The world has been upended! Things that seemed impossible now seem like part of the solution, even as the pandemic has thrown the injustices of our system into even starker relief than normal. These two dynamics are igniting a new narrative about the need for fundamental system change—to build a new world that centers the wellbeing of people and planet.

This pandemic is teaching us a new story about what is possible and necessary. COVID has prompted responses that were unthinkable a mere 2 months ago: the $2 trillion stimulus bill is by far the largest in U.S. history; Medicare for All seems more and more sensible; moratoriums on evictions and utility
shut-offs are being enacted throughout the country. Organizing to channel resources to the neediest, instead of the rich, has been swift and multi-faceted. As skies clear and air becomes breathable in previously smog-choked cities, people are asking why we can’t make this part of our future. A Green New Deal seems increasingly like the way through the coming recession. Shortages of imported equipment and COVID tests have also underscored the importance of re-localizing production and building resilience.

We’ve seen tremendous, spontaneous self-organizing of solidarity, cooperation, mutual aid and community production: people sewing or 3D-printing masks; peer to peer asks and offers for basic needs, people are pooling their individual stimulus checks to help those in need, and folks are creating community across social distancing by singing together from their balconies, freely sharing yoga, meditation, performance and crafting sessions online, spending time with their families, and reigniting dormant relationships. People are re-learning self-provisioning — growing food, raising chickens, cooking, and making all kinds of stuff.

People are asking, why shouldn’t we emerge from this crisis closer to a world that centers solidarity and the wellbeing of people and planet, rather than blind growth and the further enrichment of the 1%?

Wellspring is part of the movement to build this new world. We embrace the vision of the solidarity economy, a global movement to transform our economic system of capitalism into one that is grounded in values of: solidarity, democracy, equity in all dimensions (race, class, gender, etc.), sustainability, and pluralism (not a one-size-fits-all approach).

Wellspring’s focus on supporting co-op development in the Springfield region is an expression of our commitment to these values:

- **Solidarity** and cooperation are guiding principles of cooperatives
- **Equity**: Wellspring helps to build co-ops in Springfield's underserved communities. Within the co-ops, workers share profits equitably and build wealth as the businesses thrive.
- **Democracy**: co-ops are democratically owned and controlled by their members.
- **Sustainability**: Local ownership strengthens the local economy and resilience. Shorter supply chains reduce the carbon footprint and keeps money circulating in the community. Worker-owners tend to care about the local community that they live in.
- **Pluralism**: We strive to always be humble and open to new ideas, learning, and action.

Wellspring is also working to support our communities during the pandemic through food distribution and mask production, as you'll read about below. From these pandemic-specific actions to our basic mission, we are proud to be part of the new narrative and movement to build a more just, democratic and sustainable world.
Wellspring Harvest - Working through COVID

Wellspring Harvest continues to operate as an essential business through the pandemic, and is adapting a number of new strategies that set the stage for future growth even as we continue to grow sales to our commercial customers. During this crisis, we have implemented a donation program with the Food Bank (above), begun a grant funded salad distribution in Indian Orchard (below), carried out our first direct distribution of salad boxes in an Amherst neighborhood, and supported the Go Fresh Mobile Market to implement their emergency food distribution. These initiatives reflect established plans to diversify revenue streams at the greenhouse that have been accelerated by the current crisis.

The greenhouse faced an immediate loss of 1/3 of sales when colleges and hospital cafeterias closed down. Donations for lettuce to deliver to the Food Bank raised $5,755 so far for bulk lettuce deliveries twice a week to the Food Bank, which is some of the only fresh produce they have for food pantries this time of year.

We are working with both the Indian Orchard Citizens Council (IOCC) and the Go Fresh Mobile Market to provide emergency food deliveries in the city, part of our updated mission to increase food access in underserved communities. Partnering with the IOCC, we are providing free salads featuring Wellspring Harvest lettuce and grilled chicken from Trolio’s Restaurant. These salads
are distributed through the Indian Orchard Community Survival Center and made possible with the generous support of the New England Grassroots Environment Fund. The mobile market, which generally provides fresh produce to low income housing communities in Springfield, is working through the greenhouse to make emergency deliveries to neighborhoods not now served by food pantries because of the pandemic.

Like many farms, Wellspring Harvest is also responding to the COVID crisis by delivering produce directly to neighborhoods for pick up. Last week we delivered our first 33 salad boxes including lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumbers to the Amherst Woods neighborhood with the help of Mary Hoyer from the Wellspring board. We plan to expand on these deliveries and grow into direct-to-community sales in Springfield when the time is right.

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**Wellspring Upholstery Shifts to Mask Production**

The Wellspring Upholstery Cooperative (WUC) began 2020 in its strongest financial position ever. In March, the shop was moving through several jobs, with work lined up for another four to six weeks. However, because much of that work involved hospitals, the knock-on effect of COVID-19 saw that work grind to a halt, resulting in the WUC suspending operations on March 24th.

Luckily, there were enough cash reserves to keep people on the payroll, though with no revenue coming in, this will leave the business in an extremely difficult situation moving forward. WUC applied for both the Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) and the Emergency Impact Disaster Loan (EIDL) which are part of the federal CARE stimulus package. The good news is that WUC received word that the PPP application has been approved and that will cover payroll through the end of May. We are still waiting to hear about the EIDL. There are a number of other small business grants that we’ve applied for as well.

Meanwhile, Gary Brown and Tina Pepper stepped up to provide the vital service of sewing face masks (*Our co-director, Fred Rose models a face mask, above*) which we distributed to the workers at Wellspring Harvest and the Food Bank of WMass. We are talking with the bus drivers’ union, the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 448 about providing them with a supply of masks for riders and drivers.

As for the future, contacts at Baystate hospital have indicated that the work now on hold is expected to resume soon, with new procedures in place to avoid contact between WUC and hospital workers. And an auditorium seating project at Fitchburg State
University is scheduled to begin in early June. So despite the current challenge of being shut down, we're hopeful that WUC will be able to get back on track with what until COVID hit was promising to be a super year.

Old Window Workshop

The four women who make up the Old Window Workshop (OWW) crew were busy restoring windows for the New Salem Academy (right) which is listed on the National Historic Register. Next up was working on the windows of the New Salem Town Hall. All of that ground to a halt with the state-wide shut down of non-essential services in late March.

The shutdown has been hard on the business and the workers. OWW is hopeful that they will receive the Paycheck Protection Program forgivable loan but hasn't heard back yet. They applied for the Emergency Impact Disaster Loan as well but haven't had any response from the Small Business Administration, as is the case for all of our cooperatives.

Once OWW is able to get back to work, they have a couple of other residential jobs lines up. So there's reason for optimism, even though it's clear that there are many challenges to weather in the coming months.

GreenLove Eco-Cleaning Joins the Wellspring Network
We are so thrilled to announce that Wellspring Cooperative Network has a new member. We are pleased to welcome GreenLove Eco-cleaning which is in the process of converting into a worker co-op and Wellspring is providing support for this conversion. GreenLove Eco Cleaning was founded in 2010 by biodynamic herbalist & homesteader Amy Lovell, a Pioneer Valley mother of five. Armed with her own kitchen-formulated line of organic cleaning solutions, the business has grown and thrived over the last 10 years. GreenLove is a women-owned, women-run company with a focus on building resilient communities through fair pay, healthy lifestyle education and family-first values. The nineteen women who work for GreenLove have the opportunity to become worker-owners. GreenLove's non-toxic and environmentally safe cleaning products are good for the workers, the customers and the planet.

GreenLove, like all small businesses has been hard hit by the pandemic and has suspended operation during the shutdown. It has continued to make payroll even though this has been extremely challenging. One way that they have been able to do so, is asking new and old customers to buy products and housecleaning gift certificates.

Please visit GreenLove Eco Cleaning to support them through this crisis.

National Co-op Collaboration

Wellspring is teaming up with three other place-based co-op developers to explore the development of a national co-op. The collaboration includes Wellspring Cooperative, Cooperation Jackson in Jackson, MS, Co-op Cincy in Cincinnati, OH, and Cooperacion Santa Ana in Santa Ana, CA, all of which are non-profits. We share a commitment to social and economic justice and to building a cooperative economy in under-served communities. We share
the aim of creating a local network of mutually supportive cooperative businesses and our non-profit organizations. We each bring different strengths and experiences and our communities look different. Cooperation Jackson seeks to build economic justice and self-determination for Afrikan people in the Deep South, and dignity for all workers; Cooperacion Santa Ana works in a community that is largely Mexican American, whereas Wellspring and Co-op Cincy work with a more mixed community of Black, Latinx and white folks.

We believe that there are potentially numerous advantages to creating a national co-op, which include:

- Developing and sharing expertise in a specific sector
- Group purchasing
- Group marketing
- Collaborative curriculum development
- Shared services and training (e.g. legal, technical assistance) and staff (e.g. administrative, bookkeeping)

We are looking at starting our collaboration in two sectors: food/farming and childcare. All of our organizations are already involved in farming, though at quite different scales and Wellspring is the only one that is growing hydroponically. Whether we create a national entity or simply build a more informal affiliation, we are confident that there are lots of benefits to reap.

Both Cooperation Jackson and Co-op Cincy already have small childcare co-ops, though it's a challenge to create a system that is both affordable for parents and pays a living wage with benefits for the workers. Co-op Cincy's Care Share is a very promising model that creates a home-based childcare co-op that is jointly owned by the caregivers and the parents. In their pilot program they have been able to provide affordable childcare along with steady work and living wages plus benefits. We are excited about exploring the potential of building on this model to achieve scale, stability and profitability.

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**Wellspring**

Cooperative is participating in next month’s **#Giving Tuesday NOW**, a global day of giving (May 5th) for people around the world to stand together in unity—to use their individual power of generosity to remain connected and heal. Partner with us and give locally to Wellspring to help create jobs and wealth opportunities and a more just and sustainable economy in Springfield during this COVID Crisis. Thanks!
Community Investment Tax Credit (CITC) Doubles Funds Raised in 2019

In 2019 Wellspring raised over $155,000 in donations from individuals, donor advised funds and family foundations utilizing all our allotted CITC $50,000 tax credits. This represents an increase of 150% over 2018 giving. Our success can be attributed to many factors not the least of which is our compelling mission to create and support co-op jobs and wealth creation in a solidarity economy for low income and unemployed residents of Springfield, MA.

“It has been a team effort of our development committee and board to reach philanthropic partners whose values resonate with Wellspring’s. The CITC program’s 50% tax credit incentive for donations of $1000 or more has resulted in many of our donors more than doubling their gifts knowing they will receive half of their gift back as a tax credit,” shares Kristan Bakker, co-chair of the Development Committee. She adds, “the number of donations at or over $1000 for the year more than doubled.”

The impact of these increased funds has been tremendous. It has allowed Wellspring to hire a part-time development consultant to better engage our donors freeing up Fred and Emily, our co-directors, to devote more time to the work of co-op development. The results are encouraging - one new Wellspring co-op and two more possibilities in the wings and needed active support of our co-ops and their workers during this Covid crisis.

For 2020 the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations has allocated Wellspring $100,000 worth of credits. That is an incentive to raise $200,000 in major gifts. We are confident that we will rise to the challenge. With the shortcomings of our nation’s economic laid bare by this crisis, the message that a cooperative economy is needed more than ever is sure to resonate with our partners who want to create a more just and sustainable economy in Springfield. Now is the time.

Who is eligible to receive the Community Investment Tax Credit? Massachusetts AND out-of-state donors of $1000 or more are eligible for this Massachusetts tax credit. Donors can be:

- Individuals
- Foundations
- Corporations
- Donor Advised Funds

For more information, contact Kristan Bakker, kristan.bakker@mail.sit.edu

Visit Wellspring’s Website