

Moscow Food Cooperative Newsletter

FREE!



SUNDAY SHOPPING

BY: Truman Woodruff

The Co-op has been open on Sunday from 12:00 - 4:00 p.m. for approximately two months. Thoughts of board of director members, staff, and customers seemed to indicate Sunday shopping hours would help both the Co-op and Co-op shoppers. Sunday is the only day available or expedient to some shoppers. And it was hoped shopping hours on Sunday might alleviate the crunch on Saturdays.

Revenues have varried from a high of nearly \$200.00 to a low of approximately \$50.00. The average seems to be around \$150.00. Not all of this income has been a direct transfer from Saturday. Saturday is still a busy day, however, Sunday shoppers have expressed their gratitude for the new Sunday hours. Since the goal was to make Sunday shopping available without costing the Co-op, I would say the new hours are a success. Yet, shoppers are continually surprised to learn we are open on Sunday. So, pass

the word!! Pick up special orders. Grab some snacks and refreshments on the way to summer outings. Let us know how the hours work for you. In fact, let us know your opinions and ideas.

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JUNE 1988

MANAGER'S REPORT

By: Mary Jo Knowles

Summer has hit the Co-op. No students! (although we do appreciate their business) Last year business slowed a little but not as much as in past years. I think this summer will be a good one. One reason is that I am taking the summer off. I'll be in the store most mornings and at a beach most afternoons. Truman will be working more hours until fall, then he will be moving.

I am still working on setting up an Assistant Manager position, but still need a job description. This position will probably be filled by one of our present workers. The Assistant manager would learn my job. If two of us know how the store runs, it will be easier for future employees. Consistency has been a problem in the past. I hope we are setting up a system that is understandable and easy to pass on.

We have hired a new employee, Mary Butters, who will be taking Greg Meyer's position (marketing, volunteers, and advertising). Mary has been involved with the Co-op for many years. She has been on the Board of Directors and is presently a volunteer janitor. Mary will be working 10-15 hours per week, balancing her other jobs. Her ultimate goal is to see the Co-op move into a larger space to be shared with another business, the "Alternative Mall."

We have money in the bank! So I have to spend it. The first purchase is a new coffee grinder. We have been loosing coffee business because the poor old antique coffee grinder just doesn't fine grind any longer. We did have a Hobart repair man from Spokane look at it and he did what he could, however, it was not enough. Of course Hobart doesn't make industrial size coffee grinders any more, so no parts! Our coffee company (White Cloud Mountain Coffee) has a good used grinder we are looking at.

The next purchase is a computer. The applications are numerable. The biggest problem is: I went to college when people still used slide rules. And yes, we have new products!

★ Beth's Pasta: A fresh cooked pasta that makes great pasta salads. Beth's pasta is in the new produce cooler.

★ Cheaper refried beans. We also have Casa Fiesta Vegetarian beans - less expensive refried canned beans.

★ Oat bran is back, plus we have a new Couscous made with durham wheat flour. It looks different than what we had before.

And one last bit of news. Our bathroom is now pink. Thanks to Lynn Lloyd for prodding us to do something about the old color - and to Mary Butters for the paint job.

SUMMER VOLUNTEERS AND SUMMER NEEDS

BY: CANDACE CLOUD



Summer is a good time to be a volunteer at the Co-op. We have a lot of tasks that are easy to learn and fun to do. We can accommodate any schedule - you can come in regularly, or if you need more flexibility, there are plenty of one-time stocking jobs. We always appreciate the help and it gives you a chance to find out more about the Co-op.

Update on the Natural Touch burritos. Truman has tried cooking the burritos more slowly and said it made a big difference. they are much more tender and tasty.

More news: Our faithful air conditioner has died after many years of service. Does anyone out there have access to a new or used one that we could purchase?

JUNE SPECIALS
it's National Dairy Month!

✕ All Low Fat Yogurt...20% off

✕ Golden Grain Butter...\$1.93/#

✕ Cheeses: Feta...\$2.53/#

Medium Cheddar...\$2.33/#

✕ Knudsens Juices: frozen Lemonade
...\$2.07 reg 2.32

Cranberry-Lemonade...qts

...\$2.41 reg 2.61

Lemonade, 8oz...\$.55 each

reg .59

✕ Coffee: Cafe Frangelica...\$5.96/#
reg 6.45

★
★
★
★
★
Nancy's



SMALL BUSINESS INSTITUTE REPORT

By: Truman Woodruff

The Small Business Institute is associated with the College of Business and Economics Department of Management and Systems, Washington State University. Through the S.B.I., senior and graduate students conduct a detailed analysis of a small business. We requested an analysis of the Co-op to help determine weaknesses and strengths and to create better management at the Co-op. The SBI report is now completed and in summary it reported the following information.

Currently, operation of the Co-op was determined to be good, overall. Prices are equal to, and in some cases, less than competitors. However, some were higher. The Co-op has a friendly atmosphere with a diverse selection of products. Some products are available only at the Co-op. Areas of improvement cited were advertising, personnel management, bookkeeping procedures, profit versus cost of goods sold, and availability of products and store access.

Advertising assessment indicated the need for the Co-op to carefully weigh the cost of different forms of all advertising versus the affect of the particular strategy used. The report listed the forms of advertising available to the Co-op and their cost. Radio was the most expensive with rates at local stations listed as approximately \$12.00 per minute. Newspapers were the next most expensive with a column inch cost of \$3.75. Flyers and mailings were also suggested with these methods being the least expensive in relation to the number of people reached. Their suggestion was to use flyers and mailings generally and to take advantage of radio and newspapers for specials. Advertising is difficult to balance between the expense and the needs of the business. No one procedure can automatically guarantee low cost and high response rates over a period of time. Advertising is a difficult integration of techniques with no guarantees.

The area of store management can encompass many aspects of store operations. One area is the cost of goods sold versus profits. The statement committee felt profits were not adequate covering the cost of goods sold. Several suggestions were proposed. One was to increase prices of items. Price comparisons indicated that Co-op prices were below competitive prices. However this would demand an on-going price comparison schedule and variable in-store markups. A second suggestion was to eliminate special order discounts and apply regular mark-ups on all special orders and possibly an additional fee to compensate for the time involved.

Personnel management was another facet studied.

this included day-to-day scheduling, working conditions and wages and benefits. Their report cited hard work with low pay and no benefits; an unmanageable system of scheduling over thirty volunteers and employees, high employee and volunteer turn over, and no concrete process to maintain and pass on a consistent operational system to successive management personnel.

Another area assessed was the store location and the store layout. The store was judged to be in a poor location with a lack of adequate and available parking. In effect, limited parking means limited customers, limited shopping and limited sales. The interior layout of the store needs improvement. Grouping products into categories and more efficient use of store space were suggestions. The students felt the store needed more of an in-store backup inventory. More efficient use of available space could provide a more extensive inventory thereby reducing out-of-stock problems. It was also suggested to reduce the number of suppliers to the larger, more dependable firms to take advantage of large order discounts and also to help reduce out-of-stock problems.

Suggestions made but not discussed previously in this report included elimination of dependency on volunteers, the purchase of a computer, and appropriate programs, and expanding the market base of the Co-op.

First, volunteers are not dependable and the quality of work is not necessarily the best available. This is not an indictment against volunteers. In fact, the volunteers at the Co-op have been a small corp of very dedicated individuals. However, as volunteers, they have no obligation to perform work at designated hours for specified periods of time. Quality of work can be directly related to experience and training. High turnover of volunteers makes experience and training more of a problem than an asset. It was suggested that the Co-op take advantage of work study programs and federally funded wage sharing programs offered through the Employment Security office. These opportunities would not only help high school students earn money and gain experience, but would also share the cost of wages with schools and local, state, and federal agencies. Training will also provide quality work with the opportunity to hire particular employees after they have completed their specified programs.

Second, the purchase of a computer with appropriate programs was judged essential. The students recommended several local business that provide equipment and advice and suggested several programs with corresponding assessment from leading computer publications. The least expensive software program recommended costs only \$69.95. A computer system would help with inventory control, payroll,

bookkeeping and cost projections. Local businesses supply not only equipment and advice but will also train employees in the use of the computer system.

Another major concern was the expansion of the market base. The student group felt Moscow offered an excellent opportunity for the Co-op to expand. They felt the Co-op needed to foster shopping for more businesses, ethnic groups, and students.

In summary, there were not any revolutionary ideas offered by the student group. Some of their suggestions have been implemented with varying degrees of success. Other suggestions have rekindled old ideas. Still others are not possible at present. However, the report was a positive impetus for those involved and indicated precise directions to follow in some areas. The Co-op staff and Board of Directors are dedicated to learning and improving, thereby making the Co-op beneficial to all concerned.

Remember...

Local milk in glass bottles?
We've still got it.
Milk in recyclable glass bottles
from Stratton's Dairy in Pullman.

BOARD NEWS

By: Lynn Lloyd

The board met on May 4 (but not necessarily in honor of Kent State) whereupon we sat in thoughtful contemplation of the many dealings of the Moscow Food Co-op. One not so fruitful endeavor was the food booth at the Moscow Renaissance Fair. It was decided that we would not do it again next year as we are more of a commercial establishment in Moscow than a group fighting for a cause; thus taking away monies from those causes which we might rather support. Also, we only made \$100.00 - any comments?

In a lighter vein, it was noted that the bathroom in the Co-op is now PINK (and we are talking pink) with a new throne to boot!

Candace regrettably reported that she has opted for a different bulk food wholesaler. She would have preferred to do business with a company based in the Northwest, however her experiences since starting to work at the Co-op have been somewhat more than frustrating, as those distributors' businesses have shown a steady downhill trend. (See more about this change of wholesalers in Bill London's "Letters" article in this newsletter). The new company is based in Nevada City, California and is called Mountain People's Warehouse. Hopefully we'll do a little better with them.

Apparently, Greg Meyer, former employee and volunteer coordinator is now pursuing his heart's desire in terms of career. He has relinquished his leave of absence status and no doubt will soon be rich and famous.

And last but not least, Rosemarie Waller committed herself to working at the Co-op for another year - Yippee! We all enjoy you so much, Rosemarie!

And that's the board news!



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WRITING LETTERS

By: Bill London

Besides the usual stocking, checking, ordering, managing and tidying, the Co-op staff has been busy lately writing letters. Several of those letters may be of interest to Co-op shoppers.

First, Candace got the message in the April Newsletter regarding the environmental damage from the use of styrofoam. And, even better, she acted. She wrote letters to wholesalers who supply the Co-op and who use styrofoam as packaging. She reminded those suppliers that crumpled newspaper worked as well, is cheaper, and most importantly, is environmentally safe (no ozone degradation from the released chlorofluorocarbons)--and she included the Newsletter that documented the dangers of styrofoam. She also mentioned that other suppliers are able to use newsprint as packaging. Best of all, her letters requested a response from the presidents of the three offending companies (they are Speciality Foods, White Cloud Mountain Coffee and Nature's Life Vitamins). We'll let you know how (or if) they responded in future issues.

Second, Mary Jo and Candace together wrote identical letters to two other Co-op suppliers --Equinox Food Exchange of Springdale, Washington, and Great Divide of Missoula, Montana. Equinox is the collectively-run cooperatively-owned, politically correct wholesaler that was founded in 1976 to ship good food on a not-for-profit basis. The Moscow Food Co-op is a member of Equinox. Great Divide is a similar food trucking company, but organized as a for-profit family business venture.

Both wholesalers are, to put it mildly, experiencing difficulties. They were both unable to guarantee regular shipments to the Co-op of what the staff here ordered. Mary Jo estimates that roughly one-third of the items the Co-op ordered would be undelivered or listed as out-of-stock. (And

sometimes, that percentage would rise to over half). That makes it very difficult to keep what Co-op customers want on the shelves, plus that increases costs and staff work load since they must reorder and seek alternative suppliers.

In their letters, Mary Jo and Candace told the wholesalers that the Co-op will reduce its purchases from both to a maximum of \$300 monthly, with the hope that as (and if) the present out-of-stock problem improves, this amount can rise.

For now, the Co-op will be ordering the basic bulk food items from Mountain Peoples' Warehouse of Nevada City, California. Mountain Peoples' now trucks from Boise to Moscow, the prices are better and the out-of-stocks will be significantly reduced.

RENAISSANCE FAIR NO MORE

By: John McCarthy

The coffee and baked goods booth at the Renaissance Fair by the Co-op was a mixed success, which led to a decision by those involved to scrap future participation of the Co-op at the fair.

The decision was not a hard one to make. The fair booth requires a lot of effort in preparation, set up, working the booth and picking up the pieces. This year, it didn't seem to be worth the effort and no one has voiced any strong objections to stopping the Co-op involvement nor has any one come forward to suggest he or she will take it over.

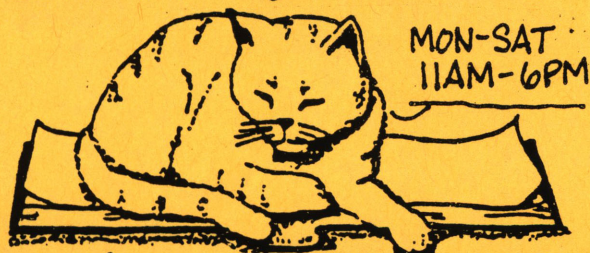
But the decision for the Co-op to get out of active fair participation is a sad one, I think.

First, multiple "Thank-yous" are in order for all the people who worked at the booth and/or prepared food. Once again, a careful list of those who helped out wasn't kept. So, unfortunately, everyone can't be thanked by name. Special thanks go to Mary Jo, David Thodal and Steve Dodson for their help in preparation and seeing it come off.

Part of the problem was the lack of participation but everyone who did help out made it be as successful as it was and made it fun.

The consensus among board members and others involved is that it has gotten too difficult to recruit people to work at the booth or to bake things for it. This may point up some larger problem with volunteer involvement or it may just show that people have other interests. One reason the board decided to not do it again is to let people off the hook from Co-op responsibility to work on other fair projects, including food booths that may need more support. All of the store staff pitched in, thank you staff, but no groundswell of volunteer effort materialized and any expectation that staff or board members would beat the

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street to get out the troops is not in the cards --unless Nancy's stargazer has contrary information. Almost everyone who signed up did help out, with the notable exception of one tall, not normal, bearded, sometime editor who claimed he had to go discover the future of rock'n'roll but it is suspected that recurring blank spots on the brain may have played a part.

Anyway, it's one of those truisms--unless people want to make somethin happen, it doesn't happen on its own. In my own personal experience, last year I had a great time, put in a lot of effort and got a lot out of it. the store also made more than \$600. This year, I found myself stuck doing more than I wanted, more than I expected but no one else was going to do it, so I forged on and had only an OK time of it. The store only made about \$100 and so why do it anymore?

Part of the reason we made more money last year was a better location and this year everyone and their dog was selling coffee. A recommendation to some group next year is hot cider; it went by thhe gallon and smelled great.

On the further brighter side, the store did a gangbuster business both days and being open Sunday further increased visibility and sales. The consideration is now to do some in-store specials, maybe some special fair advertising and to help out other good causes with special ordering for food preparation and encouraging the use of politically correct, low-impact, paper-not plastic-coffee cups.



JUST FOR KIDS

By: Sunshine Storholt

Have any of you ever pressed flowers before? Well, I have and it's a lot of fun. It's a great opportunity to get outdoors and experience the wonders of Spring.

Before you rush out to pick flowers for pressing there are some things you will need:

1. A flower press which you can make with newspapers and some heavy books.

2. A scrapbook. You can make this out of colored construction paper - just puch three holes through the long side, like notebook paper has, and use yarn to tie your pages together.
3. Some glue, a ball point pen, and a pair of scissors. And a book with a folded sheet of newspaper to temporarily place your flowers in until you get home.

Before you head out to pick flowers you will need to decide what kind of flowers to pick - wild or domestic. I prefer wild flowers myself, but perhaps you will want to pick both.

Be sure to get permission from Mom or Dad or from the owners of the land you intend to pick from.

OK! Now you can go out and pick flowers, but you don't want to pick too may because you can only press a few at a time. Keeping that in mind, select the best flower of its kind. Inspect it carefully for any flaws and just bring home the best of all (you could pick a few for Mom and Dad too!)

Once you get your flowers home, place them seperately between two sheets of newspaper for absorbancy, then place the newspaper with the flowers inside on a flat surface and place heavy books on top. (The newsprint will not come off on you flowers). Depending on the size of your flower it should take one to two months for your flower to be pressed and dried. I know you'll be tempted to sneak looks at the flowers, but don't disturb your flowers for at least one month. If you do check AFTER ONE MONTH and your flower appears limp or moist, change the newspaper and continue to press.

If your flower is nice and dry you can glue your flower onto your construction paper.

Now you can have more fun by going to the library and looking up your flowers in flower books, writing down what kind they are, where they came from, and what it or its plant may be good for.

Not only will you have fun now, you will create something of beauty that's filled with happy memories.

DR. ANN RAYMER
chiropractic physician

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