



ANNUAL MEETING EDITION



On Top of the World A Visit to Ronnybrook Farm



By Matthew Novik

In the beginning of summer, our marketing department set out to take pictures of our local farmers and vendors to use for in-store promotions. It seemed like an easy and fun project. It seemed like we had ample time. It seemed like it would be noooooo problem!

Fast-forward to the end of September, and we find ourselves wondering what happened to all our time. I looked at the forecast for a Friday afternoon and realized that summer was over. The sunny day I was enjoying could be one of the last good ones to go out and photograph farms. I decided to hit Columbia County in New York. With one drive to Ancramdale, I could check four farms off my list.

It was a lovely day and an even lovelier task. I visited Marnie and Don at Thompson Finch Farm, took pictures at Sol Flower Farm (even though nobody

was there), and bought a snack at the McEnroe Farm Store on Route 22. Then I worked my way to Ronnybrook Farm Dairy. And my day got even better.

When you drive onto the Ronnybrook property you immediately know you're somewhere special. I wasn't sure where to go at first, so I wandered. Then I was greeted by a young, blond cattle farmer named Sadie. She was leading one of her baby cows by a rope and seemed really curious about who I was and what I was doing on her farm.

I explained my mission and she directed me to the office. It was there that I met the rest of the crew and got my first look at Ronny, the co-owner and master of ceremonies for the rest of my trip. As it turned out, most of the employees were his relatives, and even the aforementioned Sadie was his granddaughter. Ronny insisted that I take a tour. He

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NOTES FROM HQ: THE GM REPORT

By Art Ames



Hi everyone.

I'm not going to go through all that is happening or has happened at the Co-op since the last newsletter, partially because many of us will see each other at Annual Meeting on November 5th. However, I do want to talk a little about changes that have happened with our personnel and management structure.

In the last several months, three key managers have left. Eric is in South Carolina; Allison is on a farm in North Carolina; Seth Marcantonio, our previous store manager, just took over as the general manager at Moscow Food Co-op in Moscow, Idaho. Naturally, we were saddened by the loss of all three of these friends, but at the same time, we adjusted our operations to accommodate the changes.

When Seth left, we temporarily assigned some of his responsibilities to others in our management team and began the

process of finding a replacement. We had several worthy candidates, including a GM or two from other cooperatives, and two internal candidates. In the meantime, the management team pooled their resources together to keep the operation running. Then an unexpected thing happened. We began to be more efficient and have more fun. All of a sudden, more people were involved in the process, more employees who were directly involved had a clearer understanding of goals, and the work that needed to be done benefited by a different level of collaboration.

As we studied this, we really delved deep into our organization and the assignment of tasks and roles, and looked ahead, realizing that indeed we will be expanding or relocating to a bigger store in the near future. The reasons for our success began to be obvious. Let me also say that none of this is personality driven. At the Co-op we look at the expectation for the job and try and find the best fit between personality, skill set and job expectation. We do not change the job to fit the personality. We realized that we were succeeding because all of the systems and employee development that we had

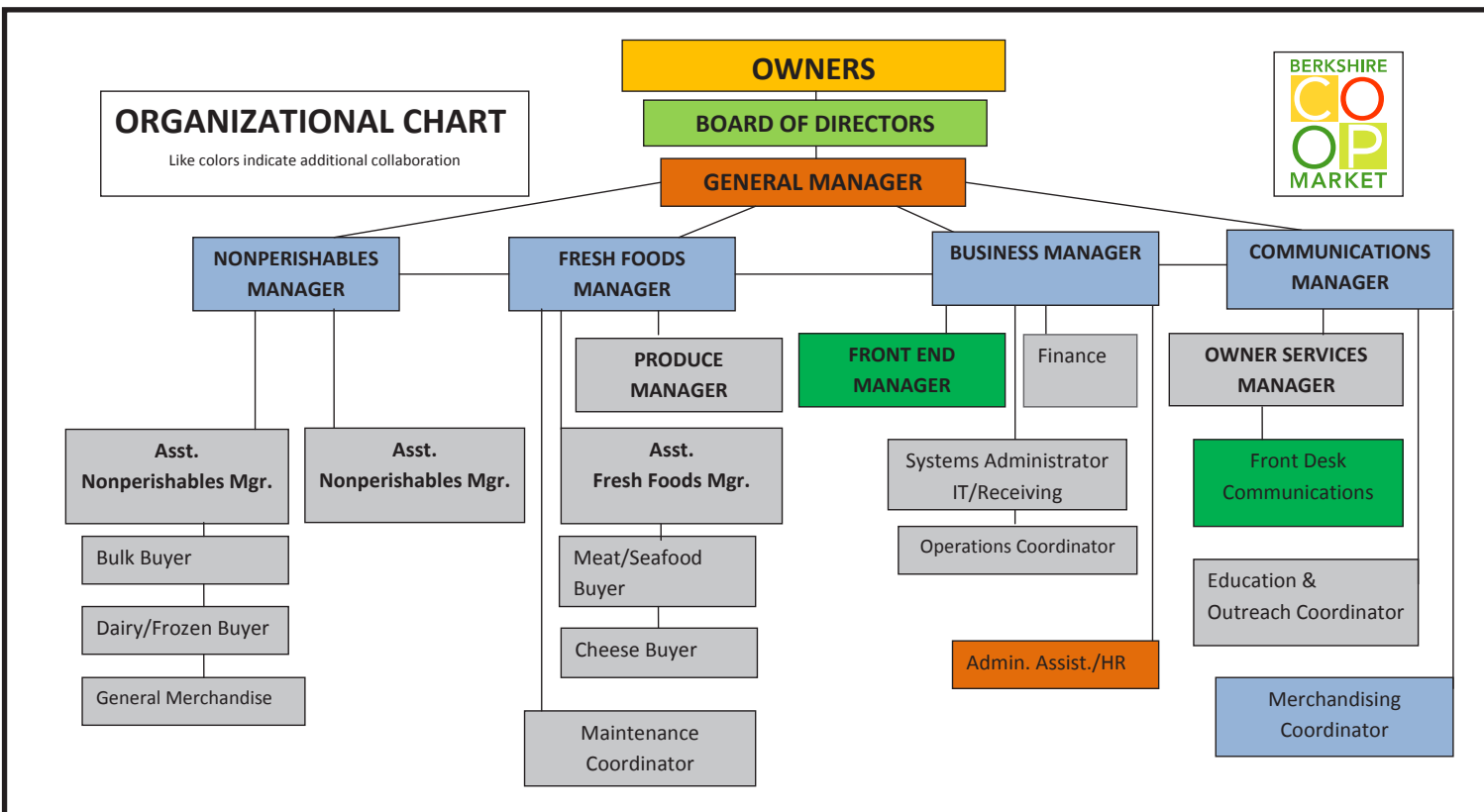
done in the past was beginning to pay off. Even more simply put, we have a very talented staff and a very talented management team that can simply work together better than before. (If I sound prideful, it's because I admittedly am.)

We are pleased to announce that a decision has been made concerning the store manager position. We won't have one. Instead, we are going to try a group management structure to a certain extent. The two candidates for store manager, both capable, have been elevated to be a part of this group dynamic. The general manager (that's me) will continue to be at the helm. Our business, communications, nonperishables, and fresh foods managers will constitute the group management team. By the way, we can't seem to find the right name for this group. We've dismissed, among others, "gang of four," "g4" and a few suggestions that may not be printable. Any suggestions, tongue in cheek or not? Our staff and the rest of the management team seem to be delighted. We've attached the new organizational structure for you to see. There were a few other changes as well. I have no interest in assigning more work to any individual. Instead, we found a way

to spread the assignments out so that we work more productively, and not necessarily harder. Matt Novik had his title changed from marketing and communications manager to communications manager. The positions of wellness buyer and grocery head buyer were changed to nonperishables assistant manager. Congratulations to Cian and Brenna, who have accepted this change in position.

We've made a few other changes that will benefit all of you. With the team concept, we have more managers involved in more things at the Co-op, and it is their real responsibility to assist our other employees in being able to do their jobs and to assist you. Those are not idle words, as we are already seeing this happen.

I have to say that I am constantly amazed at the ability of our staff to not only accept change but to embrace it. I believe it to be one of the primary strengths of our organization. It can be difficult to aim to be a model employer—recognizing that we aren't there yet—and to also balance the needs of our owners, community, cooperative development, and to run a solid business. In my opinion, we not only manage to do so, but also continue to improve, even as economic conditions and cultural/political challenges make it more difficult. Our ability to change and learn and grow gives us the opportunity to continue to flourish. I have a personal interest in organizational development. This is a different concept. A few co-ops use a group management team instead of a GM, with mixed results. Most co-ops use a GM/CEO structure. We are trying a hybrid. Once again, ultimately, the responsibility does end at my desk and in my role as the GM, and I don't expect that structure to change. If you have any interest in talking about this redirection in concept, please feel free to ask me. I'm fascinated by what is transpiring, and am reminded that particularly when we get set in our ways, it's even more important to keep our eyes open to new ideas and infinite possibilities. In fact, it's kind of fun.



Note From the Board: 99% Want Genuine Democracy

By Daniel Seitz
Board President



The Occupy Wall Street movement is sparking activism around the globe by the 99 percent of people who are interested in bringing about a more equitable

and socially conscious distribution of the world's resources, and in establishing truly functional democratic institutions—ones that allow for meaningful citizen involvement and expression of a full spectrum of views. In light of this movement, it's important to reflect on the role that consumer cooperatives can play in supporting these life-affirming goals.

At the core of consumer cooperatives are the following two principles: Democratic

control of the organization by *all* of the owners on an equal basis (not just by shareholders who control large amounts of stock), and concern for the community—the idea that the needs of a business's owners and managers must be balanced with the social well-being of the community and country in which the business operates. While it's important for us as citizens and consumers to advocate for reforms within conventional corporations to make them financially, socially and environmentally accountable, our involvement in cooperative businesses like the Berkshire Co-op Market provides an effective alternative approach to impact our economy and community. As we as Co-op owners actively participate in making the Co-op financially successful and work to expand its reach as a business entity and community supporter, we also contribute meaningfully to a much larger social transformation.



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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OUR ENDS

The Berkshire Cooperative Association cultivates a sustainable local/regional economy and cooperatively builds a vibrant community.

To this end, the Berkshire Cooperative Association:

- E1. Operates a financially successful, community-oriented natural foodstore that specializes in consciously fresh food and meals, with reasonably priced options
- E2. Flourishes
- E3. Is a model of social and environmental stewardship
- E4. Is accessible, welcoming, inclusive and innovative
- E5. Fosters the growth of local/regional food systems
- E6. Develops an informed and engaged community
- E7. Promotes healthful living
- E8. Supports a sustainable environment

OPERATIONAL VISION

- To be a transformative force in the community
- To serve as a model of a sustainable business alternative
- To nurture social and economic well-being in an environmentally sensitive manner

UPCOMING EVENTS

OWNER APPRECIATION DAYS

10% OFF TO OWNERS IN GOOD STANDING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 2012

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18TH, 2012

THURSDAY, JULY 19TH, 2012

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20TH, 2012

BOARD MEETINGS*

HELD THE 4TH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH

SCHEDULE CHANGES TO 3RD WEEK IN NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

6:00 PM • BERKSHIRE CO-OP OFFICES • 307 MAIN STREET

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16TH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21ST

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25TH

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

OTHER EVENTS

TASTINGS WITH TED: KALE CHIPS - 10/28 - 3:00 to 5:00

FARM TOUR - RONNYBROOK FARM DAIRY - 10/29 - 2:00

DIY KIDS: MAKE YOUR OWN HAND LOTION - 11/11 - 4:00

KIDS CAN COOK: PUMPKIN SOUP - 11/19 - 10:00

DIY KIDS: MAKE YOUR OWN WRAPPING PAPER: 12/9 - 4:00

KIDS CAN COOK: HOLIDAY COOKIES - 12/17 - 10:00

* Board Meetings are open and Owners are welcome to attend. Owner-input time is reserved from 6:45 – 7 pm to speak on any topic. If you need more time or want to address something in more detail, you can request to be placed onto our meeting agenda. Please recognize that we need to set an agenda and post it in advance of any meeting, so we need to receive your request at least two weeks before the meeting. Send requests to bod@berkshire.coop



Working your way through the shopping list, you come across “peanut butter.” A simple task: you walk to the aisle toward the back of the store, reach out at that hip-high shelf and grab whatever is the cheapest option on the shelf. Cross “peanut butter” off your list and continue down the aisle. Well done. You found an affordable, organic peanut butter and bagged lunches are taken care of for another week. But wait, did you know there could be more to consider when purchasing your peanut butter?

Like what?

How about:

- What kind of company are you supporting by purchasing this product?
- Where exactly are your dollars going?
- Where is your nut butter coming from?

We at the Co-op try to be very conscious of the items we put on our shelves. The products we sell are what we consider to be the best options for healthy ingredients and affordable prices available. When a company goes above and beyond these expectations through means of humane practices, ecological integrity or creativity, we like to highlight them as a Berkshire Co-op 5 Star Vendor. Once Again is one such company.

Once Again comes out of Nunda, New York, in Livingston County. That is 40 miles south of Rochester, which is not local to us by our definition, but still far fewer food miles than most other organic nut butter producers. One hundred percent employee owned, Once Again is democratically managed and practices fair distribution of income throughout the company.

The good folks at Once Again are philanthropists as well as food producers. They donated goods for earthquake relief efforts in Japan and tornado relief in Alabama. In addition, they routinely provide product to their local homeless shelters, working with Dansville’s Hope Lunches, Open Door Mission, and Food Link. They even provide funding for a vision-saving project to provide safety lenses in glasses for farmers in New York.

You can be assured that your Once Again nut butters are made from good ingredients. They source all of their nuts from responsible farmers in Central and South America, east Asia (but never China), Italy, and multiple states within the U.S. Caring for their key stakeholders is a priority for Once Again, which is why they use fair trade practices.

Did you know that Once Again is also a clover and wildflower honey producer? Once Again provides a Fair Trade and Labor certification for their honeys, which are all sourced from domestic farms. They are committed to supporting their small-scale local and rural beekeepers, which we love.

These are just some of the reasons we think Once Again is a special company, but there is more to them than we can fit in this article. Check out their website, onceagainnutbutter.com, for more information. We hope that the next time you are going through your shopping list, you consider for a moment that nut butter is more than the glue of your sandwich, it’s an opportunity to support good people doing good things.

Notes From The Sustain ABILITY Committee



How to Throw Things Away The Sustainable Way

ITEM IN THE STORE

PROPER DISPOSAL



- Coffee cups Cups go in paper recycling, lids go in plastic recycling
- Cold to-go drink cups Plastic recycling
- Cardboard to-go containers Paper recycling
- Soup containers Cups go in paper recycling, lids go in plastic recycling
- Plastic to-go containers (grab and go).. Plastic recycling
- To-go utensils..... Trash
- Bulk coffee bags..... Trash
- Paper sample cups..... Paper recycling
- Plastic sample cups..... Plastic recycling
- Paper cone cups for water Paper recycling
- Paper wrapping from sandwiches..... Paper recycling
- Paper bags Bring them back to be reused! (Or paper recycling)

*Note: While it is ideal to rinse containers out before recycling them, it is not necessary.



RONNYBROOK cont. from page 1

introduced me to his other granddaughter, Claire, who accompanied us to visit the cows— well, some of the cows. Ronnybrook has hundreds of cows; we visited a barn that held about fifty of them. All the while Claire was talking about her show cows and the county fairs she would be visiting. All Ronny wanted to talk about was his farm.

It was so apparent that this man was as proud as he could be of what he has done on this hill. He told me the story of the place; he showed me where they make the yogurt; he brought me into the biggest freezer I’ve ever seen, and I saw where my favorite ice cream is born. Ronny even gave me a sample of one of their newest products, a low-fat version of their famous drinkable yogurts.

Then Ronny pointed at a far off hillside and told me that he wanted to take me

to the highest point on their property. I tried to be polite and decline, thinking he was a busy guy and not wanting to take up too much of his time. “You should really drive up there,” said Claire. “It only takes a minute and it’s really cool.” How could I refuse?

Ronny and I jumped in my Mazda and took off. On the way, he showed me where the farm started, two generations earlier. He also showed me the house in which he was born. Before I knew it, we were heading up a farm road to what seemed like the top of the sky. We got out of the car, and there it was: one of the most breathtaking views of this area I have ever seen. To our left were the Catskills, to our right, the Berkshires. And right there, in the middle, was Ronnybrook Farm Dairy... one of the friendliest family farms I have ever visited.

**DON'T FORGET!
RONNYBROOK FARM TOUR - 10/29 - 2:00**

A message from Art Ames: Welcome to Berkshire Co-op Market's Annual Meeting special edition newsletter. I'm delighted that you are giving it the attention that it deserves and look forward to seeing many of you on November 5th, starting at 2:30 for registration. Please don't go to Butternut, where we have held it in past years. Instead, we are going to have our meeting just up the road a piece at Kutsher's Sports Academy. It's my opinion that you all are going to like it much more, and will be able to see and hear things better. There are specific directions elsewhere in the newsletter, along with other materials included that will help you prepare for and understand our upcoming meeting.

FREE MONEY!!!! Did I get your attention? I hope so. This next part is pretty important. For the second year in a row, we will be issuing a patronage dividend to our owners, depending on your individual purchases. Close to \$22,000 will be returned to our owners in the form of direct checks. At this meeting, when you attend, we will hand you a check; same as last year. You may take it with you, or we can cash it for you at Annual Meeting or in the Co-op, or you can sign it over to one of a few worthy nonprofit causes. The choice is yours, exactly as intended! It's your money. Not only do we want you to have it and cash it, but if you do not cash the check, you actually hurt the Co-op! I know it doesn't make sense at first, but here's what happens.

Your dividend check represents a portion of the profit that the Co-op made last year. The federal government allows us to return dividends to owners and to deduct the dividend and what it represents from the portion of our profit that we must pay to the government for taxes. However, the government also tells us that the checks issued *must* be cashed within three months or we simply lose the flexibility that they granted to us. Last year, close to \$2,500 in checks were not cashed. This year, we had to reenter that amount into our "profits" along with the rest of the profit that the \$2,500 represented. Consequently, we ended up



paying the federal government close to \$2,800 more because some of you didn't cash your checks. Remember that we aren't looking for loopholes in paying our taxes. Instead, as a cooperative we have the ability to keep local currency within our local economy by giving it back directly to you. Somehow, this seems even more relevant than in the past, considering what's happening right now in our country, and is one of the reasons why we restructured as a cooperative a few years ago. So, *please* do all of us a favor and simply CASH THOSE CHECKS. If you really don't want or don't care about the money, then by all means, donate it; give it away; whatever you want to do.

As long as I'm in lecture mode, allow me to address two more subjects. I want to talk briefly about the whole RSVP thing and how we deal with trying to feed so many people in one sitting. Yes, Annual Meeting costs money. However, it's also an opportunity for us to meet, celebrate and engage. Because it enhances and strengthens our little community, the money spent is an investment in our organization and in our community.

Every year, the biggest expense is the food that we need to order, prepare and serve. Consequently, we began an RSVP process a few years ago. This has really helped. The one catch is the fact that in years past too many of our owners told us that they would be coming and then were not able to attend. While I do not object to investing our funds, I don't want to waste them either. The final number of meals is made official a week before the event, so we had to pay for all of those no-shows. That's why we would like to let you all know that if you RSVP and then cannot attend, we will need to assess a service charge if we don't hear from you the week before. By the way, the charge is not even close to our actual cost, but merely a way to recoup some of the funds lost. I hope you understand why we need to do this.

I also feel obligated to point out that this is an Annual Meeting, required by law in Massachusetts. We must conduct business at the Co-op, and feel it is important that we have a good amount of owners attending to ensure that we do our best to represent all of you. The dinner and music are our way of celebrating after we

take care of the business at hand. We'll report on our financial status and have our external accounting agency available for your questions. We will also offer candidates for our Board of Directors for your consideration. This year, we have three regular open three-year terms and one one-year term and four candidates. While this year's election is not contested, we are more than pleased by the qualifications of the candidates, including one incumbent. Note that the candidate who receives the lowest vote total will serve the one-year term. Therefore, this election is not without significant consequences, so please remember that your vote does matter!

I am delighted that Mark Kastel, representing the Cornucopia Institute, will be speaking at our meeting. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will find more information about him and the organization. On a personal note: "Thank goodness for Cornucopia Institute!" With GMO issues; food safety; purity of organic ingredients; misrepresentation going on in many food related corporations, including some that we have in the past viewed as allies, and with reliable non-partisan news and information getting harder to find all the time, Mark Kastel and the organization that he represents stand out as a bright light. I feel honored and fortunate that he is able to find the time to come speak to us.

Please note that registration starts at 2:30 and ends when the meeting starts, at 4 PM. Please try to get there early. We'll have snacks, music and a beautiful view to enjoy, so don't worry about getting there too early. It's also a great time to mingle.

We will give you your "dinner tickets" when you register. If you are unable to attend the meeting and try to register after 5 pm, you won't be able to simply come on in and eat. As I mentioned earlier, we have business to do. With a guest speaker, we don't want to appear to be rude and have constant seating interruptions. So please help us stay organized and able to deal with the necessary changes by showing up early and regis-

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Our Keynote Speaker: Mark Kastel

Local, Healthy, Sustainable Food Systems:

How the Choices We Make in the Grocery Impact Our Health, Our Environment, and the Vitality of Our Communities

Mark Kastel is cofounder of The Cornucopia Institute, a progressive farm policy research group based in Wisconsin, and director of its Organic Integrity Project. The institute's goal is promoting economic justice for family-scale farmers.

For almost 20 years prior to its launch he was president of M. A. Kastel and Associates, Inc. His professional practice included political consulting, lobbying work on behalf of family farm groups, and business development work benefiting family-scale farmers. Mr. Kastel has played a key role in a number of cooperative ventures designed to empower farmers in the marketplace. His development work has focused on creating sustainable farmer-owned businesses with an emphasis on dairy production and marketing.

Kastel played a crucial role in the farm community's response to the introduction of rBGH. His watershed research, published while doing policy work for the Farmers Union, brought great media scrutiny when he documented the fact that cows were dying and whole herds were suffering from serious illnesses soon after they were injected. He has been intimately involved at numerous stages during development of the bill to regulate organic farming in Congress and the subsequent rulemaking process at the USDA.

Kastel, who worked for agribusiness giants International Harvester and J.I. Case prior to making the paradigm shift to sustainable agriculture, lives on a 160-acre organic farm in the rugged hills of southwestern Wisconsin, near the tiny burg of Rockton.

MOLLY DE ST ANDRÉ



I am an artist and a teacher who has been connected to the Great Barrington community for the last 13 years. After graduating with a masters in Arts and Teaching from Bennington College, I worked with many diverse populations of marginalized children and adults within the U.S. and internationally. I spent two years working for NGOs and community based organizations in Afghanistan, and two years working for underserved children in Turkey. Since that time I have returned to living full time in the Berkshires and currently run a small, local screen-printing company called Moho Designs. We focus on creating sustainable, hand screen-printed products, including custom products for many small businesses around the Berkshires.

I am incredibly thankful to have the Co-op in Great Barrington and I think of it as an opportunity to be closer to the food I eat and the people involved in the process of connecting me with that food. I have many dietary restrictions and rely on the Co-op on a daily and weekly basis to make sure I am getting the products I need to sustain my health and well-being. For those reasons I would not only like to be more involved in the Co-op, I would like to show my gratitude by giving back to the organization.

ALEXANDRA PHILLIPS



I moved to Great Barrington from Brooklyn with my fiancé this past December. We are starting a small farm on Monument Valley Road and have been working for ourselves and gardening for others while living here. Getting to know Great Barrington and its residents has been a fantastic experience. When not working we're making plans for the future of our farm. Putting down roots here is very rewarding for me.

I am originally from Maryland and in 2003 I received an Associates Degree in Culinary Arts. My life has been food-focused ever since. I've worked in the kitchens of restaurants, cooked on wood stoves on schooners in Maine, apprenticed and volunteered on organic farms, and interned in the kitchen of a restaurant in Tuscany.

Since March I have been volunteering with Keep Berkshires Farming on the Local Foods team. This has been a great way to get to know the local food culture of the Berkshires and has taught me the delicate nature of a regional food system. I am looking forward to serving on the Board of Directors so that I can deepen my experience in one of the community's local staples. These past months the Co-op has been an important place to me, not only for shopping, but also local events, community workshops and social run-ins.

DANIEL SEITZ



I have served as a Co-op board member since 2007 and as the board president since 2008. During my time as president, the Co-op board successfully completed a reorganization process to become a legally organized cooperative corporation, which has allowed the Co-op to begin issuing patronage dividends to owners. Over these past four years, the board adopted a new set of board bylaws, reviewed and updated policies, and committed the store to increasing purchases of local, sustainable and organically produced products. Additionally, as a board we have begun to plan for expansion in order to better meet the evolving needs of our owners. During this time, despite our country's economic challenges, the Co-op has consistently operated at a profit, thanks to the Co-op's incredibly capable general manager, management staff and employees.

As the following biographical sketch shows, I have professional experience related to governing boards, education and alternative medicine, as well as significant leadership and volunteer experience—all of which qualify me, I believe, for continued service on the Co-op board. I am very interested in nutrition, organic farming and sustainability, and believe that the cooperative model of ownership provides an essential socially conscious alternative to conventional capitalism.

I have worked for 24 years in alternative medicine education, accreditation and regulation, and currently serve as the executive director of the Council on Naturopathic Medical Education. Additionally, I provide group facilitation and guidance to alternative medicine colleges and organizations on a variety of issues including accreditation, educational standards development, strategic planning, board governance, marketing, regulatory compliance, and fundraising. Previously, I served as the founding dean for the School of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine at N.Y. Chiropractic College, chair of the Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, president of New England School of Acupuncture, and chief of the Acupuncture Unit for the Massachusetts Board of Medicine. My current volunteer activities include serving on the advisory board of the Kripalu School of Ayurveda, and formerly I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Malaysia. I have a BA from the University of Chicago, a JD from Boston University Law School, and an EdD in Higher Education Administration from UMass-Boston. My professional, volunteer and educational experiences have provided me with great appreciation for the various ways in which organizations and businesses can create health and well-being in their communities, whether through alternative health care, education, access to genuinely healthy, local and organic foods, or progressive business models that support people.

MATTHEW SYRETT



For those who don't know me yet, I am a returning resident to the area, having spent much of my childhood at my grandparents' house in nearby Craryville. I now live in South Egremont with my wife (an accomplished documentary filmmaker) and two daughters. I am looking for ways to better serve my community. I see the Berkshire Co-op board as the perfect place for this.

I started my career 20 years ago as an anthropologist and geographer, but was soon drawn into advertising and product development working at a senior level for a series of leading agencies, retail brands and companies. Most notably, I worked as a vice president at Grey Advertising, a senior product manager for Amazon.com, and a VP of Product for Rakuten (Japan's leading e-commerce provider). Independently, I have worked as a retail and brand analyst for the likes of Unilever, Kraft, NBC, Solar Vitamins and AT&T. This independent work has included extensive quantitative analysis of consumer purchase intent, brand health, customer segmentation, and product mix for these and other leading brands.

As a product specialist, I am very comfortable working within the policy-driven framework of our board, which is very similar to the agile requirement process and small workgroup framework I use in my own work every day. I have a passion for cooking with local foods, as anyone who has encountered me at a local pie-baking contest, in my kitchen, or at the CSA, can attest. As a graduate of the Putney School and the former president of a self-managed co-op building in Brooklyn, I have a strong working understanding of what it means to work in and run a cooperative enterprise.

ABOUT OUR BOARD

The Berkshire Co-op Market is cooperatively owned and operated by people in our community who care about nutritious food, where it comes from and how it reaches the consumer. As a democratically controlled organization that follows the cooperative business model, store patrons who purchase an ownership share of stock in the Co-op elect—on the basis of “one-person-one vote”—a Board of Directors to represent them and provide governance and oversight.

The nine-member Board of Directors meets monthly, and owners are welcome to attend meetings. As representatives of the owners, Board members try to stay aware of owners' needs and aspirations for the Co-op. Every meeting includes a time during which owners can provide input and ask questions. Special forums are occasionally held, as well, to obtain feedback from owners on important questions. A major aspect of the Board's governance responsibility is hiring and overseeing the General Manager, who serves as the Co-op's chief executive officer and person in charge of operations. Working in partnership with the General Manager, the Board helps ensure that the store is run in a way that is financially responsible, socially conscious, and genuinely responsive to the wide interests of the owners.

The Board conducts its business in accordance with the “Policy Governance Model” of board leadership, where its primary role is to define the broad goals of the Co-op. We refer to these goals as “Ends” since they articulate the key results we aim toward, such as promoting healthful living, and fostering the growth of local and regional food systems. The Board is also responsible for establishing a comprehensive set of policies that define the roles and responsibilities of the General Manager and the Board of Directors. Generally speaking, the Board sets policy objectives for the General Manager and the Co-op as a whole, while the General Manager oversees and manages the complex day-to-day operations. The Board and General Manager, working collaboratively, are responsible for carrying out the policies. Together with all its owners, we strive toward the benefit of the Co-op and the wider community.

PATRONAGE DIVIDENDS IN A NUTSHELL

For the second consecutive year, The Co-op will be offering a patronage dividend. By this process, we are able to give back a portion of our profits to our owners and convert those profits to tax-free income. Payment disbursements will begin at the 2011 Annual Meeting. While this is now old hat to some of our owners, we wanted to make sure that the process was clear to all. In this section, we hope to explain patronage dividends in as simple terms as possible.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Step 1: THE CO-OP EARNS A PROFIT.

In order for your co-op to offer you a piece of the profit, there must be a profit in the first place. Patronage dividends are only eligible to be distributed in a profitable fiscal year.

Step 2: WE MAKE A FEW DECISIONS.

Decision 1: The Board decides whether or not to declare a dividend. Factors that influence that decision include the amount of profit, reinvestment needs and financial stability. When the dividend is declared, it is the amount of profits earned from owner sales. Sales from nonowners are not counted.

Decision 2: The Board decides what percentage of the declared dividend to return to the owners. Cooperatives are required to distribute at least 20% of declared dividends. The remaining percentage of the dividends is not distributed to owners. It is retained by the co-op in a nonrefundable equity account. (Just so you know, the Berkshire Co-op Board decided to declare a return rate of 30%.)

Decision 3: The Board decides on a minimum distribution. This year, the Board decided to not distribute dividends under \$3. For bookkeeping purposes, this is a vital step. Without it, we would be writing checks for pennies that would never be cashed.

Step 3: WE DO SOME MATH.

Dividends per owner are decided based on that owner's percentage of total sales to owners. So, if your shopping for the year represents .025% of the total sales to owners, then your dividend is .025% of the total dispersed amount. You are then issued a check equal to the appropriate payout percentage decided by your board. The remaining dividend is reserved by the co-op as unpaid equity.

Examples: Please keep in mind that the following numbers in no way relate to the numbers in this year's dividend. This is merely an example of how your total is calculated.

	Your Purchases for the Year	÷	Total Owner Sales	=	Your Share of the Divi- dend	×	Total Distribution	=	Your Dividend
Example #1	\$1,000	÷	\$3.75 million	=	.027%	×	\$13,705	=	\$3.65
Example #2	\$5,000	÷	\$3.75 million	=	.133%	×	\$13,705	=	\$18.27
Example #3	\$10,000	÷	\$3.75 million	=	.267%	×	\$13,705	=	\$36.54

YOUR DIVIDEND CHECK

We want you to process your check. In fact, we NEED you to process your check. Every dividend that is not processed as of ninety days of issue will be returned to our tax rolls. The number returned to taxable income will be 100% of your dividend, not the percentage represented on your check. So, we'd like to make it easier for you. At the meeting, there will be several options for you.

CASH IT We will have cashing stations on site at the meeting. Simply visit us upon registration. Endorse your check, hand it over, and we'll cash you out. Simple as can be.

DONATE IT We will also offer you the opportunity to donate your dividend to a selection of recipients. Considering the economic climate these days, we thought it best to lend support to several organizations that assist with the primary needs of our community's families.

VOLUNTEERS IN MEDICINE

VIM Berkshires is a volunteer-based community organization of local health care professionals - physicians, nurse practitioners, and nurses; dentists, hygienists and dental assistants; optometrists and assistants; psychiatrists, therapists and counselors; acupuncturists; diabetic and nutrition counselors. They are also volunteer laypersons who serve as administrators, fundraisers and translators. Volunteers are supported by a small paid office staff. Together they provide free health care to people living and working in the Berkshire region who are currently uninsured, easing some of the strain on our community's health care systems and small businesses.

CONSTRUCT INC.

Construct Inc. provides comprehensive housing, support and educational services to anyone in the Southern Berkshire region who has lost his or her home or who lacks financial resources to maintain safe, decent and affordable housing. They are dedicated to helping those in need to rebuild their lives. They provide not only the basics of food, shelter and emergency financial assistance but also adult education and counseling for life skills, employment and housing so people can make the successful transition to lead self-sufficient lives.

EAT WELL AND LEARN

This is an after-school class at Undermountain Elementary School structured to teach children about the importance of organic and locally grown food in addition to preparing these ingredients to make their own snacks and meals. The class is offered to children in first through fifth grades, while middle and high school students are invited participate as mentors. A six week camp is offered in the summer and meets twice a week. EWAL is one of the many local programs that is partially sponsored by the Co-op. We supply food for the classes and our Education & Outreach Coordinator is one of the course teachers.

ANUAL MEETING: A ZERO WASTE EVENT

Early this year, several Co-op employees took it upon themselves to create an in-store committee to address environmental sustainability in the store, and its business practices. The Sustain Ability Committee meets weekly and has become a great success story of employees finding engagement as part of the cooperative. This year, they are doing something new for Annual Meeting. For the first time, we will be conducting a Zero Waste Event. We all look forward to seeing how it works out. If all goes well, we will use this as a model for all future Co-op events.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? A Zero-Waste Event is an environmentally sustainable method of conducting events that attempts to contribute no additional garbage to our already overfull landfills through recycling, reusing, composting and the use of creative technology.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM PAST CO-OP EVENTS? We have always strived to be as environmentally sustainable as possible. But with this movement, we will be taking it to another level. It will take a lot of work from our staff, and cooperation and participation from our guests. In the end, we hope to change the way people view their garbage habits in down to earth and easy to understand ways.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO DIFFERENTLY? We will be asking meeting attendees to bus their own plates this year. When they do, they will be asked to separate their scraps. There will be containers for food scraps, recycling and landfill waste.

NOTE Continued from Page 5
tering. By the way, you DO NOT need to RSVP if you are only coming to Annual Meeting and won't be staying for dinner. Annual Meeting itself is always open to all owners.

Because I can be long-winded, I'm going to summarize a few key points.

- If you RSVP and cannot attend and do

not notify us within five days of Annual Meeting, we will need to assess a charge for food.

- We will not be able to let you in for dinner after 5 pm. You can join us after dinner for music if you wish. If you have a special issue and call us two days in advance, we may be able to work out something.

VOTING PROCEDURES

Voting is a privilege of ownership, and any owner in good standing may vote. Owner equity payments must be up-to-date by 8 pm, Friday, November 4th. An ownership share gets one ballot—this will go to the primary cardholder. Ballots must be filled out personally by the primary cardholder as registered in your ownership, either as an absentee ballot or at Annual Meeting.

PLEASE REMEMBER YOUR OWNER CARDS FOR MEETING REGISTRATION

This year, there are three 3-year terms and one 1-year term open for the Board of Directors. There are four candidates running for those seats. The top three vote getters will get the 3-year terms, while the remaining candidate will take over the 1-year term.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS...

- Upon arrival, members will check in and be handed a packet including a ballot. Please remember to *bring your owner card to check in.*
- At the beginning of the legal portion of Annual Meeting, each of the candidates will have the opportunity to give a brief statement.
- At the conclusion of their statements, a secure ballot box will be provided to members. You may place your ballot into the box up until 6:45 pm, or a full half-hour after the close of Annual Meeting.
- At 7:00, a counting committee of co-op owners, observed by the General Manager, will count the votes.
- Winners will be announced at the Co-op on Sunday, November 6th.

- We PLEAD with you to cash your dividend checks. It hurts the Co-op financially if you do not cash your checks.

Obviously I don't enjoy giving you a list of "don'ts". I also know that you recognize that this is more than a social club or traditional business and that you are owners of our organization. Consequently, you support us in our need to make and

follow these rules. Annual Meeting is a chance for us all to break bread together. It's also a fun day out on the town. We are going to have great food in a new venue; an inspiring and relevant speaker; amazing music, and a surprise too. Matt won't let me reveal it, however. But here's a hint: unless it's raining, bring a jacket. I love Annual Meeting. Can't wait to see you all there!



MEETING AGENDA

- 4:00 – 4:05 Welcome**
Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 4:05 – 4:15 Voting Procedures & Candidate Introductions**
Kira Smith, Owners Services Manager
- Candidate's Statements**
Molly de St Andre
Alexandra Phillips
Daniel Seitz
Matthew Syrett
- 4:15 – 4:25 Financial Reports**
Marty Huban, Brazee & Huban CPA
- 4:25 – 4:30 Communications Report**
Matt Novik, Communications Manager
- 4:30 – 4:35 You, Your Co-op & Sustainability**
The Sustain Ability Committee
- 4:35 – 4:40 Message From the Board President**
Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 4:40 – 4:50 Message From the General Manager**
Art Ames, General Manager
- 4:50 – 5:50 Keynote Speaker Mark Kastel**
Introduced by Art Ames, General Manager
- 5:50 – 6:00 Owner Q&A & Discussion**
Facilitated by Daniel Seitz, Board President
- 6:00 – 6:05 Wrap-Up & Closing Remarks**
Daniel Seitz, Board President

ANNUAL HARVEST SUPPER MENU

Dinner will be served at the conclusion of Annual Meeting

AUTUMN CURRIED RED LENTIL SOUP
cumin sour cream, toasted pumpkin seeds & chives on the side

BROWN RICE & HEARTY GREENS

BALSAMIC-GLAZED ROASTED CHICKEN
with braised capers, parsley & scallions

MUSHROOM, EGGPLANT & SPINACH PESTO
with brown rice penne, olives & roasted red peppers
feta & parmesan on the side

ROASTED FALL VEGETABLES WITH TARRAGON AND GARLIC
root vegetables, brussels sprouts, zucchini,
peppers, yellow squash, onion & fennel

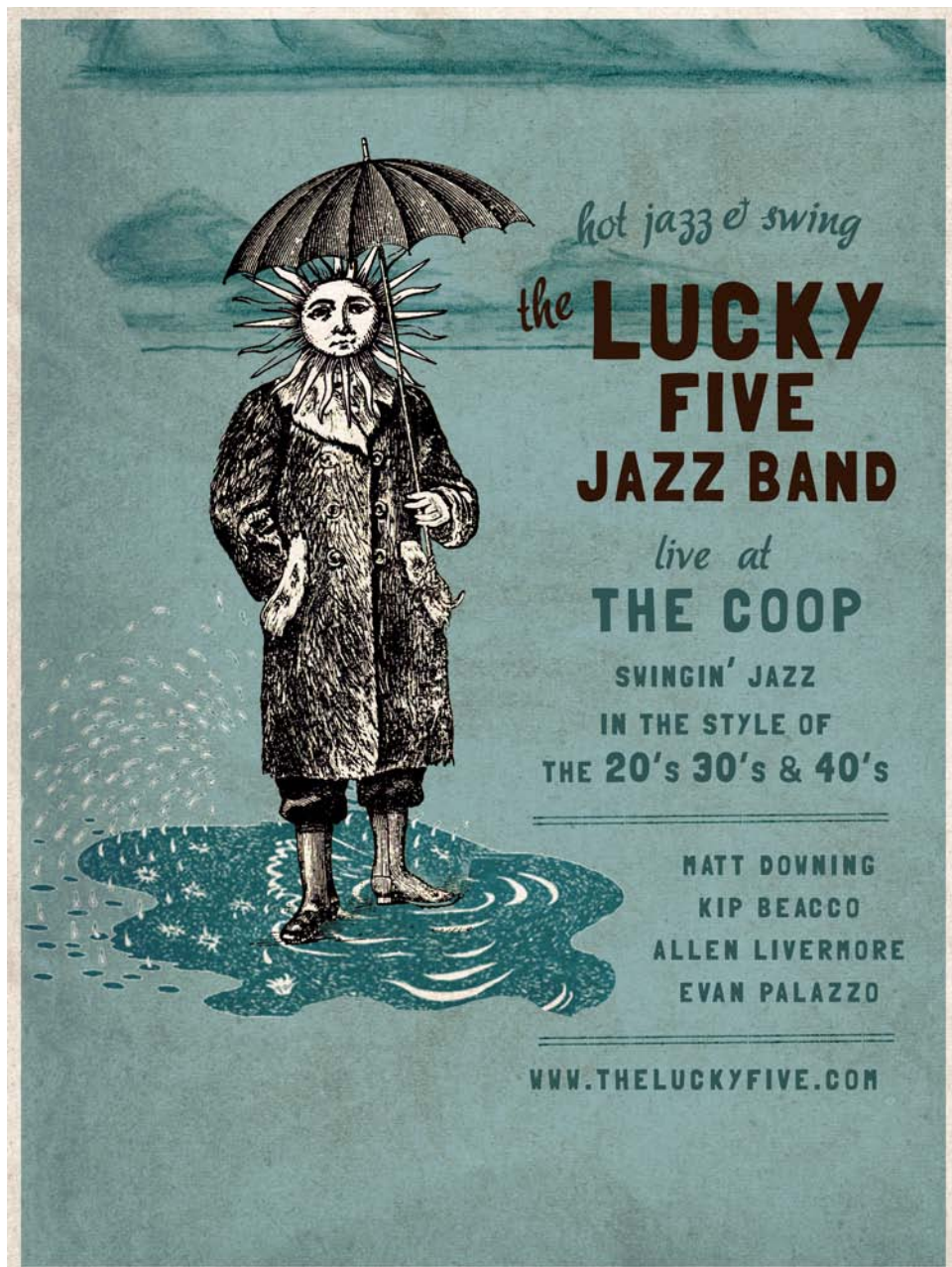
RED INCAN & BLACK QUINOA
with French lentils, coconut, goji berries, dried wild blueberries,
dulse, gomaschio, caramelized onion, rainbow and ruby chard,
broccolini, bok choy, Italian kale & green beans

MESCLUN, ARUGULA, WATERCRESS, RADDICCHIO & ENDIVE SALAD
grape tomatoes, roasted almonds & walnuts on the side
Monterey chevre and Berkshire blue on the side
balsamic-maple vinaigrette & ume-scallion dressing on the side

CO-OP KITCHEN DESSERTS
Vegan Chocolate Ganache Cake
Co-op Carrot Cake
Gluten-Free Magic Bars
Maple Valley Ice Cream
Coffee, Tea

Beer and wine will be available once the meeting is concluded.

INGREDIENTS



Soup: red lentils, cauliflower, pumpkin, carrot, ginger, peas, sea salt, pepper, garlic, onion - sour cream, cumin, toasted pumpkin seeds, chives on the side

Brown Rice Dish: short grain brown rice, garlic, burdock root, collard greens, tamari (soy, gluten free)

Chicken Dish: boneless breast of chicken, braised capers, parsley, scallion, garlic, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt, pepper

Pasta Dish: mushrooms, eggplant, spinach, pesto (fresh basil, vegetable oil (may contain soybean oil or canola oil), water, garlic, salt, olive oil, pine nuts, and spices, citric acid, xanthan gum, oregano extract), brown rice penne, garlic, pepper, salt, calamata and green olives, roasted red peppers - feta and parmesan on side

Roasted Vegetable Dish: yams, potatoes, turnips, brussels sprouts, zucchini, peppers, yellow squash, onion, fennel, garlic, tarragon

Quinoa Dish: quinoa, French lentils, red chilis, garlic, onion, coconut, goji berries, dried wild blueberries, dulse, gomaschio, rainbow/ruby chard, broccolini, bok choy, kale and green beans, tamari (soy,gluten free)

Salad: mesclun, watercress, raddichio, endive - grape tomatoes, almonds, walnuts on side - Monterey chevre and Berkshire Blue on side

Balsamic Vinaigrette: maple syrup, olive oil, salt, pepper, balsamic vinegar

Ume Scallion Dressing: scallions, safflower oil, water, umeboshi vinegar

Chocolate Cake: all purpose flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, sea salt, silken tofu, soymilk, maple syrup, safflower oil, vanilla extract, lemon juice
Frosting: soymilk, grain sweetened dairy free chocolate chips

Carrot Cake: all purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, salt, sugar, vanilla extract, safflower oil, eggs, carrots, pineapple, walnuts
Frosting: butter, cream cheese, sugar, vanilla extract

Magic Bars: Bob's Red Mill gluten-free chocolate chip cookie mix(Evaporated cane juice, brown sugar, garbanzo bean flour, potato starch, semi-sweet chocolate chips (sugar, unsweetened chocolate, cocoa, butter, soy lecithin, vanilla) tapioca starch, whole grain white sorghum flour, fava bean flour, xanthan gum, baking soda, sea salt, natural vanilla powder (sugar, cornstarch, vanilla extract), safflower oil, egg replacer, water, peanuts, grain sweetened chocolate chips, coconut, sweetened condensed milk

Irene's Silver Lining

How Some Local Farmers Made the Best Out of A Bad Situation

By Matthew Novik

By now, we all know the story of the 2011 summer storms. We know that Hurricane Irene swept through in late August and gave our region some the greatest rainfall totals we've seen in over fifty years. We remember that just a few days later, tropical storm Lee swept through and drenched us again. We've talked to people who were evacuated from their homes and had no power for weeks. We've seen the massive flooding, road damage and downed trees that the storms left in their wake. And, especially here at the Co-op, we know that some of the hardest hit folks in our area were our local farmers. That story has been told. This story is about something else.

Making Lemonade

At some point in our lives, we have all said something along the lines of, "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade." We've all been dealt a bad hand and persevered to make the best out of a bad situation. With the fields soaked, the end of summer harvest ruined, and the freshly planted seeds washed away, local farmers were dealing with a pretty large supply of lemons. I set out to try and see what some of them did to make lemonade.

Time on Her Hands

Laura Meister at Farm Girl Farm in Egremont, MA, was one of the farmers who suffered as a result of the rains. "It was very disappointing and sad," said Meister. "Basically the rain led to the early demise of our late summer harvest." But Laura is not the kind of person to sit idly by and wallow in the past. She and her crew quickly went to work to move ahead. "I don't usually have any time around this season," Laura told us in an interview at her farm. "This season, because of the storms, I had time to initiate some projects that I could never



get started before."

With the found time, Laura has commenced some farming projects that will extend her farm's growing season. She has started plants that, if heavily protected over the winter, will be viable in early spring. If all goes well with the experiment, Farm Girl should be harvesting kale and Swiss chard in late April instead of mid-June.

"It was hard to see all that work, and all that food for that matter, go to waste," Laura said. "But, hopefully this project makes us stronger in the long run and more able to supply local food to local people."

Trouble Down The Drain

At Equinox Farm in Sheffield, MA, changes in the fields were already afoot when the weather reports began predicting Irene. Ted Dobson and his son Ben were preparing their field for new harvesting equipment and, while they were at it, they were trying to improve the field's ability to drain.

"The soil on my farm is great," Ted told me as we walked through his lettuce and greens field. "But I have never been very happy with the way it drains." Heavy rains in 2009 had already showed Dobson that huge pools could form in his fields and that something needed to be done. By late August, Equinox had already changed the length and direction of their beds to better suit their equipment and the possibility of wet weather. But they still weren't ready for the kind of rain that was coming. "We saw the weather report and went right to work. Ben and I dug drainage trenches from the low parts of the field all the way to the culvert along the road."

The storms proved to Ted and his crew that, with a little extra planning and work, the farm could be stronger and more protected from what has become a very unpredictable Berkshire environment. "I'm looking at things differently now," he said. "We could have lost everything." Equinox did lose crops this summer, but losses were not nearly as drastic

as they could have been. "The trenches were running like brooks," said Ted, "and I felt like a kid at Christmas watching all that water pour out on the other end."

To Experience is to Understand

At Indian Line Farm in Egremont, MA, damages were not as bad as in some other places. They lost some recently germinated seeds and good chunk of their late summer harvest, but according to Al Thorpe, one of Indian Line's principal farmers, "We didn't take the kind of damage some other farms did, but what I found most interesting was the response from our customers.

"Our customers, whether they're retail outlets, CSA members or farmer's market patrons, are really responsive to what we are able to provide," said Thorpe. "People who are invested in local foods are tied to this region. When the weather is bad, like it was this summer, they understand that it affects what they are able to buy. It's all part of developing a higher awareness of their surroundings and standing behind the local idea."

As I spoke with Al and the others, one thought continued to resurface. This summer's storms put a stress on the very important relationship between food and the environment in which it is grown. As the Eat Local Movement continues to gain traction, understanding this relationship is more important than ever before. "As farmers we don't have much control. We adjust, we take our chances, and we make the best of it," said Thorpe. "We learn from our experience, and then we relearn the next year. That's just the way it goes."

Maybe that sort of thinking is the greatest lesson learned this summer. If farmers need to think that way, so do the rest of us. It is that flexibility that will allow our efforts to continue region wide. In the end, we all need to remember how to make a great glass of lemonade.

Ownership Report: She's Just Getting Started

By Kira Smith
Owner Services Manager



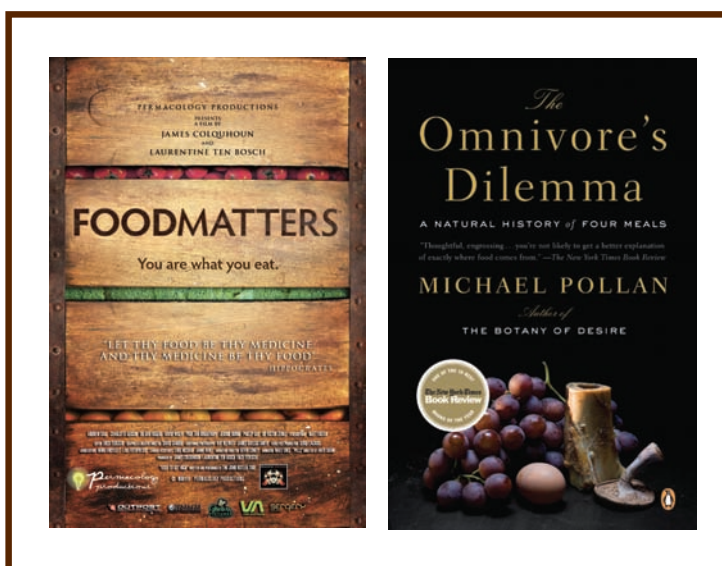
Greetings from the Owner Services desk. I have been in the Owner Services Manager position for just over three months and am adjusting quite

nice. It has been wonderful to get to meet and work with so many new people. Since I walked through the door on my first day I have felt welcome and received a lot of support. Thank you, thank you!

We are currently working on a few projects in Owner Services. The first is refreshing Owner Benefits by updating Community Connections. We have done away with the rule that one must be an owner at the Co-op to offer our owners a discount at their place of business.

Since then we have been in contact with an array of local businesses in hopes of expanding the offerings. If you know of any local businesses that would be interested in participating, please feel free to contact me.

Another project we have been working on is updating the Lending Library. We now have a computer program to help keep track of our inventory. Because of this we are also able to keep better track of the titles that are checked in and out of the library. If a title is past due, owners will receive reminder phone calls, and alerts when



Just a couple of the new titles being added to our owner lending library. Come check out the other additions and maybe you'll even want to borrow one.

they are checking out of the store— just a friendly reminder to return the past due titles to our front desk. The most exciting part is that we are now able to add more

titles to our library, which we will be continuing to do on a more regular basis. We have added three new books: *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan; *Canning for a New Generation* by Liana Krissoff, and *Food Matters* by Mark Bittman. We have also added three new DVD's: *Dirt! The Movie*; *Food Matters*, and *Mad City Chickens: The Return of the Urban Backyard Chicken*. Stop in and check one out today.

In the next few months the Owner Services and Marketing & Communications teams will continue to develop our current projects as well as new ones. We are focusing on bringing new benefits to our owners and, as always, developing relationships with the community that will benefit all. We can't wait to share them with you. Make sure to stop by the Owner Services desk to see what we have going on at the Co-op this month!

Merchandising Report: New Methods

By Ted Moy

Merchandising Coordinator



As a store, we feel it is important that all you folks communicate with us on topics that are important to you. Similarly, we are constantly trying to

find the best ways to communicate with you what is important to us. Currently, we use this quarterly newsletter, Constant Contact, Facebook, Twitter, advertisement in local publications and radio, in-store signs and posters, and our website. The last of which, we'll admit, has gotten a bit stale. Well, we've got some news we hope you'll enjoy. Communications manager Matt Novik has been working hard with Housatonic Creative to design a new website. Their goal is to present better organization of the information we all feel is important. We are keeping your old favorites, like the Hot Bar Menu, Events Calendar and online access to the Buying Club, easily accessible. You can also expect to see new content relevant to Berkshire Co-op, our products, our staff and our community on a regular basis. Updates will be more frequent as we venture into the world of blogging. These changes to the website have already gone live, so visit berkshire.coop and see what's new.

Next on the agenda, I would like to introduce you to the newest addition in our communication family: the shelf flag.

Shelf flags are small signs that sit on a product shelf. We are using these to share small bits of information that, frankly, we think you will find more interesting than the usual sale signs. The content of the flags fit into one of two types: featured vendor/farmer/producer and featured product. There are two types of featured vendor flags: the 5 Star Vendor flag and the Local flag. These flags serve as reminders of the great vendors, local and otherwise, that we're proud to have in the store. Product flags fit into one of three categories: My Faves, Pick of the Week, and New Product Spotlight.

- My Faves are products that the staff at Berkshire Co-op love and want you to know about.

- Pick of the Week is a highlight on items that department managers want to offer at discounted rates. These items do not usually get sale support, so Pick of the Week is their opportunity to shine.

- New Product Spotlight is an introduction to products that are new to the store.

These shelf flags will contain information about the products and vendors/farmers to help you connect with the products you already purchase, but we can't fit everything we want to say on such a small card. Our solution? We are making more complete write-ups about each of the flags available on our website. Now you can read why a 5 Star Vendor is special in our eyes, and what else your favorite local vendor makes in their bake house.

We want accessing this new web content to be easy. It does us no good if we do all this writing and no one knows how to access it. For this reason, we are giving you a shortcut. On the shelf flags, we are using a handy tool known as a QR code. What are QR codes, you ask? Here is an excerpt from beqrious.com that should answer your questions.



Pick of the Week: One of the many new promotions to hit the Co-op this fall.

QR codes, or quick response codes, are a type of 2-D bar code that may be decoded using your smartphone with a QR code reader. QR codes have proved to be very useful in marketing and convenience related applications that are more suitable for smartphone users. In recent months, we have seen QR codes show up on marketing materials such as movie posters, promotional posters for various products, billboards and fliers, among other things.

There are two main things that you have to have when you deal with QR codes:

1. A mobile phone with a camera and Internet connectivity (free Wi-Fi in the store);
2. A QR code reader.

Most smartphones coming out nowadays have a QR code reader already installed. For some, you would need to download the reader and install it yourself.

After you have your reader installed, fire up the application and snap a picture of the QR code. Make sure that your hand is steady and that you are able to include the whole code in the picture. There will be some instances when the scan would fail. Don't worry, just keep on snapping.

Depending on your software, it may take five to thirty seconds for the application to resolve the link for you. That is to say, to decode the information written behind the code. If it is a URL, the QR code reader will open your browser and let you surf the mobile site the code links to.

We are very excited to be using QR codes on our shelf flags. If you are interested in the product being highlighted, or you want to find out more about that local farmer, just pull out your phone. Quickly and simply, you can now be more connected to the products and people that we care about most—next to you, that is.

A Good Old Fashioned Field Trip

How the Communications Team Used an Old Idea to Make a New Tradition

By Matthew Novik

I've always loved field trips. As a kid in the southern Berkshires, we went on a lot of field trips. We visited Tanglewood, Naumkeag and Bartholomew's Cobble for what seemed like annual trips. The mummy at the Berkshire Museum? We were on a first name basis. But, even if it seemed like this visit to the Norman Rockwell Museum was the millionth visit that year, I loved those days with abandon.

Other kids saw field trips as an excuse to act out; a change of scenery that meant an easier path to mischief. And don't get me wrong, I liked that too. But there was something else about field trips that made them special. To me, they were the best part of education. It was hands-on. It was right in front of your eyes. The things we learned on a field trip were so much more real—so authentic and justifiable—that I held onto them longer and with more passion than anything I learned in a classroom. It was one thing to learn about the Egyptians from a book. Seeing the mummified remains of a priest named Pahat who lived over 2,000 years ago? Now that was something else altogether.

These days, field trips have been relegated to memories. I work, I go home,

I celebrate weekends and vacations and I work again. Don't get me wrong. I love my job and I enjoy my days. But they are very rarely special in the ways that grade school field trips were.

Fast forward to this summer. The Communications Department has been trying to schedule a meeting of key staff for months now. There are only four of us, but it has been a difficult task getting all of us in one place at one time. Then it came to me: we should have a field trip! We could find a place to go, hold our meeting in the car, and then have a fun, educational, hands-on learning experience. It was perfect!

As a group, we decided on a trip to Equal Exchange. They are our primary coffee distributor as well as a provider of fair trade chocolate, tea and bananas. Their main office is just outside of Boston and they had been inviting us to visit for weeks.



The Communications Team at the Equal Exchange Warehouse. Look at all the coffee!

Our first stop was a chat about bananas with Jessica. She talked about the farmers who provide their products. The sheer mass of bananas (the most popular produce item in the U.S.) shipped to us each week and the abuses and humanitarian issues surrounding Dole, Chiquita and other large-scale distributors were overwhelming.

Next, it was on to coffee quality control with Mike. He showed us EE's process for coffee tasting, from the bean to the

roast to the cup. He showed us how they regulated the process, tracked each shipment of beans, traced each roasting and tasted each shipment time and time again. Even a devoted caffeine addict such as myself had to ask: "Do you ever sleep?"

Then it was on to Matt, and the coffee roasting part of our tour. Honestly, if you have never seen this process, you should check it out. Coffee roasting is a loud, hot and impressive process. The people who do the Equal Exchange roasting consider themselves culinary artists and hold an incredibly high standard. They love what they do, and they do it very well.

Finally, we finished up with a visit to the chocolate department. Have you ever let a piece of chocolate melt on your tongue? Of course you have. But have you ever tried to pick out the individual flavors and characteristics of that chocolate? Well, I have; now that I've done a chocolate tasting with Kelsie at Equal Exchange.

As we loaded into the car for our return trip, the good feelings were unanimous. We had learned, in detail, about some of the products we sell. We had made new friends. We had eaten our fill. And, just like in grade school, we were all looking

PS We'd like to send out a huge thanks to Becca and all the folks at Equal Exchange for their attention and hospitality.

Education & Outreach Report



By Jenny Schwartz
Education & Outreach Coordinator



We live in a very special community where many members work for causes they feel passionately about. It has been great to connect with these

various organizations and collaborate with them. It's refreshing to look at the bottom of a 5k-race poster and see all of the local organizations raising money for another local organization.

Our collaboration with the Nutrition Center continues into the 2011-2012 school year as we continue to offer in-school and after-school classes in the Berkshire community. This year we are working with Nerissa Bardfeld, a nutrition educator from the center. Together we are working with teachers to incorporate core curriculum standards into our lessons and continuing to stress the importance of supporting our community and its members. One simple way we do this is by collecting compost from our classes to give to local farmers back at the Co-op. At the conclusion of the classes, we come together as a group to eat the food that we made together and share their experience of the process. I continue to find this to be a positive way of ending a class.

To support another nonprofit, we sponsored and participated in Berkshire Grown's Preserving the Bounty workshop series in August. We offered a children's class to learn how to make their own refrigerator dilly beans. Farmers Alex Freedman and Mael Raoult from Community Cooperative Farms held a successful workshop on making peach preserves. Learning new skills and supporting local farms and organizations are two important goals for our workshops. When thinking about the future of a new Co-op, wouldn't it be great to have a community canning kitchen where we could come together and put up food grown in the summer? That's just one of the many ideas we talk about around here when we imagine our new home.

"regional equity" in the conservation programs of the Farm Bill. Conservation funding is critical in New England. Our region's population density, high costs of land, labor and inputs mean higher costs. Without the "regional equity" language, New England states would not receive a fair share of the funds for these programs.

For example, here's what would happen if we didn't have this language in the Farm Bill. Bruce recently installed solar panels on a barn at his farm. He received funding from the USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to pay for a portion of his costs for that project. The REAP program is part of the conservation section of the Farm Bill, and those funds are allocated to states based on "regional equity." If that language weren't in the bill, the large, "square" states in the middle of the U.S. where agriculture is the first or second industry would absorb all of those funds and New Eng-

Continuing the theme of bringing people together, we are offering two free children's workshops a month: DIY Kids and Kids Can Cook. Participants in our DIY Kids workshop learned how to make their own snack bags from old fabric. Once we got over the hurdle of practicing the stitches to hold the bag together, the creativity was endless, with fabric markers to decorate with and fabric patches to cut and appliqué onto the bags. Our Halloween edition of Kids Can Cook has had the highest sign-up yet.

We continue to reach out to our community's farmers to educate us about their practices. Our last farm tour was to Blue Hill Farm, where, in the pouring rain, Sean Stanton hauled around twenty participants in the back of his pickup truck to see his farm. It reminded me of a African safari without the zebras, as he intermittently stopped to talk about his cows, pigs and chickens. Watching twenty participants file into the back of a truck, holding the edge of the vehicle with one hand and an umbrella with the other, made for a unique farm tour experience. On October 29th from 2-3pm we will be headed to Ronnybrook Farm Dairy in Ancramdale, NY. Sign up at the front desk if you are interested.

Planning has begun for Get Unplugged 2012. Get Unplugged is a collaboration with Berkshire South Regional Community Center that takes place during April vacation week at the community center. This week is also National Turn Your TV Off Week. We are working to provide a week of screen-free programs with the goal of letting children explore and experiment with new interests that work towards building community. If you have a workshop you would be interested in teaching, please contact Jenna Bronson or Jenny Schwartz at getunpluggedberkshires@gmail.com

Let's make this winter a good one. We are interested in expanding our workshops for adults. If you are interested in teaching a workshop or would like to suggest a topic, please contact me at jschwartz@berkshire.coop For now, enjoy a good hike, pick some apples or take in a good harvest festival. Most importantly, take in the amazing opportunities our community has to offer.

Local Farmer Drops in on Washington

By Annie Cheatham, President,
New England Farmers Union

This year, Berkshire Food Co-op member Bruce Howden, from Howden Farm in Sheffield, was one of 10 farmers and friends of farmers to attend the fly-in for the New England Farmers Union.

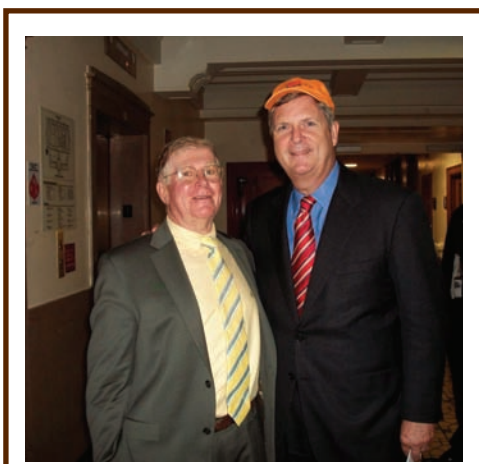
Bruce heard the Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, describe his department's three strategies: 1) expand exports; 2) create new income streams for farmers; and 3) support local and regional food systems. "Farmers have been cautious," he said, "and they have still increased productivity. But we need to educate the public about what farmers and rural people do for America."

At the White House, Bruce and the New England delegation heard from trade representatives, domestic programs officers and energy officials. Bruce, with his bright orange Howden Farm hat, could be seen from a distance, across the Mall or in front of the Capitol. And at each stop he gave members of Congress and their staffs a Howden Farm hat to call their own.

We advocated for issues to help our farmers, including better dairy policy for small-sized New England farmers and continuation of conservation programs that protect soil, preserve farmland, increase renewable energy use on farms, and protect land from overproduction. Bruce became our spokesperson for

land would be left high and dry. Bruce would not have access to any Farm Bill funds to help him with his solar panels, and so he might not have enough money to do the project. Government funds often serve as an incentive for farmers (and others) to make improvements that they might not otherwise have the funds to make. Bruce became our expert on this technical talk as he explained it to the 15 congressional staff and members of Congress he met.

By the end of our three days in Washington, our feet were sore, our minds were full, and our hearts were opened by our contact with policy leaders in Washington. And, thanks to Bruce, we left our mark. Colorful Howden Farm hats will remind people of our visit and how our New England delegation is committed to strengthening agriculture, as we make sure the 2012 Farm Bill is supportive of our region's innovative approaches to agricultural development.



Mr. Howden with Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack. And, yes, the secretary is wearing a Howden Farms Cap

Comfortable shoes are a requirement. An ability to summarize your points in less than fifteen minutes is a must. An appreciation that you are talking with people who set policy for our country helps the conversation flow. These are aspects of the National Farmers Union annual fly-in, the time when hundreds of farmers and their supporters descend on Washington, DC, for meetings with congressional leaders and administration officials. Three days of meetings, discussions, policy proposals (and lunches wherever you can grab them) bring rewards not experienced when you are simply a tourist in our nation's capital.

THE DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Your Personal Updates from Our Departments

Fresh Foods *From Jeff Schilling Fresh Food Manager*

The holiday season is nearly upon us, and that's when our department really gets going! Preorders for organic and all-natural turkeys will start at the beginning of November. It is always an exciting process for us and we hope it will be again this year.

We will also be doing preorders for our Co-op Kitchen pies. As usual, we will offer traditional pumpkin and apple pies along with vegan versions of pumpkin, apple crumb and cranberry walnut (my personal favorite). Also, if you would like to special order any of our cakes, cookies or other desserts, please let us know. With enough notice we can



Here come the holiday pies!

accommodate almost any order. And, as always, nobody addresses food allergies and intolerances better than our bakers, so if you have special needs, please get in touch. We can help.

We will also be doing preorders for deli platters, including a great shrimp platter, and our Thanksgiving side package, which includes stuffing, yams, mashed potatoes and gravy. Everything is made with wholesome ingredients and without the use of any chemical or artificial additives.

We wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season and hope to help you make it a great one...with great food, of course.

Grocery *From Daniel Esko Nonperishables Manager*

New Local Items

After a long hiatus, we are happy to bring back People's Bakery spelt breads. They were a popular local offering but were unable to deliver for some time. These are some of the softest, most flavorful spelt breads we've ever tasted and we hope you like them as much as we do.

Klara's Gourmet has come out with a new line of savory shortbreads, and with such diverse flavor offerings as paprika & caraway and bacon & rosemary, they are sure to be a popular item.

Brand spanking new to the store is a unique item that is half health tonic and half culinary delight. It is called Fire Cider and is made locally by Shire City Herbals in Pittsfield, MA. It is a fiery blend of apple cider vinegar and herbs and spices that is a traditional immune health-supporting tonic used in the colder months.

New to Grocery this month and featured in our promotions are the grand debut of Cookie Head's "Grainy Brainy Wakey Cakes." They are essentially a multi-pack of bite size mini muffins made from sprouted grains. The flavors include banana-nut, cranberry-orange, and blueberry. They are absolutely delicious.

Reset News

Check out the reset we just did. We slimmed down our cereal and nondairy beverage sets and expanded our nutrition bar and raw food sets. Swing on by and take a gander when you have a moment. It looks great!

Did You Know?

We sold 62,000 square feet of Seventh Generation toilet paper from 8/31 through 9/13? That's 1.42 acres of t.p.!

We sold 5,099 bottles of Santa Cruz Lemonade during the months of May, June and July? That's 163,168 fluid ounces or 1,275 gallons!

Staffing Updates

On behalf of the Berkshire Co-op family, I would like to bid a most heartfelt farewell to Susan Snow. Susan has worked at the Co-op for over four years and is now moving on to newer things. We wish you luck, Susan, in your next endeavor in life. Your wealth of knowledge, bubbling energy and sense of humor will surely be missed.

Food Policy In Action

In the Co+op Deals flier of September 2011, there was an item that we did not bring into the store due to ingredient issues. Fantastic Foods Falafel Mix contains partially hydrogenated oil, which is specifically not allowed in any products in the store as per our food policy. If you were disappointed that it was not on our shelves, we hope you understand. We do have Casbah brand in the spot where the Fantastic Foods falafel used to be located.

Wellness *From Brenna St. Pierre Wellness Lead Buyer*

Greetings from the Wellness corner. We're sad to say that Eric and Susan have moved on to other adventures, but we wish them both the best. You will surely see new faces in Wellness these days. I've worked at the BCM since 2006, and this past July I made the move from Fresh Foods to Wellness. I would also like to introduce Kate and Patricia, both of whom are frequent Co-op customers and will be great additions to our Wellness staff. Please swing by the Wellness corner to say hello!

Autumn is in full swing and we are preparing for every runny nose and congested chest in Berkshire County. There are many options, from oil of oregano to black elderberry and flu fighting formulas and fire cider. The department is full of new selections. My new product philosophy for this fall focuses on organic, local, requested and immune health products. I have brought in Barlean's Olive Leaf Complex for immune health; a selection of fish oils, including a vegan DHA from Minami; lemon balm and sea buckthorn omega-7 supplements and a .5oz Tropical Tamanu oil from local New Chapter; Joint Vibrance powder and F.L.U. Protector from local Vibrant Health; Alaskan salmon oil capsules and liquid from Nordic Naturals; two electrolyte formulas from Trace Minerals, and seven terrific mushroom supple-

ments and playing cards from an up and coming company called Host Defense. Their mushrooms are grown on organic brown rice, and their founder, Paul Stamets, is the unofficial king of mushrooms. They also do a lot of work to preserve the native old growth forest species in the Pacific Northwest. I'm very happy to bring in their products.

For body care I've brought in a wonderful line of shampoos, conditioners and deodorants from Green Beaver in Canada. Their scents—cranberry delight, fresh mint and lavender-rosemary—are wonderful for the fall and winter. The men's care section has expanded with the addition of the Bulldog Skin Care line from the UK. Our selection of balms has also grown, with the reintroduction of Badger Co.'s wide selection, and Booda Butter, my personal favorite.

As for general merchandise, our Maggie's Organics and Chicobag displays are filled to bursting with exciting products; some new, and some dearly missed—until now. We will also have some fun new housewares, pie plates and bread pans for the harvest season. Please bring your interest and curiosity to the corner. There are plenty of new products and people to meet. We look forward to seeing you.

Produce *From Andrei Smerechniak Produce Manager*

Another summer is behind us. As always, we would like to thank all of our local producers for a great year of summer fruits and vegetables. It's their hard work and diligence that makes it possible for us to provide (and you to eat) great local produce all summer long. We are always looking for new local products and new local farmers. This year, to name a few, we were able to add red cabbage from Community Cooperative Farms in Sheffield, purple wax beans from Joe Church Farm in Canaan, and fresh local ginger from Et Cetera Farm in Hillsdale. Welcome to the Co-op to them and to all of our other new farms!

The weather may be cooling off, but our department doesn't slow down just because the days are getting colder.

We're moving right along. We will have local apples from Windy Hill Farm and



It's squash season again!

Thompson Finch Farm until the end of November. We've got local hard squashes through the end of the year from High Meadow Farm and others. And, once it starts to freeze a

bit at night, local kale gets sweeter and even more delicious until the real hard frosts come.

On a departmental note, we said goodbye to Morwenna, one of our favorite staffers, when she left for art school in the Midwest last month. We wish her luck and hope she will visit us from time to time. On the bright side, we continue to attract high quality lovers of local food to work in our department and we will continue to offer what I hope you think is the best produce department in the area.