



From the Board:

A Look Back and a Look Forward

by Kellie Hill – Board President

The grassroots effort to create a food co-op in Medford started in 2005 and the Co-op was officially incorporated in 2006. Then, there were some tumultuous times ([see the three-part history of Medford Food Co-op written by Alexandria Lamont on our blog](#)). But, fueled by the passion of the community, in August 2010, the goal of raising \$500,000 was surpassed through Co-op member-generated loans, sponsorships, and share purchases. After a complete building remodel by Batzer Construction, the store opened on August 8, 2011.



Owner and former Board member, John Miele cuts the ribbon at the Grand Opening in August 2011.

Our owners really answered the call to support the Medford Food Co-op. To open our doors, over \$600,000 came in the form of loans from our owners. An additional equipment loan totaled \$19,800. Over the years we gradually began to repay the loans. The final payment on all loans was made in July 2020.

A few highlights over the past ten years:

- Sales have more than doubled!

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From the GM:

Our Vision for the Future

by Anne Carter – General Manager

Our ten-year vision positions Medford Food Co-op as a community leader in the local food system, cooperative enterprise, nutrition and health education, and employment. We envision continued support and growth of local farms and food producers; an expanded local food distribution system to make affordable local, organic food readily available to all residents of the Rogue Valley; and a strong community donation/grant program to encourage and promote businesses and organizations with compatible goals and ends.

Five years ago, Board and managers spent time discussing our vision for the future and created this [Ten Year Vision](#) narrative. This narrative describes the direction we want to head and some of the big goals we are reaching for over the next ten years. As we celebrate our 10 year anniversary this year, it is rewarding to reflect on the Co-op's success and achievements during our first decade. It is also a good time to reflect on where we're heading.

Now, in 2021, we are halfway through this ten year vision. It seems that we still have a long way to go to achieve our goals. Were we naive or just idealistic when we wrote this? Will we ever achieve this? Is this vision still important? I would answer, "Yes, Yes, and Yes!"

Having a vision provides the foundation that guides our work and drives us to build a community around food. We value quality, fresh, local food and we strive to always provide that. We work with other organizations and businesses to increase the amount of local food that is produced and to provide a market for that food. During the next few years, we plan to expand on efforts like the annual [Farm Tour](#) and the [Rogue Valley Food Trail](#) that promote and raise awareness of local food producers.

Besides supporting existing farms and food producers, it's important to improve local distribution and market access in order to increase the amount of local food that is sold to

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- We've grown from 1,593 owners to 4,485 owners!
- We've increased the number of full-time employees by 37%.
- We joined [National Co+op Grocers](#) (NCG) in 2012 helping us strengthen our purchasing power and lower prices.
- Financial success allowed for the first patronage dividend to be paid to our owners in 2017.
- We opened [the Café](#) in November 2017 without borrowing any additional money.
- We started the [Positive Change](#) program in January 2019. Since then, our customers' generous support has enabled us to donate a total of \$72,848 to local non-profits chosen by the owners in the annual elections.
- We remodeled the Café in November 2020 without borrowing any additional money. Yea, smoothies!
- In 2020, Medford Food Co-op shoppers purchased \$1,171,391 of local food and beverages (grown or produced within 100 miles of Medford).
- Financial success allows for another patronage dividend to be paid to our owners in 2021.

Medford Food Co-op is the only grocery store in Medford that is owned by its membership. Any community member can become a Co-op owner. We are cooperatively owned, so our profit remains here in Medford and with our owners.

When you choose to spend your valuable dollars at Medford Food Co-op you are helping to construct, not only a life, but a community. "Shopping at Medford Food Co-op feels like family. I'm part of a community here" explains longtime Board member Fran Batzer.

"Over the past 15 - 20 years there has been a growing awareness across the Rogue Valley of the importance of convenient access to healthy, wholesome, organically produced food. Today the Co-op continues to provide a convenient, healthy and enjoyable shopping experience while giving shoppers the satisfaction of supporting local farmers and food producers" notes founding owner John Miele.

Part of the value of a cooperative, of a social economy, is to have a shared vision and foundation to build from. Well, we've built an amazing foundation! So, what's next?

Expansion really is on the horizon. Over the last two years we've put some of the logistical pieces into place – rewriting the [bylaws](#) and amending the Articles of Incorporation. Additionally, we contracted with NCG's Development Cooperative to help us determine the financial feasibility of an expansion. During this time, we've looked at multiple ways to try and reconfigure our current location in order to expand and stay put; unfortunately, without success. We've considered a number of potential locations over the last few years; unfortunately, also without success.

But, just like those original owners, we are fueled by a passion that won't be deterred. The [Board of Directors](#) continue to look and discuss possibilities. We have faith that a wonderful building, with fantastic investors and amazing owners will converge again in the near future – just like it did ten years ago. ■

consumers. Recently, we participated in the Southwest Oregon Food Hub Feasibility study and discussion, and a three-part Jackson County FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) program that helps communities organize and act to improve their local food system. These discussions brought together individuals and groups interested in developing the local food economy.



Being recognized as a great place to work in Medford is an important part of our ten year vision. Co-op staff have a wealth of knowledge and experience with food. We value our staff and want to make sure that they are fairly compensated and that their work at the Co-op is fulfilling. Improving employee benefits and opportunities to develop their skills is an ongoing process in making the Co-op a great employer.

Customer and Co-op support of the [Positive Change](#) program has provided us with a robust community donation program. Positive Change gives us the means to contribute to a variety of local non-profits every year.

Medford is a growing, changing community. Medford Food Co-op envisions being a part of changes that improve our quality of life. With your help we can achieve our vision of making sure that healthy local food is accessible to everyone in the community now and in the future. Keep supporting your favorite farmer, local coffee roaster, beekeeper, and independent grocer. We can mutually support one another and build a better future for everyone in the Rogue Valley. ■

Staff Spotlight

Get to know the staff!

Kate Grissom

How long have you been cooperating?

I've been at the Co-op for two years now.

What do you do at the Co-op?

I primarily function as a Floor Supervisor.

What brought you to the Co-op?

I came to the Co-op after just moving back to Oregon. I appreciated the pace and values of the store.

What do you like best about your job?

The best thing about my job is the quality of product that we're working with, it feels good to genuinely advocate for what you're representing.



Tell us your Co-op favorites:

Co-op fav's include Midnight Moon Gouda by Cypress Grove. Honey Mama's Ginger Cardamom Truffle Bar. And the OG Bitchin Sauce.

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

I've met friends through the Co-op that I hope to have for a long time. It's the kind of environment that like-minded people gravitate towards because of the implied community values.

Tell us something we don't know!

Well, I've been on the biggest cruise ship in the world. I've herded 50 head of cattle down highways, more than once. I chopped and stacked wood in high school to pay for prom dresses. I used to design tattoos for people. I spent most of my childhood hiking in backwoods. Played softball for 7 years. Hard to narrow oneself down to one or two interesting facts.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I like to cook, draw, hike with my doggo, kayak, fish, read, read some more. I'm a fan of cinema. Recently got a bicycle. There's no end to things I like to do outside of work!

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

I grew up in Oregon. I've lived in Texas, Sydney, Australia, traveled a bit, and found myself back here. This list will be far longer, give me a few years. ■

A Walk in the Fields

by Halle Riddlebarger – Outreach Manager



This Sunday, July 18th, marks the return of the [Rogue Valley Farm Tour](#), and we're so happy to invite you all back out onto the land to meet your local farmers and ranchers! MFC staff have been working alongside staff from Ashland Food Co-op and the Rogue Valley Food System Network to organize this Sunday's event, and we hope you can join us for a step behind the scenes to learn about where your food comes from, how it is grown, and the people who tend the food from the field to your table.

Get ready for a day of exploring country back roads, sun dappled orchards, twisted wine vines, and more. There are a total of 23 participating farms and ranches on this year's Farm Tour. These unique tours offer close-ups of Southern Oregon farms, gorgeous agricultural scenery, and plenty of places to stop and taste the bounty. Don't forget: the Rogue Valley is a big place! Pick up a paper copy of the Farm Tour brochure and map at

Important Dates

Rogue Valley Farm Tour

Sunday, July 18th from 10am – 3pm at participating farms and ranches in Jackson and Josephine counties. Step behind the scenes and meet the makers, taste artisanal foods, and explore a vast array of local goods. Visit local farms for in-person tours, or virtually tour farms from the comfort of your home at: www.roguevalleyfarmtour.com.

MFC 10-Year Anniversary

This August we're celebrating 10 years of cooperation and good food! Join us for a week-long celebration that will kick off on Sunday, August 8th – our official ten-year anniversary date. Join the Board of Directors for an open house in the Café from 1–4pm and celebrate with anniversary cake and samples of our housemade goodies. Schedule of events TBA.

The Oregon Wine Experience

August 23rd – August 29th Bigham Knoll, Jacksonville. This annual fundraiser for the Asante Foundation and our local Children's Miracle network features extraordinary Oregon wines, culinary creations, and one-of-a-kind experiences. Tickets and information at: theoregonwineexperience.com.

Bear Creek Stewardship Day

Saturday, September 25th Bear Creek Greenway. Celebrate Public Lands Day and volunteer to clean-up along the Bear Creek Greenway. Registration and information at: bearcreekstewards.org.

Rogue Valley Growers & Crafters Market

Support local farmers, ranchers, food producers, and crafters at the Rogue Valley Growers & Crafters Market. Held from 8:30am – 1:30pm at the following locations:

Medford Thursday Market at Hawthorne Park
Ashland Tuesday Market at Ashland Armory
Ashland Saturday Market on Oak Street

Board of Directors Meetings

Third Monday of each month from 5:30pm – 7:30pm. Meetings are currently being held online via Zoom 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.

either food co-op (or [download a digital version](#)) and plan your day in advance to minimize drive time and maximize farm time.

In addition to the farms, four local nonprofits are participating this year. The [Rogue Valley Food System Network](#) will be at Fry Family Farm offering free Rogue Flavor Guides, as well as resources for farmers, food businesses, gardeners, cooks, and eaters. At The Farm at SOU in Ashland, [Rogue Valley Farm to School](#) will be offering a family-friendly hands-on educational activity. And at Oshala Farm in the Applegate Valley: [Our Family Farms](#) is sharing interactive materials and activities about regenerative agriculture, and the [Pollinator Project Rogue Valley](#) will be sharing information about pollinators. Pick up a Pollinator Activity sheet at one of the farms, or [download a copy](#) before you head out. Completed activity sheets can be entered for a chance to win \$100 in goodies from local farms!

Farm Tour tips:

1. Please leave pets at home. These are working farms and ranches and pets are not welcome.
2. Bring a water bottle and cooler to store all the farm-fresh goods you purchase on the tour.
3. Wear shoes you don't mind getting dirty, and can handle uneven ground.
4. Stay on established paths and don't pick produce or flowers without permission.
5. GPS and cell phone reception is spotty in some locations, so plan your routes in advance and check directions before you leave home.
6. If you have any questions the day of the tour, please contact the farmers directly. Contact information is listed in the brochure.

This annual event is brought to you by Medford Food Co-op, Ashland Food Co-op, and the Rogue Valley Food System Network. Please help us in thanking our 2021 sponsors: [Organically Grown Company](#), [Travel Medford](#), [What to do in Southern Oregon](#), [Grange Co-op](#), and [Organic Valley](#). We hope to see you on a walk in the fields this Sunday! ■