



the COOPERATIVE

spirit

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM 3/23**
- Reduced Hours 7 AM - 6:00 PM 3/31**
- Easter Reduced Hours 7 AM - 6:00 PM 4/4**
- Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM 4/27**

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Call for Candidates

Although it may not seem like it, spring is right around the corner. That means it's almost time for our annual Spring General Membership Meeting, held this year on Sunday, May 23rd at 6:00 PM. One key part of this meeting is our Board of Directors elections. We currently have 3 open positions. All candidates will have the opportunity to speak to the membership at the General Membership Meeting.

Board members must participate actively in the affairs of the cooperative, including regular attendance at board and management circle meetings, review of pertinent information and data, and overseeing the management of the Stevens Point Area Cooperative. Board members are in a position of trust with the cooperative and must not abuse this relationship to enrich themselves. If a Board member acts in good faith, is careful and deliberate in their actions, and avoids financial self-dealing, they will encounter no difficulties in fulfilling their legal duties to the cooperative. The special characteristics of a cooperative business require that the directors be sensitive to the needs of the members and make sure the members are educated so that they can exercise their rights. Compensation for serving on the Board of Directors includes a 20% membership discount.

Eligible candidates must be members of the SPA Co-op and attend at least one BOD meeting prior to the election at the GMM. BOD meetings are currently held in person on the 2nd floor of the Co-op or virtually. You can find the virtual links to the meetings on our website at <https://www.spacoop.com/board-of-directors> near the bottom of the page in the agendas.

Remaining BOD meetings before the GMM include:

Tuesday, March 23rd at 5:30 PM

Tuesday, April 27th at 5:30 PM

Candidates must submit their written nomination including a 150-word biography and photo to Communications@spacoop.com by Sunday May 16th, 2021. Candidates and their biographies will be added to the website as they are received. Write-in nominations will be accepted at the GMM. Nominations received before April 2nd 2021 will also be included in the May/June newsletter. One vote per membership. Absentee voting by those unable to make the GMM will take place in-store and online between Monday, May 17th through Friday, May 21st. The official election will take place at the GMM on Sunday May 23rd.

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FOOD SWAMPS: AN OVERABUNDANCE OF UNHEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

In our last newsletter, we examined food deserts and the effect they have on the health of those who reside in them. To review, a food desert is an area where access to fresh, healthy options are limited, causing the residents to be forced to shop at convenience stores or gas stations. The lack of access to healthy foods in these food deserts is a leading cause of obesity in America. Comparatively, there are many areas in the United States where there is an overwhelming amount of food options available, but it is mostly highly processed, nutrition deficient, fast food and restaurant options. These areas are known as “food swamps”. Recent studies have shown that these food swamps may have a bigger impact on obesity than food deserts.

While food deserts are about lack of access to fresh foods, food swamps are an overwhelming amount of access to the “wrong” kinds of food. These two issues may overlap in some areas, but generally they are two separate entities. It is estimated that for every healthy food option there are four unhealthy food options available in a food swamp. Establishments in these areas typically have a low cost of food which makes the risk of overconsumption high. When there are healthier choices available, they may be expensive by comparison. For example, McDonalds has salads available to consumers, but also has a dollar menu where four double cheeseburgers are the same price as a salad. The cost factor for the amount of food one gets is likely to unfavorably sway the food-related decision consumers are making, especially if families have multiple children to feed.




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Disrupting a food swamp is not always as simple as introducing a grocery store. The Journal of the American Association published a study which showed that the presence of a grocery store doesn't make residents more likely to buy fresh produce or other healthy options.



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Although food deserts were the focus of this particular study, it parallels food swamps and our tendency to choose quick, convenient meals. We are a country of convenience. It's much easier to swing by a fast food chain on your way home from work as opposed to stopping at a grocery store, picking up ingredients, waiting to check out, driving home, and making the meal. Having access to healthy food is important, but knowing what to do with fresh and minimally processed food really happens in kitchens and consumers' ability to cook. Figuring out ways for consumers to find these foods and become comfortable cooking must play a part in navigating today's food swamps and improving our overall health and well-being. There is no one answer for disrupting food swamps and food deserts. When people have access to healthier choices and also have food education, they are being given knowledge of how their food is grown and what impact it has on their mind and body which will, in turn, help them embrace healthier choices.

(Read the full study from the Journal of American Association here: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1106078>).

TAKE YOUR GARDEN TO THE NEXT LEVEL

The Hillcrest Farm Factory, located in Custer, WI, will facilitate the development of new, regenerative farms in Central Wisconsin. Our purpose is to provide guidance and support for those who are interested in starting their own organic agricultural journeys, as well as cultivate a community of emerging farmers through direct participation in our local food system.

This may sound like a lofty mission, but rest assured we are firmly grounded when we say this is something that Central Wisconsin needs, and something that Central Wisconsin can achieve. We won't lie and tell you it will be easy, but the first step is as simple as joining one of our two programs: the Allotment program or the Incubator program.

The Allotment program is for anyone who thinks their backyard garden just isn't cutting it anymore and that they need to take it to the next level. Under this program you get an $\frac{1}{8}$ acre lot that is tilled, with access to water, shared resources, and communal experience. This $\frac{1}{8}$ acre is for whatever you want to do - veggies, trees, shrubs, bees, chickens, or whatever else you have your mind set on.

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The Incubator program is, on the other hand, a bit more of a serious endeavor. This program will get you on the land to start growing your enterprise, as well as set you up with a Central Wisconsin farmer mentor to help you navigate the process. If you've always dreamed of making a living working with the land, or want to provide an agricultural resource for our community that you think is missing, this program was made with you in mind. Your project can be anything related to organic agriculture organized in any way, but we would especially love to help you build it as a cooperative!

We'd like to thank our kind friends at Pisarski Funeral Home for being thoughtful, generous neighbors for many years!



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Frank Pisarski, Jr. ~ Frank Pisarski, Sr. ~ David Pisarski

John G. Suchon ~ Pete Jacoby

But, of course, it's never just as easy as "doing." In our minds, these are just the starting points that'll, eventually, help us accomplish our simple goals: grow the number of farmers in Central WI by increasing access to land, resources, and community support; shift the power and decision making in agriculture away from factory farms to a community that stewards the land; create a greater diversity of local farms and services they offer; change the perceptions about farmers and farming in our Central WI community; and help new farmers to be independent and interdependent. It will take work to get there, but every journey starts with a first step.

Do either of our programs pique your interest? Do you want to help us accomplish our mission, and achieve our goals? Head to cooperativepoint.com/farm-factory to learn more about Hillcrest Farm Factory, our Incubator and Allotment programs, and to fill out the interest forms.

-Lyn Ciurro

Do you know how...When you were a kid,

You were completely fascinated with nature?

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URBAN AGRICULTURE: A SOLUTION TO FOOD INSECURITY

In many cities, people are combating food insecurity with urban agriculture. We've touched on this subject before in previous newsletters, but what does it really mean? Urban agriculture is the cultivation, harvest, and distribution of garden fresh food in and around urban areas of the country. The distribution of the food is a key factor in defining urban agriculture as well as what separates it from community gardening. In community gardening, the food that is grown is being grown for personal consumption or sharing. Urban agriculture assumes a level of commerce, the growing of products to be sold, to places like restaurants, farmers markets, or donated to local soup kitchens or churches. The commerce of urban agriculture doesn't mean that it is a big business, in fact, in many situations it's the opposite. You don't need acres of land or a lot of capital to start your own urban farm. It reminds us that just because you live in the city, it doesn't mean you can't fulfill your dream of starting a business in agriculture or a community garden space.

The most obvious way in which urban agriculture is thought to increase food security and nutrition is improved access to food. We've learned that through food deserts and food swamps, households with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables tend to choose less nutritious "convenience foods". Homegrown foods increase the total amount of food available to a household which can help prevent hunger and malnutrition. Throughout the pandemic, consumers and businesses are both seeing an increase in empty shelves, as distributors are having a harder time getting products. Through urban agriculture, people have more direct access to food and the availability of products isn't as much of an issue. In addition, when food is grown on a smaller scale in a community, it generally stays within that community and creates more food security for families in lower-income areas.

We live in a time in which many people don't understand where their food comes from or how it's grown; connecting people with their food closes the gap. It's important to get people to think about where their food is coming from. By doing that, you're fighting food insecurity. Urban agriculture is done on a much smaller scale than traditional agriculture, but the impact can be immense.

What are some examples of urban agriculture?

Vertical farming

Vertical farming works well in urban agriculture because it maximizes space. Farmers can grow indoors year-round by controlling light, temperature, water, and sometimes carbon dioxide levels as well. In vertical farming, plants are placed on shelves. Plants can be stacked on top of each other with grow lights to provide enough light. You can stack three or four shelves of plants on top of each other and suddenly you're growing 300% to 400% more plants than what you could otherwise fit in that space. Crops can be grown on the side of buildings or fences with vining plants or mounting planters. Often times, vertical farms are placed in unused shipping containers and placed in unused parking lots, community spaces, or even city parks.

Rooftop farming

Rooftop farming is exactly what it sounds like- people are turning their rooftops into profitable farming. Raised beds, greenhouses, bees, even farming small animals are all a possibility of rooftop farming; it all depends on how comfortable the owner of the building is. Bare roofs in cities absorb and radiate heat, but rooftop farms help keep buildings cool and ultimately reduce carbon emissions.

Hydroponics

It may be odd to think of gardening without soil, but that's exactly what hydroponics is all about. It is the cultivation of plants without using soil but supplied with nutrient-rich solutions, oxygen, and water. This type of gardening leads to rapid growth, stronger yields, and superior quality. Hydroponic systems work by allowing extensive control over environmental conditions which reduces many risk factors such as pests, diseases, and wildlife. The unpredictability of growing plants outdoors is removed when using hydroponics. Without these obstacles, plants can grow rapidly which leads to more production and more product sold.

Micro Farming

You don't have to live in a concrete jungle to practice urban farming. Micro farming is a way to get creative and come up with ways to maximize your yield in the small space you have. Ideas like square foot gardening allow you to maximize the amount of plants you can fit in a given area by segmenting your garden beds.

Interested in urban agriculture? Check out this toolkit from USDA for more information <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/urban-agriculture-toolkit.pdf>

MASK UPDATE

Regardless of the status of the state mandates, we feel it is important to our business that we continue to ensure the safety of both our customers and staff, by maintaining our current policy of requiring masks in the store. We would like to take a moment to thank our members for helping to keep our staff and community safe by wearing your mask. Combined with other preventative measures, the mask mandate has kept all of our staff happy, healthy, and covid-free. While we understand that there may be some people who don't prefer to wear a mask, we appreciate everyone for complying with our policy by wearing masks that properly cover your mouth and nose.



On June 23rd 2020, the SPA Co-op Board of Directors voted in favor of a storefront re-opening proposal presented by the SPAC staff. The Board is a collection of community representatives, elected to their positions by the Co-op's Membership. A key part of this proposal was implementing a mask requirement while inside the SPAC building.

For your convenience, we offer disposable masks at no charge. If you're unable to wear a mask for any reason, we want you to know we value your business and have other options for you to continue to support us and access our products. Currently, we are accepting phone orders Monday 7:00 AM - 8:00 PM and Tuesday - Sunday from 7:00 AM - 9:00 AM. We accept online orders at any time and we fill those orders every Monday. You can also have your groceries delivered right to your doorstep via bicycle with our partnership with Curbwise LLC. For any questions or to place a phone order, call our storefront at 715-341-1555 or go to our website at www.spacoop.com.



The Board is always available to receive your feedback, and if you wish to address the Board of Directors in person or virtually, meetings are hosted at 5:30 PM on the 4th Tuesday of every month. You can find the virtual links to the meetings on our website at <https://www.spacoop.com/board-of-directors> near the bottom of the page in the agendas. You can also email info@spacoop.com or bod_spac@spacoop.com with any questions, comments, or concerns.

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SUPERFOODS: FEATURED PRODUCTS

Check out these superfood products stocking our shelves.

Reishi Mushroom Powder - Located in our bulk herbs section, this mushroom powder is nutritious and full of antioxidants. Reishi mushrooms have been known to boost your immune system and may also have some cancer fighting properties. In some cases, people who consume reishi mushrooms have seen decreased signs of fatigue and depression. Because it's in a powder form, you can easily add this to smoothies or tea to get all the benefits.

Pure Bliss Carob Fig Hazelnut Bars - These bars include relaxing ayurvedic herbs such as ashwagandha turmeric, both of which are known to help with stress relief. In addition, these bars also include other superfoods like cashews and figs.

Maple Bee Acres Organic Pasture Raised Eggs - Every egg has 6 grams of protein but just 72 calories. Eggs also have all nine essential amino acids and are rich in vitamins A, B12, B2 and B5, choline, selenium, iron and phosphorus making them one of the most nutritious foods on the planet. They are also high in the antioxidants zeaxanthin and lutein which are good for eye health. Not only are they a nutrition powerhouse but these hens forage locally on pasture, meaning they feed off of the local flora and fauna of our area and make your microbiome a happy place.



Jake's Ginger Juice, 4 oz. or 64 oz. - Ginger root contains antioxidants, is effective for managing nausea and reducing pain from inflammation. It may also reduce your risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, dementia and certain cancers. Our refrigerated grocery buyer Annette swears by these ginger shots as a natural replacement for tylenol or advil to mediate acute inflammatory pain from headaches, sore muscles, or menstrual pain.



And did we mention Jake is local? While they currently operate out of Sheboygan, the company's namesake "Jake" grew up in Stevens Point! Jake's Ginger Juice is cut with a bit of lemon juice and water to take the bite off. Take it as a shot, add it to a cocktail or juice, or your favorite smoothie recipe!

Navitas Organics Superfood+ Greens Blend - This mix has certified organic wheatgrass, kale powder, and moringa powder perfect for detoxing and restoring alkalinity for whole system health. This mix brings together three powerfully nutritious and cleansing superfoods; a simple teaspoon added to your smoothie can boost your daily green intake.

Nativas Organics Superfood+ Adaptogen Blend - Maca, reishi, and ashwagandha combine in this superfood blend. These are three of the most potent adaptogens. Adaptogens help work regulate our hormones, sleep, and mood to help us build energy. Adding adaptogens to your diet helps your body handle every day stresses.

Burmeister Ginseng: From Wausau, WI Since 1909! We've got ginseng available in many forms including capsule, tincture, powder, tea, bulk root, and coming soon bar soap! Ginseng is a known adaptogen and has been shown to reduce cytokines related to inflammation and to help regulate cortisol levels. Regulating cortisol levels helps reduce that feeling of being "stressed out" which in turn has many health benefits such as weight loss, blood sugar, athletic performance, and mood. Burmeister does not use pesticides or herbicides, only organic and biodegradable fungicides and very sparingly. They are a green friendly, bee-friendly operation and sponsors of "United Plant Savers" which is a charity tasked with saving endangered medicinal plant species.

STAFF FAVORITES

Jessica Lawson:

- Acure Incredibly Clear Mattifying Moisturizer
- SoFresh Flossing toothbrushes
- Soul Spring Serenity CBD Bath Bomb
- Beauty Full Day Herbal Deodorant (any scent)

Deanna Kujawa:

- Everyone Lotion, Unscented or Lemon
- Kiss My Face Roll on Deodorant, Patchouli
- Rosewater Spray

Brittany Waite:

- Mykind Organics Women's Multi
- Acure Everyday Eczema Lotion
- Rabbit Whole Herbs Calendula Spray

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Have a suggestion? Have an idea? Feel free to email one of our board members with your thoughts!

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LOCAL PRODUCE CASE PROGRAM 2.0

In 2020 we sold over ONE TON of local fruits and vegetables in case amounts- that's a lot of delicious weight! We started off the local case purchasing in the spring with the third year of the Local Produce Case Program (LPCP). This model was adapted from Central Rivers Farmshed's Local Food Buying Club, which included the purchasing of local produce at their peak season at a reduced bulk price. The LPCP here at the SPA Co-op has involved a pre-order system where members put deposits on cases of products they will receive throughout the growing season. This allowed farmers to plan their crops accordingly, and encouraged bulk produce purchases with the incentive of a lower price per pound. We sold 75 total cases through the LPCP in 2020.

After the LPCP wrapped up, I was contacted by farmers who still had a LOT of produce left. The Co-op would likely eventually buy that produce to sell in the storefront, but it also seemed like a great opportunity for an impromptu Local Case Sale. Products were mostly storage items such as carrots, beets, onions, apples, and cabbages. To order cases, customers could fill out the online form at spacooop.com/produce, email me directly at taylorc@spacoop.com, or place a special order with storefront staff. After compiling the requests, I would place the orders with local farms on Monday morning, with the produce being delivered later that week. Once delivered, the customer was contacted to come pick up their beautiful produce...and that's it! In the span of just a few weeks, 80 cases were sold, delivered, and received by customers (and we're still receiving orders!).

With the success and relative ease of this abbreviated sale, and after talking with participating farmers at our annual farmer meetings, it was decided that having a continuous Local Produce Case Program would be beneficial for all. The amount of case pre-orders in the old system weren't enough to affect the farmer's projections and in a continuous model, we can respond to seasonal fluctuations in product availability. So what does this look like for someone who wants to buy a case of a local product? Or wants to know what's available? The easiest way is to check out the Local Produce Case Program form on spacoop.com/produce. In early summer, when more local produce is available in case amounts, you can look for signs on products in the produce section that are available in bulk. Lastly, you can always reach out to me with any questions or suggestions at taylorc@spacoop.com. Thanks to everyone who participated in the Local Produce Case Program and Local Case Sale in 2020! Let's hope you eat it all up so you can participate in the LPCP 2021 (:

-Taylor Christiansen, produce buyer

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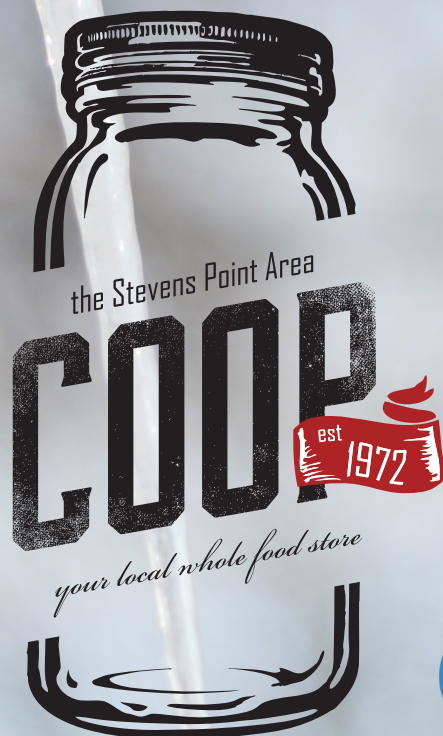
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