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# cedar falls times

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

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CEDAR FALLS, IOWA

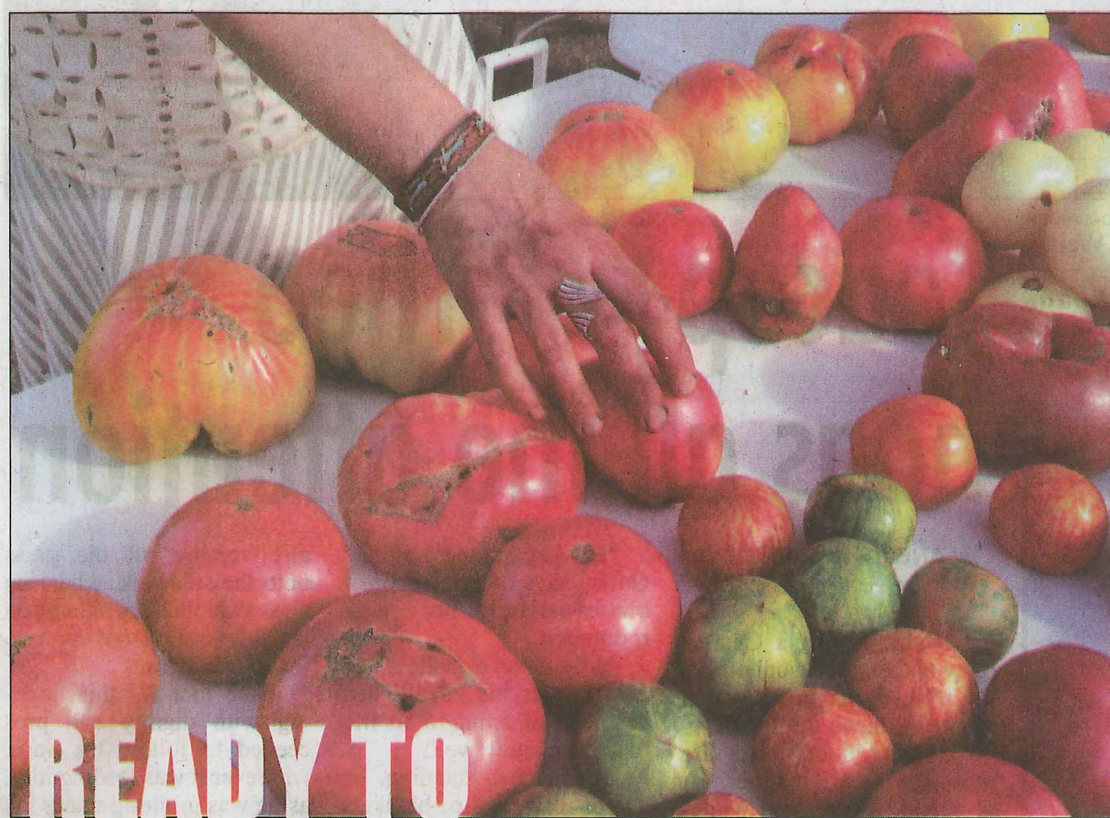
Join us for a  
**Birthday Party**  
to celebrate  
100 years of compassionate care.

**Sunday,  
September 7**  
Noon to 3:00 p.m.

Brief Program at 12:30 p.m.  
Enjoy free entertainment, food, kids' activities.

Sartori Memorial Hospital  
Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

CELEBRATING  
100  
YEARS  
1914-2014



## READY TO SPROUT

FILE PHOTO

Lindsay Kaiser of Kaiser Farms in Waverly sells both at the downtown farmers market and on College Hill. Her produce will also be exhibited at the co-op.

### Cedar Falls food co-op launches membership drive

by TRAVIS BEAN

news1@waverlynewspapers.com

If you want fresh-cut, quality bison meat, locally grown apples, free-range eggs or artisan soaps, you can find it in Cedar Falls.

But how would you like to find it all in one place?

Well, within two years, you might be able to, thanks to the Cedar Falls Food Co-op. The cooperative, which was set in motion in 2012 when Roots Market at 2021 Main St. closed,

is on track to set up shop soon, possibly in the downtown area.

Tom Wickersham, a board member of the co-op, came up with the idea two years ago over coffee with friends. He had been a member of a food co-op in California, and thought Cedar Falls seemed like a prime candidate.

A co-op, which is short for cooperative, is a non-profit entity owned, managed and democratically controlled by local stakeholders who utilize the

business.

The cooperative movement's ideological roots can be traced back to England, Scotland and Ireland in 1795, when profit-sharing arrangements between workers and owners were established. As the co-op continued to develop worldwide, modern consumer cooperatives became extremely popular in the U.S., with 10,000 food co-ops established between 1969 and 1979. Today, food co-ops are particularly popular in Midwest small towns, including Dubuque, Decorah, Iowa City and Waterloo.

See CO-OP, A8



CAROL LILLY

“I think a market would definitely thrive in the downtown area.”

■ 20% of sales come from local farmers, 38% of revenue is spent locally.



JULIE HALEVAN

“Becoming a member of the co-op is becoming an owner of the co-op. You'll have a say in the direction we take.”

■ Food co-ops recycle 96% of their cardboard, 81% plastics, and 74% of food waste.



TOM WICKERSHAM

“There aren't really a lot of producers (locally), and if they had a reliable system that they could sell their goods year around, that would help support them.”

■ For every \$1,000 spent at a food co-op, \$1,604 in economic activity is generated in the local economy.



COURTESY PHOTO

A membership kick off party was held on Wednesday. Face painting was one of the draws for the kids.

## Food co-op on its way to Cedar Falls

CONTINUED FROM A1

Co-ops can exist in many forms, from housing cooperatives to movie theater cooperatives, but Cedar Falls' new business would be a grocery store, where you could find Blueridge Orchard apples or La Calle salsa or Timber Ridge Bison meat all in one spot.

Wickersham said that, while a local food co-op with fresh options would encourage healthier living, the underlying goal is to encourage local business growth.

“There aren't really a lot of producers (locally), and if they had a reliable system that they could sell their goods year around, that would help support them,” he said.

According to Stronger Together, an initiative promoting cooperatives, cooperatives are more in touch with local farmers than conventional grocery stores — on average, conventional grocers on average work with 65 farmers that make up 6 percent of sales, while co-ops work with 157 farmers that make up 20 percent of sales.

Local co-ops also offer much more organic food options — 82 percent of foods sold at cooperatives are organic and make up 82 percent of sales, compared to just 12 percent commercially sold for 2 percent of sales.

Perhaps the most promising economic

statistic is a co-op's impact on the community as a whole. For every \$1,000 spent at a food co-op, \$1,604 in economic activity is generated in the local economy — \$239 more than if customers had spent \$1,000 at a conventional grocer.

Co-ops on average offer more to their employees, paying them at least \$1 more an hour and providing more benefits and health insurance. Co-ops also have higher recycling rates, recycling 81 percent of plastics as opposed to commercial grocers at 29 percent, and recycling 74 percent of food waste as opposed to 36 percent.

Several Cedar Falls Food Co-Op board members held a launch party over the weekend to promote membership. The event provided a glimpse of the wonders local food can create, such as pumpkin empanadas, tres leches cake and pineapple salsita from La Calle, seasonal coffee beans from Sidecar Coffee Roasters and pesticide-free produce from Kaiser Farm in Waverly.

Anybody wishing to become a stakeholder can download a form at <http://www.cedar-fallsfoodcoop.org/>. Within a couple weeks, people will be able to sign up electronically.

The goal is to secure 1,000 members in the next two years, and Wickersham said the event showed a lot of promise in reaching

that number.

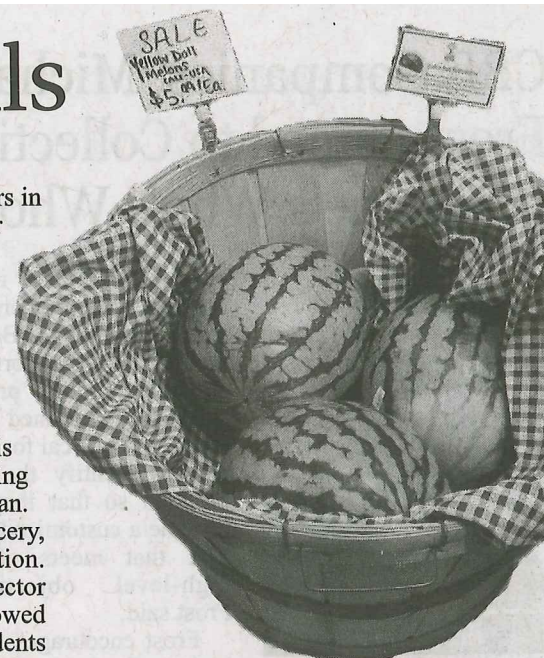
“Several people signed up as members in a more supportive way,” he said. “For example, we had both a husband and a wife each get their own membership. That's not typical. You sign up with a household membership. This is a way of saying, ‘We really support this effort and we want to get things going.’”

While no plans are set for a location, Wickersham said the co-op's next step is hiring a company that specializes in starting up cooperatives and developing a site plan.

Now that Main Street is without a grocery, downtown could be the prime location. Community Main Street Executive Director Carol Lilly said a market analysis showed that the top downtown concern for residents was securing a grocery store on Main. Also, based on the walkability and bikeability of the area, she said a local grocery would be very welcome.

“I think a market would definitely thrive in the downtown area,” she said.

On top of encouraging local growth, opening a convenient avenue to healthy, organic options would fit in with the city's healthy lifestyle theme, Wickersham said. With various running and biking groups and shops on Main, along with the Blue Zone



project making its stamp of approval at businesses throughout the city, a local co-op would further promote healthy living.

“We want to encourage, support and nurture that,” he said. “Being a Blue Zone community means a lot of things. We think that providing a grocery store that doesn't just have a Blue Zone aisle, but the entire store is built on the Blue Zone principle would be great for Cedar Falls.”