

Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative 1976 — 2016

Newsletter May 2016 with Annual Report



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!
40 YEARS A CO-OP

Warning

Voting for the election of the
MNFC Board of Directors will take place from
Sunday, May 1, 2016, 8 AM
through Friday, May 27, 2016, 7 PM .

Mail-in votes must be received by
Wednesday May 25, 2016.

The 40th Annual Meeting will be held
June 1st, 5:30 PM-7:30 PM, at American Flatbread

This Newsletter/Annual Report is a publication of the Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative,
1 Washington Street, Middlebury, Vermont, 05753. The Editor is Reiner Winkler.
Printed at The Little Pressroom, Middlebury, Vermont.

Call us at 802-388-7276, or e-mail us at bulk@middleburycoop.com.

Visit our website at www.middlebury.coop; or like us on Facebook.

Cover page photos: Top: *New Leaf Organics Farm*, Bottom Left: *Blue Ledge Farm*; Right: *Twig Farm*.



President's Report

Tam Stewart

Here at Forty

It's surprising to think that four short decades ago the little store that began life in a train depot is now one of the most vibrant, profitable, admired food co-ops in the country. Yet here we are: staff, directors, friends, families, neighbors, all of us... looking back across the arc of the years and ahead into a future loaded with uncertainty and potential.

And what we see, to borrow a phrase, is that the state of our Co-op is good. It is good in part because for all these years we have never failed to navigate by our core values and to ask ourselves at every turn: is this best for *healthy food*; for our *local economy*; for *co-operative democracy*; for the *environment*; and are we always *learning* more and sharing what we know along the way? It's also clear that as we've grown, the relevance and influence of these values have grown in proportion; they're in our DNA.

The state of our Co-op is also good because, at forty, we are embracing change as never before with an ambitious physical expansion project designed to offer a greater choice of healthier foods to more people, at better prices, in a bigger, smarter place to work and shop. (Expanding in our current downtown location is a perfect example of how our values continue to drive our decisions.

It's a huge challenge, but our values said: find a way; stay put.)

At the same time, we're growing our non-physical infrastructure with new internet-based solutions that invite more of us to engage with the Co-op in more ways. (Digital natives, our youngest member-owners and rear-guard: check it out and tell us what you think.)

Yet another example of how we're leaning in to change is our new Patronage Dividend system. Already in place at many thriving co-op's like ours, this financial mechanism gives us the flexibility to both invest in our Co-op's future and to return value to our member-owners in the ways we need it most. (See more about Patronage Dividends later in this Annual Report.)

Finally, to help meet future challenges with clarity and strength, your Board of directors has been working hard at building its governance skills. This includes a recent, highly productive retreat focused on long-range thinking; committee structure improvements; policy revision and fine tuning; ground-breaking collaboration with staff; and the ability to move fluidly and as a team from a tight focus on detail to broad views of the big picture. This year we also have a record number of new director applicants; a feather



in all our caps. (See their essays in this issue.) So don't forget to vote, and please keep in touch. Here at forty, it's never been more important.



Manager's Report

Glenn Lower

Happy Birthday, Middlebury Co-op!

What a major milestone to be celebrating our 40th anniversary of being a co-op! We are so grateful to the early “pioneers” who started a buying club in our community back in the early 1970’s. In 1976, the small store front at the old train depot on Seymour Street became incorporated as a cooperative business. The store relocated to Washington Street in 1981, expanded in 1985 and again in 1994.

When we discussed further expansion options in 1999, including possibly relocating the store, 80% of the Co-op membership responding held a strong conviction to keep the Co-op in its present location as part of a vital downtown. Fortunately, over the next few years, we were able to purchase property from several neighbors (*Thank you neighbors!*), and built the current building in 2004.

Here we are today, a successful downtown Middlebury Co-op, serving 4,500 member-owners. We have been so successful indeed that we are gearing up for another expansion in our current location, which has proved challenging. By the time you read this

report, we should be able to zero in on a preferred building layout concept and cost analysis. Next steps include approaching the town Development Review Board for permits. As always we will share our progress with you.

Annual sales reached a new record of over \$13.3 million. We are so lucky to have such a great community that supports a co-op! Our customers, local farmers and food producers appreciate it. One of the most exciting things this year was breaking a new record in sales of locally grown and produced foods: 33% of store sales!

A most significant step taken this year was beginning the implementation of our Long Range Plan. This plan was developed after an extensive engagement process with member focus groups via our *Co-op Conversations*. Major implementation steps this past year include:

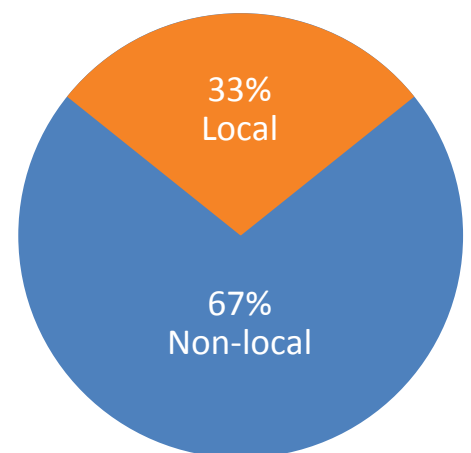
Patronage Vote

Last year the Co-op membership voted to replace our 2% discount with a patronage dividend system, with the first dividend to be paid out to our members this coming June. We had our biggest voter turnout ever, and 91% of votes supported the change.

(More on Patronage Dividend on page 8)



Store Sales
Local & Non-local



Co+op Basics

Competitive pricing is a high priority of our Long Range Plan. To that end, we have begun our Co+op Basics program this past year. Purple signage in the store indicate items we decided to offer at very low prices to our customers.

New Website

Check out our new website at www.middlebury.coop. Initial feedback tells us that the site is very user friendly and informative



about Co-op events, products, and projects. The site also works well with hand held devices.

Last but not least I would like to thank our Board members who provide their time and careful thought to help steer our Co-op into a bright Co-op future. I am sad to say goodbye to Board members Sheila McGrory-Klyza and Kevin Lehman. Both have been tremendous contributors to our Board and Co-op!

I wish all of you a Happy Spring and hope to see you at one or all of our Co-op events. Green-Up Day will be held at the Co-op on May 7th; for the Annual Meeting we invite you to join us on June 1st at American Flatbread,

We're stronger together,

Glenn Lower



The Co-op's ENDS statement defines our goals.

On the following pages you will find several graphs showing how we are making progress.

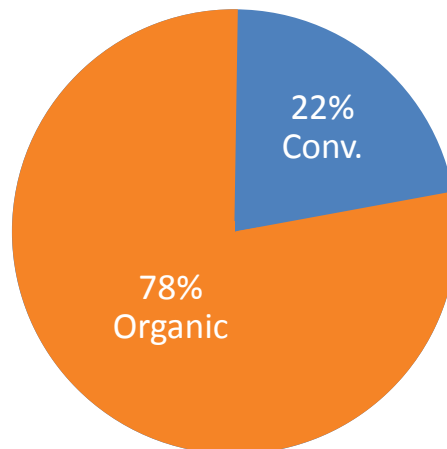
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op Ends Statement

Member-Owners, customers, and the community benefit from:

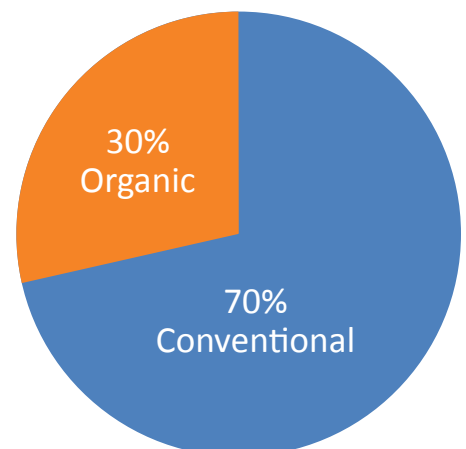
- **Healthy foods**
- **A vibrant local economy**
- **Environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient practices**
- **Cooperative democratic ownership**
- **Learning about these values**

One indication of how successful we have been promoting healthy foods are the numbers indicating our percentage of "organic" sales.

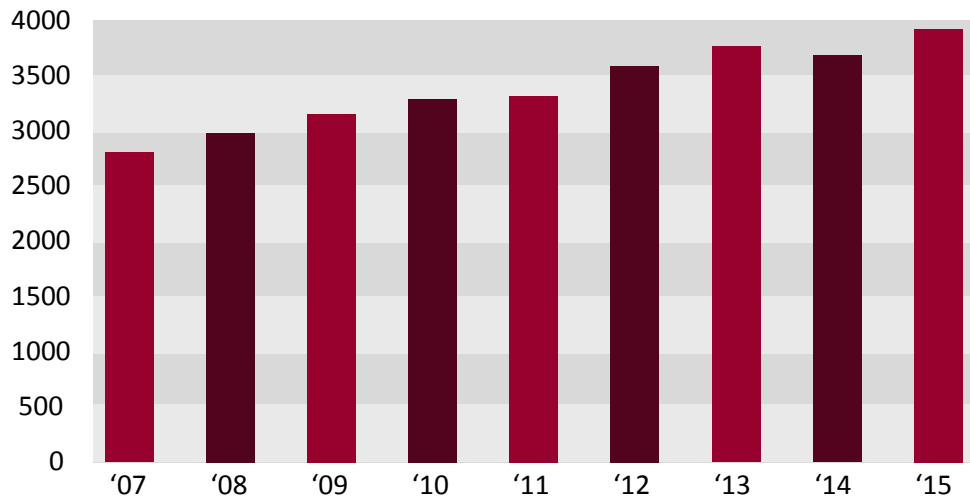
**Produce Sales
Organic & Conventional**



**Store Sales
Organic & Conventional**

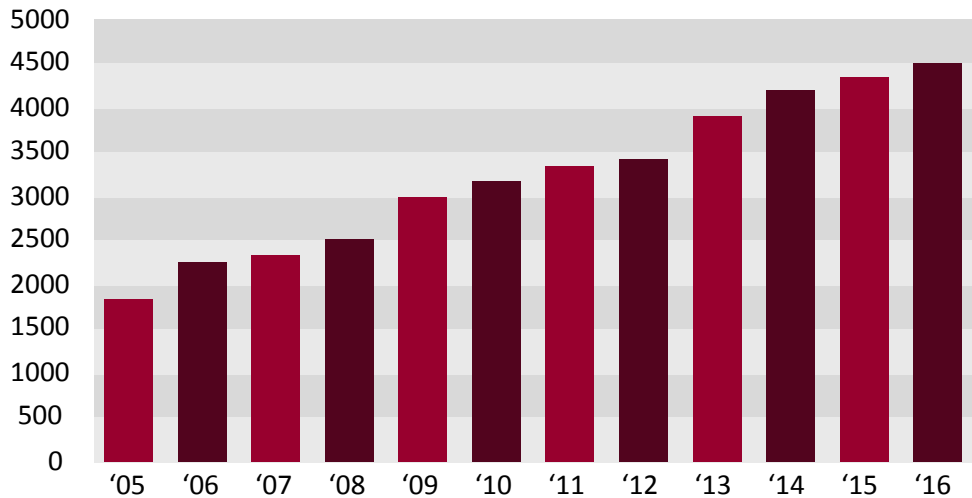


Annual Customer Count



The numbers of members and customers frequenting our store have steadily been going up. We take this as a sign that people are happy with their Co-op!

Member-Owner Count



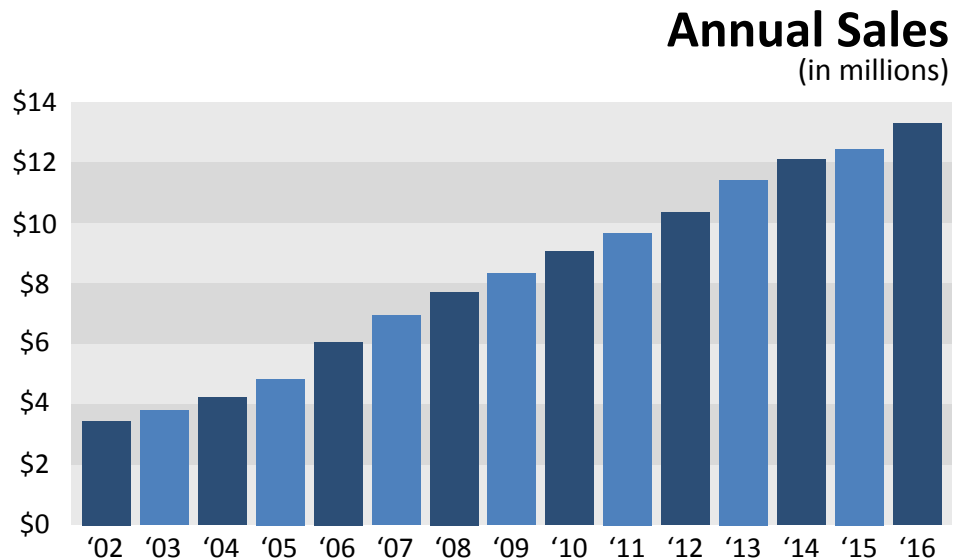
Member-owners are essential for the success of the Co-op. The Co-op in turn provides benefits for its membership.

This “dollar chart” shows the portion of each customer dollar spent at the Co-op divided up to cover expenses. Co-op profits are used to improve benefits and services to member-owners and the community. Donations this past year were over \$27,000 in food and other contributions to local food shelves and other non-profits in Addison County.

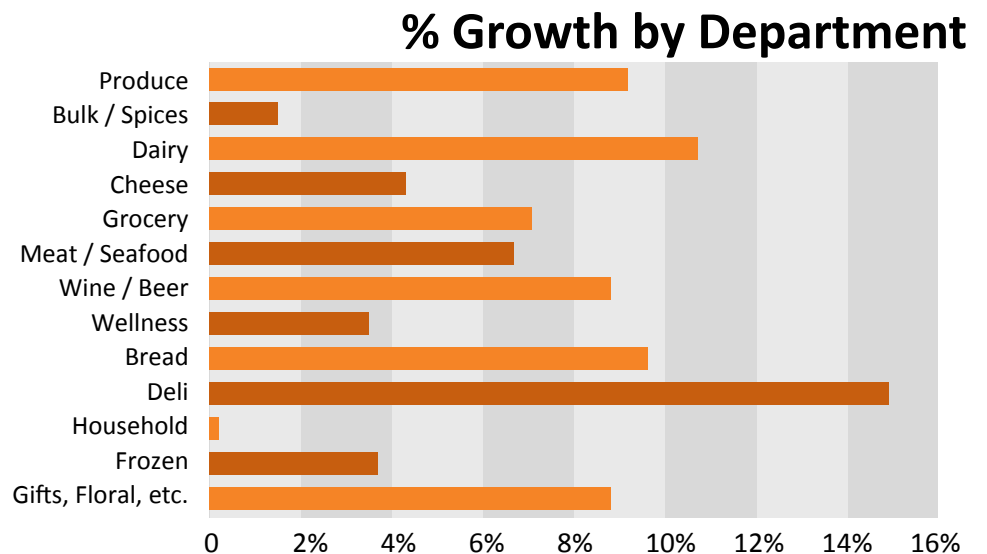
Expenses for each customer \$1.00 spent



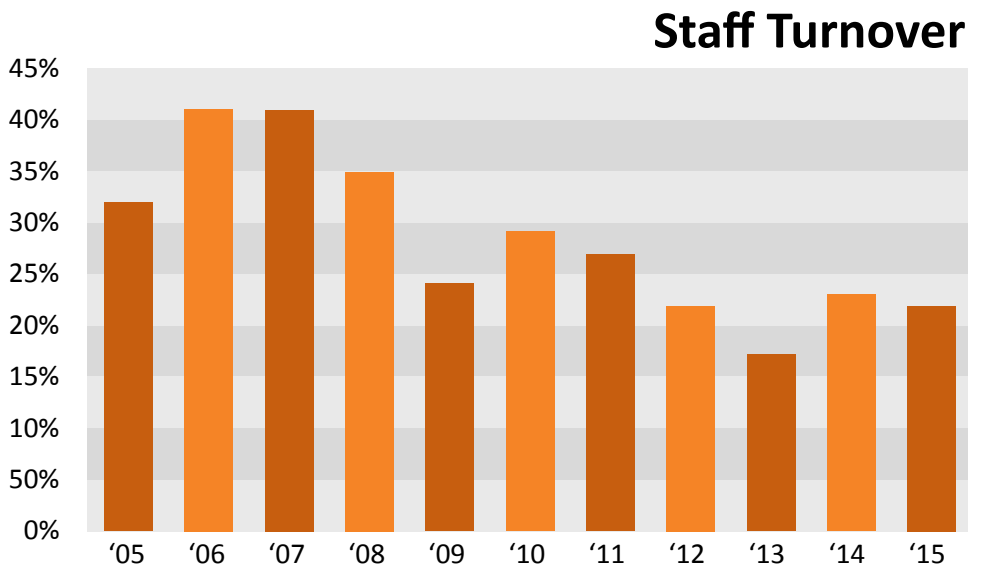
Annual Sales look good. But remember: net income adds up to a small percentage after expenses have been paid.



Department growth changes year to year. This past year was a strong year for our Deli, Dairy, and Produce departments. The three main contributors to store sales include the Grocery, Produce and Bulk Foods departments.



Our low turnover rate of 22% for 2015 is impressive for the retail industry where turnover is typically between 50% and 65%. We have 55 full-time employees. We believe that offering full time opportunities along with generous benefits, contributes to low turnover and a positive workplace culture.



Patronage Dividends

Exciting !!!! This June we will make our first ever payout of a patronage dividend to member-owners.

Background

The third goal of our Long Range Plan talked about “the Co-op being fiscally and environmentally sustainable as we go forward.” One of the key strategies was to explore transitioning to a patronage dividend system. This required a member vote to change to our Co-op by-laws. Last May, we had 631 members voting (a record); 91% approved the change from a member discount to a patronage dividend system at the end of the year.

Consequently, this June 2016, we will be issuing our first ever patronage dividends. We will send you information at the beginning of June once the fiscal year financials have been closed and the Board has officially declared a patronage dividend to the members-owners.

What are patronage dividends?

A patronage dividend is the cooperative way of sharing the profits with member-owners. This system is based on the Co-op's annual profit, and members receive their distribution once a year.

A patronage dividend system offers the Co-op many long-term advantages that will enable us to better achieve our long range goals with much less risk.

How does it work?

Member-owners receive a share of the profits in proportion to how much they purchased during the fiscal year April - March. The more you shop, the more you are eligible to earn. A portion of the profit is returned to you as a patronage dividend check. The remainder is retained by the Co-op in your name and can be used to finance projected capital needs at lower cost. At the end of each fiscal year, the Board decides how much is retained and how much is returned.

Law requires that at least 20% of patronage be returned to members in cash or cash equivalent.

Member-owners

must be current in their \$20 annual equity investment to be eligible for patronage dividends.

How much will the patronage dividend be?

This will vary from year to year based on both the Co-op's profits and the projected capital needs of the Co-op. Some years it would be similar to the 2% discount. Some years it would be less. For example, in the first year following a building renovation or expansion, typically there is no profit, so there would be no patronage dividends. This actually helps the Co-op return to profitability much faster, and thus

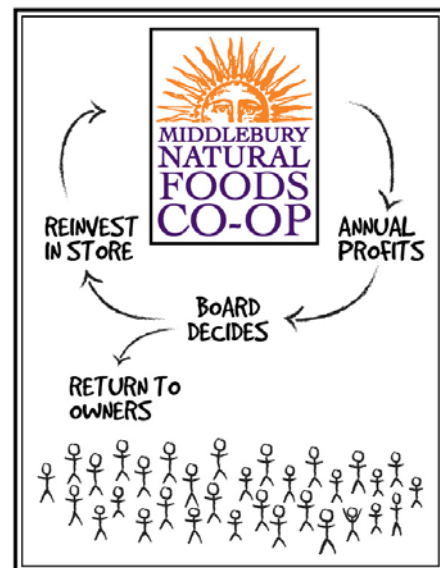
keeps the Co-op stronger and more secure during challenging times.

Do other co-ops do this?

Yes, the majority of food co-ops in the U.S. have implemented a patronage dividend system, including our peer co-ops in Burlington, Montpelier, and Brattleboro.

Can I donate my dividend to a good cause?

Yes, we will have options for donating dividends. Yet to be decided, but likely donations would go toward helping people in need to access healthy foods, such as via the Co-op's *Food For All* program and the local food shelves.



MIDDLEBURY NATURAL FOODS CO-OP

Come Join Our
40th
Annual Meeting!
Wednesday, June 1, 5:30-7:30pm
AT



**Find Out What's Next
For Your Co-op**

Enjoy
Flatbread, Salad, Dessert & Drinks
ON US!

**Everyone
Welcome!**



Having a good time



The Co-op goes to American Flatbread

Minutes of the 2015 MNFC Annual Meeting To be approved at the 2016 Meeting June 1st.

Board Members Present: R.J. Adler, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghim, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Mary Gill, Kate Gridley, Kevin Lehman, Jay Leshinsky, Sheila McGrory-Klyza, Tam Stewart, Louise Vojtisek.

Board Members Absent: none

Others Present: Victoria DeWind (staff liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager) and approximately 125 people in attendance including several staff.

Call to Order: Glenn called the meeting to order at 6:20 pm at *American Flatbread* in Middlebury, welcoming everyone to the 39th MNFC Annual Meeting.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 2014 Annual Meeting were approved, with all in favor, on a motion made by Peggy Rush and seconded by Ralph Esposito.

President's Report: Jay Leshinsky talked briefly about the Co-op and the importance of its work furthering the MNFC Ends....

Please find the complete 2015 Minutes available on the web at www.middlebury.coop/participate/annual-reports

Middlebury Co-op started out as a pre-order buying club. Co-op member Jeremy Singley vividly describes how and why this pre-order group evolved into a store front, before in 1976, it became incorporated as a business. Jeremy and his wife Pauline are still Co-op members today, with Pauline working with the Bulk Foods department as a member worker on a weekly basis.

First Steps

Jeremy Singley

Pauline and I joined the Middlebury Natural Foods Coop in 1974*, not long after its debut. At the time the Co-op was a sort of bulk foods buying club of likeminded folks. The group met monthly to engage in a friendly auction amongst themselves, each committing to purchase increasing or decreasing portions until their individual orders added up to, say, a whole wheel of cheese or a 50 pound bag of flour. These goods would then be ordered at wholesale rate, and stored in Jane and Marshall Ed- dy's barn in Middlebury.

Upon arrival the bulk goods were broken down into portions by a revolving body of member volunteers. Cheese wheels, for example, would be reduced to individually wrapped and labeled wedges and stacked in the group's fridge. Members who had made purchases were encouraged to be timely in picking up their orders.

Over time sub-groups grew up in a

number of vicinities, each overseen by a "coordinator." Pauline and I represented the East Middlebury/ Salisbury region, at which time I also became a Co-op Board member.

By then the group had grown large enough that meetings were no longer necessary. In lieu of meet-ups, members filled out a monthly "pre-order" form. The total number of members in all the sub-groups combined guaranteed that enough food would be pre-ordered in any given month to support bulk purchases. There were scraps left over of course, a wedge of cheddar, for example, but the selections that were on offer in those early days were goods that would keep until the next order, at which time they could be offered again, at least in theory.

Two issues cropped up: The first was the leftover problem. Dividing the food didn't always work out. Plus, members craved a wider selection, but how do you handle, say, lettuce, on a long-term basis. So Co-op member Charles Adams rent-

ed the abandoned train station on Seymour Street and started a "store front." Now anyone could walk in and buy, not only that orphaned cheddar wedge, but a growing list of new direct-sale offerings, displayed in bins and buckets with spunky hand-written labels.

The second problem was the work we coordinators had to do. We were in charge of sending out the order sheets, tallying the members' orders, bulk ordering, rousting up four or five volunteers and setting up a "breakdown" day, when the bulk goods would be re-packaged to fill the individual member orders. We needed to stay and wait until all the member orders had been picked up, and then deliver or store the ones that weren't.

When the store front had matured to the point that it offered everything the pre-orders did, and more, available throughout the month, I published a suggestion that we terminate

*Two issues cropped up:
the first was the
leftover problem.*

pre-order and just focus on the store. This was not at first a popular idea. Many members en-

joyed the camaraderie of the breakdowns and the whole-earth feel of the process. But the majority realized they preferred to be able to buy what they wanted when they wanted.

So Charlie, myself and a stalwart crew of volunteers tore into the train station, replacing the floor, improving the lighting, building shelves and, eventually, even installing a walk-in fridge!

The budget was tight. We'd begun with a tackle box as our cash exchange. Then one of those old *ka-ching!* cash registers turned up from somewhere. I built a checkout counter in my woodshop.

The store grew so fast it was decided a digital cash register was needed to help keep track of the flow. This was a big deal. The board did not have much money to spend. But I had an idea. After checking with my bank, I



Pauline, Jeremy, Gwen, and Emily Singly in the early 1970s.

approached a number of members, mostly respected business owners, and asked if they would counter-sign a loan. They all agreed. The cash register was in!

When the store outgrew the station and moved to its present location (but much smaller than today!) my wooden counter went along. Eventually, so did our kids. In the late 80s to early 90s Gwen worked as a cashier, stocker, and made intricate illustrated shelf labels. Emily also cashiered and stocked, as well as helping to manage the HABA (Health and Beauty Aids) section, now called the Wellness Department.

My homemade checkout counter worked well for years, even as it was gradually surrounded by multiple factory-made counters and registers.

* Editor's note: The Middlebury Co-op was incorporated in 1976, not 1974.

Every time I walked in — as a shopper now and no longer a board member — that counter reminded me of the old days, and I was awed by how Charlie's brainchild had grown.

And I still marvel today.

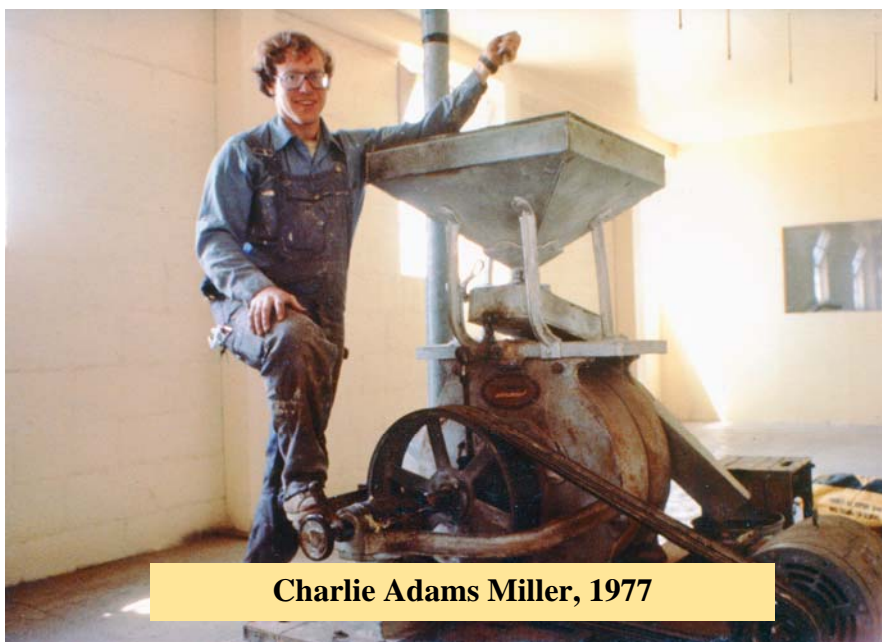


Jeremy and Pauline in 2016

What is a Cooperative?

A cooperative business belongs to the people who use it — people who have organized to provide themselves with the goods and services they need.

These member-owners share equally in the control of their cooperative. They meet at regular intervals, hear detailed reports, and elect directors from among themselves. The directors, in turn, hire management to handle the day-to-day affairs of the cooperative in a way that services the members' interests.



Charlie Adams Miller, 1977



Conversation with Co-op Member Kathryn Schloff

Reiner Winkler: Kathryn, what brought you to Vermont? When did you become a member of our Co-op?

Kathryn Schloff: I grew up in on a farm in Nebraska. My parents were both school teachers; but we always worked in the garden and tended our chickens. We grew much of our own food. I moved to Vermont in the 70's. My husband, Merle, and I were part of the *Back to the Land* movement. Doing more with less was our way of life. We initially ran a restaurant in Bridgewater, called The Bridgewater Tavern, a whole food restaurant. We joined to a cooperative pre-order group and shopped at the Hanover Co-op which was very small in those days. You would scoop just about everything in the store. In the late 70's we moved to Salisbury and became members of the early Middlebury Co-op which was located at the Train Depot in those days.

RW: What comes to mind when you think about the early Co-op?

KS: I do remember Susan Smiley's home-made yogurt in the store. You would purchase the yogurt, later return the jar for washing and refilling. The space was really tight! But it was wonderful really.

RW: What does the Co-op mean to you these days, Kathryn?

KS: The Co-op is my home away from home, in a way. I have known this place for such a long time. I know many of the staff really well. I feel very comfortable with the size. I like the intimacy we have when space is tight. My friend Annabel from the Rutland Co-op thinks Middlebury Co-op is too big, which shows you that it's all relative. I love the friendly staff at the Co-op, the conscientious choice of products, the emphasis on local foods and the support of local farming. I love many of the Deli items, but I am mostly drawn to the wonderful fruit and veggies.

RW: Do you think our Buying Criteria are a good thing?

KS: Yes, I do!

RW: You and your husband are busy with your Vermont-made furniture business [*The Vermont Home*]. Do you still find time to grow some of your own food?

KS: Yes, we still garden. Preserving food, canning and freezing are important to us. We make our own tomato juice and sauce and pickles. In the fall we pick apples in the neighborhood and add a good amount of wild growing apples as well and make our own cider with the cider press that we own.

RW: What Co-op foods do you miss when you're traveling?

KS: I miss the *Red Hen* bread, *Blue Ledge* cheese, fresh eggs and the local produce. Definitely all the local food!

RW: You have traveled quite a bit, right?

KS: We have spent memorable times in the Swiss alps, in Italy and France. We hiked around Mont Blanc, from hut to hut. We also enjoyed our kayaking trip in Norway, where we were paddled around many islands in the North Sea.

RW: Any travel plans for the future?

KS: We may travel cross country in our VW bus; but at this point our grandchildren have become more important to us. Spending time with our five grandchildren feels like good medicine... in a way, they are part of me.

RW: How can we contribute to a better world?

KS: By meeting as many people as we can and sharing life experiences. I little while ago, Merle and I were at the Middlebury Snow Bowl. We noticed a Chinese speaking couple who were there for their daughter who was starting out at Middlebury College. It turned out they were from Beijing. After some welcoming

words, *Hello!* and *Welcome!* we happened to see them again when going up with the ski lift. We spontaneously invited the family for dinner. How many opportunities to you get to invite some from China for dinner?! I'd like to think that this kind of thing can make a difference. Our world is often too much guided by fear. When we meet people from other countries and other cultures,

we learn that we have so much in common. We are much more alike than we are different. Everyone has a mother. We must see how, as human beings, we are very much alike! Getting to know people may take us a few steps closer to a more peaceful world.

RW: Thank you, Kathryn!

Birthday Cake with Frosting

Recipe adapted by Kat Lowther from *New Best Recipe*

Cake

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups cake flour, sifted, plus more to dust pans
4 eggs, room temperature
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk

2 teaspoons vanilla
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature



- * Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease two 9-inch round cake pans and cover the bottom with parchment. Grease over the top of parchment and dust with flour.
- * Beat the eggs, milk, and vanilla with a fork in a small bowl. Measure out 1 cup of this mixture and set aside.
- * Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in the bowl of a standing mixer. Combine well on a low speed. Add the butter one tablespoon at a time and mix until the pieces are about the size of peas and the mixture looks sandy.
- * Add the reserved 1 cup egg mixture and combine. Increase speed to medium and beat until light and fluffy. Very slowly, add the remaining egg mixture (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) in a steady stream. Stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl. Beat on medium-high speed until thoroughly combined.
- * Divide the batter between the two cake pans and bake for 20-30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean. Cool completely before frosting.

Frosting

4 eggs
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
4 sticks butter

- * Combine the eggs, sugar, and vanilla in the bowl of a standing mixer. Place the bowl over a pot of simmering water and whisk constantly and gently until the mixture reaches 160 degrees.
- * Remove from heat and beat the heated mixture at medium-high speed until light and airy and it has cooled to room temperature.
- * Reduce the speed to medium and add the butter a tablespoon at a time. Once all the butter is added, increase the speed to high and beat until light, fluffy, and thoroughly combined. Frost the cake and enjoy!

Learning and Sharing The Co-op Way

At the Co-op we value learning and aim to facilitate learning for our entire community. We start by providing a wide range of opportunities for our 85 staff members.

We value opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, and our food system as a whole. We provide ongoing staff education where staff members learn about food-related issues like organic farming, Fair Trade, and GMOs, or spend time with our local farmers and producers to find out about their products and ways of production.

Last year we offered over 25 such workshops for our staff members. They provide an opportunity for us to learn the unique story of a farmer or food producer beyond that which

can be shared on a product label. This knowledge helps to deepen the all-important connection between producer and consumer. It also allows us to give better customer service when a shopper is interested in learning about a product



**Elissa teaching at the
Hannaford Career Center**

we carry in the store. We pride ourselves on answering those deeper questions and sharing the information we've learned.

Staff members share educational experiences with shoppers and the community through classes and workshops at the Hannaford Career Center. Several of our staff members teach these classes as part of our Co-op Sustainability Series. Topics include *Healthy Cooking on a Budget*, *Bread Baking*, *Seed Saving*, *Fermentation*, and *Food Preservation*.

Emily Millard, Marketing, Education and Membership Assistant Manager

I cannot speak highly enough about the Co-op. I feel at home here and always want to better myself to support the growth and development of not only the concept of the Co-op but the community we provide for.

Comment from a recent
Staff Satisfaction Survey



**Tracey and Melinda
sharing a moment of joy**

I've done many of the in-house workshops at the Co-op including Real Pickle, Fermented Food, and Super Foods. In March I went to a management seminar in Minnesota. The dead of winter in the great plains!? Still, very worth it! I learned a lot and immediately implemented some of what I'd learned. It has helped a great deal, both for the Grocery Department and for me personally. All the time we spend training and learning is well worth it!

Tom McElhaney

Traveling to local farms or businesses on field trips is a favorite way of learning for many of our staff. Last year several staff members visited local cheese-makers in Addison County in addition to learning from Provisions International about Italian family-run cheese and Prosciutto operations. Staff members learned about the high standards used locally and overseas for the products we carry. Whether a small family farm in Addison County or a small Italian village, a common theme was “quality doesn’t happen by chance”. A lot of hard work, time and talent goes into making exceptional products.

Caroline Usher

I recently attended a management training program with a curriculum relevant to the natural foods retail industry and presented in ways that bring home the key concepts including workload management tools, staff development methods, successful team building, improving customer service and managing department sales and margins for success. I value my experience and have begun implementing tools and skills I learned.

Jennifer Smith



The people, baby... it’s all about this great group of people!
from a recent staff survey



Future Co-op staffer ?



Caitlin preparing the dough

Learning Opportunities

Each year several staff participate in regional and national Co-op conferences and seminars with opportunities for shared learning, collaboration and networking. The *Neighboring Food Co-op Association* (NFCA) hosts learning opportunities for over 35 Co-ops throughout New England to offer mutual support amongst our neighbors. The National Cooperative Grocer (NCG) and Rising Stars Leadership Group provide national forums for Co-op leadership training, strategies for effectively using technology, staying competitive, community engagement, and creating dynamic workplaces where our staff come back with fresh ideas.

**By investing in our staff
we are investing in our
community.**

**Come learn
and grow with us!**

MIDDLEBURY NATURAL
FOODS CO-OP

Green Up Festival



**Saturday, May 7, 12-3pm
at the CO-OP**

Music from
"The Doughboys"
Free Food from MNFC
Fun for Kids
Lots of Great Exhibits

Everybody Welcome!!!!



Local Food Producers

One third of our Co-op sales go to
Vermont farmers and food producers!



**Will and Judy Stevens
Golden Russet Farm**



**Elmer Farm
Family**



**Lauren, Marjorie, Marian
Orb Weaver Farm**



**Apple Picking Crew
Scott Farm**



Wood's Market Garden

*Shake the hand
that feeds you.*

Michael Pollan

Building and Supporting Community

Co-op donations this past year were over \$27,000 in food and other contributions to local food shelves and other non-profits in Addison County.

Donna Rose of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity:

I would like to offer a special thank you to our Co-op who tirelessly works to raise money for the Rally for Change.

As a former cashier of the Co-op I am well aware of all of the multi-tasking that takes place at the front end of the store. To have this additional task along with all of the daily chores is nothing less than a “labor of love” for the cause of hunger in our community. Thank you cashiers! I cannot praise you enough. Hats off to your patience and dedication, that resulted in the Rally for Change being a huge success.



Jeanne Montross of Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects:

The Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op is one of our stand-outs as a significant contributor! From the Empty Bowl supper, to unexpected donations of food, funds, and more, the MNFC acts with great and creative generosity.

The Rally for Change is the latest example of MNFC's helping actions... This money will quickly be put to good use, purchasing food to help fill some of the many empty spots on our shelves.



Join the CO-OP'S
RALLY FOR CHANGE

May 12 th to 18th

Round Up \$\$\$ For
Homeward Bound
Animal Welfare Center

Your Co-op Cares
WE'LL MATCH YOUR DONATION

From May 12 through 18, we invite you to join our Rally for Change, in support of *Homeward Bound*, whose Mission Statement reads:

To educate the community and improve the lives of animals, alleviate their suffering, and elevate their status in society. We safeguard, rescue, shelter, heal, adopt and advocate for animals in need, while inspiring community action and compassion on their behalf.

Member Appreciation Sales

This month, four companies will make up our Member Appreciation Sales. During the week that the company is featured, Middlebury Co-op members will receive a 20% or 30% discount on any item made by the company.



From **May 5 through May 11** we will spotlight *Burt's Bees*. Originated in Maine in the 1980's, *Burt's Bees*'s an earth friendly, natural personal care company, making products for personal health and hygiene. Products are

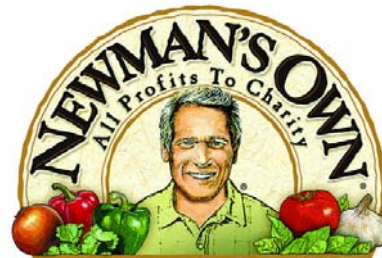
manufactured with all natural ingredients that have been minimally processed. You'll find *Burt's Bees* shampoo, conditioner, hand, foot and cuticle cream, body lotion, lipstick, and baby products in the store. **30% off**, if you are a member of our Co-op!



Niman Ranch will be our Co-op Member Deal, from **May 12 through May 18**.

Niman Ranch began in the early 1970s on an eleven acre ranch just north of San Francisco. The cattle were raised using traditional, humane husbandry methods and given wholesome all-natural feeds. Before long, *Niman Ranch* beef became a favorite in local grocery stores and at San Francisco Bay Area restaurants. Today, the company's network has grown to include over 700 independent American farmers and ranchers. *Niman* meat is grown without antibiotics or added hormones. All animals are raised outdoors or in deeply bedded pens.

At the store, we carry a variety of *Niman Ranch* beef products. Members will receive a **20% discount** on all during the featured week.



During the week of **May 19 through May 25**, our focus will be on *Newman's Own*/*Newman's Organics*.

Newman's Own was founded by actor Paul Newman and author A.E. Hotchner in 1982. The company gives 100% of the after-tax profits from the sale of its products to the *Newman's Own Foundation*, in support of various educational and charitable organizations.

In 1993, Newman's daughter Nell Newman founded *Newman's Own Organics* as a division of the company, later to become a separate company in late 2001. It produces only organic foods and pet foods.

At the Co-op, you'll find *Newman's Own* salad dressings and lemonade. Under the *Newman's Own Organics Label*, the Co-op offers fig bars, crème filled cookies, ginger cookies, pretzel sticks, peanut butter cups, and more.

Members save **20%** on all their products.



During this month's final week, **May 26 through June 1**, we will celebrate *So Delicious*, the Oregon company that has been making dairy-free beverages for over 25 years. *So*

Delicious products are 100% plant based and, for the most part, made with organic ingredients. No artificial sweeteners, trans-fats or hydrogenated oils are ever used. All products are non-GMO verified.

At the Co-op you'll find coconut milk and a variety of flavored non-dairy coffee creamers in our refrigerator. We also carry cultured coconut milk, frozen coco whip, and frozen coconut milk desserts. MNFC members will enjoy a **20% discount** on all their products!



Global Warming and Climate Change: A difficulty we can potentially solve - Part II

Ross Conrad

As mentioned in last month's newsletter article, excess carbon dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere can be removed and sequestered in the ground through the following ecological agricultural practices.

Keep the soil covered with plants and plant matter

Bare soil oxidizes carbon in the soil, while plants protect it and add to it. Not only do plants sequester carbon through photosynthesis, they slow carbon emissions by soil microbes by forming a barrier between the air and the soil, and they reduce soil erosion a major factor in soil carbon depletion. Every time soil is exposed, whether it is because the ground is being tilled, a crop has

been harvested and the land left fallow, or we leave space between row crops, soil carbon is reduced. Practices such as mulch farming and undersowing with legumes and cover crops to keep soils covered throughout the year increase soil carbon, keep soil organisms healthy and prevent erosion (Azeez 2009).

This also means that tilling the soil needs to be minimized if not abandoned. Not only does tilling or turning the soil ruin the soil structure, it exposes the soil to air so carbon can oxidize and escape. Tilling also disturbs the micro-organism ecosystem in the soil, destroying pore spaces in soil that hold air and water, both vital components for healthy soil organisms. In addition, the act of tilling itself often releases carbon into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels. Research indicates that the highest levels of carbon sequestration are achieved through cropping systems that practice no-till farming

and add plenty of organic matter (e.g. compost or cow manure) to the soil (Khorramdel 2013).

Imitate nature's diversity

Nature shows us that the more diverse a system is, the healthier and more resilient that system is, so to promote healthy soil microbes monocultures should be avoided (Lal 2004). Monocultures invite pest and disease infestations, while diverse plantings help keep infestations from spreading. A mixture of plants on every square foot of ground provides the opportunity for a larger diversity of soil organisms to fill the greater variety of niches. Mixtures of cover crop varieties are now available to help encourage biodiversity. While crop rotations help support biodiversity, rotations with continuous cover cropping prevent fallow periods of bare soil and increase the activity of soil microbes and enzymes. Research also indicates that when legumes are included in the crop rotation, microbial biomass is increased (Six 2006).

Grazing animals can be an important part of building organic matter in soils, particularly in pastures. Perennial pasturing when properly managed has shown rapid increases in organic matter and soil carbon (Machmuller 2015). Not only do animal hooves break up the soil surface allowing plant seeds, water and air to infiltrate, their manure which is rich in carbon and microbes inoculate the soil with biological diversity. More on the importance of grazing ruminants in a moment.

Ban pesticides

Synthetic agricultural chemicals (herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, etc.) destroy soil carbon. Not only are pesticides lethal to soil organisms, chemical fertilizers have also been shown to destroy organic matter. The Rodale Institute's Compost Utilization Trials showed that composted manure combined with crop rotations resulted in carbon gains of up to 1.0 ton/acre/year, while the use of synthetic fertilizers without rotations achieved carbon losses of 0.15 ton/acre/year (LaSalle 2008). Meanwhile, fifty years of farm trials at the University of Illinois showed a *loss* of 5 tons of soil organic matter per acre on fields where 90 to 124 tons of carbon residue was added on each acre, but a synthetic nitrogen fertilizer was also applied (Khan 2007).

Reforestation and reversing desertification

The release of carbon that had been stored in the ground for millions of years has been accompanied by the destruction of about a third of the world's forests and grasslands. There are indications that the proper management of woody plants can lead to sizable soil carbon gains (Quinkenstein 2011). The re-establishment of our lost forests and grass lands can play a significant role in helping to restore the atmospheric carbon balance. The work of Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, who's Green Belt Movement has assisted African women in planting more than 20 million trees serves as an inspiration.

Another inspiring effort is the work

of Allan Savory who demonstrates how holistic planned grazing that mimics nature can stop the process that causes land to turn into desert and help reverse climate change. Over half the surface of the Earth is currently desert or in the process of desertification, and a significant part of the reason for this has been the way ranchers and nomadic peoples have grazed their animals. Savory shows that by allowing hundreds of times more animals to graze for just a short duration on a piece of land than the land itself can support, the land can be regenerated and desertification reversed. Rather than take up more space talking about it here, I encourage you to google Allan's Ted Talk on mob grazing for a truly inspirational 22 minute presentation.

Can we act in time?

Clearly our agricultural system must change from being a major contributor to the problem, to being part of the solution. Researchers who study soil carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change estimate that we have removed 136 Gigatons of carbon from the soil as a result of land clearing and agriculture since the industrial age (Lal, 2007). This is less than the amount of carbon we need to put back into the soil in order to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to 350 ppm, the level that NASA climate scientist James Hansen says is a

relatively "safe" level. Depending on who's numbers you look at, agriculture is reported to contribute anywhere from 7- 15 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Other major contributors to GHG emissions are categorized as industry (manufacturing, packaging, transportation and storage), and changes in land use (such as through deforestation and desertification).

5 Practical Ways to apply these ideas today:

- Plant a garden if you don't already have one.
- Use cover crops and mulching to keep all soil covered throughout the year.
- Do not use any chemical pesticides or fertilizers on your garden or lawn.
- Practice no-till methods and plant perennials when possible.
- Support ecological farmers by purchasing their products whenever possible.

Unfortunately these categorizations ignores that fact that agriculture is one of the world's major industries accounting for much of the processing, packaging, shipping and storage activity in the world. Agriculture is also a major cause of deforestation and responsible for much of those emissions as well. Thus, we see that our current industrial agricultural model is probably responsible for a third or more of GHG emissions worldwide.



Given that we are currently at 400 ppm carbon dioxide and in order to keep climate change to a minimum we need to reverse the CO2 buildup and get back to at least 350 ppm quickly, we need to remove and store 50 ppm of carbon dioxide in the soil. This works out to about 106 Gigatons of carbon. Since we have removed about 136 Gt since 1750, we know the carbon will fit back in the ground. All it will take is to convert all of the world's agriculture to incorporate practices that sequester carbon: use of cover crops, no-till, no chemicals, replanting our forests and holistic planned grazing. Since the agricultural practices that are needed are the same practices used by many organic, biodynamic and permaculture farmers, what it will ultimately take to reverse climate change is tens of millions of new eco-agricultural farmers all around the globe, supported by hundreds of millions of conscious consumers. That is how simple, and how difficult, the challenge before us is.

Of course there are the naysayers who will claim that this will never work...that organic agriculture will never produce enough food for our ever growing world population and we need modern industrial agriculture in order to feed the world. This argument ignores that fact that there

are millions of people starving and going to bed hungry every day even with industrial agriculture. There are numerous studies all pointing to the fact that the future will not be dominated by the corporate model of agriculture we see today. Instead the world's increasing demand for food can only be sustained by smaller, more localized forms of ecological agriculture that are much more efficient both in terms of energy and in terms of the amount of food produced from a given area of land. (NRC (2010), DeSchutter (2011), Foley, et. al., (2011), FAO (2012))

...what it will ultimately take to reverse climate change is tens of millions of new eco-agricultural farmers all around the globe, supported by hundreds of millions of conscious consumers. That is how simple, and how difficult, the challenge before us is.

Because this situation has never occurred previously in our recorded history, we really don't have a clear idea of what to expect as a result of our having increased the carbon diox-

ide levels in our atmosphere by at least 40 percent. Our climate which had been remarkably stable for all of human history has now become unpredictable. The overall increase in the average global temperature is not just melting around 97 percent of the glaciers on the planet, but is causing measurable increases in ocean temperature, sea-levels, and ocean acidification.

Even though we have a clear path to solving our current situation (replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, reduce our energy consumption and convert the world's agriculture to ecologically oriented methods), we are not acting fast enough to avoid some of the disastrous consequences of our actions so far. Next month in Part III of this series, we will explore some ideas on how we can prepare ourselves for some of the coming changes that appear to be unavoidable at this point.

Special thanks to the Massachusetts Chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association and Jack Kirtledge for the white paper: Soil Carbon Restoration: Can Biology Do the Job? (2015), which formed the basis for this article series. <http://www.nofamass.org/content/soil-carbon-restoration-can-biology-do-job>

References available upon request, from the editor



Here's to You!

Kat Lowther

The Co-op is celebrating a milestone: the big 4-0. That's a lot of years to be providing our community with wholesome foods and locally produced goods. A big birthday calls for a big celebration, and to get started, we must consider the birthday cake! It's a fine tradition for acknowledging another passing year; sweet, tender cake covered with creamy icing, set ablaze with 40 candles. But how did this become the tradition we know and love?

The birthday cake's origin is a little mysterious. We don't know exactly how the ritual came to be but there are a lot of interesting theories. In ancient Egypt, when pharaohs came to throne they were considered to become deities and were honored with elaborate celebrations to acknowledge their "birth" as a god.

The Greeks adopted this form of celebration for their own deities and worshipped Artemis, the goddess of the moon, with an appropriately round, moon-shaped cake. Some accounts say they were the clever ones to add candles to the affair. It makes sense to me that you would worship the goddess of the moon with a glowing confection. After blowing out the candles, prayers would be car-

ried to the heavens in the rising smoke.

Eventually, the tradition of celebrating a birth shifted from religious reasons to honoring regular mortals. The Romans practiced giving those reaching the age of 50 a cake of flour, olive oil, honey, and grated cheese. The Co-op is on its way to reaching that revered age but we have 10 years to work on a modern twist to that recipe.

In order to understand our contemporary tradition of the birthday cake, we must look to the Germans. They held parties for young children called *Kinderfeste*, at the center of which was a cake with a candle on it for each year of life.

Today we see the range in birthday cakes from rich French-style baked goods, to ice cream cakes, and even cakes shaped like Disney princesses. I remember being astounded one day when I walked into a local chocolatier shop and saw someone working on a Snow White cake in which the skirt of Snow White's gown was the cake! I can recall, when my mom turned 40, she was thrown a tongue-in-



cheek, over-the-hill party with black balloons and a cake shaped as a coffin. The themes can vary widely but the important thing is that it's a special treat to honor a special someone on their special occasion. These days, we even get to make a silent wish that will be granted if we can blow out all the candles on our cake in one go!

So here's to you, Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, on your 40th birthday! We are all going to enjoy this one with you, and hopefully many more to come!



**Find Kat's cake recipe
on page 13**

Introducing the 2016 Board of Directors Election Candidates

Candidates for the Election were asked why they were interested in serving on the Board, what their previous experience with cooperatives or not-for-profit organizations had been, and what their approach to group dynamics was. They were also invited to share anything else they thought the MNFC membership might like to know about them.

This year **three seats are open** on the Board of Directors.

The election ballot is located on page 31 of this Newsletter.



R.J. Adler (Incumbent)

I'm interested in continued service on the Board because of the Co-op's role as a centerpiece of the Addison County Community. How can the Co-op serve its own needs, and those of our neighbors at the same time? We are undergoing an exciting expansion! How can we use that opportunity to support the downtown community as it looks forward to the railroad construction project? While serving as vice president of the Board for the last year I've done my best to answer this question.

Beyond my two years of experience on this Board, I spent many years working on staff at Camp Keewaydin on Lake Dunmore, and as a youth advisor for the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society (CVUUS). I spent a year in Wyoming teaching high school. I enjoy working with folks so they understand how their choices can change the world around them. Since moving to Middlebury in 2008 I've cultivated many connections throughout Addison County, and bring that knowledge and experience to my Board work.

Whether it was the involvement with projects like the Solar Decathlon at Middlebury College, or community

events with CVUUS, the Middlebury Energy Committee, or SunCommon, my approach to group dynamics is to listen. That's where a real understanding of community comes from and where solutions are born.

In the November 2015 Newsletter I wrote an article entitled "Expanding our Values" in which I applauded other grocery stores carrying organic and natural food as positive because it reflects our success. As someone with experience with values-led business I believe expanding our influence is the best way to achieve our ends. If you'd like to re-read the article, you can at http://middleburycoop.com/coop/sites/default/files/files/PDFs/Newsletters/newsletter_15-11.pdf and if you've got other ideas to make the Co-op a better place I'm always down for a good brainstorm. Please contact me at 802-793-0662 or email me at rjajr89@gmail.com.



Don Glauber

The Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op is a truly wonderful place. Four years ago, when my wife Karen and I were exploring different towns in Vermont as the place for our next life adventure, we accidentally happened

upon the MNFC, and quickly realized that this Co-op was a special place, which embodied a vibrant community energy and spirit, of the kind which we were hoping to find in our future home. Long story short, we chose to move to the Middlebury area and the MNFC was a big part of that decision. Since we took up residence in Middlebury in August of 2013, we immediately became members, frequent member workers and have participated in numerous Co-op events. During frequent member worker shifts in the Bulk department, I have been able to get to know the Co-op from the inside in a unique and fascinating way. During each two hour shift, I have gotten to know many of the wonderful, warm, welcoming and highly skilled Co-op staff members. It is also amazing, especially in the summer and fall seasons, to see so many deliveries of produce from local farmers and other local artisans.

As a member of the Board, I would be a passionate supporter of any action that could support the growth and vibrancy of our local food community movement, which is such a unique, dynamic and important dimension of the MNFC. Since I am relatively new to this community, should I become a MNFC Board member, I believe that my first and most important task would be to listen, ask questions and learn how the Board works and how given my background and experience with food co-ops and grassroots human-centered community organizations, I can make the most meaningful and relevant contribution to this dynamic and important group.

Since 1975, I have been a member of five different co-ops, usually as a working member. They have been the SUNY Binghamton Food Coop, Honest Weight Food Co-op (Albany, NY), Binghamton Town Food Co-op, Greenstar Food Co-op (Ithaca, NY), Binghamton University Food Co-op and now MNFC. Not-for-profit organizations that I have or am involved with (and am very passionate about) are NYRAD (New York Residents Against Drilling, from 2004-2010, on their Board for 3 years), Elephant Nature Park/Save Elephant Foundation (as volunteer and Elephant ambassador in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2009-present) and for the past year as a volunteer for Homeward Bound: Addison County Humane Society (another wonderful/important Middlebury organization where I work largely with the cats, new vol-

unteer orientation and tabling for Homeward Bound at various events in the community).

I enjoy being part of groups and have had a great variety of experience with all kinds of groups and group dynamics. From being part of a team at the Binghamton University Counseling Center for 23 years as a staff psychologist, helping to maintain a balanced, safe, open, creative, flexible and evolving group dynamic that supported the many challenges that arose both across campus and for each staff member in what often could be very challenging and stressful work, was a continuous and fascinating challenge. I was also a member of many ongoing groups across campus (short and long-term), a few of which I initiated to support student and community development, were a men's group, a Storytelling group and a weekly campus wide meditation/yoga group. I am particularly passionate about men's groups for men at any stage of life, which led me to co-initiate a Men's group in my former Upstate NY community about 15 years ago, which is still going strong with 9 members today, and which I participate in via skype. A few words which capture my feelings about productive group dynamics would be: open, flexible, genuine, respectful, safe, resilient, creative, focused, patient... and magical.

I have loved food and cooking my entire life, especially being creative and spontaneous in the kitchen with newly discovered ingredients, especially when they are superfoods and extremely healthful. Also, my wife Karen and I love our new life in Middlebury and in the Champlain Valley, having befriended so many wonderful people so quickly and finding so many meaningful activities to engage our time with. Some other passions of mine are yoga, meditation, hiking, swimming, animal right activism, rites of passage and fostering authentic relationships and community.





Myles Kamisher-Koch

Over the past five years living in Middlebury, my love for the Co-op has grown alongside an ever increasing passion for food and community as demonstrated by a consistent trajectory of learning and practice in my academic, professional, and personal paths. My interests in cooking, curing, cultivating, fermenting, and foraging have been driven by a critical examination of the food systems of which I am a part. With this in mind, the opportunity to serve on the Board of the Directors for the Co-op represents a profound opportunity to contribute to an institution that not only nourishes and educates but also serves as a social hub for our community. Shopping for food that has been sourced with integrity, while happily chatting with friends, neighbors, and Co-op staff, is a privilege Co-op members and non-members alike are lucky to have.

Some key experiences I believe I could bring to the table as board member include:

- Member of ACORN's Board of Directors. ACORN is a local non-profit working to promote the food and agriculture of Addison County and the surrounding Champlain Valley
- Representative staff member of Middlebury College's Community Council, a body of students, faculty, staff, and administrators who meet regularly to discuss community-wide issues
- Academic research into institutional food-purchasing and the American industrial food complex
- Professional experience in food-service database construction and management as well as commercial

kitchen-literacy stemming from employment in destination restaurant, institutional, and backcountry kitchens.

I believe my voice would be a positive addition to our already strong Board of Directors. As a sitting member, I would be honored to learn from and collaborate with the Board. Together, I hope to help ensure that the future of our Co-op remains bright, inclusive, and serves our member-owners as well as surrounding communities of producers and consumers as best it can.



Kevin Kite

I've shopped at the Co-op since moving to Middlebury 18 years ago, and, in that time, the Co-op has always been a wonderful resource for healthy, wholesome, and locally-grown foods and products. As I have watched grocery stores come and go through Middlebury, I have been grateful that the Co-op has consistently encouraged ecologically sound and healthful patterns of production and consumption in our community. For nearly two decades, the Co-op has nurtured my spouse, my children, and me. Now that my children are older, and I have more time to give, I would love to give some time back to the Cooperative that has given so much to me and my family. A democratic, member-owned cooperative remains strong when its community participates. I would be honored to participate as a member of the Board.

I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the Otter Creek Child Care Center, and I am Secretary of the Green Mountain Division of the U.S. Fencing Association. In the past, I have served on the Board of the Addison County Humane Society (now Homeward Bound). These experiences have been rewarding and engaging. I

have enjoyed working together with others to develop policies and long-range plans.

I've been fortunate to work with groups in many different contexts, such as helping teenagers work together to put on theatrical performances, facilitating discussions among students during Winter Term at Middlebury College, and helping adversarial parties reach mutually agreeable resolutions in legal disputes. In group settings, my main goal is always the same: to listen carefully to everyone, to try to make sure that everyone's voice is heard, and to figure out how my particular skills and experiences can best contribute to the goals of the group. In the end, a group meets to achieve a group purpose, and I believe every individual in the group should be there to help the group meet its aim.

I would bring my legal experience as an attorney with me to the Board. I also co-create the environmental web-comic *Hurry Up Please It's Time* with my spouse, Michelle McCauley.



Ann LaFiandra

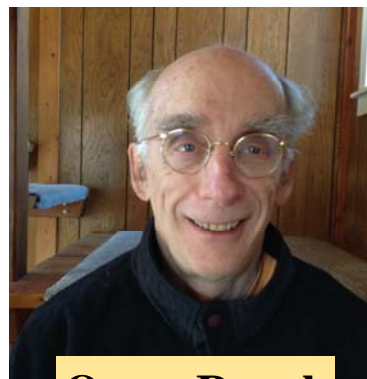
A member of the MNFC since 1974 (back in the pre-order days) and a Co-op Partner since 2003, I have enjoyed the availability of good quality food locally for over 40 years and feel that it's time to help the MNFC continue to thrive in its mission. I grew up eating organic vegetables from my father's garden and eating healthy meals, so I want to ensure that opportunity for as many people as possible.

I have served on the Board of my church for 3 years.

As a retired teacher I have attended many faculty meet-

ings, department meetings, and parent-teacher meetings, and my church membership involves committee meetings. I like to listen to people, and hopefully hear what they are saying, before I form an opinion. I get impatient with behavior that tries to drown out other voices by being louder or interrupting. My philosophy is that if an idea has merit, it will stand on its own, without such tactics.

After graduating in 1973 with a Master's degree in German from Middlebury College, I have lived in Middlebury, where I met my husband and raised three children. I am descended from Samuel Miller, the original owner of the Charter House right around the corner, so in that respect I have come back to my roots.



Owen Rogal

I'm a retired English teacher, having taught for almost 30 years in a small university in Iowa. I say "retired" but don't like the word — I don't believe people should stop working, and am looking for a job, not the sort with benefits and a pay check; rather, a job that will let me work in and for the community. I've been involved in food co-ops for almost forty years, running the very small Good Foods Co-op in Oberlin, OH, with my wife Margi and others. When Margi and I moved to Iowa, one of the first things we did was join New Pioneer Co-op in Iowa City, and when I helped our daughter Hannah move to Minneapolis almost the first thing we did there was join The Wedge. We're died-in-the-wool co-ops: Hannah's partner Erin holds the position of Organic Certification and Sustainability Coordinator at The Wedge.

My work in the community in Iowa was through my congregation at Temple Emanuel and my school. Margi and I

took on the responsibility at Temple Emanuel, for example, to cook every month with a fifth Sunday for a homeless shelter. One of my proudest achievements at school was working with students to start a community garden. Having been a teacher, working in the classroom and a department, on committees, chairing for a long period the most challenging committee at the university, I'm used to working in groups — difference of opinion is healthy, civility and respect the necessary starting points for all discussion.

My wife and I are relatively new in Vermont and are looking for ways to become good citizens. So far our only work for the Middlebury Foods Co-op is through volunteering two hours every month; you'll see us then bagging at the table in the back room, supervised by Faye, Caroline, or Reiner, Margarita or Elin, but also learning about the Co-op behind-the-scenes, developing a stronger appreciation for a vigorous and progressive operation that is a key player in the greater community. Now I'm looking for another opportunity, that's why I'm eager to serve on the Board.



I have been interested in expanding on my current knowledge of and involvement with Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op (MNFC) for several years. I have been an employee in the Deli for nearly 10 years, and have heard talk on some level about future expansion of our business for much of that time. Recent events in my life have opened up this opportunity for me to run for the Board of Directors. I feel that my skill set from past experiences could be of great value to MNFC as we enter this new period of growth.

My experience with co-ops is limited to being a volun-

teer, member, and employee at MNFC, as well as a member of Vermont Federal Credit Union. I have worked with several Habitat for Humanity affiliates and chapters nationwide. This includes volunteering at a couple of regional organizations; working as an AmeriCorps member in Jacksonville, Florida; an internship in Anchorage, Alaska; and a Collegiate Challenge trip to Charleston, South Carolina.

Most of my work experiences have had me working on some level within a team. In some cases we each have individual responsibilities, but help each other toward a shared goal. I pride myself on trying to look at a challenge from all perspectives. I may be coming at it with one point of view, but I will listen to other perspectives and am willing to go with the majority. So long as conversations remain respectful, moving forward should not be difficult. I oftentimes bring an element fun to any environment I am in.

Before working at MNFC I had times working at the McKernon Group and Jeremiah Parker Restoration, two area construction firms that emphasized reclaiming and repurposing buildings and building materials. I also received my Associate degree In Architectural Engineering Technology from the Vermont Technical College. I even took drafting classes in High School and at the Hannaford Career Center. While I am not recently active in the Architecture and Construction industries, I do still dabble in sketching from time to time. I am also a devoted family man with three young daughters.



I joined the Co-op just three days after arriving as a Middlebury College student in 2008. Businesses such as the Co-op — those that represent Addison County's

commitment to a locally owned, agricultural economy — epitomize why I chose to move to Middlebury as a student, and why my husband and I chose to settle here after graduating. The Co-op is a community gathering place in our lives, and I am honored that the Co-op was among the first customers of my husband's business, *Shacksbury Cider!*

I would be a positive member of the Co-op Board because of my leadership experiences in education, agriculture and nutrition. As a student, I was treasurer of Weybridge House, the college's sustainability and local food house, and I facilitated the transition from a vegetarian house towards a local food mission. Additionally, as co-president of the Middlebury College Organic Farm, I co-authored the proposal for the college's Food Studies program. Through my work at the College Farm, I partnered with Cornwall School and Aurora School to build school gardens and implement agriculture and nutrition curriculum. I also served on the College's Environmental Council, and facilitated a student-led Winter Term course titled 'Food Justice in Vermont'.

Through my professional experiences as a farmer and a teacher, I would bring a dedication to the Co-op's educational mission of ecologically sound production and consumption. I am proud that as a seasonal employee of Gildrien Farm in 2013, I planted, weeded and harvested countless pounds of produce that ended up on the Co-op shelves. After receiving my master's degree in education from Lesley University in 2015, I now teach at the Bridge School, here in Middlebury. One of the most rewarding aspects of my work at Bridge School is that as teachers, we cooperatively share all administrative and leadership responsibilities of running the K-6 school.

As a marathon runner who lives with Crohn's Disease, nutrition is my hobby, passion and lifestyle. I am excited to bring my experiences in cooperative leadership to the Co-op board, and share my love for education with the Co-op community.



Gregory Witscher

I feel like being on the Board at the Co-op is a good way for me to engage in an organization that I respect and support, and is an opportunity to contribute agricultural perspective to an institution that is focused on local food.

My experience with co-ops is only as a member.

I've had experience working in groups as a farm worker, farm manager and farm owner. I lived in a co-housing community and learned some about group dynamics and non-violent communication. I enjoy working in groups and engaging in meaningful dialogue.

Our family has been members of the Co-op since we moved here from across the state in 2013 and I've become aware of how important the organization is to the community and especially to farmers who sell their food and products through the co-op. The atmosphere of local and organic food is constantly changing and evolving and I think it's important for the co-op to evolve with those changes.



Election for the MNFC Board of Directors

Dear Co-op Members,

The MNFC is governed by an eleven member Board which is elected by you, its member-owners. Board members give their time to thoughtful deliberations concerning the future and well-being of the Co-op. The Board is directly accountable to the members for the activities and accomplishments of the store. Read the information in this packet and cast your ballot by Friday, May 27.

MNFC Election Voting Procedure

What am I voting on?

- ◆ There are nine members seeking election to three seats on the MNFC Board of Directors.
- ◆ Vote for up to three candidates.

Who can vote?

- ◆ Only the MNFC member who is named on the MNFC membership is eligible to vote. That person's name appears on this Newsletter's mailing label. One membership equals one vote.

How do I vote?

- ◆ A ballot is printed on the last page of this Newsletter.
- ◆ Peel off and remove the member's address label located on the backside of the ballot.
- ◆ Fill out the ballot, fold it in half and present your ballot to a cashier at the Co-op. You will receive the benefit of the store coupon printed on the reverse side of the ballot.
- ◆ You may also mail the ballot to: MNFC Elections, 1 Washington Street, Middlebury, VT 05753. Your mailed-in ballot must be received by Friday, May 27.

**The voting period begins on Sunday, May 1, 2016
and ends at 7:00 pm on Friday, May 27, 2016.**

What about voter anonymity?

- ◆ Before casting your vote, remove your address label to preserve your anonymity.

How do I find out about the results?

- ◆ Results of the election of the new Directors will be posted in the store and announced at the Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 1, 2016.

Please note:

The year-end financial report will be available to member-owners
at the Annual Meeting and at the registers in the store
the week prior to the Annual Meeting.
Please contact Glenn Lower at gm@middleburycoop.com with any questions.

2016 MNFC Election Ballot

Dear Co-op Member-Owner,

This is your only ballot.

Peel the address label off your Newsletter.

Fill out this ballot, fold it in half, and drop it off with a cashier at the Co-op,
or send it, with address label, to:

MNFC Elections, 1 Washington Street, Middlebury, VT 05753

Your ballot must be received by 7 pm Friday, May 27

Your Vote Counts!

Vote for the Board of Directors

Choose Up To Three

- ☐ **R.J. Adler**
- ☐ **Don Glauber**
- ☐ **Myles Kamisher-Koch**
- ☐ **Ann LaFiandra**
- ☐ **Kevin Kite**
- ☐ **Owen Rogal**
- ☐ **Ian Ross**
- ☐ **Amanda Warren**
- ☐ **Gregory Witscher**



MNFC

1 Washington Street
Middlebury
Vermont 05753

Return Service Requested

**PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE**

PAID

PERMIT NO. 56
MIDDLEBURY, VT

www.middlebury.coop



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!
40 YEARS A CO-OP