



**91 Valley Street
Willimantic, CT 06226
860.456.3611**

WWW.WILLIMANTICFOOD.COOP
INFO@WILLIMANTICFOOD.COOP

THE COMPOST

Vol. 44, Number 1 **Spring 2022**

STORE HOURS

8:00 am - 8:00 pm
Every Day

Co-op Scoop *Alice Rubin*

The question that I was asked most often during the early days of the Co-op's reopening was... *When can we bring in our own containers to refill?*

Just prior to the pandemic, the Co-op had begun a big campaign to encourage people to reduce our collective contribution to the waste stream through shopping in bulk with reusable containers. We began to offer a nickel back for every container you brought from home. We started this rebate program in September of 2018, and collectively we reused 9,695 containers, for a total of \$485 in rebates. In 2019, 52,564 containers were reused!

What a great thing! On so many levels! The Co-op has always embraced the Bulk Food concept. I have heard stories of selling oats out of garbage cans in our earliest days. But over the years we have improved our delivery system of bulk foods to bring it to where it is today. It is not perfect, we still have to bag some of our bulk items. There is just not enough room for enough bins to hold the huge selection that we offer in the Bulk Department, where there is always something new to try.

Anyway, back to the question about bringing in your own containers. I learned that many people have elaborate systems in place to manage their pantries. Certain containers hold certain foods. This makes them happy. Some people don't care what goes where and they have a collection of well-worn paper bags that can be refilled with just about anything. That makes them happy.

The Co-op does not care what container you bring. Paper bags, plastic bags, cloth bags, canning jars, empty peanut butter jars. If they can hold something, please bring them in and refill them! You can refill them in bulk of course, but don't forget about the produce department – lots of opportunities there to reduce waste too!

While this is not all about money to the Co-op, we do spend a fair amount of money on buying new bags for our owners' and shoppers' bulk purchases. Just to give you an idea of the cost of new bags –

- 8# heavy paper bags - \$.053 each.
- 12# heavy paper bags - \$.077 each
- Plastic produce bags - \$.019 each
- Plastic medium sized bags - \$.042 each
- Paper grocery bags - \$.159 each

And these prices do not take into account any environmental costs associated with either the production or the disposal of these bags.

Not that long ago, we all learned to bring our own shopping bags with us – wherever we shopped. I bet we can also learn to bring our own bulk and produce bags.

Mother Earth will be smiling down on us.
Happy Earth Day! 

CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Co-op Scoop..... | 1 |
| Slash Your Trash..... | 2 |
| Birthday Coupon..... | 3 |
| Board Doings..... | 3 |
| Wellness Review..... | 4 |
| Co-op Advantage..... | 5 |
| Wooden Nickel Vote..... | 6 |
| New in 2022..... | 7 |
| Country Fair Date..... | 7 |
| Run for the Co-op Board.... | 8 |

General Manager

Alice Rubin

Management Team

Kathy Leddy

Financial Manager

Wendy Jakoboski

Produce Manager

Patty Smith

Operations Manager

Marissa Ocegüera

Front-end Manager

Corry Elm

Assistant Front-end Manager

Staff

Jessica Bance-Vidich

Vicky Bassett

Maxwell Calverly

Michelle Aguayo Castro

Susan Chasin

John Clark

Ben Coggins

Kara Croce

Chad Dunnack

Eion Foust

Kathe Gable

Jaron Gaier

Mark Giangrave

Avery Gratton

Catherine Hahn

Saige Johnson

Brandon Johnson Nickson

Chris Klaben

Gabi Lopez

Nancy McMerriman

Jeff Nash

Steve Scanlon

Dalian Segarra

Naomi Solares

Christopher Swift

Antoinette Thuillier

Julio Velez

Matthew Woodward

Board of Directors

Steve Bachiochi

Matthew Coolbeth

Linda Brock

Kathleen Krider

Natasha Sheer

Joanne Todd

Manager Representative

Alice Rubin

Staff Representative

Chris Klaben

Newsletter

Ellen Embardo

Amy Kalisher

Alice Rubin

Printed by

Gulemo Printers



Slash Your Trash

Nancy McMerriman

A Challenge is coming to the Co-op and its members and shoppers this Spring!

Do you ever consider what it means when you hear, “Throw it away!”? The fact is, there really is no “away.” We remove things from our sight, our homes, our spaces without much thought to where it goes next. According to 2019 statistics, the average American creates 1,790 lbs of trash each year. That’s almost 5 lbs per day! And the last two years of the pandemic have put an extra strain on our waste stream. Our disposable society has reached a breaking point.

We could all use something positive to focus on!

The Willimantic Food Co-op along with the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is inviting you to **Slash Your Trash** starting this April. This initiative began in 2019, but was derailed for Spring 2020, due, of course, to the pandemic. It is exciting to be working on this project again! We’ll participate as individuals and as part of the greater community to reduce our waste and become more informed about our choices and resources. Your Co-op is here to support you in your efforts!

THE CHALLENGE:

To act now and reduce the amount of trash you send to the landfill for the month of April and beyond.

Starting in March, fill out a **Slash Your Trash Pledge Card** in store, and pledge to take at least one of the actions listed, or come up with your own! We will have opportunities in-store to learn about waste reduction and incentives to keep you motivated. We are planning educational talks and events to help you make some great changes that will hopefully last well past April! All Pledge participants will be entered into a raffle for great gift baskets and other give-aways. (But don’t do it for the prizes, do it for the environment!)

One of our collective goals is to measure the success of this challenge so we can report on our regional impact. The NFCA will track participating co-ops and the number of folks that are pledging to make changes. We will be reporting on our success during the campaign in-store and through social media. You will be encouraged to share your ideas and successes on Facebook and Instagram during the campaign. We look forward to seeing what this great community can do! 🌱

COUPON

In Celebration of the Co-op's 42nd Birthday

Every Member-Owner who has paid their \$120 equity in full or is up to date on their payments will receive a coupon for 10% off the shopping trip of their choice in 2022.

This will be programed into our system – just let your cashier know when you would like to use it.



**Join us for Earth Day!!
Friday April 22nd, 2022
3:00pm to 5:00pm
Willimantic Food Co-op
91 Valley Street, Willimantic
With live MUSIC**

Board Doings *Linda Brock*

Over the past four months, the Board has continued its regular oversight of the Co-op, while also looking to the future.

The Board evaluated the General Manager's compliance with policies:

- B.2 Financial Planning;
- B.3 Financial Condition and Activities (Q3);
- B.3 Financial Condition and Activities (Q4);
- B.4 Asset Protection.

The Board also evaluated its own performance on policies:

- C.1 Unity of Control;
- C.2 Accountability of the Manager;
- D.7 Board Committee Principles; and
- D.8 Governance Investment.

(Wondering what these mean? Check out the Co-op web page, About the Co-op > Our Board for the Policy Governance Manual.)

Management arranged for completion of the annual Staff Survey, which helps to ensure the Co-op is a good employer, and the Board completed the General Manager's annual performance evaluation.

Board committees kept moving ahead with our primary goals for this year and next: preparing for the hiring of a new General Manager when the inevitable day comes that Alice decides her garden needs her even more than the store does; planning our reincorporation as a cooperative under CT statute; and brainstorming ways to improve our Board recruitment process.

Comments or questions? Use the "Contact Us" link on the web page or drop off your name, number and email at the Store; we'll be in touch!

*Next Board Meeting: Thursday April 7, 7:00pm
Horizons office on Church Street, Willimantic (check web site to confirm location)*

Members welcome!



Hello dear Co-operators!

So, how are you doing with self-care these days? Do you need to do more of it? “I don’t have the time,” you say? Too busy? Too distracted?

When should you practice self-care?

The time for self-care is for...drum roll...when you think you don’t have time for it. That means, self-care day is for EVERY DAY. EVERY. DAY. Take the time. You deserve it!

Your body works hard for you. Treat it with kindness, and my goodness—pamper it! Eat healthy foods, get enough sleep, move around, laugh, let the worries go, show compassion to yourself and others, and always use the good stuff on your skin. In this issue of *The Compost*, I reviewed three luscious new skincare products featured on the shelves of our wonderful Willimantic Food Co-op.

The first product I would like to share with you is **Sukin Super Greens Facial Moisturizer**. Check this out:

It is enriched with Super Greens extracts of Kale, Spirulina, Parsley and Chlorella to give your skin a nutrient boost to promote a radiant, glowing and healthy complexion. Antioxidant rich Acai, Goji Berry Extracts & Carrot Seed Oil known to fight free radicals and environmental stressors while also assisting in minimizing the appearance of fine lines. Hydrating Oils of Rosehip, Avocado and Jojoba lock moisture and nutrients into the skin. (www.sukinnaturals.com)

Sukin Super Greens Facial Moisturizer is lightweight, and because of those above-listed ingredients, smells like a sunny day. Vegan and cruelty-free, too. I like how this moisturizer soaked right into my skin with zero greasy



residue. I also discovered that it works well as a neck cream—just slather some on at night and let it work its moisturizing and nourishing magic as you sleep. The scent is light and soothing to help you drift off to dreamland. Bonus!

Next up, I would like to introduce you two products by Connecticut-based Treefort Naturals (they are right up the street in Colchester!)

First, say hello to **Treefort Naturals Eucalyptus Mint Hand and Body Balm**. It comes in a little tin, and while eucalyptus and mint tend to smell strong and may be too much for some, this balm features a non-obtrusive scent that is light with a hint of mint. Perfect.

Rub some of this on your winter-weary hands and they will thank you. Super-healing and emollient, this balm needs to be in your winter recovery self-care kit (don’t have a winter recovery self-care kit, you say? Well, today is a good day to start one).

Winter dry air wreaked havoc on your skin: Treefort Naturals Eucalyptus Mint Hand and Body Balm to the rescue. Also great for chapped lips, rough elbows, and tired feet. You’re welcome!

Now, please allow me to introduce you to **Treefort Naturals Lavender Evergreen Body Scrub** featuring organic raw sugar, Pacific sea salt, Himalayan pink salt, organic coconut oil, organic cocoa butter, avocado oil, castor oil, fir needle essential oil and lavender essential oil.

Whoa, wait—did I just list some really incredible ingredients? Why yes, I did. Does this body scrub sound amazing, or what? Well, LUCKY ME, because I got to try it and tell you all about it!

As some of you may know, and if you don’t know, you *continued on page 8*

Jewels Verne
JEWELERS

Creative Designs • Custom Orders • Expert Repairs
Engagement Rings • Wedding Bands
Estate Jewelry

723 Main Street • Willimantic, CT 06226 • (860) 456-3563

redtwig
garden design llc

Dede Delaney
860-455-3612

CT NOFA certified landcare professional • Ecological Landscape Association
www.redtwiggarden.com • email: redtwigCT@gmail.com

The Co-op Advantage in Turbulent Times

Patty Smith

It seems that every other headline these days is about inflation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently announced that consumer prices rose 7.5% in January, over the previous 12 months, with food prices keeping pace at 7.4%. All categories of food experienced significant increases, with the prices of meat, poultry, fish, and eggs rising the most, at 12.2%. Likewise, the producer price index, which measures the cost of inputs (raw material, labor, etc.) to producers (and retailers, like the Co-op) has risen 9.7% over the past 12 months. It's impossible to escape the fact that things are becoming more expensive, from transportation and housing to energy and food.

You're likely experiencing the impacts of this every time you pay a bill or buy something these days, including when you check out at the Co-op. As independent and special as we are, the Co-op is not insulated from the wider economy, and the rising costs at every stop along the supply chain are showing up in our shelf prices, as well. Over the past 3 months, we have had to raise retail prices on approximately 800 items across 200 brands, on items in all categories. The increases in wholesale costs on these items have been averaging 18%.

While the Co-op is not immune to the effects of global economic trends, we do have some advantages during times such as these, precisely because we (you, our member-owners) have chosen to organize and operate as a cooperative business. Co-ops operate on a not-for-profit basis and [have shown themselves to be more resilient than investor-owned firms during times of social and economic crisis](#). The purpose of co-ops is to meet the needs of their members (owners) and not to maximize profits for distant shareholders. Therefore, our approach to pricing is focused not on a single financial bottom line, but on ensuring equity among all of our stakeholders: consumer-members, employees, producers, our community, and the environment.

Our approach to pricing is focused not on a single financial bottom line, but on ensuring equity among all of our stakeholders: consumer-members, employees, producers, our community, and the environment.

In our case, this means attempting to balance reasonable and competitive shelf prices for shoppers (members and non-members alike) with a living wage and benefits for Co-op staff, fair prices to our local farmers and producers, and just enough “profit” to ensure the Co-op can operate safely and sustainably into the future. For example, in the summer of 2021, as we were determining how and when to end our Covid “hazard pay” premiums that we'd been paying to staff since March 2020, we decided to implement a \$15.25 minimum “living” wage for entry-level employees (our previous living wage was \$14.75). While we can always continue to improve staff compensation, we believe this increase in our wage scale, along with other benefits like the staff discount, provide substantial cost-of-living support to Co-op employees.

As our cost of goods (the prices we pay to our suppliers and producers) continue to rise, we inevitably have to pass some of that cost onto our shoppers. However, since our purpose is to provide an essential service to our members and community and not to enrich shareholders, we can be slightly more flexible with our operating margins. Due to years of sales growth combined with careful financial management, very little debt, and our membership in [National Co+op Grocers](#) (NCG), the Co-op has a strong fiscal foundation – this means that we are able to reduce our target profit margins to minimize the pain of price increases to our shoppers while continuing to pay our rising operating costs.

Let's be clear – prices are continuing to go up, and you will inevitably see your grocery bill at the Co-op increase during this period of global inflation. You can be assured, however, that those extra pennies and dollars are not ending up in the pockets of shareholders and corporate executives. They are going to pay staff and farmers fair wages, ensure we can continue to offer the products you want and need, pay our rising energy bills, and make sure the Co-op continues to be here for you and future generations. 🥕

Results of our WOODEN NICKEL VOTE!

The Co-op was able to make
\$20,000 in donations
at the end of 2021.

Based on your votes, the following
donations were made to
four Non-Profits who provide
essential support to
Community members in need.

\$3,312 Holy Family Shelter

\$7,118 No Freeze

\$3,560 WAIM

\$6,010 Covenant Soup Kitchen

Cobblestone Farm CSA

20 WEEKS OF HIGH QUALITY, LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE

PICK UP ON THE FARM, JUNE - OCTOBER

LEARN MORE AT COBBLESTONEFARMCSA.COM

*87 Bassetts Bridge Rd
Mansfield Center, CT*

*** amyKstudio ***

EXPAND YOUR REACH

branding • strategy • websites • printed materials

401-359-2231 • amy@amykstudio.com



The **best** place
to bank, **isn't**
even a **bank**

We're local, a
co-op, believe in
community and we
know **you're a person**,
not a number.

- Savings • Checking • Loans • Surcharge-FREE ATM's • IRA's
- Apple Pay, Samsung Pay & Google Pay • Mobile Deposit
- FREE Bill Pay • Credit/Debit cards and more.



860-423-1601

361 Boston Post Rd., North Windham
233 Main St., Manchester
www.nefamily.coop



easterninsuranceassociates.com

(860) 456-1996

For all of your
Auto • Home • Life • Business
insurance needs contact



Tejas Sonpal



Todd O'Keefe

tsonpal@easterninsurancect.com tokeefe@easterninsurancect.com

A local & independent insurance agency
serving Connecticut for over 22 years.

6 Storrs Rd. | Willimantic, CT 06250

visit us at [f](#) [g+](#) [in](#) ✨



John Boiano

860-798-5692

john@zensolar.net

zen.solar.net

Local Solar

New in 2022 *Patty Smith*

The Compost has traditionally come out four times per year, usually about once per season. These days, we often have important information to share with members more often than our quarterly publication dates, so we are changing our approach a little this year in the interest of improving our communication with members.

If you are a Compost subscriber, you will continue to receive your quarterly edition of the Compost as usual, and you will also receive a few additional emails per year with important co-op news and information that doesn't make it into the full newsletter. For example, if we are running a member survey or if there is an update about expansion plans or other things that affect members, like the Co-op anniversary member discount, we will send out a brief bulletin about it when it is relevant.

These emails will not be used for advertising products or promotions – they are intended in the spirit of Co-operative Principle 5: Education, Training, and Information. You can always opt out (unsubscribe) or let us know if you feel we are sending too many emails.

If you no longer wish to receive these emails from us, you can **use the unsubscribe link** in the footer. Make sure that you do not click SPAM when you receive a subscription or member email since we never send unsolicited mail and that would negatively impact our “internet reputation” and significantly compromise our ability to communicate with members. Thank you!

Member Communication in the Digital Age

To help reduce our printing and postage costs, and to reduce our carbon footprint, we prefer to communicate with members via email whenever possible. The only thing we continue to send through the U.S. mail is the Annual Meeting announcement/Annual Report edition of the newsletter if we do not have a current email address on file for you. All other newsletter issues are sent electronically to our subscribers, and a limited number of printed copies are available in the store. To help us continue reducing our carbon footprint, we ask that you take a few moments next time you're in the store to ask your cashier to update your email, phone number, and home address as needed.

Thanks! 🌱





The Co-op Wants YOU to Run for the Board of Directors

if you are a Member who is:

- Motivated to see the Co-op succeed
- Open-minded and eager to learn
- Someone who listens and collaborates
- Willing to represent the Members as a whole
- Able to commit 6 to 8 hours a month

As stated in our Ends Policy, one of the Co-op's goals is to ensure inclusivity and represent our diverse community. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Join an online Candidate Information session to learn more: Saturday, March 26 at 10:00am or Wednesday, March 30 at 7:00pm. To receive a link, or to get more information if you can't attend, email: nominations@willimanticfood.coop.

Nominations will close by mid-April.

Wellness Review *continued from page 4*

are about to find out: I am a scent fanatic—and Treefort Naturals Lavender Evergreen Body Scrub is an olfactory feast as well as being a sumptuous and luxurious skincare product. Think of it: you are standing in the middle of a forest surrounded by conifers. They sway in the breeze, whispering forest poetry in your ear. Then you take in the air, and it reminds you of the time you were a kid hiking in the woods with your best friend. Take that scent in, but add some lavender to that earthy aroma. It really doesn't get better than that. And Treefort Naturals Lavender Evergreen Body Scrub comes in a waterproof kraft bag so you can seal it and store it in your bath or shower (make sure the seal is tight so you don't get water in the bag). As soon as the steam hits this body scrub, your bathroom will come to life with evergreen and lavender, and let me tell you—it is as wonderful as you think it is. Trust.

It gently exfoliates your skin while moisturizing it. Not too good to be true, this scrub exists and it also needs to be in your winter recovery self-care kit. Get yourself to the Co-op's Wellness department and snag your bag of Treefort Naturals Lavender Evergreen Body Scrub!

One snippet from their website:

Our ingredients are carefully selected and we love sourcing locally from Connecticut farms and suppliers. We also choose certified organic ingredients whenever possible. Treefort Naturals specializes in truly natural bath and body products. You will never find a synthetic fragrance, dye or preservative in any of our products...just simple natural goodness!

Yeah, Treefort Naturals are that awesome. Go here to learn more: www.treefortnaturals.com

Until next time, take care of yourselves. Every. Day. 🌱