



ROOTSTOCK

the newsletter of the Belfast Community Co-op

2022 Annual Report

*a look back at our
business, our Co-op,
and the news and
events of record
of our past year*

in 2022 Our community raised
\$62,374.44
by rounding up for Common Cents

January	\$3,904.48
February	\$3,750.00
March	\$4,200.00
April	\$3,000.00
May	\$4,000.00
June	\$3,000.00
July	\$3,000.00
August	\$3,000.00
September	\$3,000.00
October	\$3,000.00
November	\$3,000.00
December	\$3,000.00

BELFAST COMMUNITY CO-OP



**BELFAST
COMMUNITY
CO-OP**

Owned by you. Food for all.

NOTES FROM THE BOARD

*"Impermanence is the constant transformation of things."
"It is precisely because of its impermanence, that we value life so dearly."
- Thich Nhat Hanh*

Greetings, Owners of
the Belfast Community Co-op,

Six years of diligent work by our General Manager Doug Johnson and our Board of Directors on expansion options for the Co-op has finally borne fruit: the Board approved the proposed renovation of our store, and we are now underway!

Committing to a significant renovation is a big step to take. The Board has taken this very seriously, and we sincerely appreciate Doug's tireless efforts and close communication. We have researched, discussed and reviewed plans, getting input from experts and owners. We have met and heard from the builders and architects specializing in retail establishments. There have been feasibility, market, civil, plumbing, electrical and engineering studies; we have received support and guidance from numerous consultants including those who specialize in food co-op projects.

Our Finance Committee and officers have spent countless hours reviewing the financial pictures—current and projected—and the numbers shine a green light. And now, along with substantial cash-on-hand and our member-owner loan program, the

Cooperative Fund of the Northeast has teamed up with Coastal Enterprises and Local Enterprise Assistance Fund to offer core financing for the project in a way that works for our Co-op. All of this points to one conclusion: that this project for renovating the store in our heart-of-Belfast location is the right project, and now is the right time.

The pandemic has been hard on us all, and I feel such gratitude to the Co-op for shifting to address the community needs of the moment. In order to continue its steadfast presence, the Co-op must grow and evolve. As we begin, once again, to hold in-person events, we can envision the return of our Co-op Café—in its fresh, revitalized form. With our updated name and new logo, we continue to serve as an anchor for our community—connected with our farms, our Common Cents recipient organizations, our Co-op workers and each other. Together, we grow.



Susan Cutting,
Board President
board@belfast.coop



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Cutting *President*
Ernie Cooper *Vice President*
Valerie Tate *Secretary*
John Krueger *Treasurer*
Sasha Breus
Marion Grahek
Elaine Mack
Collin Thompson
Charles Pattavina

Located in the heart of downtown, the Belfast Community Co-op has been serving our area since 1976.
Inquiries: info@belfast.coop

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Chris Battaglia

Interior Photographs

Co-op Marketing Dept

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Doug Johnson
General Manager
Jamie Cermak
Marketing Manager
Gina Ferendo
Store Service Manager
Naya Flanzala
Human Resources Manager
Heather Q Hay
IT & eCommerce Manager
Michael Walter
Store Operation Manager

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IN REMEMBRANCE

Howard "Buck" Sawyer - 1948 - 2022

We thank him for his service on the Board of Directors and celebrate his contributions to our greater community near and far.

EVERYONE WELCOME

Welcome to the Belfast Community Co-op's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2021-22 and look back on our year!

In this issue: find updates on the Co-op's finances from the Board and GM and read reports from other Board members on their committee work. Co-op managers share insights and stories highlighting our past year. With many big projects on the horizon we talk about the past year while also referencing things in the works, including our upcoming store renovation project.

We encourage you to attend our 2023 Annual Meeting of Owners or watch the recording online.

We invite you to stay up to date with the Co-op: by subscribing to our email newsletter, visiting us online @ www.belfast.coop, or get social with us on Instagram or Facebook. Visit us at the store anytime we're open!

Owners are always welcome to attend our monthly Board of Directors meetings, typically held the 4th Wednesday of the month. Notice of each meeting is published on our website and in the store or contact the board: board@belfast.coop

The Belfast Community Co-op exists so that our member-owners & our community will have:

- ① A thriving, just, & sustainable local food economy
- ② A source of healthy, nutritious, affordable food, & water
- ③ An efficiently managed, democratically governed, inclusive cooperative enterprise
- ④ A greater understanding of health, food systems, cooperatives, & economic & environmental sustainability
- ⑤ An invested, engaged, & empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, & equitable workplace.

Our Belfast Community Co-op Structure

- 1 OWNERSHIP**
Relies on the Co-op to meet their needs, elects the Board, and makes changes to the bylaws
- 2 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
Represents the owners, sets policy, selects and supervises management
- 3 MANAGEMENT**
Carries out policies, reports to the Board, hires and supervises employees
- 4 EMPLOYEES**
Carry out the tasks needed to operate the cooperative and to meet the needs of the owners



Located in the heart of downtown, the Belfast Community Co-op has been serving our area since 1976.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO SHOP AT THE CO-OP

It is our mission and our pleasure to bring locally sourced, reasonably priced, organic and natural products to all.



Emily Berry loves handing out cake for the Co-op's Birthday.

Join us for cake and apples on the Co-op's Birthday:

See you in September 17th for our 47th!

CO-OP OWNERSHIP UPDATE

At the 2022 year end, the Co-op recorded a total of 4761 owners, 363 of which are fully vested. This past year, the Co-op welcomed 459 new owners, including 61 during our 2nd Annual Ownership Drive in September '22. Our online owner sign-up system is still going strong and meeting the needs of our community, with 119 of our 2022 new Owners opting to join through the online form.

The Co-op's renovation project is one of our primary focuses these days and whether you are participating in the Capital Campaign or not, becoming fully vested is a great opportunity to help strengthen the Co-op. If you have any questions about your account or ownership, I'm always happy to help!

-Emily Berry, Ownership & Board Admin
ownership@belfast.coop

BOARD FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, convenes monthly on the Friday before the monthly Board of Directors meeting.

This year has been particularly busy and special thanks are due to a Finance Committee that worked as a team including **Board Members:** Ernie Cooper, Collin Thompson, and John Krueger; **Past Board members:** Matt McConnell and Jim Miller, and **Co-op Worker/Owner:** Gina Ferendo

In a “normal” year your Finance Committee typically assumes these duties: Meets with the General Manager to review current financial reports such as balance sheets, income statements, cash flow statements and key indicators. *The finance committee uses these reports to provide assurance that important*

Co-op decisions make financial sense; Reviews the annual financial report undertaken by an outside accounting firm; Reviews the Co-op’s credit card portfolio, patronage dividends, and all matters appropriate for future investment in certificates of deposit and equipment maintenance costs.

This year your Finance Committee took on the complex responsibility to fully evaluate the large renovation project that is planned for this year. This evaluation has included reviews of costs, predictions of future sales and margins, market studies, bank loans, contingencies, multiple options, risks, and even the impact of inflation and pipeline issues. To accomplish this evaluation there have been significant reviews of algorithms that predict future values of key indicators. We have used a

Pro Forma that our General Manager has developed with a team of professionals; professionals that have successfully used such a Pro Forma to expand other co-ops nationally. The Pro Forma leverages hypothetical data or assumptions about future values to project performance over a period that hasn’t yet occurred.

The Finance Committee tested different outcomes by applying different stresses to forecasts

such as: construction costs, major purchases, sales projections, cost of labor, inflation %, interest rates on loans, sales, contingencies etc. Examples of products from these reviews are ten year graphs of Days of Cash on Hand and Debt Service Coverage ratios. These same tests were helpful in determining that several other renovation/expansion options that the Board has reviewed were financially unacceptable. Additionally, this year’s activities included meetings with financial institutions, building and design partners and staff.

Fortunately, the “normal” duties were made easy this year due to the fact that as the attached graphs demonstrate, the Co-op had a tremendous year financially! This year’s financial success bodes well with the desire to renovate our Co-op as our old building is in serious need for a renovation.

The finance committee looked for these favorable conditions to support a major renovation: *a sales growth increase of 3%, a Gross Margin of 34.7%, and a net profit greater than 0.5%.* The Co-op met those numbers this year with 4.8% sales growth, at 36.7% gross margin, and a net profit of 1.7%!

At this point in time, financial forecasts look good to support a major renovation project, however to do so the Co-op must have a successful capital campaign. This is an exciting time and there are many opportunities for owners to participate as we go forward. Member owners are invited to participate.

*John Krueger,
Board Treasurer,*

bodfinance@belfast.coop

	FY 2022	FY 2021
SALES REVENUE		
Gross sales	\$ 11,276,610	\$ 10,804,789
Less: discounts	(94,343)	(132,295)
Net sales	11,182,267	10,672,494
Cost of goods sold	7,114,575	6,783,892
Gross profit	4,067,692	3,888,602
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Personnel	2,810,297	2,555,002
Operations	466,663	435,549
Occupancy	193,889	159,946
Promotions	153,733	133,450
Administrative	165,028	121,659
Depreciation	115,235	85,484
Governance and education	28,412	21,112
Total operating expenses	3,933,257	3,512,202
Net income from operations	134,435	376,400
OTHER INCOME (EXPENSE)		
Other income	38,534	6,390
Patronage dividends	54,570	4,667
Interest expense	(12,847)	(14,470)
Other expenses	(2,864)	(2,686)
Total other income (expense)	77,393	(6,099)
Net income before income taxes	211,828	370,301
Provision for income taxes	(24,015)	(31,000)
NET INCOME	\$ 187,813	\$ 339,301

OUR FISCAL YEAR 2021-2022

\$11.3M

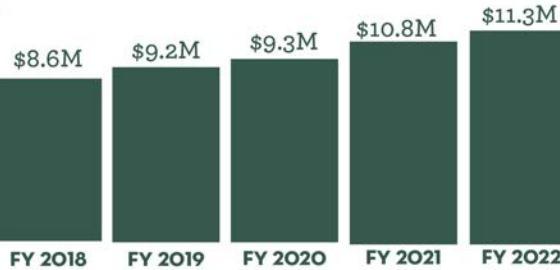
in total sales revenues

66.7%

of sales to owners

4.4%

sales increase over previous year



+4850

ACTIVE OWNERS

350

FULLY VESTED OWNERS

492

NEW OWNERS IN 2021-2022

\$31,553

IN OWNER REWARDS

\$3.6M

in local sales

33.2%

of sales from local products from over

+220

LOCAL FARMERS AND PRODUCERS

NET INCOME FROM OPERATIONS



KEY FINANCIAL INDICATORS

WHAT IS A GOOD TARGET?

		2022 FY
SALES GROWTH	>3%	4.4%
GROSS MARGIN	>34%	36.4%
NET PROFIT	>0.5%	1.9%
CURRENT RATIO	>1.25%	2.49%
DEBT TO EQUITY	<2:1	0.43:1
DAYS OF CASH	>10	42
LABOR AS A % OF SALES	<25%	25.1%

CURRENT RATIO

2.49

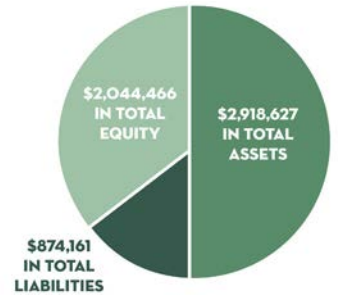
DEBT TO EQUITY RATIO

0.43

TOTAL NET INCOME %

1.9%

BEFORE TAXES



PATRONAGE DIVIDEND FY 2021-2022

\$211,828

net income before provision for income taxes

66.7%

% of sales to owners

\$137,900

total patronage dividend

20% patronage dividend payable in cash to owners based on purchases

\$27,580

80% patronage dividend retained by the co-op

\$110,320

The patronage dividend is the distribution of a percentage of the net income attributed to the purchases by owners in a given fiscal year. This distribution applies to net profits from owner sales only. Our net income before the provision for income taxes for the 2020-21 fiscal year was \$211,868. 66.7% of that was from sales to owners, so the total patronage dividend for the year will be \$137,900.

Under cooperative law, the Co-op must distribute at least 20% of that dividend back to owners as cash to avoid taxation of the entire amount. That cash disbursement this year is \$27,580, which will be made available to owners in the months ahead. We will donate the unclaimed portion later in the year. The remaining 80% will be retained by the Co-op to strengthen our financial position.

Your dividend is not taxable income for you, as long as your purchases at the Co-op were for use in your household only, and not for business purposes. The more

you shop and the more all owners shop increases the net profit from owner sales and more is distributed to the ownership. Thank you for your ongoing financial support of the Co-op.

Last year's full & partially unclaimed distributed dividends (\$3,220.67) were donated to the newly formed MOFGA and Maine Farmland Trust PFAS Emergency Relief Fund for Farmers.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Board at board@belfast.coop



STATE OF THE BOARD

The Co-op would like to extend a warm and heartfelt thank you to the directors at the end of their term and to the directors who had to move on this past year: **Stephen Brimley, Kristin Clements, Michael D'Amico, Cristiane Gil, Marion Grahek, Elaine Mack, Charlie Pattavina, Buck Sawyer, and Edward Sheridan.**

Buck Sawyer passed away this year and we honor his memory.

Our outgoing directors, along with all those who have served on the Board in the past, have spent countless hours in service of the Co-op and their expertise, perspectives, and professionalism will be greatly missed. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors.



Co-op Board Members, Worker-Owners, Family & Friends participated again in the Annual Keeping Belfast Beautiful town-wide clean-up in May

ANNUAL MEETING & BOARD ELECTIONS

Voting for the 2023 Board candidates begins Sunday, February 26th at the end of the Annual Meeting. Voting will conclude on Sunday, March 19th, or be extended until a quorum of owners (10%) has been reached. Owners may vote for any candidates or abstain: one owner, one ballot.

Details about voting will be emailed to Co-op Owners via Simply Voting. The election results and the recorded Annual Meeting will be available on our website after they have concluded.



Questions about the election or the Annual Meeting: info@belfast.coop



BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

As our charter reads, “the Board Development Committee is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness, perpetuation, training, and education of the Board, and the accountability and transparency of its policies and processes.”

In short, this means that our committee has the responsibility and joy of focusing our attention a bit more inwards: How is the board operating as a unit - are we efficient, effective? Are we holding to the policies and by-laws formulated by previous iterations of the board - or does something need a tweak?

The Board Development Committee has the opportunity to support the board’s unique group dynamics, as well as hold the board accountable to itself and the rest of the cooperative. While by-laws, policies, and guidelines are intended to set clear parameters for our work as a board and cooperative, the reality is not always quite so simple. Times change, needs change, and new board members are elected each year. This committee gets to acknowledge and support these shifts by simultaneously staying rooted in our history and policies,

while supporting the effective function of a regenerating board and co-op.

2022 will be remembered as the year the Co-op community came together to agree on an exciting and much needed renovation project. As this project proceeds in 2023, the work of this committee to monitor, educate, and support the board will be as important as ever as we wade into the new territory of renovation and expansion on the heels of covid. Here’s to a wonderful year ahead!

Sasha Breus, Committee Chair

OWNER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Last year was another challenging year for your Owner Engagement Committee although in a different way from the year before. We again felt limited in terms of large in-person events such as Owner Forums but we did manage to get out there and do a lot of public events.

We started off with directors supporting and participating in the annual staff holiday party. We then held a very successful annual meeting which again was via teleconference software. *(We will be doing our first in-person annual meeting this year since before the pandemic.)*

Those of us who could do “meet and greets” outside the Co-op and the tabling events included the

Belfast Street Party, the Co-op’s 46th birthday, another successful membership drive in September and Co-op Month in October. Late in the summer we held a wonderful movie event at the Boathouse which also offered an opportunity for owners to interact with the Board and talk about renovation plans. In



November, directors and committee members once again helped shoppers bag their groceries, always a good opportunity to interact with people and learn what’s on their minds.

One serious challenge the committee continues to face is lack of membership, particularly by owners who are neither employees or directors. I would encourage anyone reading this to think about

whether you can devote a small amount of time each month to your Co-op for duties that are basically fun!

(interested? board@belfast.coop)

On a somber note, I note the passing of long time owner, director and member of this committee, Buck Sawyer who passed away recently. Buck was a kind man who cared deeply about the Co-op and the community. He was also a great resource to the Co-op, especially as we considered various options for rebuilding.

I wish the Co-op another successful year and success in the very large renovation project about to be undertaken.

*Dr. Charles Pattavina
OEC Chair*

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Since the first modern cooperative business was established in 1844, co-op members have pooled their resources to build better lives for workers and their communities. In 2016, Belfast Community Co-op member-owners began a process to achieve the long-discussed need for a safer, more efficient workplace; a better experience for shoppers; greater success in the marketplace; and a secure financial future.

In Fiscal Year 2021 – 2022, in consultation with co-op leaders in New England and elsewhere, the Co-op Board made expansion decisions based on member-owner feedback. Simultaneously, we made plans for funding the project that would meet our goals. Our General Manager Doug

Johnson found the perfect partner in a community development loan fund that facilitates socially responsible investing – the Cooperative Fund of the Northeast. He found a Maine non-profit willing to serve as our fiscal agent should we decide to accept tax-deductible donations – the Cooperative Development Institute. And our Board, working with Co-op attorneys, set up an opportunity for our member-owners to invest locally, in their values, and in their community.

Towards the end of this last fiscal year, once the Board agreed to support a full renovation of our

store, months before an official capital campaign launched, member-owners began pledging

to make unsecured interest-bearing loans. Within a few weeks, we had pre-commitments of more than \$450,000. We could see that the Co-op would be able to borrow less from banks, saving on higher interest payments. We would keep more money circulating in our community as we paid interest to local folks, supporting our regional economy even more.

And our cooperative economy would keep growing, creating a more equitable and just society. The capital campaign has been complicated. It’s been hard work. Most of all, it’s been incredibly rewarding to see the love that our member-owners have for their very own Belfast Community Co-op.

*Valerie Tate, Board Secretary
& Committee Chair*

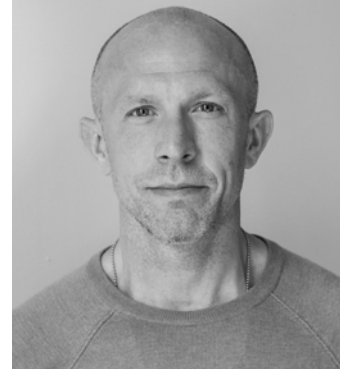


Our Year in Review

Doug Johnson - General Manager

Last year in the Annual Report I wrote about the cultivation of optimism and how I felt it was necessary to keep us moving forward, to keep hope alive. I still believe that, but if there is any lesson that I have learned from the past year it is the value of realism, of not being afraid to see the dark spots and the unfortunate details. The struggles that we work through don't always make us stronger, in fact sometimes they break us, but pretending that they are not there rather than confronting them just prolongs the pain. There is beauty in seeing things as they are, seeing the hard road before you, and taking action to confront the challenge head on.

This past fiscal year was successful for your Co-op on many fronts despite all the additional challenges that were thrown our way. We had our highest single sales day in our history in January (\$58,818) and our single highest sales week in our history in mid August (\$271,673). We witnessed the cost of many goods rise quickly due to widespread inflationary pressures, from raw materials to product shipping, which forced us to refine many of our processes in order to maintain a margin that would allow us to cover all of our expenses. Price changes needed to be looked at weekly, sometimes daily, to ensure that we were not selling products at a loss. We saw inflation hit our national distributors first, but it was not long before the cost increases starting negatively affecting our local farmers and producers. Throughout all the turmoil our purchasing team and our point-of-sale team did an exceptional job staying ahead of the chaos and their efforts are directly tied to our



ability to stay profitable this year, which will allow us to issue patronage dividends back to our owners. Many co-ops across the country were not able to adapt as quickly as we were able to and will not be in the same positive position at year's end.



**BELFAST
COMMUNITY
CO-OP**

Owned by you. Food for all.



CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

The Co-op supports our community in many ways throughout the year. Co-op Workers Jamie & Emily brought donations to the Belfast Library Food drive (left). We have a longtime relationship of supporting the Troy Howard Middle School Garden program & students as one of our local vendors (center). Outreach Coordinator Alessandra Martinelli and GM Doug Johnson brought donations to one of the Waldo County YMCA food drives (right).



Another success of this past year began when we announced at the Annual Meeting our partnership with our friends at PICA, a local brand, strategy and design firm, to help us tell the story of who we are and who we serve. Watching the process play out throughout the year, guided by our Marketing Manager Jamie Cermak and executed by his team, has been an absolute pleasure.



FISCAL YEAR 21-22

\$61,173

IN COMMON CENTS
DONATIONS TO LOCAL
NON-PROFITS

\$10,487

IN CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS

Announcing ourselves as the Belfast Community Co-op and seeing the thoughtful curation of the visual elements that Pica created for us out in the world as a consistent message has made the storytelling aspect of what we do infinitely more powerful. We have always known who we were but having the tools to express that cohesively has been wonderful. Community has always been at the center of what we do and I am happy that we have now made it official.

Construction Group for the past five years has been a delight. I am so proud of the plan we have built and I am confident that what we are building will continue to serve this community for the decades ahead. The renovation will allow us to do more of what we already do so well, increasing our retail square footage by 33%, but will also give us the opportunity to offer more services and new options to delight our shoppers. We will be bringing back the cafe seating area,

of potential opportunities to further develop Shop for Me to meet a greater number of community needs. Finally, the updates that we are making to our facility will ensure that our valuable co-op workers have a safe and efficient environment to work in and that customers will have a pleasurable shopping experience when they are in the aisles.

As always, thank you for your support this past year and over the past 46 years. You, our friends

and neighbors, are what make the Belfast Community Co-op what it is, and it is you that will allow the Co-op to continue to thrive. The year ahead will be full of tremendous challenges that will test our resolve, but I

am comforted to know that we are moving forward with eyes wide open and that we are moving forward together.

In cooperation,



Doug Johnson
Belfast Community Co-op
General Manager

Our renovation project has evolved significantly over the last year, moving further and further away from being theoretical as we started committing resources to making the dream a reality. Working with the talented designers at Woodhull (formerly Caleb Johnson Studios), the development experts at NCG (National Co-op Grocers), and the expert team at Warren

a necessity in our community that was sacrificed during the pandemic, and building a new and improved Prepared Foods department. We are also investing resources to continue our Shop for Me curbside delivery program. This service was so vital to our community during the pandemic and continues to provide a desired service for many of our neighbors. Moving forward, we see a number

Free for Everyone and provided for your convenience, our Shop for Me curbside pick-up program is available to all. Many regular customers value the ease and safety provided by our SFM team and shopping online. The average basket size shows the average customer uses SFM for larger purchases including the ease of picking up your pre-orders!



View the plans & learn more on our website: *Your Future Co-op* was a series of videos, Zoom calls, and in-person meetings held in May & June by our GM and Board. Topics included our past, our present, upcoming possibilities and plans, and hopes for the Co-op's future renovation. The videos and plans are available to watch online.



HR Year in Review

Naya Flanzala - Human Resources Manager



In 2022 we're moving from pandemic to endemic, and many of us started feeling safe to think in terms of the future again. This gave us room to recognize that the strategies that kept us whole and healthy during the early days of the pandemic may have stopped serving us, and we need to once again do the work of finding balance between safety and wellbeing 'right now' and a sustainable future.

Rebalancing looks different for everyone, and for many Co-op workers involves taking a hard look at how we value time and energy. More and more, we're seeing workers advocate for schedules that allow room for things that keep them whole - the before-work hike, the extra day off in the workweek - with the same consideration they give to wages and benefits. Housing availability and the increased cost of commuting also factor into individual measurements of sustainability. Folks are making big choices about where to live, and what it means to make a living. This is reflected in our turnover numbers, the departure of familiar faces as folks move on to something new, and new faces on our sales floor, with the Co-op being 'something new' that many folks have moved on to.

After a period of upheaval, it's reasonable to seek refuge in stasis. After all, we made it through an emergency few of us expected, and none of us were prepared for. The fact is that no matter where we've arrived at, life carries on, and that can be comforting as well as exhausting. Our work now is to support structures that sustain what has served us well, and gather the compassion and accountability to let go of what holds us back. It's exhausting because the work is never done, and comforting because we've proven that as a community, we can keep moving.

Naya Flanzala



3.8 YEARS
average tenure of co-op
employment

54%
of workers at a
livable wage*

\$18.90
average hourly wage of a
co-op worker

*based on the MIT living wage calculator

\$2.8M
in wages and benefits
paid out in FY 2021-2022

80%
of workers eligible for health
insurance



Everyone agrees: Co-op Workers are one of the best things about our Co-op!

Want to work with an awesome team to support local food & community connection? Whether you are looking for a job you'll love or a career you can grow with, Belfast Community Co-op provides the training, benefits, and supportive community that makes it a rewarding place to work.

Building a Foundation for Growth

Gina Ferendo - Store Service Manager



As we look ahead to the future of the Belfast Community Co-op and the inevitable growth of the organization, it's crucial that we start by assessing our current procedures. We are investing time to create a solid base for a safe and efficient workplace, supporting our staff, customers and community as we expand.

In 2022 we were given the opportunity to intentionally look at what we have done historically and adjust our strategy in preparation for our future. We created new roles including Promotions, Graphics and Stockroom Coordinators, Store Service Manager, specialty clerks and several department leads, allowing for increased staff support and an improved customer experience.



We established a preventative maintenance protocol for our refrigeration. The process was involved but what a difference it has made in both equipment stability and morale!

We have been proactive in bringing workplace safety to the next level, taking a deep dive into our current methods and inviting an outside consultant to assist in developing our protocol and improving the facility for our staff. We have created a Safety Committee and are implementing increased safety protocol throughout our workday.

As an organization we implemented these and many more proactive changes in 2022. The most incredible aspect of all of this however, is how the entire staff has worked together to make it happen. The success that we have seen could not have been possible without the hard work, dedication and cooperation of every member on our team.

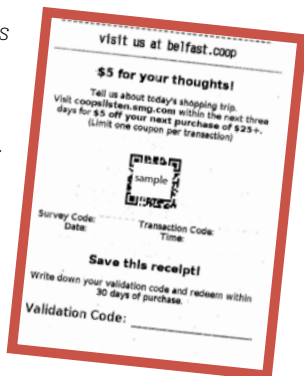
Gina Ferendo

Customer Experience Surveys

Attention to the customer experience is what sets us apart and our newly implemented CX (Customer Experience) Survey allows our customers the opportunity to provide feedback about what it is that makes their visit top notch and what we can do to improve your shopping experience. Surveys are distributed at random through our point of sale system and printed at the bottom of your receipt, offering a \$5 coupon in exchange for your time.

"We are always looking for ways that we can offer increased quality for our customers and this survey is incredibly helpful. Staff receive quantitative data pinpointing when we're offering strong service and where we can do better!"

Gina F, Store Service Manager



Our refrigeration equipment had a busy year!

- Our old freezers along the back wall were removed & upgraded after a number of challenges: these new freezers will be part of our renovated store.
- We installed our "CoolBot" external refrigeration unit in our parking lot. Our limited space and future renovation will benefit from this new addition.
- Customers saw other service disruptions over the year due to our aging equipment. We came away from the challenges stronger by developing many protocols that will limit future challenges and disruption.



Providing Connections

Heather Q Hay - IT & eCommerce Manager

It's safe to say that the last few years have changed the way that we shop in many ways. This past year, we saw many people focusing on their food budgets for a variety of reasons and seeking assistance as they faced food insecurity. One of the places that showed that the most is the increase in EBT/SNAP use at the co-op. Over the past few years, we have seen an overall increase in EBT use at the Co-op of over 250%.

In March of 2023, all EBT users will be faced with a "benefits cliff", a program-wide reduction in benefits - this is due to the expiration of several emergency funding measures that went into place since 2020. Many people will return to EBT levels that did not adequately feed their families. With

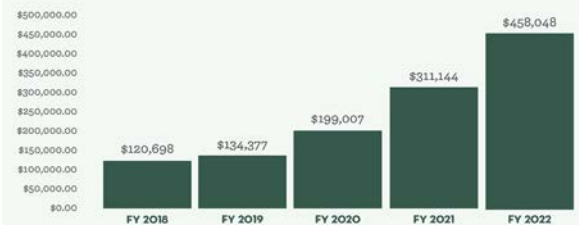
that in mind, the Co-op continues to strive to meet the needs of our community, through smart buying practices and bountiful offerings. We are dedicated to maintaining and advancing additional programs that bolster food security for our community as a whole.

One of the additional benefits that we offer is the Farm Fresh Rewards program, where EBT customers can earn bonus dollars for additional local fruits and vegetables - this program is offered at many co-ops and small food stores across Maine, with the Belfast Community Co-op being the largest participant. **Farm Fresh Rewards will see an increase in accessibility and benefits this spring, which we are very excited about.**

While customers do not need to be owners to participate in Farm

Fresh Rewards or to use EBT, we have also seen an increase in the amount of owners who use SNAP benefits. In 2018, approximately 3% owners were EBT users, now 5.5% of active owners pay with EBT - many of whom are new owners with us.

BELFAST COMMUNITY CO-OP EBT-SNAP SALES BY YEAR



Though sobering, the increase in EBT use by shoppers and Co-op Owners alike illustrates we are better meeting the needs of our community.

We are honored that more people are seeing the value of the services and products the Co-op offers and are becoming equity Owners. We look forward to fostering these relationships and providing a open and equitable experience for all of our owners, customers, visitors, and community members.

Heather Q Hay



With Farm Fresh Rewards, shoppers using SNAP/EBT can earn bonus dollars to buy more fruit and vegetables.

As of May 1st 2022, *Farm Fresh Rewards transitioned to being lead by Good Shepherd Food Bank. We thank Maine Farmland Trust for*

their work stewarding the Farm Fresh Rewards program through the years! Gina Ferendo (center) and other Co-op workers have worked diligently to assist with the transition which will support Farm Fresh Rewards participants nearby and throughout the state. Representatives from GSFB (L & R in picture) visited the Co-op in May.



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Operations Year in Review

Michael Walter - Store Operations Manager



This past fiscal year, which concluded on September 30th, marked a year of challenge, triumph, and pretty much every emotion that falls between those points. While we collectively tiptoed out of the COVID bubble, our amazing Board of Directors greenlighted our long-awaited and much-needed renovation. Our team of Managers and Buyers worked tirelessly to combat inflation while ensuring the Co-op had enough profitability to afford livable wages for our workers, income to pay our expenses, and a surplus to provide owners with patronage dividends (again).

On Friday afternoon, September 23rd, our Co-op reached its eleventh million dollar in sales, a milestone we hadn't ever seen. We ended the year like this:

	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	Change
Prepared Foods	857,701.47	922,116.03	7.51%
Cheese	384,845.48	383,419.07	-0.37%
Meat	786,348.59	805,086.69	2.38%
Beer/Wine	806,585.96	755,332.28	-6.35%
Bulk	692,124.42	737,346.53	6.53%
General Merch	190,379.83	202,017.09	6.11%
Grocery	2,322,613.52	2,519,646.75	8.48%
Dairy	1,027,682.47	1,050,597.40	2.23%
Frozen	555,162.61	563,943.68	1.58%
Bread	314,481.69	343,793.45	9.32%
Perishables Total	1,897,326.85	1,958,334.53	3.22%
Wellness	1,007,771.71	1,066,391.07	5.82%
Produce	1,760,841.26	1,795,604.34	1.97%
Soils	72,599.41	98,537.61	35.73%
Produce Total	1,833,440.67	1,894,141.95	3.31%

Year over year increases:



Store Total
4.31%



Michael Walter



Tending the Garden

Jamie Cermak - Marketing Manager



One of the most useful things that helps my work was taught to me by a friend and our former webmaster, Al Arthur, who sadly passed away in 2021. *"Tend it like a garden, there's always something to do"*, he suggested as we finished working on that new website years back.

Some days you do a little weeding over here, another day you install a whole new garden bed over there, and so on, and eventually you hope to get to all the things that need tending in the garden, big and small. I value this approach in all the work we do for the Co-op: like making new signs for Produce and the store, securing and creating ads, installing portraits of local farmers, coordinating donations, and so much more.



A sample of our look over time:



Al's advice has been present with me since our Co-op began all the work to reenvision our look and brand and the work it has taken to implement these new changes this past year. Thanks to the expert work and care of our friends at PICA, who've worked in Belfast and shopped at the Co-op as long as many, our 'garden' has had even more good help and I'm excited to see what projects we'll get into next.

COMMUNITY

Owned by you. Food for all.

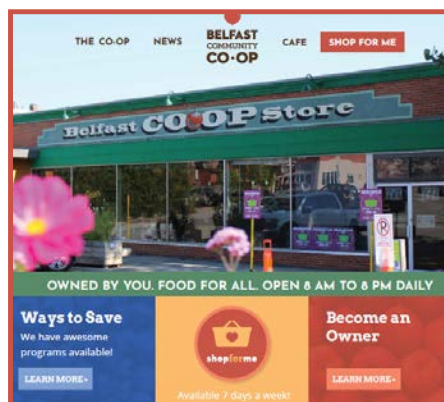
We will always be known as "the Co-op". However, the addition of a few yet very important words to our name are a statement and a promise about who we are. It's a commitment to **you, our Owners**, and our community of shoppers and eaters and friends, that we are here and we will remain here. It's also a statement that we are owned by you, **OUR community**, by real people, by our friends and neighbors. And it's a commitment to our mission-

ensuring that we will remain a source for good, healthy, local food for everyone. Food for all means there's something for everyone no matter your unique need and it means we strive to make sure everyone feels welcome at the Co-op.

I have many thanks for my talented co-workers who help tend our "garden" and spread the word about our Co-op: from behind a computer, or in the aisles, behind a cash register, or over the phone, and on and on. **And thank YOU, too!** In our aisles, on the sidewalk, by a social media share, or over the dinner table - you help spread the good word of the Co-op in your community.

It's our Community Co-op and everyone's welcome! Thank you for your ongoing support!

Jamie Cermak
jamie@belfast.coop



We launched our new website designed by PICA ----> belfast.coop


BELFAST COMMUNITY CO-OP
Owned by you. Food for all.



Jamie poses for a photo at Halloween with an unidentified local farmer.



Maine Artist
Scott Whitehouse
illustrated new designs
for the Co-op: watch for
more in 2023!



Rounding Up Makes Cents

Every day, we invite shoppers to "round-up" their purchase for a local non-profit organization and each month 100% of those donations go to help that community organization that is working to uplift and fortify our community.

One of the ways we live our mission has been fundraising for and donating money to local nonprofits and community organizations; our current Common Cents round-up program was developed over the last 10 years.

We're incredibly proud to run such an effective and sought after program! The history of the program shows we've grown donations by leaps and bounds (*see graph*)!

In the 2021 Annual report we celebrated a number of historic record breaking donations. This past year has seen that momentum and participation increase even more! It's truly amazing and gratifying to be a part of a community so generous and willing to help groups that serve us all and benefit our wider communities.

Thank you for rounding up!

Congratulations to all the recipients for 2023, see the list on the back page.

Nominations and voting for the 2024 recipients will start in Fall 2023.

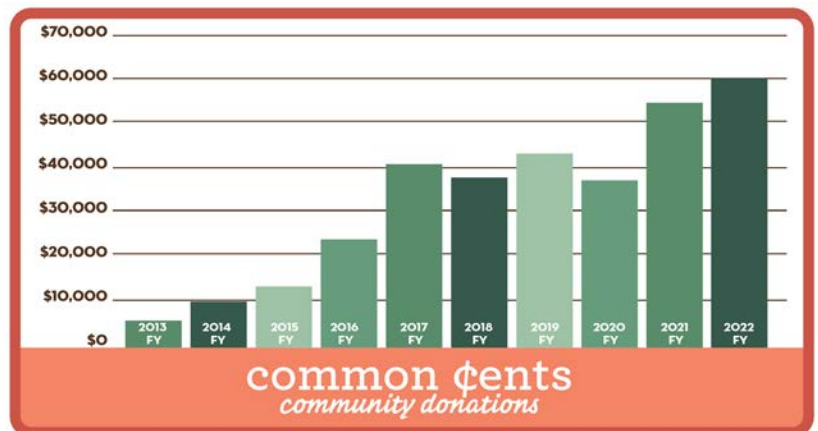
Questions? info@belfast.coop

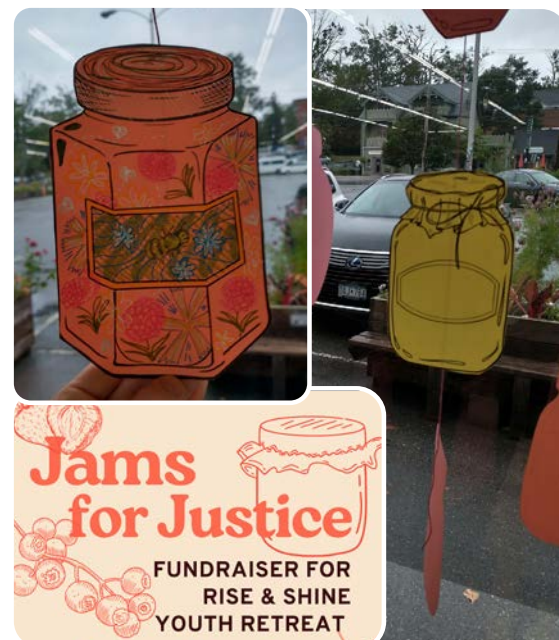


*Recent Common Cents recipients,
left - right, top - bottom:*

November '21	\$5,699.31
Belfast Soup Kitchen	
December '21	\$5,264.50
Game Loft + I Know ME	
January '22	\$3,904.48
Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition	
February '22	\$3,757.09
Waldo County Pet Food Pantry	
March '22	\$4,156.18
Maine Family Planning	
April '22	\$4,000.74
Belfast Area Child Care Services	
May '22	\$4,443.06
WERU Community Radio	
June '22	\$5,496.99
Wabanaki Youth in Science (WaYS)	
July '22	\$6,365.62
New Hope Midcoast	
August '22	\$6,633.41
Veggies for All	
September '22	\$6,531.65
Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter & Services	
October '22	\$5,732.65
Restorative Justice Project Maine	
November '22	\$5,655.55
Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program	
December '22	\$5,697.02
Waldo County Bountty	

WE RAISED
\$62,374.44!
FOR OUR COMMUNITY
NON-PROFITS IN 2022





The Power of Community

One of the Best things about our area and our Co-op is our strong support of the arts in our community. In 2021, the Co-op started a community art fundraiser to benefit OUTMaine! during Pride Month raising \$1,000.

The success of that project led us to do more community art fundraisers in our windows. In early 2022 we partnered with Waterfall Arts and the kids of their after-school program to "Help keep our Neighbors Warm". Kids and community-members made colorful mittens that represented donations to Waldo Community Action Partners! Later in 2022, we ran another partner fundraiser "Jams for Justice" benefiting the Rise & Shine Youth Retreat! (*Rise & Shine is a center for the enrichment and liberation of Black people in Maine and beyond*).

These community groups receive welcome funds and greater awareness. Our community benefits from the color, life, and energy that the art brings into our store. We're excited to continue this new tradition in 2023 tying art to social action in a way that benefits us all and helps us live our mission!

BELFAST HAS PRIDE



Co-op Workers, Family, & Friends at the 2022 Belfast Has Pride parade

Congratulations!

Common Cents 2023

January	Knox County Homeless Coalition
February	Hospice Volunteers of Waldo County
March	Midcoast Conservancy
April	Protect Ancient Forests
May	Belfast Community Radio
June	RSU 71 School Garden Collaborative
July	Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine
August	Friends of Sears Island
September	Waldo County Woodshed
October	Greater Belfast Area Ministerial Food Cupboard
November	MOFGA Journey Person Program
December	Maine School Garden Network

belfast.coop/common-cents

2024 selection begins in Fall 2023



**BELFAST
COMMUNITY
CO-OP**

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