MARSH RIVER COOPERATIVE
5 VETERANS HWY,BROOKS ME 04921
(207) 722-3053 WWW.MARSHRIVERCOOP.ORG AND ON FACEBOOK

MARSH RIVER CO-OP

100% Independent since 2014

2026

Fiscal year 2025-2026

THE MISSION OF THE MARSH RIVER COOPERATIVE is to foster our local community and economy by offering affordable high quality, and locally produced food and goods in a welcoming space that strengthens our community social fabric.

2014 MARSH RIVER CO-OP 2026

ANNUAL MEETING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH
4:30 PM – 6:30ISH
Potluck Prior To The Presentation

AGENDA

4:30pm Potluck
5:15pm - 5:30pm Opening Statements
5:30 - 6:00pm Manager Presentation
6:00 - 6:30 Open Forum & Slate

MESSAGE FROM YOUR BOARD

State of the Co-op 2026

This has been a year of positive growth, and it's been wonderful to see so many familiar faces, along with new and returning customers. Word is getting around, and more people are discovering us. The feedback has been very encouraging. People love the store, the friendly atmosphere, and the "good vibes" they feel when they walk through the door. We've made improvements in how we use our space, keeping the shelves stocked, adding new products, improving cleanliness and craft organization, and putting up beautiful new signs. Thank you to the volunteers who add so much with their unique talents, input and hard work. It does not go unnoticed. We've also had a great season of activities. The Fourth of July float was a big hit, and Music on the Porch tops the list. These are all things we can feel good about, and we appreciate everyone who has helped make them happen.

Of course, it hasn't all been easy. We've dealt with recurring freezer problems, infrastructure and systems issues, and unexpected expenses that have put a strain on our finances. We've also had to put the bathroom project on hold because of some unforeseen complications. And, as always, we could use more help. As the Co-op grows, so does the work involved in keeping things running smoothly. Whether it's volunteering in the store, helping with events, or simply telling others about us, every little bit makes a difference. Despite the challenges, we have a lot to be thankful for and plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the future. Thank you for being part of the Marsh River Co-op, for supporting what we do, and for helping us keep this special community resource growing and thriving here in Brooks. We look forward to another year of working together!

A few of the highlights, happenings and achievements of the last year

In the community-

- **4th of July Celebration** - With a parade float and popcorn on the porch
- **Music on the Porch** - With a series of wonderful musicians
- **Plant Swap** - The plant swap is a great way to start the planting season and meet some new folks.
- **Art Shows curated by the Co-op** -Showcasing in the seating/gathering area, the talent of our local artists
- **Volunteer Group is active with ideas and projects!** -

Our in-store volunteer group has been meeting regularly to come up with new ideas and help overcome obstacles that we might encounter

In-store –

- **Aggressive Re-imagining of the floor layout –** In the last two years (guided by our board, membership and customers) we have made significant changes in our store layout. This included moving our register to where it was when it was a hardware store (thanks to the team that made it happen) as well as moving multiple coolers and shelves. We appreciate everyone's feedback. Some things worked, with some things we ran up against some challenges or didn't work, but overall we think it came together quite well. There is always more in the works to improve the way things are laid out here, and your feedback is always welcome!
- **Inventory Stability** - We spend a significant amount of time researching new sources of goods and have made a concerted effort to increase inventory on hand (though this does dip in winter) and have worked diligently to improve our on stock rates despite all the disruptions and supply chain issues in the last few years. This has definitely been easier some days than others as products either are no longer available or have additional requirements, but if a member is looking for an item we'll make every reasonable effort to make it happen.
- **New Road Sign** - It's been 12 years since we opened our doors here in the small town of Brooks and something that hasn't changed much over the years is that every few weeks we get comments from folks that they "didn't even know we were here". We love being off the beaten path a bit but it does make it a bit challenging for us in regards to foot traffic. This year. with the help of volunteers, we managed to build a new street sign facing Route 7 (just in time for Route 7 to be closed). There is still more work to do to make us more visible but it's a great step in the right direction. We do want to take a moment to acknowledge all the hard work of those that created our original signage.

We are where we are today through a lot of donated time and extraordinary effort on the part of these among others –

Our Volunteers who continue to staff the co-op a good third of the time, and those who, for years have been doing the pickups from numerous vendors, in-store stocking, repack of bulk items, work on the facilities, cleaning and so much more. And then there are those of us who, make up your volunteer board (many of whom do many of the above tasks as well), who help manage the business side of the co-op, as well as guide and grow the co-op as an organization.

- **Our Dedicated Part-Time Staff** who have a high responsibility job for a low wage
- **Our Manager,** last but not least, who takes care of everything from staff management, tech management, financial management - books, reports, bill paying and banking; marketing, merchandise strategizing, ordering, vendor pickups of local products; to staffing the store with all its myriad of tasks -checking us out at the register, stocking, cleaning etc. He is our ear to the community and is constantly working to progress the co-op to better serve the needs and desires of everyone that walks through our doors. For the first years of his tenure, he worked at minimum wage, part time compensation, for more than full time work with countless unpaid hours dedicated. Though we pay him slightly more now, in the interest of continuing to shepherd the Co-op on a trajectory towards self-sufficiency, he has forgone channeling any resources into a more decent wage or the addition of benefits for himself, for yet another year.
- And of course, we wouldn't be here if it were not for the support of all the shoppers, both members and the broader community.

We are so fortunate that all of our members and community continue to support our little Co-op!



Art work by local artist Mike Fletcher!

Our Greatest Challenges & Goals (in no particular order)-

Operational Overhead & Supply Chain

- Like most everyone we are feeling the pinch with ever increasing costs of doing business. With the help of our board and volunteers we've continued to address this head on and find savings wherever we can (solar array, partnering with a local farm for solar credits, building repairs and maintenance and various other savings).
    - Our largest overhead cost is our Cost Of Goods Sold. This is defined as the price distributors, businesses and farms sell goods to us for. In our last fiscal year 75% of all revenue generated went to the purchase of items for resale in the co-op.
    - While our supply chain is extremely diverse we do struggle sometimes with ordering due to our size and location. Because we generate less than a million in revenue (or greater) and remain completely independent (not part of trade organizations) we often do not receive the significant discounts on some goods that come with increased size and less local control. The grocery market highly incentivizes revenue and revenue growth. We've always actively discussed of how growth can alter the character of an organization, but work to balance that against how we can provide more things that our members ask for.
    - There continues to be ever increasing consolidation at the distribution level in the grocery sector (distributors, purchasing, producers, etc.). Due to our small size and being off the Route 1 delivery corridor we are frequently rebuffed when asking about becoming a delivery location. This limits some of our product selection as certain distributors limit certain goods to their own supply chain.

Redundancy -

- The Co-op continues to be heavily reliant on a few key individuals (both volunteer and staff) to maintain operations and a potential loss of any one of them could be detrimental to the long-term health of the co-op. We continue to look at various ways to mitigate these risks, though it's hard in a small business. Some ongoing ideas below but not an exhaustive list;
    - Free up additional cash to increase the number of paid hours available.
    - Increase the number of trained volunteers for redundant tasks (off season training would be best). Some tasks can be done outside the co-op and might not have a particular schedule.

Third Space - (Defined as a community space outside home and work)

- One of the long term goals of the Co-op was to become something of a third space in our community. We see more and more that these spaces where folks can casually meet with each other, going away, but we'd love to encourage that here. One of the greatest obstacles for us on this path has been our lack of a public restroom (and likely for Brooks in general). We made strides last winter to put in a restroom (thank you Justin for your labor) but during the process we

came up against a literal wall. We have received estimates for the work in the approximate range of $6000 to complete the plumbing required (the town requires a certified plumber to complete the work). In a few weeks we will be starting the process to look into fundraising to complete the project during the off-season.

Our goal is to not just be a business, but instead to provide something more to our community. Whether that's goods that they might not be able to find elsewhere (or would prefer to purchase here) or a space for live music, there are myriad ways that we see the Co-op being able to serve our community. We're excited to try new ideas in the coming year and find the ones that serve our community best.



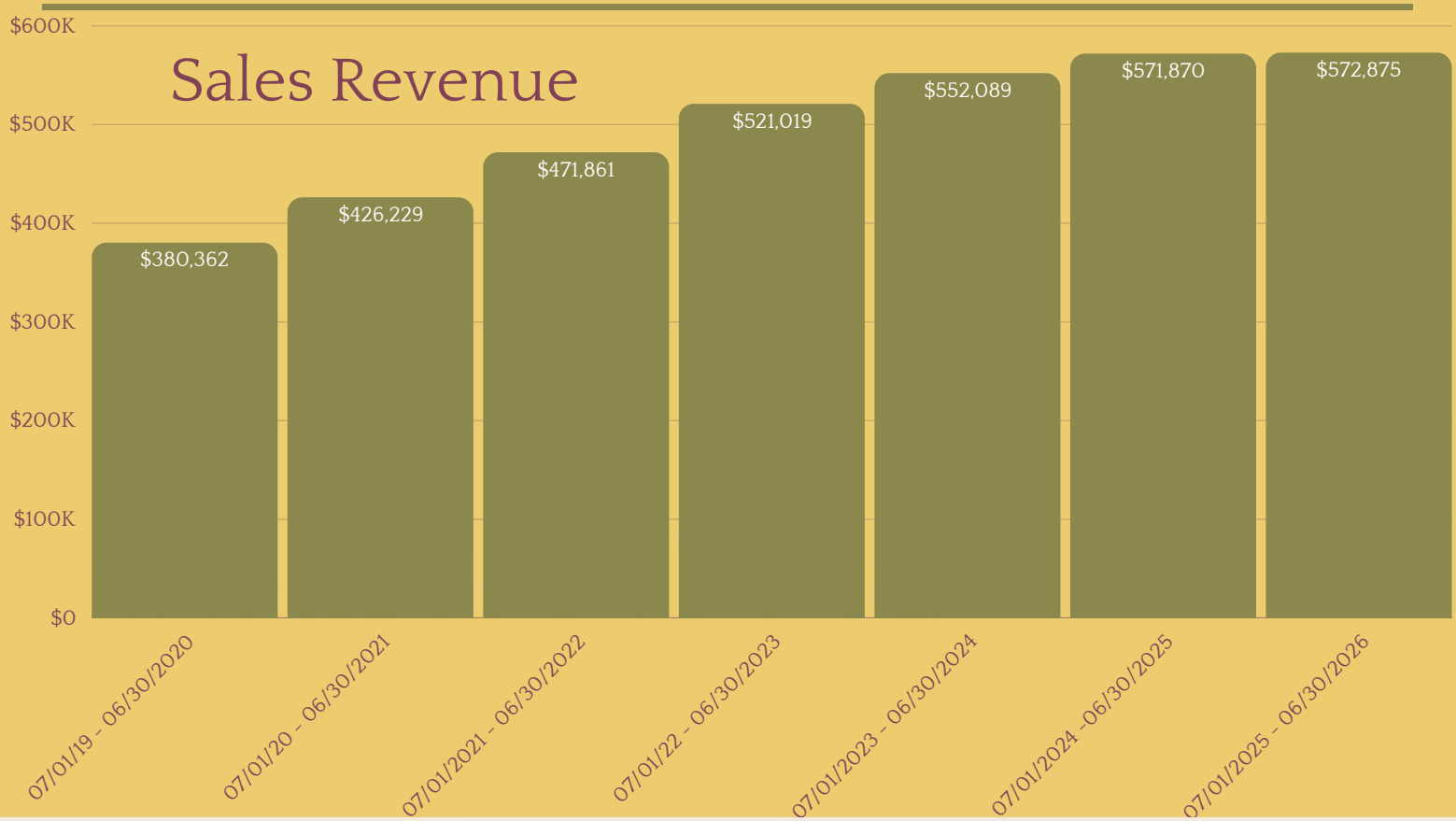






YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
RONANNE HAIGH - PRESIDENT, JILL STASIUM - TREASURER, LISA AGOSTINI - SECRETARY, JANE KIRSLING, ERIK LACLAIR

CURRENT STAFF:
MATTHEW MCKILLOP MANAGER
RONANNE HAIGH, HEATHER SELIN, JASIE COSTIGAN



Our Current Financial Situation

OUR FISCAL YEAR IS FROM JULY 1ST THROUGH JUNE 30TH

FULL PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT IS AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS UPON REQUEST

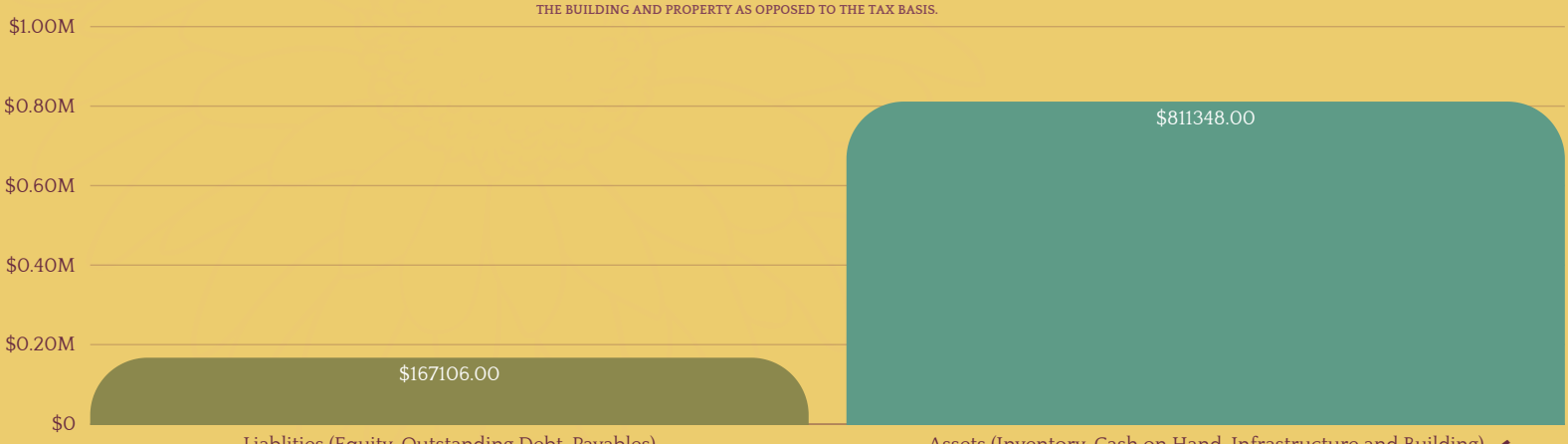
The Co-op had flat revenue growth on a year over year basis in year. While this is often not considered a good thing it's important to consider the context. In the previous fiscal year we saw good sales growth (partly due to the renovations at the Belfast Co-op) which contextualizes the lack of growth on a year over year. We likely would have seen average revenue growth if we excluded external factors.

Despite not seeing an increase in sales revenue we did manage to increase our cash generation by working aggressively to lower our overhead expenditures (though the majority of our overhead is Cost of Goods Sold which unfortunately continues to increase).

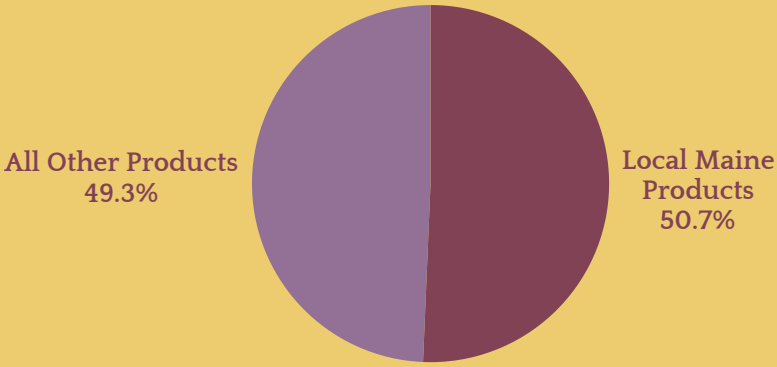
We have had our first full year as owners of the 5 Veterans Way Property and Building. We are still working to navigate the financial benefits and risks of now owning our building (a big thank you to Izzy Mckay for her generous donation!).

LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

A STANDARD BALANCE SHEET INCLUDES INTAGABLE ITEMS LIKE GOOD WILL AND DEPRECIATION. WE HAVE EXCLUDED THESE ITEMS TO GIVE A BETTER SENSE OF THE VARIATION BETWEEN ASSETS AND LIABILITES. WE ARE ALSO USING THE POTENTIAL RESALE VALUE OF THE BUILDING AND PROPERTY AS OPPOSED TO THE TAX BASIS.



Local vs From Away



We sold $288,166 worth of Maine produced goods in Fiscal 2025-2026.

We purchased $16,632 worth of local produce.

We sold nearly 1000lbs of Local Organic Apples!

Message From the Manager

You would think after writing a Message From The Manager for the last 11 years I'd be really good at it, but I find myself always having a hard time putting my thoughts on paper. As most of you know my job involves being heavily involved in daily operations of the Co-op and frankly that's where I prefer to put most of my time versus writing reports. I think both have their place, but we all have our strong suits. We encourage our volunteers to find the things they feel suit them best and because we are smaller we really can work with folks to find the best fit.

There are so many little details that go into running a small retail food business (and businesses in general) that if everything is going the way it is supposed to go no one ever sees. It all happens behind the scenes and if anything it's gotten even more complex in the last few years. On any given day there might be up to 5-10 deliveries with missing or incorrect items, invoices that don't match, repricing and that doesn't even include the register and other items that need to get done. This isn't to say that we all don't find this work rewarding, I just want to take a moment to acknowledge all the little things that our staff, volunteers and the occasional random community member take on of to make sure that our small little cooperative continues to make strides in our community.

Thanks to the generous donation from one of our founding members (Izzy McKay), of our building and grounds, we find ourselves with an even stronger tie to our community as Landlords and Building Owners, as well as a downtown business. We will continue the work of solidifying the co-op in our small rural community. In this regard, I also want to take a moment to thank everyone in our area who either volunteer for various organizations or work in other ways to make the community better. It's been great to see all the different groups focusing on what they find to be important (be it the folks of the Parks and Rec Committee or the individuals involved in the theater). When I first took over as the Manager here at the co-op, Brooks felt a lot quieter. I think through the hard work of community members and volunteers, no matter the organization, that the area has become a lot richer.

I do want to acknowledge that we still have many challenges to overcome and like many small organizations we absolutely have our struggles. We are a quite small business and that often has very limited resources (that could include time, capital and just plain energy). We've been very lucky throughout the years to be able to meet obstacles with the support of our volunteers and community. We would always love to have additional help and support to meet the co-ops long term goals and dreams and realistically we'll never be perfect. As business has increased over the years I do find that I'm occasionally unable to respond to questions or concerns as I would normally like to (though members will absolutely be responded to as timely as possible). This is just one example of something we can work to improve.

While that means that there is a lot of work ahead of us (we we thank you all for your continued support, time and energy) we will work tirelessly to continue to improve the co-op and our little community. We look forward to hearing your ideas and vision for the co-op in the future.



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The Marsh River Cooperative Needs You!



The Marsh River Co-op is a member-owned and volunteer-run cooperative. As more and more people become aware of all we have to offer and as we are able to meet more and more of their shopping needs, we continue to experience rapid growth. While this is good, it is a challenge to keep up with the additional needs of the organization and operations. We are hoping for individuals who share our values and appreciate having the Co-op in existence, to volunteer their time and energy to keep the Co-op open and to become truly sustainable.

We have many different ways you can volunteer at the Co-op depending our your time, your interests and your talents.

Serve on the board:
Our volunteer board both governs the organization and helps run the operational side of the coop as an enterprise. Elections coincide with the annual meetings, but please keep in mind that if a seat should become open, members can be appointed to unfilled, interim positions at any time.
For information about board duties please check our website under the ABOUT tab Board Expectations
https://marshrivercoop.org/about/board-of-directors-expectations/

Serve on an existing groups, revitalize or head up a needed group, or work in one of these areas on your own:
Usually there would be group made up of board members, Co-op members and others from our customer base and community to facilitate many aspects of our mission and operations. Many previously functioning committees are in abeyance due to lack of people. There are many interesting and fun areas that you could get involved in.

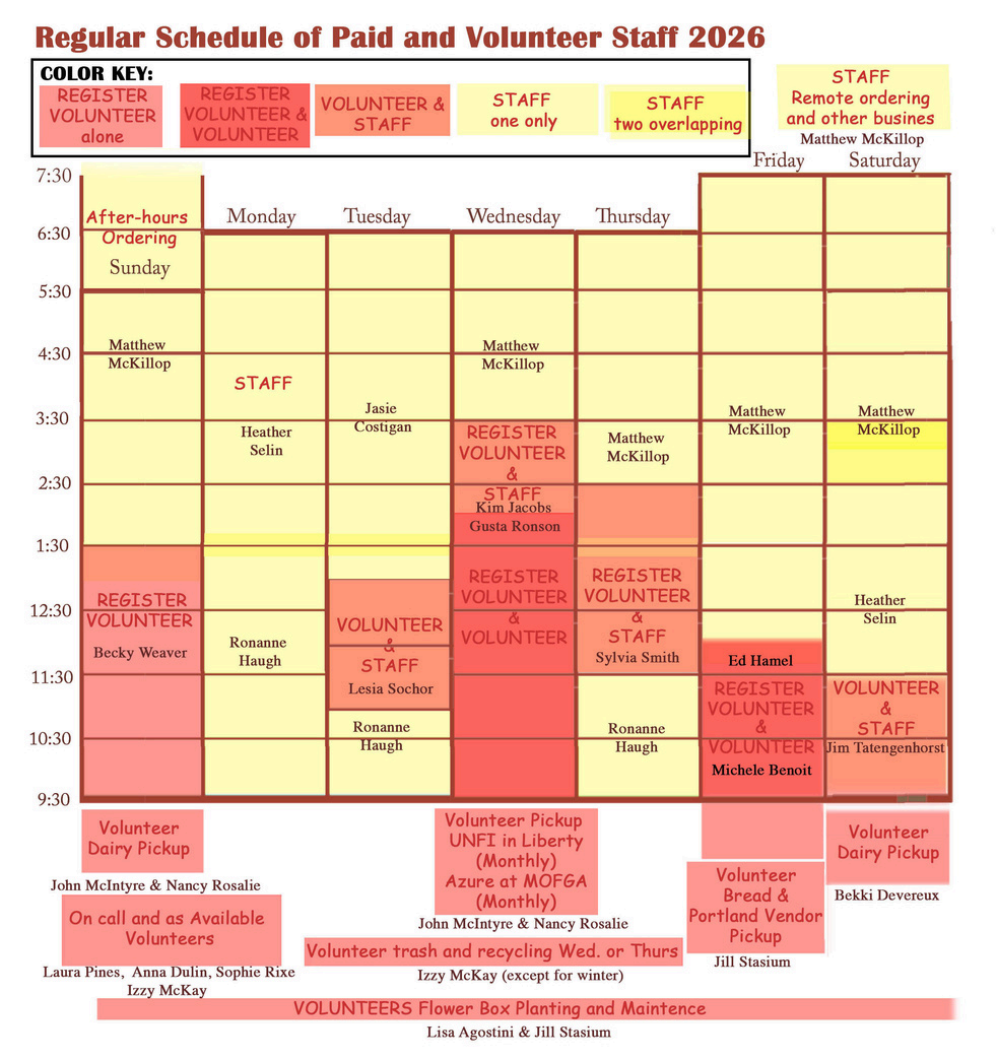
We could use your help in the areas of-

- Finance
- Fundraising - help with grants etc.
- Marketing
- Cooperative Education
- Events
- Communication with the community and membership through posts, website, creating posters, reviving our newsletter etc.
- Coop Policy
- Expertise in non-profit creation

Volunteer and Staff Hours Chart

Check out what is covered by your volunteers

-



Consider how you might get involved in keeping your Co-op running!
Contact Kim Jacobs at volunteermarshriver@gmail.com or 722-3139
Or better yet, speak with her in person during her volunteer shift at the Co-op on Wednesdays between 10 am and 3 pm!

Here are some ways you could help with in-store tasks:

- Cover many of the daily shifts – running the register and doing everything else needed to be open
- Double up with the paid staff or with other volunteers to do many needed in-store tasks such as stocking, repack of bulk items, cleaning, labeling, etc.
- Make pickups from vendors – such as from our local dairies, and from the drop off locations of the buying club, Azure Standard and Portland area vendor items
- Facilities maintenance tasks- small carpentry and other infrastructure fixes for instance.
- Cleaning tasks

Though helpful, there is no need to sign up for a regular shift, you can come when available and/or be on call.

Thank you to our Volunteers!

Board Of Directors
Ronanne Haigh (President)
Jill Stasium (Treasurer)
Lisa Agostini (Secretary)
Jane Kirsling
Erick Laclair

Register Volunteers
Kim Jacobs
Becky Weaver
Ed Hamel
Gusta Ronson
Sophie Rixe

Pickup Volunteers
Bekki Devereaux
John McIntire & Nancy Rosalee
Georges Nashan & Barbara Clement
Jill Stasium
Bob Klein
Cheryl and Terry Huber

Facilities Volunteers
John Purinton
Erick Laclair
Ed Hamel
Aldo Tarigo
Mike Fletcher
Justin Gordan

Please let us know if we missed anyone, we'll make it right!

In Store Support/Repack (some with register skills too!)
Sylvia Smith
Michele Benoit
Laura Pines
Anna Dulin
Stacia Hoover
Alan Cohen
Lesia Sochor

Music on the Porch
Jane Kirsling

Flower Boxes and Holiday Decorations
Jill Stasium and Lisa Agostini

Animal Grain
Izzy Mckay

Seating/Gallery Art
Lisa Agostini
Jill Stasium

Plant Swap
Lizzie Hogg
Becca Lane

Recycling & Trash Disposal
Izzy Mckay

Crafts
Lyndsey Marston
Lisa Agostini
Jill Stasium

Volunteer Coordinator
Kim Jacobs

Spring Cleanup
Thank you everyone that came out!

Co-op Porch Lady
Kim Jacobs

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