SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2021

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UPCOMING EVENTS

9/28 Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM

9/30 Reduced Hours 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM

10/26 Board of Directors Meeting 5:30 PM

SPAC'S LOCAL PRODUCE CASE PROGRAM

Summer is at its peak, and the local produce does not disappoint. Farms are bringing in literal tons of produce from their fields and we'd like to sell it to you so you can preserve and enjoy it all year long! Whether you like to can, freeze, or dehydrate, there are endless ways to fill your pantries and freezers with local goodness. With our new ordering system for the Local Produce Case Program, it'll be easier than ever to plan out your food processing.

In the past we had an early sign up in the spring and orders would be fulfilled throughout the growing season. We wanted more people to have the opportunity to buy local produce cases, as well as respond to extra produce as it becomes available at local farms. So how do you get in on these produce cases? Let me tell you!

First off, you can go to spacoop.com/produce to subscribe to our email reminders. To make ordering your produce case easy for you, we'll send the link with the current offerings weekly.

You can always browse through the cases that are currently offered, commitment-free. The current offerings are updated weekly as we hear from the farmers. Once an order is placed, it should arrive about a week later, but we will call you so you know for sure. That means if you know you'll have time to process veggies next week, you should go on the website and order today! Most orders arrive the Wednesday or Thursday of the following week, and you'll have until the next Monday to pick up your case so the produce stays fresh.

This year we are working with Cattail Organics, Red Door Family Farm, Growing Earth Farm, Whitefeather Organics, and Rising Sand Organics. To see what they have available- head to our website! Questions about what's coming up or how the Local Produce Case Program works? Email taylorc@spacoop.com.

-Taylor Christiansen

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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

COOPERATIVES: A (VERY BRIEF) HISTORY

The United States is built on an unstable foundation of its own mythology. Popular beliefs about the nature of the men who founded the country - and, implicitly, the many others who were not allowed a voice in this act of creation - and their individual brilliance permeate our understanding of what it means to be successful. If one just pulls themselves up by their bootstraps and puts their nose to the grindstone they too can be successful. Those who can't do that? Well, their failure is their fault in this land brimming with opportunity.

Has the sarcasm dripped off the words and pooled under your newsletter yet? Contrary to the American mythos of self-interest and self-reliance stoked by conservative individualism (thanks a lot, Ayn Rand), the human species has survived to this day because of our innate communalism and cooperation and in spite of greed and repression. Humans have succeeded because we've worked together with our neighbors and human civilizations have burned because they've tried to lift themselves higher by stepping on others.

The history of human camaraderie and mutual aid is perhaps best exemplified in the modern era through cooperative associations - hey, that's what we are! Cooperatives have transformed over the years in an attempt to best meet the needs of their members, but the fundamental structure has remained the same: a group of individuals with a common need or goal come together, pooling their resources, knowledge, and experience in order to achieve more together than they could separately.

The first legal example of such a cooperative in the United States was a mutual fire insurance company started by Benjamin Franklin back in 1752 (I say legal because, let's be real here, people have put cooperative practices into action for far longer than the existence of corporations). While good old Benny Franks may have been the first, we can more clearly see the benefits of cooperatives through the consumer cooperative movement, both in the U.S. and abroad. Consumer cooperatives are prolific both in their volume and in their variety: farmers have formed associations to more affordably purchase supplies and equipment; many rural communities have electrical cooperatives that service their area; folks who live in food deserts can come together to purchase the foods they want by making direct partnerships with distributors. Though different in practice, the common thread between each is understanding that the economy and industries are not set up to work for the masses so the masses need to create a system that works for them. In the case of consumer cooperatives, this means purchasing goods, supplies, or resources in large quantities in order to sell cheaply to their members.

This was how our cooperative began in 1972, how many consumer food cooperatives continue to find success, and how cooperatives of the past were able to get food and supplies to their members who otherwise had to rely on company stores or starve. The prime historical example is the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers.

THE BEGINNING OF MODERN COOPERATIVES

While human history is full of human ingenuity and cooperation, most cooperative historians and scholars point to the Rochdale Pioneers as the archetype of cooperatives and beginning of what we would recognize today as a modern cooperative association. In the face of increasing levels of poverty - due in part to the exploitation of workers during the Industrial Revolution - a group of 28 weavers and skilled workers decided to pool their resources and open a general store. This is not unique: legal cooperatives had been around for almost 100 years at this point. The Rochdale Pioneers were revolutionary because of the mutually agreed upon rules that governed their association: The Rochdale Principles.

- That capital should be of their own providing and bear a fixed rate of interest
- That only the purest provisions procurable should be supplied to members
- That full weight and measure should be given
- That market prices should be charged and no credit given nor asked
- That profits should be divided pro rate upon the amount of purchases made by each member
- That the principle of 'one member one vote' should obtain in government and the equality of the sexes in membership
- That management should be in the hands of officers and committee elected periodically
- That a definite percentage of profits should be allotted to education
- That frequent statements and balance sheets should be presented to members

The Rochdale Pioneers marked a turning point in cooperative history not because they were the first cooperative association but because they were the first to require a patronage dividend and enshrine the value of one member, one vote. In essence, this meant that to be a member of the cooperative you had to earn it either through money or time and that you were not privileged over the other members if you had more of either to give. The Rochdale Pioneers set a patronage rate at 1 pound. This allowed them to gather what would roughly be 4000 pounds today to open their store with some basic necessities and burst open the floodgates of cooperative development.

MODERN COOPERATIVES + COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Cooperative associations have come and gone in waves since the Rochdale Pioneers, but the 1970s was a veritable tsunami of consumer cooperatives. You wouldn't have been able to swing a stick without hitting someone who was part of a cooperative, and in some cases sticks were purposely and rather violently swung at members of competing cooperatives. Minneapolis cooperatives were literally waging battles with rival food cooperatives, laying siege and occupying warehouses and storefronts due to ideological differences and limited resources.

Our humble little cooperative was part of this resurgence - though not part of the war - and one of the few food cooperatives who have survived to this day. Membership has changed considerably over the last 50 years, from our roots as a small buying club to a storefront with over 2,000 member households, more than 20 staff members, and over two million dollars in sales every year. For a timeline of this growth, go to page 4 or talk to any number of the founding members who still frequent the Co-op.

I'm sorry to do this, but I need to return us to the American mythology of rugged individualism as the conversation turns to recent changes to cooperative principles, culture, and legal statutes. What was once an organizational model that allowed folks with limited access the capital to create community resources is being diluted and transformed into a new way for capitalists to make more and more money. Wisconsin Senate Bill 281/Assembly Bill 353 was up for vote in 2017. These bills set out to change the Wisconsin cooperative statutes to allow cooperatives to permit non-members and outside investors to sit on their Boards of Directors, to restrict access to cooperative records, and to allow a greater than 8% return to capital investors. They would also allow cooperatives to base voting power on patronage rather than the fundamental cooperative principle of one member, one vote.

These changes may seem innocuous. After all, cooperatives wouldn't be forced to make any of these changes if they didn't want to. However for larger cooperatives such as in the agricultural, electric, and food industries, this could mean a silencing of members' voices if a select few with available capital bought more and more stock, meaning more and more power. Not only then could they use cooperatives as machines to increase their own personal wealth, they could fundamentally change the purpose and direction of the cooperative even if it's to the detriment of other members.

A version of this bill was passed, and large cooperatives and organizations of cooperatives have fundamentally changed because of it. Fortunately for us, advocacy efforts organized by individuals in our community (shout out to Oren Jakobson), as well as groups like the Wisconsin Farmers Union ensured that some provisions were removed or changed. Another great fortune for folks like us (folks who aren't interested in making stacks on stacks but instead to meet the needs of themselves and their communities), is that we can be part of the solution to this bastardization of cooperatives.

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The first step is easy: become active in your cooperatives! The next steps are harder - changing laws and social norms is typically difficult - but we can't even consider these steps until we begin. Start local with your Stevens Point Area Cooperative. Consider attending Board of Directors meetings or joining any of our management circles. For more information, email info@spacoop.com or check out our website at www.spacoop.com. Our Co-op wouldn't be what it is today without involvement from our members.

THE STATISTICS OF COOPERATIVES TODAY

- Over 50 thousand in US
- Over 3 million across the world
- More than 1 billion people are members of cooperatives
- Current ICA Principles
  - » Voluntary and open membership
  - » Democratic member control
  - » Members' economic participation
  - » Autonomy and independence
  - » Education, training, and information
  - » Cooperation among cooperatives
  - » Concern for community

Information for this article came from the following sources:

- University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives
- *History of Cooperatives* report
- Cultural Survival Magazine
- *Cooperatives: A Short History* article
- National Co+op Grocers Welcome to the Table
- *History of Co-ops* article
- John Curl's *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communalism in America book*

-Lyn Ciurro

OUR CO-OP HISTORY

It is the fall of 1972. A few members of the community of Stevens Point started a buying club where the food was delivered to a home on Clark and Division. These were the first few steps that created the Stevens Point Area Co-op as we now know it. Two years later, in the spring of 1974, a warehouse was purchased on the corner of Patch and Welsby and became a storefront. It wasn't until the winter of 1976 that the Co-op moved into its current location, the corner of 4th and 2nd street. Earthcrust Bakery was opened shortly after the Co-op moved into the new space. In addition to Earthcrust Bakery, a fabric and clothing store called Flax to Gold was opened in the corner that is now our HABA/Supplement corner. A few years later, Kangaroo's Pouch opened where the freezer is now, and served pita pockets and other goodies.

Mark S. Ensweiler, D.C., L. Ac., LBT
Charity Millard, D.C.
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The summer of 1997 was a big summer for the Steven's Point Area Co-op. A few of the general managers did a major reset of the building. The west windows were closed off, the floors were sanded, and new coolers and shelving brought in as well. Renovation continued until 2006 (although it's never really ended, has it?) with the upstairs finally being finished. Offices, kitchen, storage, and meeting spaces were moved upstairs.

Up until this point, the Stevens Point Area Co-op was managed by just a few people. The financials, outreach, human resources, facilities, and the flow of goods were all handled by one or two general managers that took on all of the responsibilities, decision making, and running of the Co-op.

Members could still engage with the Co-op through the General Membership meetings and Board of Directors, but access to creating the direction of the Co-op was limited to the general managers. Now, it's hard to imagine the Co-op operating any other way than collectively.

In 2016, the Stevens Point Area Co-op switched to operating as a collective management structure. One of the key aspects of a cooperative is that each member has as much say as any other member in the decision making processes. This looks different for every cooperative, but ours uses the format of Management Circles. Created by the Board of Directors, your Co-op's Management Circles are given the responsibility of managing the business in key ways. Right now, we have five management circles that oversee our business. These circles are open to every single member of our cooperative, and allow members to be actively engaged in the management of our Co-op, either by attending, reading minutes, or applying to be a voting member of any of our management circles.

Communications - The Communications Circle is the connective force between the Co-op and the community. This Circle does the work of promotions, member engagement, sponsorships and donations, and writing The Cooperative Spirit.

Movement - The Movement Circle is tasked with managing the flow of goods through the store, from ordering and delivery all the way to products being put into your basket and reusable shopping bag. They also coordinate the creation of our new warehouse in the Central City Market.

Numbers - The Numbers Circle is the Co-op's hub for financial reporting and analysis, business systems management, and financial education. In order to thrive as a cooperative business, we need to understand and diligently manage our finances.

Physical - The Physical Circle is responsible for our building, equipment, contracts, and IT hardware. We have a beautiful building that has been cared for and improved by our staff and members over the decades, and this circle is charged with maintaining everything that makes our building special.

We the People - The We the People (WtP) Circle works to maintain the heart of the Co-op by facilitating support for staff, maintaining optimum staffing, developing conflict resolution processes, and developing a working member program.

As we approach our 50th year of business, we want to thank you for your continued support of our little Co-op. Let's take a look at what the Co-op's management circles are up to now.

-Michelle Nieuwenhuis

WHAT'S YOUR CO-OP UP TO?

Movement Circle - The Movement circle has been hard at work making sure we are providing our members with products that reflect our mission statement and align with our values. Earlier in the year, we sent out a food survey to see what our membership looks for when buying groceries. We've taken your suggestions and done the best we can to accommodate your wants and needs. A recurring theme we saw in the surveys was a concern with palm oil in products, so the Movement circle has been doing a storewide audit to see which products contain it. It can be tricky, we've noticed, as palm oil can be disguised as many other names. It's been a tedious process, but we are making great progress. The Co-op prides itself in providing sustainable, ethical products for its members and nonmembers and always takes all product suggestions seriously. If you have a product suggestion or concern, email info@spacoop.com or talk to a cashier the next time you're in our store.

Communications Circle - Covid-19 has had a big effect on the communications circle. With cases still rising, we have had to put our outreach program on hold until 2022. We certainly miss hosting events in the upstairs part of our Co-op, but want everyone to feel safe. To combat this, the Stevens Point Area Co-op has been working hard to partner up with other small businesses in the area. You may have seen us working with Bound to Happen Books for the September 1st Artswalk as well as the Wine Walk on August 20th. The Co-op looks forward to continuing to collaborate with Bound to Happen Books along with many other small businesses in the area!

We the People Circle - The past few months have kept the We the People circle very busy! We've been working hard at completely updating our staff manual to make it clear and concise. We have also been creating a separate We the People manual to better refine our human resources processes. In addition, we've updated our application so that candidates can also apply directly online! We onboarded two new staff members and created our fall schedule which started in late August.

Physical Circle - "What's up with the Physical Circle these days?", you might ask. Good question. As you may or may not already know, Physical is tasked with the nuts and bolts facilities needs of the CO-OP. Lately though, it's been less nuts and bolts and more wires and plumbing. August has been a pretty big month for NEW stuff. In addition to updating and upgrading our WiFi system to accommodate the growing number of devices and users, we've also ran conduit for several new dedicated electrical circuits in the store: One to meet CO-TO-GO's Deli needs, and another to the Bulk area to power the NEW peanut butter grinding station (which should be chock full of peanuts, and ready to grind NOW)! And last but not least, on the plumbing/electrical front, is the addition of a commercial dishwasher in our kitchen! It has been called "the cutest dishwasher EVER!" And it probably is. When health safety concerns led us to single-use scoops for bulk goods, this required a lot of staff time washing dishes throughout the day. But not anymore! At just 18" wide, this little gem can clean and SANITIZE (at 190°F) a load of dishes in 2 MINUTES!

August is also the last month the CO-OP will play the role of landlord, as we will be saying goodbye not only to our tenants next door at 617 2nd street, but also to the house itself, as we open that land to make room for the future growth of our CO-OP in the not-so-distant future. Expect to hear more about that, coming up!

Numbers Circle - Numbers continues to analyze monthly financial statements to ensure SPAC is operating within our approved annual budget. Numbers circle worked with some department buyers to approve 3rd quarter budget adjustments. We wrapped up our 3rd quarter inventory count and are taking important steps toward making sure these counts are as accurate as possible. We are working on creating redundancy documents so our processes remain consistent over time. We are in the process of improving the way we utilize credit cards when purchasing products for the store. This helps us stay competitive in the ever changing market, and helps us expand our purchasing power so we can prioritize and support small, independent distributors. Finally, and perhaps most excitingly, we approved the purchase of a peanut grinder for our bulk section, so be on the lookout for that in the near future!

Finally, what have our Board of Directors been up to? Our current chairperson, Celia Sweet, also has an update for us.

SPAC is an incredibly exciting place to be. The Building Future Committee is taking steps to reimagine and rebuild our 617 Second Street rental property into the expanded space of our current, historic location. Our Warehouse Coordinator and Warehouse Support have been activating our space at the Central City Market warehouse space. The Co-op's 50th Anniversary is approaching and we're making plans to celebrate our history and future.

With all of that excitement, I think I can speak for the Board of Directors in saying that some of our most exciting topics are surrounding procedure! As we look forward to the outcome of the many projects happening within the Co-op, we also look to what is in need of improvement within our structure. We had spent the end of 2020 and a considerable amount of 2021 updating our Bylaws to reflect current technology, pandemic-like conditions, and beginning the work within our structure to analyze our cooperative for inclusivity. We approved our New BOD Member Information Packet and are setting our sights on other documents like Executive Committee Role Descriptions and Expectations and General Membership Meeting Procedure and Guidelines. We're all so pleased to be able to begin our work to prepare our BOD, staff, and management structure for our upcoming expansion. With great power comes great responsibility and with future expansion comes a lot of policy planning, document editing, and discussion.

-Michelle Nieuwenhuis, John Pearson,
Celia Sweet & Annette DesRosiers

FEATURED PRODUCTS:
HARVEST DAYS

October means one thing at the Stevens Point Area Co-op: Harvest Days. Come on in and get an extra 10% off every bulk item in the store! Here are a couple of our favorites.

Reishi Antlers, Segura & Sons: Segura & Sons is a family owned and operated cultivator of gourmet mushrooms. Located in the heart of Stevens Point, Segura & Sons is an urban farm that has built their mushroom fruiting chamber in an empty room in their basement. By controlling the temperature, humidity, light, and air exchange, you can have a steady, year round harvest of fresh mushrooms. Approximately 10 grams of a woody mushroom often used to make tea or like a bay leaf for flavoring a soup or broth. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Turn down to the lowest heat and slowly simmer the reishi for 30 minutes to 2 hours adding additional water as needed. Strain with a fine mesh. Pour into your favorite cup and taste the rich mushroom flavor that is slightly bitter. Some people add honey or lemon juice to enhance flavor. The reishi mushroom can be reused in this process up to three times.

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Mustard Seed, Maple Hill Farm: Just in time for pickling season, Maple Hill Farm has got you covered with their yellow mustard seed. Founded in 1995, Maple Hill Farm is a solar powered family farm that produces a variety of sustainably raised farm products. We currently carry their yellow and brown mustard seed, as well as mustard powder.

Mango, Dried, Tierra Farms: Dried mango has become a Co-op staple throughout the years, and we are proud to bring it back to you in bulk. Take as much or as little as you'd like of this tasty treat- just write down the PLU to bring to your cashier and we will take care of the rest. Don't worry, it's still available pre-bagged in three sizes.

Peanuts, Salted, Roasted, Unsalted, Tierra Farms: We've got some exciting news when it comes to our bulk peanuts. Maybe you've already seen it, but the Stevens Point Area Co-op has it's very own nut grinder! Enjoy your own freshly ground peanut butter located near the beer cooler in our store. Ask your staff member for help if you have any questions.

-Michelle Nieuwenhuis

Kindred Spirit Books
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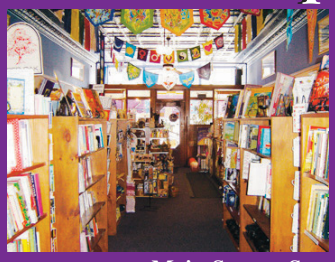

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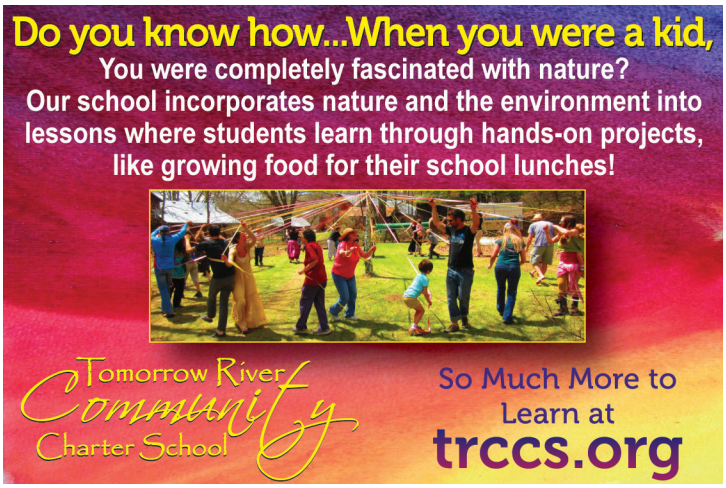
SMALL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT:
DIVISION+BRAWLEY

Hello there, let us introduce ourselves! We are Nick and Sollita Franc, the husband and wife team behind the up-and-coming household name business, Division+Brawley. We married young (REALLY young) and have always had a dream of owning our own business and although we had many different ideas, it never seemed to be the right time. We lived in a small mobile home for 12 years, with 3 kids and 3 dogs. We felt cramped, yet everyone flocked to our home. We hosted holidays, family meals, baby showers, and birthday parties.... It was because everyone enjoyed the way our "house" made them feel welcome, cozy, and at home. We poured love into small and big renovations of our place and it didn't go unnoticed. Sollita also spent countless hours making the space special and something to be mentioned when entering it with her way of decorating! There were always lights twinkling, candles glowing, food cooking and you bet you could count on a cozy blanket and pillow on the couch!

After 12 years of making our tiny place a home, we bought our first big house in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. You guessed it, right on the corner of Division St. and Brawley St.! It was almost 3,000 square feet, and has a lot of wall space for decorating! Plus, it had a darling wrap-around front porch. That was going to be the first project, ideas began flowing... a black table, sheer curtains for a little privacy, just enough to have people guessing on what was behind them, and boy, do they flow nicely in a breeze. Then, string lights were strung back and forth, in romantic swoops and we added an old ladder to the sky painted ceiling to hold two vintage-like lanterns right above our black picnic table. It's a dream! Now, this porch is recognized by almost anyone in Portage county that visits Stevens Point and the community loves it. The compliments came in, one by one. That's when Sollita realized, "this is it, this is what we need to do!". So it began, on January 1st 2019, from staging and decorating to retail items, and eventually pouring our own private line of 100% soy candles! We even offer date night packages to bring couples, families, and even friends together! Division+Brawley is all about connecting people to their home and to each other! We will offer many wonderful things, from the items you'll use to make your nightly meal, to your holiday specialties. Or our cotton wick soy candles that engulf your home with your favorite fragrances. Or, possibly even, the pillows that your guests will come snuggle on while you sip wine together as you share your week's happenings out of our beautiful crystal stemware.



Now, we are opening our very first store front for Division+Brawley, in the old Shopko building in Plover now known as Artist & Fare! We have a projected opening of October 2021 and we sure hope to see you there! Watch our journey unfold on Facebook, We post construction updates frequently and offer Pop Up shops for cash and carry candles, right on our own little home-town famous front porch.

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

Pisarski Funeral Homes & Cremation Center

Website: www.pisarskifuneralhome.com
Email: pdfh703@charter.net

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Frank Pisarski, Jr. ~ Frank Pisarski, Sr. ~ David Pisarski
John G. Suchon ~ Pete Jacoby

Does something seem different about the paper The COOPERATIVE Spirit is printed on? Don't worry- it's the same paper it's always been, but Dolce Printing is now using an updated machine which gives a much more vibrant color and leaves a smoother feel once printed! The COOPERATIVE Spirit is still printed on recyclable paper.

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