

Brownsville Co-op News

At our last meeting on June 24th, we had a good turnout and were able to vote on a new name for our group. We are now officially the "Brownsville Co-op" and we hope to start serving Brownsville in the near future. Various technicalities need to be taken care of first (such as registering our business name with the state, obtaining a federal tax id, and setting up a checking account at Keybank) and of course there are many details we need to work out in terms of how we are going to implement our various programs. We encourage you to join us and contribute both your good ideas and especially your good energy to help make this a successful enterprise. Come to our next Co-op meeting at Randy's at 10:00 am on July 12th (meetings are normally every two weeks on Saturdays). To help the Co-op get started financially we are asking people to contribute \$25 for a Brownsville Co-op membership. Membership will entitle people to participate in the Buyer's Club, provide a discount on purchases from the Co-op table at the Farmers Market and will entitle members to vote on Co-op decisions.

At this point in time there are three distinct areas where the Co-op will be involved, and they all revolve around food:

Farmers Market

We are in the process of contacting farmers who might have produce they would like to sell here in Brownsville. One of the key goals for the Co-op is to facilitate the access to high quality food at the local level. If it's produced locally, you have the best chance of getting food that is both fresh and full of nutrients. And you will probably get a better idea of where your food comes from and what kinds of chemicals (if any) were used in its cultivation. The Farmers Market will also be open to selling processed items such as jams, bread, and spreads as well as locally made arts and crafts. So whether you're a professional farmer, or a backyard vegetable gardener with a surplus, or a crafts person, consider the Farmers Market as a possible venue for your sales.

There are two arrangements for vendors. If you bring your own table (and shade?) and stay to sell your own items, the Farmers Market is completely free for you. If you drop off your items to be sold by Co-op volunteers, you will be charged a 15% fee for the items that are sold.

The target date for our first Farmers Market is July 29th. It will generally be held between 9am to noon most Saturdays in the parking lot of Randy's Main Street Coffee (Thanks Randy!). Some Saturdays, when events are happening at Randy's, we'll be setting up at the lawn area across the street from City Hall (that is until the new Brownsville Hotel starts construction). This is a summer and fall activity that will start out on a fairly small scale and hopefully build into a Brownsville tradition we can all be proud of.

To find out more about the Farmers Market, contact Anne Stein at 466-5081 or scottanne@proaxis.com.

Buyer's Club

With the cost of gas rising at such a rapid rate, that casual drive into Eugene or Corvallis to purchase food is now becoming a luxury. With a buyer's club, one person can drive to the source and purchase for multiple households. The food is then distributed at a central location in Brownsville. Not only do you save gas money and time, but you are likely to end up with higher quality food at lower prices. We are going to start out purchasing produce from the Organically Grown Company (wholesale) in Eugene. As we gain experience and refine the process, we'll probably also purchase other non-produce items (such as tofu, cheese, nuts, grains etc.) from the Eugene Grower's Market.

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The vision for the Buyer's Club is to take one step at a time and to gradually evolve into something more ambitious. At the point where we have enough members to support a \$1000 minimum order, we will be able to have the United Natural Foods wholesaler deliver our food directly to us. If membership continues to build, it would be a fairly easy transition to set up a local health food store right here in Brownsville. Willow Coberly owns the building complex that contains Main Street Coffee and she is in the process of renovating the back portion. She supports the Co-op concept and is willing to help the group with space needs at whatever stage we find ourselves. That is a tremendous benefit to those of us with a dream of someday seeing a health food store in such a small town as Brownsville (Thanks Willow!).

To find out more about the Buyers Club contact Steve Brenner at 466-3060 or sbrenner@archetype.org.

Community Gardens

You might have seen the Community Gardens Survey in the city newsletter. Around 15 responded to the survey and were interested in the concept. We worked with the city to find a city-owned location for the gardens. For various reasons, no suitable locations were found. Luckily, Carla and Eric Gerber came forward and offered a portion of their land that is adjacent to the Pioneer Park (Thanks Carla & Eric!). The Gerbers already had an agreement with the City and Chamber to host a publicly accessible Croquet Court on their property. The new Community Gardens will surround the Croquet Court.

The City Council was responsive to the new agreement and we expect an official approval at our next City Council Meeting on July 24. We anticipate a \$15/year fee to cover the cost of improvements to the gardens. We will probably have fund raisers as well to buy the materials needed to construct such facilities as leaf and manure storage areas, tool shed, green house (for starts), etc. If you have surplus building materials or garden tools, please consider donating them to the Community Gardens project.

So if your property is too shaded, or you would enjoy the social aspects of gardening with others, consider getting a plot at the Community Gardens. With our late start this year, we will probably devote our time improving the soil, rather than doing extensive plantings.

To find out more about the Community Gardens contact Cheryl Haworth at 466-3395 or clh@proaxis.com.