

Northwinds

Newsletter of the Northwind Natural Foods Co-op

Spring 2007



The 30 Year History of the Northwind Natural Food Co-op

“Our People Food Co-op” began in 1977 as a food-buying club on the Gogebic Range. The six founding members were Susan Spaete, Jeff Hautala, Rick S., Kirk Draeger, Phil Kucera, and Kris Hopkins. Sue Spaete was a member of a food co-op in Menominee, Wisconsin, and wanted to get one started in our area. The original intent was to provide interested families and individuals the natural, unprocessed foods that they desired at prices they could afford. The name of the Co-op was inspired by the Arapaho tribe of Native Americans from the eastern plains of Colorado and Wyoming, and was suggested by Sue Spaete after reading the book *Centennial* by James A. Michener. The Arapaho called themselves Inuna-Ina, meaning “Our people.”

From 1977 to 1979 the Co-op operated as a food-buying club. Every month members planned how much they wanted of grains, beans, pasta, and other items, and the Co-op submitted an order through Common Health Warehouse Co-op Association. The earliest orders were submitted through Whole Foods Co-op in Duluth. The first deliveries were to Sue and Dennis Spaete’s basement. As more people joined, the deliveries went to Chris Hopkins’ barn, and then to Gogebic Community College. A truck would come from the co-op in Duluth and stop in Ironwood, where participants would unload and divide up the food. The truck also continued on to a co-op in the Keweenaw Peninsula, and to Marquette.

As interest in the food-buying club grew, the burden of collating and placing the orders, receiving and dividing the merchandise, and

Co-op program schedule

June 11th 6 PM: *Food Allergies Support Group*

June 14th 6 PM: *All About Tea*

Come learn the difference between green, white, red, black and herbal teas. See and Taste the difference between them. Enjoy a fun evening with Tea.

June 28th 6 PM: *Natural Cosmetics & Aromatherapy*

Come and learn about what lurks in your cosmetics. See how easy it is to make & use natural alternatives. Learn about essential oils, natural ingredients and more.

July 9th 6 PM: *Food Allergies Support Group*

July 12th 6 PM: *Herbal First Aid*

Learn how to put together an herbal first aid kit for headaches, bruises, cuts, sunburn and more. Learn how to make a simple ointment and more.

July 26th 6 PM: *Homemade Cleaners*

Save money, time, and help your house stay clean as well as protect your family from unnecessary chemicals - All in one class!

August 9th 6 PM: *Indian Food Night*

Come sample the exotic cuisine of India. Come hungry and willing to try new things!

August 13th 6 PM: *Food Allergies Support Group*

August 23rd 6 PM: *Vitamins Supplements and Herbs*

Come and learn about what to look for and what to avoid in supplements. See why all supplements are not created equal and what to watch for when shopping for your vitamins, supplements and herbs.

computing the totals was falling on a few. Members decided to have a "storefront" and make these foods available to the wider population. The work would be handled by paid staff and participants who could earn discounts for their labor. Leadership of the Our People Food Co-op passed to some new members, including Bonnie Maki, Bruce Dalman, Joe Bauer, Werner Kivi, Carl Gregas, and Glen Wahlberg (see Table 1 on page 3).

The Co-op's first store opened on June 5, 1979, within the New Creation Bookstore, at 305 S. Sophie St. in Bessemer. This was the old Fashion Floors building, near Abelman Clothing and across from the Bessemer Bank. The storekeepers of the bookstore were David and Anita Helsius. The current membership log began, and membership #1 was sold to David Helsius. The Co-op was on Sophie Street less than a year. All that is left of the building is the vacant lot between Abelman Clothing and the Bessemer Art Place.

In 1980 the Co-op moved to 301 E. Mary Street in Bessemer (currently a house). Joan Dalman became the manager and Joe Bauer became the President. Membership grew, but at that time the members were purchasing a lifetime membership for \$10 or \$15. Working members paid 10% over the base price, nonworking members paid 15% over, and nonmembers paid 30% over. Our People Food Co-operative was officially incorporated on January 24, 1980. David Kuklenski became the accountant, a service he continues to provide in 2007!

On May 1, 1981 the store was moved to 121 N. Lowell Street in Ironwood, at what is now Creative Spirits Rubber Stamp (and formerly the Fabric Patch). Terry Davis became manager and Bruce Dalman became the President. More people joined during the early eighties, many of which are still current members. Co-op membership grew from 182 before the move in 1981 to 462 members in 1984. Kristen Mueller and Arlene Schneller produced a splendid newsletter every month or two. Angelo's Pizza and Penoque Mountains Pizza made an original granola for sale at the Co-op.



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In 1981, members of the Co-op created a cookbook. Members filled the 240 pages with their own recipes, all made from unprocessed ingredients available from the Co-op. The Our People Food Co-op Cookbook was coordinated by Susan Spaete and edited by Elise Woltersdorf and Barb Szopinski. A contest was held for the cover design. The winner was Terry Davis, who drew a circle with a sunrise, wheat, corn, onions, peas, and a bowl of cereal. Terry Davis received a \$5.00 gift certificate, and her design has become the Co-op logo, and is still featured on our front sign and Co-op newsletter. The Co-op printed over 500 copies of the cookbook and sold them for \$5 each. (Note: If anyone has an extra copy of the Cookbook, please contact us, as the Co-op would like to buy back a few copies).

Despite many members and volunteers, the Co-op at times suffered from high bills and low sales. Thus, the lifetime membership was stricken in 1984, and replaced with an annual membership fee. Likewise, the discount levels were reduced to a level that made operational finances more available. The role of “Coordinator” was introduced. Coordinators ran the store for 12-16 hours a month, instead of paid clerks, and received a 30% discount. Another change in leadership occurred in the mid 1980s. Carol Engelstad became manager in 1984 and Norman Stone became President in 1986.

In May 1988 the store was moved to 134 W. Aurora Street (now vacant). The downtown location improved customer traffic and business. Jody DeCarlo became manager in 1988, working with President Leigh Taylor, followed by President Tim Feldt.

In 1991 changes to staff and board started to become more frequent. After a difficult year, members voted to disband the Co-op during the fall 1992 General Membership Meeting. Soon after the adjournment however, a group met again and voted to resurrect the Co-op. A contest was held to choose a new name. The winning name was submitted by Norman Stone, for which he received a small gift certificate. Our People Food Co-op became the Northwind Natural Foods Co-op on

Table 1. Past Co-op presidents and managers.

Fiscal Year	Manager	President
1977	No manager	Sue Spaete
1978	No manager	Sue Spaete
1979	David Helsius	Bonnie Maki
1980	Joan Dalman	Joe Bauer
1981	Joan Dalman, Terry Davis	Joe Bauer, Bruce Dalman
1982	Terry Davis	Bruce Dalman
1983	Terry Davis	Bruce Dalman
1984	Terry Davis, Carol Engelstad	Bruce Dalman
1985	Carol Egglestad	Sandy (Borlek) Pera
1986	Carol Egglestad	Norman Stone
1987	Carol Egglestad	Norman Stone
1988	Carol Egglestad, Jody DeCarlo, Laura Harvey	Leigh Taylor
1989	Jody DeCarlo	Leigh Taylor
1990	Jody DeCarlo	Leigh Taylor, Tim Feldt
1991	Jody DeCarlo	Tim Feldt
1992	Ed Mascotti, Sue Helinski, Roger Margason	Paul Sturgul, Doug Clark
1993	Roger Margason	Doug Clark
1994	Roger Margason	Doug Clark
1995	Roger Margason	Terry Dunham
1996	Linda Grawn	Terry Dunham
1997	Linda Ongie	Larry I. Sands
1998	Linda Ongie	Zona Wick
1999	Linda Ongie	Zona Wick
2000	Linda Ongie	Zona Wick
2001	Jim Polencek	Arlyn Aronson
2002	No manager	Zona Wick
2003	No manager	Zona Wick
2004	No manager	Larry I. Sands
2005	Eva Smith-Furgason	Steve Garske
2006	Eva Smith-Furgason	Steve Garske
2007	Eva Smith-Furgason	Steve Garske

November 30, 1992. Names not selected included Earth First Co-op, El Mundo, Gogebic Natural Food Store, Health Nut, The Honey Jar, The Mustard Seed, Naturally Yours Co-op, Northern Lights Food Co-op, Penokee Whole Food Co-op, Superior Food Co-op, and Bran Barn. Norman Stone continued supporting the Co-op until his death late in 2000.

The next move of the store was to 210 South Suffolk Street in 1994, at the site of the old Ironwood Pharmacy and now the Northwoods Niche. While in this location, sales and membership continued to rise steadily. By the late 1990's it was noted that the Co-op had survived twenty years despite moving approximately every five years. The manager and board decided it was time to give the cooperative a permanent home.

The present location, 116 South Suffolk Street, was purchased in 1999. Most recently, the building had housed two different businesses: Universal Travel Agency upstairs and a bar downstairs. The bar was first named Khaury's, then Wooly's Pub, and finally Whispers. Upstairs, a clothing store preceded the travel agency. Some changing rooms were still standing when the building was acquired by the current Co-op. A Gambels Hardware that opened in the late 1960s preceded the clothing store. An appliance store existed in the space before that.

The upstairs (current Co-op store) was renovated in 6 to 8 weeks by member-volunteers, including George and Linda Beck, Robin and Jody Schneider, Zona Wick, Vic Calore, Tim Feldt, and Larry I. Sands. The old co-op at 210 South Suffolk Street was closed at 5 o'clock on a Saturday, and the Co-op re-opened in its new location at 9 o'clock on Monday morning, November 1, 1999.

The new building reenergized the staff and members. Sales records were set, and new members were signed up at record pace. The cooperative was getting attention from folks who had not previously known of its existence, despite living in Ironwood for years!

The early years of the new millennium brought more internal changes for the Co-op, as another manager left. Competition from franchise grocery stores increased as they expanded their health food selections. By the spring of 2002, the store was desperately in debt and much of the board had left as well. There was talk of selling the building and business. By the fall of 2004 the store had been without a manager for three years, and only one individual could be coerced to serve on the Board of Directors. The cash flow was sluggish. Interest in the effort seemed to be at an all time low.

At the 2005 General Membership Meeting, three additional members and one alternate were elected to the Board of Directors, thereby filling the positions of Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. Steve Garske continues to be the Co-op's committed President.

Miraculously, the Northwind Natural Foods Co-op survives and even thrives today. Still housed in its own building at 116 S. Suffolk Street, a dedicated manager and staff of three now run it. There are currently 114 members. The sales goal set for the 2007 fiscal year is a mind-boggling \$200,000. The Treasurer and Manager report that we are nearly on track to achieve it!

Over the course of its thirty years, the Co-op has gone from its inception as a food-buying club to its present place as an anchor in the downtown business scene. Please help your local non-profit food Co-op continue to serve the community. Renew your membership, tell a friend, volunteer a little, or just stop by to pick up some wholesome food. Thank you for all of your support over the past 30 years.

History prepared by Linda Beck and Ian Shackleford. Thank you to Susan Spaete, Joan Dalman, Terry Davis, Tim Feldt, and Joe Kravetz for contributing to this written history. Please contact Ian Shackleford at 906-932-3779 or ianks@sbcglobal.net if you noticed any errors or omissions.

A Letter from the Manager

Spring is here and the seeds have been flying out of the Co-op! This year, once again, we are offering wonderful seeds from the Seed Savers Exchange. I have picked out my seeds and I'm dreaming of a bountiful garden.

It's hard to imagine what the garden will look like in the summer given that now it is filled with dried stalks from last year and newly sprouted weeds. I know that with careful tending and weeding it will look lush in just a few weeks.

The Co-op is much like a garden. I know that with careful tending by many hands it will flourish and grow beyond what we can imagine.

That brings me to an introduction of a new "gardener" here at the Co-op. Edie Taylor is the new, friendly face at the cash register. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge about sustainable living, food sensitivities and health foods. With her assistance the Co-op will once again hold monthly meetings for people with food sensitivities. These meetings will be great ways to share recipes and stories, and to taste test some of the Co-op's products. The first meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 11th, at 6 PM.

More exciting news includes the return of the Co-op's popular free educational programs, offered on a monthly basis. See the front page of this newsletter for the summer schedule. Sign up early as classes fill up fast!

According to the new Co-op history, this will be the 30th year of our Co-op's existence. Many hands have tended this garden - planting, weeding, tilling and watching it grow. May this year be the most bountiful yet.

Eva Smith-Furgason

Membership

Is there an asterisk by your member number on the mailing label? If so, please renew your

membership! Help the co-op grow and insure you keep receiving the Co-op newsletters. Thanks!

News Flash

During the Board of Directors meeting in May, a co-op member asked that awareness be raised regarding a bill pending in the US Congress. It is S-1082 and HR-1561 and is variously called "Food and Drug Revitalization Act of 2007" or "Enhancing Drug Safety and Innovation Act of 2007." This bill has the potential to affect many of our daily dietary supplements by enabling the FDA to apply drug-related risk analysis to the safety of food and food ingredients. It appears the Senate has already passed this bill, but it has not yet been taken up by the House. More information, including links to your lawmakers, can be accessed at the web sites below:

<http://www.wellnessresources.com/news/051507.php>

<http://www.newstarget.com/021851.html>

The Basement

As detailed in the above history, the basement of the Co-op used to be a popular local drinking establishment. The basement featured a large rectangular bar, with seating on all four sides and a mahogany centerpiece in the middle. You can find it now at Dawn's Never Inn in Hurley (formerly the Mahogany Ridge Saloon). Dr. Stanley Gresham bought the bar from the Co-op, and had it moved to its new home.

Working Members!

Did you know the working members of the Co-op receive a 10% discount? To qualify, you only need to work 6 hours a month. Working members do things like:

- Assist with quarterly inventories
- Break down boxes for recycling on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Clean
- Help with store lights
- Bag bulk items
- Arrange the front window displays

Wish List

1. Volunteers for the quarterly inventory, Saturday, June 30, at 2:00 PM.
2. Small and medium-sized glass jars with lids
3. Clean, empty, boxes and cans of Co-op items, for displays in the front windows.
4. Health and food-related books for the lending library
5. Photocopier
6. Donations for a produce cooler
7. More members!

Northwind Natural Foods Co-op Mission Statement

1. To provide a marketing and purchasing outlet for primarily natural, organic, unprocessed foods and related items at a minimum price, on a nonprofit basis.
2. To educate and promote to the community healthy lifestyles, wellness and a whole foods diet emphasizing natural, organic, and unprocessed foods.

Northwind Natural Foods Co-op
116 South Suffolk Street
Ironwood, MI 49938
(906) 932-3547

3. To educate the community to the benefits and potentials of our cooperative and cooperatives in general and to cooperate with other cooperatives.

Northwind News is published by Northwind Natural Foods Cooperative for its members. Please notify us if your address has changed.

Co-op Board & Manager

President: Steve Garske
Vice-President: Ian Shackleford
Secretary: Lily Palmer
Treasurer: George Beck
Other board members: Linda Beck

Manager: Eva Smith-Furgason

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If so, please renew your membership!