



The Co-op Connect

A newsletter of the Cleveland Food Co-op 11702 Euclid Avenue Cleveland OH 44106-4302 (216) 791-3890

Gathering Information & Planning for the Future *By Allyson Robichaud*

Jim Anderson and Jay Simecek from the Ohio Employee Ownership Center, based at Kent State University, along with Margaret Lund, agreed to look at the Co-op for us and help us to figure out how we might be able to improve our situation. As many of you know, we have not been doing well since the Euclid Corridor Project began, more than two years ago. While everyone hoped things would get better after Euclid Avenue was once again in good shape, this has not happened. Our sales continue to be down from where they were 2-5 years ago and this has caused us to have to cut some staff along with reducing hours for some of our staff. We have also had to think more carefully about our inventory—you might have noticed some items in the store have been re-arranged. Also, some things that don't sell as well are not being ordered although we do continue to order things for anyone who asks so if there is something you used to buy but can't find, please ask for help!

As many of you also know, we are still not sure



Jim Anderson of OEOC

what is going to happen to the building we are in. It may be that University Circle Inc. (UCI) has plans for our location so for a while now we have been thinking about a possible move. Since we are not flourishing at this time, we don't have the money it would take to make a move on our own. In fact, it's a very good thing UCI charges us a reasonable rent. It seems many people who have a stake in

the University Circle area would like to have a grocery store in the area. We think we have a good chance at being that grocery store, but we need to try to figure out how we can make it happen. Part of the reason Jim, Jay and Margaret are doing this study is to see if we would be a good fit for some re-development Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is doing. CWRU would like to have a gro-

cery store nearby and they are interested in seeing if we are the store for them. Of course in the end the co-op gets to decide what it wants to do, but it sure is nice that people are considering us and looking to help us figure some things out.

We are lucky too because this study of our co-op is going to provide us with some advice about what we can do to help us thrive. Our President, Vicky Knight and our Secretary Sam Richmond traveled to Pittsburgh to a conference and got lots of very good information. They met David Finet, the manager of the East Lansing Food Co-op and he generously agreed to come to Cleveland, look us over and offer us some advice. He did this on his own time over a weekend and he was able to tell us some things that have already resulted in some improvements for us and we were very grateful for his time and effort. Vicky and Sam also met some people who belong to a national association of food co-ops. Margaret Lund knows many people in this community and she has helped us to make some good connections with people who can help us get ahead. It is exciting to think about getting connected with all the food co-ops in the country and there are ways that we could get support from them that would allow us to be more successful. Then we would be able to undertake the kinds of changes and updates that making more money allows. We want our co-op to be financially secure and move towards being a more energy efficient and greener operation.

There has been a survey available in the store for folks to fill out so Jim, Jay and Margaret can help us fill in some gaps in our knowledge. They have also been looking over our operation very carefully. By the end of September we expect to have lots of good information that will help us see more clearly where our problems lie and what sorts of solutions exist to try to solve them. We will use this information to continue to plan for the future of the co-op. The Board has been discussing our situation and looking for ways to make us more successful for some time now and with the excellent help we are now receiving, we are confident we will be in a better position to work towards fulfilling our mission as a food cooperative.

Dear Cleveland Food Co-op Members,

Thanks to all who shop at the Co-op and to all who contribute in other ways!
I am writing to ask for your help at a time of difficulty and opportunity for the Co-op.

Difficulty

1) Loss of Lease. Our 25-year lease expired in April. We are continuing at our present location under a year-to-year verbal agreement following several years' efforts to renew our lease and refurbish our building. A plan to re-route East 117th Street may displace us within a few years.

2) Loss of Sales. Euclid Corridor construction (18 months) and the economic downturn (10 months) resulted in reduced sales and operational losses.

Opportunity

In response to our request for assistance in finding space, CWRU President Barbara Snyder arranged for us to meet with officers of the University. We also consulted with the Ohio Employee Ownership Center regarding the Greater University Circle/Evergreen Initiative, a network of co-ops OEOC is developing with the support of the Cleveland Foundation and area institutions.

These efforts converged. The Cleveland Foundation and CWRU are funding an OEOC study of the Co-op's potential to grow and serve the community at a nearby location CWRU is developing. (We are also looking for other alternatives.)

Advice

We consulted David Finet of East Lansing Food Co-op because of his recent experience managing turnarounds at East Lansing and a Toledo food co-op. Out of co-op solidarity and without charge, David came to our store, reviewed our situation, and recommended changes. He urged us to act immediately to ask employees to reduce their rate of pay and members to increase their capital contributions.

Action

We have introduced operational changes to reduce costs and increase sales. Employees have voluntarily reduced their rate of pay for August (our slowest month) and September, contributing \$4000. A Co-op member will match up to \$4500 that members contribute by September 30th to stop loss as we complete a turnaround plan.

Request

We ask you to increase your capital contribution (set at \$20 more than 25 years ago) by \$50 for each adult in your household if you can.

In co-operation,

Vicky Knight
President
Board of Directors

IN MEMORIAM

Longtime co-op cashier Abe Brustein passed away in August. Abe worked for nearly 25 years at the Food Co-op until his recent retirement. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Shirley. The Co-op sends sincerest condolences to his family and friends.



BE COOPERATIVE: VOLUNTEER!

The Co-op needs volunteers to dedicate their time to improving and sustaining our store. Help out in package bulk, price-checking, answering phones, and cleaning & maintenance. Contact India at coopindia@gmail.com.

Upcoming Meetings of the Food Co-op Board of Directors

Food Co-op Board Meetings are held monthly in the Community Room at the Co-op. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend. They are currently scheduled for:

Wednesday, September 16th - 6:15 p.m.

Wednesday, October 21st - 6:15 p.m.

Wednesday, November 18th - 6:15 p.m.

Wednesday, December 16th - 6:15 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED THIS SPRING BY THE FOOD CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of the Cleveland Food Co-op recognizes the many years of service of Abe Brustein to its members and hereby expresses their gratitude to him.

The Board of Directors of the Cleveland Food Co-op recognizes the volunteer service of John Wood to its members and hereby expresses their gratitude to him for roof repair, kitchen relocation and walkway demolition, and legal representation.

The Board of Directors of the Cleveland Food Co-op recognizes the volunteer service of Nellie Johnson to its members and hereby expresses their gratitude to her for her legal representation of the Food Co-op and her contribution to the recent resolution of a vexing dispute.

REDISCOVERING THE FOOD CO-OP

Hilary Mason King

Some people sooth their souls with a sleek, shiny Porche. I rejoice in the sweet smell of oats cooked to perfection in a cast iron pan on a gas grill. Then again, I always say yes to a meal at one of our fine local independent restaurants.

When I left Shaker Heights for Cornell, one of my greatest pleasures was discovering the Ithaca Real Food Co-op. I had never experienced such a place. All the foods I loved brought to me by people who really cared about the integrity of the food. The Food Coop grounded me in a love of whole foods cooking. It didn't hurt that I also discovered Laurel's Kitchen and the first Moosewood Cookbook and could eat regularly at Cabbagetown Cafe and Moosewood Restaurant.

Many years later, I moved to New York City and discovered community sponsored agriculture. Our CSA shared that same love of good food and honored the goodness of the plants we were eating, the farmer who grew them and all of the people who brought them to us. The freshness in the midst of the grey grime of the city took my breath away. I became so committed to this work that I provided pro bono legal services to the umbrella organization and encouraged many people to join.

My husband went to Berkeley. He was skeptical that we would find a 'real' food coop in Cleveland. But, when we came to visit, there it was on Coventry - The Cleveland

Food Co-op. When we moved to Cleveland, we planned to join. Well, imagine our dismay when we learned that the Food Co-op had closed on Coventry. We turned to other sources of locally grown produce, but were not completely satisfied with our choices. We spent a lot of time shopping here and there all around town, and paying so much more, nearly as much as we did in New York City!

Well, one day our neighbors gave us a tour of all of the new developments on University Circle and pointed out The Cleveland Food Co-op. Is this a new Food Co-op we asked? Of course not, its been here all the time, he answered.

The next day, we headed through Little Italy to University Circle to check it out. Everyone was friendly, really Ohio friendly. We found cheeses from Middlefield that we had been driving an hour to buy, we found yeast in bulk for my weekly bread making, and a broad selection of spices and fresh local and organic fruits and vegetables. They even have the luscious honey that my husband uses to make meade. There's a CSA connection, too!

Soon, I became a volunteer. Watching the staff and volunteers listen to members' and customers' needs and carefully select and present the many temptations confirmed what I felt from the beginning. If there were only one place I could shop, this would be it.

The manager of The Co-op's Health and Beauty Aids Department (HABA), Kim, recently started two websites dedicated to the natural herbal and homeopathic remedies, tinctures, supplements, and teas she helps Co-op shoppers to find everyday. Please visit her blogs for information and support:

<http://naturallykim.com/>
<http://kimsremedies.com/>

About the Cleveland Food Co-op

We are a cooperative grocery business owned by thousands of household members who shop at the store. Started in 1968 as a food buying club, we serve the Cleveland area with natural foods and other quality products while supporting good health and vitality in the community.

Our Mission Statement

The Cleveland Food Co-op is a cooperative which strives to be the most innovative provider of reasonably priced, high quality natural food products to our community while exercising environmental responsibility.

The Co-op Connect is edited by Anna Kiss Mauser-Martinez. Submissions are welcomed! Inquire at annakissmm@gmail.com

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www.clevelandfoodcoop.org

7 Co-operative Principles

The Cleveland Food Co-op is different from other natural food grocery stores in that we follow cooperative principles that guide our decision making processes and inform our organizational approach.

Principles: The cooperative principles are guidelines by which cooperatives put the values into practice.

1. Voluntary and Open Membership
2. Democratic Member Control
3. Member Economic Participation
4. Autonomy and Independence
5. Education, Training and Information
6. Co-operation among Co-operatives
7. Concern for Community

The Cleveland Food Co-op to Partner with Montessori High School at University Circle

By Anna Kiss Mauser-Martinez

Montessori High School (MHS) on Magnolia Drive in University Circle opened its doors to 37 students in the Fall of 2008. This past spring, The Cleveland Food Co-op began discussions to join the other cultural institutions in the Greater University Circle area in partnering with students at MHS to provide real-world, hands-on opportunities for growth and learning.

Students interested in working with the Food Co-op will be utilized to fulfill regular tasks of maintenance and operations, as well as in unique opportunities to become a part of our community through a variety of efforts related to sustaining and progressing our cooperative.

Volunteering students will have the opportunity to begin to understand the movement of food from rural to urban communities, the importance of food choices and nutrition, alternative forms of organization and collaboration, and the impact of agricultural technologies on the larger world through a collective approach to sustainable means of fulfilling the most basic need of humans. They will be invited to participate in community outreach and health, environmental, and nutritional education. Their involvement will include design, physical activity, marketing, and research. Our hope is to utilize their many creative talents and varied interests to create end-cap displays, videos, printed histories, and incorporate them in the ongoing publishing and writing for The Co-op Connect.

One MHS student attended and photographed our Annual Meeting of the Members at Cleveland Friends Meeting House in April. In late August, 36 new freshman and sophomore students were given a tour of the store as introduction to our grounds and goals. As the school year becomes properly underway, we hope to accommodate a few students in an ongoing collaboration.

This partnership is unique for both students and the Co-op. Students working at or on projects for the store will become active members, entrenched with employees and volunteers in progressing the mission of providing high quality natural food to the people of Cleveland. They will develop relationships with the customers, members, staff, and volunteers that make our store what it is. This will fundamentally underscore the importance and meaning of involvement and action that go into creating and sustaining a community.

Correction: The name of the photographer was mistakenly left out of the Spring edition of The Co-op Connect. The photos of the Annual meeting were taken by Nick Downer of the Montessori High School. One of these photos also appears on the front page of this issue.

Please recycle me!

