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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Fall is upon us and that means it's time for one of our two yearly General Membership meetings! This year, our fall GMM will be held virtually to ensure the safety of our staff, board, and members. You probably have heard about our GMM before, but do you know what it means, or why they're important?

The General Membership Meetings are an integral part of our cooperative structure as a meeting put aside specifically for the entire membership to convene. We have two GMMs per year: one in the spring and one in the fall. These meetings are used for: Board updates and spring elections; sharing financial information and other presentations by staff, Board, and members; voting on any bylaw changes by the membership as a whole; and giving our membership a forum space to bring any issues, concerns, feedback, or support they wish to voice.

As a co-op, we place a high value on sharing information widely with our membership, and the GMM is a great opportunity to truly keep everyone abreast of what progress is being made at the Co-op. As we host our fall GMM, we want to again reach out and encourage all of our members to attend. Is there a burning question you have? Is there something you would like to recommend or see changed? This is your time! Keep your eyes peeled for our virtual link. Our Co-op is our community, which is the biggest reason why the GMM matters: we want to meet you, get to know you, hear your opinions, and continue to work toward creating a great experience for everyone who enters our doors. So, please, won't you join us at the Fall GMM on November 7th? We want to hear your voice and share with you.

-Michelle Nieuwenhuis

UPCOMING EVENTS

11/7 General Membership Meeting

11/23 Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM

12/24 Christmas Eve:
Reduced Hours
7:00 AM - 3:00 PM

12/25 Christmas Day:
Co-op closed

12/28 Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM

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Sunday-Saturday:

7:00 am - 9:00 am Curbside Orders
9:00 am - 8:00 pm In-Store Shopping

Bicycle Deliveries:

Mondays 9:00 am - 1:00 pm
Wednesdays 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

BENEFITS OF LOCAL, THE COST OF CONVENIENCE

We live in an era of convenience - we want to have our needs met almost instantly and there'll be hell to pay if we can't. This is a constant struggle for us at the Co-op and the question on our mind is always how we can change our store to keep up with this growing need while staying true to our values and priorities. There is no easy answer to this, at least not one that we've found. Unfortunately for some, this may leave the Co-op seeming like an inconvenient option rather than the best spot in town to get their groceries and body care options. They want to be able to go into a store, leave as quickly as possible, and not think about the store until they have to come back in again - aka, the complete antithesis of what it means to shop at the Co-op

Before you start calling us all curmudgeonly old fogeys yelling at things we don't understand and stuck in our ways, let us explain. We don't deny that convenience can be good, and in fact it is behind a lot of human innovation. We can't all be expected to grow our own food and also work our other jobs or run our other businesses; being able to go to a grocery store and buy our food is incredibly convenient for us and allows us to accomplish more with each day we have. There is a line to this convenience, however, and we as a culture are losing sight of what it means to step from one side of this line to the other.

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There is a hidden cost to convenience that is very easy to ignore. In fact, that's what most megacorporations hope you'll do; ignore the cost that their convenient products create for the world. While the dollar amount you pay at big box store for mass produced items might be reduced, the increased levels of pollution required to manufacture the products, the increased packaging on the product, the number of laborers who aren't being paid enough to create the product, and the transportation infrastructure to ship that product to you add up before you know it. But this isn't the cost you see when you're in the aisle comparing products. Do you go with the locally made and ethically sourced yet slightly pricier option, or do you buy the one that is mass produced and wrapped in plastic but a little less expensive? If you're just looking at the prices, the choice seems obvious.

Let's flip the script a little here. We can harp on the negatives of convenience all day, but this doesn't really change your way of thinking. Instead of trying to shame you into changing your habits, we want to focus on the blatant benefits of shopping local and buying from smaller businesses. Here are some facts from Shift Workspaces showcasing exactly why small businesses are so kickass:

- A local business will generate 70% more local activity per square foot than a big box store
- Local shops will produce a net annual return of \$326 per 1,000 square foot compared to a net annual deficit of \$468 per 1,000 square foot for big box stores
- The money we spend locally will generate three and a half times more wealth for the local economy compared to chain-owned businesses
- If every U.S. family spent an additional \$10 per month at a local shop, the result would be an additional \$9.3 billion directly returned to the local economy
- Nearly 60% of workers at local businesses report a high commitment score to the business compared to only 39% at chains, which results in better customer service and an improved buying experience
- Buying local helps immigrants; 28% of all main street businesses are owned and operated by immigrants and from 2000-2013, 48% of the overall US growth of business ownership was attributed to immigrant business owners

While stats and figures are important, we think there's something more that happens when you shop local and especially when you shop at a community owned business like our Co-op. There's a special power that places like us have; we're made up of individuals from within the community, but because we are pooling our energies and resources together we can accomplish so much more than any of us could on our own. Yes, part of this is buying groceries to sell to the community, but we do so much more than sell food at the Co-op. We're a gathering space for radical folks. We're an incubator to help people learn what it means to work in a cooperative organizing model. We're influencers, and change-makers, and we can be all these things and more because we're a small business with a large community.

Think about this on the upcoming Small Business Saturday, and every other day of the year. Will you prioritize convenience? Or will you prioritize valuing your community? Will you go with what's easy? Or will you do what needs to be done to make our local economy more resilient? The choice is yours, but we know what we'll be choosing.

-Lyn Ciurro

CENTRAL CITY MARKET

We've written to you PLENTY of times about our involvement in the Central City Market - you know, the soon-to-be coolest food hub/bakery/tap room/warehouse/cidery/on and on and on in all of Central WI (it's easy to say that, because it's probably the one and only!). And guess what: we're doing it again! I'd say sorry, but we're honestly not. This partnership of local food enterprises and community leaders saved a historic, beautiful building from being demolished, and we're already showing how a community-led initiative can inspire others to come forward and chase their dreams.

We are sorry about one thing, though. We've neglected to tell you about the most important piece in the Central City Market puzzle: YOU!

The Central City Market obviously could not exist without folks like the Main Grain Bakery, and Altenburg Dairy, and Upstream Cider, and Tapped, and Fed Up Foods, and Company Cooperative, and I could go on listing the influential players all page. However, we could not do what we're doing without folks like you. You, who cares about how your food is produced. You, who cares about supporting local businesses. You, who is part of the fighting local food movement. Heck, you may have even been one of the founders of the local food movement. Without folks like you, who care so much, we would not have a reason to exist and a community base from which we could flourish.

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If we just described you (and I have a strong feeling we did, otherwise you wouldn't be reading our Co-op's newsletter), and you want to be even more supportive than you already are, please consider following the Central City Market social media accounts and signing up for the newsletter by visiting centralcitymarket.com. You'll get the latest and greatest updates on the building renovations, events, and when the doors open to the public.

Now, if you want to go above and beyond and really step up for the local food movement there is another option. Renovating an older building is not cheap, especially with how awesome we're making it. That's why the Central City Market is flexing its cooperative powers and offering stock options to our community! Every investment made goes right into renovating and preparing the Market, and comes with a fixed rate of return for you.



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We'll be real, this is not a way for you to make beaucoup bucks with a quick rate of return. If that's what you're after, you're better off looking somewhere else. However, if you have some flexible income and want to use it to make cool things happen in your neck of the woods, then your money could go a long way if you invest it in the Central City Market.

There are some boring (but important, I guess) legal details and more information you're probably looking for that we can't tell you in this article (I'd make a joke about being over word count as it is, but that takes up more of my precious Cooperative Spirit space). If you are interested in learning more about the nitty gritty, reach out to the Central City Market team by filling out the form at this webpage - centralcitymarket.com - or emailing them directly at centralcitymarket@gmail.com.

If investment is not in the stars for you right now, be sure to follow the project on Facebook and Instagram and share with your friends and family about the cool stuff going on right here in Pointe. Money definitely will help us achieve our dreams, but more important than that is the community support we need to succeed in building a cooperative that will survive for years to come.

Thank you for being you, and thank you for caring!

-Lyn Ciarro

THE STEVENS POINT AREA CO-OP: A YEAR IN REVIEW

It's no secret the last few years have been full of changes for everyone and every business in Stevens Point. We've been busy during these years at the Co-op too. We developed a phone & online alternative shopping experience, combined it with in-store shopping, and now we use both methods to best serve our customers. We purchased the house to the north, tested out our landlord hat for a bit, and now we're working out the logistics of how to expand our storefront. These are the big, ongoing changes you've already heard all about, but what about all the other cooler, "smaller scale, big changes" the Co-op has done this year? There are a lot of ins and outs and moving parts to the Co-op, and we're doing our best to tighten up the nuts and bolts.

You might remember earlier in the year we sent out a food survey to the community; hopefully you participated in it. Well, that single food survey received over 400 responses! How fantastic is it that so many members of our community participated in a conversation about local food? We were ecstatic to have received so many responses and were eager to implement the suggestions brought to our attention.

BYE BYE PLASTICS

A consistent response we received was the removal of single use plastics in our produce department. Our kale, bunched herbs, bunched roots, and celery are no longer wrapped in an effort to reduce the store's overall plastic usage. You'll now see our storefront staff misting our produce section throughout the day. In another effort to reduce our plastics, the Co-op has installed a nut grinder for our peanuts! Customers can now bring in their own jars to fill with delicious peanut butter.

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SEE YOU NEVER, PALM OIL

Much like the removal of plastics in produce, we received many responses regarding the use of palm oil in our products. Acting fast, the Movement Circle developed a plan to audit our products that contained palm oil. With the help of our staff and working members, the Co-op was able to make a list of palm oil products. We learned a lot along the way, as well.

Did you know that sometimes producers will list palm oil under other names too? We're working hard and plugging away at our complete store list, eliminating items that contain palm oil and replacing them with better alternatives. We're digging deep into our product standards and what they mean to us and our customers, hammering out the details of products so that we can feel good about where our food comes from. This is definitely going to be one of those big, ongoing projects, but we're chipping away at it and feeling good about what we've done.

WE ♥ OUR WAREHOUSE

Let's talk about another one of those big, ongoing projects you've heard so much about: The Cook Altemburg Cooperative warehouse. It's no secret that this is a BIG project. We're very excited because we've begun utilizing our space in the warehouse. By storing our products at the warehouse, we can buy in bulk which ultimately leads to more deals for you, our customers. It feels great to have gotten to this point and we look forward to continuing to effectively use our warehouse space.



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GIVE OUR PRODUCE SOME SUGAR

Another big win for the Co-op was switching up our Local Produce Case Program. When this program was first introduced, you could only place one early season order. You know the Co-op loves to bring local produce to our community, so we decided to make the Local Produce Case Program available year round. This year to date, we've sold over 80 cases of local produce. We're stoked to get all that produce to our community and help out our local farmers and economy. In fact, local farmers and local vendors have been a savior to the Co-op this year. With decreased availability of products from our bigger vendors, the Co-op has relied even more on our smaller vendors this year; that's what the Co-op is all about, right?

GRAB-N-GO IS HERE TO STAY

It feels appropriate to mention our newest department: Deli! Well, it's not super new; deli was actually established in 2020, but we just want to point out its incredible success and growth this year. Our deli sales have nearly doubled over the last year and we are so incredibly proud and thankful to be able to serve you with quick grab-and-go products. We look forward to continuing to develop this ever growing department. We've recently expanded into fruit and veggie trays. Be sure to check them out the next time you're in our store.





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SMALL BIZ, BIG IMPACT

Throughout 2021, the Co-op has been further establishing partnerships with other small businesses. You've probably noticed our Small Business Spotlight articles (located on page 7) that have been in the last few newsletters. This is something we're really excited about around here. We love the idea of educating our readers about new (and old!) small businesses in the area who may not have found out about them otherwise. We've partnered with Process & Bound to Happen Books in numerous events and look forward to continuing to grow our relationship with them as well as other businesses. In addition to partnerships, we also began distributing our newsletters to various small businesses. For a long time, the only way to the Cooperative Spirit was to be a member of the Co-op, but we figured, why hog all the fun? We hope every member of this community takes a peek at our newsletter and gives it a try.

SPREADING THE LOVE

The Stevens Point Area Co-op takes donated bag and container credits, our spare change box, and 1% of our Friday sales and donates it to nominated local organizations that give back to the community. The Co-op has donated almost \$3,000 to the 2021 organizations so far, and there are still two months to go. In addition, the Co-op also has Produce for the People where two organizations that help reduce food insecurity in Portage County receive the proceeds of our discounted produce bin sales for six months of the year to aid them in their efforts. The Co-op has donated over \$600 to help those organizations eliminate food insecurity.

WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF CREATIVE HEADINGS

You may have also noticed the little pantry located on the east side of the building. This was developed in the summer in an effort to help with food access in the community and it's been amazing and inspiring to see the cycle of it filling up and emptying again and again. The Co-op is proud to serve a community that takes a stand against food insecurity.

LOOKING INWARDS


A more "behind the scenes" change that has been implemented this year was a focus on the Co-op's employees. We want to support our staff with professional and personal development so this year we've been focusing on discussing boundaries and ways to respond to harassment from others. This is something we've taken very seriously at the Co-op this year and as the We the People Circle works hard to update our employee manual, we've also all completed a harassment training from CAP Services. We want our employees, customers, and working members to all feel safe while in the Co-op.

Speaking of working members, our working member program has EXPLODED! It's been doing so well that we've actually had to put a cap on the number of working members that we can have. We currently have 20 working members helping out in our storefront and we couldn't be more grateful for them. But if you're interested in becoming a working member, please still drop by our store and fill out an application, we keep them on file.

These are just a few of the many, many things the Stevens Point Area Co-op has been up to this last year. It's no doubt there are big changes on the horizon and many things to look forward to for the Co-op, but it's important to stop and appreciate the little things we've done throughout the year too. Did you see something cool happen at the Co-op this year that wasn't mentioned? Send an email to newsletter@spacoop.com and we'll post it to our social media!

-Michelle Nieuwenhuis

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FEATURED PRODUCTS: HOLIDAY GOODIES

Check out these seasonal products for the holidays from the Co-op! Who knows, we may even keep them around longer.



Pumpkin Cheesecake, Daiya - Imagine a vegan pumpkin pie mixed with a gluten free cheesecake...delicious!

Pumpkin Coffee Spices, Simply Organic - It wouldn't be fall if we didn't have pumpkin spice coffee.

Elderberry Syrup Making Kit, Frontier - With cold season coming in hot, this elderberry syrup making kit will help fight off those colds. A perfect gift for the holidays, too!

Salted Caramel Ice Cream, SassyCow - It may be cold, but it's never too cold for some ice cream.



Pumpkin Bread, Valley's Own - Because there can never be too many pumpkin things around this time of the year, right?

Halloween Giggles, YumEarth - No high fructose corn syrup, no artificial dyes, non-GMO and made with simple ingredients; a candy you can feel good about.



Mark S. Ensweiler, D.C., L. Ac., LBT
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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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SMALL BUISNESS SPOTLIGHT: WOOL EXCHANGE

The Wisconsin Wool Exchange, located at 1009 First Street, has a wealth of beautiful yarn and fiber for crafters. In addition, there is a wide range of hand-crafted fiber-related items including handknit socks, needle-felted animals, a dragon or two, warm hats and mittens, and much more. The store opened in Amherst in 2009 with co-owners Jacque Templin and Maud LaMarche. Two years later the store opened at its present location on First Street in Stevens Point. In 2016 Maud and Jackie decided to move on to other adventures and Pat Herman, Bonnie Beverstock, and Susan Kirsch became the new owners. When Susan moved to Missouri in 2019, Margaret Parsons became an owner in her place.



Most of the yarn and roving that is sold comes from local producers - frequently a local sheep or alpaca farm - where the animals are raised, shorn for their fleece, then on to yarn, fiber, and other finished products. Fiber is available for spinners, weavers, knitters, crocheters, felters, and many other crafters. One customer said she used the hand-dyed alpaca locks to make jewelry. In addition to fleece, locks, and roving from sheep, llamas, and alpacas, there is soft angora rabbit fur and roving and yarn mixed with silk and other natural fibers. The selection of hand-spun and hand-dyed art yarn is unique and constantly changing. Sheepskins in different sizes and woven alpaca rugs make the softest home furnishings.

Although larger classes are currently on hold, individual or small group instruction is available for knitting, spinning, weaving, crocheting, dying fiber, and more. Make a pair of child's sheepskin slippers, a Christmas ornament, a hat, mittens, or learn to make something uniquely your own.

Special events are held throughout the year and include Pajama Day in January, our Anniversary Party in May, Knit-in-Public Day in June, our Fall Fiber Fashion Day in September, Halloween Party (with a dramatic reading of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven") in October, and Christmas Open House in November. Additional events feature some of our popular fiber artists who bring new items and talk about their artistic process and products. One of the most popular in recent years was Sandy Baldwin, demonstrating spinning from her angora rabbits, who were the stars of the show. This October, Audrey Hackbarth, another of our popular artists, will bring two of her alpacas, along with her lovely roving and yarn.



The Wisconsin Wool Exchange is a community, much more than a storefront. When the store is open there is always a table available for working on your craft project, usually with others. Spinners gather on Sunday afternoons and Tuesday evenings are Open Crafting nights from 7:00 - 8:30, open to anyone who would like to visit or get help with a current project. We are fortunate to be part of the best "strip mall" in the world, so anyone can get coffee or ice cream at Emy J's, breakfast or lunch from Zion Kitchen, and bakery from the Main Grain Bakery, then come next door to visit and create at the Wisconsin Wool Exchange.

Margaret Parsons, co-owner

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



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