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BLUE HILL CO-OP NEWS

APRIL/MAY 2009

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Greetings to you all! I am using my space in this issue of the newsletter to allow a guest columnist to step in. I think you'll find this great food for thought. As we think about investing in our community, what more elegant way than to support your community-owned co-op, which provides our community with a lively center of activity, education, jobs, etc.? Did you know that for every \$100 you spend at a national chain, studies show only about \$14 stays in the local area? Spend that same \$100 at a locally-owned independent business and \$45 stays in the community. [Institute for Local Self-Reliance and Friends of Midcoast Maine, "The Economic Impact of Locally Owned Businesses vs. Chains: A Case Study in Midcoast Maine," September 2003.]

"Cooperate and no one gets hurt" as the saying goes...and together we can continue to thrive as a community. Go Co-op!

*Karen Doherty
General Manager*

MANAGER'S REPORT

Who Profits When Co-ops Succeed?

by Elizabeth Archerd, Member Services Manager, Wedge Community Co-op

One of the most complex things to explain to people who are new to co-ops is who benefits when a co-op succeeds. When a cooperative appears to be thriving, some shoppers voice suspicions that it is not a "real co-op." That attitude implies that co-ops are only "real" when they are badly run or barely making it!

A successful co-op is proof that a community can build a self-sustaining business to provide the goods and services that it needs. It also means that an essential part of the local economy exists only to serve the community, reinvesting much of the wealth it generates back in to the community.

Manager's Report

Continued from page 1

There is no profit motive in consumer co-ops. Profit is a measure of performance of how well management and staff control expenses, offer products the members need, and manage the members' money. Profit is never the reason for a co-op to exist, but it is how members know that their business is in competent hands.

In the traditional terminology of co-ops, profit was known as "surplus." The surplus generated by a well-run co-op is a resource for the co-op as a whole. A large part of surplus is reinvested in the business itself—true in any well-run business—or used to fund services desired by the members. Any remainder is distributed back to the members at the end of each year.

An important cooperative tradition is that no member profits at the expense of any other member or of the co-op as a whole. Co-ops should not offer member benefits that put them in a risky financial position. The unique way that co-ops handle profit was designed to institutionalize this tradition: the proportional patronage refund means that every member gets back only the profit generated by their own purchases.

The concept of the co-op as community wealth can be lost if members think of their co-op merely as a source of immediate savings. Co-ops are at risk when little thought is given to long-term business health. Only healthy co-ops can become major players in the economy, pushing the food industry toward a more service-oriented ethic.

It is increasingly important for members to understand that the crucial difference between co-ops and other stores is not product line, pricing, or management style, but the very purpose of the business. Co-ops exist to provide long-term service to their members. Co-ops are a way for communities to fulfill their aspirations to become stronger, wealthier, and more equitable.

To the founders of the modern co-op movement, cooperation was more than "getting along": it was interaction for a purpose. Competition is about getting ahead of others, but cooperation stresses getting ahead with others on behalf of the common good.

[Reprinted with permission. Our thanks to Elizabeth Archard for sharing this.]

Message to Obama: Please Fix the USDA's Organic Mess

by Will Fantle, Cornucopia Co-director

The Cornucopia Institute is calling on organic farmers and consumers to contact President Obama and new USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack with a "demand for change" at the USDA's National Organic Program. The organic watchdog recently sent a briefing paper to the President detailing the need for an overhaul of organic program management.

"The stewardship of the USDA's organic program, under the Bush Administration, was an absolute abomination," said Mark A. Kastel, Cornucopia's senior farm policy analyst. "It was not just neglect—it was intentional monkeywrenching."

Cornucopia has prepared a proxy letter, available on their website (under Action Alerts at www.cornucopia.org), that they will hand deliver signed copies of to both President Obama and Secretary Vilsack. Individuals can mail or e-mail their proxies to Cornucopia for hand delivery.

According to Cornucopia, problems plaguing organics include:

- suspect imports of "organic" grains, nuts, and vegetables from China and other countries
- questionable organic milk, beef, and eggs from giant factory farms
- the erosion of opportunity for family farmers
- stacking the National Organic Standards Board with representatives from corporate agribusiness.

"Our new governmental leaders need to hear from us now while their voices may be heard," added Kastel.



Notice of Board Meetings

The Co-op Board meets on the third Tuesday of each month, 6:30–9:00 p.m. The meetings are held in the Howard Room at the Blue Hill Public Library. They are open to the membership. The next Co-op Board meetings will be held on May 19 and June 16.

Co-op Board Officers & Members:

President Marianne Vandiver
Vice President Gail Bartlett
Treasurer Bob Sullivan
Secretary Erich Reed
Chip Angell
Becky McCall
John Vincent
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DEADLINE FOR JUNE/JULY ISSUE:

MAY 18

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Newsletter articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the board, staff, management, or Newsletter Team.

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Karen Doherty

Store Hours

Monday–Friday, 8 am–7 pm
Saturday, 8 am–6 pm
Sunday, 9 am–5 pm
(207) 374-2165
www.bluehill.coop

Letters to the Newsletter

The Newsletter Team welcomes input. If you have something you'd like to share with other Co-op owners, please send a letter to: Letters to the Editor, Blue Hill Co-op Community Market, PO Box 1133, Blue Hill, ME 04614, or send an e-mail to newsletter@bluehill.coop. Letters may be edited for style, not content, and should be brief. Please include your name, address and daytime phone number.

Cooperatives and Local Foods: A Look at Working Models

What comes to mind when you think about Switzerland? Skiing in the Alps? The Red Cross? Chocolate? Neutrality? Banks? Food co-ops? Approximately half the size of Maine, home to 7.2 million people (roughly, six times the population of Maine), Switzerland has a grocery industry dominated by two large food cooperatives: Migros, founded in 1925, and Coop (pronounced *cope*), founded in 1890. Together they employ more than 129,000 people. Two out of three Swiss belong to one of these food co-ops, and many belong to both.

With more than 1,450 stores and 2,461,000 household memberships, Coop accounts for half of all the organic food sold in Switzerland. While it may charge higher prices than Migros, Coop is reputed to pay its workers more. Store size varies greatly, from tiny to enormous, for both Coop and Migros. Migros has 580 stores scattered throughout Switzerland, and has approximately two million households memberships. In addition to retail food outlets, Migros owns and operates food-processing plants throughout the country. Both Migros and Coop own a number of auxiliary cooperative businesses, including restaurants, travel agencies, insurance companies, gas stations, and banks.

What makes this success possible? Perhaps the most salient factor here is the Swiss government. Considered by many observers to be the most stable democracy in the world, Switzerland has invested in civilian infrastructure to a nearly unparalleled degree, building a public transportation system the envy of most in the world, maintaining stellar schools and universities, and supporting farms. Switzerland is truly a "farms, not arms" nation. In 2007 there were 6,350 certified organic farms in Switzerland as well as many more thousands of conventional farms.

Generous government subsidies are available to farms of all sizes and persuasions in Switzerland. The Swiss grow and produce more than 60% of their food, which is astonishing considering it is a small, mountainous, and fairly populous country. This means that most food is local food, and much of the rest is from countries nearby such as Italy or France. Many farms have farm stands run on an honor basis, and farmer's markets are as popular there as they are here. The two co-ops are loved for what they provide: state-of-the-art, creatively designed, and efficient infrastructure for food delivery. Along with pro-farm subsidies, the government imposes strong tariffs on imported goods, and together these government policies insure an enviable degree of food security for the Swiss.

Could we replicate the Swiss cooperative success here in Maine? In many respects I'm comparing apples and oranges by discussing a small, very prosperous nation side by side with the state of Maine. Doing so presents an alternative template for the cooperative than what is usually considered in local food distribution discussions.

When thinking about the potential success of local cooperatives, here are some factors to consider:

1) Unlike those in Switzerland, US agricultural subsidies are aimed at supporting giant agribusinesses growing soy, corn, and cotton rather than supporting the kind of mix of smaller and mid-sized growers that can feed community vitality in diverse ways.

2) The Swiss are wise investors. Their cooperative founders were willing to defer rewards until their businesses were sound. Member discounts and dividend returns were put off for a time; profits were

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Susan Jenkins-Urban Medicine Dreamer

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Small Farmer Co-ops Cultivate Democracy: It's In Their Roots

by Phyllis Robinson, *Equal Exchange*

This May, we celebrate World Fair Trade Day. We're excited to honor all that cooperatives have accomplished to support small farmers. Yet, it feels important to also take this opportunity to revisit the roots of Fair Trade, and reconsider what we aim to accomplish. Most people understand the critical importance of higher prices, advance credit, and direct relationships—they allow farmers to stay on their land, send their children to school, and diversify their incomes. Yet, there's another equally important—goal of Fair Trade, one that seems to be slowly disappearing as new iterations of "ethical trade" and "direct trade" appear in the market: empowering communities and social movements. It is for this reason *Equal Exchange* chooses to work exclusively with small-farmer cooperatives.

In our culture, individualism is steeped into our subconscious from an early age. The American Dream says that anyone who works hard enough can pull themselves up by their bootstraps to become a millionaire—or the country's president. Americans have a hard time with the idea that movements are built by many anonymous "ordinary" people each putting in "their grain of sand." In contrast, many indigenous cultures are built around this central theme of "community"; even most European countries place a higher premium on collective welfare than we do. For people who have had to shed blood and lose family members to earn their most basic rights, it is obvious that true success can only happen through collective efforts, organization, and cooperation.

This empowerment of indigenous peoples and the poor in general—many of whom rely on farming for their livelihoods—is a concept that makes some people uncomfortable. As a society, we are okay with poverty alleviation and charity, but when the world's disenfranchised begin to organize and take control

over their own lives, businesses, and communities, when they start gaining economic power in the marketplace and political power in their countries, and in our own...that makes people nervous. Why would we rather raise money and give it to "poor farmers" than support their efforts to make their own livings?

For me, this notion of empowerment is the missing ingredient when folks in the coffee industry start talking about "going direct," or referring to a cooperative as yet another middleman. The strategy places too much emphasis on one person's benevolence, and gives that person, or company, the upper hand. Today, I come to your village and establish a friendship, offer a scholarship for your family's children, and purchase your highest-quality coffee. Tomorrow, I might go elsewhere. It is a strategy that, while well-intentioned and producing positive results, does little to build democratic control and power at the producer level.

These same strategies—scholarships, direct relationships, community projects—have a completely different, and I would argue stronger, impact when they occur within the framework of an organized cooperative, association, or community. It's a question of who's in control, who makes the decisions, who is acquiring experience, and ultimately who has the power to set the terms.

It's about producers, consumers, and alternative trade organizations working together to ensure that the terms of trade are more fair. Higher prices—yes. Advance credit, direct relationships, and social projects...all of these are critical. But the emphasis and ultimate goal of all our work needs to be about equity and social justice.

Fair Trade through cooperatives enables farmers to invest in their own businesses and improvements in their own communities. Through co-ops, they can participate in other organizations and social movements to influence, improve upon, and change national trade and agricultural policies. In this way, organized and well-run small farmer cooperatives can acquire the economic and political power necessary to create lasting and deep-seated change.

New Local Products in the Bulk Department!

We're very happy to welcome 5 Star Nursery & Orchard's **apple cider vinegar** in bulk! Tim and Leslie gave a demo and handed out samples at the Co-op in February, and we've been getting lots of great feedback about its quality and nutritional benefits. We also get our wonderful apple cider from them in season.

Also new is **cranberry cashew pecan granola** from Tierra Farm, one of our favorite bulk suppliers, as well as a new **local soup mix** from Aurora Mills in Linneus, Maine.

And back in bulk are **organic raw Brazil nuts** and **organic hulled barley**—back after being out of stock from our distributors for quite a while. Coming soon: **organic smoked paprika** in bulk!

Also check out our spring bulk sales. Many products in all sections of the bulk department are on sale, including beans, rice, flours, dried mushrooms, and chocolate- and carob-covered goodies. Come check it out!

Amy Coppage
Bulk Department Manager



More Spring Savings!

Spring is a great time to rejuvenate and re-energize as we prepare for a season of celebrations, including Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and countless graduations. And there's no better way to celebrate than with good food.

That's why we're offering another great Co-op Advantage Program (CAP) coupon book. It's full of big savings on some of your favorite brands.

This coupon book is just one small way for us to say "thanks" to you, our co-op owners. Your continued support makes our co-op more than just another grocery store. Your investment, patronage, and input help us better serve you, support our local community, and build connections with other communities across the country and around the world.

You should have received this special offer in your mailbox in late March. CAP Coupons are valid through May 31, 2009.

Immunity

by Catherine Princell, RN MS

As the immune system goes, so goes our health and vitality. The immune system, comprising two trillion cells, is a complex mechanism designed to defend us against illness-causing viruses, bacteria and fungi, while co-existing with the "good" bacteria that inhabit the gut and other organs. The ability of our immune system to protect us depends largely on how well we care for ourselves.

Terry Phillips, PhD, an immunochemist at the National Institutes of Health, states that the best way to keep your immune system healthy is to do all of the things that keep it naturally strong, like exercising, eating right, and coping with stress. Do you smoke? We already know that smoking raises the risk of heart disease and cancer, smokers develop more upper respiratory infections, and smoker's wounds heal more slowly. Studies also show that smoking suppresses immune function by lowering blood levels of several kinds of antibodies, reducing the function of T-cells and natural killer cells, and hindering the ability of macrophages in the lungs to kill bacteria. Smoking also floods the body with free radicals that cause immunity-suppressing inflammation. On a more positive note, if you quit smoking your immune function begins to improve within thirty days.

Recent research by a group of physicians and researchers who specialize in immunology and preventive medicine has identified seven lifestyle factors that enhance the immune system's healing potential.

Nutrition

Certain substances in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains help protect the immune system from the destructive effects of free radicals that cause chronic inflammation. A junk-food diet contains refined food sources that can suppress the immune system and can lead to obesity, another factor that contributes to suppressed immunity. A basic nutrition guideline for increasing immunity includes:

Whole Grains: at least six servings per day. Serving sizes include one slice of bread, ½ cup of cereal, ½ cup of cooked brown rice, 3 cups of popcorn. More examples of serving sizes can be found at mypyramid.gov.

Vegetables: at least 2½ cups per day. For most vegetables a serving is 1 cup raw or cooked. Highly immunity-boosting vegetables include tomatoes, broccoli, onions, garlic, mushrooms, and sweet potatoes. Dark green and orange vegetables are the best sources of immunity-enhancing nutrients.

Fruits: at least 1½ cups per day. One of the best immunity-enhancing fruits is an apple! Eat the whole fruit, though, because while apple juice is good, it is not as high in immunity-boosting polyphenols.

Dairy: at least 2-3 cups per day. These foods supply protein, an essential substance for your immune cells, and are among the best dietary sources of Vitamin D, which helps maintain a healthy immune system. It is important to review the fat content of the dairy products to avoid the increased risk of heart disease from excess calorie consumption. Low-fat or fat-free dairy products meet the

Continued on page 6

Down to Earth Pottery



Keith Herklotz

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*Are you a Co-op owner who's also an artist?
Want to show your artwork at the Co-op Café?
Call Mary Barnes to schedule a show: 359-5053*

Immunity

Continued from page 5

immune system's requirements without increasing the risk of heart disease. For cheeses, 1 cup equals 1½ ounces of hard cheese; other dairy products such as yogurt and milk are measured by the cup. Probiotics found in cultured dairy products such as yogurt, acidophilus milk, and kefir can restore the beneficial bacteria in your gut and prime your immune system to fight gastrointestinal infections. The suggested daily intake of these foods is two 7-ounce servings per day.

Lean Proteins: at least 5 ounces per day. Protein foods provide generous amounts of the immunity-boosting vitamins B6 and E, and the mineral zinc. They also provide B-vitamins that support the formation of red blood cells and help maintain a healthy nervous system. Animal sources of protein can be high in saturated fat and cholesterol so it is best to choose lean cuts and remove any visible fat before cooking. Fish sources that are high in omega-3 fatty acids are quite beneficial to a healthy immune system; a recommended intake is a 4-ounce serving four times per week. Other sources of daily protein intake include servings of one egg, 1 tablespoon of nut butter, ¼ cup of cooked dried beans or peas or ¼ cup of tofu.

Fluids. New research defines daily fluid intake as a combination of non-alcoholic fluids and those that come from food. The Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Science issued hydration guidelines for women at 11 ½ cups per day, 9 coming from beverages and the rest from food; for men the suggested intake is 16 cups with 13 coming from beverages. Proper hydration keeps your mucous membranes full of disease-fighting antibodies such as Immunoglobulin A.

Exercise

Physical activity does more than help with weight loss and muscle toning. Moderate exercise, such as 30–60 minutes of walking at about 3 ½ miles per hour, triggers many hormonal and immunological reactions. It can help by flushing out disease-causing viruses and bacteria from the lungs. It can flush out cancer-causing cells by increasing the output of wastes such as urine and sweat. It also sends antibodies and white blood cells through the body at a faster rate, enabling them to attack intruding bacteria and viruses more quickly. The temporary rise in body temperature may inhibit bacterial growth, allowing the body to fight the infection more effectively.

Immune function usually peaks in early adulthood and then steadily declines, but exercise can reverse this trend. The longer you engage in regular exercise the greater its benefit, and it is never too late to start. The basic recommendation is 30–60 minutes of aerobic exercise at least five days per week and 20 minutes of strength training twice per week. Getting the full immune-enhancing effect of moderate exercise takes activity that raises your heart rate 50–70 percent of maximum and causes you to sweat! Beware of over-exercising, though, as an intense exercise session that lasts 90 minutes or longer can actually suppress your immune system.

Sleep

Eight hours of sleep each night allows the immune system to fortify its defenses. When you don't get enough sleep you produce fewer infection-fighting natural killer cells, increased stress hormone production suppresses immune function further, and inflammatory proteins such as C-reactive protein (a risk factor for atherosclerosis) are released. It also increases the production of tumor-necrosis factor, which may contribute to autoimmune disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis. Regular sleep deprivation can cause starch and sugar metabolism to decrease, which prompts a rise in blood sugar. A study conducted by the American Cancer Society over a seven-year period concluded that the lifestyle factor most strongly associated with an increased risk of death was sleep loss. The death rate was higher in those that slept four hours or less per night and lowest in those that slept eight hours per night.

Stress

There is "good" stress, which is short term, and "bad" stress, which is chronic. Short-term stress that lasts only a few minutes or hours temporarily mobilizes immune cells to prepare for imminent danger such as an injury that needs protection from infection. On the other hand chronic stress caused by money problems, family issues, job problems, relationship issues and anxieties actually suppress the immune system. This means the ability to battle viral, bacterial and parasitic infections is diminished. People who are older or whose immune systems are already compromised are much more prone to a stress-related effect on their immune cell response.

Mood

There is a connection between your brain and the immune system that relates quite

strongly to your outlook on life. Studies on the use of humor to cope with stress have indicated an increase in levels of an immune system protein that is the body's first line defense against respiratory illnesses. Your emotional style has a powerful impact on immunity and most studies show that a positive emotional style is associated with enhanced immune function and a negative emotional style leads to a suppressed immune function.

Sunshine

Your immune system needs Vitamin D, and studies now show that low levels of the vitamin allow flu viruses to breach the immune system. This is why the flu is more of a winter disease. Low levels of Vitamin D have been connected to Multiple Sclerosis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Diabetes and Inflammatory Bowel Disease in populations that live in northern latitudes. Extensive exposure to the sun raises the risk of skin cancer, but a few minutes of sun exposure during the day may improve Vitamin D status, which in turn reduces the risk of sixteen common cancers. People can obtain Vitamin D through 10–15 minutes of sun exposure 2–3 days per week, and through fortified foods and supplements.

Environment

Wash your hands! You are more likely to pick up the latest illness that is going around by touching a contaminated surface than by inhaling someone else's sneeze or cough. Clean foods and food preparation surfaces. Never place cooked foods on a surface that has had raw meat, poultry or fish on it without prior cleaning. Use a thermometer when cooking meats and follow the temperature guidelines to destroy food-borne contaminants. Safeguard your home from environmental toxins such as toxic chemicals used in cleaning products, insecticides and herbicides. Keep tobacco smoke outdoors and invest in an air filter for your home. Test your water and if need be install a water filter or use a water filter pitcher to keep your drinking water clean.

Without an immune system we would wake up each morning covered with mold! Take the time to review your lifestyle habits and investigate how you can improve your immunity by changing your habits!



The Simmering Pot

The Simmering Pot, a project of the Tree of Life Food Pantry, has been awarded \$7,000 through the Community Health Alliance Grant Program. This generous funding will allow the Simmering Pot community suppers to continue year-round, providing nutritious and tasty soups and breads to 20-25 families every other week. Additionally, Simmering Pot organizers have committed to using 50% of their purchasing power (for food ingredients) towards local farms, fisheries, and orchards.

The Simmering Pot will continue serving soups on April 20, May 4 & 18, and June 1, 15, & 29. Suppers are held at the First Congregational Church of Blue Hill, 2:30 pm-6:00 pm.



Co-organizer Hadley Friedman serves from a simmering pot!

Free Local Produce with Maine Senior FarmShare

Maine residents aged sixty or older with incomes below \$20,036 (individual) and \$26,995 (couples) are eligible to receive \$50 worth of free fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables this coming season through the Maine Senior FarmShare Program. Participating farms in Hancock County are: Horsepower Farm, Lazy C, H.O.M.E., Amber's Best, and Simon's Hancock Farm.

To find a participating farm near them, interested seniors are encouraged to contact their local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) on the toll-free line: 1-877-353-3771. The AAA agencies can also provide information on other programs available to low-income seniors, such as heating assistance and other food programs.

Taking Stock: The Need for Community Storage and Processing

Salie Grossman, Blue Hill Co-op Produce Manager, was among the twenty-three farmers, chefs, and marketeers gathered at the East Blue Hill Grange on March 9 for conversation and networking. Representatives of thirteen farms and five businesses (one inn, two restaurants, Food for Maine's Future, and the Co-op) chatted informally for the first hour, making new connections and catching up on old ones.

The more formal discussion revealed specific needs of chefs for timely, regular communication regarding product and delivery. Pasture-raised meat producers wondered about a processing facility on the Peninsula. Currently, farmers must transport their animals a minimum of sixty miles to the nearest federally-licensed facility. Farmers and chefs alike agreed that lack of adequate cool storage for root crops and freezer space for meat, fish, and poultry were hindrances to producing and purchasing more local farm products. Producers also expressed interest in a year-round farmer's market.

This event grew out of the November Eat Local Challenge sponsored by the Co-op. Betsy Bott and Mia Strong invited all farmers and food purveyors on the Peninsula to the meeting and provided the beverages and baked goods. Quill's End Farm provided fresh cream and goat cheese. Clayfield Farm and 5 Star Nursery brought apples. Clifton Page and Lucy Benjamin provided the meeting space and heat.

If you would like to be involved in this continuing effort to support a sustainable local food network, please contact Betsy Bott (460-0837), Mia Strong (359-8572), or Eileen Mielenhausen (374-2165).

Two Cents' Worth

The Two Cents Board is back! Please leave your comments/questions for Department Managers on the board across from the produce cooler. We will collect the questions and post responses on a monthly basis. Looking forward to hearing *your* two cents!

ALTERATIONS

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Patronage Rebates

Patronage dividend checks were mailed out on March 14. Patronage dividends are based on a percentage of profits from owner sales in Fiscal Year 2008. Owners who spent more dollars at the Co-op received more substantial checks. This year, the board approved giving owners 80% of the profits from owner sales, while retaining 20% for Co-op capital expenses.

Note: There was an error on the check stub. Checks must be cashed by June 30, 2009 (not 2008, as noted on the stub).

Discounts

As you may have read in the previous newsletter or learned at the store, membership benefits have changed. The 3% Supporting and 5%

Senior at-register discounts were removed as of April 1. New benefits to owners are being planned for the next fiscal year.

For now, we will be issuing discount coupons to be used for one-time purchases at the store. If you are an active owner (i.e., your equity is up-to-date), look for your Blue Hill Co-op membership discount coupons in the mail in late April.

Please see the general manager's report (pages 1-2) for more information about why this decision was made—or feel free to speak directly to General Manager Karen Doherty.

Owner Accounts: Adding Family Members

You can now add up to four family members to your individual owner account, allowing your dependents or significant other to use your account when shopping at the Co-op.

To add a family member to your owner account, please fill out a form at the register (ask your cashier). For more information, contact Eileen at membership@bluehill.coop or 374-2165.

Working Members

We love our working members and all the hard work you do for the Co-op! Many thanks to Yvonne Chick for assisting me in coordinating the working member program.

To become a working member, you'll need to sign up for an orientation, which are usually held on Wednesday afternoons. Please call Eileen to schedule: 374-2165.

Owner Forums

An owner forum, facilitated by Steve

Benson, was held on March 31 to discuss owner discounts. Open forums are an opportunity for owners to learn more about the operation of their co-op, to ask questions, exchange ideas, and share concerns with board members, the general manager, membership coordinator, and other owners.

Stay tuned for more information on upcoming owner forums! Check the Co-op website (www.bluehill.coop) or store bulletin board for future forum dates, or contact the membership coordinator, general manager, or a board representative.

Survey

Thank you to everyone who has filled out a customer survey! We appreciate

all the thoughtful feedback, which will help guide the Co-op into the future. We have received 180 completed surveys at this writing. A drawing for prizes for survey participants will be held in April.

If you haven't filled one out yet, there's still time! Turn in your survey by April 30 to have your input included in our data report. You can bring it into the store or mail the survey to: Customer Survey, c/o Blue Hill Co-op, PO Box 1133, Blue Hill, ME 04614. The data will be collected and recorded in a manner to ensure survey participants will remain anonymous. THANK YOU!

Eileen Mielenhausen

Membership & Marketing Coordinator

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Upcoming Events

• Poetry Night

Friday, April 24 from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Café. April is National Poetry Month, so bring your work and your friends!

• World Fair Trade Day

Saturday, May 9

• Voluntary Simplicity Course

A Northwest Earth Institute discussion course will address the distractions of modern society that keep us from caring for ourselves, our relationships, and our environment.

Participants in this discussion course will gain an understanding of the meaning of voluntary simplicity, explore the material and psychological distractions that prevent us from caring for Earth, consider how life might be enriched through the practice of simplicity, and develop a personal action plan to integrate simplicity into their lives.

This Monday discussion series is free and open to the public. The next sessions are on April 20 & 27 and May 11 & 18 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Blue Hill Library's Howard Room.

Course materials are available on loan from the Blue Hill Library. For more information, contact Mia Strong at 359-8572 or Eileen at 374-2165 or membership@bluehill.coop.

A Note of Thanks

to Co-op owner Rick Traub for your generous donation of a much-needed Dell laptop computer.

Thank you, Rick!!

Looking for a Few Good Chairs

If you have some pretty decent chairs you'd like to give to a good home, the Co-op is looking for several for use in the Café. Please call the Co-op at 374-2165.

Co-op News Advertising Fine Print:

Ad Rates for Newsletter: *Classified ads*: \$2.50 for up to 20 words; 15¢ per word over 20 (phone number counts as one word). *Display ads (Boxed)*: \$10/column inch. *Business card ads*: \$25.

SPECIAL! 6 Business Card Ads for the price of 5: Ad must be pre-paid for a year to receive this special rate of \$125 for six ads.

Regulations and Terms: All advertising is accepted subject to approval by the Newsletter Team. The Newsletter Team reserves the right to refuse any advertisement at any time. The Blue Hill Co-op News assumes liability for errors in advertising only to the extent that it will publish, at no charge, a corrected version of the advertisement in the next issue of the newsletter.

All ads must be prepaid. Make check payable to Blue Hill Co-op. Send payment & ad info to: Prudy Heilner • PO Box 239 • Blue Hill, ME 04614 • 374-5485; or drop off at the Co-op.

Co-ops and Local Foods

Continued from page 3

invested back into the businesses until the businesses were strong enough to offer returns to the members.

3) Migros, at 84 years, and Coop, at 119 years, are mature cooperatives. By comparison, Maine co-ops are still relatively young and immature businesses. In New England, only New Hampshire's Hanover Co-op, 70 years old with 60,000 members, can compare to Swiss co-ops in terms of maturity and level of development. Here in Maine our cooperative founders and owners were unwilling or didn't know enough to defer returns on their members' investment, and this is crucial for long term success—in Maine, we have only five cooperative stores that have survived the past thirty years.

4) The cost of food security in Switzerland is pretty steep. In US dollar equivalents, the price of a dozen organic Swiss eggs in 2009 is \$12.00. The Swiss income tax rate can reach 40%, much higher than we're accustomed to. Americans have come to expect inexpensive food and lower taxes. Throughout western Europe, consumers are willing to pay a much greater percentage of their income for food and a concomitantly higher tax rate. However, their tax dollars clearly go toward supporting farms, not arms.

In Maine, these success factors are absent, or very limited. We lack an adequate infrastructure of both co-op stores and farms, not to mention food processing facilities and public transportation. We have neither federal nor state government investing our tax dollars in farms. In the absence of supportive agricultural policy, it's all too easy to cast blame on retail outlets—large and small—for making food more costly while leaving less profit for the farmers. It's important to remember that historically there have always been centralized markets and stores, even in undeveloped parts of the world, and even here, in the thirteen colonies.

Still, I believe that we could achieve a modest version of what the Swiss have accomplished. But doing so would mean learning how to create, maintain, and share the ownership of community assets and common wealth. If co-op owners look only at personal gain, we miss the power of cooperation or misinterpret it as delivery of the lowest possible prices,

without due consideration of long-term costs to infrastructure or assets that could be used to launch auxiliary cooperative enterprises. Just to be clear, I think it is very important that we be frugal, but in weighing the benefits or returns of cooperative ownership, we need to strike a balance between immediate gains, such as register discounts, and long-term health of cooperative enterprise.

There are many challenges presented by the problem of food distribution and no easy or simple solutions. There are complementary and valuable roles for CSA's, farmers markets, storefront co-ops, farm stands, and smaller and larger competitors—one need not choose one option exclusively. In the largest sense, we are all interdependent and interconnected. That said, if you are interested in committing your food dollars to our local economy, I encourage you to support your local co-op store, and consider becoming an owner if you have not yet made this leap.

Gail Bartlett
Board Vice-President

Children's Essay Contest

Barbara's Bakery is hosting the "How I Have Changed the World Around Me!" Kress Award contest. During the month of May, children aged 7–17 can submit an essay and photo to share how they've worked for change for their community, the environment, and the world around them. Seven total prizes will be awarded.

The contest will be promoted in the May CAP (Co-op Advantage Program) flyer, which will be available in the store May 1. Contact Eileen or visit our website (www.bluehill.coop) for contest rules and more information.

"What Does the Co-op Mean to Me?" Essay Contest

Why do you love the Co-op? Why are you a Co-op owner? We'd love to hear from you! Submit an original essay (250–500 words) and you may be eligible to win a store gift certificate. We reserve the right to reprint all submissions in the *Co-op News* and other publications. Contact Eileen for more details or send an e-mail to newsletter@bluehill.coop.

Blue Hill Co-op Mission Statement & Ends Policies

Through a thriving cooperative enterprise, we encourage a vibrant healthy community and a sustainable local economy.

In light of this mission, the Blue Hill Co-op is dedicated to achieving the following ends:

- The Blue Hill Peninsula will have a retail source of food that is fairly priced, healthy, and organically grown and/or processed locally to the fullest extent possible.
- There will be economic value returned to the community via charitable contributions, outreach projects, patronage refunds to members, and other avenues.
- Customers will be better educated about food issues and, as a result, make healthier choices than those who shop elsewhere.
- There will be a vibrant cooperative sector in the economy, both nationally and regionally, and a local community educated in the value of cooperative principles and enterprises.
- The cooperative's bioregion will have a vibrant local agricultural community and that community will, in turn, have a reliable retail market for its products.
- There will be a major source of employment in the community that provides personal satisfaction to employees, livable wages and financial security for employees and their families.
- There will be a thriving business organization that protects and restores the environment.

*Mission Statement approved by the Board
03/20/2007*

*Global Ends approved by the Board
09/19/2007*

Where Are You?

Have you moved? Changed your name or phone number? Please help us keep the Co-op membership database accurate by giving us your current mailing address, phone number, and e-mail. Thanks!
Eileen Mielenhausen, Membership & Marketing Coordinator
(207) 374-2165
membership@bluehill.coop

Vendor Profile: Island Soap, Gifts and Gallery

by Allison Watters

Patricia Arvidson's gift shop, redolent of essential oils, delights the eye with an array of beautiful items. These include colorful greeting cards and handmade soaps decoratively wrapped using Patricia's precisely-drawn labels. Patricia has been creating handmade soap for twenty-five years. Her journey as a soap maker started as a hobby but turned into a small business when her daughter was born and she wanted a way to support her family from home. Over the years, Patricia has developed dozens of soap varieties, some of which use local ingredients such as "Clam Flat Clay." Carefully wrapped in paper with hand-drawn labels, each bar of soap is a work of art in itself. In addition to creating beautiful soaps, Patricia is also an artist who works in colored pencils and oil paints.

Patricia sells her soaps to a variety of wholesale markets and gift shops in the state, including the Blue Hill Co-op. She also attends farmer's markets in Blue Hill, Stonington, and Brooksville, and has a small mail-order business as well. The best place to experience Patricia's artwork and to see all the varieties of soap is to visit her gift shop in Brooksville. Located on the Bagaduce Road just a half a mile off Route 15, it is the green building on the left that used to be a country store. The shop is open every day by chance or appointment.



by Allison Watters

Staff Profile: Pete Collier



Pete's life path has been broad but circuitous in his twenty-seven years, and now he is back where he started. After growing up in Surry, Pete attended Kenyon College in Ohio to earn his undergraduate degree. He spent some time studying abroad in Madrid, and then lived in Bend, Oregon with some college buddies for a spell. Next, he was off to Panama to study the effects of deforestation on the rainforest. Pete then moved to San Francisco to study creative writing in graduate school.

While in California, he met his girlfriend, Pi, an aspiring farmer. The two of them worked at a small farm in Northern California for a season, and Pete began to feel as if he had found his true vocation. Eager to be closer to his extended family back in Hancock County, Pete and Pi returned east to apprentice on a small farm in Freedom, Maine for the 2008 season. There they realized they wanted to try to start an agricultural endeavor of their own. Now they are planning the summer season at Holy Cow Farm on Pete's parents' thirty-five acres. The farm will feature their small herd of American milking Devons, a vegetable garden, and pasture-raised laying hens.

These days, when he's not poring over seed catalogs or feeding his pregnant cows, the ever-affable Pete can be found at the Co-op, where he works as bulk assistant, hefting bags of oats and dry beans and filling flour containers. Pete is also taking a welding class and sits on the board of the Surry Conservation Commission.

Farmer Profile: Stoneset Farm

by Allison Watters

This time of year, even apples, carrots, and other storage crops from local farms have started to dwindle. Can you think of another healthful product that is available in abundance at the Co-op and that kids and grown-ups alike eagerly gobble up? Blueberries! Clara and Nathan Rutenbeck, with their two young daughters, Eleanor and Maggie, manage thirty acres of MOFGA-certified organic blueberries at Stoneset Farm. You can find the fruits of their labors at the Co-op year-round, either fresh in season, or frozen while the supply in their freezers lasts.

Stoneset Farm is located on the River Road in Brooklin and is marked by an impressive stonewall. The farm is owned by Clara's parents, Kevin and Ginny Poland, who purchased the farm in 1999 from Edmund Williams, an old family friend. Over the past ten years the farm has produced pasture-raised pork, lamb, and poultry, seedlings, and plentiful vegetables. At the moment, Clara and Nathan are taking some time off from growing vegetables and raising animals while Nathan pursues a Master's Degree and Clara focuses on being a full-time mother. Blueberries remain a steady part of their farming operation, though. As you blend a blueberry smoothie or take some warm blueberry muffins out of the oven, imagine the heat of August that ripened these native berries and think of the summer to come.

