



# BLUFF COUNTRY CUIZINE

FOOD NEWS, EVENTS & SALES FOR THE BLUFF COUNTRY CO-OP COMMUNITY



*Summer 2020*





# Stronger Together

## Our Co-op's Response to COVID-19

As a full-service grocery store and kitchen, we are aware that we play a vital role in providing sustenance to our community. As a community-owned business, we have a heightened commitment to ensure that our store can serve you with the safest food and service possible. Below are some of the practices we've put into place in response to COVID-19.

**Increased Our Sanitizing Efforts** All grocery carts, baskets, and credit card pin pads are disinfected after each use and we've increased the frequency of sanitizing other high-touch areas, such as refrigerator handles and freezer handles.

**Employee Care** Employees who self-identify as high risk may take time off without risking their employment. Additionally, as sales allow, staff are receiving appreciation pay to help show appreciation for their essential worker status.

**Special Orders** have increased dramatically. We continue to offer our owners 15% off most case purchases.

**Bulk and Kitchen** items are currently being pre-packed by our staff to reduce risk in these otherwise high-touch departments.

**Local Producers** We have reached out to our farmers and the Winona Farmers Market to see how we can support them. Thanks to Dr. Sarah's Essentials (Arcadia, WI) we have been able to ensure hand sanitizer is available for our customers to use in the store and to purchase.

**Tired of Cooking?** Our kitchen is offering family-sized take-and-bake casseroles in addition to individual entrees and sandwiches. Just take home a casserole and pop it in the oven! We also have our signature scratch soups and salads available in varying sizes, and customers can call ahead to place an order for pick up. And don't forget about our delicious roasted chickens, which are still available every day.





**Distancing Markers** have been designated at the registers and distancing practices are observed by staff throughout the store. We've closed our 2nd Street entrance to minimize contact surfaces and better monitor traffic in the store. All classes and events scheduled from March through August have been canceled. (See our Facebook page for fun videos!)



**Masks and Gloves** Employees are strongly encouraged to wear masks. Masks have been provided to all employees, as well as guidelines for correct use of masks to maximize their efficacy. Gloves and hand sanitizer are available to all employees and customers.



**FREE!**

**Curbside Pick Up** allows our customers continued access to our high quality food in a contact-free format. Find out more at [www.bluff.coop](http://www.bluff.coop) or email us your order at [info@bluff.coop](mailto:info@bluff.coop)



**Plexiglass Sneeze Guards** were installed to help protect cashiers and customers.

**What Hasn't Changed?** We're still open daily from 8am-8pm. We are still working with our local vendors to bring you the food you want. (See our cover for a sample of the great products we've always had available to you.) We still have soup in our kitchen. And we're still committed to serving you, our owners and customers.



# GM Report

BY DAWN SCHREIBER, GENERAL MANAGER

Hello Community,

As your community-owned grocery store, we have always talked about community -- the importance of community, fostering community, the health of our community. I have to admit, however, the concept has always seemed a little bit vague to me, and definitely a challenge to explain and to model.

This current crisis has made it much more tangible for me. I can see so much more clearly now the direct impact our store has on meeting community needs, comforting our community in times of crisis and supporting our community members who are struggling.

Early on, it became very clear that as a community hub, our actions were critical in minimizing the spread of the virus. Doing everything we can to ensure we are minimizing our part in the spread of the virus was, and is, priority one. Our direct interaction with so many individuals quickly became a staggering responsibility. Thankfully, the facts of germs and sanitation are ones that we can address through hand washing and social distancing and bleach. While seeking refuge in the isolation of a lake cabin might be best, there are many measures that our staff are able to take within our walls to address this concern.

The second realization of community for me was meeting the sometimes-overwhelming food needs that our community had in the pursuit of stocking their pantries. We saw a dramatic rise in sales as folks prepared to hunker down in their homes. Helping our community find the things they needed in such an uncertain time was gratifying. This is what we do! What we've trained our staff to do. The stories of food and supply shortages were filling the news, yet our buyers and staff were able to keep our shelves stocked with the essentials (or reasonable alternatives) in every department. Well done BCC Staff! Also kudos to our fabulous local suppliers who stepped up during this pinch and continue to deliver regularly to our store!

But the most heartwarming realization was how obvious and needed was our support, care, and concern for folks floundering or bewildered or dazed by these recent events. For some, that was a kind, positive voice on the telephone when they called to place their pickup order. For others, it was the calm normality they found when shopping our aisles themselves. For many it was simply knowing the co-op is still here, open. Still a place to get news, share plants, find resources, check in on others in the community who are at risk.

And we continue to receive as good as we give. Nearly every shopper continues to express their gratitude for our service through kind words, chocolates, and gift cards for our staff members. New customers are signing on as owners, old owners are returning.

Our impact on our community has never been more direct and obvious to me. And I can say from our staff as well as myself Thank You for your support and your graciousness during this time. Thank You, thank you for helping make our community such a beautiful thing.

Dawn  
gm@bluff.coop





# Board Report

BY JENN BAECHLE, BOARD VICE PRESIDENT

I must admit that I am struggling to write this article when there is so much going on in the world right now. I hope you are all staying safe, taking care of yourselves, and getting what you need to make it through this quarantine. Know that the board, the staff, and I are thinking about you and how we can be a resource for our community.

If you've been in the Co-op recently, you've noticed that things look a little different. The staff has been working hard to pre-package bulk items and keep everything in stock. (Have you seen the 5-pound bag of Equal Exchange coffee? What a deal!) The hot bar and salad bar have also been modified to meet new needs. Salads are pre-made and new family-sized take-and-bake casseroles are being offered. The juice bar remains open, and coffee and tea can be ordered at the deli counter.

BCC is also offering curbside delivery for those who prefer to minimize outside contact as much as possible. You can phone in or email your order and someone will handpick the items for you then call with your total and any items that may need to be substituted. You can call in with payment info or add money onto your declining balance.

I want to take a moment to give a HUGE thank you to our staff and managers. They have handled the COVID-19 crisis with grace and courage amid ever-changing information and safety concerns. They have been willing to step up to the challenges and have done so with smiles on their faces (even though the masks hide them). Please give them a big thank you the next time you are in. I hear they like baked goods too!

While we don't know what the next few months will bring, be assured that Bluff Country Co-op will continue to bring you good food and good service.

Jenn Baechle  
jenn@bluff.coop

## ***We are looking for owners to join the Social Justice Committee and the Owner Outreach Committee***

The Social Justice Committee works to increase healthy food access in the community and meets on the first Monday of the month from 5:15-6:15pm. For more information, contact Ann Lichter, committee chair, at Ann@bluff.coop.

The Owner Outreach Committee exists to welcome new members, plan the Annual Membership Meeting and other social events, and increase owner engagement. The Outreach Committee meets on the first Wednesday of the month from 5:15-6:15pm. For more information, contact Terri Hansen, committee chair, at Terri@bluff.coop.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# The Promise of Food Co-ops

Bluff Country Co-op's Board of Directors has been discussing the book *Grocery Story: The Promise of Food Co-ops in the Age of Grocery Giants* by Jon Steinman. Here they share some of what they learned about the disturbing realities of the grocery business and how co-ops are offering an alternative.

The imagery of chain grocery store semi trucks hauling the profits from the store out of the community after delivering products from far away lands was really striking for me.

– **Dawn Schreiber**  
General Manager



According to the book, less than 15% of every dollar goes back to the farmer.\* This seems grossly unfair. I was relieved to hear that by Dawn's estimations, what Bluff Country Co-op gives our growers is vastly different; our growers are getting closer to 65 cents on every dollar. This is just another way BCC is working to improve our community.

\*This amount is at its lowest point in history. According to Steinman, "in 1950...farmers received considerably more of that dollar, 40 cents." Even as food prices rise for consumers, farmers don't get a larger share because the concentration of number of retailers in the grocery business has meant downward pressure on prices paid to producers.

– **Jenn Baechle**  
Vice President

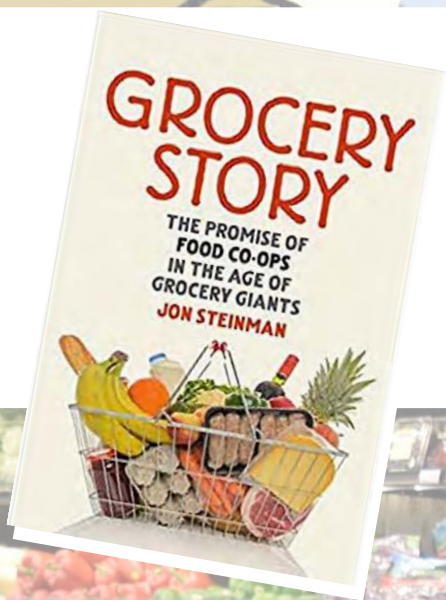


One thing I found interesting was how dispersed the growth of the co-op movement was in all of North America, and how the national co-op scene was affected by the Wisconsin/Minnesota co-op scene. I was pleased to learn that Viroqua Food Co-op and the People's Food Co-op (La Crosse, WI and Rochester, MN) were used as examples in this book.

– **Kay Peterson**  
Board Member







The impact that co-ops have, compared to conventional stores, is impressive:

- Co-ops source 20% locally (conventional stores source 6%)
- Co-ops spend 38% of revenue locally (conventional stores spend 24%)
- Co-ops offer significantly more organics (organics make up 48% of co-op sales, compared to 2% of conventional store sales)

– **Aurea Osgood**

*Board Development Committee Chair*



We can vote for earth-friendly practices and biodiversity with our mouths (and our wallets!). Consider:

“In a food culture of sameness, the grocery giants have also whittled down the genetic diversity of the global food supply. ‘If the supermarkets don’t want them, the growers won’t grow them,’ says one grower. With the disposal of diversity, grocers set the food’s genetic agenda.”

“Meeting the cosmetic demands of the grocery giants has been linked to increases in pesticides... ‘We use more pesticides than we’d like to try to meet the cosmetic standards set.’ Another grower, ‘They want a perfect product that will keep for a week, but trying to make quality last a week logically leads to more pesticides.’”

By focusing on buying directly from many local producers, Bluff Country Co-op can offer a wider variety of fresher, tastier food, produced with fewer pesticides and harmful chemicals. Large grocery chains can’t offer this kind of diversity because their supply chain often involves long-distance transportation that only certain varieties of produce can withstand.

– **Eileen Hanson**

*Board Director*



“In the 1980s and 1990s, the grocery store food giants became more prominent, as mergers allowed a small number of grocery chains to monopolize the market. Not only has this had a detrimental effect on the farmer, it has impacted the consumer. The large grocery chains (think Walmart, Krogers, A&P, Safeway) determine what we eat.

“The chain stores have such power over the food industry, they decide when your tomato will be picked, how it will ripen, and how long it will last on the shelf. To accommodate what is best for the market, all aspects of producing the tomato are affected: from the genetics used to make the variety, the pesticides used and the food safety standards. And it’s not just happening to produce. “Retailers ... are increasingly telling [meat] packers what to do....Retailers mandate to producers how they want meat cut, packaged, labelled, and bar-coded.”

Cosmetics and shelf life determine what we eat, rather than the nutritional value. At the Co-op, I appreciate being able to buy fresh, organic food from our local farmers, knowing they are growing food that will sustain me and my family.

– **Donna Kamann**

*Finance Committee Chair*







## Celebrating Co-ops, Part 3: We Are Not Alone!

by Mitch Johnson and Melissa Gordon

*In our winter newsletter we shared a brief history of consumer cooperatives, and in our spring newsletter we looked at Bluff Country Co-op's history. In this issue, we continue our exploration of cooperatives by turning our attention to the other types of cooperatives that exist around the world.*

Cooperatives have long been formed to meet individual and community needs, empower workers, battle big business, and inspire change. While many people are familiar with food cooperatives, cooperative businesses can be found in nearly all sectors of society, offering a wide range of products and services.

In Winona, Altra Federal Credit Union provides all the same services of a bank but adheres to a cooperative business structure. Like all cooperatives, every member of Altra owns an equal number of shares, which prevents any one member from having disproportionate influence on the credit union's direction. Decisions are thus made based on what's best for the membership as a whole, not based on select individuals' profit. Indeed, when credit unions first came into prominence during the Great Depression, their tagline was "not for profit, not for charity, but for service."

Another Winona area cooperative is Wiscoy Valley Community Land Cooperative. The Wiscoy Valley co-op consists of several families who banded together and purchased 358 acres of bluff and farm land in southern Winona County. Each family contributes monthly dues and works together to maintain the land. Consensus decision making is employed, which means no one member determines how the land will be used, or the spiritual, political or environmental leanings of the organization. Decisions are agreed upon as a whole community and everyone owns an equal share. With a shared love for the land, Wiscoy Valley Community Land Cooperative has existed in some form since the mid-70s.

In addition to food co-ops, credit unions, and land cooperatives, other common cooperatives in the United States include child care co-ops, housing co-ops, electric co-ops, and health care co-ops. But the work of cooperatives doesn't end there. Here's a peek into the wider world of cooperatives:





Photo from [www.stories.coop](http://www.stories.coop)

In the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, just south of Sicily, lies the tiny island nation of Malta, a cultural crossroads of the modern and ancient world. Malta's location has made it a depository for cultural artifacts like classic oil paintings, bronze statues and wall paintings. To maintain these fragile treasures, the Restoration and Conservation Co-op (ReCoop) was formed in 2003. The variety of professions needed to preserve and repair the artifacts is staggering, and the number of opinions that go into the proper way to preserve and repair the artifacts is just as plentiful. ReCoop brought together professional conservators, art historians, architects and scientists, and through the cooperative model they ensured no group of professionals held too much power over the preservation efforts. They continue to work together to protect the cultural heritage of Malta and the Mediterranean at large.



Photo from [www.stories.coop](http://www.stories.coop)

Gujarat, India is known for being the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, but it is also home to an impressive cooperative. The Vanlaxmi Women's Tree Growing Cooperative struggled for several years to gain access to farmland.

The Gujarat region was rapidly industrializing, and many of the local subsistence farmers, especially women, were being left behind. Through ingenious legal maneuvering the Cooperative registered as a tree growers' cooperative instead of an agricultural cooperative, helping them circumvent a system that disproportionately assists industrial agriculture. After this shift, and with renewed interest in horticulture, composting, and agro-forestry, the Vanlaxmi Women's Tree Growing Cooperative began to thrive.



Photo credit: Sally Hartley

In Lesotho (leh-SOO-too), a small landlocked country in far southern Africa, over 40 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line. Many youth in Lesotho don't have enough money to buy a uniform, a requirement for any student to attend school. The Rise and Shine Student Cooperative, a student-run cooperative that provides savings facilities and small loans to its members, have helped students pursue a number of fundraising activities, including an exceedingly popular "Mr. and Miss Cooperative" competition. In Lesotho, cooperatives are increasing in importance, inspiring entrepreneurship and, ultimately, creating a brighter future for its youth.



Photo from [www.lancasterfarmfresh.com](http://www.lancasterfarmfresh.com)

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is colloquially known as Pennsylvania Dutch Country because of its high population of Amish farming families. In a meeting of modern and traditional lifestyles, nine families, Amish and non-Amish, came together to form the Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative in 2006. The families focused on maintaining their mutual independence from Big Ag and the resulting middlemen, who pushed for the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and chiseled into the small farmers' profits. The Lancaster Farm Fresh Cooperative helped create numerous jobs in the community, swelling from the original nine farmers to over 80 in just six years. As Casey Spacht, one of the nine founding farmers, says, "[our co-op has] no need for multinational corporations, no need for technologies in the name of progress. Just love for the land, love for our families and extending that into our community to create a wider web."

"Love for the land, love for our families..." These are words that Bluff Country Co-op owners can identify with. Striving together to create a common good, a good that benefits the people and the land, is what cooperatives have always done, and what we will continue to do.

#### Sources:

*Building a Better World: 100 Stories of Cooperation* by Kate Askew  
Altra Federal Credit Union: <https://www.altra.org/>



# Hit the Trails

These portable, protein-packed snacks will give you the energy you need for your outdoor adventures.



## Nut Butter and Flax Powerballs

Servings: 15. Prep time: 20 minutes.

- 1 ½ cups almond butter
- 1 banana, peeled and mashed
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseed
- 2 tablespoons whey protein powder
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon honey
- ½ cup almonds, finely chopped

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together the almond butter, banana, flax, protein powder, cocoa powder and honey. Blend until smooth.
2. Line a plate or pan with parchment paper. Roll the mixture into 1- to 2-inch balls and place on parchment paper. Next, roll each ball in the chopped almonds and return to parchment paper. Place in the refrigerator or freezer until firm.

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## No-Bake Apricot Cashew Energy Bars

Servings: Makes 14 bars. Prep time: 1 hour, 15 minutes; 15 minutes active.

- 1 ½ cups chopped dried apricots
- ½ cup cashews
- ½ cup almonds
- ½ cup cashew butter
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- ⅓ cup shelled hemp seeds
- ⅓ cup chia seeds
- 3 tablespoons cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon maca powder

1. Place the apricots, cashews, almonds and cashew butter in a food processor and mix until the apricots are finely chopped and the ingredients have come together. The mixture will still be coarse.
2. Transfer to a mixing bowl and add the remaining ingredients. Stir until the mixture takes on the consistency of a very thick dough. Line a loaf pan with parchment paper and press mixture firmly into the bottom of the pan. Chill in the refrigerator for at least one hour, then check to make sure it has set. When set, turn the mixture out onto a cutting board and slice into 14 pieces. Keeps refrigerated up to 5 days.





## Chocolate Matcha Energy Balls

Servings: Makes 16. Prep time: 15 minutes.

- 1/2 cup raw cashews
- 1/4 cup raw walnuts
- 1 cup pitted dates
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup or honey
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon matcha, divided
- Pinch of salt

1. Place cashews and walnuts in the food processor and grind the nuts to a fine mince, then scrape them to the center of the container. Add the dates, maple syrup or honey, cocoa, 1 tablespoon matcha and salt. Process until the dates form a thick paste and the mixture holds together if you squeeze a bit of it.
2. Scoop out a tablespoon of the mixture, form into a ball and place into a medium bowl; repeat until all of the mixture has been used. Use a wire mesh strainer to sift the remaining matcha over the balls. Roll the balls around to coat. Store, tightly wrapped, in the refrigerator for up to a month.



## Chewy Cocoa Granola Bars

Servings: Makes 12. Prep time: 20 minutes active; 50 minutes total.

- 2 cups rolled oats, thick
- 1/2 cup raisins, dried cherries or other dried fruit
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped almonds, walnuts or peanuts
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup applesauce
- 1/2 cup honey or agave syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut a piece of parchment paper 8 inches wide, and place it in an 8" x 8" baking pan, with the edges hanging over to make handles for easy removal of the finished bars.
2. On a sheet pan, spread the oats and toast them in the oven for about 10 minutes, until fragrant and lightly golden in spots. Let cool on a rack.
3. Place the cooled oats in a large bowl and add the dried fruit, nuts, cocoa and salt and stir to mix well.
4. In a medium bowl, combine the applesauce, honey and vanilla. Stir until smooth, then pour over the oat mixture. Stir until well mixed, then spread in the prepared pan. Using a spatula, press the mixture firmly and evenly in the pan.
5. Bake for 30 minutes, until the bars feel firm when pressed. Cool on a rack for 10 minutes, then use the parchment to lift the bars out and let cool completely. Cut 3-by-4 to make 12 bars. Store, tightly wrapped, for up to 4 days at room temperature or a week in the refrigerator.





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