



2016 Annual Report

May 1, 2016 ~ Falcon Bowl ~ Riverwest, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Letter from the President

It has been another exciting year for the Riverwest Co-op Grocery and Café (we opened our doors 14 years, can you believe it?!) The board would like to extend a sincere thank you to all those who have helped the co-op by donating their time, money, and energy to our member-owned business! Our members, volunteers, staff, and community are the reason we exist, and in 2016 we will continue to find new ways to make our food more accessible and delicious for all those we serve!

We are kicking off this year with a firm foundation of solid business principles to make us financially stable for years to come. We would like to do so many things for our community and our business, but we are constantly balancing the highest priority needs with our limited resources. In 2015 our membership committee worked incredibly hard to bring our memberships back into compliance with our by-laws; 1 person: 1 membership. Major thanks to them for all the analysis and effort to drive that to completion! Starting off 2016 you hopefully have already seen the advertising for our Solar Panel project, where we were able to meet our donation goal to have the panels installed this year! Special thanks to RE-Volv for encouraging and supporting us on this journey. The board will also focus on budgeting, defining quality employment, and documenting our institutional memory in a sustainable and transparent manner. If any of those topics sound interesting to you please reach out to a board member to participate!

We are so happy to have been around 14 years, and in order to make it 14+ more we will need everyone's support. Please consider joining a committee, special project, or volunteering your time and skills, whatever they may be, at the co-op!

There are many new opportunities on the horizon, and we are looking forward to the new ideas and initiatives planned in 2016. Please reach out to the board at any time to provide feedback and feel free to attend a board meeting any time to make sure your voice is heard!

Cheers to a co-operative 2016!

~ Kristin Mannion

From the Store:

The Co-op is a hub of activity. People come to make healthy food choices, share food and conversation.

Our mission is to purchase high quality, local and affordable food for our community. For the first time in 2015 the Co-op offered local produce every month of the year!

Beginning in April with fresh greens from urban ag partners like Walnut Way, during the height of the season when 90% of our produce is sourced locally, and in winter when root vegetables are delivered weekly from local farms, we provide Wisconsin grown produce to our community throughout the year.

One of our biggest merchandise challenges is maintaining the produce. It takes considerable time to keep this area looking fresh, especially during the summer months when we receive multiple shipments during the week.

The display would benefit from the help of dedicated volunteers assigned to maintain stock and manage produce spoilage.

We expanded staffing in the store this year by offering hours to café workers. By cross training workers, the Co-op can offer more hours to part time staff. We all benefit by having more workers with the skills to work in the café and the store. Currently two café workers are working a store shift each week.

It's worth repeating why we are considering the addition of a second register, as the following story illustrates.

It was the first warm weekend of the year and the co-op and café were hustling, the checkout line extended to the beverage cooler and beyond, things were going smoothly until the computer froze, although we quickly reset it and continued. We were lucky that day it didn't take long to remedy the problem. But what occurred was a good reminder about how tense it can be when something goes wrong on a busy day. We can provide better service to our customers with the addition of a 2nd register.

Last fall we began working with a Co-op member to re-design the check out counter. Our goal was to see if the space could accommodate two registers, it does. The plans are not final but we have drawings and are working on the de-

tails necessary to accommodate our needs.

With the Copos update that occurred in January, we purchased an in-counter scanner/scale. It will be installed with the new counter and is expected to speed the checkout process.

Ironically, the new credit card chip reader slows the process down. We hope to reduce the number of terminals on the counter by combining credit card and ebt processing into one unit.

We are going into our 15th year and would like to spruce the place up.

We have a list of things we would like to do inside and out. If anyone would like to work on any of the projects, we would love to share them with you.

Thank you for supporting the Co-op and all the local vendors we represent.

***Report by Shelly McClone Carriere and
Paula Gelbke***



Gina representing the Co-Op at the 2016 Rockabilly Chili Fundraiser, where we won Best Vegetarian Chili!

From the Cafe

STAFF: We currently have an exemplary staff in the cafe that includes Gretchen, Gina, Scott, Todd, Nick and Nik. We have also recently hired back Sebaston as well as Jessica, Ayla, and Therese; who have all been wonderful additions. Cafe staff meetings have been well attended and a lot of our issues of the past have been resolved. Our relationship with the Urban League and hiring for transitional employment has been both great and at times challenging but continues to go well.

COMPOST: We have been using compostable disposables for over a year now. We are constantly looking for more ways the café can be more sustainable.

MENUS: We have put out a children's menu that we expect to be really wonderful in the summer months when children aren't in school. Any and all feedback to the kid's menu is always welcome. We are also in the process of changing up a couple menu items and adding a couple more in the near future.

WISHES:

- Water filtration system
- NSF Toaster
- NSF Waffle Iron
- Steam clean for range and oven

Report by Gina DeVecchis



Finance Committee

The Co-Op is using Net Operating Income to gauge profitability as recommended by our accountant. We had a Net Operating Income at the end of 2015 of \$33,396. Of that, \$13,508 was generated by Café sales and \$19,888 was generated by Store sales. This Net was on gross sales of \$1,095,157.

As we mature, it is good to see our Café also turning a profit. This is no small task with a dining area that can only seat a dozen during cold or wet weather. Thank you to all staff and volunteers in both the store and café for making this happen.

Our Balance Sheet for the end of 2015 shows total deposits at \$161,951. Liabilities outstanding at year end were \$11,567. That gives us a healthy reserve and operating fund of \$150,384.

Additionally, apart from our internal expenses and income, we've met our goal for fundraising for our solar panels, so in 2016, the Co-op will be at least partially solar powered!

The Finance Committee approved payment of a "Bonus" to eligible employees based on 2015 profits. Our employee guide states that we will share 25% of profit with staff for their effort in running a profitable business. This and wage adjustments were discussed at Finance Committee meetings and approved by the board. Bonus paid out was a total of \$8,149.00, based on 25% of year end Net Operating Income (\$33,396.) and divided by each employee's per cent of total wages paid in 2015.

As of March 21, 2016, managers pay scale was upgraded to reach a target of \$13 to \$15/hour based on length of service. New hires have a probationary period of 90 days and start at the lower rate until the probation is successfully completed and increases as length of service increases. These raises were approved by Finance and the full board and were given in consideration that hourly non-managerial staff were all given a raise the prior year to a base start of \$10.10/hour. The Board put a freeze on any additional raises--besides probationary increase of new hire--until a review of the financial statements in spring of 2017.

***Report by Vince Bushell, Nick Gates and
Monica Reida***

Communications Committee

Our largest project this year was completing our beautiful new website. If you haven't already, please go to riverwestcoop.org and take a look. A big thanks to Kris Purzycki, our resident website developer, and to Eshi Morris for creating the discussion forums.

As always, we email a monthly newsletter to our members and create a monthly advertisement for the Riverwest Currents. We played a part in the Co-op reaching its goal for the RE-volv fundraiser by keeping members informed of our progress through the newsletter and by advertising in the Currents. Erin Christman writes the newsletters and John Sengdalaphet and Glenda Puhek create the advertisements as well as other artwork. We also attend events as part of our regular activities. You may have seen us at one of the festivals this summer; we had booths at Locust Street Festival, Juneteenth Day Festival and Center Street Daze.

Each holiday season for the past several years, we've set up a collection by the register for people to donate to an organization in our community. This year we raised \$144 for the refugee resettlement program at Lutheran Social Services. One of the caseworkers at LSS is also a member at the Co-op and helped us get \$144 worth of socks to refugee families, many of which were braving their first Milwaukee winter. We've also given in-kind donations to 16 different groups this past year; these donations help support other organizations with their fundraisers and other events.

We became a member of Local First Milwaukee, an organization that promotes the growth of local business in the Milwaukee area. Riverwest Radio is a new radio station in Riverwest, and we are supporting the station as an underwriter. Tune in to 104.1 and pretty soon you'll be able to hear us promoting the Co-op in between listening to your favorite radio shows.

You can check out the Co-op's new travel mugs that we ordered this year. They were designed by tattoo artist and member Eric Brown and are selling very fast; so come get one soon if you'd like to advertise the Co-op everywhere you go.

The Co-op's 15th anniversary is this coming fall, and we've been thinking about how to celebrate. One possible project is to spruce up the exterior with new window awnings. If you'd like to help spread the news about how great the Co-

op is, we'd love to have you as a volunteer. We're looking for writers, artists and people with an interest in advertising and growing relationships with the community. We're also looking for people to help keep our website updated; it's easy and we'll be happy to teach you. But whatever your talents or interests may be, we'd love for you to stop by a meeting and check it out. Whether you'd like to learn something new or put your existing skills to use, we hope to meet you. We typically meet the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month at 7 pm in the Co-op office, but send an email to paulag@riverwestcoop.org for confirmation.

Report by Bridget Crowley

Membership Committee

Currently, our Co-op is owned by 1,513 members, 771 of which are lifetime members. Since last year's General Membership Meeting, 762 members have joined the Co-op or renewed their memberships, bringing in over \$15,000 in membership equity, while 13 have joined as Lifetime members adding \$1300 in equity for a total of over \$16,300 in added equity. Thank you, fellow members, for supporting your Co-op!

Soon at the register will be new improved membership forms along with yellow member cards. The card will serve as proof of purchase to use before your renewal or new membership goes to our dedicated volunteers, into the system to be confirmed at the register. New members can then write their number on the card, but as usual you only need to give your member number or last name to pull up your discount after it's entered into our system. Thank you for everyone's patience with any prior difficulties.

A big thank you to Sheryl Mullendore for cleaning up our member data base while finishing to give 2nd cardholders their own memberships! Sheryl and Lisa have been the backbone of ensuring members receive their proper discount over the past year. Thank you to everyone who has helped! Unfortunately for us, we happily wish Lisa and Sheryl good luck on their new adventures as they transition away from helping our committee. That means there are openings for new fingers to type in our critical membership data. This is a good opportunity for people who cannot fit in a regular store or cafe shift and would like to volunteer.

***Report by Karen Reynolds and
Alex Brower***

HR Committee

The HR Committee's primary responsibilities are the regular maintenance of employee files, ensuring the the legal compliance of the Co-op's procedures and protocols, and providing conflict-resolution facilitation when necessary. We also participate in the employee review process and hiring.

This year we hope to update our employee job descriptions, and clean up our policies and procedures. If you have a passion for people and/or a history in HR, please consider joining us on the HR committee as we continue to try and make the Co-op a great place to shop, eat, and work!

Report by Kristin Mannion

Building and Maintenance Committee

The major work involving the co-op's building in 2015 was the proposal for Solar Panel installation, which is ongoing and should be completed in June 2016. The store updated its point of sale program and equipment, which was approved in 2015 and finished in 2016.

Several items proposed for 2016 is repair or replacement of the exterior awnings, which are showing wear and function problems after 15 years. We have asked for quotes on installing a central air conditioning unit and distribution ducts similar to that in the cafe for the store main room. This is advised to improve energy usage and solve an inadequate existing system of on wall and in-window units.

Report by Vince Bushell

2015-16 Board of Directors

Alex Brower ~ Vince Bushell ~ Nichali Ciaccio ~ Nick Gates ~ Kristin Mannion ~
Eshi Morris ~ Kris Purzycki ~ Monica Reida ~ Karen Reynolds

2015-16 Staff

Shelly McClone Carriere, Inventory Coordinator ~ Paula Gelbke,
Merchandising Coordinator ~ Nichali Ciaccio and Erika Wolf, Volunteer
Coordinator ~ Todd Leech and Gina DeVecchis, Cafe Manager ~ Nik Bastman,
Nick Gauthier, Scott Hankowski, Ayla Jensen, Jessica Knurr, Gretchen Peskie,
Therese Thompson; Cafe Staff

The Riverwest Co-Op Board of Directors and staff thanks you for your membership and patronage. Here's to 15 more years of building community and providing healthy, local food to Riverwest and the surrounding area!