



From the Board:

A Beacon of Hope

by Kellie Hill – Board President

Usually for the last newsletter of the year the President highlights the work of the Board of Directors. And, although I am very proud of the work the Board accomplished this past year – [updated bylaws](#), Café remodel and continuing to examine expansion sites – it is really the work of our staff and owners that has been the most awe-inspiring.

In a year of horrific events, our staff and owners have been a beacon of hope.

When the country closed down, our employees showed up – and continue doing so. Every day, the staff risk their own health and the health of their loved ones to ensure that essential foods are available for our community. As we try to navigate the constantly changing regulations, the staff make daily changes with grace.



When our most vulnerable owners need assistance, [the staff shop for them](#). The staff have listened to customers, bringing suggestions and solutions forward so the Medford Food Co-op can lead the way in our area. Our gratitude is endless. Our staff are heroes in our community.

Our owners have shown the same grace repeatedly. You have shown up, even when the shelves weren't full. You have continued to support local farmers by shopping at the Co-op. You've given generously to [Positive Change](#) recipients. You keep ordering meals to go at [the Café](#). You've respected and appreciated our staff during these difficult times. Our gratitude is endless. You are a hero in our community.

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Concern for Community in Action

by Halle Riddlebarger – Outreach Manager

When the wind kicked up in the early morning hours of September 8th, no one was expecting the intense firestorm that followed – red flag warnings and all. By early afternoon, Co-op staff members living in Talent and Phoenix raced home to assess the situation and prepare for evacuation. Within two hours, thick black smoke billowed in the sky directly over the store, carried by strong winds pushing the quick-moving fire through the valley. Seeing that the Co-op was in the path of the fire moving up the Greenway, we closed at 5pm so remaining staff members could get home and off the roads as soon as possible. The Jackson County Sheriff's office was asking residents to stay home unless under evacuation due to overcrowded roads full of evacuees from Ashland, Talent, and Phoenix. As additional fires spread in Central Point and Eagle Point, a long terrifying night ensued for everyone in the valley.



The next morning, the Co-op remained under level 2 evacuation orders, and the wind was still worrisome. In shock and with heavy hearts, staff members not directly affected by evacuation orders covered shifts so the Co-op could continue to serve the community. Folks were tired and hungry, and in shock by the sudden loss of so much so quickly. By day two, all hands were on deck to evaluate the enormous community needs left in the path of the fire. We immediately addressed the needs of displaced staff, making sure everyone had a comfortable place to stay, and supplied those unable to return home with gift cards to help cover the costs of food in the coming days.

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We also began reaching out to find out where we could help. On September 10th, [Positive Change](#) transitioned to a Fire Relief Fund. In just twenty days, we raised \$3,882 from small change donations at the register. The Co-op added an additional \$1,500 to the fund, for a total of \$5,382. The fund was split three ways, and checks for \$1,794 were delivered to the [Rogue Valley Relief Fund](#), the [Phoenix-Talent Families Fire Relief Fund](#), and the [Unete Immigrant Fire Relief Fund](#) in early October. We are eternally grateful for our compassionate and generous community.

We also started to nourish the community with healthy food on September 10th. Thanks to the combined efforts of Andrea, our Café Manager, and her sister, Terri with Jackson County Sheriff's office, we coordinated efforts to deliver breakfast burritos to the hardworking folks at the north and south emergency command centers still battling the Almeda and Obenchain fires. A sincere, heartfelt thank you to all the firefighters and emergency responders. The Café continued to offer free meals to emergency personnel and any local residents who were not able to return home in the days immediately following the fires.

On September 11th, we transitioned to feeding evacuees. One hundred mini breakfast burritos were delivered to the Expo in the morning, and eighty half sandwiches were delivered to evacuees in White City in the afternoon. In the following days, donations began to arrive from our thoughtful vendors. Equal Exchange donated thirty pounds of coffee and Bon Mua Oregon donated five pounds: some of the coffee was brewed and given away for free in the Café, and the remainder of the beans were ground and donated to the relief center in Phoenix.



MFC owner Carol Adams helps deliver breakfast burritos to evacuees at the Expo.

bars from Bob's Red Mill, which were delivered to the relief center in Phoenix. Ensuring access to healthy food and drinking water for displaced community members remains a top priority.

In October, the Positive Change program raised funds for Rogue Food Unites. [Rogue Food Unites](#) continues to coordinate



food businesses, farms, and cultural organizations to provide a community-driven meal preparation and delivery program. Meals are prepared with ingredients from local farms by local restaurants and delivered to locations in Southern Oregon where residents displaced by the fires receive food and supplies. Every dollar invested in Rogue Food Unites ensures that local restaurant workers keep working, local farmers keep farming, and displaced residents impacted by the fires are supported nutritionally and emotionally through food. Again, our community rallied to support this effort to sustain the local food system through the multiple traumas of 2020.

Thanks again to our incredible shoppers, we were able to donate \$3,247 to support Rogue Food Unites.

Local nonprofits continue to provide relief for those in need, and MFC is committed to continuing to support the community at large. This November, Positive Change is fundraising for

[Rogue Valley Farm to School](#).

This summer, Rogue Valley Farm to School partnered with Fry Family Farm to provide 2,000 boxes of organic produce to families every week. Now they are working to raise money to provide 250 boxes a week to survivors of the Almeda Fire.



And we continue to receive support from the broader cooperative community. [Coos Head Food Co-op](#) in Coos Bay launched a round-up campaign for fire relief in the Rogue Valley, which they are continuing through the month of November. Proceeds from the Coos Head fundraiser will be split between Medford Food Co-op and Ashland Food Co-op, for each co-op to donate to fire relief efforts. We want to extend our immense gratitude to Coos Head Food Co-op for their compassion for our grieving community and their beautiful expression of [cooperative principle #6: cooperation among cooperatives](#).

2020 has been a difficult year all around. While the wildfires added to the stress and chaos of an already hectic year, the aftermath has also helped to highlight some of the wonderful things about our community. We are filled with gratitude, and we are inspired by community members who stepped up to coordinate powerful efforts to provide hurting folks with some relief when they needed it most. Help us carry love and concern forward into the new year. ■

From the GM:

Building Community in Trying Times

by Anne Carter – General Manager

Unprecedented – traumatic – once in a 100 years – overwhelming... These are the words we use to describe the challenges we are facing this year. Crises often reveal our weaknesses, but they also reveal strengths.

For years, Medford Food Co-op's focus has been to grow a thriving local, organic food economy. As a Co-op owner and shopper, you are a part of this growing community that includes farmers, ranchers, food producers, distributors, grocery workers, and food service employees.

The crises we have faced this year have raised our awareness of how many people are involved in ensuring that we have food for our families.



Local vendors help keep shelves stocked.

During the panic buying that occurred in March and April, it was difficult for us to keep the shelves stocked. Our local vendors stepped up to provide needed items. For example, Peter of Salant Family Ranch responded immediately to our request for additional deliveries of beef. Rosie and Jo of Rise Up Artisan Bread increased the quantity of bread they baked for us. Hummingbird Wholesale of Eugene helped find additional sources of bulk rice, beans, and flour. TerraSol Organics accommodated our special request for large trays of wheat grass.

Building Community continues on page 4.

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Staff Spotlight

Get to know the staff!

Patrick Hancock

How long have you been cooperating?

About four years.

What do you do at the Co-op?

I work in the produce department.

What brought you to the Co-op?

Great products, friendly caring people with a vision to provide quality help and good service to our members and customers.

What do you like best about your job?

The challenge to provide the best products in the most thoughtful and positive way. It's a great place to work and the people here are the best!

Tell us your Co-op favorites:

Hands down: the Café's Reuben Sandwich. Muir Glen Fire Roasted Tomatoes and Cascade Organic Ground Beef.

How has working at the Co-op affected your life?

Better health – better attitude.

Tell us something we don't know!

I was a mountaineering guide in the Cascade Range for about one year. I also worked as a land inspector with the forestry department for about three years.

What do you like to do outside of work?

Hiking and camping.

Where did you grow up/where have you lived in your life?

Spent my first 25 years in dairy country in western New York state before moving to Oregon. I also lived in Mexico for about a year. ■



I know that it's been said that showing up is half the battle and we've successfully accomplished that half. But the other half is the way we show up. And, our staff and owners have shown up in all the ways that matter! Thank you for showing up for the Medford Food Co-op and showing up with a smile on your face, even if we can only see it in your eyes.



On behalf of the [Board of Directors](#), I send immeasurable amounts of gratitude and thanks for standing with the Medford Food Co-op during these uncertain times. Thank you for providing a beacon of hope this year. Thank you for demonstrating that everyone can be a hero, if they just show up. You are appreciated every single day for all that you do for our community. Thank you! ■



Vince and Mary of Whistling Duck.

Through the hot, dry summer months, local farmers like Whistling Duck, Wandering Roots, Blue Fox Farm, Fry Family Farm, Oneleaf Microgreens, TerraSol Organics, Cowhorn Vineyard and Garden, and Ted's Bees continued to grow crops and deliver produce and honey to the Co-op despite struggling with shortages of labor and heavy smoke.

The Alameda, Obenchain, and Slater fires were especially devastating to the farming community. A disproportionate number of farm laborers and immigrant workers lost homes, belongings, and cash savings. Farmers made extraordinary efforts to secure housing for displaced workers as well as harvest crops. A couple of examples from farmers who supply the Co-op include Mark of Sunshine Sprouts who lost his home in the Alameda Fire, yet continued to grow and deliver alfalfa sprouts. Chris of Blue Fox Farm diverted his attention from farming to finding housing for his workers who lost their homes in the fires.



Peter of Salant Family Ranch.

The crises this year have revealed the strength of our community that supports so many people dedicated to growing organic vegetables, or producing quality baked goods, or unique cheese. Rosie, Jo, Peter, Mark, Chris ...we rely on them and many others to provide our Co-op and community with healthy, local food. They are the foundation of our food system. This year we have come to recognize and appreciate more than ever their contributions to making the Rogue Valley a uniquely beautiful place to live.

You can contribute to sustaining this community during times of crisis by purchasing local foods. As you shop for holiday celebrations, look for Blue Fox Farm's squash and carrots, Rise Up bread, Sunshine Sprouts, Salant beef, Ted's honey – and many other local products at the Co-op. ■

Important Dates

Holiday Hours

- November 26 – Thanksgiving Day – CLOSED
- December 24 – Christmas Eve – Closing early at 6pm
- December 25 – Christmas Day – CLOSED
- December 31 – New Year's Eve – Open regular hours
- January 1 – New Year's Day – Open regular hours

Thanksgiving Turkeys

Reserve the bird, and rest assured! Choose from non-GMO verified, certified organic, or organic heirloom turkeys in a range of sizes from Diestel Family Turkey Ranch. No deposit required. [Reserve your turkey online](#), give us a call, or ask your cashier for an order form on your next Co-op visit.

Winter Growers Market

[The Winter Market](#) is open from December 1, 2020 to February 23, 2021 on Tuesdays from 10:00am – 2:00pm. Located at the Phoenix Plaza Civic Center at 220 North Main Street in Phoenix. Parking is available in the Civic Center parking lot and along North Main Street.

Board of Directors Meetings

Third Monday of each month from 5:30pm – 7:30pm. Due to the pandemic, the meetings will be held online until further notice. If you are an owner who would like to participate in an online Board meeting, please email Board President Kellie Hill for an invitation to the online meeting: board@medfordfood.coop.