

The Firestarter

Newsletter of the
Tonasket Natural Foods Co-op
Summer 2024



Annual Membership Meeting Highlights

Twenty people attended the Co-op's Annual Membership Meeting on Sunday, June 2. With such an enthusiastic group, we were able to discuss and implement critical changes to our working strategies and discuss several other important topics. The staff and Board of Directors thank all who came and showed their support for our little store.

After introductions, store manager Sabrina Sofia gave a comprehensive store report, sharing many positive developments and changes. Her first words said it all: "We have so many loving hands..." involved with making our Co-op as vibrant and successful as can be. Sabrina's enthusiasm illustrates the dedication she and the other staff bring to the community and the Co-op membership.

At the top of her list was how well the store is recovering from some of our financial woes. We are still feeling the effects of the pandemic and our business decline during Covid. However, Sabrina shared that "2023 was an action-packed year..." and sales increased over \$57,000, bringing us from a \$45,000 deficit in 2022 to less than \$6,000 today. We should all be proud of our staff and dedicated customers, and a big "Thank-You!" goes out to all involved.

Also in the discussions, we talked about volunteerism, our community involvement, and possible store modifications and upgrades. Stay tuned for more on all of that in the future.

On the other hand, we have had some setbacks impacting our solvency. By installing our POS system, we can now track sales vs. shoplifting; unfortunately, the store has suffered in that area. We didn't want to resort to installing cameras but have

decided to do so, hopefully deterring potential thefts.

In other news, we made a Bylaw change and reworked our Mission Statement to reflect new developments. The new Bylaw voted upon by the membership concerns membership dues: **Starting June 2, 2024, new members will indefinitely pay \$10 annual dues for membership. Current Lifetime Members can pledge to pay \$10 annually to support the Co-op or continue their Lifetime Membership without annual dues.** All present unanimously approved this change.

Secondly, we approved the new Mission Statement, which all nonprofits require. It now reads that we **Provide education and access to organic, healthy, local, and ethically sourced**

food and goods that nourish our diverse rural community.

Making such a change will enable the Co-op to apply for federal nonprofit status, also known as 501(c)3. By including the educational aspect, we stand a better chance of getting authorization to become a federal nonprofit, rather than our present State nonprofit status, allowing us to apply for grants.

At the end of the meeting, everyone applauded our staff and volunteers and thanked them for all their dedication and hard work. It takes a strong, loving community to keep a store like ours vibrant and dynamic.

The evening concluded with a tasty meal of soup, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, with a side of delicious cornbread.

Help Us Stay Strong - Pay With Cash, Write a Check, or Set Up a Pre-Paid Store Account

Credit and debit card fees are a significant expense for our Co-op. In 2023, credit card fees were more than \$12,000, and while we intend to continue to take payments with cards, we hope that our shoppers will consider alternatives.

Some ways you can help are paying with cash, writing a check for your purchases, or donating a little extra at the till when you use your card. A mere 60¢ donation each time you charge for your purchases can help offset this expense.

A new program that our members might enjoy is to prepay into your own store

account with cash, any amount, and whenever it's convenient. Then, you can draw from that account when you shop. You will be able to renew your prepaid account whenever you want. The benefit to you is you won't need to have cash on hand or pay for your goods with your card.

Moreover, the store can utilize those funds for our purchases, maintaining well-stocked shelves for our customers.

We all love our Co-op and want to keep the store thriving and vibrant. Thank you for your continued support.

Co-op Board of Directors

Peggy Tofte, *President*

Patti House, *Vice President*

Ron Jones-Edwards,

Secretary

Charlene Baka Rich,

Treasurer

Thom Speidel

Annie Kier

River Jones

Your Name Here?

Store Manager:

Sabrina Sofia

Tonasket Co-op Member Appreciation Day

3rd Tuesday of each
month

Members may
bulk-order from the
UNFI Catalog at 20%
above wholesale.

Tonasket Founder’s Day Celebration at the Co-op

Amanda Baker painted faces in our Co-op Garden after the Founder’s Day Parade on Saturday, May 25, while BlueJay Hankins provided a fantastic show, mixing sounds and entertaining the crowd for hours. A tremendous “Thank-You!” to them and all the other volunteers who made our Founder’s Day Celebration a delightful success.



We plan on more colorful events and further involvement with local festivals. Stay tuned for news on how you can become involved with other community adventures. The Okanogan River Garlic Festival, on August 24 & 25 is on the docket, as well as the fall Okanogan Family Faire. Please ask how you can help!

The Co-op Café is open 7 days a week, with the Café Window open daily from 11-2.

Special order a hot Reuben Sandwich, our Sandwich of the Week, or one of our newest Café Specials when the Café window is open.

“Grab and Go” sandwiches and hot soup are available all day until they’re sold out.

Look for our daily soup schedule and lunch specials on our Facebook page, updated weekly.

And we’re offering Self-Serve soups again for your dining convenience. Come have lunch with us!

An EASY way to support the Co-op is to share our posts when you see us on Facebook or Instagram. Sharing isn’t for you? Then just hit the “like” button to let your friends know how much you love your Co-op. You can also make a comment, that helps too.

You Can Order Your Azure Standard Products Through the Co-op

You can order your Azure products directly from the Co-op, and we can get it for nearly the same price that Azure charges. This way you don’t have to be available at the delivery drop *and* you can use your SNAP benefits to pay. The Azure order is placed every four weeks, so ask one of our cashiers for more details.

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 deal, some are monthly sales, & some are introductory promotions.

Price tags show member prices and non-member prices.

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

You Asked & We Listened

We now carry many additional products that our customers have requested. Some are old favorites, and some are new to us. Thanks to you, we’ve added the following products to our shelves:

- Un-Petroleum Jelly • Halvah Bars • Tony’s Almond Sea Salt Dark Chocolates • House Salsa’s Roasted Tomato Salsa • Organic White-Wine Vinegar • Odyssey’s Dragon Fruit Energy Lemonade • Crystal Mineral Deodorant Stones • Olbas Aromatherapy & Massage Oil • Kind Peanut Butter & Chocolate Chip Bars • Johnson’s Homestead (local) Shampoo Bars & more!

Green Valley Dairy Milk Products Now Available

We are pleased to offer local *Green Valley Dairy* products. The WSDA-certified company, from Cashmere, WA, provides raw cow and goat milk in half-gallons and quarts, and you can find them in our dairy cooler. Delivered fresh every Wednesday, the milk is packaged in reusable glass jars. Customers receive store credit when they return the clean jars.

Half-gallons are \$3.50, and quart jars are \$2.00.

For more information on this family-owned company, visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/greenvalleydairywa



We encourage our customers to bring your own clean containers for all your bulk items.

Under Washington State regulations, we must charge for shopping bags. Please try to bring your own supply of reusable bags.

We also offer a great selection of lovely and practical reusable shopping bags to purchase.

Thank You!

Shopper’s Guide: EWG’s 2024 Dirty Dozen & Clean Fifteen List

Since the early 1990s, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) has been working diligently to help shoppers avoid pesticides in their foods, particularly produce. They compile a report on the *Dirty Dozen* and the *Clean Fifteen* conventionally grown fruits and vegetables every year. While we all know it’s imperative to eat plenty of fresh foods for optimum health, it’s also critical to know which foods to avoid.

That’s where the *Dirty Dozen* comes in, a list of the most toxic conventionally grown foods. As a complement to this list, EWG has also publicized its *Clean Fifteen*

list, including fruits and veggies with minimal toxic pesticide residue.

This year’s top three takeaways are notable, and EWG scientists have determined the following cautions:

EWG determined that 75% of all conventional fresh produce sampled had residues of potentially harmful pesticides. However, for items on the *Dirty Dozen* list, a whopping 95% of samples contain pesticides.

The 12 *Dirty Dozen* products are loaded with fungicides that can disrupt human hormone systems.

However, the good news is that 65% of EWG’s 2024 *Clean Fifteen* fruit and vegetable samples had no detectable pesticide residues.

EWG recommends consumers seeking fresh produce with low pesticide residues buy organic versions of items on EWG’s *Dirty Dozen* and either organic or non-organic versions of produce on the *Clean Fifteen* list. Thankfully, we can assure our Co-op shoppers that we are committed to providing the healthiest choices for everyone’s wellbeing.

Dirty Dozen

Strawberries - The average American eats about eight pounds of fresh strawberries a year – and with them, dozens of pesticides, including chemicals that have been linked to cancer and reproductive damage, or that are banned in Europe.

Spinach - Although packed with nutrients, unfortunately, also pesticides that have been banned in Europe.

Kale, collards, and mustard greens - More than half of the kale sampled were shown to be tainted by potentially cancer-causing pesticides.

Grapes - Conventionally grown grapes have been found to have 56 different pesticide residues on them, including eight probable carcinogens, 17 suspected hormone disruptors, and 10 neurotoxins.

Peaches - This delicious fruit has been found to have an abundance of pesticide contamination

Pears - Among the most pesticide-contaminated fruit in EWG’s Dirty Dozen

Nectarines - The EWG detected residues in nearly 94% of nectarine samples, with one sample containing over 15 different pesticide residues

Apples – Conventional apples are doused with chemicals after harvest

Bell and hot peppers. Close to half of all conventional samples of these vegetables tested positive for oxamyl or its breakdown product, oxamyl oxime, a highly toxic chemical.

Cherries - The EWG detected an average of five pesticide residues on cherry samples, including a pesticide called iprodione, which is banned in Europe.

Blueberries - This fruit is now back on the *Dirty Dozen* list, after being deemed clean for a couple of years, found with traces of several toxic chemicals.

Green beans - Are now listed as one of the *Dirty Dozen* as it is tainted by a pesticide that the EPA banned over 10 years ago.

Clean Fifteen

These 15 foods had the lowest amounts of pesticide residue, according to EWG’s analysis of the most recent USDA data.

Avocados
Sweetcorn
Pineapple

Onions
Papaya
Sweet peas (frozen)

Asparagus
Carrots
Honeydew melon

Cabbage
Mushrooms
Mangos

Sweet potatoes
Kiwi
Watermelon

Supporting local farmers and the Community since 1977

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E-MAIL:

info@tonasketcoop.com

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.tonasketcoop.com

Summer Hours

9am-7pm Monday -Friday

9-6 Saturdays

11am-4pm Sundays

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

River Jones, Newsletter Editor

Co-op member honored by WA State for her volunteer service

Local Tonasket resident Diana Weddle was recently honored with a Washington State Volunteer Service Award. Diana has volunteered hundreds of hours through her participation with Okanogan Highlands Alliance, Little Learners Park, and the Church of the Brethren. Additionally, she has spent the last 13 years as Co-Chair of Tonasket's Food Bank, serving around 230 families weekly. Diana, along with Montie Smith and Debbie Roberts, wrote a grant to help purchase the food bank's building on the north edge of town. This funding, supplemented by local donations, enabled them to turn the former Don's Drive-In restaurant into the permanent home of our city's food bank. With a stable location, the Food Bank can store more products, bringing more quality food into the community.

Last September, the Tonasket Food Bank was awarded a grant of \$175,000 from WSDA. This money enables them to increase protein

purchases, such as meat and eggs, specifically from local producers.

Additionally, our local farmers and gardeners donate and sell vegetables and fruits in season, and the local grocery stores, including the Tonasket Natural Foods Co-op, generously donate to the food bank every week.

"The heart of a volunteer is never measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others."
- DeAnn Hollis



Pictured are some members of the Food Bank Board of Directors. From left to right: Norman Weddle, Diana Weddle, Beatty Mastrude, Montie Smith and Debbie Roberts. Not pictured are Chris Clay, Iris Fisher and Joe Gavin

Staff Picks

Products Our Co-op Really Likes and We Think You Might Too

Do you have a favorite product that you'd 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 & see how it sells. Also, please know that we can special order items for you. Talk to a cashier for more information on our policies and bulk-order options.

Thank-You!

To everyone who has continued to support the Co-op for over 45 years. As a member-owned nonprofit business, this is your store. We encourage you to use the suggestion box. It is 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.

Alex couldn't pick just one. She says you should try our Halvah Bars "So yummy, a candy bar with health benefits!" & our Cuban Mojo Rice & Beans in our bulk section. "As an organic alternative to the conventional version."

"I love our **NOW** brand Vitamin C & Buckthorn Lotion. Smells amazing - like oranges - and makes my skin so soft!"
~ Tyler

Courtney says:
"Try our Madagascar Vanilla ice cream (it's coconut) from Cosmic Bliss!
It's so good I could have it for my lunch!"

Justin wants customers to try our **Spudsy** brand Sweet Potato Hot Fries and Limonata from the Sanpellegrino beverage company

Lisa's pick is our **LOCAL Heart of the Highlands** tinctures. Arnica, Evening Primrose Oil, Hops, Horehound, Pennyroyal, Shiitake, & Spearmint.

Nerium's latest favorite is our house-made **Viet-Wah Salad** found in the Café Cooler