the marketplace. We want the person we hire to be accountable, to take responsibility for every great achievement and every unfortunate mistake. As we have witnessed in other food co-ops, when operational issues are neglect ed, they are apt to morph and grow into crises. The long term health of our co-op depends on our cooperative leaders "walking the walk," holding everyone (including themselves) to high standards. That is an expectation that we hold for our next general manager.

Another aspect of accountability the Board is exploring is improving our organization's ability to model and encourage the cooperative values and principles which guide us. Fostering education, training, and information among our worker and member-owners is fundamental to our identity and to maintaining the connection to our cooperative roots. We are all responsible for working together and empowering those around us. In response to this charge, our Membership Committee will hold the first of our new quarterly Member-Owner Forums on November 11, to explore the seven cooperative principles as well as issues surrounding the Belfast Co-op. Our hope is that our member-owners will utilize this opportunity to engage and provide guidance to the Co-op leaders.

As the Board works to create a culture of accountability, we are dependent on every member-owner and worker-owner to continue this work with us. We need feedback and direction to continue to serve you and meet the needs of our community. I implore all member-owners to hold yourself accountable to this business you own. Ask what the Co-op means to you now and what you want the Co-op to mean in the future. Hearing your thoughts and concerns is vital to the Board's ability to do their work. Areas where you can interact with your co-op include:

- Taking part in Member-Owner Forums
- Attending monthly board meetings
- Voting in Board of Director elections
- Running for the Board of Directors
- Serving on a Board Committee
- · Participating in surveys
- Shopping at the Co-op

Use the tools of our representative democracy to maintain the health of this important community-owned cooperative business. Our food cooperative is more than just a grocery store, it is a radical economic enterprise!



In March 2013, we launched our "Round Up for Community" program, affording Belfast Co-op shoppers the opportunity to round up the total of their purchases to the nearest dollar, donating their extra change to provide support to a highlighted community organization. This program helps us to fulfill our commitment to the seventh cooperative principle, Concern for Community. Up until now, we have highlighted two organizations per month. Beginning in 2016, selected recipients will receive a full month to accrue support. Recipient organizations for 2016 have been selected based upon how well their mission and goals align with Belfast Co-op's Ends. Beginning in 2016, the twelve recipients for the following year will be voted on at each year's Annual Meeting. Look for opportunities to nominate recipients early in 2016!

Our 2016 Common Cents recipients are:

January – Belfast Community Television February – WERU Community Radio March – Coastal Mountains Land Trust April – Restorative Justice Project of the Midcoast May – Avian Haven June – Maine Food Corps July – Friends of the Belfast Free Library August – Maine Farmland Trust September – MOFGA October – Howard Bowers Fund November – Belfast Soup Kitchen December – New Hope for Women

being a COP member in a changing economy

by Brittany Baird

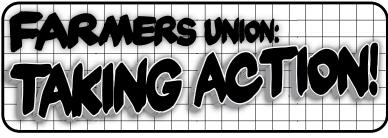
Belfast Co-op Interim General Manager In the 70s and 80s, when modern food co-ops first began to take root across the country, the word co-op was synonymous with low-prices. According to a recent nationwide survey, food co-ops across the country are having an increasingly difficult time meeting their member's pricing needs. Only 28% of respondents said that their co-op was meeting their needs well or very-well. What has changed? The ability to provide affordable, quality foods to our membership is an increasing challenge in a rapidly changing food economy. In order to understand the obstacles we face, it's important to understand how the food industry has changed over recent years. Many food co-ops, including Belfast, started as grassroots buying clubs that provided members access to organic foods which were unavailable elsewhere. Forty years ago, when the Belfast Co-op began, it was possible for small groups of people to get significant discounts from distributors for buying groceries in bulk. As time went on, small "mom & pop" grocery distributors were bought up by large corporations. As the distributors continued to monopolize, so did the grocery stores they served.

The network of food distribution today is geared toward multibillion dollar corporations, many of whom have their own centralized warehouses, a fleet of tractor trailers, and tremendous buying power. The other big grocery store in town (rhymes with Blannaford), is owned by a Belgium-based company that also owns, Shop n Save, Food Lion, Giant, and the online service Pea Pod. They are currently in the process of merging with a Dutch-owned company to create one of the largest supermarket conglomerates in the world, worth around \$29 billion. To give that some perspective, this year the Co-op had about \$8 million in sales. We don't look at money the way large retailers do, and I think we are kinda proud of that. We get to operate on an entirely different value system, where people and planet are equally as important as profit. We like being small and regardless of the current challenges, we are determined to find ways to stay competitive in the changing marketplace. As part of the launch of our Co-op Basics program, we are putting a ton of energy into using savvier and more strategic pricing to make the Co-op more affordable for our member-owners. We have permanently lowered the price of over 100 staple items in the store. There are some seriously impressive deals, like \$0.89/lb organic, fairtrade bananas, \$2.99 organic cereals, and bulk local eggs for 30 cents each. Our goal is to provide an affordable shopping experience for people of all income levels. I recently heard feedback that our Co-op Basics signage looked too "grocery-store-ish". I assure you, we are the same crunchy, rag-tag bunch you have always known. Co-op Basics represents a renewed commitment to meeting your needs by giving you the same grocery-store-ish low prices as our competitors (and we also happen to have a guy on staff whose great at making signs.)

As the competitive landscape changes, food co-ops across the country are starting to realize that we are no longer the "only game in town." Which brings us to the most important question; who are we and why are we different? First and foremost, we are a cooperative, guided by cooperative principles, who just happened to choose a grocery store as our economic engine. According to our ends policies, our sole purpose for existence (yes it's that deep) is that our 3,800+ member-owners 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; and an invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace." What we have created here in Belfast is not just a food store, it's a revolutionary economic model.

When I first started at the Co-op, I was teasing the marketing staff that our tagline "your trusted grocer," might sound too gimmicky. Everyday huge corporations exploit the concepts of trust and care in their advertising. I personally find it hard to believe that executives of international, multibillion dollar companies actually care about me-and if I wanted to ask, I wouldn't be sure who to call. What I do know for sure, is that co-ops care. You don't need to go overseas to meet the owners of the Belfast Co-op; you don't even need to leave Waldo County. Our owners are your families, your friends, and your neighbors. We are not simply a store that serves a community, we are the community. I shop at co-ops because I want to live in a world where my food supply is controlled by my community-and I want to live in a community that is healthy, connected, and empowered. If you are interested in a deeper connection with the Co-op, would like to join the discussion about pricing, or would like more perspective about what being a member-owner means, I encourage you to attend our first member-owner forum, being held November 11th at the Belfast Free Library at 6:00pm. Hope to see you there.





by Kate Snyder Director of Membership and Programs, NEFU

If you're a longtime reader of this newsletter, you know the Belfast Co-op is a member of New England Farmers Union. This partnership benefits Belfast and all regional food co-ops, the farmers who supply them, and YOU, the consumers who depend on both for healthy, locally grown food. For those of you new to Farmers Union, the New England Farmers Union is one of 26 state or regional chapters of National Farmers Union (NFU), a progressive agriculture organization that has been advocating for family farmers for 113 years. We want to share a few news items with you:

The 2015 NFU Legislative Fly-In

In mid-September, 275 family farmers gathered in Washington, D.C., to receive briefings from NFU staff, USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden, and others on the status of legislation and programs impacting farmers. Five New England Farmers Union members attendedincluding two Organic Valley dairy farmers from Maine-meeting with our Congressional delegation and staffers on key issues for New England growers.

The NFU Action Center

Earlier this month, NFU launched a new online advocacy tool, the NFU Action Center, which will allow users to keep track of key issues affecting family agriculture and rural communities, and take action on these issues with the click of a button. New England Farmers Union is happy to spread the word to its members and those working toward a more just and sustainable food system that through this tool, users will be able to:

- Stay up-to-date with key issues, bills and votes on Capitol Hill
- Send pre-written letters to representatives and federal agencies
- Sign petitions
- Share stories
- Tweet at representatives and federal agencies

Take a look at the new NFU Action Center at the web address http:// cqrcengage.com/nationalfarmersunion/home, where you can sign up to become an Advocate of the Family Farmer and try some of the engagements ("Write a letter," and "Tweet @ your representative"). Please help us spread the word about this citizen engagement tool!

New England Farmers Union Convention: Gearing Up for Success

You are welcome to attend New England Farmers Union's sixth annual convention, Gearing Up for Success, to be held at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, NH, on Nov. 6-8. Attendees can expect informative workshops, engaging speakers, lots of chances to network, and the opportunity to participate in setting our policy priorities for the coming year. It's truly democracy in action!

Between the NFU Action Center, the Legislative Fly-In, and our annual convention, you can bet we are strengthening farmers' voices in Washington, D.C.! Thank you for being a part of it. Working together, we are — as our motto states — United for Family Agriculture.

Find more information at our website,

www.newenglandfarmersunion.org.

New England Farmers Union (NEFU) works to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life of family farmers, fishermen, foresters, nursery growers, and consumers in all six New England states. The Belfast Co-op is a business member of NEFU.



Dairy farmers and NEFU members Chelsea Kruse, Allison Bates, and Mary Castonguay during the NFU Legislative Fly In in front of the Capitol Building.



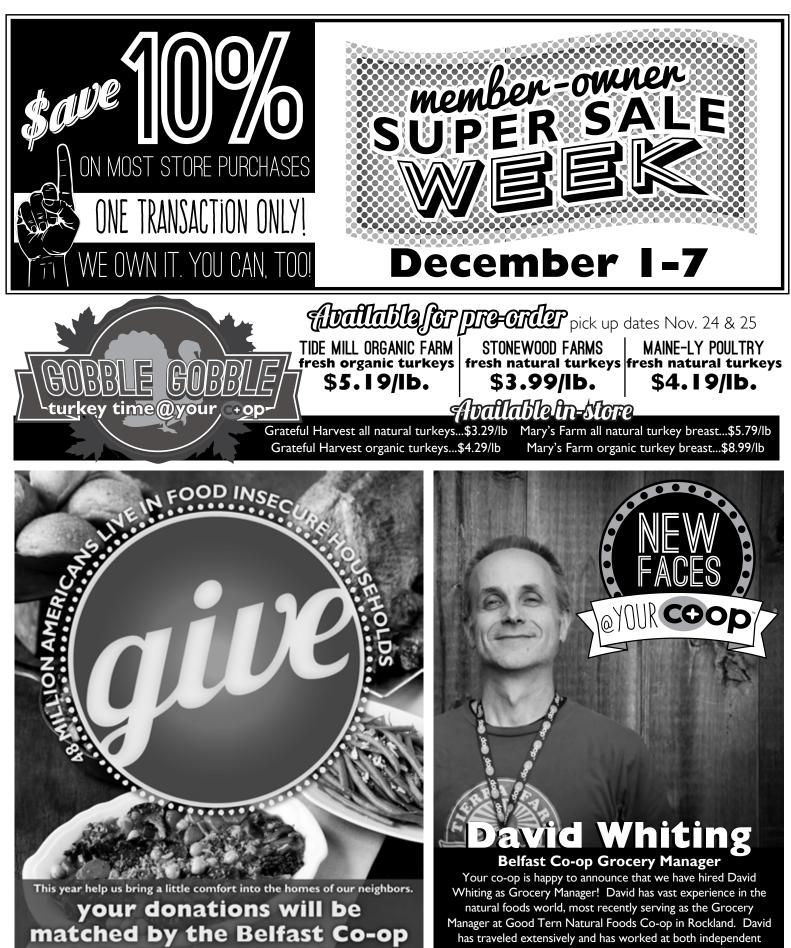
A thriving, just, and sustainable local food economy

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.



Donations will go towards purchasing healthy food that the Northport Food Pantry will be distributing to local families in need.

DONATIONS CAN BE MADE AT THE REGISTERS

retailers and co-ops from California to New Zealand. Welcome to the Belfast Co-op!

by Betsy Garrold ThePopulistFarmer.wordpress.com

Carly DelSignore and Aaron Bell represent the 8th generation to farm Tide Mill Organic Farm in Edmunds, Maine. The 1,600 acre working coastal farm was founded in 1765 by Aaron's ancestor, Robert Bell, who emigrated from Scotland as a teenager. Robert installed a mill under the bridge which connects the various farm parcels, harnessing the tidal power of the Crane Mill Stream to grind wheat and corn. Their four children are members of the 9th generation on the family farm, currently consisting of nine young, lively offspring. Nine generations later, Tide Mill Farm continues to be a thriving diversified farm on the coast of Maine, run by this group of young farmers who have deservedly received much good press for their hard work at both reviving and keeping alive Maine's rural traditions.

They have recently added a poultry processing plant to the diverse enterprises which keep this multi-generational farm afloat, adding yet another important link to the local food infrastructure in Maine. This facility eliminates hours of travel to the next closest processing plant in Gardiner, helping farmers Downeast maximize their meat poultry income.

In 2014, Carly launched an Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign which successfully raised over \$25,000 from 195 contributors in just one month to help with construction costs. The entire project will cost upward of \$600,000 and included funding from Slow Money Maine investors, in-kind contributions from their current businesses, \$200,000 dollars worth of low interest loans, and grants from individuals, the State of Maine, and foundations. Aaron and Carly are still fundraising for a wood furnace and more refrigeration to meet the needs of the facility. They hope to have it USDA inspected by 2016, which will allow Tide Mill to sell their poultry across state lines and, as Aaron says in their fundraising video, "put an organic chicken in every pot in New England." Prior to building the current facility, they were processing their poultry in a "tiny, cold and inefficient" 8 by 20 foot trailer, which prevented them from being able to keep up with the increasing demand for their products. With the new facility, they will be able to process year-round, greatly expanding their capacity. It will also allow them to process neighboring farmer's birds, expanding the economic and job opportunities in one of the poorest counties in the nation.

Tide Mill Organic Farm

Tide Mill was one of the farms involved in the sadly failed MOO Milk (Maine's Own Organic Milk Company) venture. All Carly had to say about that particular chapter in the farm's history was that it was a "major bummer." They, along with several other Maine farmers, are grateful to Horizon Organic for continuing to make the pick-up run for their milk, which is then processed into fluid milk under the Horizon label at their Massachusetts facility.

Tide Mill Creamery, another dairy enterprise on the farm, is run by Aaron's cousin, Rachel Bell and her husband, Nate Horton. Tide Mill Creamery, which milks a herd of certified organic Nubian goats and also buys milk from Aaron and Carly's certified organic cow dairy, was recently among ten Maine Cheese Guild members who won recognition for their products at the American Cheese Society Competition. They won first place for their "Little Bloom", a blended organic milk camembert.

Here at the Co-op, we are fortunate to be one of the 28 stops that the Tide Mill delivery truck makes on its Tuesday route down the coast of Maine from Edmunds to Portland, dropping off raw milk, poultry, beef and pork. Our co-op is also one of only seven places in Maine where you can pre-order your pasture-raised organic holiday turkey from their farm.

When you see the big refrigerator truck in the Co-op's parking lot this fall, you should feel proud that our co-op is part of the solution, helping to keep farms thriving throughout the state, and proud to be supporting the organic way of life. As Carly says "certified organic meat is a big deal.... it is the only way you know you are eating meat that has not been fed GMOs, antibiotics, hormones and given access to outside. But often that isn't enough....choosing Tide Mill Farm certified organic meat supports animals that are treated with respect, from a family scale, transparent, local and certified organic farm. "

To learn more about the Farm, please visit their website at:

www.tidemillorganicfarm.com



Organic Farm

photo by lane Bel

LOOKING AT FOOD INSECURITY IN MAINE CONTINUED FROM P1

Many organizations, such as the Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB), are also working hard to combat hunger at the local level. Through creative programs like Mainers Feeding Mainers (which purchases produce from local farms and distributes it to food banks), GSFB works with more than four hundred nonprofit partner agencies in each of Maine's sixteen counties, such as shelters, soup kitchens, and community centers. The GSFB purchases food with donated funds from private citizens, businesses, and grants, and provides it to local agencies to distribute. Relying heavily on volunteer efforts and donations of funds and foodstuffs, GSFB dispersed over 21 million pounds of goods in 2014 alone.

Veggies For All is another prime example of an organization taking direct action to bridge the gap between local agriculture and people in need. Unique in that it deems itself a food bank farm, VFA sustainably cultivates several acres of mixed vegetable crops in donated space at the Unity College campus and formerly underused plots in the surrounding area. The produce – typically good winter storage crops like squash, onions, cabbage and carrots – is cultivated and harvested by volunteers and then dispersed to food pantries. Though a small and relatively new organization, VFA has nonetheless made huge strides, distributing over 100,000 pounds of produce to their neighbors since forming in 2007. Seven years after its formation, VFA became a project of MFT, further synchronizing the goals of their staff and volunteers.

All of these efforts are taking measured aim at problems with complex origins. As Trunzo notes, there are numerous "wonderful, effective programs...and all of us could serve better by more closely integrating our programs and learning from each other's work." Among top priorities for that work, she lists waste recovery and reduction in the food stream, improved infrastructure around storage, transportation and processing of food, and education efforts around the intricate webs of agriculture, food and nutrition.

In regard to the last point on that list, in early 2016 our Belfast Coop, along with the Belfast Free Library, will be hosting Feeding Maine, a photography collaboration between GSFB and MFT. Documenting people on the front lines of food insecurity awareness and action, the exhibit will travel across Maine to raise awareness of hunger and the campaigns to end it within our state. Ellen Sabina, Outreach Director at MFT, said in an email exchange: "Our hope is that the exhibit is a platform for communities to spark conversations about how they can grow local food access in their area." One thing is certain – neglecting to notice, discuss, and continually revisit these issues will never release Mainers from the grip of hunger. We need to keep unearthing the complex roots of these issues if there is to be any hope of holistic solutions.

For more information on these programs, and to learn about volunteer opportunities, visit their websites or social media pages, call or visit their home offices, or talk to representatives at your local farmers markets and community centers.

Maine Farmland Trust: www.mainefarmlandtrust.org Good Shepherd Food Bank: www.gsfb.org Veggies For All: www.veggiesforall.org Wholesome Wave: www.wholesomewave.org

For a detailed breakdown of food insecurity data: www.feedingamerica.org



NOVEMBER

Round Up for Community: Penobscot Bay Singers, Good Shepherd Food Bank of Maine Featured Artist: Eric Leppanen 11/11 Member-Owner Forum Wed. 6pm, Belfast Free Library (see page 2) 11/17 "Food For Thought, Food for Life" film screening & panel Tues. 7pm, Colonial Theater, 163 High St, Belfast – followed by a panel with Eliot Coleman. \$5 suggested donation. Sponsors: Sustainable Harvest International, Maine Farmland Trust, Belfast Co-op. FMI about the film: foodforthoughtfilm.com 11/20 Wine Tasting & Art Opening Fri. 7-8pm, Café – Featured wines 10% off during tasting. 11/20 Love LOCAL Day Fri- featuring Little Lad's 10% off all Maine-made products all day. 11/26 Closed Thanksgiving Day DECEMBER 12/1-7 Member-Owner Super Sale Week Round Up for Community: Peace Ridge Sanctuary, Cold Comfort Theater Featured Artist: Carol Mathieu Fowler 12/4 6pm Early Closing for Staff Holiday Party 12/18 Love LOCAL Day Fri. featuring Bixby Bars10% off all Maine-made products all day. 12/18 Wine Tasting & Art Opening Fri. 7-8pm, Café – Featured wines 10% off during tasting.

- 12/24 5pm Early Closing Christmas Eve
- 12/25 Closed Christmas Day
- 12/31 9pm Closing New Year's Eve

I/I/16 Closed New Year's Day

For more information about Co-op events, visit our online calendar at: www.belfast.coop

- O PCALEND