



From Our General Manager

Dear Members,

[We discussed] the Merchandise Policy for Franklin Community Co-op at the Board meeting 12/16/15; I'd like to share with you my perspectives.

My Commitment and FCC's Commitment to carrying Healthy Food at FCC

We all want healthy, organic foods and we want to invite our whole community to shop here and eat healthy, organic foods with us. How do we do this in the most positive and successful manner?

Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." So, first and foremost, on a personal level, I came to work at the Franklin Community Co-op to put to work the set of skills I've acquired from other retail environments in the service of a strong, socially responsible organization that provides quality, wholesome foods to our community—the community that my family and I live in. My personal belief is that food has a tremendous ability to positively impact the overall well-being of the world in which we live; this belief was responsible for the shift in my career. That belief has been at the core of what the co-op stands for since its inception.

The strength of that belief informs all aspects of business operation at the co-op. While some of the products we sell are now more widely available at other grocery retail outlets, it's this foundation that

continues to differentiate the co-op, where the power of responsibly sourced food means:

- Higher wages and a full range of medical benefits for employees
- Job growth in our community
- Greater access to healthy food for everyone
- The continued growth of our support for local farms and local businesses
- The continued support for our long history of Fair Trade purchasing

Our success is community success: it represents our ability to continue to foster the growth of other community businesses, to create more jobs in Franklin County, and to help to keep our community economically as well as physically healthy and vibrant. The co-op's belief that responsibly sourced, affordably priced, locally supportive goods can be a powerful force for community prosperity is reflected both in our long history of support for food access programs in Franklin County, and in the form of new initiatives in the past year designed to expand our



community outreach even further. As a cooperative, I believe that we truly are embodying that

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What Form Herb?

by Deirdre LaPenna, staff

When deciding to use herbs for health, people often ask which form is better? I have not found conclusive evidence that any one form is more effective than another, though at times strong doses are desired, and you may not wish to ingest 2.5 gms. of turmeric daily, although an average adult in India might! (US National Institutes of Health)*

Aside from asking someone you trust, which form you choose can come from

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From Our Board Treasurer

by Jeanne Douillard

In the November/December *New Beet*, we examined in greater detail the current financial challenges of our co-op by addressing the losses incurred in the last three years and the amount spent in 2% discounts distributed to member/owners in that time period. In this article, we'll address the idea of Patronage Dividends.

I want to clarify that introducing Patronage Dividends to the co-op does not mean the automatic elimination of member discounts. Patronage Dividends and Member Discounts can

coexist. It's also true that the member discount programs of the Franklin

TREASURER continued on p. 5

Franklin Community Co-operative Board of Directors

- Jay Lord '16
Gary Seldon '16 (Clerk)
Lynn Benander '16 (Vic President)
Norm Hirschfeld '17
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Stephan Gordon '17
Judy Draper '16
Marie Betts Bartlett '17
George Touloumtzis '16 (President)
Emma Morgan '17
Jeanne Douillard '17 (Treasurer)

The co-op board meets monthly, (generally 2nd Wed.) at 6:30 p.m. The agenda and minutes from previous meetings are posted in both stores and on our website.

Co-op Managers 413.773.9567

General Manager

John Williams x1009

Marketing & Member Services

Suzette Snow-Cobb x1017

Events & Outreach

Sarah Kanabay x1003

Information Services

David Russell x1001

Prepared Foods

Chris Opalenick x1008

Bakery

Micheal Shersnow x1007

Grocery

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Kim Nyiri x1020

Wellness

Pamela Ferrechio x1016

Produce

Victor Signore x1015

Front-end/Cashiers (GFM)

Jeremy Starpoli x1013

McCusker's Store Manager

Alec Goodwin x2001

McCusker's Market

413.625.9411

New Beet Editors:

Suzette Snow-Cobb, staff

Eveline MacDougall, member

www.franklincommunity.coop

Illustrations:

Jessica Larkin, member

Masthead Art Work:

Karen Gaudette

President's Report

News from Franklin Community Co-op, where all the member-owners are above average.

I regretfully couldn't submit a report to the last edition, as I was laid up with an injury. So this dispatch will cover the Board's activities and decisions from the August through December Board meetings.

But I'll begin (and end) this communiqué by addressing Board recruitment, because 'tis the season! First, I invite you to look in the mirror and reflect (pun intended) if you might be prepared to offer your services to this precious cooperative we own together by running for the Board.

When the Membership Engagement Committee brought forward specific recommendations flowing from member-owner input at the last Annual Meeting -- 1) more visible marketing of the Co-op Basics program; 2) creating an online forum; and 3) posting the entire Board meeting packet on the website (not just the minutes & agenda) -- all three were already in the process of being implemented by General Manager John Williams, an indication of sensitive and effective synergy within our organization.

In an attempt to have active and dynamic linkage with ownership on an ongoing basis, the MEC came up with, and got Board support for trying an approach that we'll implement starting in January. The idea is to be available to member-owners "where you're at"—in the stores, as you're shopping and using the dining areas. We're calling it "Spend 5 minutes with a Board member." Board members will sign up for half-hour or hour-long blocks to be available in the dining areas of one of our two stores -- we'll make our availability obvious. The schedule

will be posted, so an owner can plan to speak with one of us, or you may just happen upon us. (This is also an opportunity to intrigue potential owners— frequent shoppers who hear "Are you a member?" or "Do you have a member number?" at the register without realizing this implies ownership and a fundamentally different economic model.)

The charter of the Finance Committee was adjusted to tighten up its membership: "Committee members should have a financial background in accounting, finance or economics or be current or former Board of Directors members. Business experience is a plus. All members of the committee should have the ability to read financial statements." While the committee has always been chaired by the Board Treasurer, another charter change is that "membership on the Committee is by invitation of the Treasurer."

At the September Board meeting, [General Manager] John presented his operating budget, which showed a projection of FCC returning to profitability in FY 2016! This was submitted along with an L6 Budgeting/Financial Planning monitoring report (the system whereby the Board supervises or "monitors" the GM), which the Board accepted as in "partial compliance" (a non-judgmental designation typical in policy governance, and very characteristic for a first-year GM coming into a complex situation). John then submitted his capital budget at the October meeting, the next piece in the budgetary puzzle. It's eagerly anticipated that he'll submit his multi-year plan at the January 9th meeting, which will bring him into full compliance with L6.

The Board provided the necessary paperwork to acquire the liquor license for McCusker's, a development made possible by the overwhelming vote of ownership at the last Annual Meeting approving the bylaw change allowing application for such a license.

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The New Beet is the newsletter published 7-8 times each year by Franklin Community Co-operative.

Articles about health or nutrition are for informational purposes only. We recommend that you consult a health care professional for medical advice. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily the views or policies of FCC.

The deadline for classified ads, letters, recipes or article submissions is the 15th of the month prior to publication. All submissions must include author's name and phone number, and conform to the following guidelines:

Recipes: We welcome original recipes from members.

Classifieds: Members' classifieds are free (40 word limit) Drop off at the member/customer desk (typed

or very clearly written) or e-mail; we print as space allows. suzette@franklincommunity.coop

Letters to the Editor: We welcome letters; they must be signed and include a phone number for author verification. We will withhold name if requested. We reserve the right to edit for grammatical errors, clarity, and length. 300 words maximum.

Via email: suzette@franklincommunity.coop Submissions on paper: Typed and double-spaced. The editor may reject letters and articles that are illegible, too long, or inappropriate. We also welcome original poetry, photographs and drawings.

Our Ends (What we are working toward):

Global: The co-op will be an innovator and collaborator in the process of creating a regenerative and sustainable local community, economy, and food sys-

tem.

- Our community will be educated about our food, food systems, health and ecology.
The co-op will supply healthy, reasonably-priced foods--and other goods and services--that benefit the lives of the members, community, and all those who worked to bring these goods to us.
The co-op will provide a central place for the members and community to congregate and strengthen the social fabric of our community.
The co-op will foster a positive working environment for all staff while providing a living wage, and excellent treatment of all workers.
Customers will have a positive experience with each visit.
The co-op will be an outstanding example of the Co-operative Principles and Values.





Members Write

In response to Cathy Whitely's article about *Bone Broth* and a member's article about her NOFA conference experience, we received two Letters to the Editor (below). (Past issues of *The New Beet* are in PDF form on our website.) In every issue we include: "Articles about health or nutrition are for informational purposes only. We recommend that you consult a health care professional for medical advice. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not necessarily the views or policies of FCC."

Thank you for reading our co-op newsletter. It is our goal to provide co-op information, food and food system information and engage members and the community to think more deeply about the

To the *New Beet* Editor,

In the November issue of *The New Beet* there appeared a pair of articles about the GAPS diet advocated by Dr. Natasha Campbell-McBride. Both articles advocated a dietary regimen that includes eating lots of bones and animal fat as a cure [for] a host of ailments. Since nearly every scientific study from the last half century has indicated that the healthiest, [longest-lived] people follow a dietary regimen consisting of a wide variety of minimally processed plant based foods, I thought that I would check out the GAPS diet and its leading advocate, Campbell-McBride. I took a look on the internet and it turns out that none of her theories, recommendations, or claims to miraculous healings have been substantiated or documented by credible scientific means. Many of the critics of her methods described her pontifications as "quackery." The supplements and tinctures she sells as essential elements for her cures appear to be "snake oil class" products.

I urge that before co-op members descend into bone-sucking diets based on the articles printed in *The New Beet* they review the overwhelming evidence that vegetarian diets consisting of a wide variety of minimally processed foods provide the best nutrition for most humans and will result in the best health outcomes.

Paul Voiland

Dear FCC members and *New Beet* Editor,

I was disappointed [to see] in the November/December issue of *The New Beet* an article [entitled] "Bone Broth and its amazing healing properties." I think it's unfortunate at best, if not irresponsible, for the FCC to give a prominent platform for this type of pseudoscience and detrimental food faddism. The "bone broth" fad is not based in sound

food they consume and the co-op we own.

-Suzette Snow-Cobb, *New Beet* Editor

Cathy Comments:

Just to clarify a few things: I believe that a plant-based, whole-foods diet of un- and minimally-processed foods is the healthiest way to eat. I could talk more about that but, for the sake of brevity, I spoke only about bone broth because that's what the article was about. I would not suggest eating large quantities of animal products and would absolutely only use bones from pasture-raised animals raised on small, local farms. Although some people feel healthier when they switch to a vegetarian or vegan diet, others do

nutritional science and promotes increased consumption of animal products with unproven claims of "amazing healing properties." While non-science blogs, TV hucksters like Dr. Oz and high priced bistros tout the dubious health benefits of drinking a simmered concoction of various animal parts, William Percy, an associate professor at the University of South Dakota's Sanford School of Medicine, isn't convinced: "Since we don't absorb collagen whole, the idea that eating collagen somehow promotes bone growth is just wishful thinking," Percy says. Kantha Shelke, a food scientist and spokesperson for the Institute of Food Technologists, states: "Eating a diet rich in leafy green vegetables is ideal," she says. "Plants offer richer sources in collagen building blocks and, in addition, provide nutrients not found in sufficient quantities in meats or broth."

The evidence is clear that while "bone broth" has no proven health benefits, adopting a plant-based diet has been proven in numerous large studies to be the best indicator of a healthy outcome. Dr. Daniel Katz, director of the Yale University Prevention Research Center and President of the American College of Lifestyle Medicine writes: "The New York Times told us this: "Broth made with plenty of bones contributes to well-being in ways that other foods don't." Since it was in the New York Times, I guess it must be true. As noted, I looked for evidence and couldn't find any. I haven't seen beanstalks grow from magical beans either, but maybe that's true, too."

"The evidence we do have is monumentally in the other direction. Among modern populations with no difficult [sic] procuring enough protein or meat, it is the addition of plant foods to the diet that reliably leads to better health. This has been shown in intervention studies examining heart disease and cancer; it has been shown in massive epidemiologic

better when they switch back to including some meat.

Those I know who follow the GAPS protocol continue to find improvements in their digestive health. As for my mother, the addition of bone broth to her diet was the turning point in her healing. I wouldn't dismiss that simply because it's not scientifically proven anymore than I would dismiss the various homeopathic and herbal remedies I've used successfully that haven't been "proven" either.

-Cathy Whitely

studies over, and over, and over, and over again; and it is not just "demonstrable" but actually demonstrated by the enviable health outcomes enjoyed in the world's Blue Zones." (See his article in the HuffPo below for links to the studies).

In addition to the false health claims made for "bone broth," it is alarming that the *New Beet* finds it necessary to promote greater consumption of animal-based products which have been proven to be leading causes of our most serious health problems including heart disease and cancer, but are also known to be a major contributors to greenhouse gases that are causing and accelerating climate change, as well as a leading cause of deforestation, species extinction, air and water pollution. Again, the science is overwhelming and decisive on this issue dating back to the 2009 UN study *Livestock's Long Shadow*. And none of this takes into account the enormous suffering and cruelty to animals occurring for every "knuckle and foot" you boil in the vain belief that you are promoting a healthy life, let alone a healthy or humane planet. To quote Dr. Katz again: "Cruelty has no place on the menu of decent people, whatever our gustatory inclinations."

I hope to see more articles in *The New Beet* promoting dietary recommendations based in real science and promoting true health without causing further damage to our environment and more unnecessary suffering to billions of sentient animals.

Respectfully, Ed Rutledge

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-katz-md/bone-broth-and-magic-bean_b_6444284.html

<http://www.npr.org/sections/the-salt/2015/02/10/384948585/taking-stock-of-bone-broth-sorry-no-cure-all-here>

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.HTM>

<http://science.time.com/2013/12/16/the-triple-whopper-environmental-impact-of-global-meat-production/>

peaceful exhortation to be the change we wish to see in the world. For a full list of how we support food security and healthy eating within our community, please visit the following link: <http://s.coop/coopfood>

In that spirit, the Board and Management of FCC are committed to carrying food and other merchandise that are high-quality and reasonably priced, and that emphasize products that are:

- Organic and/or produced by organic growing practices
- Free of artificial colors, flavors, preservatives, synthetic pesticides, non-food ingredients in food including cotton extracts

- Produced with socially just and environmentally benign processes
- Whole or minimally processed

Local/regional

- Made, sold or produced by other co-ops
- Verified non-GMO, or do not contain GMO ingredients

We have all agreed to:

- Support local organic food production
- Label, present and market merchandise as clearly, completely and honestly as possible
- Assure higher standards in prepared foods
- Reduce sales of products owned by a parent company which fights GMO labeling laws or whose primary business plan does not support a sustainable and regenerative food system.

We do support the mandatory manufacturer labeling of foods with GMOs in the food supply and support organizations actively lobbying for this. There is no question that these are our shared priorities.

What has happened over the last year

A renewed interest by the members have prompted management to review our product selection guidelines. Please view link: <http://s.coop/1xoo4>.

We did extensive ingredients assessment within our prepared foods and bakery.

We purchased new scales that allowed us to begin labeling organic ingredients in prepared foods.

We continue to reinforce our goals for product selection through staff education and emphasis on organic ingredients and organic food selection.

What needs to happen next

IDENTIFYING THE KEY QUESTIONS

The questions on the table now revolve around nuanced questions:

- Do we immediately ban GMO foods or foods that potentially contain GMOs? What would the business impact be? Do we phase them out over time?
- What methods of verification do we use?

How do we make learning to “eat healthy” less intimidating? How do we invite everyone into the conversation, at all levels?

- What do we do when we can't find a source for organic products or the available options are too expensive? Do we stop carrying the products our member and customer base are asking for? Here are just a few examples

- Organic chicken would increase the hot bar price by \$3.00/lb.

- We cannot source organic sesame seed oil. There is no GMO sesame; there is no verification for pesticide-free.

- We currently use local dairy products from Mapeline in our bakery; if we switched to organic-only, our bakery prices would double.

- Our bakery uses a number of ingredients containing non-organic sugar—chocolates, jams, graham crackers, sweetened condensed milk. Converting to organic-only would represent a significant price increase for a range of products—bliss tortes, chocolate chip cookies, magic bars, brownies, danish, and granola. The amount of conventional sugar in these ingredients is minuscule compared to the total amount of sugar used for sweetening the finished products. The bakery staff considers it an acceptable trade-off to utilize all-natural but affordable ingredients instead of all-organic but expensive ones.

- Our customers have a variety of priorities. For some, “local” is key, for others, “organic”; for still others, “fair trade” is key. Our chocolate bars are a good example. We carry what we call a good, better, best product line of chocolate bars. We encourage people to buy the best, but we have alternatives that invite them in and then educate them about their alternatives. We have been similarly responsive and sensitive to the wider range of customer needs concerning produce—offering both organic, and responsibly produced, affordable conventional alternatives, at the request of members. Should we label products that might possibly contain GMOs or label the products that are verified non-GMO?

- Should we label products in a negative way that violate best practices in marketing and customer service, making people feel badly about their choices, or do we emphasize the positive aspects of the products we carry and educate people about how to choose the foods that are best for them?

- How do we label to educate, not intimidate or dictate?

- What can we do to offer a welcoming environment to new customers and members of our community who have not shopped our store? How do we make learning to “eat healthy” less intimidating? How do we invite everyone into the conversation, at all levels?

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

At this time in the decision making process, staff have not had a broader opportunity to participate in the discussion about the proposed Merchandise Policy. This policy directly impacts their workplace environment and workflow. Staff members want to have an opportunity to help shape the policy itself and the operational policies to implement it.

Only a small portion of the overall membership has been engaged thus far.

Our buying practices and ingredient selection have been a result of historical shopping patterns by our members and customers and from the industry knowledge and experience of our engaged staff.

The foundation of our current merchandise policy was developed as a result of an extensive member input process.

This is a complex, passionate issue, with many views, opinions, and ideas. Let's work together cooperatively in a process that invites everyone to express thoughts and needs.

We would like to take time this spring to gather information from members and staff about how to address these questions. We are planning to do so at the annual meeting, to hold focus groups, and to do a survey. Once we have options and implications identified, we will report back to the board with our findings and recommendations.

We believe the process and this timeline are necessary to address these important questions in a considered way, which respects all co-op and community stakeholders. We ask for your patience and your participation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
John Williams
General Manager

HERB continued from page 1.

your own inclination and investigation. Here are some basics to consider:

Preference. If your arm needs to be twisted in order for you to take it, it's probably not going to help you. For whatever reason—fed up with pills, smell, taste, size, aversion to some ingredient—not only will these reasons keep you from taking your herbs, but your resentments about them may get in the way of their benefits. So pick something that attracts you.

Time. Who has extra time these days? We want to spend time doing things that are important to us. Maybe that means brewing herbal infusions or decoctions, or filling capsules with powdered herbs. It's an added benefit if we can be in touch with the living essence of the herbs we invite to assist us in our health. But it's not for everyone. And you have other options. Buying ready-made capsules, tablets and tinctures can be more convenient.

Strength. Acute circumstance may require heavy doses. In other instances, less may be more. What does your intuition tell you? What does the manufacturer recommend? Are you trying to knock out a cold by taking a lot of garlic? Or are you trying to improve your mental function by taking regular doses of ginkgo? Do your own research and read labels. A label on a package of tablets or capsules will indicate weight, most commonly in milligrams (mg) or micrograms (mcg). A tincture label will list a solvent (called menstruum) to herb ratio, indicating weight to volume. A 1:2 ratio is stronger than a 1:5 ratio, for example. Precise strength of infu-



Cost. Cost of herbs is species-specific. Goldenseal costs more per ounce than fenugreek, for example. If a particular herb or formula is a priority for your health, or you have high regard for a manufacturer, cost may not be as important to you. Many of us are on a limited budget. For the most part, dried herbs in bulk will be less expensive. Or you can grow them yourself and receive the added benefit of experience with the living plant.

Lifestyle. What is the rhythm of your life? Are you in one place most of the time, or on the go? Bringing a lot of tincture bottles on a plane or trying to brew infusions in a hotel coffee maker (yuck!) is not really feasible. Maybe you need to reserve a time of day for taking herbs so that you'll remember. Maybe the whole family needs a tonic. Whatever the circumstance, your choice of form can be guided by the way you live.

You may find you like different forms for different herbs. If you don't like the taste of something, you can take a pill. If relaxing is part of the cure, you may want to sip a warm cup of infused herb. There are many variables, and you can decide what works for you.

**<http://www.livestrong.com/article/104916-recommended-dosages-turmeric>*

sions and decoctions may be more difficult to determine; the longer one steeps or simmers, the stronger the brew.

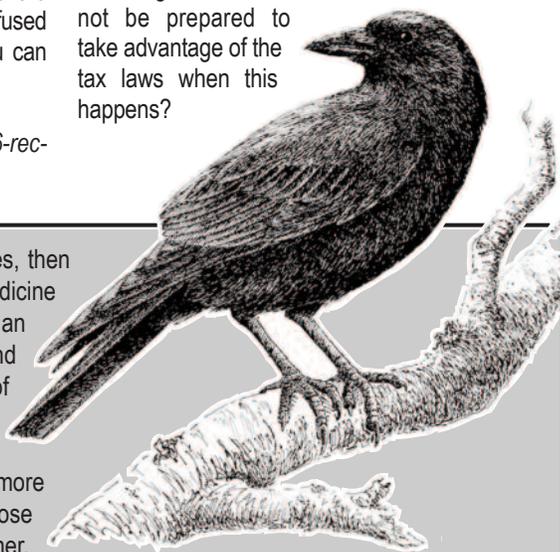
TREASURER continued from page 1.

Community Co-op are under the purview of the Board of Directors and these can be altered or eliminated by the board regardless of whether we vote in Patronage Dividends.

Why should we think about introducing Patronage Dividends to our co-op? In years when co-ops make a profit from member sales, current U.S. tax codes allow these businesses to retain any profits (made from sales to members) as a tax exempt dividend, payable to the member/owners. At the end of the fiscal year, the Board of Directors may declare any portion of the profits from member sales as "Patronage Dividend." The dividend is allocated to members in proportion to how much each member spent during the year.

When the Board does declare a dividend, a minimum of 20% of the dividend must be returned to member/owners. It's up to the Board to decide the amount of the refund, based on the co-op's current and future needs. Up to 80% of the dividend can be retained to build equity. Thus, this system benefits both member/owners and the co-op.

If the co-op makes no profits from member sales, (as has been the case in the last three years for FCC), Patronage Dividends are not distributed. However, Patronage Dividends must be in the by-laws in the year before a Patronage Dividend can be declared. Our GM and staff are working diligently to turn things around. Should we not be prepared to take advantage of the tax laws when this happens?



Nature Notes

- We put on our warm coats in the winter and our animal and bird friends wear their **insulating feathers and furs**. Birds often grow an extra layer of down in the late fall and their feathers are arranged to create minute air pockets, adding warmth. Watch a bird preening: a gland at the base of the tail produces waterproofing oil that coats the outer feathers. Even their tiny feet are covered with scales that help protect them from heat loss. In extreme weather, small birds may roost together in tight cavities or go into a torpor to conserve energy when metabolism and body temperatures lower. If you feed the birds, please use suet and good food, and keep it up during very cold spells.

- **A crow calls to the East**, flies, then lands on a branch overhead. In Medicine Wheel, crow is the observer; he's an omen of change, seeing both inner and outer reality. The power of the East is of light removing darkness – wisdom in the light of discernment. Its quality is innocence. As light returns a little more each day, we remember to honor those tender feelings in ourselves, each other, and in our troubled world. By mid-February, we can welcome the start of spring, the rebirth of innocence. Chickadees, titmice and purple finches sing their spring songs. Great horned owls nest, while skunks and other critters emerge and begin to mate. The sap will begin flowing, and so will we as we slowly emerge from winter's rest.

-Kathleen O'Rourke, naturalist/herbalist

Book Reading: "WHAT I'VE SEEN: Animal, Nature and Ranger Tales" by Kathleen O'Rourke, Feb. 10 at 5:30 p.m. At the co-op's newest space at 170 Main St, Greenfield. Stories and poems are about national parks; working as a ranger naturalist; Navajo, Hopi and other tribes; Mount Greylock; and fictional writings.

• The Board voted to renew our CBLD (Cooperative Board Leadership Development) participation agreement with CDS Consulting Co-op. This service provides ongoing consultation, a one-day retreat, a full day of training, and access to a large electronic resource library. A majority of current Board members plan to attend the one-day “Leadership Training” session in Keene, NH on Jan. 9th.

• We voted to renew our member agreement with National Co-op Grocers. Our participation with NCG provides us with many benefits, including lower cost of goods, access to services such as Co-op Deals, the new Co-op Basics program, and much more. In addition, our involvement in NCG is a wonderful demonstration of FCC’s commitment to the 6th cooperative principle: cooperation among cooperatives. 148 co-ops in 38 states participate in NCG, and—because of this collectively supportive system—at least a dozen co-ops have been spared significant fiscal peril or even bankruptcy in the past decade alone.

• As mentioned in my last report, the Board’s new Policy and Bylaw Revision Committee collaborated with the owner-organized Non-GMO Committee to address the latter’s concerns, spending many weeks and many meeting hours drafting a Merchandise Policy; this was presented at the October Board meeting. The Board was supportive of the overall framework and direction of the policy, but felt that some parts were too specific and too restrictive in limitations they imposed upon staff operations and strategic planning. They also wanted opportunity for input from a broader spectrum of ownership. The Board unanimously voted to send what we believed was a prudently trimmed draft of the policy to John to secure more extensive input from membership and staff, and to bring it back to the

How do we make learning to “eat healthy” less intimidating? How do we invite everyone into the conversation, at all levels?

Board in 6-12 months.

• The Non-GMO Committee then utilized a component of our bylaws (Article VIII, Section 2) to trigger reconsideration of the October vote on the Merchandise Policy at the December Board meeting. This resulted in significant ownership mobilization, both in the form of e-mails to the Board and a capacity crowd at the Board meeting. The October decision was revisited, with a

lengthy and thorough exploration of, first, the drawbacks, and then the positives of the motion made in October, followed by the re-vote. The vote of both the Board and non-Board owners present affirmed the decision made in October.

• It was wonderful to see the level of passion and wisdom among the non-Board owners who attended the meeting. There was some frustration expressed by the lead petitioners and understandable confusion for those unfamiliar with protocol, but we were able to work together through

will be ongoing opportunities for owner input before it reappears before the Board next year.

• I hope that the owners who were inspired to come because of this issue will continue to attend Board meetings. If you haven’t observed your Board in action—in your service—I encourage you to check out a meeting. Hopefully (with many thanks to our longtime hosts at the CDC) we’ll soon hold meetings at the more convenient location we rent at 170 Main St. in Greenfield, a few doors down from Green Fields Market – Check the meeting agenda on the website or posted at each store.

• Mark your calendars! The Annual Meeting will happen **Sunday, March 6th from 2-6pm** (location to be determined). Many FCC staff are involved in pulling off such a large event successfully. Vice President Lynn Benander has also generously offered and been designated as the Board-lead in this process. There are many practical logistics involved, essential to create a successful setting, which becomes an important and complex annual occasion—a vital and dynamic opportunity for member-owners to link with the Board, the GM/staff, and with each other. Please consider attending.

• One vital piece of business for our Annual Meetings is consideration of bylaw changes. Currently, the Board is working on bringing forward three potential bylaw changes: 1) The introduction of patronage dividends, which our Treasurer Jeanne Douillard and the Finance Committee have researched and discussed for months, and which Jeanne addressed in a member-owner forum on October 28th; 2) Increasing the number of ownership shares from 4,000 to 10,000; and 3) Considering removal of Board term limits, which were introduced at the 2015 Annual Meeting in conjunction with shifting

from two- to three-year Board terms. Based on a straw poll of owners present, the majority would rather have been able to vote on the term-length issue independent of the term limit aspect, so the Board felt obliged to re-submit this to ownership.



FCC Board of Directors, L to R back: David Paysnick, John Williams (GM), Emma Morgan, Marie Bartlett, Jeanne Douillard, Jay Lord. Front: George Touloumtzis, Stephan Gordon, Gary Seldon, Judy Draper. Not pictured: Lynn Benander and Norm Hirschfeld

this challenging process with poise and mutual respect. The cooperative model fosters grassroots democracy of a richness and depth obliterated by hierarchical corporate models so dominant in our society. The more members actively involved, the better it works. Regarding this draft Merchandise Policy, based on this decision, there

continues next page

- As we did for the last Annual Meeting, the Board will prepare study guides that will be sent to member-owners in advance; these will include existing and proposed bylaw language, implications of yes and no votes, and Board recommendations.

- The Board considered implementing a revised ballot system this year that would have switched to online/kiosk and telephone voting, utilizing a Canadian company called Simply Voting (their 24-page proposal was included in both the November & December Board packets which can be found on links on the Board of Directors page on the website). While we're excited about how such a system could increase member-owner access to and participation in Annual Meeting voting (and other voting situations that may arise), we ultimately decided that there was not enough lead time to sufficiently orient ownership to such a change for this year. Instead, we're getting the word out: this change is coming in 2017!

- Speaking of voting at Annual Meetings—this brings us back to Board elections! Are you thinking of whether you might run? Or of another member-owner you respect whom you might ask to run? For two years in a row, we've had contested elections (more candidates than open seats), which I believe is a sign of a healthy co-op ecosystem. But since many of us are averse to "competition" in a cooperative, perhaps another way to think of it is that we're giving ownership—ourselves—"choice" about who we want to represent us in these important roles.

That CBLD training in Keene will also include a module—CBL (Cooperative Board Leadership) 101—designed for new Board members and Board candidates. Unfortunately, it's happening on Jan. 9th, just about when this newsletter arrives at your home. But if you receive it in time and you're seriously interested in running, this training is a great way to prepare. The cost is covered by the co-op's annual contract and there's no cap, so if you're free that day, so's the training! Quickly contact me at bod@franklincommunity.coop or 772-8830 to register.

Board nomination packets are available in both stores and on the website. **The deadline is February 5th.** All Board members are charged per our policies with the responsibility to perpetuate the Board via recruitment, so don't be surprised if we approach you! The newly formed Board Development Committee also has this recruitment responsibility as part of its charter.

If you're seriously thinking about serving and would find it helpful to chat with a currently serving Board member, please feel free to "Spend 5 minutes with a Board member," leave a note in one of our folders behind the front cashier at Green Fields Market, or contact us at bod@franklincommunity.coop.

And if running for the Board feels honestly like too large a step but you do want to get more involved, please think about joining one of the Board committees -- a great way to learn about and serve your co-op.

George Touloumtzis
FCC Board President

Members Speaking To Members

From the Member Participation Circle

In 1978 our co-op was the only place in our area to get unprocessed, chemical-free and organic foods. People joined as members and worked in the store, on the board and on committees, sustaining and building the co-op. They did it because the co-op met important needs.

Shifts in the Natural Foods Marketplace:

"Natural" and organic foods are now the fastest growing sectors of the food marketplace. There's a wide range of quality and prices. There are giant retailers in the marketplace selling at low prices.

Competition is intensifying. Mega-grocers keep expanding their offerings. Nationwide, a new wave of "natural foods" retail chains adds to the number of competitors. New food co-ops are also opening. Many of the products we sell are becoming easier to find.

As co-op members, we see new challenges in owning small and midsize food stores. If we're clear that we want to sustain our co-op, how can we, as individual members and as the whole of our membership, do so?

OUR CO-OP'S FINANCIAL CONDITION (based on the annual report of the GM and Treasurer)

Past Losses:

Franklin Community Co-op showed losses from 2013 thru June 2015. Total losses for the period were \$791,536.

MPCircle—two big member participation events to put on your calendar!

"Different Kinds of Co-ops – What They Mean to Their Members"

Weds., Jan. 20, 6-8 pm in the Green Fields Market meeting room. Join us for a panel discussion with representatives from a variety of area co-ops (two worker co-ops, a credit union and a co-op association whose members are made up of co-ops). Each will speak about what being a co-op means to their member-owners. Followed by a conversation among our members about what our co-op means to us.

Yearly Board Candidates' Forum

Sun., Feb. 28, 1-3 pm in the Green Fields Market upstairs meeting room. Here's an opportunity to meet, greet, and hear directly from Board candidates and ask questions. Come prepared to listen, learn about the candidates and ask questions. Contact: MPCircle at MPCircle@franklincommunity.coop (413) 634-8844

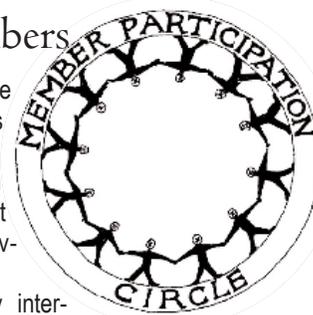
These losses have been offset by savings.

Many internal factors contributed to the losses, including: three changes of general management within a few years; expenses and disruption associated with embezzlement; corrections of past inaccurate asset and depreciation accounting; challenges to profitability at McCusker's Market.

Positive Trends:

Green Fields Market had a 4.48% increase in sales for 2014 and strong improvement in net income, which was \$39,112 compared to a loss of \$138,040 in 2013. The strongest growth occurred in produce and prepared foods. These sections are being enlarged and enhanced.

McCusker's Market sales declined 5.56% in 2014. Net income was a loss (\$108,689) but was reduced by \$39,112 from the loss of \$138,040 in 2013. High overhead and inefficiencies often associated with small format stores are being addressed. We have switched the deli format to grab & go, added local and craft beer and wine, and plan to add a new bulk section and change the layout to increase the store's appeal.



Co-op Classified Ads

Theatre meets Agriculture: Piti Theatre Company's "Olde Coleraine: A Musical Hilltown History" to be performed this spring! Founders of Shelburne's Piti Theatre Company Godeliève Richard and Jonathan Mirin are cooking up a special treat for this spring's 7th Annual SYRUP: One Sweet Performing Arts Festival to be held on March 20, Memorial Hall. One of the themes of the show is the transition at the turn of the last century from an agricultural to an industrial economy; "farm children" became "mill children" as many young people worked with their families in local mills. Piti is offering a new after-school program to prepare a group of local children ages 7 - 12 to perform with them in the show. Thursdays in Shelburne Falls starting 1/21 from 4 - 5:15 p.m.. Adults, teens, and younger children who would like to participate as actors or in other ways are also encouraged to get in touch. Info: www.ptco.org/syrup or (413) 625-6569

Valley Time Trade Orientations—Saturday, January 9, 2:30-4 p.m. and Sunday, February 7, 4 to 5:30 p.m. in the co-op's upstairs meeting room, 144 Main Street, Greenfield. Free. No registration required. Bring a laptop or tablet if you have one. www.valleytimetrade.org or (413) 648-3093 for more information.

People's Medicine clinic is a free alternative health clinic in Greenfield. We seek donations of massage tables, as well as volunteers to fulfill various roles. Please email peoplesmedicineclinic@gmail.com, or call 842-4762.

Advocate for a child—CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Franklin/Hampshire Counties is recruiting

for our Spring CASA training. CASA volunteers are ordinary people doing extraordinary work. Be the voice for an abused and neglected child. Contact: Friends of Children (413) 586-0011, www.friendsofchildreninc.org.

Pet-Sitting: Happy Cats pet sitting—Cat and small animal care in your home. Professional, affordable, kind. Serving Greenfield & surrounding area. Contact Adriene Tilton for rates and information! Phone/Text: (413) 824-8269; happycats.greenfield@yahoo.com; www.facebook.com/HappyCatsGreenfield.

Interior painting. Quality work using no-odor and zero VOC products. Excellent references. 25 years experience. Mark Barry, (413) 325-4470. markbarry8@gmail.com

Book Reading: "WHAT I'VE SEEN: Animal, Nature and Ranger Tales" by Kathleen O'Rourke, Feb. 10 at 5:30 p.m. At the co-op's newest space at 170 Main St, Greenfield. Stories and poems are about national parks; working as a ranger naturalist; Navajo, Hopi and other tribes; Mount Greylock; and fictional writings. Available libraries and bookstores.

Freedom and Struggle Song Circle Sundays, 2-5 pm. Jan 17, Feb 21, Mar 13 at [GFM-space]170 Main St., Greenfield. Wheelchair accessible. Share songs you've written or love to perform, request songs from songbooks, or just listen. Share snacks and sustain local radical political culture. Ben Grosscup: (413) 658-5374 or ben.grosscup@peoplesmusic.org.

Perform in a locally-grown play this spring! Piti Theatre offering class for ages 7 - 12 on Thursdays in

S.F. + chance for other ages to perform in new musical "Olde Coleraine" at SYRUP Festival, 3/20. www.ptco.org/syrup, 625-6569, info@ptco.org

Little Sprouts Childcare has openings for infants and toddlers. Mon. - Fri. 7:30 am - 5:00 pm. Full or half days. Breakfast, lunch & snacks included. In Conway close to Rte. 116. Jen (413) 563-2777.

Greenfield Zen Mondays 7:15 - 8:45 p.m. Sitting & walking meditation, cushions & chairs available. \$5 donation requested - not required. Initial instruction for beginners at 7 p.m. All welcome. Paul Sonier (413) 665-0278/ prajna801@icloud.com

Parent Talk seminars are designed to help parents gain the skills needed to communicate effectively with their children. Emphasis is on developing a style of speaking that creates responsible, respectful and cooperative children. Call Anjee: (413) 475-0585.

For Rent: Furnished room (12'x15' +alcove) bathroom adjacent. \$475/mo. House with big porch on Colrain country road. 15 min. to Greenfield or Shelburne Falls; 30 min. to Amherst. Utilities, phone, wi-fi included. Shared kitchen. (3 cats) Contact Donna: (413) 624-3484/ hummingbirdhill67@gmail.com. Refs required.

Just Roots is hiring farm staff for the 2016 growing season; 1 assistant manager and 3 apprentices, all paid positions. Please spread the word and help to establish the next generation of farmers. More info., visit just-roots.org/farm-employment or email farm manager Aaron Drysdale aaron@justroots.org.

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Call For Candidates!

As a member/owner of
the co-op you can
Run For The
Board!
If you are interested in
serving your co-op as
an elected Board
Member,
nomination packets are
available at the
Member/Customers
Service Desk and Front
Register at each store
and on our
website:
www.franklincommunity.coop
Deadline for submitting:
February 5, 2016
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