

First Alternative NATURAL FOODS CO-OP

Fresh, local, organic groceries for everyone

North Store: 2855 NW Grant Ave • South Store: 1007 SE 3rd St

The 
SCOOP
October 2023



*From the
Board of Directors*

Patrick Monroe

To paraphrase the great words of Beastie Boys rapper Adam “MCA” Yauch: “You gotta fight for your

right... to a grocery store dedicated to a mission-based platform that puts people before profits.” That’s the kind of “party” I think of when I listen to that song.

When that song came out of New York City’s blossoming Hip-Hop scene in 1986, First Alternative was already sixteen years old and fighting for its right to “party” in that same *mission-based platform that puts people before profits* kinda way. Nearly forty years later, it’s the one we continue to “fight for” and believe in.



If we hope to continue on this path, profitability is what we need to thrive. For First Alternative, profitability is predicated on an extremely thin net margin (that’s the revenue that is

left over to reinvest after all expenses are paid) of around 1%, a percentage that might sound pretty wild, but is actually pretty normal for a grocery store.

Some larger, more profit-driven, and far less people-driven stores run around 2% or 3% net margin. This means that, at the end of the day, to run a truly people-driven organization, that extra percent or two that would be profit instead goes to the people who matter—our employees, our farmers, our local businesses, and to the community, in the form of direct financial contributions.

In other words, every time you buy that pint of Local Direct Riverland Strawberries for \$4.99, First Alternative takes roughly 5 cents of every pint purchased and puts it away for that rainy day or for investment in future growth. For the Board, finance is at the forefront this time of year as we think about next year’s budget and how to carefully allocate that precious 1%.

Our annual budget talks always start with a refresher on the financial statements such as P&Ls, balance sheets, income statements, etc. Depreciation is re-learned, amortization is re-forgotten. All of it’s somehow intertwined logically, but tangled illogically in our brains. Eventually, halfway through, the group starts to vibe. The blank stares are gone, lightbulbs go off inside our

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October Board Committee Meetings

Owners interested in virtual attendance should contact BREC@firstalt.coop for details.

Owner Relations Committee:

The conduit for communication between Owners and the Board.

Monday, October 9, 6pm

Board Recruitment & Elections Committee:

Working to recruit qualified Board candidates.

Tuesday, October 10, 6pm

Finance Committee:

Reviews, analyzes, and makes recommendations on financial matters.

Wednesday, October 11, 4:30pm

Board of Directors:

Elected Owners putting our cooperative principles into action.

Tuesday, October 31, 6pm

**ANYONE
CAN SHOP**

**Two locations
Open daily
7 am - 9 pm**

From the Board of Directors

Patrick Monroe

Continued from previous page...

heads, and the soapbox derby that is budgeting rolls on.

We always end up on that 1% at the end of it all, after we pay our workers an ethical wage, after we pay our farmers enough to be able to eat their own food, after we pay back our Owners in dividends, and ensure the next generation is left with a better slab of soil than we started.

It always comes back to that 1%, or more importantly, how close we actually get to that projected 1%. Traditionally, this quarter is slow for us as summer brings our budgetary soap box racers to a flat part of the hill. Acceleration is on the horizon, though, with the end of the year holidays ahead. *(Okay, if this soap box derby analogy has you confused, you know the feeling of being halfway to that internal light bulb moment at the end of our annual budget conversations!)*

The holidays are a time for us all to come together and celebrate each other, most commonly through food, which makes it a big time for grocery stores. So, before they arrive, our Finance manager researches industry trends and prognostications, looking for the answers to our future, and we refresh our brains on our financial position, looking to help govern operations with a projected financial plan that comes to us in the form of a draft budget, composed by a collection of managers from various departments and both stores.

This is the first talk of many before a final budget will be decided upon. An overview of our current position is a great place to start and it's where we began in our August meeting. As we look at where we are and where we plan to go, the Board really helps guide the organization.

August is about "slowly doing the math in our heads." We then think about future projects and expansions of the Co-op and, as always, the math can get tricky.

How do we best allocate that 5 cents? What do we think the next year will hold? Will the fourth quarter provide a lift, a dip, or sustain the normal levels of past years? More importantly, what will external markets do? Will one big corporation buy another? Will we get a new competitor in town? Will opportunities open for us? Always with these uncertainties comes an overflowing excitement for new potential avenues for First Alternative.

August is a good time to express and archive whatever thoughts and ideas we all have about the direction of the Co-op. Many paths will be available in the following months and years, and it's time now to decide our general trajectory. As we continue to allocate whatever of the 1% we can to these things, we always have to be aware of how thin that margin is. "People not profits" means many things, but it certainly doesn't mean "easy."

As John F. Kennedy said, "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone".

Don't get me wrong, this isn't running a space program over here, as much as amortization and depreciation might as well be rocket science sometimes. However, we're not looking to go to Mars, we're looking to stay here, we're dedicated to this piece of dirt... and turning it back to soil. All 13-plus septillion pounds of it. With all the people, plants, and things on it determined to build it back better than those who chose otherwise.

As Kennedy said, we do this "because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone." So let's get together and figure this all out—especially this next year's budget. As always, Owners are welcome at our Board meetings to watch and immerse themselves in the big picture. It might not be as big a picture as planet Earth but the budget for the next year is determined to be just as important as any of them, because really, there's no reason why we don't just go ahead and stick around for another 50 years.

Patrick prepares for the annual budgetary "soap box race."



Beans for Bags

2024 Election Candidate Profiles



Beans for Bags supports the work of sixteen different Owner-elected community organizations (four per financial quarter) by dividing an annual \$4,000 in donations between them. We have 23 candidate organizations this year and it's up to our Owners to select sixteen of them for 2023.

Read about the missions and accomplishments of the candidates, presented alphabetically on the following pages. Then vote via paper or online ballot.

Owners with a valid email address will receive an online ballot. If you vote online, **DO NOT** complete a paper ballot. If you vote with a paper ballot, fill out your ballot and drop it in the ballot boxes at either store and **DO NOT** vote online.

All ballots, digital and printed, are due by 9 pm on Tuesday, October 31.



ABC HOUSE

ABC House works to break the cycle of child abuse and neglect, supporting children as they find their voice and helping children and families heal and thrive. ABC House serves more than 800-900 Linn and Benton County infants, children, and youth per year, referred to them by law enforcement, DHS, or the medical community. ninety-percent of the families they serve are low-income or underinsured. No child in need is ever turned away due to inability to pay, and families pay nothing out of pocket for essential services. This is possible thanks to support from the community. Nearly half of their budget comes from the community in the form of donations and grants.

CASCADE VOLUNTEERS

Cascade Volunteers connects individuals and communities to the Willamette National Forest and adjacent public lands through programs, stewardship, and education. They have over 3,000 volunteers helping annually to support events, programs, and trails maintenance in the Willamette National Forest, most of whom are based in the Willamette Valley.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH, INC (COI)

The mission of COI is "Creating Transformative and Supportive Pathways to Life" while "Helping People Help Themselves Lead Healthy and Productive Lives." COI provides a suite of services for people experiencing homelessness, including their Transformative Shelter program which is transformational housing dorms for men, women, young adults aged 18-24, and families with children, no-cost medical and dental clinics, affordable childcare, foodbank, behavioral healthcare, and veterans' services.

COMMUNITY DOULA PROGRAM (CDP)

CDP is a project of Heart of the Valley Birth and Beyond with a mission to improve the well-being of pregnant and parenting families through advocacy, education, resource coordination, research, and direct services offered by Doulas and certified breastfeeding specialists. With the opening of their new community space in downtown Corvallis their goal is to provide a one-stop location for support during pregnancy, birth, and the toddler years. They offer services like fertility education, childbirth classes, doula care, lactation support, yoga, babywearing, parenting classes, and more. In addition to providing care during pregnancy, continuous labor/birth support, and support in the early weeks of caring for a newborn, CDP doulas counsel pregnant people on how to build sustainable social support networks and cope with everyday stresses by connecting them with mental health care and social services.

CO-OP RECYCLING CENTER

The Co-op Recycling Center provides multiple resources for most of your recycling needs in Corvallis and the rest of the valley. They are the only place in town where you can recycle Styrofoam, and are a focal point in South Town that helps fulfill the community's needs for recycling items that would otherwise go to the landfill. In an average year they recycle 3,700 lbs. of metal, 1,420 cubic yards of Styrofoam, 840 cubic yards of commingled items, and 510 cubic yards of glass. The center is operated on a zero-dollar budget; community support is vital to its success.

CORVALLIS MULTI-CULTURAL LITERACY CENTER (CMLC)

CMLC's mission is growing justice and belonging cross-culturally with international, immigrant, refugee, and intersecting communities. CMLC advances diversity, equity, and inclusion internally within the organization by centering the communities they serve and framing efforts through the lens of inclusivity. The CMLC staff, board of directors, and internal volunteers reflect the diverse populations that participate in their programs and use the services they provide.

COASTAL RANGE FOOD BANK (CRFB)

CRFB creates access to varieties of healthy food by promoting client autonomy and reducing barriers to food access. In May 2023 their Board implemented a self-serve 24 hr. Emergency Food Pantry. They are the first food bank to convert to a shopping style format. The 24-hour pantry is a repurposed Pepsi machine stocked with non-perishable foods. Just like the shopping style format, this self-serve 24-hour pantry has not been abused, but instead has shown how grateful and respectful people are who have used it. In conjunction with the Health Department, they will be providing monthly harm reduction resources, and their nurse provides wound care, basic health checks, and vaccinations.

CORVALLIS SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION - GONDAR (CSCA-G)

CSCA-G partners with the people of Gondar, Ethiopia to develop sustainable solutions and promote cultural awareness, respect, and understanding. Working with people to access clean water and improve quality of education is at the heart of their work. During their 17 year relationship, 20 wells and spring developments have been constructed, providing clean water to over 2,700 households throughout rural Gondar. A new well for a children's village is being planned to provide water for the children's needs and for food production and sustainability. Their educational partnerships with Gondar schools during this past year focused on a critical need for bathroom facilities for students, teacher training, and donation of educational materials. They are also committed to support the Gondar Donkey

Library and the 5 rural schools it serves. Sister school relationships between Corvallis and Gondar are in place and provide productive exchanges between schools. CSCA-G sponsors two annual events in Corvallis to increase awareness of the Ethiopian culture, food, and people. CSCA-G provides opportunities to Corvallis residents to become Global Citizens and learn from other cultures while also making a positive impact to the the lives of people in Gondar.

FURNITURE SHARE

Furniture Share's mission is to provide locally grown healthy foods and to redistribute quality used furniture and household items. This helps vulnerable populations improve the quality of their lives, become self-sufficient, and protect our local environment by diverting items from landfills. In addition to providing furnishings and home goods, their newly expanded "Healthy Families Thriving Communities" food box program, which delivers 3-5 pounds of meat, fresh vegetables, and fruits to our clients, has been a wonderful addition.

GRACE CENTER FOR ADULT DAY SERVICES

Grace Center's mission is to provide day services that optimize the cognitive and physical abilities of seniors and adults with disabilities so they can remain as independent as possible and in their homes. They offer day services catering to seniors and adults (aged 18 and above) with disabilities. The center specializes in providing dedicated care for both individuals with memory-related issues and those recuperating from injuries like strokes or brain trauma, and extends crucial relief to caregivers.

INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED ECOLOGY (IAE)

Founded in Corvallis in 1999, IAE's mission is to conserve native species and habitats through restoration, research, and education. Their vision is a world where all people and wildlands are healthy and interact positively, where biological diversity flourishes, and environmental challenges are met with a social commitment to solving problems with scientific principles.

JACKSON STREET YOUTH SERVICES

Started in Corvallis twenty-one years ago, Jackson Street promotes safety, stability, and well-being for youth, working to prevent homelessness by showing a path to long-term success through building positive relationships and teaching skills for self-sufficiency. They are the sole youth homeless shelter for unaccompanied minors, with ten beds at their shelter in Corvallis and sixteen beds in Albany. They also provide Outreach services for 10-24 year-olds, including food, hygiene supplies, peer support groups, mental health support, case management and more. Their Next Steps program provides transitional housing for 18-24 year-olds, as well.

LUMINA HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE

Founded as Benton Hospice Service in 1980, Lumina has a long tradition of serving end-of-life needs in Linn and Benton Counties. From their hospice and palliative care services to their extensive grief and caregiver support programs, they are here for you. Lumina is the only independent, nonprofit hospice in our region. Additionally, Lumina provides supportive services to anyone in the community, free of charge. These programs include grief support, caregiver support, Transitions program, teddy bear bags for kids, Death Café, Illuminating Series, and other educational presentations. Lumina also has an extensive volunteer program, providing support to patients and families on our hospice service. All support programs are funded solely by donations and grants.

OLD MILL CENTER FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Old Mill Center is a community-based, family-oriented agency that empowers children and families to optimize their potential through specially designed education and therapy programs. 45 years ago, their founders developed a new approach to early education, one where acceptance, compassion, and understanding would be available to all preschool children, in classrooms that taught those with special needs side-by-side with typically-developing peers. Today, Old

Mill Center offers six programs that respond to the community's changing needs: Healthy Families, Relief Nursery, Community Preschool, Intensive Treatment Services, Child & Family Counseling and Pediatric Occupational Therapy. They support the social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of children and families throughout Benton & Linn Counties.

REGION THREE K9 SEARCH AND RESCUE

K9 Search and Rescue's mission is to support the community by having well-trained, nationally certified canine teams able to assist 24/7 with missing person searches and emergency response missions in a variety of capacities including area search, trailing, human remains detection, water search, and disaster response. They also use public relation opportunities to teach children, youth, and other community members techniques on how to remain safe in wilderness and urban environments. The organization is composed of volunteers from the local community who train and handle their own dogs. All the training costs for this commitment are borne by the individual team members.

RED FEATHER RANCH

Philomath based Red Feather Ranch provides a place for women veterans and women currently serving in the military to build community and heal trauma through nature-based retreats and online peer support groups. Red Feather Ranch is the only non-profit in Oregon exclusively serving women veterans. Women veterans face significant health and economic disparities compared to their male counterparts. They address the unique needs of this population and ensure that women veterans have a safe space to build community and strengthen their relationships with the land and with one another. Red Feather Ranch held its first women veterans retreat in 2022, are actively planning for our 2023 retreat, and would utilize the proceeds from Beans for Bags to support their 2024 women veterans retreat.

SAFE HAVEN

Safe Haven's mission is finding homes, opening hearts and educating minds to strengthen and improve the lives of animals and people. They envision a community where every adoptable, treatable companion animal has a loving home, and where every loving home has the opportunity to care for a companion animal. They are guided by the belief that no adoptable or treatable companion animal should be unnecessarily euthanized due to space, time, appearance, or treatable conditions. They are committed to giving a new chance to companion animals who would otherwise be discarded, strengthening the humane animal bond through education, helping people and their companion animals stay together through the support of programs and services, and leading responsibly with compassion.

SOUTH CORVALLIS FOOD BANK (SCFB)

SCFB's mission is to increase sustainable food security in South Corvallis by providing emergency food boxes, information, and opportunities with compassion and respect. With food prices increasing and the end of pandemic benefits, they have seen a rapid growth in demand for food in 2023. They are currently providing food boxes to over 2,000 individuals each month.

SENIOR DOG RESCUE OF OREGON

Senior Dog Rescue of Oregon is a canine rescue, re-homing dogs ages six and up. They are the only organization in Oregon that focuses exclusively on senior dogs. Headquartered out of Philomath, they have been doing his work for 25 years. Beans for Bags funds would help offsite veterinarian costs associated with senior dogs, evaluating them, and then placing them in permanent homes. Because the dogs are older, they tend to need more care. When people find themselves unable to care for their pet because they move into a home, or pass away, they work to find the dog a second forever home where they can spend their last years. They are 100% volunteer, do not have a brick and mortar office, have volunteers that process the intake applications, transport the dogs, foster the dogs, and then place them in permanent homes.

TEN RIVERS FOOD WEB (TRFW)

TRFW's mission is to steward the growth of a resilient local food web in Benton, Lincoln, and Linn counties. They envision a vibrant regional food web, where reciprocal relationships sustain a thriving food economy, steward land and water, and produce delicious food to nourish our whole community. TRFW pioneered Fill Your Pantry, a stock-up event for staple and storage crops from local farms, which has since been replicated across Oregon. They also organize an annual Soil Amendment Sale to offer bulk discounts to local organic growers. In addition, they plan to launch an online local food directory in 2024, and are gathering information from bean, grain and corn growers and buyers to understand their needs, and aim to support more local buying.

UNITY SHELTER

Unity Shelter's mission is to provide safe shelter through collaborative care, offering low-barrier emergency and transitional housing to those in the community who have none. They recognize that people lacking safe shelter often face deprivation of hygiene, clean water, nutritious food, and community. In addition to addressing these physical needs, they also acknowledge the social disconnection and potential complications of trauma, mental illness, and addiction that individuals without shelter may experience. Their focus is on the ethics of belonging, community, purpose, and dignity. Unity Shelter envisions a community where homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring, and where everyone has a safe and stable place to live, connect, and thrive.



2024 Ballot

VINA MOSES CENTER

Vina Moses Center strives to support low-income and under-resourced community members facing a wide variety of challenges and hardships through a network of resources and services to build resilience and improve wellbeing. Vina Moses Center's mission is to support all individuals and families living in Benton County through times of hardship and financial troubles by providing no-cost clothing, household materials, food, and other basic necessities at the center daily. The center relies on community donations, personal monetary donations, and volunteers who upkeep the center. Emergency financial assistance is provided to support those unable to meet their urgent needs with things like housing, utilities, prescriptions, identification, laundry, and gas. Annually, Vina Moses Center hosts a Giving Tree program, providing holiday meals and new gifts to kids, families, and seniors, as well as a Back-to-School program, providing students with necessary apparel and school supplies as they head back into the classroom. In the past year, the center has been able to supply folks starting new jobs with proper safety attire, apparel, and rain gear through our labor closet.

WE CARE

We Care bridges the gap between emergency and sustainability by providing one-time financial assistance to residents of Benton County. Each week, We Care helps neighbors pay for rent, utilities, and other expenses to prevent evictions and homelessness or the shut-off of water or electricity. With their support, folks in need move through an immediate crisis towards a more sustainable and stable future. Beyond the financial aid, We Care helps foster a spirit of understanding, inclusion, and compassion that touches both those served and those who serve. In 2022, We Care helped 367 Benton County households, providing \$170,427 of assistance when relief from other sources was unavailable or inadequate. These households included 162 families with children and 79 households with someone living with a disability. 93 households were going through a major transition such as getting out of homelessness, recovering from substance abuse, or leaving a domestic violence situation.

Voting Owner name (required): **Share # (required):**

Voting Owner signature:

You must be a Co-op Owner to vote. Owner share payments must be current or paid, share must be in good standing. One vote per Owner number.

- ☐ ABC House
- ☐ Cascade Volunteer
- ☐ Community Outreach, Inc.
- ☐ Community Doula Program
- ☐ Co-op Recycling Center
- ☐ Corvallis Multicultural Literacy Center
- ☐ Coastal Range Food Bank
- ☐ Corvallis Sister Cities Association - Gondar
- ☐ Furniture Share
- ☐ Grace Center for Adult Day Services
- ☐ Institute for Applied Ecology
- ☐ Jackson Street Youth Services
- ☐ Lumina Hospice & Palliative Care
- ☐ Old Mill Center for Children and Families
- ☐ Region 3 K9 Search and Rescue
- ☐ Red Feather Ranch
- ☐ Safe Haven
- ☐ South Corvallis Food Bank
- ☐ Senior Dog Rescue of Oregon
- ☐ Ten Rivers Food Web
- ☐ Unity Shelter
- ☐ Vina Moses Center
- ☐ We Care

Vote for up to 16 nominees

Ballots with more votes will be considered invalid

Celebrate Fair Trade Month with Café Mam on sale in Bulk, October 4-17

Café Mam takes an approach to climate change that involves supporting better stewardship of the land by sourcing only organic coffee; supporting living wages for the farmers; paying above fair trade prices; and an ongoing effort to conduct our business in ways that are more ecologically minded.

In 2019, Café Mam implemented a Climate Change Mitigation Fund for farming partners in Chiapas, Mexico. Café Mam pays a self-imposed premium of 10¢ per pound of coffee on top of the negotiated price for coffee they buy. It's then given to the farm co-ops they work to use as they see fit to combat climate change, specific to their communities.

To date, this fund has totaled over \$178,000 USD. Distributed between the five cooperatives Café Mam works with, it has resulted in the planting of over 8,000 trees on 3,400 acres, large scale groundcover planting

for weed and erosion control, education, and retrofitting coffee processing facilities to clean solar energy.

None of this would be possible without the dedicated customers like First Alternative's shoppers. Whether you drink Café Mam for the delicious cup of coffee it makes, or for their superb sourcing practices, they are truly grateful for your support.



Café Mam
Bulk Coffee, assorted varieties
\$11.49/lb in Bulk October 4-17



**Own it in
October!**

Become an Owner during October and

**GET 20% OFF
YOUR NEXT
SHOPPING TRIP**

*Offer good October 1-31, 2023
see store for details*



Follow First Alternative

For up-to-the-minute news,
giveaways, recipes, special offers,
and tons of cooperative fun.

@firstaltcoop    

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The Co-op welcomed...



new Owners in August