

The Firestarter

Newsletter of the
Tonasket Natural Foods Co-op
Spring-Summer 2026



Shop Local • Eat Local • Spend Local
Enjoy Local

Support the local businesses that support
the area where you live, work & play

It Takes You To Start The Trend!

New and Noteworthy at the Co-op

There's a well-known African proverb, *"It takes a village to raise a child,"* that we can borrow and adapt for our vision: *"It takes a village to sustain a Co-op."* And all our dedicated members and shoppers are an integral part of that village. So, a big, hearty *Thank-you* goes out to everyone!

And what's new at the Co-op? Plenty! For starters, we want to thank everyone who took the time to fill out our Customer Outreach Survey and share the results. We received 50 responses, learning a lot about what our shoppers want, along with many great suggestions on how we can meet your needs. How can we know what's important, without asking? Now that we have this information, we can better serve you and make the best use of our small space.

A brief summary of the survey results shows that shoppers care a great deal about organic products, locally sourced foods and goods, and Fair-trade merchandise. We also received some good suggestions on how to best serve our public, many of which we will try to implement in the near future.

In other news, our Annual Membership Meeting is scheduled for June 14th at the CCC, beginning at 1:00. This will be an opportunity for Co-op members to hear about upcoming changes and improvements, as well as a recap of last year's events. We will be serving a delicious soup

prepared by the Co-op Café, along with store-made bread. Please consider joining us and showing your support for the Co-op.

For those interested in helping the Tonasket Food Bank, the Co-op has installed a collection basket as an easy way to donate. While you're shopping, consider buying a little extra to contribute to those who are less fortunate. You can also bring in food from other sources, and we will be sure to pass it along.

Do you know that we sell fresh *Darigold* milk for the best price in the area? It's true! You can buy a half gallon of whole milk for \$4.75, which is less than our neighboring stores, including Walmart or Safeway. And our Straus Heavy Cream is pure,

with no unnecessary additives – emulsifiers, stabilizers, sweeteners, or flavorings – all the more reason to shop at *your* Co-op.

Finally, as summer approaches, the Co-op will feature an array of local produce from *Growing Resilience* farm and other purveyors.

So please come shop with us, we care about your good health!

Co-op Board of Directors

Peggy Tofte, *President*

River Jones, *Vice President*

Charlene Baka Rich,
Secretary

Ron Jones-Edwards,
Treasurer

Thom Speidel

Annie Kier

Anne MacDonaugh

Store Manager:

Sabrina Sofia



Congratulations
to Tom Cloud,
winner of the
Survey Contest!
And thank you
to all who took
the time to
take the survey.
Your opinions
matter.

Tonasket Co-op Membership Perks

- 3rd Tuesday of each month bulk-order from the UNFI Catalog at 15% above wholesale
- Last Friday of each month members receive a 10% discount on all vitamin and HABA purchases
- In-store exclusive specials for members only

"Each human being, however small or weak, has something to bring to humanity. As we start to really get to know others, as we begin to listen to each other's stories, things begin to change. We begin the movement from exclusion to inclusion, from fear to trust, from closedness to openness, from judgment and prejudice to forgiveness and understanding. It is a movement of the heart."

– Jean Vanier

This Year's Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen Lists For Produce ~ Buy Organic Whenever Possible ~

Each year, the *Environmental Working Group* (EWG) compiles a list for consumers, ranking produce by pesticide levels. Since its inception in 1993, this watchdog agency has been involved with investigating and assessing risks to our health and our environment.

Their critical work helps the public by focusing on such issues as outdated legislation and harmful agricultural conventions. As they say on their website, their mission is to “empower you with breakthrough research to make informed choices and live a healthy life in a healthy environment.”

By using *The Dirty Dozen* and *Clean Fifteen* lists as a guide,

shoppers can make informed choices that enhance their health and protect their families from pesticide exposure.

While it's not always possible to buy organic produce, following certain guidelines can help us be our healthiest, along with shopping on a budget. If you're not sure where to start with buying organic, some suggestions are to choose organic fruits and veggies with thin, edible skins, along with leafy greens and herbs, since they tend to absorb pesticides more readily. Most thicker-skinned produce will be safer to eat because peeling helps remove much of the residue. However, many pesticides can

be absorbed into the food, so peeling won't remove everything, and we all know that much of the nutritional content is also removed with peeling.

Below are the two lists, *The Dirty Dozen* and *The Clean Fifteen*, to help you make informed decisions while shopping for your produce. *The Dirty Dozen* list shows the fruits and veggies with the highest pesticide residues. *The Clean Fifteen* fruits and veggies are least likely to be contaminated, making them a safer choice if you must buy conventionally grown foods.

For more information, visit the EWG website at <https://www.ewg.org>.

Come Eat at The Co-op Café!

Your Co-op offers some of the best and healthiest lunches in town, along with a lovely indoor setting for dining, our Garden Room. Or enjoy your lunch in our beautiful outdoor garden.

“Grab and Go” sandwiches and hot soup are available all day until they're sold out. We also offer delicious house-made salads and new and exciting sandwich selections. And now we're offering wraps, those delectable sandwich substitutes that are a soft flatbread, rolled around a delicious filling.

Please look for our daily soup schedule on our Facebook page, updated weekly.

Most sandwiches are discounted daily, after 3 PM.

For your convenience we have recently installed a microwave to heat your favorite lunch item.

The Dirty Dozen (High Pesticide Residue)

- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Kale, Collard and Mustard Greens
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Cherries
- Nectarines
- Pears
- Apples
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Potatoes

Collard greens, kale, and mustard greens showed the highest content of pesticide residue.

The Clean Fifteen (Less Pesticide Residue)

- Avocados
- Sweet Corn
- Pineapple
- Onions
- Papaya
- Frozen Peas
- Asparagus
- Bananas
- Kiwi
- Cabbage
- Watermelon
- Mushrooms
- Mangos
- Cauliflower
- Carrots

Avocados and sweet corn tested the cleanest, with less than 2% of samples showing any pesticide traces. Most items on the Clean Fifteen list have thick skins or peels, naturally protecting them from pesticides.

Good News for Customers Who Like to Order From Azure Standard

Did you know you can order your Azure products directly from the Co-op? Avoid the hassle of meeting the delivery drop and pick up your goods at your convenience. Plus, you can use your SNAP benefits for your food purchases.

Ask one of our cashiers for more details.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Your Co-op relies on volunteer help for many of our projects and tasks.

We have an active Board of Directors that sets strategic goals and upholds our core values and mission.

Additionally, we depend on people power to implement store improvements and other activities.

We welcome your help if you feel inspired.

Some jobs are ongoing, such as creating product displays, assisting with deep cleaning, stocking shelves, or helping in our little garden.

Some jobs are on an as-needed basis; things pop up and need tending.

If you have time, please consider pitching in.

Do you have a favorite product you would like to see us carry? Feel free to make a suggestion.

If it's available from our suppliers, and there's room on our shelves, we'll give it a try and see how it sells.

Also, you should know that we can special order items for you.

Talk to a cashier for more information on our policies and bulk-order options.

MEMBERS

Look for the storewide SALES throughout the Co-op, displayed with red shelf tags below the items. Current Tonasket Co-op members receive special discounts on these products – some are a one-time special, some are monthly sales, and some are introductory promotions.

Price tags show both the member prices and non-member prices.

These specials also apply to visiting members from other Co-ops. Just show us your membership card.

Artificial Intelligence: Friend or Foe?

AI, or Artificial Intelligence, may seem like a harmless and useful research tool that enhances our lives by saving time on information gathering. AI proponents show how they can “transform industries and everyday life” by taking over repetitive tasks and allowing humans to focus on more complex work. It is also useful in data gathering which may help with some decision making in fields that could benefit people.

However, little-discussed adverse consequences include its impact on our environment, mainly through excessive energy and water consumption, particularly in data training and operation centers. This usage increases carbon emissions and can deplete local water supplies, contributing to broader environmental challenges.

AI technologies, especially generative AI, require substan-

tial energy for training and operation. Data centers, which house the servers for AI applications, consume a significant amount of electricity. For instance, training a large AI model can produce emissions equivalent to those of several cars over their lifetimes.

According to The Global Tech Council, the rapid growth of AI is projected to significantly increase carbon dioxide emissions, with estimates suggesting an additional 24 to 44 million metric tons annually by 2030.

Moreover, data center cooling systems require large quantities of water. A single data center can use up to 5 million gallons of water per day, exhausting local water supplies, especially in areas already facing water scarcity. The infrastructure needed for AI, including specialized electronics, contributes to electronic waste. Furthermore, producing these components

often involves extracting critical minerals, which can be environmentally damaging, including destroying sensitive habitats and causing extreme pollution.

Relying on fossil fuels to power data centers intensifies greenhouse gas emissions, and the expansion of AI technology resources will divert resources from sustainable practices and environmental projects that are critical for a healthy environment.

All of that aside, AI does offer potential for environmental benefits. It can improve efficiency in many areas, support climate monitoring, and improve sustainable practices. However, balancing these benefits with the environmental harm will become society's pivotal challenge.

Source: www.sciencenewstoday.org/

Our Fresh Organic Produce Delivery Comes Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday • Shop Early For Your Best Selection!

Bonaparte Meadows Hosts a Rare Peat Fen

Did you know that just east of Tonasket, there's a very unique and precious piece of land that is up for sale?

Anyone who has traveled to Bonaparte Lake via Highway 20 drives right past a 260-acre peat fen. According to the Okanogan Land Trust (OLT), it's an “ecological gem, not only in Washington State, but throughout the world.” Most locals consider this piece of land a peat bog; however, there's a difference between a fen and a bog. While a bog is fed by surface water and rain,

the fen is supplied by groundwater. And this fen is also unique because it's composed of limestone substrate, making it a rare calcareous fen.

OLT goes on to explain that peat fens are major carbon sinks, and while they only exist on about 3% of the Earth's surface, they store “roughly twice as much carbon as all the world's forests combined.”

Locally known as Bonaparte Meadows, this fen is now for sale, and several area conservation groups are

teaming up to raise funds to purchase the property, along with the surrounding acreage, totaling 745 acres. Additionally, these groups aim to restore the wetlands, including reestablishing wildlife habitat and protecting this local treasure.

For more information or to get involved, contact OLT Director, Kate Miller at kate@okanoganlandtrust.org or visit their website at <https://www.okanoganlandtrust.org/>

*Supporting local farmers and
the Community since 1977*

ADDRESS:

21 W. 4th Street

PO Box 591

Tonasket WA 98855

PHONE: (509) 486-4188

E-MAIL:

info@tonasketcoop.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.tonasketcoop.com

**Spring - Summer
Hours:**

**10am-7pm Monday –
Friday**

10am-6pm Saturdays

11am-4pm Sundays

*The Co-op Board of Directors
meets monthly. Check Facebook
or call the Co-op for more
information if you wish to attend.*

**For more information on
the Co-op and updated
news, past Firestarters,
and other pertinent articles
visit our website at
<https://tonasketcoop.com>**

Join Us On Social Media

We're on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/TonasketCoop/>

And now on Instagram at
<https://www.instagram.com/tonasketcooperative>

**We'd LOVE to see you
there!**

New Products At The Co-Op

The Co-op's shelves are filled with lovely and healthful foods and goods to satisfy the most discerning shoppers. Despite supply issues, our dedicated staff ensures we provide the best products we can, and we're always open to suggestions.

One new product we think our customers will enjoy is *Host Defense* mushroom supplements, a Washington-based company dedicated to supporting natural immunity and whole-body wellness. Founded by renowned mycologist Paul Stamets, the company's "central premise is that mushrooms are vital to a healthy immune response in both people and habitats". For in-depth information on *Host Defense*, please visit their website at <https://hostdefense.com/>.

Along these same lines, we're now carrying *Laird Superfood Organic Coffee* with functional mushrooms. Currently, we're stocking their dark roast ground coffee, but with more interest, we will expand our selection.

Another addition to our supplement section is *Vital Planet* targeted enzymes and supplements, offering premium probiotics, based on extensive research and scientific data.

Azure Standard has been expanding its organic canned goods selection, and we have been stocking many options at affordable prices. With *Azure Standard*, you can be sure you're feeding your family products that are produced with care and integrity. Additionally, for a wider selection of *Azure* products, you can special order anything

from their catalog. Please ask one of our cashiers for more information.

Shoppers may have noticed that many products are out of stock lately. This issue is due to a few factors: several companies have gone out of business, along with transportation issues which are out of our control. We will continue to try to keep our shelves well-stocked and continue looking for alternatives to your favorite products.

Our community has continued to support the Co-op for nearly 50 years, and as a member-owned nonprofit business, this is your store.

Please feel free to use the suggestion box located in the Garden Room. It's a great way to communicate with us about what you like about the Co-op and make kind recommendations.

We take your suggestions to heart & do our best to provide what our customers are looking for.

So Many People To Thank!

Someone once said, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart." What would we do without all our dedicated volunteers? From the Board of Directors to the gardeners, cleaners, and organizers, our Co-op wouldn't be here without all of our helpers.

Recent helpers include the folks who came to our garden work party last fall. Thanks to Baka, Peggy, Betsy, Sunny, Bob R., Ken V., Su-I, and Sandy, we put the garden to

bed for the winter. So, thank you to all who helped.

While speaking of the garden, a huge *thank-you* must go out to James Gillespie for trimming our Juniper tree so it's no longer a hazard to our building. It was supposed to be cut down and removed, but James found a bird nest in it, so it's still standing; he feels that it should be fine for at least another 10 years. Melanie, Peggy, and Baka, our other garden volunteers, water and help to keep our plants thriving

during the scorching summer months. Please think of them when you're enjoying the cool respite from summer's 100° temps.

We also tackled another big job over the winter: a complete inventory of the store, along with painting, repairs, and general beautification. Thanks to Baka, Peggy, Leah V., Annie K., Sandy, Anne M., and Lisa B., we're looking pretty good. In the coming months, we're hoping to do even more, so stay tuned.

The Co-op uses Facebook and Instagram to promote our store. One way you can support us is by sharing our posts when you see us on social media. Don't care to share? You can simply tap the "like" button, which will let your friends know how much you love your Co-op!