Cooperation in Action:
Creating Our Destination Deli

Who makes the soup?
It’s not who you think.
Yes, of course the Deli team cooks our soups. But the people stirring the pot aren’t the whole story.

Did you know that our housemade soups, sandwiches, salads and desserts are all made using the same ingredients you’ll find on our shelves? Look around the store. What you see is what’s in the soup: fresh, healthy, organic (and sometimes local) veggies, meats and groceries.

Our cooks use lots of produce that’s not cosmetically “perfect” (but it still tastes wonderful!) and meats and groceries that are nearing their expiration date. Doing this is healthy for the store and the planet. It saves the store (and you) money and allows the cooks a spark of creativity in the kitchen.

Over the past three months, we’ve been exploring ways to make our Deli a true destination eatery. We’re streamlining operations and improving our offerings. And we’ve realized that to make a good soup, it takes a lot more people than just those who dice, chop, stir and season.

Stone’s Throw Culinary Training Program – Chefs Danielle and Sara helped us take stock, organize and clean the kitchen. All three of our Deli team members are Stone’s Throw graduates (see sidebar), and the chefs continue to mentor and guide them. In coming weeks, we’ll bring in current Stone’s Throw students to help with prep work. They’ll get real-life, paid experience on the job, and we’ll have more hands to make more delicious food. Win/win!

National Co+op Grocers – Our “co-op of retail food co-ops” knows what works in co-ops across the country. Ken Wallace, NCG’s Prepared Foods Specialist, recently spent two days with us, focused on ways to improve systems, introduce new foods and make our customers happy. He brings decades of work in the restaurant and hospitality industries, as well as at Whole Foods, and he comes to us as a benefit of our membership in NCG.

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Ownership Is the Co-op Difference

Hello from the Board,

If you can find healthy, organic food at another grocery store, why choose Co-op Market Grocery & Deli? This question, which is asked of all board of directors candidates, made me pause. I’d already been committed to supporting the co-op (and other co-ops before it), but how could I articulate the positive vibe that kept me invested and returning to the store? Many of us have our personal reasons for supporting our store: health, convenience, the environment, social justice, community, and many more.

But what is “the co-op difference?”

It’s simple. We own the store. It’s not just locally owned; it’s owned by its patrons. What a difference! The decisions originate here, the profits stay here, and the resulting impact on the community here is deep.

Your board of directors is committed to maintaining the integrity of the co-op and what makes it unique. The board’s job is to represent the Owners and help support the management of the co-op. Governance includes ensuring operating documents are doing their job, from a legal as well as a communication standpoint.

In 2015 we passed a major overhaul to the co-op’s bylaws to achieve a streamlined, updated document. In our excitement and haste, the board neglected to have the new version reviewed by our attorney before it was submitted to the owners for a vote. We were chagrined to realize after the fact that some of the changes we’d made did not conform to the Alaska state statute governing co-ops (AS 10.15).

The proposed bylaws changes you will see on your ballot are an effort to remedy this. To help you make an informed decision, the ballot includes links to the changes to the bylaws, as well as a summary of the changes.

Bylaws are an organizational governing document in which the Owners of a cooperative articulate the special dual relationship they have as members of an association and owners of a business. In the bylaws, the Owners define how they will make certain decisions together and how they will empower a board to make other decisions on their behalf. They outline Owner rights and responsibilities. Bylaws should be understandable and effective for all Owners to participate in a cooperative democracy and a foundation for operational guidelines for directors and staff.

One proposed change to note: the term “owner” in the bylaws is changed to “member.” According AS 10.15, the co-op qualifies as a membership organization because people pay a fee to join, whereas to join an ownership organization requires the issuance and purchase of stock. While we must use the term “member” in the bylaws to refer to our relationship in the organization, it does not change our rights and responsibilities. When we join, the “fee” is actually our equity interest in the store, our little piece of this cooperatively-owned business. We remain Owners of Co-op Market as a business.

Ownership is, and will continue to be, the co-op difference.

As Owners, it’s in our best interest to look after our investment. Supporting the co-op as a patron is one avenue, as is participating in our election and annual owner meeting October 19th.

These are key times to engage in this cooperative democracy. I look forward to seeing you there.

In cooperation,
Anduin McElroy
2016-2017 Chair
Stronger Together: National Cooperative Grocers

Ask any Co-op Market manager, and they’ll tell you: We wouldn’t be the successful store we are today without our membership in National Co+op Grocers (NCG).

Our “co-op of retail food co-ops” represents 148 food cooperatives operating more than 200 stores in 37 states. NCG co-ops have combined annual sales of more than $2 billion and represent more than 13 million Owners.

NCG uses that buying power to negotiate for better prices. Co+op Deals flyer sales and our everyday low prices on Co+op Basics mean you pay the same as shoppers in Washington or California.

NCG helps co-ops flourish by providing training and professional development opportunities. In addition to national conferences attended by our staff, NCG also offers online training on topics ranging from pricing strategies to effective management.

NCG also amplifies our (and your) voices through advocacy on issues that matter: organic food standards, Fair Trade, NonGMOs and food labeling. “We could not undertake this kind of advocacy on our own,” said Mary Christensen, Co-op Market GM. “We are fortunate to belong to an organization committed to protecting our consumers.”

And NCG walks the talk on sustainability. In a partnership with Peruvian farmer cooperatives, NCG’s Co+op Forest project has planted more than 1.4 million native trees in the Amazon rainforest as part of a carbon offset program. NCG is also a founding member of the Climate Collaborative, which seeks ways to reverse global climate change.

Visit www.strongertogether.coop for more on NCG’s advocacy efforts, plus recipes, health & wellness info, and a co-op directory.

2017 By the Numbers

We’ve got something to celebrate! We achieved our first-ever million-dollar quarter from April through June. And we had a profit of $17,000.

If current trends continue, we should attain $4 million in sales in 2017.

At the end of the third quarter, our sales have reached $2.825 million. Last year at this time, we were at $2.7 million.

At 5.44% sales growth, we are just under our 6% target for this year. We expect an increase in our final quarter sales as we revamp our Deli and implement recommendations from a recent NCG audit. We also expect more traffic once the Noble Street road construction wraps up later this month.

Our average sale so far this year is $34.57, up 2.6% over last year’s $33.70. Our cashiers handle an average of 307 transactions every day.

We currently have 3494 Owners, 5% more than last year’s 3323. About 62% of our sales are to Owners.

We’ve given $1051 in 5¢ refunds to shoppers who bring their own reusable bags. That represents 21,020 plastic & paper bags kept out of the landfill.

We provide jobs for 30 people, 19 of them full-time. Thank you for helping us build the best grocery store in Fairbanks!

Mary Christensen
General Manager
Co-operative Principle 7: 
Shoppers Share Concern for Community

It’s no secret that times are tough for a lot of people, but hard times seem to bring out the best in co-op shoppers. Your generosity means donations to our two community-focused programs have surpassed all expectations.

Shop & Share

“I wanted you to know I went to the co-op and used my coupons. The food is really delicious and I am thankful for the extra help.”

Our new Shop & Share program allows co-op shoppers to give food directly and anonymously to families in need.

Shoppers select one of seven versatile, nutritious foods from a menu at the register and pay for it along with their own groceries. We create vouchers for those purchases and give them to the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. AHFC distributes them to families in their Jumpstart program.

Since Shop & Share debuted in October 2016, 64 families have received a total of 340 vouchers with a total value of $1370. Organic oats, ground turkey and eggs were purchased most frequently.

Most of the families are headed by a single adult. While one family included 10 people, the average family size is four. In June, AHFC reported that a total of 28 adults and 63 children had received vouchers.

Mandi Manning, AHFC’s Jumpstart Program Manager, said, “Families receiving housing assistance are very grateful for the Shop & Share program and food donations. Every donated item is distributed and means a lot to the families that receive them. The Fairbanks community doesn’t have a lot of healthy food donation options so this effort is so needed. Thank you for our partnership!”

We believe Shop & Share is having a positive effect on food access for more people in the community as word spreads. Since the program started, we’ve seen a 23% increase in shoppers using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Lend a Hand

“I love this program! It’s a terrific way to give small amounts that provide big results!” – Co-op Market Owner

Donations to our register round-up program are up a whopping 62% over last year! From January through September 2017, you rounded up $16,884.82 in spare change.

Since the Lend-a-Hand program began in 2013, our shoppers have...
Your Dollars Doing Good: Investing in Health, Fairness, Sustainability

When you shop at your co-op, you aren’t just buying food. In the past year*, you’ve supported:

**USDA Certified Organic Foods**
- 354,705 purchases
- 2005 different items
- totaling $1,326,127

**Local Foods & Products**
- 40,019 purchases
- 343 items
- totaling $222,428

**Fair Trade Certified Goods**
- 22,368 purchases
- 251 different items
- totaling $97,910

**Certified NonGMO Foods**
- 92,028 purchases
- 1058 different items
- totaling $394,090

**Other Goods Sold**
- 848,435 purchases
- 9175 different items
- totaling $3,732,755

It’s important to note that totals for local products, especially, are likely much higher than shown because of inconsistencies in our database. We are currently seeking an IT/Retail Support Manager to help us keep more accurate track.

*Sales data from October 1, 2016, through September 30, 2017.

**Want to work with us?**

We’re hiring a Fresh Foods Buyer and an IT/Retail Support Manager, and we’re always recruiting customer service stars. Learn more about co-op jobs at www.coopmarket.org.
We ♥ What We Do!

I just wanted to say how impressed I was with your store, staff, and offerings.

Today was the first time I have visited since your opening week. I was asked in every department of the store, by smiling friendly employees, if I had questions or needed help finding something. What questions I did have were answered by very knowledgeable staff.

I could tell that there was a lot of store pride with your employees. Hands down the best grocery store customer service in town! I look forward to shopping with you again very soon. Thank you!

– Lynn Cunningham

Your Dollars Doing Good

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However, sales of local meats, seafood and produce have fallen over the past couple of years. There are many reasons for this. A few farmers retired or turned to other non-food crops. A local meat producers’ patty-making machinery broke. The demand for our everyday low-priced Co+op Basics continues to grow, and that program now includes free-range, grassfed and organic meats.

We expect to spend at least $60,000 on local meats this year. In the Produce department, local sales accounted for 14% in 2016, compared to 11% so far this year.

We are working on strategies to increase and improve our local offerings. This winter, we plan to meet with our farmers and suppliers to learn from each other about what works well, what doesn’t, and how we can better collaborate and cooperate to grow our local agriculture.

Cooperation in Action

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Farmers & Producers – Quite simply, no farmers = no food. Farmers fill our soup pot with healthy groceries: fruits & veggies grown locally and/or organically; meats, eggs & dairy from humanely raised animals; and sustainably wild-caught seafood.

Co-op Market Staff – Our staff is a diverse group. But all of us – managers, buyers, cashiers and stockers – are committed to making your experience in our co-op both delicious and delightful. We want you to walk out with a smile, and we want you to come back.

Our Owners & Customers – You are the most important ingredient of all. You’re the reason we’re here. What you buy shapes what we sell – and what goes into the soup. You have helped us create a store full of options not easily found anywhere else: vegan foods, NonGMO foods, Fair Trade goods, allergen-free foods.

In the Stone Soup fable, it takes an entire community to create a tasty, hearty soup. Likewise, it takes the strength of many partners to create a vibrant, exciting co-op.
Vegetarian Kale Soup
Yield: 6-8 servings  Prep Time: 25 minutes  Cook Time: 30 minutes

- 2 tablespoons Napa Valley Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 1 yellow onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- 1 bunch kale, stems removed & leaves chopped
- 8 cups water
- 6 cubes Rapunzel Organic Vegetable Bouillon
- 6 white potatoes, peeled & cubed
- 2 15-oz. cans Eden Organic Cannellini Beans
- 1 tablespoon Frontier Italian Seasoning
- 2 tablespoon Frontier Dried Parsley
- salt & pepper

1. Heat olive oil in large soup pot. Cook the onion and garlic until soft. Stir in kale and cook until wilted, about 2 minutes.
2. Stir in the water, vegetable bouillon, tomatoes, beans, potatoes, Italian seasoning and parsley.
3. Simmer soup on medium heat for 25 minutes or until potatoes are cooked through. Season with salt & pepper to taste.

Taco Soup
Yield: 6-8 servings  Prep/Cook Time: 25 minutes total

- 2 lbs Mid State Meats Local Ground Beef
- 1 envelope Riega Organic Taco Seasoning
- 1 16-oz. can Amy's Organic Mild Chili Beans, undrained
- 1 15-oz. can Field Day Organic Whole Kernel Corn, drained
- 1 15-oz. can Westbrae Organic Pinto Beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 14.5-oz. can Muir Glen Organic Diced Tomatoes
- 1 4-oz. can Chopped Green Chilies (optional)
- 1 envelope Simply Organic Ranch Salad Dressing Mix

1. Brown ground beef over medium heat until no longer pink; drain.
2. Add taco seasoning mix and stir in remaining ingredients.
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Cooperative Principle 7:
Shoppers Share Concern for Community
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given a grand total of $50,900 to support 21 community nonprofits. That number is even more impressive when you realize that these donations are almost always given just a few cents at a time.

Your spare change has helped create big change for organizations as diverse as the Fairbanks Children's Museum, Calypso Farm & Ecology Center, and the Fairbanks Animal Shelter Fund.

Applications for the 2018 Lend-a-Hand program will be available on-line and in the store on November 1. Owners will vote to select next year’s recipients in December.

For more info on both Shop & Share and Lend a Hand, please visit www.coopmarket.org.

What Do You Think?

What do you love about your co-op? How can we improve? Tell us in our Shopper Survey this fall. We’ll publicize it in our e-news, social media and website. Complete the survey and you’ll be entered to win one of three $50 gift certificates!
9TH ANNUAL CO-OP MEETING

Birch Hill Recreation Area
Thursday, October 19, 2017
Doors will open at 5:30 p.m.
Light soup supper from the Deli
Please join us!

Your Dollars Make a Difference!

Everyone is welcome to shop at Co-op Market. And when you spend your money here, you are investing in a better world.

- You help create a robust local economy.
- You help grow a healthier environment.
- You help tackle food waste.
- You help nurture community.
- You help grow Fair Trade business.
- You help support sustainable solutions.

Thank you for supporting your community-owned grocery store!

To learn more about the impact of shopping at your co-op, visit www.strongertogether.coop.