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THE COMPOST

Vol. 39, Number 2 Summer 2017

STORE HOURS

Monday - Saturday
9:00am - 8:00pm
Sunday
9:00am - 6:00pm

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Co-op Scoop Alice Rubin

I don't know how it got to be June! Or why it still feels like April! Cool and wet, warm and wet, where is the sunshine we all are craving? Despite the lack of sunshine, the Co-op garden sure is looking good. The Lupines and the Iris are spectacular. This year we have a great crew of working members caring for the garden. There is a lot of weeding and mulching getting done. Many thanks to everyone who is working on maintaining this beautiful space! One of the questions our cashiers are often asked is 'When will you plant trees to replace the ones you cut down?'. We are hoping to plant them this fall as part of the project to plant 325 trees in honor of Willimantic's 325th Anniversary. Some of the delay is that we aren't sure what to plant. Should we go for a spring blooming show stopper, or more 4-season interest? Maybe a group of large shrubs that bloom at various times? Let me know if you have ideas. I know that the garden is missing something without the trees.

Another question that is often asked is 'What is going on at 87 Church Street?'. The best answer I have for that question is that it is in the gestation phase. We recently put in writing the plan for the process that will guide the project. This process starts with making our list of Must Haves, as well as Good to Haves, and then defining each items' function and the justification for having it. For example, one Must Have is a Staff break room - why? - to maintain good morale for our staff. And while we are doing this exercise for our new property, we are also doing the same for our store. Part of this whole plan is to make our store more efficient and to better serve our Member-Owners and community. For instance, we are seeing your purchases shift away from Packaged Groceries and toward more Produce. To shift our store's inventory, we need to find a way to add more refrigeration. Wellness purchases are also on the rise. How do we best serve the needs we are seeing in this department? One idea is to have a Wellness counter so that a trained Staff Person is always in that department to offer help, while still being able to accomplish other work that needs to be done.

At times this whole process thing seems laborious and unnecessary...and maybe in the end we will say, why did we do that? But I think that will be better than saying why didn't we do that? This process also allows for more member input. I had hoped to have some stakeholder meetings over the winter, but time got away from me. Watch for postings about Member input meetings in the store, in your email and on Face book.

More than anything, this project is about what the Member-Owners of the Co-op want, what our community needs, and how best to use our resources to ensure the Co-op continues to be successful. 🌱

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Produce Manager

Bruce Oscar

Facilities Manager

Steve Scanlon

Grocery Manager

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Grow Our Impact

• • • • • Patricia Smith • • • • •

Organic, local, vegan, gluten-free, non-GMO, paleo – these words are not part of the esoteric “health nut” food lexicon any longer – almost everyone knows what they mean, and more and more people are looking for products with these attributes. As the “wellness” lifestyle becomes more mainstream, the demand for natural, organic, and locally made products increases, and the grocery industry has been responding in kind. So-called “supernaturals” (think Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s) have been opening up all over the country, and conventional grocery stores, like Stop n Shop and Big Y, have been gradually, and in some cases, dramatically increasing their selections of natural and organic products. Even department stores such as Walmart and Target are now offering many of the items that used to be available only in small health food stores and food co-ops; in some cases this even includes organic produce! Whereas food co-ops and small independent natural grocers used to have this market cornered, we are now by no means the only game in town.

Luckily, here in Willimantic, in our quiet corner of the Quiet Corner, we have not yet had to contend with such giants as Whole Foods and Trader Joe’s infiltrating our relatively pristine cooperative natural foods landscape. We do, however, find ourselves vying with large corporate brick-and-mortar entities nonetheless, not to mention the growing trend of online shopping. It’s inevitable that products that were once unique to the Food Co-op will continue to find their way onto the shelves of more and more stores, sometimes even in gas stations and discount outlets. The increasingly competitive landscape in which the Food Co-op does business is starting to call into question our well-established identity as the place to go to buy real, good food. As we plan for the future of the Willimantic Food Co-op (one, five, ten, twenty years and beyond), we need to continue striving to be a great grocery store with a great selection at great prices. However, I believe it’s also crucial that we, as an organization, begin to more seriously consider the larger role of our food co-op in our community and the world.

So, given that one can find Annie’s Mac n Cheese, organic milk, and fair-trade coffee just about everywhere these days, why should someone come to the Co-op to shop, rather than any of those other places? Why, for that matter, should anyone invest \$120 in equity to become a member-owner of the Co-op – is it just to avoid that pesky 10% surcharge, or is it something bigger than that? How would you answer someone who asked you these questions? As a twenty-year Co-op member-owner, some reasons come readily to my mind: a sense of community, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff, an alternative to the corporate model, supporting the local economy and a sustainable food system. Clearly, these are all great reasons, but to someone new to the whole idea of food co-ops, they don’t really say very much, especially in the deluge of “greenwashing” that’s being put forth by our competitors. Everyone claims local, natural, and sustainable these days. In this information age, the details really count. So, can we dig deeper and illuminate what’s underneath those cooperative catch phrases?

How do we measure the impact we’re making, how do we set goals for growing that impact, and how do we let people know about it? At a recent National Cooperative Grocers (NCG) meeting of food co-op managers from across the country, we looked at cooperative impact in terms of five categories: Local, Community, Health & Nutrition, Great Food, and Healthy Planet; these concepts are integral to the missions of most food co-ops, and to some extent are built into the seven cooperative principles, but are not necessarily measured in any consistent and meaningful way. In business school, they teach that “you move what you measure.” We recently participated in an NCG survey that collected data meant to reflect the impact we’re making in those five areas, and with the results we can begin to think about how to grow that impact into the future.

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Helen's Wellness Review

Helen Scanlon

Hello, and welcome to spring wellness!

For the springtime edition of The Compost, I share with you two NEW items from the Co-op's Wellness aisles: Dr. Hauschka Soothing Cleansing Milk and Facial Toner.

The Dr. Hauschka line of skincare features botanical extracts to help the skin regenerate, renew and refresh itself—nothing harsh, nothing too dry, strip, or irritate. The products simply support the skin's natural functions. And the company is pretty great, too...

...I could go on and on, but let the company's mission sum it up for you:

The founder of Dr. Hauschka manufacturer WALA Heilmittel gave his company a mission that continues to this day. Dr. Rudolf Hauschka's goal "to support the healing of humanity and the earth" informs not only the culture of Dr. Hauschka Skin Care and its manufacturer, WALA Heilmittel, but also the company's business practices, production methods and the very nature of the company's products themselves.

Inspired by our vision of a culture of care, we've created a company powered by principle. Everything we do is in the interest of fostering well-being in the world, from our ecologically conscious methods of growing and sourcing ingredients to our one-of-a-kind manufacturing processes and international fair trade initiatives.

We stand proudly by the natural skin care products we sell, knowing that their purity and efficacy are helping people to nurture their health and beauty as well as inspiring them to recognize and foster beauty and well-being in others. We're active in our local communities and engage in projects the world over that help transform disadvantage into self-reliance and economic sustainability.¹



Pretty awesome, right? How lucky are we to have such incredible products on the shelves at our Co-op? This is pretty darn special, folks. The Dr. Hauschka skin care line features high-quality, socially and environmentally responsible products that will help your skin look and feel its best. Your skin works hard for you—it faces the world and protects you. Dr. Hauschka products are a wonderful way to thank your skin for a job well done.

I chose to review the Soothing Cleansing Milk and Facial Toner because I am always on the lookout for a gentle facial cleanser that can also make my skin feel soft—but also feel clean, with zero residue. It's a tall

¹ Source: www.dr.hauschka.com/en_US/about-us/our-mission/

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Bylaws & Policy Review

The Co-op's Bylaws and Policy Governance Manual define the rights and responsibilities of Member Owners, Directors and Management of our Co-op. Periodically the Board reviews them to consider whether updates are needed to better meet Member Owner needs and interests. If you would like to participate on the Bylaws and Policy Review subcommittee, please contact Linda Brock or send an email to info@willimanticfood.coop

The current Bylaws and Policy Governance Manual can be found on the WFC website under About the Co-op > Our Board. Members will also have the opportunity to give feedback later this year if the subcommittee and Board recommend any changes, prior to formal presentation for approval at the next annual meeting. 🌱



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www.kindredcrossingsfarm.com

2016 Treasurer's Report *Joanne Todd*

The Willimantic Food Coop ended 2016 with another good year of 8.5% sales growth and net income of \$82,701. Sales have grown 54.5% in the five years since I became Treasurer in 2011 and, as I have written over those years, we have strained the capacity of the current store.

In 2016 we committed to expansion of our facilities when members approved the purchase of 87 Church Street, the building across Valley Street from the co-op. The purchase of 87 Church Street will allow us to grow in phases while staying at the current store. Financially, this means our new property can meet member needs and wants with incremental investments as we can continue to grow.

As we make a plan for 87 Church Street, we may again ask members to make loans to the Co-op. The money that members lent the Co-op when we moved from Meadow Street made the Valley Street store possible. Since we moved to Valley Street, the better-than-expected sales growth allowed us to pay those loans early. Past experience is no guarantee of future performance, but we anticipate future growth and have also considered conservative, no-growth projections.

Willimantic Food Co-op, as always, continued to be grounded in Co-operative Principles in 2016. Financially, this means you own the Co-op through your equity investment and you further participate by shopping at the store – in other words, principle three, Members' Economic Participation. Principle four, Autonomy and Independence is sustained by the financial strength of the coop. Owners' equity is an impressive 79% of assets and cash is over \$800,000, allowing the Co-op to purchase 87 Church Street with cash in early 2017. Principle seven, Concern for Community manifests in the Co-op's commitment to community organizations including \$17,995 in financial donations and in paying staff a living wage.

If you attended our Annual Meeting, you may have a copy of the financials distributed there. Since then, our accounting firm has completed a review and, as a result, made a few adjustments that are not material. The financial report here includes these adjustments. 🥕



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Willimantic Food Coop — Statement of Financial Condition — 31-Dec-16

Assets	12/31/10	12/31/11	12/31/12	12/31/13	12/31/14	12/31/15	12/31/16
Cash and Equivalents	351,191	151,001	301,432	510,800	565,106	726,201	837,800
Accounts Receivable	20,327	23,531	20,978	17,026	10,688	12,806	14,547
Inventory	204,104	211,819	231,460	224,553	248,078	280,326	291,122
Prepaid Expenses	4,355	4,684	8,165	8,415	29,591	9,017	16,319
Total Current Assets:	579,977	391,035	562,035	760,794	853,464	1,028,351	1,159,788
Fixed Assets							
Leasehold Improvements	429,481	413,964	395,939	379,764	362,341	356,997	339,573
Equipment/Fixtures	177,015	162,699	135,864	146,393	131,130	100,295	107,484
Other	547	200	-				
Total Fixed Assets:	607,043	576,863	531,803	526,157	493,471	457,292	447,057
Investment - Coop Fund of New England				50,000	51,188	51,972	52,770
Building Expansion Project							58,576
Other Assets	15,479	17,249	18,340	23,828	38,523	43,550	54,000
Total Assets:	1,202,499	985,147	1,112,178	1,360,779	1,436,646	1,581,165	1,772,191
Liabilities and Owner's Equity							
Accounts Payable	66,267	75,275	86,102	98,539	122,514	146,088	182,722
Accrued Expenses	55,780	26,581	54,548	94,860	71,826	117,540	138,265
Member Loans - Long Term	224,350	91,000	-	-	-	-	-
Other Loans	91,342	1,631	-	-	-	10,021	5,875
Deferred Tax Liability							42,143
Total Liabilities	437,739	194,487	140,650	193,399	194,340	273,650	369,005
Owner's Equity							
Paid in Member Equity	578,581	605,487	638,803	675,404	720,302	769,923	823,960
Donated Member Equity	3,657	3,657	3,657	3,657	3,657	4,151	4,181
Retained Earnings	182,522	181,516	329,068	488,319	518,348	533,442	575,045
Total Owner's Equity:	764,760	790,660	971,528	1,167,380	1,242,306	1,307,516	1,403,186
Total Liabilities and Owner's Equity:	1,202,499	985,147	1,112,178	1,360,779	1,436,646	1,581,165	1,772,191

Willimantic Food Coop — Income Statement — 12/31/2016

Sales	12/31/10	12/31/11	12/31/12	12/31/13	12/31/14	12/31/15	12/31/16	% change
Package Grocery	870,410	874,176	959,380	1,041,842	1,127,602	1,160,227	1,218,507	5.02%
Produce	608,243	639,719	750,721	843,751	904,338	944,801	1,047,354	10.85%
Bulk	575,219	583,197	666,217	743,489	839,981	907,851	878,973	-3.18%
Refrigerated Grocery	391,322	391,762	432,918	465,039	513,649	548,269	592,291	8.03%
Supplements and Body Care	384,968	375,676	402,796	419,422	462,407	525,848	623,315	18.54%
Other	509,501	490,878	548,548	591,040	594,356	664,940	798,887	20.14%
Total Sales:	3,339,663	3,355,408	3,760,580	4,104,583	4,442,333	4,751,936	5,159,327	8.57%
Cost of Goods Sold								
Package Grocery	506,647	519,821	567,221	611,888	664,737	677,703	717,194	5.83%
Produce	424,390	461,363	510,516	579,075	633,442	685,375	753,962	10.01%
Bulk	378,674	381,822	431,218	476,150	532,667	520,349	532,147	2.27%
Refrigerated Grocery	300,722	300,126	323,430	343,343	378,664	405,138	421,422	4.02%
Supplements and Body Care	225,469	224,852	236,846	244,866	266,413	292,316	339,225	16.05%
Other	342,124	323,533	365,635	385,723	400,346	482,872	509,460	5.51%
Total Cost of Goods Sold:	2,178,026	2,211,517	2,434,866	2,641,045	2,876,269	3,063,752	3,273,410	6.84%
Total Gross Profit (Loss):	1,161,637	1,143,891	1,325,714	1,463,538	1,566,064	1,688,185	1,885,917	11.71%
Overhead Expenses								
Salary, Wages & Benefits	736,826	736,410	783,523	853,225	944,708	1,070,691	1,139,849	6.46%
Discounts - Workers & Members	95,310	105,419	112,399	122,547	134,153	142,530	161,647	13.41%
Rent	50,091	51,682	53,242	54,917	56,476	57,348	58,011	1.16%
Depreciation	45,043	46,395	48,330	44,939	48,061	48,619	37,682	-22.50%
Utilities	39,016	35,459	33,054	34,359	38,799	32,145	33,070	2.88%
Other Expenses	178,343	176,047	148,491	180,515	250,086	313,895	375,230	19.54%
Total Overhead Expenses:	1,144,629	1,151,412	1,179,039	1,290,502	1,472,283	1,665,229	1,805,489	8.42%
Total Operating Income (Loss):	17,008	(7,521)	146,675	173,036	93,781	22,956	80,428	250.36%
Total Other Income:	13,532	13,255	14,670	10,402	24,232	18,112	25,287	39.62%
Total Other Expenses:	6,315	6,741	12,121	24,187	46,660	25,973	23,014	-11.39%
Total Net Income (Loss):	24,225	(1,007)	149,224	159,251	71,353	15,094	82,701	447.90%

Winky's Food Review *Winky Gordon*

On tap for this Food Review: good culture's cottage cheese (\$2.29/5.3 oz. container); Simple Mills double chocolate and cinnamon "crunchy cookies" (\$5.39/5.5 oz. box) ; Natural Choice popsicles (\$1.25 each or \$4.99 mix and match 4). Read on.

When I was in college in the early 1980's, the few vegetarian choices there were in the dining-hall were less than interesting. I ate a lot of garbanzo beans and cottage cheese. Boring garbanzo beans, boring cottage cheese. Since then, cottage cheese has remained in the "good for you, but boring" category, not something I eat often. Well – boring no longer! good culture has pushed this humble dairy product out of the boring closet and reworked it into a food with pizzazz. Their particular combination of organic skim and whole milk and cream (from grass-fed happy cows of course), celtic sea salt, and live and active cultures creates a cottage cheese that is hearty and substantial, has 19 grams of protein in a 5.3 oz. serving, and lives up to the tag line of "cottage cheese but better." The curds are neither wimpy nor too chunky and the taste is smooth but not bland. I'd say this product is worthy of coming to work for lunch, being added to salad, or serving as the base to add veggies into. The web site has recipes both sweet and savory. We carry plain, strawberry chia, and pineapple flavors. Co-op dairy manager – bring on the Kalamata olive kind as well! good culture comes from Irvine, California.

Want to know about some weird "new" foods? Okay, weird and new to me. Maybe you all have known about them forever and I'm just slow. Konjac root. Tigernuts. Yeah – what are they? They're both a kind of tuber, packed with fiber, and are credited with various health attributes including prevention of cardiovascular disease, blood sugar stabilization, weight loss support. Who knew? Konjac root is originally from Asia, tiger nuts from North Africa and Spain. Why am I writing about them? Because

they are among the ingredients in Simple Mills "naturally gluten-free" cookies. Some of the other ingredients are: almond and coconut flours, tapioca, organic coconut oil and sugar, arrowroot. I tried both the cinnamon and the double chocolate.

To be honest, I am probably more taken by the novelty of the ingredients than I am by the cookies themselves. However... I am happily eating them and would certainly eat more if they were put in front of me! I have a fairly shameless sweet tooth. The double chocolate is good and chocolatey, and the cinnamon has a comfort-food quality about it. It's the texture that is a little something-not-quite-right. Perhaps it's all those super-great, Paleo friendly ingredients that gives these cookies a slightly wet chalk feel, but good wet chalk. (No, I've never tried that.) Cari was super-excited about their clean ingredients. I admit a preference for good old butter and I'm a definite maybe on the tigernuts and konjac root. Try 'em. See what your kids think. Give me another box of these cookies and I'll happily eat them. The Simple Mills company hails from Chicago.

Natural Choice popsicles get a resounding Yes! from me. It's true I don't eat popsicles often, and it's a little odd to be eating them when it's cold and yucky outside (at the end of May no less), but these are popsicles I will return to the next time I get a hankering for frozen fruit deliciousness. I tried pomegranate, strawberry, raspberry and mango. No, I did not eat them (quite) all at once. The basic ingredients are: filtered water, organic fruit, organic evaporated cane sugar, organic fruit puree, organic fruit flavor, guar and xanthan gums, citric acid. Okay, they're hefty in the sugars – 13 grams in the strawberry- but they are completely satisfying. They really taste like frozen fruit, they've got good texture, and they are super inexpensive. My favorites were the raspberry and the mango.

Natural Choice products are made by Two Brothers International Desserts, also in Irvine CA. (Do they know the good culture people?) In the promo video founder Gary Winkler, one of the two brothers, proclaims that eating ice cream [or popsicles] makes people happy and "a happy person is much nicer to be around." I'm totally on board for the second part of that statement and encourage you to experiment with the first part by trying one of the Natural Choice popsicles. Maybe it will make you happy. And boy, couldn't we use more happy people sharing their nice?

Until next time - be well, be kind, and maybe you'll also be happy. My best wishes to you. 🌱



Wellness Review *continued*

order these days—it seems that a lot of cleansing milks fall short of this double duty. Not this wonderful stuff—just wet your face with warm water, and apply an even layer of cleansing milk on your face. And, working from your forehead down, gently work the product into your pores. Rinse. Miracle of miracles, my face felt soft—but also completely clean, and not like I needed to get in there again and remove the product that was supposed to actually clean my face. My face felt vibrant and healthy, even after a long day.

But wait—is this also a cleanser that can double as a super-gentle eye make-up remover? The answer is a resounding yes. Apply some Dr. Hauschka Soothing Cleansing Milk to a damp cotton ball, swipe it over your lids and lash lines, and make up is gone—with zero sting and irritation. It even removed waterproof mascara with no tears. Love!

After the Soothing Cleansing Milk did an incredible job, I used the Dr. Hauschka Facial Toner. It comes in a spray bottle for totally even application, how incredible. It felt so refreshing—yes, refreshing, like a fine mist of salt spray from the sea—I kid you not. After spraying, use your fingertips and lightly press the toner into your skin. I used the toner in the evening, and did not need to use a moisturizer before getting shuteye. You see, the Dr. Hauschka Facial Toner supports your skin's nighttime renewal; no heavy creams or lotions to interrupt its important and delicate work for the next eight hours. Did I wake up with totally fresh skin? Thank you for asking, why yes—I did.

It really is worth it to have a gentle powerhouse skin care routine, it makes a huge difference in how your skin looks and feels. I felt that difference after only two weeks of using Dr. Hauschka products: my skin felt like it found something that truly cared. My skin looked glowy and healthy. I even received an out-of-nowhere compliment on my skin during those first two weeks of use. Coincidence? Maybe. But I don't think so! I'm sold.

I am looking forward to trying more of the Dr. Hauschka skin care line, and the Co-op has 'em all! There is a product for every skin type, ask Chris to help you customize your very own Dr. Hauschka skin care regimen. He is excited to have this new line available for you, and I can see why!

Until next time,

In good health,

Be well,

Helen 🥕



Shocking Facts About Plastic *Cari Nadeau*

We all know plastic is a problematic substance. It's full of harmful chemicals, pollutes the planet when it is produced, and never goes away. With plastic, there is no AWAY.

I've been watching some movies about plastic pollution and it's astonishing and heartbreaking. Over the last decade we have produced more plastic than in the entire last century.

Where does the plastic go?

Right now our oceans contain BILLIONS of pounds of it. Fish and birds are eating it and getting sick or dying. Birds are bringing it back to their babies and feeding it to them.

There are many groups of people out there trying to clean up the plastic debris but it's virtually impossible. Plastic photodegrades, which means it breaks into smaller and smaller pieces over time with exposure to the sun.

Honestly, I wasn't really aware of how bad this situation was until I started watching these movies. It's so easy to go about our daily lives using the materials we have always used. There are many organizations (Plastics Councils) that ensure that we are so accustomed to using and tossing plastic that we don't give it a second thought.

It took seeing what is happening to the fish and birds to really hit home for me. That made it real and tangible.

Here are some shocking facts about plastic:

- Last year, the average American used 137 water bottles and recycled only 38 of those
- Americans used about 50 billion plastic water bottles last year
- The recycling rate for plastic in the US is only 23 % (meaning only 23% of the plastic we put in recycling actually gets recycled)
- Fifty percent of the plastic we use gets used once, then thrown out
- Approximately 100,000 marine animals and one million sea birds are killed every year from plastic exposure or consumption
- Almost every piece of plastic ever made still exists in

some form (a small amount has been incinerated)

- Ninety three percent of Americans age six or older test positive for having BPA in their bodies (and that's only ONE of the harmful chemicals in plastic)
- More than 8 million tons of plastic are dumped into our oceans every year

As you can see from above, recycling is definitely NOT the answer to this problem. Only a small percentage of plastic is recycled and the process itself is polluting because plastic is made from oil.

The solution is in reducing our plastic usage and ultimately refusing to buy plastic.

If you're interested in learning more about this, here are some good documentaries to get started with. Just make sure you have some tissues handy. They're pretty heart-wrenching.

A Plastic Ocean, Addicted to Plastic, Tapped, Plastic Paradise

Here are some more resources if you want to learn more from

the websites I referred to for this article.

- BreakFreeFromPlastic.org
- StoryOfStuff.org
- PlasticPollution.org
- PlasticPollutionCoalition.org

Thanks for reading and next time I'll be writing an article with some easy tips and tricks to help you reduce the plastic in your life. 🌱



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New Staff! *Sasha Bajjo*

Hey there Coopers!

We made it through the holidays and the wintertime... here we are and spring is springing. By now you've seen and spoken to some of our new teammates. Here's a little more about them:



Janet Janet is a long time member who joined our cashier team in February. Janet is from Canterbury, and what she likes best about the Coop are the fresh produce and peanut crunchies. She currently has ramps in her kitchen from our coop, and her favorite hobby is horseback riding.

Cassidy joined our cashier team in January after being a long time shopper. As for a hometown, Cassidy doesn't really have one (nomads don't have those!) What does Cassidy like best about the Coop?: hiding in the Kids' Cove with her cubs. Pretty much all the food in her kitchen is from the coop, but she is most excited about organic Adobo right now. Her favorite hobby is singing and playing Ukelele songs.



Paul joined our Produce team in April, and has also been a long time member. Paul's hometown is Ashford, and what he likes best about the Coop is "the food, it's great." Right now, Paul has: local spicy lettuce, gouda cheese, Anaheim pepper, bell pepper, local eggs, and lots of granola in his kitchen, all from our coop. His favorite hobby is keeping his Subaru running. 🥕

Grow Our Impact *continued*

Let's take Local, for example. In 2016, there were 91 local vendors represented in our store, 9% of all of our products were locally grown or produced, and 18% of our sales were from local products. For us to fulfill our mission and still offer the variety of products our customers need and want, is that adequate or should we try to increase the amount of local sales? Perhaps we could strive to grow it to 25% over 5 years. If that's our goal, we may need to divert more resources to supporting local businesses to grow or produce things our customers want to buy, make sure our customers know we have them and why they may be slightly more expensive than commercial versions of the same products, and what impact it has on our local economy if they decide to buy them.

And what about community? In 2016, we donated \$18,000 to local charities and non-profit organizations, sent 10,000 pounds of food to the Covenant Soup Kitchen, and hosted or participated in about 2 community events per month. Fantastic, no doubt! But are there more or different ways in which we can serve our downtown Willimantic community and our community of member-owners, wherever they happen to live? Perhaps we should consider offering a needs-based discount to make our store more accessible to low-income shoppers. Perhaps our product mix, staff, and board could better reflect the community we live in. Perhaps there are needs our community has that we don't know about, for which we could somehow provide.

There are more examples from the other three categories – Health & Nutrition, Great Food, and Healthy Planet – that I don't have room to go into here, and my intention is not to make ourselves an impossible to-do list. There is never any shortage of amazing ideas, from staff, member-owners, shoppers, and community members, about how to make the Co-op better. What I'm suggesting here is that we take this opportunity as we begin planning our expansion at 87 Church Street, to first hold up the mirror and take a look at who the Willimantic Food Co-op has become over the past four decades; second, to look around at and listen to the community in which we've grown up to discover the needs we can fulfill; and last, to think long-term about how to continue building that relationship into a vibrant, dynamic, and truly cooperative one.

Drop me a line and let me know what you think – patty.smith@willimanticfood.coop. I look forward to hearing from you!

Save the Date Vendors Wanted!

We are pleased to announce that planning has begun for the Co-op's 2017 Downtown Country Fair! This year's event will be Saturday September 30th from 10 am to 4 pm and will once again be held in Jillson Square.

A huge thank you to all of the musicians, volunteers and vendors that made last year's event a huge success. The planning committee wants to make this year even better, so we're putting out the call for vendors. This is a great opportunity to get exposure to the hundreds of people that attend the event. There are just a few requirements for selling your wares:

- 1) Products must be made locally**
- 2) The selling of handmade items is encouraged**
- 3) The selling of re-purposed, recycled and used items will be considered**

If you're interested in being put on the list to receive an application or if you have any questions regarding vending at the event, please contact **Angela Walker** at awalk66@gmail.com or **Alice Rubin** at alice.rubin@willimanticfood.coop