

Seattle Farm Co-op

News Update



Dearest community,

Our transition to an official member owned and operated urban farm co-operative is nearing completion and we will be hosting our first general membership meeting this October in conjunction with our Fall Harvest Party. This will be a great opportunity to meet and socialize with the board of directors and fellow founding co-op members. The Fall Harvest Party includes a harvest exchange, potluck dinner, and general celebration in honor of the founding of the Seattle Farm Co-op.

Mission: To satisfy demand for local organic feed and supplies, community resources and education for urban farmers.

The **Seattle Farm Co-op** has been unofficially serving our membership base since February of 2009, when we started out as a buying club for pre-ordered animal feed and supplies for urban farmers. An active online group forum and a dedicated group of volunteers have allowed the development of our urban farming community. We would like to thank the many people who have stepped forward to volunteer their time in building this thriving community.

The vision for Seattle Farm Co-op's future is much larger than where we are today, and includes the help and support of each of you. What can you do to help? The immediate need to assure our success is to recruit as many founding members as possible to provide both operating capital for expanded inventory and a strong and active volunteer base to keep us operating smoothly. Membership is structured to be affordable and we hope you will support our success by investing in a lifetime membership in the Seattle Farm Co-op. This fully refundable membership fee is \$50, and there are payment and work trade options available.

It has been a real struggle to bring the co-op to our current level of success, and we cannot be sustainable long-term without your support. We are dedicated to transparency, and want our membership to understand our financial situation. We really are just keeping our heads above water on the business side. Considering that we started this business venture with no initial investment of capital, and have been building from very humble beginnings, our financial situation is reasonable. However, we strive to grow in order to better serve the needs of our growing community.

The following table shows our net income from January through June of 2011. We are not in debt, but the situation is not pretty either.

	January	February	March	April	May	June
Gross Sales	\$3,969.26	\$1,691.54	\$8,271.72	\$8,443.85	\$4,666.91	\$7,015.30
Cost of Goods	\$3,371.75	\$1,396.46	\$5,601.64	\$5,446.25	\$3,325.63	\$4,955.41
Expenses	\$459.81	\$548.41	\$384.49	\$744.66	\$1,249.93	\$2026.49
Net Income	\$137.70	\$-253.33	\$2,285.59	\$2,252.94	\$91.33	\$33.40

It is worth noting that our net income has been extremely low in months where we did not host a special event, such as the chick sales in March and April of this year. Our limited income makes it difficult to grow our inventory and member services, and means we are operating month by month with no cushion for unforeseen business expenses. Even a minor expense such as bathroom supplies can mean the difference between operating at a profit or loss for the month. And, all management and operations to date have been done with volunteers. We are a long ways from being able to afford a much-needed part time bookkeeper and warehouse manager.

The steering committee has identified several opportunities to help grow the co-op and transition to more sound financial footing. These opportunities include:

- Move to a location that better serves our needs. Our current location is limited severely by its proximity to the two sports stadiums. By necessity we schedule our open hours for non-game nights which reduces our ability serve our customer base and increase net income. Our current rent is \$750 per month plus utilities. Realistically, we cannot pay more at this time.
- Provide regular operating hours. More trained warehouse volunteers and a new location should facilitate meeting this goal.
- Adjust prices so that non-members pay full retail value. Co-op members would continue to receive a generous discount.
- Provide excellent prices and service to increase customer loyalty.
- Find ways to bring in more members and customers through participating in and advertising at community events.
- **Find a motivated volunteer coordinator**

We welcome any and all help from our members in realizing these opportunities. We have created a database on the yahoo group to begin an inventory of member skills. It will take a

community to accomplish our goals. Please take a moment to let us know more about you and what skills you can donate to this co-operative venture.

Despite the shoestring budget, the Seattle Farm Co-op community has been tremendously important in supporting the blossoming local urban agriculture movement. We want to recognize and celebrate our achievements. The following list highlights many of our collective achievements since our humble beginnings in 2009:

- Built an 850+ member and growing online community (Seattle Farm Co-op Yahoo Group) to support local urban farmers. This list serves a tremendous need in our community, and the steering committee is committed to continuing this open public forum in order to support, educate, and inspire the local community.
- We provide a wide variety of locally sourced, sustainable animal feeds and supplies.
- Hosted several community building events including seedling exchanges, harvest festivals, clutch (neighborhood) gatherings, workshops, and festivals.
- Participated in local neighborhood festivals, farmers markets, and urban agriculture events to promote and support urban farming practices.
- Published three quarterly newsletters "The Scratch Pad".
- We partner, collaborate and participate with other local organizations such as Tilth and a local 4H group to further our shared goals.

Again, we are extending a sincere thank you to all of you for contributing to our success. We look forward to seeing you at the Seattle Farm Co-op General Membership Meeting and Fall Harvest Party.

All the best,

Amie Broadsword
Amy Stevenson
Charmaine Slaven
Christy Cusick

James Whitaker
Lacia Lynne Bailey
Maya Beal

Seattle Farm Co-op Steering Committee Members