EXPANDING OUR POSSIBILITIES

Taking our Co-op to the Next Level
On the Editor’s Mind

Richard Bergsma, Co-op Owner and Conspiracy News Editor

If you attended the Annual Meeting on March 2nd at Borderlands Brewing Company downtown, you were likely swept away by the excitement surrounding our Co-op’s expansion plans. Owners overwhelmingly approved of the East Entrance Project and new 5-year Strategic Plan. This edition of Conspiracy News is, therefore, appropriately titled “Expanding our Possibilities”. Under the leadership of our Board of Directors and General Manager, our Co-op is truly making a leap into the future and our Co-op Staff are placing themselves at the forefront of 4th Avenue business development.

Our focus continues to be on Co-op people because it is important that you know them well. Food Conspiracy Staff are truly dedicated individuals who believe deeply in what the Co-op is all about. This edition of the News is another opportunity for you to become familiar with them and the amazing work they do. It is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the Board Members you have just elected. We think you will see that everyone involved, from the Board of Directors to the Staff, is collaborating at the highest level. Their strong teamwork benefits Co-op Owners by ensuring quality service, dynamic growth, safety and efficiency.

Our Co-op is also enriched by the downtown neighbors that work with us and our local food producers. Conspiracy News shines a spotlight on some of these people so that you are more informed of our local resources and more knowledgeable of the products on the store shelves.

Enjoy our beautiful desert Spring!

A GIFT FOR ANY OCCASION...
AND A WAY TO SAVE CASH!

Food Conspiracy gift cards are an excellent way to celebrate milestones and show your loved ones that you care about their well-being. Purchase any amount. It’s recycleable, reloadable and made with 60% chalk.

You can also use a Gift Card instead of a debit or credit card for regular purchases. Each year the Co-op spends approximately $70,000 on debit and credit card fees. By loading and using a gift card instead you help us save these dollars and put them to other use. Thank you!

Back Issues at Issuu.com

You can find your favorite articles and recipes from previous issues of Conspiracy News in a convenient, page-turning format at https://issuu.com/foodconspiracycoop.

If you would prefer to receive your Co-op News by e-mail, register for the mailing list at http://www.foodconspiracy.coop/mailing_list/ or update your information in-store.

Leave Us a Suggestion Online

You can make comments and suggestions on the Food Conspiracy website just as you can on the written comment cards provided in the store. To ask a question, express kudos, or make a product request, go to www.foodconspiracy.coop, click on Contact Us, and choose Suggestion Page. Thank you!
Statement of Cooperative Identity

A cooperative is an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

Food Conspiracy Values

1. We adhere to the internationally recognized Rochdale Principles for cooperatives.
2. We promote whole, natural, organic, and chemical-free products with minimal packaging.
3. We value openness, honesty, and integrity with each other and the community.
4. We seek, through cooperative effort, to provide a humane, fulfilling environment in which to work and shop.
5. We promote social justice by encouraging and respecting diversity.
6. We strive for a sustainable, healthy ecology through use of clean, renewable resources.

Co-op Principles

Co-op principles were first stated by the Rochdale pioneers in 1844. The cooperative principles are guidelines by which we put our values into practice.

1. Voluntary and open Member-Ownership.
2. Democratic Member-Owner control.
3. Member-Owner economic participation.
4. Autonomy and independence.
5. Education, training, and information.
6. Cooperation among cooperatives.
7. Concern for community.

Co-op Ends Statement

The Co-op’s purpose is to provide:

Healthy, high quality food and products as locally and sustainably produced as possible.

A thriving, ethical, environmentally conscious and cooperatively owned business.

Education that encourages informed choices about health, food, the environment and cooperatives.

An expanding presence within the community.

On the Cover:

Owners view a conceptual rendering of the Co-op expansion project at the Annual Meeting held at Borderlands Brewing Company in March.

Owners receive 10% off purchases of $25 or more

(Does not include special orders, gift cards, or classes)
Board Report
2019 Election Results

Food Conspiracy Co-op Elections Sub-Committee

191 total votes were cast during the month of March 2019.

Board of Directors Election Results

1. Meredith Keith-Chirch — 3 Year Term, 2019 – 2022
2. Mike Wahl — 3 Year Term, 2019 – 2022 (Tied 2nd)
2. Gontran Zepeda — 3 Year Term, 2019 – 2022 (Tied 2nd)
3. Fiore Iannacone — 2 Year Term, 2019 – 2021
4. Michael DeSantis — 1 Year Term, 2019 - 2020

Propositions

Bylaw 5.4: Allow the Board of Directors to obtain a quorum and vote remotely — Pass

Bylaw 4.2: Change the Ownership time requirement for Owners to be qualified to run for the Board of Directors — Does Not Pass

Cooperative Community Fund

The top three organizations, in order of highest vote count:

1. Living Streets Alliance
2. Native Seeds SEARCH
3. Tucson Cooperative Network

Register Round Ups

The top six organizations, in order of highest vote count:

1. Lend A Hand Senior Assistance
2. Tierra y Libertad
3. Certified Naturally Grown
4. Local First Arizona Foundation
5. The Hermitage Cat Shelter and Sanctuary
6. Tucson Cooperative Network

Co-op Colors

Look for the green and purple specially-marked deals.

coop™ deals

Great deals for everyone on local, regional and national brands

coop™ basics

Everyday low prices for everyone, on all your basic needs

Mrs. Green’s World

DISRUPTORS FOR GOOD
Doing Good Things for the Planet

WEEKLY PODCASTS | COMMUNITY EVENTS | PUBLIC SPEAKING | BLOGS
LISTEN at MrsGreensWorld.com AND CONNECT @mrsgreensworld
We held this year’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Borderlands Brewing Company on Saturday, March 2, 2019. Our total turnout was 243 Owners and guests with 38 Co-op Staff in attendance. This year we partnered with Playformance for the event and had 26 kids participate in the program.

As I reflect on what we accomplished with this year’s AGM, it is apparent that it was a resounding success for our Co-op. Not only did we achieve a great turnout with an extremely smooth operation, the AGM Sub-Committee (Kevin Hendricks, John Glennon and Michael DeSantis) also furthered the groundwork for planning and executing a successful and collaborative AGM for years to come. We were excited to share our plans for the future with introductions to our 5-Year Strategic Plan as well as our East Entrance Project artistic renderings. We are looking forward to further evolving our AGM as an informative and celebratory culmination event each year for the Owners of Food Conspiracy. As always, please attend a Board Meeting (4th Wednesday of each month at 6pm) for specific updates on the Co-op’s financials and progress toward the East Entrance Project and realizing our 5-Year Strategic Plan.

Congratulations to our Board President, Michael de Santis, on being awarded the inaugural Conspiracy Cactus Award for Leadership and Innovation. The Conspiracy Cactus Award is a new tradition for our annual meeting that will recognize a Board Member, Staff Member or Owner for contributing excellence to our Co-op.

I would like to extend a special THANK YOU to all of the Owners that attended the AGM, the Board of Directors, The Co-op Staff and Management Team, the Conspiracy Kitchen for the wonderful food, Borderlands Brewery for hosting and the great beer, Playformance for engaging the Co-op Kiddos, Grasslands Band, Tucsonics, VVC Design, Groundwork Promotions, Reproductions, Commotion Studios, and Handi-Dogs Inc.
Meet the Board Members Elected in 2019

Fiore Iannacone

I have been fortunate to serve as Board Member of Food Conspiracy Co-op for the past eight years, working cooperatively in a team environment. I am motivated by my desire to help others and to contribute to our community. My strengths, skills and experiences are a reflection of over 40 years in the real estate and restaurant businesses.

Our cooperative, almost 50 years old, is one of the oldest in the country and for many good reasons. I have been a customer since the beginning and although many things in our world have changed, our core Values and Mission remain the same. Our Values and Mission are the foundation of everything we do. In uncertain times, our Co-op provides certainty.

In September 2018, our Board Members reaffirmed our Values and Mission by approving the 5-Year Strategic Plan for priority projects and long term goals. I am proud of the work we have completed but we have much more to do.

These are exciting times for our Co-op. I encourage community collaboration and personally invite you to attend one of our board meetings. This is your Co-op and your input helps guide us all. We can govern together that which we own together.

Michael de Santis

Visiting Tucson in 1974, my first stop was Food Conspiracy Co-op. There, I found both great food and a vibrant hub of a diverse community. I moved to Tucson, joined the Co-op and developed lasting friendships there. Since those early days, the Co-op has faced challenges but always evolved and thrived. Our Mission has guided us and it has never been more relevant than it is today.

I have served on the Board of Directors for the last three years, two as President, and believe that being part of the Co-op means caring for our community. In families or in neighborhoods, we are in this together and there is no more universal expression of caring than sharing good food. That is what Food Conspiracy means to me. The last three years have only deepened my commitment to the Co-op and I am ready for its next chapter.

The Board has done great foundational work, creating a comprehensive 5-Year Strategic Plan, bringing on an exceptional General Manager and developing a vision for expansion that truly responds to our Owners’ needs. We laid a great foundation and I am glad to participate in the next round of work.

I am passionate about Food Conspiracy and its Mission. As a project manager, I know how to bring people together and guide our important decisions. I am a trained mediator with listening and communication skills. As a long-time small business owner, I understand business management.

I gained important organizational and communication skills managing community-based projects like the nature center in Prescott and a housing project in California. I also served as Program Coordinator with the Sacramento Tree Foundation, working on community building and group facilitation. I continue to learn every day from the people with whom I work.

Gontran Zepeda

Born and raised in Tucson, my connection to Food Conspiracy Co-op began only after my daughter was born and I needed a source of reliable food for her. Over time, my affection for our desert cooperative has grown, in large part thanks to the Staff. Our employees represent a high expression of equality - they labor not only for their wage but also for our community interest and shared equity.

The promise and the premise of our collective has drawn me to it, as an animal to water. The constant expression of our collective values and principles has been my greatest attraction to the Co-op and my attraction has grown as the organization widens in depth, scope and potential. To labor in service to our community is an honor and a privilege.

Beyond the joy of serving others, my motivation may be selfish. I sometimes experience anxiety about the practical and existential challenges we face as Tucsonans, Arizonans, Americans and Global Citizens. I find no better outlet to assuage this condition than to effect positive change in a local context.
It is my pleasure to offer my organizational and creative skills to the Co-op. I bring strong qualifications in the technical arena in digital work and programming which has benefitted the Co-op in the past.

In previous service to our cooperative, I have demonstrated competency in collaboration, compassion for others and achieving consensus objectives. It has been my experience that cooperative work is not so much an intellectual exercise as it is a visceral one and from this posture I have been able to participate effectively and with positive results. To serve again on the board, as I did once before, is an honor and a privilege.

Meredith Keith-Chirch

I believe in supporting small and local businesses so they continue to grow and thrive in our communities, which can be a challenge these days amidst larger stores that may charge less for their products. I am a health educator so I teach others how to find places like the Co-op where they can learn of products that are safe and healthy for them. When I moved to Tucson with my family, it was so important to me that we have access to Food Conspiracy that we only looked at homes within a two-mile radius of the store, as we are car-free and travel by foot or bicycle. I joined the Co-op within days of moving to Tucson and have shopped here weekly ever since.

I love the Co-op and appreciate the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors. I have excellent organizational skills and have a track record of dependability and a willingness to bring new ideas to the group. I also have a great deal of knowledge about Co-op products that will help support the Co-op’s value of promoting safe and organic merchandise.

I spent 10 years in the corporate world, working in Human Resources. I have also served on several different boards so I am familiar with how boards can work together to make decisions and provide support to one another and to the organization.

Mike Wahl

My wife Margaret and I moved to Tucson from Rochester, New York in 2011 for reasons of her health. She needed to live in a hot, dry place and Tucson was ideal. We loved the Sonoran Desert environment and richness of Tucson’s culture. I had previously taught in the Peace Corps and had just retired from the U.S. Postal Service which fostered an interest in the famous Mondragon cooperatives of Spain. There was a lot of workplace strife and authoritarian bullying at the Post Office and I viewed cooperatives as a progressive, egalitarian and democratic alternative to what I had experienced.

I am eager to promote Food Conspiracy and cooperatives in general to achieve their Goals, Mission, and Values. I believe that practicing workplace democracy has a benign, positive influence on all of society. I am acquainted with the history and literature on co-ops, and have run a small, service-oriented business. My wife and I grow a large garden, free of pesticides and chemicals.

I am currently serving as Secretary of Food Conspiracy’s Board Organization Committee, learning the associated skills. I was Chair of a Global Issues Project from 1981-1983. At the U.S. Postal Service I was active on Employee Involvement Teams and a member of the union. I also played guitar in a musical group in the 1970s and 80s.
Zero Waste Blog
In a New Website Feature, a Co-op Employee Shares His Thoughts on Reducing Waste

Nick Super, Front End Employee

In the past few years, it seems we have seen more news than ever before on the growing plastic problem. Miles-wide plastic islands in the oceans, birds, fish and animals found dead on beaches with their stomachs full of plastic and, most recently, the movement banning plastic straws. I thought I was doing my part to reduce this waste but decided to take a deeper look at what I was doing and how I can do more. I was thinking about this at the end of the year and thought there was no better way to challenge myself than with a New Year’s resolution...or, better yet, intention.

50% of the plastic we use, we use just once and throw away. The average American throws away approximately 185 pounds of plastic every year.

“It is not always easy. It takes practice and diligence to recycle, reduce and reuse.”

It seems a lot of people do not think they can make a difference. They throw their recycling in the blue container and roll it out to the curb once a week and they are done. They have done their part. But there is a lot more to it. As part of this journey, I am writing a blog with the Co-op to share some of the changes I am making along with some tips and info I pick up along the way. I hope in doing this, you also look closer at your buying and recycling habits and ask yourself if you are doing your best for the Earth. Let us all be better Earth protectors together!

Food Conspiracy sells many reusable items, like metal straws that you can easily keep in your bag or backpack. There are also reusable flasks and cups for sale. Ask Co-op Staff to show you!

You can follow Nick’s blog on the Food Conspiracy website at http://www.foodconspiracy.coop/category/zero-waste/ or on the Food Conspiracy Facebook page.

Nick Super has been working at Food Conspiracy Co-op for seven years. He regularly attends Board Meetings, collaborates with coworkers on store promotions and was key in organizing the activities of the Annual Meeting held in March. Nick was born and raised in New Jersey then lived in Southern California before moving to Arizona 20 years ago. He enjoys movies and live theater, especially the Broadway musical. His favorite musical? Phantom of the Opera...or Wicked...or A Chorus Line. Nick finds it hard to choose. His favorite foods are pizza and lasagna...anything Italian really.
The Conspiracy Way
Andrea Buttrick,
Front End Team Lead

“One of the most interesting things about working the Front End,” says Andrea Buttrick, “is being a sort of 4th Avenue concierge.” Not only does Andrea greet and welcome customers to the Co-op, she fields questions from Tucson visitors and newcomers. Questions range from politically-motivated inquiries about what the Co-op sells to what the best district restaurants are and which hiking trails to try. People are also curious how downtown development is affecting the store. Andrea is well-positioned to help. She has lived and worked within a two-mile bike ride of downtown since moving to Tucson and becoming a Co-op Owner in 2002. She worked for a cabinet building shop across the street from Tucson High, was a mechanic at nearby Ordinary Bike Shop on 7th Street, and taught at a local non-profit children’s center using her university degree in Human Development and Social Relations.

Andrea is collaborating with Co-op Administrative Staff, Management and Board Members on the development of a new policy to address harassment, recognizing that the 4th Avenue area is a unique, highly-charged and extremely varied environment. “But what began as a simple process for developing a response to harassment,” Andrea says, “became a philosophical and cultural shift at the store focused on vibrant and cared-for Staff that cultivate respectful and reciprocal relationships...the new policy is called The Conspiracy Way”. Focus groups were held with Staff and a new camaraderie has developed. Andrea says, “If a situation now arises, we know the Co-op has our back, we have each others’ backs, and we trust each others’ intuition. We empower each other.”

When you see Andrea in the store, ask her about the latest in Tucson nightlife. She manages a band led by her husband and daughter called Little Cloud, about to release its first CD. Follow them on Facebook to learn about the CD release party scheduled in May at Sky Bar.

How to Reuse Bulk Containers at the Co-op

To reduce purchase of single use packaging, the Co-op has many containers for sale that you can reuse for bulk goods. But you can bring any container you wish from home, like a food tin, glass jar, or plastic bottle. Andrea and a Co-op Owner show us how.

1. Before shopping, bring your containers to the register.

2. The cashier weighs each container.

3. The weight of the container is written on the bottom. Now you can shop and fill the container. When you check out, the weight of the container is deducted from the total weight and you pay only for the contents.
Product Spotlight
Arizona Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar

Natalie McGee, Owner of Arizona Cactus Ranch with Forward by Jacob Cooper, Co-op Grocery Buyer

Natalie McGee leads a fascinating and colorful life. She built two amazing careers. The first, as a Clinical Social Worker in Los Angeles focusing on difficult cases of abuse. The second, as passionate promoter of one of the healthiest natural products our Sonoran desert provides: prickly pear.

When I became buyer at the Co-op, we were already selling Arizona Cactus Ranch products and I began learning all that I could about them. When I met Natalie, I found her an engaging and very eager teacher. She is a genuine person and truly believes in the RAW power of prickly pear and its benefits to our health. That is why she does not add sugar or anything to her prickly pear products, they are the way nature intended them to be. Natalie is a person who truly cares about her product and her customers, driven by her deep concern for our well-being.

In this feature, Natalie shares a bit of her inspirational story in her own words and educates us on what she has learned about including prickly pear in our daily diet.

The product I manufacturer is 100% pure CONCENTRATED Prickly Pear Nectar made without added sugar, water, chemicals or preservatives. It has wonderful health benefits when made correctly and when taking 1 to 3 teaspoons a day, can produce significant benefits:

**Lower blood sugar**, reduced 55 to 65% in two weeks if you are diabetic. If you are not a diabetic then it will help prevent you from becoming one. Your sugar will stop fluctuating and will become stable as it begins to reduce each day. If you are on insulin, your necessary insulin amounts will drop by one half in two weeks as well. Each day, as you read your sugar level, it will show that you need a little less insulin. You will experience less cravings as it balances your sugar. Most diabetics cheat as the cravings are so strong. This product helps reduce those cravings and gives the diabetic a little cheat room. I tell the diabetics not to beat themselves up for cheating and let the prickly pear help them and many of the diabetics try harder as a result.

**Balanced blood pressure** in two weeks. If it is low, it will go up. If it is high, it will go down. If it is just right, it will remain stable.

**Reduced cholesterol**. Bad cholesterol may reduce 20 to 40% in two weeks while increasing your good cholesterol.

**Balanced electrolytes**. Prickly pear is full of magnesium, potassium and all the minerals required to balance your electrolytes and keep your heart safe. I can light a light bulb with Arizona Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar because it contains so many minerals! See the demonstration in a video interview I did for Doc Talk Radio with Dr. Anne Borik located in the Blog/Press section on our website www.arizonacactusranch.com.

**Immune system boost**. A doctor at the University of Arizona Oncology Department took a dish of ovarian, bladder and cervical cancer cells and put Arizona Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar into the dish and it killed the papillomavirus (hpv) cancer cells in three days. Then they did animal studies and got the same results. Now they plan to do human studies. You can read about the study at www.arizonacactusranch.com in the Benefits and Research section under the title “Immune System”.

**Reduced fatty liver and weight loss**. You can never lose weight with a fatty liver but prickly pear assist in healing a fatty liver and in lowering weight along with it. Find out more at https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23014486.

**Reduced inflammation** thereby reducing the swelling and associated pain. The number one cause of inflammation is SUGAR according to Stanford University and unfortunately, the food industry puts sugar in most of its commercially prepared products.

I could go on and on about the benefits of Arizona Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar, but one of the best ways to share our knowledge of the product is through the people who take it.

Which brings me to how I got into this business. In the past, I was a Psychiatric Social Worker in Los Angeles. While working in child welfare, Charles Manson was one of my clients. He was easy, compared to the uphill battle I faced gaining recognition for the struggles of the deaf population. In the 1970s, I helped get sign language legalized, as it used to be against the law to use sign language except in state schools. In the 1980s, I helped get the ADA passed for those with physical challenges. When my projects in California were finished, I came home to Arizona. I was between social work jobs and a bit board.

In 1991, Green Valley hosted a three-day craft fair. I decided to attend and introduce the winter visitors to prickly pear jelly, something I had grown up on. I did not know at the time that prickly pear had health benefits.
The craft fair ended and my phone began ringing off the hook. The Green Valley snowbirds wanted me to make more prickly pear product for them. They told me that their sugar levels, blood pressure, pain levels etc. were down and they believed it was due to the prickly pear. At first, I did not think their improved health had anything to do with me or the prickly pear. Then I did some research and found they were right!

I took the jelly to doctors at the University of Arizona who were doing research in diabetes and was told, “This is much better than these people think.” Some people wanted me to keep it quiet but I said, “No, this is for everyone.” I asked my buyers how they wanted me to make the prickly pear and they told me not to put anything in it - just keep it pure.

25 years later, my phone still rings off the hook with calls from snowbirds and others across the country who have heard about the product. I have never had to advertise. My business has grown through word of mouth. My mission is to tell everyone that this is here. The Native Americans have been buying my products for years to reduce their diabetes and now the aboriginal people in Australia want to me help them too.

An Aboriginal artist invited me to Australia and I met with many of the Aborigines in Alice Spring. I learned that they live in communities without stoves or refrigerators. The challenge is to make a product that does not require refrigeration. So I am working on a product called a “Travel Bar” that will be light in weight for shipping, does not require refrigeration, is economical and - most of all - provides the health benefits with no additives.

Food Conspiracy Co-op sells many of the products made by Arizona Cactus Ranch, including Prickly Pear Nectar (12 oz.), Prickly Pear Jam (4 oz.) and the popular Hangover Terminator (4 oz.). Ask Co-op Staff to help you find the products in the store. You can follow Arizona Cactus Ranch on Facebook or Twitter.

The views and information presented in this article are those of Natalie McGee and Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar. They do not represent medical claims made by Food Conspiracy Co-op or its employees. The data presented is for informational purposes and does not constitute medical or professional advice.

Cactus Honey Sherbert

Summer is coming and before we know it, we will hit triple digits. Cool down with this delicious sherbert!

3 medium very ripe peaches
1/2 cup honey
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
5 tbsp lemon juice
1/4 cup cold water
1/2 cup whipping cream
2 1/2 cup Arizona Cactus Ranch Prickly Pear Nectar

Plunge peaches into pot of boiling water for one minute. Transfer to bowl of cold water, slip off skins and slice. Sprinkle gelatin over water in small bowl. Combine 1 cup prickly pear nectar with peach slices in medium saucepan and simmer 5 minutes. Strain off 1 cup of liquid and cook this with honey until it dissolves. Add gelatin and lemon juice to honey mixture and stir. Blend peaches and rest of nectar. Combine with gelatin/honey and cream if you have ice-cream maker. Chill and pour into ice-cream maker. If no ice-cream maker, freeze mixture without cream until nearly hard. Break up and beat with electric mixer. Beat cream until stiff and fold in. Refreeze and enjoy!

Natalie McGee was born in Tucson, the granddaughter of the man who homesteaded the area west of Green Valley in the 1800s. She moved to Hollywood as a child when her father took a job with Technicolor Corp., the company that provided color for the movies. Natalie attended Hollywood High in the 1950s alongside some of the entertainment industry’s most notable personalities. She took a sign language class in school and by the time she graduated she was fluent and knew she wanted to be an advocate for the empowerment of the deaf. She earned a degree in social work and championed tirelessly for deaf rights throughout her professional career. When she retired from her social work in L.A., she returned to her home in Tucson and began an unexpected new career producing and selling prickly pear nectar. The Arizona Cactus Ranch brand has grown steadily to distribute nationally and will soon distribute worldwide.
Downtown Links
From a Co-op Board Member’s Perspective

Fiore Iannacone, Board Member

Project Overview (from the Downtown Links website)

The Downtown Links project is part of the long-range Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) plan, approved by Pima County voters in May 2006. All projects in the $2.1 billion RTA plan are funded by a voter-approved ½ cent transportation sales tax; $76 million in RTA funds is dedicated to the Downtown Links project. The City of Tucson is the project manager.

The Downtown Links project is a 30 mph, four-lane road north of the Union Pacific railroad tracks that will connect Barraza-Aviation Parkway to I-10. The project upgrades critical infrastructure, specifically drainage systems, which will remove a large portion of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods from the 100-year flood plain. When complete, Downtown Links will offer improved access and connections, including an underpass and an overpass, for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Additionally, the project will include new and safer railroad crossings, multi-use paths, improved sidewalks and bike lanes, and public art.

Project Impact on Food Conspiracy Co-op

Our Co-op is strategically located in the heart of the 4th Avenue Historic District, just minutes from Downtown. We benefit from our mid line location along the Tucson Streetcar route, our proximity to the Downtown Links transportation project, and pro development conditions included in the Downtown Area Infill Incentive District.

The Downtown Links project, as its name implies, will link the southeast quadrant of Tucson with the northwest quadrant of Tucson. The Aviation Parkway currently terminates at Broadway downtown. When completed, Aviation Parkway will weave its way through northern portions of Downtown, ultimately connecting with I-10 near the St. Mary’s exit.

This project has been in the making for over 30 years and many of our Co-op Owners have been asking when it is going to happen. As we understand it now, the main project is slated to begin construction in Fall of this year with completion two years down the road. Phase 1 has already been completed along 7th Street in front of our Hoff Building property which included drainage improvements, striping and paving. The 4th Avenue underpass, north 4th Avenue, north 5th Avenue and north 6th Avenue will all remain open during construction which means limited disruption and easier access to the store if you are commuting from other parts of town.

This project will not only bring more customers to our Co-op, which bodes well for sales, but will also further support our expansion plans and the decision to remain at our present location.

You can learn more about the Downtown Links project at http://www.downtownlinks.info. The website contains information on road alignments, construction notices, maps, renderings and project history. Project updates are also posted on the City of Tucson’s Facebook page and Twitter account.

Fiore Iannacone has been shopping at Food Conspiracy from the beginning in 1971 and has been a Board Member for eight years. He currently assists on the Finance Committee, Board Development Committee and subcommittee on Organizational Expansion. Fiore's professional experience includes working in the Real Estate industry for over 40 years, both for government and in the private sector. He and his family have also developed ten restaurants, seven of which were located Downtown. He has been married for 45 years and has two children and seven grandchildren. Fiore enjoys playing racquetball and likes to hike with his dog Mocki.
In February, Food Conspiracy participated in the 6th annual SAVOR Southern Arizona Food & Wine Festival held at the Tucson Botanical Gardens (top). In March, our new advertisement began running on Tucson streetcar number 106 (bottom). It will run for three months. The ad raises awareness of our student discount page at foodconspiracy.coop/students. We want our local students to feel welcome and to know that there is a safe place on 4th Avenue that offers healthy food alternatives, like organic and vegan meals, snacks, drinks, supplements and wellness products. Take a ride on the streetcar and check it out!

Not finding what you need? Special orders are easy!

1. Call or visit the store to place your special order (min. 48 hrs. in advance).
2. Owners receive 20% off regular price; non-Owners 10% (excludes sale items).
3. Grocery items by the case, wellness items minimum three each.

Bring your own bag to the Co-op and save!

Single use paper bags cost 10 cents.
Choose from a colorful selection of reusable bags in the Co-op's merchandise area.

BUSINESS ALLY
CERTIFIED NATURALLY GROWN
2019
Greetings Food Conspiracy gardeners and yet to be gardeners!

Pima County Seed Library will kick off this year’s One Seed Pima County project at Tucson’s Earth Day celebration. This year we have chosen the glorious Russian Mammoth Sunflower as our special seed. One Seed Pima County is a program of Pima County Public Library’s Seed Library. It provides each of our community gardeners an opportunity to share the experience of planting, growing, harvesting and appreciating one specially-chosen regional crop together. Upon harvesting, gardeners are encouraged to drop off a portion of their gathered seeds to share with other community members. These will become part of the Seed Library’s living seed collection for you and others to use.

The beautiful sunshiny sunflower has its roots right here in the southwestern United States. According to the National Sunflower Association:

The story of sunflower (Helianthus Annuus) is indeed amazing. The wild sunflower is native to North America but commercialization of the plant took place in Russia. It was the American Indian who first domesticated the plant into a single headed plant with a variety of seed colors including black, white, red, and black/white striped. Remains of sunflower seeds found in archaeological digs in North America date them as nearly 3,000 years old.

Sunflower was a common crop among Native American tribes throughout North America. Evidence suggests that the plant was cultivated by tribes in present-day Arizona and New Mexico. Some archaeologists suggest that the sunflower may have been domesticated before corn.

The nutrient-dense sunflower has been used in many ways by the indigenous communities across North America. Seed was ground or pounded into flour for cakes, mush, or bread. Some tribes mixed the meal with other vegetables such as beans, squash, and corn. The seed was also cracked and eaten for a snack. There are references of squeezing the oil from the seeds and using the oil in making bread.

Non-food uses include purple dye for textiles, body painting and other decorations. Parts of the plant were used medicinally to treat snakebite or to make body ointments. The oil of the seed was used on the skin and hair. The dried stalk was used as a building material. The plant and the seeds were widely used in ceremonies. (Schneiter, No. 35, 1997)

Not only does this gorgeously regal plant bear delicious edible seeds, these seeds are indeed healthy. “They often sit on the shelf overlooked because of the hoards of positive press that almonds and walnuts get...sunflower seeds are also full of important vitamins and minerals—copper, vitamin E, selenium, magnesium, and zinc. The presence and combination of so many of these nutrients can be hard to come by in common foods. Sunflower seeds have about 3 grams of fiber and 5 grams of protein in an ounce of kernels. The best part is that sunflower seeds, while high in total fat (about 14 grams), contain mostly polyunsaturated fat, which researchers believe is the best type of fat to combat diabetes.” (Ramsay, A)

The bird and bee-attracting sunflowers are easy to grow in our desert climate as they need lots of sun. Sow seeds about 1-2 inches deep, 1-2 feet apart. Water regularly and abundantly and mulch to conserve moisture. It’s best to plant the seeds directly into the ground after the danger of frost—ideally when the soil...
temperature has reached 55 to 60 degrees, but I planted some seeds in early February, hoping for growth before seasonal guests arrived. I covered them faithfully during our beautiful snow and freezing weather and now they are over 14 inches high and doing well. I plan to plant more this month to enjoy continuous blooms well into summer and after.

A Russian mammoth sunflower is visually stunning not just for its size (they get to be about 8-10 feet and their head diameter can be over 12 inches), but because of its bright, happy color and large, umbrella-like leaves. The stalks are a good 3-4 inches in diameter when the soil is good and have to be cut down at the end of the year.

It is amazing how many good seeds I get from my sunflowers (in fact, they can produce over one thousand seeds per head!) and here’s a fun fact about the flower before it produces seeds: sunflowers are heliophilic, meaning they have motor cells in the head of the flower, which moves the head so it faces the sun as it moves east to west through the sky, returning to face the east at night, ready to greet the morning sun.

We hope that individual gardening friends as well as local organizations will join us in planting this amazing crop. You can pick up your Black Russian Sunflower seeds at any Pima County Seed Library location from now until they are all gone.

References:


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**Pasta with Sunflower Kernels**

Sunflower kernels can be substituted for pricier pine nuts in pesto to make a simple and delicious warm weather pasta.

8 ounces pasta
3 parsley sprigs, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/4 cup sunflower or olive oil
1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper
2/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 cup roasted sunflower kernels

Cook pasta according to package directions and drain. In a small skillet, heat parsley, garlic and lemon peel in oil one minute. Add salt and pepper. Pour over pasta; add Parmesan cheese (and any other garnish: fresh tomatoes, olives, etc.) and sunflower kernels. Toss lightly.

Visit [www.library.pima.gov/seed-library/](http://www.library.pima.gov/seed-library/) for further information. Remember that Library cardholders can check out up to 10 packets of seeds per month at Pima County Public Library.

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Kara Mills has lived in the downtown Tucson area for over 25 years and has been an Owner of the Food Conspiracy Co-op for most of that time. She is currently a librarian at Pima County Public Library’s Joyner Green Valley Library and is very happy to be on the PCPL Seed Library team. Her favorite past time is travel and gardening—not an easy endeavor with all of the area’s caliche—and therefore is extremely grateful for all the garden and organic food resources in our community, especially the Co-op. Before becoming a librarian, Kara was a Montessori teacher, worked for The Primavera Foundation, and The Nature Conservancy. She is also a certified yoga instructor and teaches a weekly yoga class.
Things are busier than ever in the Conspiracy Kitchen! The weather is getting warmer and we are getting spring vegetables. We hope you have had a chance to peruse the store’s new refrigerated display cases. We are especially excited about the new cheese case, so large and full of new products. Whether you are making the ultimate grilled cheese sandwich or searching for the proper accompaniment for your next wine tasting, the choices are plentiful. Choose from the bins of small cheese samples to try a variety of types and flavors!

The new Grab & Go case is stocked with a large variety of prepared foods for those needing a hand with meal planning or simply stopping in for something healthy and delicious on the way home from school or the office. Take home a mason jar of Conspiracy Soup to give you a head start on dinner. Or choose one of the meal kits that have the ingredients all cut and prepped for you. Lunch is covered with a large selection of delicious sandwiches. Invited for dinner and don’t know what to bring? How about a prepared side dish or refreshing dessert along with a chilled bottle of wine?

The new refrigerated cheese and grab-and-go cases provide more prepared food options than ever before.

A new selection of soups is sold in reusable mason jars.

Sandwiches, pasta dishes, salads, sushi, and fruit cups are all offered in an abundant selection for those on the go.
Local is Where the Heart is
Jacob Cooper,
Local Buyer/Grocery Buyer

When it comes to supporting the local economy, Jacob Cooper has your best interest at heart. When Jacob joined the Co-op family two and a half years ago he had no experience in the food industry but his passion for the Tucson community and high energy approach has lifted him to an important role on the team. His background includes community outreach, event coordination and social media work for two local non-profit organizations: Beyond Tucson and Ironwood Tree Experience, both dedicated to promoting good health through exercise and physical activity.

Jacob’s outreach experience has served him well in his position as Buyer where he focuses almost exclusively on expanding local accounts and securing promotions with local producers. He showcases a local product in the store’s end cap displays every day and arranges product tastings and demonstrations for the store so consumers have the opportunity to taste products and meet the producers face-to-face.

While “local” is defined by standard Co-op terms as coming from within a 200-mile radius, Jacob says he expands that to include all of Arizona depending on product type. For example, he considers his accounts with Huppybar Snack Bars from Flagstaff and High Desert Hot Sauce from Sedona (developed by a former Food Conspiracy employee) as local.

Jacob was recently elected by his coworkers to be the Staff Representative for 2019, the position Louie Benavidez held in 2018. The next time you see Jacob, ask him about the store’s new local products or about his cactus collection – he is an avid collector and ensures that the small cactus plants offered for sale in the store are the very best of the crop!
Chello Chavez says her goal is to mosaic the world. And she is well on her way! About 15 years ago, Chello left her stressful corporate job to seek a better work-life balance. With more free time on her hands, she decided to give mosaics a try after watching a program about them on television. But at that time, there were no classes offered in the Tucson area and few resources on the internet. Using books that she could find, Chello became self taught, implementing simple tools that her husband and friends gave her.

“My goal is to mosaic the world...and I need help!”

Chello and her husband, Todd Rothrock, own and operate the renovated artist warehouse space at the northeast corner of 9th Street and 3rd Avenue. Todd’s studio, Iron Horse Fabricators, a metalworking shop, occupies the space next to Chello’s mosaics workshop. He has produced work for the 4th Avenue Merchants Association, including the metal trash receptacles lining the Avenue and some metal artwork. He also made the Co-op’s A-frame sign positioned on the sidewalk in front of the store’s main entrance.

Chello began creating mosaics with ceramics, collecting scrap tiles from area stores, but found that manufactured ceramic tiles cover a very limited color palette and are difficult to cut. So she began working with clay talavera tiles made in Tucson and, she says, it changed everything. “Suddenly, I had a wider color palette to work with and (with the assistance of an easy-to-use diamond ring saw) I had greater control in cutting the tiles. My mosaic skills quickly jumped to the next level.” Recently, Chello began combining the talavera tile with handcrafted Smalti glass, a one-of-a-kind material manufactured in Italy from a centuries-old tradition. The glass gives the mosaics an even more brilliant color, especially when placed outside in the sunlight.

Workshops are held in the studio to teach others how to make mosaics but there are no artistic or trade secrets held. Chello shares everything – technique, tools, ideas. “It doesn’t matter,” she says “because if you have six people make the same mosaic, they will all look different.” Her students come with a wide range of capabilities, from those with no artistic background to those who have worked in every kind of art and craft. She also accepts private commissions. “The nice thing about commissioned pieces,” Chello admits, “is that I do things I normally wouldn’t do. I’ve made some interesting pieces, from five-foot Gila monsters to stunning designs for outdoor fireplaces and outdoor living spaces. Then when the final product is installed, I feel honored to be a part of the client’s home.”

Chello’s privately-commissioned work reflects the taste of the client and includes a wide range of subjects.

Since she has started, Chello’s business has grown largely by word of mouth and a mosaics community has developed, each artist having a unique style or specialty. When prospective clients come to Chello with a request that lies outside of her area of expertise, she can recommend another artist in town that can do the job.

The combined studio owned by Chello and Todd is an active cultural center for the neighborhood. Several events are scheduled throughout the year, including the studio’s big annual show “Tales from the Trash” in which artists that create pieces using scavenged, second hand materials are invited to show and sell their work. Additional activity will come soon when a new coffee shop occupies the building’s corner space, construction is currently underway.

Additional information about the mosaics studio may be found at https://www.chellochavez.com/. Follow Gone 2 Pieces and Iron Horse Fabricators on Facebook to stay up-to-date on current activities and events.
Annual Meeting 2019
Yes, We’re Open!
CONSPIRACY NEWS

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