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THE COMPOST

Vol. 45, Number 2 Summer 2023

STORE HOURS

8:00 am - 8:00 pm
Every Day

Member Benefits *Alice Rubin*

The world was a very different place back in the day when 2 buying clubs merged to open the Willimantic Food Co-op at 861 Main Street (now the Kerri Gallery). We had 800 square feet of retail and 200 square feet of back room. We sold food in bulk out of garbage cans. We hand wrote 2 prices – member and non member – on each item. It was a board decision to add vitamins to our offerings.

Every member originally had to do working hours each month in addition to an equity investment of \$36.

Natural foods and local produce were not common catch phrases then like they are today. Our tiny little store did not have any competition; we had very few shoppers. We had even fewer staff and possibly even less money in the bank.

Travel through time to today. Pretty much everything about the Co-op is different! We have 5,300 square feet of retail. We are not broke. You do not have to be a working member and we have shelf tags rather than individually pricing each item- never mind pricing each item with 2 prices!

We are a food Co-op. We are here to serve our members and our community by selling food that feeds us while also caring for our land through our support of local farmers. The whole chain of events that follows the simple action of buying local. Of course we also sell many other products, but local is our first priority.

The Co-op has struggled for most of its life with the perception that we are a very expensive place to shop. Many people think that they cannot afford to shop here. There will always be somewhere that sells food for less than we do. We each have our own way of valuing food. One size does not fit all. The Co-op has made great strides in operating as a business that sells competitively priced food. We comparison shop with other stores like Big Y and Stop & Shop. We check. We know it is important.

And we continue to look for more ways that will make shopping at the Co-op more accessible to more people in our community. We care about the

continued on page 8

CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Member Benefits..... | 1 |
| Annual Meeting..... | 2 |
| Thank You to the Board..... | 3 |
| Dancer to Grocer..... | 4 |
| Goood News!..... | 4 |
| Raw Vegan Recipes..... | 5 |
| Wellness Review..... | 6 |
| Thank You Dawn..... | 8 |

General Manager

Alice Rubin

Management Team

Kathy Leddy

Financial Manager

Wendy Jakoboski

Produce Manager

Patty Smith

Operations Manager

Marissa Ocegueda

Front-end Manager

Corry Elm

Assistant Front-end Manager

Staff

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Brittany Brayman

Maxwell Calverly

Michelle Aguayo Castro

Susan Chasin

Ben Coggins

Kara Croce

Chad Dunnack

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Jaron Gaier

Mark Giangrave

Avery Gratton

Catherine Hahn

Bob Jennette

Saige Johnson

Brandon Johnson Nickson

Chris Klaben

Gabi Lopez

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Vanessa Ortiz

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Matthew Woodward

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Katherine Gavin

Niti Pandey

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Manager Representative

Alice Rubin

Newsletter

Ellen Embardo

Amy Kalisher

Alice Rubin

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In Case You Missed It **Great News from the Annual Meeting!**

Members attending our Co-op's Annual Meeting at Camp Horizons in May heard two exciting announcements that came to fruition after completion of the Annual Report (which was also summarized at the meeting).

We've hired the next General Manager of the Willimantic Food Cooperative

You've probably heard by now that our General Manager (GM), Alice Rubin, will be retiring in early 2024. The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Patty Smith, the current Operations Manager, will become the steward next winter of the Co-op that Alice has done so much to shape and grow. We are confident of having made an outstanding choice for the Co-op in inviting Patty to become the next General Manager.

The process by which Patty was chosen began in 2021 with a facilitated discussion lead by Columinate consultant Todd Wallace on the required qualities for our next GM. The Board then appointed a General Manager Search Committee (GMSC) of four Co-op members (two from the Board and two members-at-large). The GMSC along with a Columinate consultant specializing in Human Resources, Carolee Colter, took a much deeper dive into what those identified qualities looked like for operations, governance, community, and other areas.

The Board then decided whether to pursue external candidates. By this we mean: advertising, vetting, and interviewing prospects from – potentially – across the country. After much discussion with Carolee, the Search Committee recommended that the Board first pursue Patty Smith as a strong internal candidate.

As with any candidate search for a position of such importance, the next steps included obtaining and reviewing a resumé, cover letter and letters of reference from a variety of sources. Patty was then interviewed by both the GMSC and the Board, a multi-hour process for which Carolee and the GMSC had created rigorous questions based on the identified qualifications.

The Board offered Patty Smith the position based on the strength of her impressive resumé, her education, her excellent interviews, her deep experience at our Co-op and in the greater cooperative world, her understanding of and commitment to the cooperative principles, values and culture, and quite frankly, the fact that she cares so much about the members, about the staff, and about our Co-op.

Patty was and is our first choice. And we feel very good about how we came to that decision. She earned it. Next steps include development of a documented transition plan by Alice and Patty working together, and the Board working in concert with both of them to support our Co-op in the transition to a new General Manager.

Alice deserves to retire without the stress of worrying that she is leaving to an unknown something she has worked so hard to grow; and the staff deserve the same confidence. Your Board believes that Patty is the person we can all feel really good about entrusting with our Co-op's future.

continued on page 3



Annual Meeting *continued from page 2*

The “Go Ask Alice Solidarity Fund” Makes the Co-op Accessible to More Members

For more than thirty years, when our Willimantic Food Co-op has had a need or faced a problem, the answer has been to “go ask Alice.” And under her outstanding guidance, the Co-op has in that time expanded to serve the needs of thousands of members and numerous other shoppers. Throughout, Alice has been an advocate to the Willimantic community for the values and principles our cooperative business embodies: mutual aid, equity, democracy, solidarity; open membership, and concern for community.

But for many in our region, the requirement to invest in a capital share may make Cooperative membership seem out of reach. To remove that barrier, in honor of Alice Rubin’s dedication to the Willimantic Food Co-op and the greater community, we are establishing the Go Ask Alice Solidarity Fund to offset the cost of membership for low-income shoppers challenged by the full membership cost.

The Board collectively has given \$1500 “seed money,” and generous members donating at the Annual Meeting have brought the total up to nearly \$3000 so far. You’ll be seeing more details later this year about this and other programs to improve access to healthy food for low-income households. If you’d like to keep the momentum going now, you can donate via the Go-Fund-Me page at gofund.me/2ee316f7 🥕

BIG THANK YOU to the Board of Directors!

Alice Rubin

I am so appreciative and honored by the creation of the Go Ask Alice Solidarity Fund. The surprise of it when it was announced at the Annual Meeting was overwhelming! I don’t have words to express how grateful I am!

And I am also grateful for the many contributions that have already been made to this fund. The idea that Co-op Membership becomes more accessible to everyone in our community is essential for the Co-op to continue moving forward. We are doing much more than just selling food – we are caring for our community by meeting our most basic need – food to nourish us. Everything that we do to meet this basic need is so important and I am glad that I can be part of it.

Thank you to each and every one of our Board Members for thinking this through and making it happen! 🥕

Dancer to Grocer *Patty Smith*

I am so honored and excited to be chosen as the Co-op's next General Manager (GM)! Thank you to the Board for their work on the rigorous GM search and to Alice for her continued support and exceptional mentorship over the years – I would not feel nearly as confident stepping into this role had I not worked side-by-side with Alice for the past 15 years, absorbing her wisdom and experience. And thank you for all the warm words of congratulations I've already received from many of you since the announcement at the Annual Meeting in May.

A little bit about me: I grew up in Eastern Connecticut and attended the Boston Conservatory, graduating with a BFA in classical dance in 1996 (the same year I became a Co-op member!). I was not interested in a starving artist existence in the city, so instead I married and moved to Mansfield to run two Subway franchises (Brooklyn and Dayville) with my husband, Andy, while pursuing a semi-professional dance career on the side.

My years in "fast" food taught me a lot about running a customer-service-based small business while galvanizing my beliefs around "real" food and environmental sustainability. Andy and I found our values and interests continuously diverging from the Subway model, and we got out of the business as soon as we could. I then worked part-time at a small health food store in Mansfield before being recruited by Alice and Bruce to implement the Co-op's first computerized point-of-sale (POS) system in 2007. This became a great part-time gig while raising our young daughter, Emma – I learned a ton and enjoyed becoming a more integral part of the Co-op community. In 2011, I accepted the offer to become the Co-op's first HR Representative, making me a full-timer and adding a whole new dimension to my work. As the Co-op continued to grow, my job evolved into the position of Operations Manager, and I loved the challenges of helping Alice and all my co-workers develop the systems and infrastructure needed to support our thriving business.

What started out as a happenstance part-time job has become a life-long career and passion (from dancer to grocer!). Last year, I completed my Masters in Management: Cooperatives and Credit Unions at the International Centre for Co-operative Management, Saint Mary's University,

in Nova Scotia – a unique and fantastic program with a broad, cross-sector focus on the cooperative movement worldwide. I am thrilled to be able to bring that perspective, along with the rest of my experience, to the GM role, and to all that this new job has to teach me. I look forward to hearing from you about your hopes and dreams for the Co-op in the years to come! 🥕



Good News! *Alice Rubin*

Patty Smith has accepted the Co-op Board's job offer to be the next General Manager of our Food Co-op! I could not be happier! Having worked with Patty over the past 15 years I have seen her passion for cooperatives grow, I have seen her understanding of the Food Co-op as a business grow. As Operations Manager, she understands all of the concrete components of operating the Co-op. Pricing, staff scheduling, tracking equity payments, managing our mailing list and paying our bills are just

a few examples of the everyday tasks that happen efficiently and accurately thanks to the systems that Patty has put in place. Patty understands how all of these pieces come together and then intertwine them with the Cooperative Principles – that extra layer that makes our Co-op a Co-op, not just a grocery store! This depth of knowledge will ensure that our strong financial base remains intact.

Over the next few months as Patty and I continue to work together, I will impart as much of our history as I can remember, to give context to our present - how we got here. And I will continue to share how I think about various Co-op related topics. None of this is really that different from how she and I have been working together all of these years!

I invite each of you to welcome Patty into her new role, share your desires for our Co-op, share your concerns about the changes that are bound to happen. It won't be seamless, there will be change, how could there not be change at this time of great change?!?!

Thank you Patty for being brave enough to want to do this work and accept this position! 🥕

Easy Raw Vegan Summer Recipes *Derri Owen*

The sky, the field, and the pond call! It's summer... here are some simple recipes so you can spend more time outdoors than in the kitchen!

These foods feature delicious seasonal vegetables -- corn, tomatoes, and zucchinis.

With wonderful salads of fresh greens, one can enjoy a great dressing. Here's my favorite and easiest salad dressing!

Sesame Lemon Dressing

Juice 2 lemons into an empty jar. Add 1/2 cup raw tahini. Close the jar and shake hard. The mixture should now be homogenous. If too thin, add more raw tahini, a careful little bit at a time. If too thick, you can add water, again a little bit at a time. For some reason the water doesn't lessen the lemon flavor. You can pack the jar right in a picnic basket.

Corn-Avocado Main Course

Slice corn off 4 cobs. Process lightly in a food processor. Mash 2 avocados and mix with the corn. Add a little powdered sage to taste. Serve plain or rolled in romaine lettuce or untoasted nori.

Zuke Pine Nut Spread

An unbelievably delicious smooth spread or filling can be made by food processing 1 medium zucchini and 1 cup of pine nuts. It can be used to stuff hollowed-out tomatoes or rolled inside romaine lettuce or untoasted nori or mixed with tomato chunks. Make it plain first (delicate flavor), later try it with lemon juice or your favorite herbs.

Spiralized Zucchini

A wonderful spiralizer can be purchased inexpensively -- then you can make your own fresh zucchini noodles. For a sauce, I like to process pre-soaked sun-dried tomatoes, fresh tomatoes, fresh basil, and avocado. Or skip the avocado. Or add a few small bits of date to sweeten it.

Tomatoes and Stone Fruit

One of the very best dishes of summer is made by mixing chopped tomatoes with chopped stone fruit -- especially peaches or nectarines -- something to remember all year!

Raw Corn on the Cob

Just like tasting summer! No way to improve on perfection! 🌽

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Helen's Wellness Review *Helen Scanlon*

Hello wonderful Co-ops! I have a confession to make: I am not a big fan of summer. Scorching heat, high humidity, ticks, and biting bugs (ugh mosquitos and deerflies! Am I right?!) kinda make me feel surly. This is why you really need to pay close attention to this Wellness Review—I am going to share some products that will make summer A LOT more bearable, and dare say—FUN.

Consider this—I am a Certified Summer Curmudgeon, so when I say summer can be “fun,” listen up—because to me, summer is mostly NOT FUN.

But yet, I digress again.

Onward with the reviews!

First up, I reviewed *Alteya Luminous Rose Hydrating Flower Toner*. How will this make summer fun? It can effectively and gently clean your face—remnants of sunscreen, sweat, and oil begone—and yet, it hydrates. And here is the best part—it smells like roses. *Alteya* uses high-quality, organic rose oils from Bulgaria. If you didn't know—and now you do—Bulgaria is rose country. Every May and June, Bulgaria holds a rose festival that spans 87 (!) miles across the country's “rose valley.”

Alteya's ingredients are pure and meticulously inspected—and that magical Bulgarian rose oil holds a scent that inspires poetry. You know how I feel about fragrances. Go ahead and use this facial toner as a body spray—because why not—just give a little spritz to the pulse points and off you go! I did, and it was a good idea if I do say so myself. *Alteya Luminous Rose Hydrating Flower Toner* comes in a beautiful amber glass spray bottle, so go for it. Just don't spray it directly on your face, spray it onto a cotton ball or onto your fingers and apply to your face after your face-cleansing routine. Avoid the eyes as with any facial product. Then, wait.



After less than a minute the *Alteya Luminous Rose Hydrating Flower Toner* dries and settles into your skin and leaves it soft as a—wait for it—rose petal. I am not kidding. Don't even think about forgetting your skin for the summer because it is constantly slathered in sunscreen and sweat and grime. Please, please, please don't just absentmindedly throw a harsh “whatever” soap on your face after a long day of sweating at the beach pretending you actually like volleyball. Summer skin still needs your gentle care and attention.

I used *Alteya Luminous Rose Hydrating Flower Toner* as a refreshing way to end the day (poetry!) This product gently offered my face a final gentle cleanse and hydration right before bedtime. Have you ever fallen asleep surrounded by the aroma of Bulgarian roses? No? What are you waiting for?

Check out the company website to find out more about this wonderful product: alteyaorganics.com

We are all SO LUCKY to have *Alteya Luminous Rose Hydrating Flower Toner* on the shelves of our friendly Co-op. This toner just became a staple for me.

Next up—a summer must-have: SUNSCREEN.

Gone are the days of greasy, slimy, disgusting, chemical-laden, reef-destroying sunscreen—because now we have products like *Badger Mineral Sunscreen SPF 40*.

Check this out from their website. Badgerbalm.com:

- REEF FRIENDLY: Protect Land + Sea Certified, safe for you and the planet
- SUSTAINABLE: Packaged in an infinitely recyclable tin, cruelty free, and made with solar power
- CLEAN + ORGANIC: GMO-free and made with just 4 simple, 98% organic ingredients
- SAFE: Protects with only zinc oxide, tested hypoallergenic, gluten free, and unscented

continued on page 7

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Wellness Review *continued from page 6*

- **EFFECTIVE:** Tested SPF 40, broad spectrum, and water resistant 80 minutes for sport-ready protection
- **NOURISHING:** Antioxidant-rich, waterless formula with Vitamin E leaves your skin moisturized and protected

It does not get any better than this! But how does it work, Helen? I am glad you asked because it works very well, thank you. Certified Not Slimy (I just made that up) and protects like crazy. An hourlong run at Horsebarn Hill at UConn, mostly in the direct sun, yielded zero sunburn. Running in the sun also makes one sweat—and the *Badger Mineral Sunscreen SPF 40* stayed put. It didn't run into my eyes and make me want to curse the onset of summer weather, instead it just did what it was supposed to do without hurting me or the planet. Boom, job done. Plus, it comes in a tin that won't accidentally pop open and explode in your beach bag. I know what you're thinking—so yeah, go to the Co-op right now and get some *Badger Mineral Sunscreen SPF 40*!

And remember to wear sunscreen every day...those summer UV rays can hurt your skin in a multitude of ways. Keep a tin of this friendly sunscreen handy.

Now, let's talk about the obnoxious summer party guests. You know the ones. They show up way too early, stay way too late, and say things like, "you think that's bad, wait until you hear what happened to me!" They double dip the chips. They bring mayo-laden potato salad and put it in the direct sun. They don't clip their toenails and insist on wearing flip-flops.

Yup. Mosquitoes.

It's all good because we have DEET-free, all-natural

plant-powered 95% organic Badger Anti-Bug Mosquito Repellent. Just a few spritzes of this lovely-smelling spray had the party guests running for their cars and peeling out of the driveway, potato salad in tow.

"Oh, we can't stay," they exclaimed, brows furrowed with disgust and panic. "I think we left the stove on."

Fine, get outta here. Be scared of a little lemongrass and cedarwood oil. And don't come back!

I love this stuff!

Bonus recommendation: Hikers! Make sure you stock up on Nantucket Spider tick repellent, also available at the Willimantic Food Co-op. My personal favorite tick repellent—ticks hate, hate, hate this spray!

There you have it—all you need to protect you from summer's onslaught of "fun."

...and maybe, just maybe, you could actually have a good time. :)

Until next time—remember to hydrate and don't leave the potato salad in the sun.

Curmudgeonly yours,

In wellness,

Helen 🌱

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Member Benefits *continued from page 1*

health and wellbeing of the people in our community. We want everyone who wants it, to have access to healthy food.

Some of our ideas include

- Creating a Food For All program that would offer a discount to members that have already qualified for other financial aid such as SNAP
- The Go Ask Alice Solidarity Fund to help people afford membership in the Co-op
- making our shelf price the price that everyone pays
- offering a variety of member only benefits that rewards and speaks to the valuable role that our membership plays by investing in our Co-op

As a way to move forward with some of these ideas, we would like input from our members. We will be holding 2 information sessions –

Wednesday August 9th 7 PM

Friday September 1st 7 PM

Meetings will be held at Grounded Coffee 869 Main Street Willimantic. We will meet outdoors, weather permitting, and indoors if not!

We are also planning a member survey on these ideas in the near future. Watch your email for the link! 🥕

Thank You Dawn!

Alice Rubin

Sort of like Jack and the Bean Stalk,
vines and flowers and gremlins and....
Elmo! are all climbing the Co-op's poles!

Local artist and long time Co-op member Dawn Cook had some extra time on her hands and had heard that we had always dreamt of flowers climbing the poles. It only took 17 years to realize that dream! But finally, here we are!

It has been an exciting project to watch unfold. I am excited to see the end results, but I am also really enjoying watching the work happen as we all interact with Dawn and then see the results of her work on our next shopping trip.

Keep your eyes on those poles, who knows what will grow there! 🥕

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