

# ROOTSTOCK

ISSUE #29

NOV-DEC 2018

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

## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

**FROM THE DESK OF THE GM**

**IN EARLY OCTOBER I SPENT TWO DAYS IN PORTLAND, MAINE WITH OVERTWENTY OF MY CO-OP PEERS WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES IN THE CO-OP ECONOMY.**

This retreat, organized by the National Co-op Grocers (NCG) Eastern Corridor, brought together leaders from not only the Maine co-ops, but also folks from New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and as far away as Greensboro, North Carolina. This is the third such retreat held in the past year and they all have focused on some aspect of our operations that is both universal as well as specific to co-ops in their respective communities. We discussed how to facilitate conversations about equity and growth with our staff, our boards, and our owners in a way that is empowering and adds value to the co-op economy. This retreat combined valuable social networking and peer relationship building with

discussions about tackling difficult issues that are impacting co-ops across the nation. Facilitated retreats, such as this one, are a prime example of the spirit of the fifth cooperative principle: Education, Training, and Information.

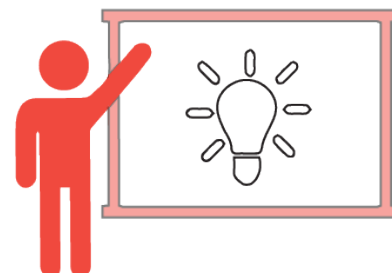
I can't think of any aspect of our operations that I hold in higher regard than worker professional development. Cemented in our co-op culture from its formation, our co-op seeks to develop our workforce to meet their highest personal potential and to contribute their greatest impact on the cooperative economy. This past year we sent workers to over fifteen training and development events and held two training intensives locally for our staff. In addition to the two annual meetings that I am contractually obligated to attend as the Co-op's designated representative, there are national conferences for our Marketing, Finance & IT, Human Resources, Grocery & Wellness, and Fresh Department leaders (Produce, Meat, Cheese, and Prepared Foods). Earlier this year we also invited two consultants from CDS Consulting Co-op to come to Belfast for a two day all-staff training on Cooperative Service, an engaging exploration of the role of our co-op in the community and our obligation to champion the cooperative model.

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

## P5: EDUCATION, TRAINING, & INFORMATION

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**BELFAST.COOP 123 HIGH STREET BELFAST, MAINE 04915 207.338.2532**

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In addition to operational trainings, we have an established relationship with Clarity Services, a local firm that teaches non-violent communication techniques. This relationship is entering its third year. Through this collaboration, over 25 members of our staff have been taught basic and advanced non-violent communication which has had a dramatic impact on how we relate to each other and how we manage our workplace conflicts.

At the Board of Directors level, this past year we sent two directors to the annual Consumer Cooperative Management Association (aka CCMA, read the article on pg 6) conference in Portland, OR. This conference brings together the best and the brightest co-op minds to share experiences and strategies for building competencies in co-op governance. This conference also emphasizes the important role that our co-ops play in promoting positive social and political justice.

Along with CCMA, directors participate in local and regional development activities alongside their peers from other New England food co-ops, including the Cooperative Board Leadership 101 training and the Co-op Café, a regional facilitated strategic conversation around a common theme (read more about this event on page 4). The work of the Board is difficult and often unrecognized, so any opportunity for Directors to gain skills and build common understanding is worth the investment.



Doug and his co-op peers in Portland, Maine at the recent Eastern corridor NCG retreat

It is hard to quantify the value of the fifth cooperative principle when looking at financial statements, but I witness it when I overhear our workers discussing cooperatives with a potential new owner or when our Directors engage in a thoughtful discussion of the future resiliency of cooperatives in the local food economy. The Belfast Co-op invests in our workers and our leaders, a fact that is evidenced by the professionalism and cooperation of our staff and our Board. We are part of a revolution, and the greatest weapon that we have to combat the challenges of the modern food system is education.

-Doug Johnson, General Manager

## who we are:

### OWNERS:

4332

### STAFF:

80+

### 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  
Violet Zerbe  
Heather Selin

### BOARD COMMITTEES

#### Finance:

[boardfinance@belfast.coop](mailto:boardfinance@belfast.coop)

#### Owner Engagement:

[boardowners@belfast.coop](mailto:boardowners@belfast.coop)

#### Board Development:

[boarddevelopment@belfast.coop](mailto:boarddevelopment@belfast.coop)

#### Expansion:

[expansion@belfast.coop](mailto:expansion@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, 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, these guidelines are used by cooperatives to lead their values into practice.

**Principle 5: Education Training and Information,** states that: Cooperatives provide education and training for their owners, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperative(s). They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of cooperation.

Principle 5 is alive at the Belfast Co-op through the ongoing networking, training, and conference events staff and board members regularly attend as we report on in this issue. However, we incorporate this principle into our everyday work culture. Employees regularly receive continual on-the-job training. New skills are developed and encouraged in individuals while individuals are encouraged to incorporate their knowledge and ideas into their respective departments .

The Co-op hosts regularly occurring classes available to the community on a wide variety of topics that align with our ends statement- from cooking, to health, to community building. The Co-op's Board of Directors has organized and continues to organize periodic forums on topics including Cooperative business structure and food resiliency. The board has also included the community in discussions regarding our expansion.

Members of our community, owners and shoppers alike, come into the Co-op everyday with the knowledge that they will find informed and helpful advice from our staff. Answering questions about alternative diets, recipes, and hard to find items are part of our everyday work culture.

*The Co-op strives to invest in our work force and contribute valuable skills and knowledge to the people who work for the Co-op, whether they stay for 6 months or more than 10 years. Our ends policy states that the Co-op exists so that... we have an invested, engaged, & empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, & equitable workplace.*

## P5 AT THE BELFAST CO-OP



Center Store Assistant Manager Evans trains our new buyer Bonnie on ordering systems and procedures



Co-op Board of Directors lead a question and answer session on the possibilities available for the Co-op's expansion



Facilities manager Carmine instructs Meat & Cheese Assistant Manager Joe F. on Forklift driving and safety



Active participants in one of our recent hands-on cooking classes: Intro to Fermented Sauerkraut



This October 13-14, seven intrepid Co-op board and staff members\* climbed into a van and headed to Keene, NH to attend a “Co-op Café” sponsored by the CDS Consulting Co-op, National Co-op Grocers, Neighboring Food Co-op Association, and other co-op organizations. Co-op Cafés provide an annual forum for co-op board and staff representatives to hear presentations on a particular theme or issue, and exchange insights, ideas, and experiences with other co-ops on that theme.

## CO-OP CAFÉ

### EXPANDING THE VISION of WE

The theme of this Café was “Expanding the Vision of We”. The conversations explored how co-ops can better meet the needs of their current customers and communities and reach potential new customers while being a force for social transformation. Topics ranged from customer service, to co-op’s community connections, to how co-ops can include diverse populations (e.g. diversity of race, income, culture), and ways that co-ops can champion initiatives that better our communities.

Two particular presentations resonated strongly with our group. One was by Sarah Hannigan, GM of the successful Whole Foods Co-op, which has been located for decades in a low-income neighborhood in Duluth, Minnesota. When a nearby corner grocery store closed down a few years ago, the WF Co-op was disheartened to hear that many community residents did not think of the co-op as an inclusive alternative. Wanting to be more relevant to its neighbors, the Co-op initiated a series of community dialogues, meeting with local social workers, catering neighborhood events, and listening deeply and seriously to how they can better welcome their community. Hannigan said “It’s not the story that we tell about ourselves, it’s the story our neighbors tell about us” that is truly important and truly transformative. Watch the video: [tinyurl.com/yc4dyn33](http://tinyurl.com/yc4dyn33)

Another strong presentation was by Jade Barker, an African American CDS consultant, who has been involved in co-ops since her university days 30 years ago. Despite her history, she came to realize that she did not always feel that “everyone is welcome” at the co-ops she was involved in. She challenged participants to be curious and listen to the voices of the less powerful, ending with: “The question is not, ‘Are you a racist,’ but, ‘Are you actively working against racism?’” Her experience led to a fantastic paper published by the CDS Consulting Co-op titled “Everyone Welcome? Personal Narratives about Race and Food Co-ops”. Available at: [tinyurl.com/yaagxa2b](http://tinyurl.com/yaagxa2b)

These and other presentations provided anchors and inspiration for small group discussions about what customer service and inclusivity meant to the participants, and how to incorporate it in their home co-ops and communities.



The van ride there was a great opportunity for everyone to get to know each other better, which helped set the tone. The van ride home was animated with discussion about each of our individual insights from the Café, and how these might coalesce into concrete actions for our co-op. It is exciting and gratifying to see and feel so much shared excitement and to have the opportunity to bring it back to our wider co-op community.

All of us have an opportunity to make our community better each and every day—through the interactions we have with each other and the support we show to our local businesses and the co-op itself. It’s up to us to make sure we are including everyone who wants to “sit at the table”—and that we are doing the work of asking the questions that ensure that everyone is truly welcome at the Belfast Co-op.

*\*Board members and Staff pictured above, L to R. Back row, board members Andrew Watkins, Shannon Grimes, David Gibson, and staff Jamie Cermak. Front Row, staff Gina Law, board Heather Selin, & staff Annie Bussiere*



CDS Consulting Co-op



SOLUTIONS FOR COOPERATIVES

**THE BELFAST SOUP KITCHEN (BSK)** The mission of BSK is to provide a safe community where the guests can find food, comfort, and hope for the future, in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. BSK has been in existence for over 10 years in a variety of places in the city of Belfast. The goals of the BSK have always been to address some of the many causes of poverty through education, health, nutrition, and providing a social network. We have grown as an organization that originally fed up to 40 people per day to one that now feeds 70+ people per day, five days a week, year-round, at no cost to individual guests. The Belfast Soup Kitchen is different than many soup kitchens in the U.S. in that it was specifically created to minimize stigmatization. Additionally, BSK and its host of dedicated volunteers provide to the community: groceries for emergency support to individuals, opportunities for work experience and community service, connections to a public health nurse, and connections with literacy volunteers to aid in GED assistance.

More info at <https://belfastsoupkitchen.com>



**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF WALDO COUNTY (HFHWC)** is a local Habitat for Humanity International affiliate dedicated to the belief that all people deserve decent, safe, and affordable housing on terms they can afford. They build simple, energy-efficient homes for Waldo County's eligible applicants with a spirit of hope and unity. The essence of HFHWC is inviting diverse individuals to find common ground through using a hammer and sharing a goal. We build relationships as well as houses, along with the pride in service, homeownership, and community.

HFHWC is currently on House Build #5. Volunteers are always needed and they would welcome your expertise and enthusiasm on their build site. Additionally, planning and work is underway for opening the Waldo County ReStore by June 2020 which will give them an income stream to steadily increase their build program and their community impact.

More info at [www.waldocountyhabitat.org/](http://www.waldocountyhabitat.org/)



**ROUND UP AT THE REGISTER** in support of worthy causes - each month at #yourbelfastcoop. In September co-op shoppers donated \$3,542.16 to the Friends of the Belfast Free Library and in October \$3,207.28 to Food for Maine's Future.

## HOME BREWING BEER

### HANDS ON COOKING CLASS



**Wednesday November 28 6-7:30pm**

at the Unitarian Universalist Church,  
37 Miller St. Belfast

Home brewing might be the worlds most ancient hobby. If you are a beer fan and interested in taking your appreciation to new heights, learning how to brew your own at home might be the perfect hobby to take on this winter.

In this introduction to home brewing we will be going over the basics of equipment, ingredients, fermentation as it relates to beer, bottling and proper sanitary practices. We will also brew a batch of beer with an extract of specialty grain as a live demonstration. This is an introductory level class and perfect for anyone who is just beginning or thinking about getting started in this wonderful hobby.

Our instructor, Leo Coronado, is the Co-op's beer and wine buyer. He has experience working at production breweries in California and has taught many home brewing classes in Oregon. He is always happy to talk about home brewing and share knowledge with fellow fermentation enthusiasts.

**Please register in advance as space is limited!**

If you are interested in signing up for one of these classes, please call the Co-op @ 338-2532  
Additional questions may be sent to [jamie@belfast.coop](mailto:jamie@belfast.coop)

# *expanding the belfast co-op*

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM CCMA 2018

BY VIOLET ZERBE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Consumer Cooperative Management Association organizes an annual conference that I had the good fortune to attend this year. Representing the Belfast Co-op along with my fellow Director and Board Treasurer Ernie Cooper and our General Manager Doug Johnson we traveled the red eye flight to Portland, Oregon. Portland is home to many unique and creative consumer cooperatives including a wicked cool printing press, an extensive tool library, and many diverse food co-ops. Additional to the co-ops in our host city, I was wowed by the sheer number of attendees representing cooperatives from all over the nation. I was impressed by how well connected the Belfast Co-op is in this welcoming cooperative community. I made new friends from New Mexico to Alaska and we all came together to share information and try to make our co-ops more resilient, fruitful enterprises. This gathering elucidated an obvious but invaluable lesson; we at the Belfast Co-op are not alone in our efforts or our challenges.

As we explore our options to undertake an expansion project, hearing the successes and pitfalls of sister co-ops was illuminating. Lo and behold, we need not reinvent the wheel! There is something to be said for talking face to face with board members and managers who successfully oversaw projects similar to what we aspire to achieve.



COURAGEOUS EVOLUTION

Strategies for Strong Co-ops and Communities

More sobering than the successes, I spoke with folks who lost their co-op six months after they opened their expanded doors. In that circumstance, their cash flow projections fell extremely short and they had no other options. When I asked how the Belfast Co-op could avoid such failure, it became clear that there is no cookie cutter answer for guaranteed success. We are looking to undertake a multi-faceted project and there will be significant risk no matter how well we prepare. Sure, maybe a grand opening in spring might see better sales numbers than midwinter and of course we don't want to totally stifle the Co-op's operations during construction, but our success boils down to doing our research, maximizing the resources we have and not overextending ourselves.

I mention this experience not to frighten us away from expanding, as I believe the cost of doing nothing is too high, but rather to reassure you that we are fully aware and accepting of the risks. Since joining the board, I've heard many more tales of co-ops closing from failing to grow and adapt than I have of co-ops taking on more than they can chew. In developing a project that fits the needs and aspirations of our community the Board and Management of the Belfast Co-op will be taking every advantage to utilize the resources of our greater co-op community to produce the best outcome. I invite you to join us on November 28 at our next Ready, Set, Grow! expansion forum to hear what we have learned from our fellow cooperators and how we will work together to create a sustainable future for our Co-op.

ready  set  
**GROW**

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 28

6PM

BELFAST FREE LIBRARY

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT A  
PHYSICAL EXPANSION?

JOIN OUR  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
IN A DISCUSSION ABOUT  
OUR CO-OP'S EXPANSION



## KEEPING FOOD DOLLARS IN WALDO COUNTY AND THE MIDCOAST

Shopping for local products at your Belfast Co-op supports the local economy. Last year, 26% of your Belfast Co-op sales went to local farmers and producers. That is an awesome number! We are lucky to live in an area with so many local farms –

633 according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Many of these are small family farms who only sell at local farmers markets as well as your Belfast Co-op. They depend upon consumers like you to choose their products over larger competitors’.

Check out your Belfast Co-op produce department. Have you ever noticed how many items are produced locally? Each time we shop, we have the opportunity to use our money to support local farms and, in doing so, our local economy.



by Rachel Olsen

Co-op shoppers who use EBT have the added benefit of receiving double their EBT dollars when purchasing local products through the Farm Fresh Rewards program. (See Customer Service to sign up for this awesome program and help support your local food economy!) You’ve heard this before, but your dollar is your vote for the food values most important to you. The more local items you buy, the more we stock. The more we stock, the more local farms want to produce them.

Buying local produce is similar to buying “Fair Trade” certified products that guarantee a fair wage to those producing the food. Your local farmers will reinvest some of their earnings in other local businesses and services, thus continuing to feed the local economy (Klavinski, 2013). There is an added benefit of buying local in that less of your money is wasted on middlemen for things like transport and marketing. Steven Hopp says it best in Barbara Kingsolver’s book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007): “Resources go furthest when people produce their own food, near to where it is consumed.”

Support your local farmers and your local co-op at the same time! Challenge yourself to make more than one quarter of your purchases local on your next shopping trip. Let’s all share the goal of supporting local farmers and our local economy by increasing our percentage of local sales this year!

-Rachel Olsen is a member of the Co-op’s produce team

## LOCAL IMPACT

**CO-OP**  
(consumer-owned)

**CONVENTIONAL**  
(privately or investor owned)

**157** local farmers and product producers working with each store **65**

**20%** locally sourced products sold **6%**

**13%** percentage of income devoted to charitable donations **4%**

**38%** revenue spent locally **24%**

•national averages

Adapted from:  
Healthy Foods Healthy Communities: The Social and Economic Impacts of Food Co-ops, 2012: NCG strongertogether.coop

### Resources

<https://helpguide.org/articles/healthy-eating/organic-foods.htm>

Klavinski, R. “7 benefits of eating local food.” Michigan State University Extension, April 13, 2013

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/7\\_benefits\\_of\\_eating\\_local\\_food](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/7_benefits_of_eating_local_food)

Kingsolver, B., Hopp, S., Kingsolver, C. *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. Harper-Collins Publishers, 2007



LOVE • LOCAL • FOOD

### Board Meetings

**November 29**  
**December 20**

6pm Social Time, 6:30pm Meeting

**Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Belfast**

37 Miller St.

### OWNER SOCIAL

**November 4 • December 2**

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

**4-5pm in the Co-op Cafe**

### STAFF PICK



**CARMINE**  
**FACILITIES MANAGER**

Carmine can't stop raving about all the great benefits of **Italian Volcano 100% Organic Lemon Juice!** "This bottle of sunshine is literally the best thing for looking good, feeling good, and it tastes amazing. There's about 40 lemons in every bottle which goes a long way - add it to your drinking water, use it for cooking, or maybe try splashing it on your face to freshen up!"

### CO+OP CALENDAR

10/30.....**ART IN THE CAFE- ELAINE ABEL**  
11/3-5.....**MOFGA FARMER TO FARMER**  
11/4.....**OWNER SOCIAL, 4-5PM IN THE CAFÉ**  
11/11...**STAFF MEETING (STORE CLOSE @5:30)**  
11/14.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**  
11/17.....**ASK A NATUROPATH, 1-3PM**  
11/22.....**THANKSGIVING (STORE CLOSED)**  
11/28....**CO-OP CLASS: HOME BREWING BEER**  
11/28...**OWNER FORUM: READY SET GROW**  
11/28....**ART IN THE CAFE- SKYLAR CARROLL**  
11/29.....**CO-OP BOARD MEETING, 6PM**  
                  **AT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**  
11/30.....**LOVE LOCAL DAY:**  
                  **TASTING BY AVENA BOTANICALS 11:30AM**  
11/30.....**GIVING TREE**  
12/1-7.....**OWNER APPRECIATION WEEK**  
12/2.....**OWNER SOCIAL, 4-5PM IN THE CAFÉ**  
12/5.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**  
12/9.....**STAFF PARTY (STORE CLOSE @5PM )**  
12/19.....**NEW SALES CYCLE BEGINS**  
12/20 .....**CO-OP BOARD MEETING, 6PM**  
                  **AT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH**  
12/21.....**LOVE LOCAL DAY:**  
                  **TASTING TBD 11:30AM**  
12/24....**CHRISTMAS EVE (STORE CLOSE @5:30)**  
12/25.....**CHRISTMAS (STORE CLOSED)**  
12/31.....**NEW YEAR'S BY THE BAY**  
01/01.....**NEW YEARS DAY (STORE CLOSED)**



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