

# the COOPERATIVE spirit

JANUARY | FEBRUARY | 2021

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>CO-OP NEWS</b>                   | <b>PAGE</b> |
| Food Deserts: What You Need to Know | <b>2</b>    |
| <b>CO-OP NEWS</b>                   | <b>3</b>    |
| Oasis of the Desert                 |             |
| <b>CO-OP EDUCATION</b>              | <b>4</b>    |
| Eating Seasonally                   |             |
| <b>CO-OP COMMUNITY</b>              | <b>5</b>    |
| Farmers in the Off Season           |             |
| <b>CO-OP GOODNESS</b>               | <b>6</b>    |
| Featured Products                   |             |
| <b>CO-OP UPDATE</b>                 | <b>7</b>    |
| Go Fish!                            |             |



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| New Year's Day<br>Co-op Closed                  | <b>1/01</b> |
| Inventory - Reduced<br>Hours 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM | <b>1/02</b> |
| Valentine's Day                                 | <b>2/14</b> |
| Board of Directors<br>Meeting - 5:30 PM         | <b>2/23</b> |



## ANNOUNCING...1% FRIDAYS 2021



Thanks to all for helping SPAC once again choose our yearly recipients for our 1% Fridays and Produce for the People programs. While our fall General Membership Meeting was held virtually this past October, our membership still showed up to nominate local organizations and vote for their favorites.

Every month in 2021, the following organizations will receive 1% of our Friday sales, along with any spare change and bag credits our members and customers. donate.

**January** - The Warming Center at Frame Presbyterian Church

**February** - North Central Conservancy Trust

**March** - Emerson Park Revitalisation Project

**April** - The Kid's Closet

**May** - MREA

**June** - Stevens Point Skatepark

**July** - Recycling Connections

**August** - Hmong American Association of Portage County

**September** - Central Wisconsin Children's Museum

**October** - Portage County Breastfeeding Coalition

**November** - Central Moraines Chapter of the Ice Age Trail

**December** - Portage County Humane Society

Produce for the People is entering its 4th year in 2021, where we donate the sales of our discount produce bin to two hunger prevention programs. From January through June, all proceeds will be donated to The Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership, and Giving Gardens will receive the donations from July through December.

If you have a nonprofit you would like to nominate for 2022 1% Fridays or Produce for the People, please submit the organization name, contact information, and a brief description to [jessical@spacoop.com](mailto:jessical@spacoop.com).

## CONTACT US

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## STORE HOURS

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FOOD DESERTS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Where I grew up, there was no grocery store in our area. We had a few bars and a convenience store down the road. Every week, my family would have to plan a trip to the nearest Walmart, which was about a 30 minute drive. We'd make a day of it, get some Subway and maybe rent a movie. While this may be doable for some, there are others who can't afford a car or the cost of gas to drive that distance, and end up having to get a majority of their groceries from convenience stores or gas stations. 'Food deserts' exist when communities don't have access to fresh foods and whole grains within 1 mile in urban areas, or 10 miles in rural areas. They are becoming increasingly complex issues throughout our country. According to the United States Department of Agriculture in 2010, 23.5 million people live in food deserts. In small towns, there are usually no form of public transportation available for people and therefore, their food choices are severely reduced and are forced to shop at supercenters. In urban areas, the closest food options are often fast food chains and convenience stores.

The USDA's Economic Research Service has identified over 6,500 food deserts in the United States based on the 2000 Census and data on the locations of supermarkets, supercenters, and large grocery stores share common characteristics throughout all of them (Haworth 6). Food deserts tend to be inhabited by low-income residents regardless of it being a rural or urban area. In addition, the study also found that the higher the percentage of minorities, the more likely it is to be a food desert. Food justice and the abolition of food deserts is not only an issue of health and poverty, but also that of racial injustice and segregation. When an area is low-income or many members of the community have reduced mobility, it makes them a less attractive market for large supermarket claims. In a case study done by Kate Haworth at Western Washington University, the Birchwood Neighborhood of Bellington, Washington lost Albertsons, a grocery store that gave almost 10,000 people access to fresh food and due to a non-compete clause, no other supermarket can move into the lot for 25 years. The Birchwood Neighborhood is also one of the most racially diverse and low-income neighborhoods-



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-of Bellingham (Haworth 18). Originally, the lot was bought to be turned into a gym, which makes little sense as a gym without access to healthy foods doesn't do the community much good. Today, a Big Lots sits in the once vacant lot. Little Caesar's, Big Lots, and Rite Aid are now the main sources of food for residents of the Birchwood Area, allowing only for highly processed and packaged foods with the occasional canned good or carton of eggs for the community (Haworth 22). There are basic necessities that all humans need to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Without access to affordable whole foods, people in food deserts like in Birchwood have a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, as well as mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. These are the same people that are less likely to have access to affordable healthcare so not only are they more likely to develop a disease but they are less likely to get proper treatment for it. Food deserts affect this country on a massive scale and countless human beings are suffering everyday because of it.

A general lack of public transportation causes a lot of issues for folks who can't afford to own a car or pay for gas. Large cities usually have a public transit system but once you get into smaller cities and villages, owning a car is a necessity. Even a place like Stevens Point has some setbacks. We do have a bus system but it has limited hours. Folks who have to work outside of those hours or have to work 2 or 3 jobs can't always rely on the bus system when they need it. I have a vivid memory of riding the bus my first year of college and seeing a woman with twice as many grocery bags as she could carry in one trip. It took her three rounds before she had all of her groceries on the bus. I overheard someone ask her how she was going to get that home and she said she'd leave it at the bus stop and make multiple trips. Stevens Point is a quaint, small town for the most part, but I think it's safe to say that most of us wouldn't feel comfortable leaving our groceries sitting out for fear of them getting stolen. In some cities, bus and transit systems only allow their riders to have a certain amount of bags on their person while riding which severely limits the amount of groceries they can buy at a time, as well as limiting their options for groceries. In addition, the amount of time it takes to travel in public transportation could leave the customer with melted ice cream, thawed meats, or other spoiled food. As you can see, there are many factors to consider when looking into food deserts, and each one has its own unique issues to address.

As a neighborhood grocery, the Co-op strives to serve our neighbors and surrounding community. If you have ideas about how we can better engage in addressing food deserts and other food access related issues in our area or otherwise, please let us know!

(If you'd like to read more about the Birchwood Neighborhood case study and Haworth's complete essay: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?arti>

-A Collaboration by Deanna Kujawa & Michelle Nieuwenhuis

OASIS OF THE DESERT: WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT FOOD DESERTS?

On a larger scale, food deserts need to be evaluated as a case by case (area by area) basis. A recent study from the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association looked into the challenge many cities in America face regarding access to healthy foods. The four main barriers outlined in the research include:

- Physical:** Finding healthy food
- Economic:** Affording healthy food
- Educational:** Making healthy food choices, cooking healthy food
- Cultural:** Wanting healthy food that is available and affordable

[Read their entire study here:](https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR_Healthy_Food_Within_Reach.pdf) [https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications\\_pdfs/SPUR\\_Healthy\\_Food\\_Within\\_Reach.pdf](https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR_Healthy_Food_Within_Reach.pdf)

By establishing how these barriers relate to a specific community oppressed by food insecurity, policymakers can determine how best to eliminate the problem. All barriers must be addressed on a neighborhood scale. What works to limit food deserts in suburban areas may not be successful in more urban areas. It's also important for policymakers to review all barriers to food access, not just physical. In situations of gentrification, residents may not have the economic ability to afford to eat healthy and instead shop for their family groceries at the Dollar General so they can save their money for other bills. Local governments should be maximizing the enrollment of federally funded food assistance programs. Vote with these issues in mind!

On a national level, there have been few developments to explicitly address and help with food insecurity and food deserts. Former First Lady Michelle Obama created the "Let's Move" campaign to fight childhood obesity in 2010. A goal of this campaign was to help eliminate food deserts by 2017. Through the Healthy Food Financing Initiative created by the Obama administration, healthy food retailers were provided financing tools such as tax credits, grants, or low-cost loans and technical assistance.

Read more about Let's Move and the HFFI here: <https://lets-move.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/healthy-communities>.

There are numerous solutions being tested to get good, healthy options into these neighborhoods, but sometimes the most exciting and effective ones start in your own community. Chances are you've heard of (or seen) the Little Free Libraries in your neighborhood. You can leave a book or take a book if you need one. Inspired by this idea, some communities are making "Little Free Pantries" where community members can drop off food items or toiletries. Have an abundant garden and live in a high traffic area? Put your extra fruits and veggies in a box or basket by the sidewalk with a sign. It's an easy way to give back to your community and reduce food waste. In some cities, farmers are being more innovative by selling their produce where people already are: bus stops and transit stations.

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In Stevens Point to help combat food deserts and food insecurity, we have the Mobile Pantry of Portage County. The Mobile Pantry is one of the four teams of the Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership, the others being Empty Bowls, Giving Gardens, and RentReady. The goal of these organizations is to help address and solve hunger and poverty issues in Portage County. The Mobile Pantry focuses on delivering healthy, quality food to rural communities: Junction City, Rosholt, Amherst, Amherst Junction, and Almond-Bancroft. According to their website (<https://hppp-pc.com/programs/mobile-pantry/>), "95% of the households served by Mobile Pantry deliveries reported these deliveries have or are currently preventing hunger in their household." If you're looking to help your community and stop food deserts by getting involved with the Mobile Pantry, contact Marcy Ferriter at (715) 341-9922 or [agyjoel961@gmail.com](mailto:agyjoel961@gmail.com).

Locations of Little Free Pantries in Stevens Point and Plover:

Stevens Point:

- Division Street - Between Main and Clark
- St. Paul Street - St. Paul's United Methodist Church
- Church Street - Downtown Mission Church-Stevens Point
- Prais Street - Washington Elementary School

Plover:

- Maple Drive - Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church
- Roosevelt Drive - Good Shepherd Lutheran Church



## EATING SEASONALLY

In a lot of grocery stores today, we can find almost any fruit and vegetable at any time throughout the year. Looking for a watermelon in December? No problem. Tomatoes in the middle of February? You got it. While seasonal eating has been practiced for most of history, our face-paced, convenience-based lifestyle has given us more access to a variety of crops year-round. Because of this convenience we've become accustomed to, eating seasonally seems like more of a challenge than our natural way of life.

What does it mean to eat seasonally? Ultimately, it means eating your food at the peak of its nutritional value. It means it was picked at precisely the correct time. If you could somehow eat a tomato harvested during the summer months and a tomato harvested from the winter months simultaneously, you'd easily be able to tell which tomato was picked during its natural growing season. Choosing to eat fruits and vegetables in their correct seasons is choosing to eat food as it was meant to be eaten. When out of season, fruits and vegetables are often picked before they are ripe in order to account for the time it takes to travel. This also means they sit in refrigerators or coolers until they land into your cart which can also affect the overall flavor, which is a great reason to buy local when possible.

Not only does seasonal eating mean higher quality food, it can also be easier on your wallet. A vegetable in season is plentiful and abundant which keeps the overall cost down by needing less inputs (ie. fertilizer, irrigation, pest control). In addition, buying from local farmers helps the economy and keeps your money in your community, an added bonus. Eating locally and eating seasonally go hand in hand. When you buy your food locally, you're reducing your carbon footprint because the food doesn't have to travel thousands of miles in order to end up in your home.

What's available seasonally depends on where you live; California is going to have very different seasonal vegetables and fruits than New York. A simple internet search can lead you in the right direction to figure out when to eat what for your location. Farmer's Markets are also a great way to see what's available during the season AND support your local farmers. In Stevens Point, we're very fortunate to also have the Winter Farmer's Market for those colder months when eating seasonally seems impossible. The Winter Farmer's Market runs Saturdays from 8am to 12pm at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Stevens Point November 3rd through March 30th, be sure to check it out.

It's easy to get caught up in convenience food, especially when we are surrounded by cheap, fast options daily. To successfully eat seasonally, it just takes a little time and research, but the fruits (and vegetables!) of labor are definitely worth it. You can also consider growing or purchasing local storage crops to give you more variety come winter. Our End of Season Local Case Sale is a great way to do that. Visit our website or give us a call to learn more.

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## FARMERS IN THE OFF SEASON

As we head into the colder months, we at the SPAC can't help but wonder what our farming friends at Rising Sand Organics are up to. What do farmers do during the (seemingly) less busy winter months? The Cooperative Spirit newsletter team caught up with Danny Werachowski, member-owner of Rising Sand Organics, to get the scoop about farmers in the off season.

#### **How do you prepare for the off season?**

DW: For our farm (Rising Sand Organics), much of our prep for winter revolves around vegetables, although that's changing now that we've welcomed various livestock onto our land. Our compost operation, and various other enterprises, require different prep for the winter months. However, with vegetables a lot of that entails removing irrigation from the field, general clean up, and moving and storing equipment.

#### **What's a typical day for a farmer during the colder months?**

DW: We've structured our organization in a way where a good majority of us can shift our load toward off farm jobs and obligations during the winter months. However, this isn't the case for every farmer, even those on our farm. Some of us will take care of daily animal chores, others will be processing hemp, and a good majority of us will begin planning for next season. For me, a typical day might involve a planning or outreach meeting for RSO. I'm also working at the Main Grain Bakery part time, or doing a work from home gig with the National Young Farmers Coalition.

#### **Do you winterize your fields? What are some steps of success for that?**

DW: We do. We plant a variety of cover crops in fall on certain plots. Depending what was planted there, or what will be planted next year, we may mulch the entire plot with straw. These activities ensure the topsoil remains relatively undisturbed, and also add valuable nutrient content to the soil. Before this is done, we typically remove any irrigation lines and store them in the barn for the winter.

#### **How do you tend to your animals in the winter? How is it different from the warmer months?**

DW: To my knowledge, the winter is more about keeping the animals warm, happy, and healthy, and maybe a bit less about land management. For example, our cows will remain in a single (very large) pasture for the winter. However, during the warmer months we rotate them for the benefit of our land, soil, and for their own wellbeing. We also do this with our pigs.

We'll feed the cows hay we cut during the greener months, since they'll be getting little to no fresh stuff on pasture. This, and ensuring all the animals get fresh, unfrozen water requires a concerted effort at fulfilling chores on a frequent basis. This is harder for us to do, as we're primarily off farm in the winter months.

#### **Does Rising Sand currently have any off season crops? If so, what are they?**

DW: At the moment we primarily grow in season, i.e. spring, summer, and fall. We have played with the idea of doing winter growing in our hoop houses and may do that yet in the next few years. However, most of what we have to offer in winter for crops are storage products, such as onions, shallots, garlic, and various hemp products we process in the fall and winter.

#### **What's different, more/less enjoyable about farming during the counter season?**

DW: I do truly enjoy the long days at the peak of June, when one phase of planting leads to a phase of weeding, leads to a phase of harvest, and then the cycle continues. During that time of the year I'm coming home later, drinking lots of water, and often times going for a quick swim at the end of the day. However, that lifestyle for plant and human is not sustainable year round. This time of the year, for me, the chores take longer, there's more time for introspection, quiet, and planning. Both are equally important and enjoyable to me.

#### **What's going on in the greenhouse or hoop houses these days?**

DW: We're overwintering some of our chickens in our hoop-houses, which is great for our soil fertility and for their warmth, as well as egg production! In terms of the greenhouse, we rent space seasonally at Farmshed, which is currently being used to sell christmas trees from the Solin Tree Farm. Happy holidays!

It's no secret that farming is a lot of steps, processes, and hard work even during the off seasons! The SPAC thanks Danny for taking the time to answer our questions, as well as all of Rising Sand Organics for their hard work and providing us with their delicious organic produce.

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 John G. Suchon ~ Pete Jacoby



## Featured Products

We're featuring products from companies that give back to their communities. Check out these brands below!



**American Provenance** - One of our made in Wisconsin body care lines. We currently carry their deodorants, natural hair pomade, and beard balm. To quote their website "We believe we have a responsibility to help lessen our impact on this planet. We're rooted in science and inspired by nature in all we do. We have a recycling program, are members of 1% of the Planet, and proudly support the work of the National Park Foundation." If you want to check out those organizations, head to their websites at <https://www.onepercentfortheplanet.org/> and <https://www.nationalparks.org/>



### Clean Cause Sparkling Yerba Mate Drinks

You can see this donation all over the cans of these delicious caffeinated beverages. They donate 50% of their profits to alcohol and substance addiction recovery via a Sober Living Scholarship program. So far they have facilitated 1771 scholarships and recoveries.



**Rishi Tea** (Bulk and Packaged) - This company supports the development of the communities they buy their ingredients from. Because of this relationship, the Mangjing Village has been able to establish a library, a Bulang cultural center, an agricultural training program for villagers, road improvements, and water purification. Check out their website to see all the other ways Rishi is helping the Mangjing Village here: <https://journal.rishi-tea.com/>

**Locally Laid Eggs** - We've talked about these local eggs before, but we bet you didn't know that they plant a tree with every box shipped or T-shirt ordered. The ladies are pasture-raised and humanely treated and the owner has written a book about being a female farmer. Giving back to the community and inspiring girls to become farmers is pretty cool in our book!

**Frontier Co-op** - Frontier supplies most of the herbs and spices you see in our selection. They give back 4% of annual net savings to charitable causes and improve life in communities all around the world. In their own words, "We are committed to doing business in a way that is positive for everyone Frontier Co-op touches."



## Have a suggestion?

## Have an idea?

Email one of our board members with your thoughts!

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## GO FISH

Ahoy mateys! We've got a big fish to fry at the SPA Co-op...and it's salmon! We've recently switched our salmon and seafood supplier from Loki Fish Co. to Lummi Island Wild (LIW), in addition to looking for new, sustainable fisheries. Lummi Island Wild is leading the way in sustainable seafood on the Pacific Northwest coast with their use of reefnet fishing, which was once practiced throughout that region by many indigenous peoples. In fact, LIW works cooperatively with Lummi Nation tribal members to implement reefnet fishing!

Reef-netting occurs during the flood tide, which pushes the salmon to follow artificial reefs and over a small net that is suspended between two stationary platforms. Spotters stand on 20-foot towers and respond to salmon swimming over the net by raising it up so the live fish are rolled onto a platform at the waterline. This ensures the fish isn't harmed since the fish are transferred to a live well open to the seawater. They are able to rest, which reduces the amount of lactic acid that builds up. At this point the fisher-folks can sort unwanted bycatch, or other fish that get caught and aren't included in the harvest. The salmon are processed quickly and individually, so as to result in the highest quality salmon available in the world. Overall, this passive fishing method utilizes electric motors, therefore reducing the dependence on fossil fuels, utilizing solar panels to charge the batteries, and the reef-netting equipment is anchored to the sea floor so as to reduce their carbon footprint. As if all of these factors weren't enough, their shipping and delivery service is incredibly convenient for the needs of our small store and even smaller freezer space. You can try out the small portions at 6oz, or commit to a large fillet, which can easily be cut into 4-7 servings. We also carry their smoked Keta and Sockeye salmon, scallops, and you can look for their shelf-stable salmon chowder! Have questions or suggestions? Email [taylorc@spacoop.com](mailto:taylorc@spacoop.com) (:

PS: Bodin Fisheries is fish-out for the foreseeable future. We are looking for suitable replacements for Great Lakes Whitefish and Lake Trout so if you have recommendations, please let us know!





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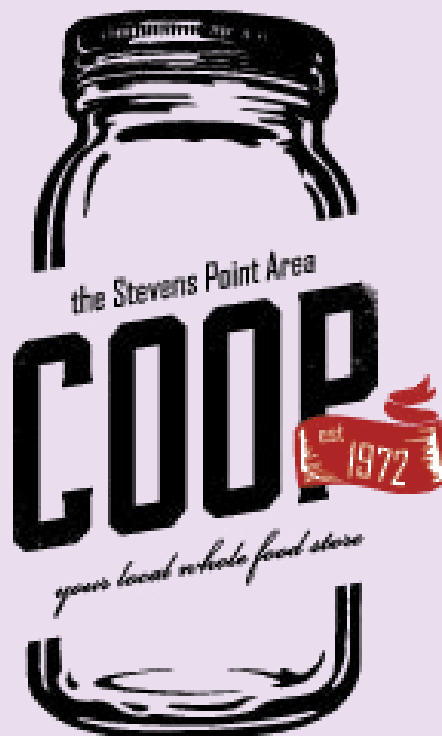
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