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Rinny Austin, *Front Staff / Produce*
Deb Barnwell, *Front Staff*
Debra Bothfeld, *Front Staff*
Laura Conklin, *Buyer*
Jezebel Crow, *Produce/Buyer/Receiver*
Anji Domino, *Produce/Buyer/Receiver*
Jay Ekis, *Front Staff*
Paula Emery, *Front Staff*
Jamie Lewis, *General Manager*
Tim Llewelyn, *Beer and Wine Buyer; Produce*
Eben Markova-Gold, *Front Staff / Trainer*
Shay Matthew, *Buyer*
Annie Reed, *Front Staff*
Stanzi Scribner, *Office Coordinator*
Dan Siegel, *Front Staff / IT*
Leah Tedesco, *Marketing/Membership Coordinator*
Chris Thompson, *Maintenance*
Margie Yoder, *Front Staff*

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Plainfield Co-op June 29 Community Forum

by Rose Paul, Board Treasurer

Over 60 people gathered at the Plainfield Recreation Field on Wednesday evening June 29 to discuss the status and future of the Plainfield Co-op. Board President Cat Klarich welcomed everyone and said she had a “bad news sandwich on good news bread” to announce.

The good news is that the Co-op, through our sponsor the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, was awarded a USDA economic development grant that will help fund expertise and studies to assess the options of expanding the Co-op in place or moving to a more visible location on Route 2. Additional good news is that the Co-op turns 50 in November!

Cat said the bad news is that our finances are not good right now (more on that later).

Thankfully, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved and help! Cat invited folks to join several volunteer groups that are forming:

- Real Estate Advisory Group: This group will work with the Board to bring real estate opportunities to the Co-op's attention and help the Board assess these opportunities.
- Bylaws Advisory Group: This group will recommend to the Board amendments to the bylaws to increase voter accessibility and make the language more gender neutral.
- Co-op Building Group: This independent group is working toward forming a nonprofit entity that will lease the Co-op building and be able to apply for various grants to help pay for maintenance of the building.



Cat also said that there would be several Board vacancies in August. Our bylaws call for 5 to 7 members on the Board and for the past year there have been five members, some of whom are going off the Board. Please let Cat know if you're interested in joining, or even just attending Board meetings to “test the waters.”

There were several clarifying questions. One was about the group that will try for nonprofit status. This is not the same as the Community Center, which is a part of the Co-op and not a separate entity. Another question was about what happened during the Co-op's financial downturn in the '90s and what did we learn from it?

Betsy Ziegler stepped up to say that she and several others ran yard sales in the Community Center at that time and made up the \$5,000 to \$10,000 shortfall with the proceeds.

Next, Board Treasurer Rose Paul gave a snapshot of some Co-op finances. Sales were up in May compared to April, but

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we still lost over \$3,000 for the month, compared to losing over \$9,000 in April. One good thing is that we hit our 35% profit margin target in May. The summer months are typically the Co-op's strongest sales period with summer visitors and all the fresh produce, so maybe we can make up some ground, but from January 1 to May 31 of 2022, we have lost \$55,691.

Rose said that someone asked her if the Co-op was about to close. She said no, the Co-op has about \$86,000 in several bank accounts and owes \$42,000 on its line of credit. She said that the work on the Main Street bridge will depress our sales this summer, as it did last year when the bridge was one lane in the last three months of the year. The Plainfield Select Board has decided to keep one lane of the bridge open (rather than a month-long shutdown), and the work may take three months to complete.

Board member Jess Taylor spoke about the Board's interest in exploring real estate options along Route 2 to increase our visibility and attract new shoppers. Jess said that someone has described the Co-op as "too large to be a convenience

store and yet too small for the workings of a large store." We are something in between and we need to either get bigger to increase sales, or get smaller to cut costs. She described one scenario whereby the Co-op moves to a larger, more visible location on Route 2 and at the same time keeps the existing Co-op building open as a smaller convenience store, easily accessible to villagers, and keeps the activities going in the Community Center. Jessie said that the Board is committed to maintaining the vibrancy of the Community Center no matter what, and that perhaps the first floor could host a café as well as a convenience store, or an expanded arts center.

Participants then split up into five groups to discuss the following:

What strength or opportunity does the Co-op have that could best address the current financial situation? How?

- A **strength** is something internal to the Co-op (example, there is no mortgage on the building).
- An **opportunity** is something external to the Co-op (example, the hardware store is for sale).

The groups animatedly discussed these issues for 20 minutes. Then a thunderstorm intervened.

The Board will collate the results of these discussions and distribute to members in early July.

A second community forum has been scheduled for Monday, August 1st, 6-7:30 p.m. (rain date: August 2nd, 6-7:30 p.m.), at the Rec Field. We invite everyone who loves and cares about the Co-op to join us as we do some more constructive brainstorming together! ❖

Photo Credit: Gail Falk



Special Member Meeting

by Gail Falk

The Co-op Board convened a special member meeting May 15 to propose bylaw changes, update members on finances, and announce an opportunity to purchase a business on Route 2. Cat Klarich, Board president, welcomed the attendees, saying that the Board has been following up on resolutions adopted at the 2021 annual meeting to explore other locations for the Co-op. Jamie Lewis, General Manager, reported that finances are not where they should be, and sales are down. Some of the causes are COVID restrictions on the number of shoppers in the store, supply chain problems, and inflation. He said he has learned that change is constant; change for the better is what the Plainfield Co-op is striving for.

By-Laws. The proposed By-laws changes would authorize the Board to offer members other ways to vote besides voting in person at a member meeting, such as remote meetings, electronic voting, and voting by ballot over a time span. The changes were intended to include more members in important decisions. The proposed amendments clarified how decisions are made if there is no consensus because there was confusion at the 2021 Annual Meeting about what the current wording means. Several members expressed concern about proposed revisions. All agreed it would be good to work more on the revisions. Three people offered to help out with that process: Brian Tokar (tentative), Michael Billingsley and Steven Farnham. They will craft revisions that address some or all the concerns and report back to the Board.

USDA Grant Application. Board Treasurer Rose Paul said the Co-op has ap-



Photo Credit: Lucy Blue

plied for a \$30,000 Rural Business Development grant from the Department of Agriculture. If funded, the grant would provide the Co-op with money to hire consultants to update architectural drawings for expansion, compare the economic viability of expanding in place versus relocating, engage the membership in choosing the best option (stay, stay and expand, move), and develop an action plan to implement the chosen option. Rose expressed appreciation to Mary Niebling for writing the grant as a volunteer and to Alice Merrill for serving as liaison to Preservation Trust of Vermont. The Co-op will find out in late June whether the application was successful.

Rose described the Board's commitment to the Community Center. If the Co-op moves to a new building, there are good options for continuing to use the current building as a Community Center. The

continued ➤➤

Special Member Meeting >>

Community Center could incorporate as a non-profit. This could strengthen the Community Center because many more grants are available for non-profits than for grocery businesses.

Business Opportunity on Route 2. Cat Klarich and Board member Jess Taylor announced that the owners of Plainfield Hardware, Rich and Gaye Christiansen, approached the Board with their hope that the Co-op would buy their property and business, as they plan to retire soon. The asking price is \$1.75 million, and the property is not listed yet. The building, including the greenhouse, is approximately 7,000 square feet, and the lot is 3 acres. The Board has started to explore this offer and is sharing the offer with the membership in order to get feedback and ideas at this preliminary stage. Here is the gist of the comments and questions from the members:

- **Q.** Would there be a financial feasibility study? **A.** Yes.
- I could see us having a one-stop store and leaving our former store to be a satellite convenience store.
- Thanks to the Board for all their work.
- It's important that the Community Center become a nonprofit right away. This is the only Co-op that I know of that is supporting non-commodified art, supporting the arts as a communitarian, sharing experience for everyone.
- **Q.** Is \$1.75 million the asking price for the property alone, or the combined property and the business. **A.** Both the property and the business.
- **Q.** Do we have an estimate of financial loss to the Co-op during bridge reconstruction? **A.** No. That would be part of the financial feasibility assessment.
- We must think about other values besides the bottom line. We need to ask our consultant how we can serve our community better.
- We need to balance financial and other values.
- **Q.** Are we talking with consultants from Columinate? **A.** Yes, but we have not hired anyone.
- **Q.** Can we form a nonprofit for the Community Center if we move the Co-op to Route 2. **A.** Yes.
- The Co-op is a generative force for community building and community stability.

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RUN FOR THE BOARD!

Board members guide the Co-op and are essential to its existence. There are empty seats on the Board waiting to be filled by members like YOU. You could really help our Co-op at this critical time by running for the Board. More info at board@plainfieldcoop.com



**Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting
IF YOU WANT THE CO-OP TO STILL BE HERE FOR YOU,
BE HERE FOR THE CO-OP.**

Special Member Meeting >>

- I want there to be a Co-op in our community. The Co-op can't exist without meeting the bottom line.
- The needs of disabled people aren't met at our Co-op: narrow aisles, no access to second floor.
- We need to serve people with low income and deliver orders to people who cannot drive.
- Hunger Mountain lacks the sense of community that Plainfield Coop has; people don't talk with each other there. We could lose the intangibles of intimacy, but we do have to meet the bottom line.
- We have been promoting strength in smallness. But we are so challenged by where our finances are right now. Can we proceed in small steps?
- We don't have to sacrifice one set of values for another set. We've been talking about the bottom line as if it were a force opposed to the arts and community values. We can have it all. But financial viability is a necessary tool to support our community goals.
- Would a café eventually bring in more of the younger generation?
- We need more younger people to be involved.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Board members said they would keep members updated and continue to seek member input on decisions about the future size and location of the Co-op at one or more upcoming community forums. ❖

Whatever-berry Sorbet

From Debra Stoleroff

Need something cool on our ever hotter days? Try this cooling sorbet. You choose the berry or mix and match flavors you prefer.

Ingredients

- 1 whole lemon, seeded and roughly chopped
- 2 cups sugar (or less if too sweet)
- 2 pounds berries
- Juice of 1 to 2 lemons



Preparation

1. Place the chopped lemon and sugar in a food processor, and pulse until combined. Transfer to a bowl.
2. Purée the berries in a food processor and add to the lemon mixture, along with the juice of 1 lemon. Taste and add more juice as desired. The lemon flavor should be intense but should not overpower the berries. Pour the mixture into an ice cream machine and churn until frozen.

No ice cream maker? No problem. Spread the puréed mixture in a flat pan and freeze until just barely firm. Remove from the freezer and break into chunks in your processor. Process until light colored and smooth and immediately return to the freezer until it refreezes. (If you want an even creamier texture, repeat the freezing and processing step one more time.)

Our Co-op - Use it or lose it!

Great Brook Nursery

by Gail Falk

Sloping up from the rushing waters of the Great Brook, tidy rows of potted perennials wait to find homes in Central Vermont gardens. The verdant scene is a far cry from the “funky” riverside lot with a tar paper shack and junked cars on Lee Road that Ian Maas and Roseanne Scotta bought at tax auction almost 30 years ago. It was known at that time, says Ian, as the “Lower East Side” of Plainfield.

When they bought the neglected property, Ian started by building a sturdy house while Roseanne taught at Maple Hill School. Over the years, Ian worked at a series of farm and carpentry jobs that allowed him to be the stay-at-home parent while the children were young.

The children are grown, and having raised them, Ian and Roseanne now dedicate themselves to raising beautiful and useful perennials – some medicinal, some edible, and some ornamental.

Ian has been intrigued with cultivating plants since he worked at a plant nursery in high school. His dream took off a few years ago when he befriended Don and Lela Avery just as they were retiring as owners of Cady’s Falls Nursery, which gave Ian a model for a woodland garden nursery. As the Averys were closing down their business, Ian worked in their gardens in exchange for plants, meanwhile picking their brains. The Averys generously shared their know-how as well as materials they no longer needed.

This is the third season Great Brook Nursery has been selling perennials. “We offer a nice mix of native and non-native perennials selected for their historical uses or simply for their beauty and garden-worthiness,” explains their



website. The plants are all propagated at the nursery from cuttings, divisions, sprouts, and seeds Ian has collected, and they are climate hardy. I sell plants “that have suffered along with the rest of us for at least one full winter and summer,” he says.

Their most popular plants include medicinal, such as goldenseal, skull cap, ginseng, and black cohosh. They stay on the lookout for uncommon plants (“not the Agway/supermarket collection”), says Ian. He is building up a collection of edible perennials, such as *Carambe maritima*, a perennial kale plant that puts out stalks with tight florettes, similar to broccoli raab, and then bursts into an ornamental white flower.

One section of pots beside a shed contains tiny light green shoots. They are *Cyprepedium* sp., otherwise known as

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lady slippers. The seeds of lady slippers are famously hard to germinate. These were germinated by a couple in Minnesota from seeds that Don and Lela Avery collected in their Hyde Park garden and sent to the folks in Minnesota. Now, lovingly tended at Great Brook Nursery, it will take four to five years for them to be large and hardy enough for sale.



Great Brook Nursery sold perennials at the Co-op this spring. Through the summer, the Montpelier Farmers Market is their best market, together with visitors to the nursery.

During the pandemic, Ian built a beautiful website with a description of the dozens of plants the nursery sells. He's

hoping the website will attract gardeners from afar, and he will be able to ship dormant plants in the spring. But if you're local, check out the website, <https://www.greatbrooknursery.com/>, and let your gardening dreams blossom. ❖

Photo Credit: Gail Falk

EAST HILL TREE FARM

Nursery for Fruit Trees, Nuts, and Berries



3499 East Hill Rd. Plainfield, VT
Check: www.easthilltreefarm.com

Just Food Hub

by Sue Morris

When I retired, I thought about how I'd like to spend my days, aligned with my beliefs. I thought about the importance of worker-owned cooperatives, where workers feel passionate about their collaboration. I thought about mitigating greed and putting people first. I thought about the importance of organic food to people's health and the health of the planet. Organic and regenerative farming keeps the earth strong, whereas commercial farms deplete the nutrition in food and fail to replenish the earth. I thought about climate change and how to buoy rather than destroy the earth. I thought about how to support racial and social justice and all the people of the earth.

Last year, I formed Just Food Hub to raise money to support all the important work people are doing. Just Food Hub provides organic food sourced from Global South worker co-ops and small organic US farms, giving all profit (30% of sales) to the fundraiser. We provide coffee, tea, nuts and nut butters, Palestinian products, and tons of chocolate to consumers without going through commercial farms or large corporations. I found a couple of like-minded people and we formed a worker co-op to provide fundraisers.

In just a year, we've raised thousands of dollars for Central Vermont Refugee Action Network, Capital City Grange, Hubbard Park Expansion, Shidaa West African drumming and dance group, Jaquith Library, Ballet Vermont, The Mud Studio, Marshfield Village Store, and the Harvest Hub. We're happy to work with you to raise money for your organization.

Sue lives in Marshfield and is a Plainfield Co-op member-owner

You already enjoy Equal Exchange products at the **Plainfield Food Coop**, supporting the climate, social justice, and food justice.



Thank you for supporting

- ★ Worker coops
- ★ Small organic family farms
- ★ Authentic fair trade



Just Food Hub works with Equal Exchange to build community strength and resilience. We offer one-time, monthly, or quarterly fundraisers, earning your organization 30% of purchases by your supporting members.

802-622-1176

sx@justfoodhub.us

justfoodhub.us

On Board!

by Cat Klarich, Board President

I am humbled and honored to be serving on the Plainfield Co-op Board of Directors. Rose, Jess, Lucy and Liz deserve a medal for their countless hours volunteering on behalf of our struggling little store. A big shout out to the staff and the GM, Jamie, who are the gas that powers the Co-op's engine.

It's been a lot of work leading up to this point, and we are very pleased that our efforts have resulted in being awarded the USDA Rural Development Grant to fund a feasibility study. A big hug to member-owner Mary Niebling for helping us write it! This grant will lay the groundwork for the Co-op's future and will help us finally answer the question of do we stay, or do we go? This visioning and planning will help usher in the next Board of Directors.

We are a lean 5 person team! There are Board terms ending and a vacant Vice Presidency. I'm concerned that we won't have a beefy enough Board moving forward. I'm asking the membership to dig deep into your talent reserves and think about what you can offer the Co-op. I initially joined the Board in 2019 during another dire financial situation because I was mortified at the thought of losing the Co-op. 3 years later, we're facing another financial crisis. I want to

get off this scary rollercoaster ride! The Co-op has "growing pains" and needs to expand in order to take us through the next 50 years. What this expansion looks like is still unknown, but we now have the resources to figure this out. We'll all need to work together to make this happen!

Thank you member-owners for all of your support, energy, and out of the box thinking. We're grateful to volunteers like Annie Coughlin who is working towards 501(c)(3) status with a group called the Co-op Building Group, which would allow them to qualify for grant funding to update and maintain the current Co-op building so it can reduce costs and exist in its current location. This is in lieu of the Community Center becoming a non-profit, which was a more complicated process. The end result is the same and demonstrates the commitment to preserving the Community Center, the Co-op, and the historic Grange building in downtown Plainfield. It's a win-win-win!

A special thanks to the established Marketing Committee who are planning something special for the Co-op's 50th birthday! And a round of applause to the Newsletter Committee who publishes this beautiful quarterly newsletter.

The Seven Cooperative Principles:

- Open and Voluntary Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members' Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training, and Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

After the Special Meeting in May and the Community Forum in June, I look forward to engaging with more members who are committed to working with the Board, on a committee, or in some other capacity. I hope to see you at the Annual meeting Sunday, Aug. 28, 2022 at 12 p.m. (rain date Aug. 29 at 5:30 p.m.), Plainfield Rec Field.

This is our Co-op! Use it or lose it! ❖

Plainfield Food Co-op Treasurer's Report

by Rose Paul, Board Treasurer

Snapshot of Co-op profit (loss) at end of Quarter 1 2022
compared with Q1 2021

	Jan 1 to Mar 31, 2022	Jan 1 to Mar 31, 2021	Variance to 2021
Gross sales	\$ 247,606	\$ 305,227	\$ 57,621
Gross profit margin	27%	34.2%	
Gross profit*	67,759	109,445	\$ 41,686
Expenses**	110,039	108,280	\$ 1,759
Profit (Loss)	\$ (42,279)	\$ 1,166	\$ (43,445)

* gross sales less the cost of goods sold

** wages, utilities, member and staff discounts, and all other expenses besides cost of goods sold

I will report on how we ended the first quarter of our fiscal year and bring us up through the month of April, the last month for which I have the numbers.

Our fiscal year runs from January 1 to December 31. In the first quarter of the year, January through March, the Co-op lost \$42,279. The first quarter, the winter months, are typically the slowest months for sales. However, this past quarter was a deep slump. The table below compares the same time periods in 2022 versus 2021. Our gross sales in 2022 were \$57,621 lower than in 2021. Simply put, people are shopping at Plainfield Co-op less than they were last year.

We try to maintain a 35% profit margin to stay in the black financially. In the first quarter (Q1) of 2022 we missed that margin by a significant amount, only achieving a 27% profit margin. While our expenses in Q1 were not much higher than Q1 of last year, we still ended Q1 with a large loss. For comparison, we

lost \$38,000 for the whole year in 2021, and we lost \$38,000 in 2020 until late-awarded 2020 government stimulus funds helped us end the year in the black. Now we have lost \$42,279 in the first quarter alone!

During April this year, we did not see an uptick in sales, and in fact sales were down \$16,000 compared with April 2021. We ended the month of April with a net loss of \$8,852.

Our various savings accounts amounted to \$70,709 at the end of Q1. Together with inventory and a few other items, our total current assets at the end of Q1 totaled \$130,329. Our total current liabilities (which includes accounts payable, gift certificate liability and a few other items) at the end of Q1 totaled \$109,450. In mid-winter, we were falling behind in paying our vendors and after the close of Q1 we borrowed \$30,000 on our line of credit. At the end

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of April, we had \$42,655 outstanding on our line of credit, and the maximum we can borrow is \$45,000.

We had another major piece of equipment fail in mid-February, a compressor that served our dairy and meat coolers. We had losses due to spoilage and a lack of sales for several days when the shelves were empty while the compressor was being installed. The new compressor cost \$5,000 including labor.

Our sales are typically highest in the summer months for a variety of reasons, including an abundance of fresh local produce, an influx of summer visitors, and more social gatherings involving meals. We'll have to wait and see whether the summer season helps to boost us out of our sales slump.

I recently heard a saying from the grocery world: high sales can hide a multitude of sins. It is said with some humor, but it is true that vigorous sales can keep a store profitable during times of equipment failures and food spoilage, lower than hoped for profit margins, and unexpected problems such as store closure due to COVID.

A friend asked me in the Co-op parking lot, "What are you (the Board) going to do about it?" meaning operating in the red. The Board is trying its best. Our General Manager and staff are trying their best. I want to ask our members, what are WE going to do about it? Slumping sales have gotten us into a deficit. Can our members step up and shop at the Co-op more than they have been? Can YOU help our Co-op survive and thrive? Is there something you want to buy but the Co-op isn't carrying? Please tell the staff so that we can meet your grocery needs!

We are facing the reality that our Co-op is being outcompeted. We are geographically close to Montpelier and it is easy for people to shop at Hunger Mountain Co-op while they are in town for errands or their work. Supermarkets now carry organic produce and you can get brown rice, tofu, vegetarian prepared foods and other typical Co-op fare there too. The competitive grocery environment for Plainfield Co-op is not what it was in the 1970's. It is time for Co-op members to re-imagine the future they want for our little local Co-op and help make it happen. ❖

Our Co-op - Use it or lose it!

Vermont Yarn Shop



At Plainview Farm
Plainfield Vermont

Featuring yarns made in Vermont,
or made from Vermont fibers

858 East Hill Road
454-1114

Hours: Fridays and Saturdays
9 A.M. to Noon, or by appt.

Membership Committee Report

by Leah Tedesco

As we celebrate the Plainfield Co-op's 50th year, keep an eye out for decorations continually appearing in and around the building. Members and staff have been having fun contributing their creativity to the celebration. Have something you would like to contribute? Contact Leah at membership@plainfieldcoop.com.

We recently had a soft reopening of the Community Center. This means that a maximum of 6 guests at a time are allowed access to the space. We are still working on updating the rental agreement paperwork and the info on the website – and the online rental system is still not available – but you can ask a staff member about reserving the space the old fashioned way. The signout sheet for the key and numbered passes is available at the first register. All minors must be accompanied by an adult. Masks are required. ❖



PCC Gallery Re-opens!



Jerome Lipani: Visual Fugue Analytical Abstractions and Assemblages, of found materials conceived as scores for music and dance improvisation

Celebrate the ReOpening of the Plainfield Community Center & Gallery. Come Re-Inhabit the Space!

Through September 30
9AM - 7PM Monday-Saturday
10AM - 7PM Sunday

Info: jeromelipani@gmail.com. Check out related collection of over 100 Lipani films @ Jerome Lipani - YouTube.

CALL TO ARTISTS

50th Anniversary Celebration of the Plainfield Co-op Community Center & Gallery November 2022 Group Show

Please submit your proposals for visual work and/or performance by September 1. We aim to honor folks who have shown or performed here over the last 50 years while simultaneously welcoming those new to the scene! We want to feature your art, poetry, music, dance, films, videos, memorabilia; your educational/community events and classes!

Contact curatrix Alexis Smith: vtpiegirlco@gmail.com

Recipes collected by Debra Stoleroff

Salad with Arugula, Beets, Goat Cheese and Walnuts

This is one of my favorite summer salads. Lettuce, arugula and beets straight from the garden. Vermont Cheese goat cheese and a few walnuts to crunch. I've included two dressings: balsamic vinaigrette dressing and a lemony one.



Salad Ingredients

- Beets - (boiled until a fork easily goes in), peeled, sliced into strips
- Lettuce - any kind will do but leaf lettuce works best for this salad
- Arugula
- Goat cheese - chevre
- Walnuts - chopped

The amount of each ingredient is up to you. I suggest a 2:1 ratio of arugula to lettuce. Enough beets to balance the strong arugula and about a ½ inch of goat cheese if you are cutting it from the smaller VT Cheese log.

Layer the ingredients: lettuce and arugula (tossed together) on the bottom. Beets, then goat cheese and finally, the walnuts.

Balsamic Vinaigrette:

- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Minced garlic
- Black pepper and salt

Mix the olive oil and balsamic vinegar in a 2:1 ratio. 2 parts balsamic vinegar to 1 part olive oil. The garlic, salt and pepper are all to your taste.

Lemon Dressing ingredients:

- Olive oil
- Lemon
- Dry powdered mustard
- Sugar
- Salt and pepper

Mix the olive oil and lemon in a 2:1 ratio. 2 parts lemon to 1 part olive oil. The rest is to your taste.



Annual Members Meeting

Plainfield Rec Field
Sunday August 28 at 12 PM

(rain date: Monday
August 29 at 5:30 PM)

General Manager's Report

by Jamie Lewis

As I write this it will mark 8 months since I became General Manager for the Plainfield Co-op. Certainly a lot has happened during that time. I have had a lot to learn as I hit the ground running back in the fall of 2021. And here we are beginning a beautiful Vermont summer. Before I get into some of the operational points of this message, I would like to encourage you to take advantage of all the incredible local produce that we are fortunate to carry at our store this time of year!

As has been outlined in other articles in this newsletter and has been messaged by the Board, the Co-op is in a bit of a financial "pickle." This has been a growing trend that started before I arrived. From what I have been told, the store has historically struggled with this kind of situation.

I have worked at Hunger Mountain and Onion River (City Market). I have visited co-ops in Chicago Illinois, Austin Texas, Maine, New Hampshire, Portland Oregon, I'm probably forgetting some. I want to say that this co-op is one of the more unique and (if you pardon my pun) "organic" stores I have ever witnessed. In terms of heart, soul, and character, this is a good thing. In terms of consistency and operations, this can pose some internal challenges.

From meeting the members and the staff here I have gotten a true sense of the 50 years of history and how important this place is to so many people.

In my time here we have experienced some choppy waters: the ever-evolving Covid situation, supply chain issues, the incredible and rapid rise in the cost of goods and inflation. We have had to in-

vest in a new freezer and cooler compressor because a lot of our equipment is old and some failed. Retail grocery work is challenging in the best of times. All of this with a staff with varying degrees of time on the job and experience. A staff, by the way, that are hardworking, dedicated and are invested in the store and its success. They have endured a lot. I thank them sincerely and I highly encourage you all to do the same when you see them in the store!

So, what do we do about where we find ourselves? I will touch on a few things that have been identified, that if improved upon, will have a significant and beneficial impact.

Operationally speaking, we are working on improving systems and buying procedures. We work with a rather antiquated point of sale system that I am exploring replacement options for. Point of sale systems or POS is the computer program that we run our registers with, scan all sales with, scan in products received, enter costs, apply profit margins and retail prices/shelf tags, track inventory and record sales data, collect membership data among other things. As you can see a POS system is vital to the operations of any store. Like its brain and nervous system, metaphorically speaking. Having a more modern upgrade could go a long way to improving accuracy and efficiency with all the above.

The buyers and I are working together to streamline, improve and standardize procedures and best practices to be put in place and followed. We are working

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to reduce inventory, while keeping our shelves full. It's a crazy time for price increases because every time fuel prices go up, so do food prices. We are working on better cost tracking and more timely methods of price changes to control margins. We are trying to consolidate orders from our largest vendors to meet order minimums so as to avoid incurring extra fees where possible.

In terms of how to support and inspire shoppers, while saving people money, we will be working to promote and reinvigorate what co-ops are renowned for besides produce and local foods – THE BULK DEPARTMENT!

I am looking into re-starting the member worker program to add staff support

without incurring added labor dollars. Even a handful of members who want to support the store with even a few hours each a week for a store discount could go a long way.

As always, we need support from all of you. We always welcome feedback whether it's a product request or whatever suggestions you may have for improvement. As member-owners, shoppers, employees, remember, this place belongs to all of us and all of us belong. ❖

**Our Co-op -
Use it or lose it!**



Our Farmers Thank You

Since 1919, the farm families of Cabot Co-op have been passionate about making the world's best cheese. We use only the purest ingredients to craft our creamy, delicious classics. Just maybe, that's why we've won every major award for taste. Learn more at cabotcheese.coop



Pesticides on Produce

Every year the Environmental Working Group rates **conventional** produce according to the amount of pesticide residue found on their samples. The Dirty Dozen, starting with strawberries that have the most residue (22 different chemicals), are fruits and vegetables that are most important to buy organic, if possible. The Clean 15 are those with the least residues, starting with the cleanest. More info at ewg.org

EWG's Dirty Dozen

1. strawberries
2. spinach
3. kale, collard & mustard greens
4. nectarines
5. apples
6. grapes
7. bell & hot peppers
8. cherries
9. peaches
10. pears
11. celery
12. tomatoes

EWG's Clean 15

1. avocados
2. sweet corn
3. pineapple
4. onions
5. papaya
6. sweet peas (frozen)
7. asparagus
8. honeydew melon
9. kiwi
10. cabbage
11. mushrooms
12. cantaloupe
13. mangoes
14. watermelon
15. sweet potatoes

COMMUNITY HARVEST of CENTRAL VERMONT

adapted from their website and emails by Glenda Bissex

The co-operative spirit is alive and thriving in Vermont in many forms in addition to food co-ops, electric co-ops and others. Community Harvest of Central Vermont is a new co-operative venture that many of the farmers who supply our Co-op contribute to and that benefits our local Twin Valley Senior Center meals.

CHCV is a local grassroots volunteer-driven community service program focused on utilizing surplus food grown in Central Vermont. Through our gleaning, we work with local farms to reduce food waste and help provide healthy food to organizations that serve community members in need. Gleaning is an age-old practice of walk-



ing farmers' fields and gathering usable food after the farmers have finished the regular harvest. During each growing season in Vermont, there are **14.3 million pounds of edible vegetables and berries** grown that are not sold by farms. There is about **1 million pounds** of this surplus just in Washington County that could be gleaned for people to eat. CHCV and the many other gleaning programs around Vermont are making progress in recovering some of this surplus, but only a small portion is being gleaned each season at this point.

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CHCV's volunteers do virtually all of our gleaning. We provide a diverse group of community volunteers the opportunity to help their neighbors in need and gain a greater awareness and appreciation of our local food system. We engage all ages and economic groups, in particular children and recipients of the gleaned food. CHCV promotes community connections and involvement with farms by bringing people out into the farm fields to work together and learn how and where fresh food is grown in their community.

CHCV has been doing weekly deliveries year-round since the spring of 2020. Be-

tween storage crops from fall gleanings, donations from farms sorting their own storage bins, and donations of fresh produce, meat, dairy, and eggs that came in from our year-round partners, our cooler stays full.

Our partnership with Rogers Farmstead is growing. For years they have graciously donated space for our cooler on their farm. Now the farm is planning to build a new storage space, and they would like to lease some of it to CHCV. Other farmers who help supply our Co-op and also partner with CHCV are listed on their website (communityharvestvt.org) along with ways you can help. ❖

Chocolate Chia Pudding

Adapted from "Oh She Glows" website by Debra Stoloroff

This is my current go to dessert. Partly because it is chocolate, partly because the chia seeds fill you up and partly because it is so damn easy to make.

Ingredients

- 1¼ cup to 1½ cup Califa Farms almond milk creamer or regular milk (as needed for desired thickness)
- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder
- 2-3 tbsp pure maple syrup



Preparation

1. In a large bowl, whisk together all of the ingredients (starting with 1¼ cup almond milk) until the clumps are gone.
2. Place in fridge for 1-2 hours, until thick or overnight.
3. Stir well, add more milk if desired to achieve the thickness you prefer, and serve chilled. No ice cream maker? No problem. Spread the pureed mixture in a flat pan and freeze until just barely firm. Remove from the freezer and break into chunks in your processor. Process until light colored and smooth and immediately return to the freezer until it refreezes. (If you want an even creamier texture, repeat the freezing and processing step one more time.)

This Newsletter



We welcome your contributions of letters, photos, cartoons, poems, whatever. Deadline for the Fall issue is September 15.

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Seeking Ad Co-ordinator

- The Newsletter is seeking an ad co-ordinator who will solicit new advertisers as well as track current advertisers and renewals. This job provides a working member discount. Contact the editor: Glenda Bissex, songboat@vtlink.net or 802-454-7895.

Advertise in the Newsletter

Deadline for the Fall issue is September 15. The newsletter is published quarterly in a black & white paper version and in color online. To place an ad, contact Elizabeth Mathai, ad co-ordinator, elizabethmathai@yahoo.com.

Electronic graphics files are preferred, but we are able to work with any clear copy. For questions about ad copy contact Elizabeth Mathai, elizabethmathai@yahoo.com.

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