

Co-op Community Newsletter



Potsdam Food Co-op
& Carriage House Bakery and Deli



Your local grocer since 1973

Producer Interview with Moses Yoder

By Erica LaFountain

On February 28th, I stopped in at the Yoder Farm. Three young children greeted me when I pulled in and directed me to their father, Moses. In the house, I met Moses' wife, Amanda, and his daughters, Clara and Naomi, who he said do most of the work in their greenhouse. The house was bustling with the smell of cooking food, and the sound of voices speaking German. I sat down with Moses and Amanda and a list of questions.

Erica: You are the source of all of the vegetable seedlings the Co-op sells, right?

Moses: Yes. At first we had a greenhouse for a few years, and sold some seedlings directly to customers. We sold a good amount, but I always wanted to find a wholesale customer. The Co-op had their own suppliers at the time. I would stop in now and then and ask the manager if we could sell them a few flats of seedlings. The Co-op would buy a couple of trays here and there. Finally, one year Donna Jewitt (of the Co-op Garden Committee) bought a lot of flats for the Co-op, then she started placing an order from us in the winter time, and it worked out well, so the next year they ordered all their vegetable seedlings from us. Once we proved our quality, we were fully accepted.

Erica: So you said Clara and Naomi do most of the greenhouse work?

Moses: Yes, we oversee the work, but the kids help out a lot. Sometimes the whole family gets involved. Naomi (16), Clara (13), Rebecca (10), and Lafena (8) do much of the transplanting, and watering. The little ones can help fill the trays with dirt. The children really enjoy it in the early spring; the greenhouse is like a mini-Florida when it's still cold outside.

Erica: Do you choose which varieties to grow?

Moses: Donna Jewitt at the Co-op orders specific varieties that she thinks will be popular among home gardeners and we grow many of the same varieties for ourselves and others who buy directly from the farm. About 75% of our seedlings go to the Co-op now.



Erica: What are some of the most popular varieties you sell, or your specialties?

Moses: We provide about 60 flats of Tomatoes, like Beefsteak and Celebrity. Herbs are also popular. We do 25 flats of green Basil alone, and lots of parsley. There are actually many varieties I grow for the Co-op that I don't plant in my own gardens because there are better varieties available. Customers look for some of the familiar names, and most home gardeners are unaware of all the options out there. For example, this year I want to introduce Mountain Spring (an earlier tomato), and Mountain Fresh (a late tomato), which are both more resistant to disease, have good flavor, and have become our favorites. Also Marketmore cucumbers are fine for small plots, but they don't produce as well, and aren't as uniform as Dasher.

Erica: That sounds like a matter of education. I guess it's hard to include much information to convince customers to try an unfamiliar variety when all you have is a little label.

Moses: Yes, I've been dreaming for years of displaying laminated signs with descriptions of varieties, because I think it's a good idea to introduce new varieties with better attributes, even if they are less recognizable to customers.

Erica: Do you sell vegetables as well as seedlings?

Moses: We used to sell some produce to the Co-op: potatoes, sweet corn, winter squash, and pie pumpkins. When we had a big customer base buying from our farm stand, I always felt responsible to stock all the varieties of vegetables at all times, which

could be hard. We ended up closing our farm stand in the fall of 2014, and if we open it again, we'll try to keep it simple, maybe stocking only vegetables people don't tend to grow in their own gardens, or focusing on spring and fall production. We still grow some for Daniel Martin's stand, but now we are rebuilding our house, and doing dairy, so we keep it simple with the vegetables.

Erica: Where do you buy your seeds from?

Moses: Mostly from Johnny's, FedCo, and E + R.

Erica: Where did you learn to farm, or have you farmed in other locations?

Moses: From my father, in Heuvelton. When I was 14, my parents quit farming and moved to Ohio. From 1993 to 2004 I lived there. Then I moved back to the North Country with my wife

Erica: Can you describe your practices and why you farm the way you do?

Moses: I grew up using conventional methods, using sprays, and chemicals. In Ohio we had 7 acres of vegetables. We sprayed for bugs and blight. We were spraying, but the sprays are like prescription pills in that after a while you have to change what you're using to get the same effect. It got to a point where I didn't want to eat my own produce anymore, and I knew something had to change. I wanted to learn to farm organically but I didn't know how until I met some other farmers in Ohio. Now we raise our seedlings using organic practices. Our potting soil is from Vermont Compost. We've tried others but always return to VC. We rarely need to add anything to it, and we found that **CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

New Grower-Owned Business Focused on Local Food

By Doug Welch

After months of planning and preparation, northern New York has its first regional wholesale produce outlet. The St. Lawrence Valley Produce Auction consists of farmers and growers from Franklin and St. Lawrence Counties, including members of local Amish and Mennonite communities. The growers' auction facility is located at 25 Martin Road, off County Road 8, north of US Route 11, in North Bangor, NY. Likely buyers will include food service providers, retail farm stands, restaurants, grocery store chains, and landscaping contractors.

The inaugural auction season began on May 1st and continued each Tuesday during the month of May. The season started with the sale of bedding plants and hanging baskets from regional greenhouses, and truckloads of hay, straw, and firewood have also been sold.



As the growing season gets into full swing, large lots of produce will be auctioned off to wholesale buyers. The next step will be to add a Saturday auction as a second sale day, if it is warranted.

Over the past twenty years, wholesale produce auction barns have become common in other parts of the country such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and western New York. This is the first one in northern New York and is a

promising development.

While the St. Lawrence Valley Auction has been organized as a corporation with a board of directors and with farmers buying shares, it is operating much like a cooperative. Materials for the yellow steel building were paid for by the group, and members provided most of the labor to build it.



The growers have had a number of meetings about how to grow for a produce auction facility and what best practices are to make the auction facility a successful marketing venture. In December, the farmers put in a joint seed order to get bulk pricing. Two recent meetings for growers each had about 35 attendees. Lindsey Pashow, Agriculture Business Development and Marketing Specialist at Franklin County Cooperative Extension, is providing information and technical support where needed.

Expanding local vegetable and fruit production to meet the demand for fresh, local food is an encouraging development, despite the challenges of long distances and low population density. Along with numerous other initiatives, gradual progress is being made in growing our local food system here in the North Country.

Buyers or sellers interested in more information can contact Leon Burkholder at 518-358-2090.



The new St. Lawrence Produce Auction building, while under construction. It is located at 25 Martin Road in North Bangor, NY. Photo courtesy of Lindsey Pashow.

Become a contributor! Before making a submission to the newsletter, please familiarize yourself with the Newsletter Submission Guidelines available on our website and in the store. The next newsletter deadline is July 15 with delivery around September 1. Submissions can be made via email to newsletter@potsdamcoop.com.

From the GM

By Andy Peet

I write this on an uncharacteristically warm and sunny day. Folks are stocking up on seeds, the crocuses are popping up in the Co-op's front yard, and the promise of Spring is in the air.

SEASONAL CHANGES

By the time you read this Spring will be in full swing. We'll have swapped out the hot cider machine for our cold-brewed iced coffee. The slush machine will make its yearly epic comeback. The plant sale will be underway and hopefully the weather will allow us many opportunities to enjoy our lunch outside. Be on the lookout for season items in the store and please let us know what you would like to see on the shelves.

SALES

So far this year we have struggled to match the strong numbers we had last year. We're about six percent under where we were this time in 2017. The number of sales and average customers per day are

also down. We're getting better though, March has shown small negative growth but much improved from the start of the year.

The Carriage House has been producing new items in the bakery and deli. New breads, soups, and sandwiches have been making their way to the shelves. The produce department is starting to introduce a cut fresh fruit program. We've featured diced pineapple and melon so far and hope to expand the offerings as more fresh fruit becomes available. The health and beauty section has a new look and many interesting new products. This has been our best department so far with over seven percent growth. Our department heads are very motivated which is great as we look to get sales back to trending positive.

ORGANIC EGGS

We have sold certified organic local chicken eggs for two years. For a while it was hard to know how much demand there was for for organic eggs in our co-op

because they were in low supply. The certified organic eggs would sell faster than we can restock them. Now we have a steady supply thanks to our two certified organic farmers, O & E Farm in Gouverneur and Jacob Hershberger from North Lawrence. These eggs meet requirements drawn up and enforced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the chickens' feed is guaranteed to come from crops that have not been genetically modified, treated with pesticides or herbicides, or fertilized with chemical or synthetic products.

All of our farm fresh local eggs are humanely raised in a cage free environment and are approved as part of our routine inspections by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets. They are known for their freshness and quality and are provided by hard working local farmers. And now if you are looking for a certified organic option you will find it in plentiful supply at the Co-op!

KID'S CO-OP AT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



Did you know that the new North Country Children's Museum, which is set to open this spring, includes a "Kids Co-op" exhibit? The exhibit will be one of 7 permanent installations in the museum, which will be located at 10 Raymond Street (the old "Red Barn" building) in Potsdam. The Kids Co-op will include a replica cash register and scanner, grocery cart, bulk bins, and even a replica brick oven. This is a great opportunity to reach more people in our community and introduce them to the Co-op.

"This will be a way to teach kids about where their food comes

from and about making good food choices," noted volunteer Rose Rivezzi.

The museum has nearly met its fundraising goals for the construction, but donations are welcome to help offset new and ongoing expenses. The Co-op is collecting donations from shoppers, right at our registers. So far almost \$300 has been collected. If we reach \$1000 the Co-op will be listed on the Children's Museum's permanent donor recognition listing.

For more information about the museum, visit their website at www.northcountrychildrensmuseum.org.

potsdamcoop.com | [@Potsdam_Co-op](https://twitter.com/Potsdam_Co-op) | facebook.com/PotsdamCoop | statigr.am/potsdamco_op

MEET KIM BOUCHARD New Board Member



I've been a member of the Potsdam Food Coop since we moved here in 1995. Before that we were members of the Moscow, Idaho Food Coop for 6 years from 1989-95 (my husband, Ed Clark, founded the bakery there and worked as their Marketing person.) During the 1970s in California and in England, I was a member of a few different cooperatives, some around food and others that had to do with housing, car ownership and childcare.

What do you appreciate most about the Co-op? What do you think is working well?

I'm very happy to have local and organic food that I know is fresh and sourced from places that value the Earth and all living things. I am gluten-free and also appreciate the variety of foods available for me to choose from. I think it is great we have the freshest herbs and spices in the region that are in bulk. Our bulk foods are as fresh as possible. I also appreciate our great staff! There are many many aspects of the Coop I appreciate and that I think work well.

What opportunities have you had to be involved in the Co-op?

I have worked as a Core Worker in the Bakery for a short stint in 2006 and then Ed and I moved to doing the Herbs and Spices, where I've been since 2007. I

have had a few breaks from Herbs and Spices over the last 11 years because of personal circumstances that took me away for a while. But I have returned to doing the Herbs and Spices (and added Teas a few years ago.) and really enjoy the morning routine and making sure that this part of our Co-op looks good and is providing the freshest herbs and spices that we can from responsible sources.

Why have you chosen to run for a seat on the Board of Directors?

I am appointed for one year and then will consider running for a full board term. I think the Board positions are very important. The Board represents and has a responsibility to the membership, all the membership, of the Co-op. We are the stewards and dream-

ers.

What interests, skill and talents will you bring to the Board of Directors?

I have many years of experience in theatre production which brings with it the appreciation of the complexities of how to manage time, people and resources in healthy and positive ways. While I appreciate that the Board does not "manage" per se, we can bring our expertise of management challenges to advise and support our management team.

I am also interested in how we can expand our services and products to meet the needs of our North Country families and communities.

Our Mission Statement

The Potsdam Consumer Cooperative, Inc. is owned and operated by its members and is dedicated to meeting the community's need for specialty and whole foods at the lowest possible cost. As a member of the local community interested in its well-being, we will attempt to use local sources whenever feasible.

We strive to provide a pleasant shopping experience and working environment, with an emphasis on education, shared information, and developing our relationship with the community. We encourage environmental respect through the goods we sell and in the manner in which we conduct our daily operations. We are committed to providing a model of responsible business practices based on the cooperative principles of open membership, democratic control, limited return on share capital or investments, return of surplus to members, continuous education, cooperation among cooperatives and concern for our local community.

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Store Hours

Daily 8:00am - 7:00pm
Except major holidays

The Co-op Accepts

- Cash
- Checks
- MasterCard/VISA
- EBT/SNAP
- Co-op Gift Cards
- Potsdam Chamber of Commerce Gift Certificates

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Thayers' Health and Beauty Products

By Alissa Haller

My obsession with the Health and Beauty department started in 2012 when I walked through a Whole Foods on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I saw tons of products that looked expensive and I would spend a good chunk of time reading labels and asking questions. Many of us want to eat well because we know "you are what you eat," but it was

during this time that I found that what you put on your body also matters.

I was introduced to Thayer's Witch Hazel products at that time as well. I was happy to look at their website and learn about their products. Now that I purchase for the Health and Beauty departments I get to speak with many representatives and among them is my favorite: Thayer's.

When I first got contacted by

one of their reps, Alex, he told me where they were located and I was also happy to learn that they were on a farm and grew the very witch hazel that they use to make their products.

Currently, we carry some of their lozenges, toners, and astringents. With a lot of options for scents (or even unscented), there is also something that must be addressed, so much so, I am writing an article about it while sipping

on kombucha and chowing down on a burrito from our deli.

Toners and astringents are not the same thing. And knowing which one is right for you can make the decision process easier. First off, toners are water based and astringents are alcohol based. The toners include antioxidants and cell-repairing ingredients. Astringents aid in removing oil from the skin. Thayer's website has this to say about astringents: "The alcohol content in astringents give it anti-bacterial properties, which may help individuals with acne

breakouts. Be sure to use astringents in small amounts, however, as the overuse of an astringent could have the reverse effect on skin, leaving it more oily."

So if you have dry, sensitive, combination skin, a toner can help balance the pH levels on your skin and hydrate! The most popular seller for the toner is the Rose Petal scent which is made with rose water. If you have oily, acne prone skin, I suggest the Lemon Astringent which helps rid bacteria, remove excess oil from the skin, and unclog pores.

MACA!

By Alissa Haller

As a relative to the radish with the smell of butterscotch, some people may have never heard of maca. I didn't know about it until a few years ago. I was told it would help me balance my hormones and I decided to try it. You can now find this supplement on our shelves or as a main ingredient in one of the kombuchas we carry; and I can attest that it has been game changing for me.

Besides balancing hormones, maca also slowly levels your energy levels. You don't really notice until you skip it one day. I usually make, what I call: "Healthy Hot Cocoa" at night after dinner. I will share my secret recipe with you and all the ingredients can be purchased at the Co-op.

You will need: a blender, pot, and stove. This recipe will make

two average mug-size servings--so find a friend or enemy to enjoy with!

Ingredients:

- 1 can of Coconut Milk (I use Field Day)
- 2 tsp. of local Maple Syrup (you can add more or less to adjust sweetness)
- 1 Tbsp. Maca powder (you can start with less and slowly add more if you wish)
- 1 tsp. Turmeric powder
- ½ tsp. Black Pepper
- 2 Tbsp. Cocoa Powder

Combine all the ingredients in your blender. I use full-fat coconut milk so you will have to scoop it out of the can, however, you could use any form of milk for this recipe. Blend all ingredients together until smooth and pour into a pot. Warm over low-medium heat. You don't want to boil it. I warm it just enough so that I can sip it while watching Gilmore Girls reruns.

Make Your Own Baby Food

By Mary Michalek, New Day Doula

Before I gave birth to my son, I had the lofty idea that once he was ready for solids, I would prepare all his food. I had a blender and had been making smoothies for myself for many years prior. I knew that the fresher the ingredients, the more nutrients they had, and I wanted to make sure that my child consumed only the very best.

When my son, Wally, was about 6 months old, my husband and I decided to introduce him to his first solid. I had exclusively breastfed up until then and was excited to have something else to sate Wally's ferocious appetite. We decided to use avocado, a common first food, mixed with breastmilk. Wally ate the small amount we offered happily and I was delighted to begin trying different foods.

Going forward with preparing baby food proved more difficult than I'd anticipated. Wally preferred the thinner and smoother store-bought puree. I would often spend tons of time cooking and pureeing in the kitchen, awkwardly pour a thick, gloopy mess into small containers, only to have him turn his nose to my creation. Over time, I figured out how to make food that he usually wanted to eat, but I did end up turning to prepared food much more than I'd planned. Here are some tips for creating a baby-approved mush:

In the beginning, mix in breastmilk or formula. Babies are used to what they have been consum-

ing their entire lives and the taste of the milk will make the food more familiar. It will also help to thin out the puree, which will help them with the texture.

Try something sweet. We are conditioned to stay away from sweet foods because we don't want our children to develop the dreaded "sweet tooth." However, breastmilk is very sweet, so your baby will be more familiar with that taste. If you want to feed vegetables, try mixing them with apples, pears, or some other fruit in the beginning.

You'll probably have to add in more water than you think. This was one of the places that I consistently went wrong with my baby food. I wanted him to get all the nutrients, so I tried to add as little water as possible. However, he often refused to eat the thick purees I came up with. Every baby is different, so maybe yours will like thicker textures, but if you're having trouble enticing your little one to eat it, try thinning it out.

Make sure you blend the heck out of it. Your puree should be smooth, without any chunks, or else your baby will likely not eat it.

Taste your creation. If the taste isn't pleasing to you, it likely won't be to your baby.



If you find something your baby loves, use it to introduce new foods. Wally loved pureed pears when he was a baby, so I tried adding in some berries and other fruits with pears to expand his palate.

When in doubt, wait. Solid food (anything other than breastmilk and formula) before one is just for "fun." Babies don't really need anything other than breastmilk or formula before then. If your baby is really not interested, there is no reason to push it. Just try again later!

You don't need to use purees at all. There are many people who practice "baby-led weaning," which involves introducing food in its usual, whole state to babies. The baby will explore the food on their own and learn to appreciate flavors and textures at the same time.

There are many ways to introduce your baby to food! Have fun with it and try not to stress over what your baby is or isn't eating. It's just for fun in the beginning so enjoy the process! Your child will likely be eating a wide variety of foods by the time he or she is packing for college. No need to worry.

MOSES YODER...

weeks later with this potting mix because the seedlings grow so well in it. We only use products that are OMRI listed, and don't spray anything for blight or bugs. I wrote an article for "Plain Interests" [August 2015] about growing without chemical sprays and I got a lot of letters in response. Finally I agreed to expand my article to a book. It's hard to farm and write a book, but I plan to do it because there was a lot of interest in how we grow without sprays.

Erica: So you were exposed to organic practices in Ohio, and then when you moved here you met other like-minded farmers like Mosie Keim and Daniel Martin [also Co-op suppliers] who were also using organic practices?

Moses: Yes, we learn a lot from each other, and help each other out. For example, Daniel has been helping us by starting some of the herbs that take longer to germinate so that we don't have to heat our greenhouse yet. Our dairy is certified organic, and we've offered to grow certified organic seedlings for the Co-op, but it would add an extra cost that we would have to pass on to the customer, and so far the response has been "We are happy with the way you grow, and we try to inform the customers about how the seedlings are grown."

Erica: Have your practices evolved over the last decade?

Moses: Yes, with farming you're always learning new things, though sometimes it seems like we might be repeat-

ing, or catching on to some of the practices that have been around for ages. Some farmers are surprised to hear we're growing without chemicals, while for others it's nothing new, and they've been growing this way all along. We are always looking for ways to improve our soil fertility, but keeping it natural and in harmony with nature.

Erica: Do you consider the North Country a good place to farm, having farmed in Ohio as well, and what do you think of the natural and economic conditions here?

Moses: We think it's great. The growing season is a little shorter, but then things grow faster in the summer than they did in Ohio due to the longer days. And the soil is really good here. When we were making plans to move we did a lot of research and looked at many soil maps at the USDA office. We found that some of the best soil in the country is in St. Lawrence County. Of course you have to maintain it by giving back. I think farming is not more of a challenge here than it is in Ohio, and farmers are probably about the same financially; sometimes you have a good year, sometimes a bad one, but it balances out over time.

We're excited and appreciate that we can grow for the Co-op. The family is excited about starting the greenhouse up again. They look forward to it. The Co-op ordered 500 flats this year, and we hope to keep working with the Co-op in the future.

NORTH COUNTRY MAKERS MEET UP

By Sarah Lynch

Cooperative Principle #6
Cooperation among Cooperatives

By working together through local, national, regional, and international structures, cooperatives improve services, bolster local economies, and deal more effectively with social and community needs.

"How can I rent studio space?" and, "Where can I go to work with clay?"

I was born and raised Potsdam. I went away to Alfred University for school and since returning in 2006 I have heard these questions over and over.

For the first six years after moving home I didn't have space to work in clay. I would travel to art centers like the Penland School of

Crafts in North Carolina, Watershed Center For Ceramic Arts in Maine, and even Medalta in Alberta, Canada just to get a few precious weeks of work in a year. I got to see how each studio was set up as well as how immensely beneficial they were to their communities. Remote towns with dying economies were revitalized by people coming to utilize their facilities and historic buildings were repaired and preserved as they were repurposed as artist studios. Every time I came home I would look around Potsdam and ask, "Why is there not a community work space in Potsdam?"

While I received a grant to purchase a professional kiln in 2013 my work space was still not ideal. Since then I've been working with the St Lawrence County Arts Council to grow a group called North Country Makers Meet Up. We are open to anyone interested

in connecting with other folks interested in creativity in any way. We meet in person once a month and can be found here on Facebook <http://bit.ly/2uDgkzw>

Through discussions at our monthly gatherings and my need for a work space I am being driven to create a community work space. To start with I am looking for input from the community. I've worked with the Small Business Development Center to design three surveys that can be found here <http://www.saraelynych.com/space-survey/>

I'm looking to hear from everyone and in particular folks interested in taking classes, renting space of any kind, and attending events. I want this space to truly serve by fulfilling our needs as well as helping us grow as a supportive and inclusive community.

Potsdam Food Cooperative Annual Report 2017

Prepared by Joseph Andriano,
Board President, for annual
meeting on 2/15/18

INTRODUCTION

Board President: Joseph Andriano

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Potsdam Co-op, I am pleased to provide the following report to our Member-Owners. This report consists of the General Manager's Report, the Treasurer's Report, and a summary of each Committee's achievements in 2017.

Two major issues faced the Co-op in 2017. First, the Board began exploring the question of how to insure that the Co-op would be sustainable in 2018 and beyond. As you may be aware, New York State law now mandates an increase in minimum wage over the next several years. Our previous General Manager, Eric Jesner, provides a report to the Board and the Membership that these increases in minimum wage would reach a point in the coming years where our expenses would outstrip our income, thus making the Co-op no longer sustainable. With these realities in mind, the Board commissioned a study of the market that the Co-op operates in in early 2017. The results of this report indicated that the main way for the Co-op to deal with this upcoming deficit is to seek to move in to a larger space and expand its offerings. Obviously this would be a major change for the Co-op, and the Board has created a new committee to investigate whether this move would be feasible.

The second major issue that faced the Co-op in 2017 was the decision by our General Manager, Eric Jesner, to leave the North Country. While the Board was saddened to hear of Eric's departure to move back home, we were happy that long time Co-op employee, Andy Peet, agreed to step in as our Interim General Manager. As of this writing, the Board has created an Ad Hoc GM Search Committee which has received a number of applications for the position and is screening them.

I encourage you to read through this report and become more informed about the work that the Co-op is doing. I also encourage you to be as involved in the Co-op as your schedule will permit. Despite the major changes the Co-op is facing, the one thing that has always remained stable is the commitment of our member-owners to this store. Please consider joining a committee or volunteering to work in the store. The more people involved, the stronger the Co-op is.

GENERAL MANAGER

Interim GM: Andy Peet

Sales were up 0.52%, to \$1,806,344, before discounts of \$84,343 were given. It is good to see overall positive growth, but it's not as good as our growth from last year (3.57%.) We started the year strong, being up over 5% halfway through the year then slowed in the last two quarters. The Carriage House remains strong with a 6.56% increase

of \$8,386 for the Bakery, and a 7.56% increase of \$12,828 for the deli. Refrigerated Grocery contributed 5.64% growth of \$12,252. The Buying Club improved 19.28% with \$5,132 more than 2016.

Sales increased \$6,685 while purchases actually decreased by \$5,072 to \$1,003,013. Similar to the previous year cash flow was good in 2017. This kept us in a position to stay well ahead of bills and continue adding to our savings accounts. It also allowed us to invest in our potential future by hiring CDS Consulting to conduct Market and Marketing research. We did this without the use of member loans.

Member-ownership is up 9 to bring us to an average of 977 member-owners for 2017. Special thanks to all of those involved in our Membership Drive that kicked off in April 2017. The efforts of the board, committee members, and staff payed off and we reached our goal of 50 new members. We finished 2017 with 1013, which was 58 more than we had before the membership drive.

The percent of sales to member-owners is up 1.5% to make up 66.52% of total sales. The sales per member-owner household is down just \$4.40 to \$1,186. This figure is important because it shows that the product mix in the store is meeting the needs of our member-owners.

In April, 2017 we switched to a new card processor called First Data and we now get a better deal on our fees for processing card transactions. In 2017 63.66% of our total sales were paid for with credit cards. Card sales were up \$70,963 to \$1,150,584. Despite the increase we payed \$25,221 in processing fees which is \$2,732 or 9.77% less than the previous year.

We have split up the buying department between myself (Andy Peet), Jessie, Erik, Alissa, and Linzie. Each of our new buyers are dedicated, long-standing employees who have been chosen for their new roles based on their strengths, experiences, and personal interests. They are all eager to contribute to our continued success and I believe the Co-op stands to benefit because they seek to rejuvenate their respective departments and strengthening the product mix.

I'd like to thank all of the Co-op staff. We continue to refine our operations and staff continues to adapt to the many changes. More is being asked of each staff member as sales continue to grow and I'm grateful for the responsibilities that each person takes to make sure the Co-op meets all of our customers' needs.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chair: Joseph Andriano

The committee met monthly with the General Manager to review issues related to personnel, store operations, and the General Manager's performance. The committee consisted of Co-op President Joseph Andriano, Vice President Laura Cordts, Treasurer Robin McClellan, and Secretary Erica LaFountain.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: Robin McClellan

2017 was a year of variability. Co-op Sales are often impacted by weather and had some bearing on the poor sales in the first quarter of the year.

Another source of variability may be the change in accounting software. Due to this uncertainty, draft financial statements have not been included with this report. At this point, Operating Profit is negative and Net Profit is in positive for 2017.

Sales fluctuate from quarter to quarter. The first quarter is generally lower, but the other quarters fluctuate less predictably. 2017 wasn't as strong in growth of sales as 2016 but sales is only one part of the overall financial picture.

Personnel cost is rising and will continue to rise over the foreseeable future as the minimum wage rises. Cost of Sales, on the other hand, has dropped even while Sales has risen.

Another trend that was very heartening was continuing rise in the current assets while current liabilities remained the same. This provides a general cushion against unexpected expenses. Current Assets have been rising for the last two years while Current Liabilities have been decreasing. The ratio of current assets to current liabilities, called the current ratio, is a measure of liquidity, or the ability to pay short term debt. At 1.98, it is the highest it has been since 2012. The Co-op has no long term debt.

One of the financial concerns facing the Co-op is the rising cost of personnel. The response to this concern has been, and continues to be, two-fold. First, increased staff efficiency. Labor costs as a percent of sales have been increasing steadily over the last 5 years because of the cost of health insurance and the increase in the minimum wage. The Co-op is committed to paying a living wage and so when minimum wage has increased, wages across the board have been raised to the highest extent possible. This has been offset with better use of staff so there are less hours per unit sales, even though the cost has been higher.

The other approach has been to increase margins—the difference between what the Co-op pays for a product and what it sells it for. Sometimes this has meant raising prices but more often it has meant finding better prices for similar products.

Another concern is weak sales. The consensus of the Finance Committee is that long-term financial viability requires ever increasing sales volume. This does have the effect of leveraging fixed costs and should have a direct positive effect on the Operating Profit. Historically, there has not been a strong correlation between Sales and Operating Profit, however there is a reasonable expectation that this will be the case in the future.

The main change this year in the bookkeeping was the conversion to QuickBooks. After a false

start in December, Stephanie Wallace at Pinto, Mucenski, Hooper, Van House, and Company, got us up and running. This means that the annual financial statements had to be done manually and there are bound to be a few hiccoughs. Stephanie's annual review should square everything, and the reviewed financials will be posted on the website as soon as they are done.

With the new system up and running, the next step is to integrate the numbers from the point of sale system (Catapult) with the main accounting system now in QuickBooks. This will reduce the amount of hand entry and thus time and the possibility of error.

From a financial perspective, the Co-op has a strong balance sheet—no long-term debt, a good cash buffer, and a good current ratio of assets to liabilities. The challenge moving forward, the challenge that will define the job for the new manager, is to keep the costs down and grow sales.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: Laura Cordts

There are several tasks which Governance is responsible for every year. This includes review and proposal of revisions to our Board Policy Manual and Board Calendar, which was completed last spring; and identifying, vetting, orienting, and presenting a slate of qualified Board nominees for election at the annual meeting in February.

For much of 2017, the Governance Committee was focused on researching patronage dividends and then drafting bylaw revisions and meeting materials for approval by the member-owners. This was completed at our special membership meeting on October 19. Now we have turned our attention to crafting a set of "Ends Policies" for the Co-op.

With input from our member-owners, we hope to have a draft ready after the annual Board retreat in March.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

Chair: Samantha DaGrossa

Highlights from 2017:

The Marketing Committee (MC) planned a joint effort with the Membership/Events Committee to hold the first-ever Potsdam Food Co-op Membership Drive: Focus – to increase the Co-op's active member-owner list and to strengthen the involvement of current member-owners. Ran from April 2, 2017 to June 30, 2017 and featured a Kick-Off Party, staff incentives and prizes/giveaways

Outcome – 50 new member-owners signed-up during the Membership Drive; the experience established a model for future drives Co-op Ambassadors Program:

What is it?

For those member-owners interested in being a Co-op "Ambassador" at community events and to speak at local organizations, public forums, etc.

What for?

Those who are interested will be trained to present an informed,

unified message about the Co-op's Mission & Values and the benefits of becoming a member-owner

To increase the Co-op's community presence and gain new membership/increase sales

To have a reliable list of Ambassadors to draw from for events

The Co-op held two successful Ambassador training sessions in Jan. 2017, creating an Ambassadors list of approx. 10 people

Held a One-Day Membership Drive during the 2017 Co-op Open House in Sept. 2017:

Focus – to increase the Co-op's active member-owner list and to promote membership renewal amongst current member-owners

Outcome – 3 new member-owners signed-up / 6 current member-owners renewed their membership during the event

Plans for 2018:

Grow the Ambassadors Program – build the Ambassadors list and clarify the list based on availability, preferences, expertise, etc.

Expand on the Ambassadors Program idea with a Co-op Community Speakers group that will present food/Co-op-related topics within the community (ex: community organizations, universities, etc.)

Plan two one-month Membership Drives; probably during March and Sept. 2018

Increase social media presence and shareable content – some discussion and efforts made in 2017 to increase the Co-op's presence on Facebook & Instagram, but the MC will discuss ways to do more

As the Ambassadors will be a physical presence in the local community, the Co-op needs to expand its online presence in the social media community

Establish and strengthen the Co-op's relationship to local/community-based organizations, esp. those with a related mission, such as a food or local emphasis

Update "Local Producer Posters" to emphasize the Co-op's support of local farmers and its offerings of local products – find ways to emphasize this online too

Continue to discuss and enact ways to attract lower-income shoppers to the Co-op; what can the Co-op offer while retaining its Mission & Values

Help plan overall marketing efforts for the Co-op based on the 2017 CDS market study and marketing proposal

IT & WEB

Chair: Eric Ochranek

In 2017 the IT & Web committee worked diligently on a few new initiatives: Board of Directors wiki page (General Co-op wiki coming soon!); PLU Lookup via website (If you haven't tried it yet, you can find in the Bulk section of the website!); Extended "usable" wifi throughout the store.

We also began a project to monitor temperatures in the many freezers & refrigerators in the store. This will help the GM catch temperature issues before they are able to effect the food, helping to save time and money by reducing loss and catching maintenance issues before they become larger problems. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

Business Partners

These locally owned businesses have generously agreed to grant the following offers to Co-op members. Present your current Membership Card when asking for the discount. One time offers will be checked off when used.

Food

 <p>Little Italy 30 Market Street, Potsdam \$1.00 off any large pizza</p>	 <p>St. Lawrence Valley Roasters Jernabi Coffeehouse 11 A Maple St, Potsdam 10% off brewed coffee</p>	 <p>32 Market St, Potsdam 10% off 7am-2pm Monday to Friday</p>	<p>3 Bears Gluten Free Bakery & More (Potsdam)</p>  <p>For each \$10 purchase you will be entered into a drawing to win their featured dessert of the month</p>	 <p>Purple Rice 20 Elm St #105, Potsdam \$2 off one lunch special (one time offer)</p>
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Retail

 <p>49 Market St, Potsdam 10% Off All Maple Run Emporium brand merchandise</p>	<p>Seaway Cash Register & Typewriter 14 Bray Road, Norwood 5% off on machines, services, and supplies</p>	 <p>The UPS Store 200 Market Street - Potsdam, NY 13676 (315) 265-4545 • store5986@theupsstore.com 10 free B&W, self service copies, daily</p>	 <p>5% OFF Folkstore purchases for Co-op member-owners (other discounts also apply) NORTH COUNTRY FOLKSTORE 53 Main Street, Downtown Canton 315-386-4289 • tnyny.org • M-F 10-5, S 10-4</p>
 <p>Farmhouse Forge James Gonzalez, blacksmith 315-566-1130 10% off www.FarmhouseForge.com</p>	<p>Downtown Sports & Toys (formerly The Cornerstore) 75 Market St, Ste 100, Potsdam 10% off with a purchase of \$25.00 or more</p>	<p>The Computer Guys 4 Clarkson Avenue, Potsdam / 2564 State Highway 68, Canton 10% off on all in stock items at both locations</p>	 <p>Friends of the Potsdam Public Library 10% discount at the regular Saturday 10-1 sale in the library basement</p>
<p>St Lawrence Nurseries 325 Route 345, Potsdam 10% off regularly priced plant stock</p>	 <p>BRICK & MORTAR MUSIC 15 Market St, Potsdam 10% off sheet music and accessories</p>	<h3>Featured Business</h3> <p>Back In Motion Family and Sports Chiropractic is an innovative holistic healthcare facility located in Potsdam on the corner of Leroy and Clinton Street. Dr. Burns' unique and effective practice methods combine traditional chiropractic adjusting techniques with trigger point therapy and stretching techniques. When necessary, we include other therapeutic modalities such as heat therapy, ultrasound, and electric stimulation. In addition, we teach you stretches and exercises that you can perform at home to assist you in your healing and help prevent future problems. We dig deep in order to understand and address the root causes of each patient's health concerns.</p> <p>Take a step towards optimal health and wellness today. (315) 261-4866 chiropracticbackinmotion.com Co-op members without insurance receive 15% off their initial visit</p>	

Home Services

 <p>Alpine Foam Insulation 315-262-6544 5% off residential foam insulation job</p>	 <p>RENEW ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN rebecca@renewarchitecture.com 5% discount on residential architectural services</p>
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Health/Beauty

 <p>47 State Highway 345 Potsdam, NY 13676 315-262-0882 www.bodyshopfitness.com 10% off Fitness Center Membership</p>	 <p>The Yoga Loft North Country Center for Yoga and Health 17 Main Street, Canton NY One time \$5 discount for any drop-in class</p>	 <p>ALCHEMYSTRESS 17 Maple Street, Potsdam, NY 10% off body art (excluding specials)</p>	<p>Alexander Technique Lessons and Workshops (Beth Robinson) (315) 212-0562 73 Leroy Street, Potsdam 10% off first lesson</p>
<p>Chiropractic Office of Dr. Jamie Towle & Dr. Lisa Francey Towle 16 Park Street, Canton / 3276 State Route 11, Malone 10% off chiropractic services at both locations</p>	 <p>10% discount ACUPUNCTURE by Design Two locations: 143 Market Street & 25 Market Street, Potsdam</p>	<p>Colton Massage Therapy, Catherine A. Klein, BA, LMT 4808 State Highway 56, Colton \$10 off first massage or gift voucher</p>	<p>Knead of Life Helen M. Kenny, NYS LMT Hannawa Falls \$5 discount on first session</p>
<p>Jazzercise 22 Depot St/PO Box 624 Potsdam 1 complimentary class to new customers (may not be combined with other offers)</p>	<p>Back In Motion Family and Sports Chiropractic 17 Leroy Street, Potsdam 15% off initial visit for those without insurance</p>	<p>Potsdam Center for Innovative Dental Technologies, Aaron Acres, DMD 83 Market Street, Potsdam 10% discount</p>	 <p>315-265-0961 PO Box 115 Hannawa Falls, 13647 10% discount on initial consult</p>

Entertainment

 <p>15% off regularly priced tickets at the box office (some restrictions may apply).</p>	 <p>St Lawrence County Arts Council 1 time SLC Arts member rate discount on a community arts class</p>	 <p>Orchestra of NNY 315-267-3251 15% off regular priced tickets</p>
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ANNUAL REPORT...

We hope to see this project finished in early 2018. Finally, you may have noticed a change in the calendar on the website. In late 2017 we moved to using a Google calendar so the calendar can be easily updated and maintained. This also means that if you are a Google calendar user yourself, you can add the Co-op's to your list and never miss an event!

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chair: Maggie McKenna

The ultimate goal of the membership committee is to provide excellent benefits to member-owners in an effort to encourage more people in our area to join the co-op. We work in tandem with the marketing committee to get the word out about how great the Co-op is for shopping, of course, but also for networking and entertainment.

This year, the membership and events committee organized all of the events for Co-op members including the Fall Open House, the Baking Fest and this Annual Meeting with the help of the Board. The committee also organized a farm visit to the Kent Family Growers, which was a great success and well attended.

This committee also encouraged the board to pass the following resolution: "to remove the board policy that special orders are only allowed to be made by member-owners. Everyone should be welcome to use this service. We feel that it is more in line with our policies of inclusion and will likely lead to more member-owners and good vibes all around." The motion was passed.

This coming year, the committee is discussing holding other farm visits, owner appreciation days, and possibly some health-related programs. Additionally, we will be considering new ways to revamp our existing annual events.

We are also hoping more people will spread their joy of community networking and event planning by joining our committee! We meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 6pm above the Carriage House. If you have any ideas of things you'd like to see us working on, please feel free to reach out to Maggie at mmckenna.violin@gmail.com.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Chair: Erica LaFountain

In the last year, Co-op Board Members Kayla French and

Erica LaFountain have assumed production of the quarterly co-op newsletter. We hope you have enjoyed the last few issues featuring local producer interviews, new recipes, Co-op news and events, etc. We continue to bring you articles by Paula Youmell, a local nutritional healer, as well as new regular contributions from local doula and educator, Mary Michelak, who addresses diverse issues for new parents.

We are always looking for new material, including written submissions as well as ideas for us to address in print. We would also like to feature more local food-related artwork. Please contact us at newsletter@potsdamcoop.com with submissions, or to inquire about submission guidelines, or to join the committee!

CONCLUSION

Board President: Joseph Andriano

When I'm not being President of the Potsdam Co-op, I have the pleasure of working as a professor at Clarkson University, when I interact with students from around the region and around the world on a day-to-day basis. When students hear that I am President of the Co-op, it often leads to a lengthy conversation about how much they love the idea of local food and local business.

The Co-op was founded 45 years ago on the principle of supporting local, sustainable agriculture and business, on the idea that we are stronger together supporting one another in supporting a place that we can feel good about buying our food, knowing we are getting products that not only nourish ourselves, but nourish our community.

It is important for us to remember, as we go through such major changes in the coming years, that young people today are thirsting for businesses like the Co-op. They want to support healthy, local food choices that are connected with the communities that they are in, but sometimes don't know how. One thing that each of us must ask ourselves as supporters of this great experiment in local food systems and local economies, is how can the Co-op reach out to the next generation? How can the Co-op model operate in a way that keeps its values while becoming a part of the 21st century economy? Answering these questions is critical for us to remain viable for another 45 years and beyond.

ENHANCING CELL HEALTH WITH SEASONAL WILD FOOD

By Paula Youmell, RN, Wise Woman Nurse®

Every year I find myself in this same space: longing for the wild foods of spring. While I am grateful for the local root veggies, squash, and cabbages that sustain us over the long winter months, my body also craves lighter food and cleansing out the heavy, sluggish food energy of winter.

I am anxiously waiting for the leeks to pop their 'lil green heads up again this year. By the time this is printed, and in your hands to read, we could be deeply into the end of wild leek season.

The return of the leeks means many things to me: spring IS here; summer will follow with bright sun, swimming, and hiking; more wild foods and flowers will be popping out of the ground daily, and; my body is being nourished, deeply nourished by nature.

Wild leeks are nature's medicine. Who am I kidding? All wild plants are nature's medicine. Wild leeks have similar healing qualities of garlic: immune boosting, good for blood pressure, a blood and spring tonic, cold and flu remedy, and their juice is good for earaches and infections.

If you love wild leeks and make sauerkraut, add a few leeks to your next batch. Cut up the whole leek, leaves to bulbs, and add to the fermentation crock. I put my 28+ day fermented kraut into wide mouth canning jars and tuck to the very back of my refrigerator. I pull this treat out and enjoy in the long winter months; grateful for the flavor of leeks in November, December, January, February...

Wild foods are the gifts that our bodies need after a long cold winter. They provide green food, vitamin C (and so many more vitamins and minerals), stimulation of the liver to open and cleanse the heaviness of winter out of our digestive tract and ultimately our body cells, and provide live food - vital life force energy - to up our internal level of vibrancy.

Soon to look for:

VIOLET LEAVES AND FLOWERS



Violets are rich in vitamin C, a much needed vitamin after a long winter. Vitamin C helps in the spring detox I spoke of above and the upward movement of life force energy. Spring is a time of upward movement of energy for everything. As new plants pop from the ground daily, our energy levels also rise upward and we long to move and be outside. Violets are rich in enzymes, chlorophyll, vitamin A, carotenes, rutin (helps maintain blood vessel strength and integrity), and many more nutrients.

YOUNG NETTLES



Nettles are by far my favorite plant (and I love all the plants). It is one herb I would add to every herbal healing blend for its nutritive properties. Nettles nourish each and every body cell, help to build strong bones, nourish the glandular system, aid the reproductive tract (PMS, migraines, prostate, libido builder, menopause), great for allergies and asthma, and just about any and every ailment I can think of. This is because of nettles high nutritional value. When the body is well nourished, the body heals.

YOUNG DANDELION



Yummy dandelion greens: and think liver. Dandelion is a bitter tonic for the liver helping with digestion and helping with the spring cleanse out of winter heaviness in our cells and life force energy. Dandelion is very high in nutrients (again, good for cellular health and building bones - body mineral stores), is a mild laxative, a cancer aid, and is good for skin conditions (think acne, psoriasis, eczema) to name but a few of dandelion's virtues. Spring brings us dandelion flower and leaves to eat at just the time

our body needs it. Nature is truly wise.

SHEEP AND WOOD SORRELS



Sorrels are from the genus Oxalis. Oxalis means "sour" and is named due to its high oxalic acid content. Oxalic acid is considered "toxic" when consumed in large quantities because oxalic acid inhibits the absorption of calcium. Oxalic acid is not considered a problem when consumed moderately and with a varied diet. Many domesticated vegetables, including spinach and broccoli, also contain oxalic. People who are challenged by gout, rheumatism, and gallbladder-kidney stones should avoid it.

Sorrel is rich in vitamin C (the sour and vitamin C again contribute to the spring cleanse of winter's stagnation in the body). Traditionally it has been used to treat scurvy, fevers, urinary infections, mouth sores, nausea, and sore throats.

If you have never been one to graze on your front lawn or the fields and woods near your home, I encourage you to find a good guide book with pictures, descriptions, and healing information and get foraging.

Remember the forager's ethical principles:

- take only what you need, 5-10% of the plant patch
- make certain to leave plenty of plants so they can reproduce and repopulate the area you are wild harvesting from
- leave plants, flowers, and berries so all other species that rely on them have food

If you over-harvest or take all the plants from a patch or area of yard, woods, or field, you are creating a micro-extinction in that area and contributing to the endangerment of the plant in your region of the Earth. Harvest responsibly and sustainably. If you are purchasing from a wild crafter, ask them about their harvesting policies. Just as you choose you cultivated foods wisely, support foragers who take care of the wild plants for future generations to benefit from and enjoy both medicinally and nutritionally (Truly one and the same!).

St. Lawrence County Residents Attend First Annual Food Summit at The Wild Center

By Doug Welch

St. Lawrence County was well-represented at the first annual Food Summit held at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake on March 1st. Approximately ten percent of the 150 attendees were students and local food advocates from St. Lawrence County.

The ambitious one-day conference, Feedback: Growing and Sharing the Abundance was the brainchild of the recently formed North Country Food Justice Working Group (FJWG), which is

described as:

"a new coalition of non-profit and for-profit organizations, community members, local businesses, farmers and farm workers, and government agencies who have come together to start a conversation about creating a more equitable food system in the North Country. The group seeks to address our region's unique issues of accessibility, inclusivity, and justice from field to fork."

This purpose was reflected in the day's programming. Workshops and breakout sessions

included such topics as Fighting Chronic Disease and Food Insecurity with a Local Diet, Land Access for Young Farmers, Farm Bill 101, and Migrant Farm Workers: Food Sovereignty and Justice. Sara Ashpole, a member of the St. Lawrence University (SLU) Environmental Studies faculty commented, "My biggest impression is twofold, first how pervasive and dire local and national food issues are, and second, how responsive and dedicated the local food community is to positively make change."

Sponsors for the conference were Craigardan, Essex Farm Institute, Wild Center, Adirondack Diversity Initiative, Adirondack Foundation, ANCA, John Brown Lives!, North Country School, NOFA-NY, Hamilton Adirondack Program, NYS Pollution Prevention Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension, FoodFeasible LLC, and Hub on the Hill. North Country Public Radio was media sponsor, and the Adirondack Council and Adirondack Harvest provided significant support for the event. Adrianna Natsoulas, Executive

Director of NOFA-NY, gave the keynote address, an eighty minute discussion of the challenges surrounding food including climate change, the role of corporations, food insecurity, and the impact of international trade agreements. The somewhat dark message was softened by the progress being made by various groups, organizations, and individuals in raising and addressing issues, and the value of working together over the long haul.

Conference participants *CONTINUED ON PAGE 7*

The Farm Bill Matters

By Anna Kowanko and Margaret Smith of GardenShare

Most of us have heard about the Farm Bill. We know that it does something important, that it is renewed every five years, and that it is massive and far-reaching, but why is the 2018 Farm Bill everyone's business? The truth is that the Farm Bill is a behemoth of a bill that not only impacts those who are growing food, but also affects who is growing food, what is being grown, how it is being grown, and who gets to buy it. It works to protect and conserve our environment while promoting sustainability and clean energy development. While it mainly supports large-scale farmers, it also provides support to new and underserved farmers, local food systems and farmer education efforts. It is funded by appropriations, meaning that spending must be reauthorized by Congress every five years. The Farm Bill is like a giant quilt, and its laws are the patches that cover us all, sewn together by one common thread: food.

Below, we present a very brief history of the main provisions of the \$100 billion U.S. Farm Bill. To guide your reading (and to provide you topics for your own further research) the twelve main sections are: commodities, conservation, trade, nutrition, credit, rural development, research and extension support, forestry, energy, specialty crops and horticulture, crop insurance, and miscellaneous (more on this one later).

As a nation, we have always incentivized farming, dating back to as early as land grants to pioneer families. However, the earliest rendition of the Farm Bill we know today dates back to the

Great Depression and President Roosevelt's 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act. During WWI, crop production soared as mechanization increased and wartime demand was high in Europe. When the War ended, production stayed high, while demand was drastically reduced, leaving farmers scrambling with surplus crops and no surplus funds. The idea of the first Farm Bill was to incentivize farmers to grow less. In order to do this Roosevelt formed a grain reserve, where farmers could borrow money and store their surplus crops, wait for prices to rise, and then sell their crops. This early program also included an option for farmers to sell their staples directly to the government, who then used these crops to feed the hungry, the earliest form of the food assistance that is commonly known as "food stamps."

Since the Bill was made permanent in 1938, it has expanded and changed considerably. The Farm Credit Service, formed in 1916, now part of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and funded by the Farm Bill, offers loans directly to farmers or subsidizes loans from private banks to help farmers buy necessities such as expensive farm equipment. After the Federal Crop Insurance Act was introduced in the 1930s, Congress established a fixed support price in 1949, which ensured farmers that if prices dropped, the government would compensate them for their loss, a safety net that has grown to include over 100 crops in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The 60s and 70s marked the biggest shift in the Farm Bill. Under President Nixon and his Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, the granary established by Roosevelt was dismantled and the

incentive was placed on producing more of staples such as wheat, corn, and cotton, rather than keeping production on par with demand. Though crop insurance has changed many times throughout its history, the purpose still remains the same: to give farmers security in the face of unexpected loss or drops in prices. In the 2014 Farm Bill, farmers of major commodity crops were given a choice to receive compensation either when their revenue drops or when the crop prices drop.

The Farm Bill also supports farmers in skills building. It funds programs like cooperative extensions, which find their roots all the way back in the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Cooperative extension services, like the Cornell Cooperative Extension, research best practices and provide support to farmers, from business classes to skills-based learning.

For farmers who are already strapped for money, the implementation of costly environmental conservation tactics is not often a possibility. Conservation was added to the Farm Bill in order to rebuild soil and buffer ecosystems after mechanical farming and drought created the environmental disaster of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. Farm Bill conservation programs, are the largest single federal source of funding for private land conservation, mainly through support of conservation easements. It's important to make noise about the importance of these programs as some of the funding for them was cut in the 2014 Farm Bill. Conservation easements that classify land as forever agricultural have been a big boon to small-scale farmers in Essex County and regions around the country where farmland is fertile, expensive, and in danger of being lost to development.

The largest portion of the Farm Bill by far – about 80% of the Bill's budget – is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called Food Stamps. Food Stamps were introduced in 1939 as a way to combat hunger during the Great Depression and deal with surplus food; however, Food Stamps were included permanently in the Farm Bill with the 1977 Food and Agricultural Act. The Food Stamp Program was renamed SNAP in 2008, and now 45 million people each year use SNAP to help feed their families. In the most recent Farm Bill, SNAP recipients were able to use their benefits to purchase Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares, as well as food at their local farmers markets. The current administration hopes to impose work requirements for able-bodied recipients. Analysts project this would drastically reduce the amount of people who qualify for assistance without reducing the need. In St. Lawrence County, nearly one in five people live in poverty and SNAP is a necessary and important part of many people's lives (around 13% of the population, to be exact).

The last important thing to note about the Farm Bill is that while most of the money is allocated for SNAP and assistance to large-scale industrial agriculture, only 1% the funds end up going to the "miscellaneous" category, which includes small-scale farmers, organic farmers, "underserved farmers" such as veteran and new growers, and those producing "specialty crops" (fruits, vegetables, and nuts). Take a look at the USDA's MyPlate nutrition recommendations, and you'll find that these "specialty crops" are precisely the types of foods that are supposed to fill half of our plate and provide most of our

nutrition.

However, there are a few lawmakers who are fighting for our right to produce and consume healthy food that can boost our local economies. Some of these lawmakers are sponsoring bills like the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program, to help organic farmers pay for costly organic certification, and the Local Food and Regional Market Supply Act (Local FARMS Act), to connect farmers to local and regional markets through cost-share and technical assistance programs while also strengthening the infrastructure that connects producers and consumers. The Local FARMS Act also improves consumers' access to a choice of fresh, local, healthy food. Another proposed law, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act (BFROA), would give new farmers access to affordable land and crop insurance as well as providing the skills and knowledge needed to run a successful farm while protecting the environment.

Our legislators will write the policy that makes up Farm Bill 2018, and there will be plenty of corporate interests vying for influence. But don't forget that those lawmakers are responsible to you. Drafting is beginning in the House of Representatives, so you may send your opinions and concerns about the upcoming Farm Bill to your NY-21 Representative, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik. Make sure to bring her attention to those provisions that help strengthen our local economy and expand everyone's access to healthy food! And when you call, keep in mind GardenShare's vision for the North Country: "Healthy Food, Healthy Farms, Everybody Eats." We think it applies pretty well to the rest of the country, too.

FOOD SUMMIT...

included people of all ages and students from North Country School, Paul Smiths College, and St. Lawrence University were among the attendees. SLU faculty member Sara Ashpole noted, "From an educational perspective, I felt SLU students were given a unique experience to see and participate in multiple agency conversation where they felt valued as students."

There was an hour and a half for lunch, featuring a hearty local food meal provided by The Wild Center. There was also plenty of time to network. One lunch time task was for conference goers to post ideas for potential projects that the North Country Food Justice Working Group could work on during 2018.

The final breakout session involved the discussion of four suggestions: a food waste/composting initiative, a gleaning program, an educational effort, and a farm viability project. The four groups reconvened and briefly reported on what each group had decided. A wine and local foods reception closed the day's activities. Another North Country Food Summit is planned for 2019.

More information at facebook.com/NorthCountryFJWG/

FROM THE BUYERS

By Jessie LaRose

Many of you are aware of my involvement as a buyer while Andy has been serving as our Interim General Manager. It has been a pleasure using my skills, and developing new ones, to serve all of our wonderful Member-Owners through this role.

The labels "Natural" and "Organic" are becoming increasingly popular in grocery stores across America. As a result, natural food stores and food Co-ops like ours must also become increasingly competitive with their conventional counterparts. One way the Co-op can do this is to offer products that are unique to our store. As many of you have probably noticed, we have continued to



take advantage of special pricing through our suppliers, working with brokers, bringing new products in, and passing the savings on to you through our monthly

sales program. We are always open to feedback and new product suggestions, so please reach out to us if you have something in mind. While we cannot make any guarantees that a product will make it into the store, we take customer suggestions seriously and will always consider them.

Occasionally, you may find that a product you enjoyed is no longer available in the store. This could be for a couple of different reasons. One is that the product was discontinued from our warehouse. If an item is discontinued from our supplier and is a particularly popular seller among shoppers, we will make attempts to find the product from another supplier, though this may or may not be an option depending on the product. Another reason for an item becoming unavailable is that it was an overall poor seller for us, so we personally chose to discontinue the product in the store to avoid further losses. When this happens, we encourage you to use our Buying Club to order the product. Not only will you continue to enjoy your favorite product(s), but you'll also save a lot of money, as our Buying Club orders have much lower markups than the items you grab from the shelf. Keep in mind that the

Buying Club is a benefit of being a Member-Owner, so you will need an active Co-op Membership to use the program. You can find more information about the Buying Club at our website or speak with a Co-op employee for all the details.

I'd like to share with you some of my favorite new products from recent months. First up: Alden's Organic Ice Cream Sandwiches. We carry three varieties - Birthday Cake, Chocolate Chip, and Strawberry. I've always been a huge fan of Alden's for their clean ingredients and quality, but these are a real treat! If you haven't tried them yet, tasting is believing.

Next up! Another favorite of mine - Maya Kaimal Indian Simmer Sauces. These sauces are shelf stable and ready to heat & eat. Just cook up some rice and some naan from our freezer and you've got a delicious Indian dish in the comfort of your home. Of course nothing beats a home-cooked Indian meal, but these are pretty satisfying when you can't have the real deal! We offer several flavors, from mild to hot, so there's plenty to choose from.



Give these a try next time you're looking for a quick meal. You can even try mixing in a little Wallaby Organic Cultured Sour Cream to make the sauces extra creamy and flavorful - I love this stuff!

Lastly, a brand new product we introduced in April is Hilary's Eat Well Veggie Breakfast Sausage. These vegan patties are also free of gluten, soy, and nuts. Made from wholesome and nutritious foods, including millet, lentils, and dates. There's nothing in the ingredient list that you can't pronounce. They are low in calories and an absolutely scrumptious addition to any breakfast.

I hope you'll give some of these new items a try. We will continue to pass our promotional pricing onto our customers and hope you



will take advantage of these prices and share your thoughts with us. Your feedback is very important to us and our Co-operative model. If there is something you would like to see us carry, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Potsdam Food Cooperative
24 Elm Street
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Community News

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