

NEW MEMBER BENEFITS!

A message from the
Board of Directors

Dear Members,

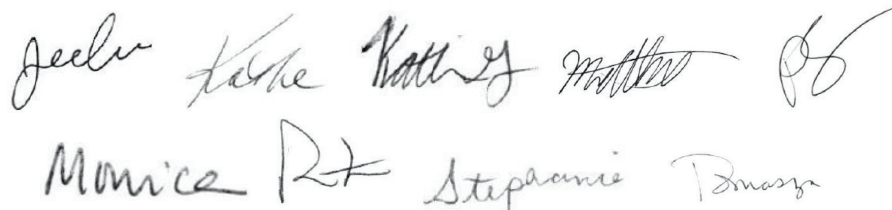
The Willimantic Food Co-op Board of Directors is pleased to welcome the new member benefits package –Member Loyalty Points and the Ramp Program --which launches on Oct. 1. This program will enhance the Co-op shopping experience by rewarding member owners and will incentivize new Co-op membership.

With the introduction of Member Loyalty Points, all members will receive 1% back on purchases, plus an additional 1% back on local purchases (double points on local!). Furthermore, the new Ramp program – a need-based discount and equity assistance for members – will expand equitable access to shopping at the Co-op. The Board is proud of this new member benefits program that supports the Co-op's long-term vitality, aligns with the Co-op's core values, and furthers the Co-op's newly updated Ends policy.

With the introduction of new benefits, we are also saying goodbye to the 5% senior discount. While this may be disappointing to some, we believe that this change supports the goal of having an equitable benefits structure. The total amount of available discount dollars will now be spread more evenly amongst all members, correlated to how much they spend (a core cooperative principle), while also ensuring that members of any age can apply for a little extra assistance while they are experiencing financial hardship. The new benefits will not do away with other occasional discounts. Members can expect to enjoy the continuation of some favorite promotions such as seasonal discounts and Wellness Wednesdays.

The Board unanimously supports the new member benefits. We would like to thank the Co-op staff and management who have put in so much thoughtful work over such a long period of time to develop these new programs. The work has been done with care for our members and community, with an emphasis on equity and business sustainability.

In Cooperation,
WFC Board of Directors

The image shows two rows of handwritten signatures in black ink. The top row contains five signatures, and the bottom row contains three. The signatures are written in a cursive, informal style.

UPDATING MEMBER BENEFITS HAS BEEN ON OUR TO-DO LIST FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW.

Both of our new member benefits – Loyalty Points and Ramp (the need-based discount & equity assistance) have been well-researched, follow common practices among food co-ops, and received strong support from members in the series of surveys and member info sessions we conducted in 2022 and 2023.

This past spring, the Board of Directors adopted an updated version of their “Ends” policy, which articulates the Co-op's reason for being. As part of the Board's process, they asked the management team to review member benefits and discounts and make recommendations to bring the member benefits in line with the Co-op's Ends and mission.

In addition to aligning with the Ends, the goals of a new member benefits package were:

- To ensure that member benefits are as equitable as possible

- To ensure that member benefits are meaningful, clear, and easy to understand
- To ensure that member benefits support financial sustainability for the Co-op

The board and management believe that the new member benefits structure serves those goals.

WE BELIEVE IT'S IMPORTANT FOR ALL CO-OP MEMBERS TO REALIZE SAVINGS IN EXCHANGE FOR THEIR EQUITY INVESTMENT AND PATRONAGE.

During Covid, we retired the member/non-member shelf price differential (members paid shelf price; non-members paid 10% over shelf price). That left us with no perks that rewarded all members on every shop.

We had member benefits that rewarded certain groups of members, for example, the senior discount only benefited those aged 65 and older, while the case discount on pre orders is only attractive to those who could and wanted to buy in bulk.

Member Loyalty Points provide an everyday benefit to every Co-op member, while Ramp provides extra assistance to those members experiencing financial hardship. These member benefits provide an equitable distribution of the resources available for member discounts.

Member Loyalty Points: Easy and equitable

Each and every active Co-op member is automatically enrolled in the Loyalty program. Loyalty Points reward every member, every time you shop. Whether you're filling a shopping cart or just buying a coffee, you are earning points that will save you money on a future purchase. Loyalty Points supports the Co-op's commitment to local: When you buy local items, you earn double the points.

Ramp: a Transition from an age-based discount to a need-based discount

An age-based discount assumes that age corresponds with financial need. While this was once a helpful proxy, it no longer accurately reflects the realities of our membership. Regardless of age, many member households and individuals are facing significant economic challenges, while some older members are not. A need-based structure ensures support goes where it is most helpful.

A needs-based discount aligns with cooperative values. Co-ops exist to meet the needs of their members. By offering assistance based on financial situation rather than demographic category, we are better able to uphold the principles of fairness, accessibility, and community responsibility.

While the every-day senior discount will be ending, qualifying members of any age will be able to benefit from the new Ramp member discount and assistance with future equity payments.

Member Savings that Support a Sustainable Business

The most important reward that Co-op members receive is the continued success of the business they own. While perks are nice, members and the community only benefit from the Co-op if it continues to exist and thrive.

The board and management have evaluated the new member benefits package for financial feasibility, and we believe it strikes a balance between creating savings for members and being sustainable for the business.

We will assess the financial impact of these changes on members and the business in the coming years to ensure we continue to meet our goals of equitable member benefits that support a thriving cooperative grocery store in Willimantic.

For questions or concerns, please contact **wfcboard@willimanticfood.coop**