



Newsletter—Fall 2019

WELLSPRING HARVEST'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



On August 14, we celebrated the first anniversary of Wellspring Harvest with light refreshments and brief presentations by Wellspring Harvest Board member Zaida Govan, Indian Orchard City Councilor Orlando Ramos, two customers: Rochelle Prunty from River Valley Co-op Market and Doreen Fadus from Mercy Medical Center, Mary Cassidy from the Community Survival Center where we donate lettuce, brief comments from our three new worker owners Alicia Brown, Migdalia Garcia and Clive Ndlovu, and a wrap up from Wellspring Board member Kristan Bakker.



Zaida Govan & Alicia Brown



Orlando Ramos



Rochelle Prunty

(Cont'd next page)

Wellspring Harvest (cont'd from p 1)

The remarks were followed by a tour of the greenhouse led by our grower, Stephen Hilyard. Around 30 people attended including a dozen from River Valley Co-op Market, one of our best customers – a great example of the 5th Cooperative Principle: cooperation among cooperatives. **This support was underscored by River Valley's wonderful gift of \$2,500!**

Wellspring Harvest continued its anniversary celebration during the Indian Orchard Food Truck Festival on October 12, where we were on stage to highlight our strong relationship with the community, including:

- A free lunch meet-up for seniors program starting up in November in partnership with the Indian Orchard Library and Yaad's Jamaican Restaurant.
- Two newly constructed raised bed planters at the Indian Orchard Citizens Council building, the first step in developing community gardens in the neighborhood. In the spring, we'll grow greens, herbs, cherry tomatoes and peas, all free for the taking – a demonstration of nature's abundance and the spirit of community sharing.
- We presented Harvest Awards to outstanding customers and partners: River Valley Co-op, Mercy Medical Center and Big Y.



Clive Ndlovu, worker-owner

Sales Growth

Greenhouse sales grew significantly at the end of the summer as we began deliveries to the Whole Foods warehouse in Hartford, CT, and are projected to reach full scale over the next 6-8 months. College sales returned in September which made it our highest revenue month so far with sales of \$14,626. In addition to institutional sales to Mercy and Baystate hospitals, Western New England University, and Mt. Holyoke College, Wellspring Harvest lettuce is available to the public at the following stores: 15 Big Y markets, Whole Foods stores across Massachusetts, River Valley Co-op, Randall's Farm, Atkins Farm Country Market, Armata's Market and the Go Fresh Mobile Market.

Sustainability

We are in the process of developing a composting system to process farm waste ourselves, which will save trash collection fees. Energy efficiency is a significant priority for Wellspring Harvest both in the interest of sustainability as well as reducing expenses.

We are currently working to raise \$50,000 to install high efficiency LED lights throughout the greenhouse to ensure sufficient light to sustain growth through the darker winter months. Eversource has committed to fund half the cost, which will save 141,000 kW hours of electricity a year. We've begun a crowd funding campaign to raise the remaining funds for the LEDs.



Migdalia Garcia, worker-owner

Please check out our LED light campaign and support us by spreading the word, and of course if you can make a donation that would be terrific.! Thank you! ❖

[GoFundMe](#)
[Light Us Up](#)

Url: gf.me/u/v6jry7

WELLSPRING COOPERATIVE is One of 61 Community Development Corporations in Massachusetts

What is a CDC?

A CDC is a mission-driven community-based organization in Massachusetts dedicated to creating places of opportunity in our state where *ALL people* can live with dignity while participating in and benefiting from our Commonwealth's economy.

Why is Wellspring a CDC?

Specifically, *Wellspring Cooperative Corporation* works to bring urgently needed economic transformation to low income and unemployed residents of the city of Springfield, Massachusetts by the creation of worker-owned businesses called co-ops. Thereby Wellspring creates jobs and wealth opportunities where it's needed most in the neighborhoods of the city.

Benefits of being a CDC?

A huge benefit of being a member of the Massachusetts Association of CDCs is that donors who make a cash donation of at least \$1,000 will receive a **Massachusetts tax credit for 50% of that donation**. It is called the **Community Investment Tax Credit** program or CITC. Massachusetts donors AND out-of-state donors are eligible for this credit. Many of *Wellspring's* partners have been doubling their gifts knowing that they will receive half of their donations back in the form of a tax credit! Donors can be:

- Individuals
- Corporations
- Partnerships
- Donor Advised Funds
- Foundations

The statewide MACDC (Massachusetts Association of CDCs) conference is being held on November 15th at Holy Cross College in Worcester. For more information, visit the MACDC site.



For 2019 Wellspring Cooperative has been allocated \$50,000 to raise funds through CITC credits. For more information and availability of credits, contact wellspringcoops@gmail.com.

UPDATES

Old Window Workshop

Old Window Workshop has had a great year. One of the jobs that they completed was the 24 windows for the tower of the Hampshire County Courthouse in Northampton (pictured on right).

In addition to founder Pam Howland, the crew, including Danisha Garcia, Zobaida Gomez (a mother and daughter team) and Marangely Rivera have all been with the co-op for between 10 months and a year. They are all trained up in window restoration and committed to continuing to build the business and its mission. They have a mix of residential and commercial jobs lined up that will keep them busy through February of next year.



Old Window Workshop will be working with the Springfield Museums to market their window art (pictured on left) through their online store. They will also be doing a workshop on wood preservation at the Museum in the spring. Old Window Workshop is very proud to be part of the re-use focus that includes Wellspring Upholstery. Together, they are diverting tons of materials from going into the landfills.

Wellspring Upholstery

Wellspring Upholstery is humming along, with jobs lined up through the end of this year and some other major jobs that are likely to fall into place for the beginning of the new year. The last six months have been flush with work and has been the steadiest, most stable period in the life of this cooperative. We're projecting sales for the year to top \$305,000, the best year yet. *(Related story: Interview w. upholsterer Gary Roby p.4)*

Jumping Jack Hoops

Jumping Jack Hoops has been on a bit of a maternity break, as Jaclyn O'Neil gave birth to a beautiful baby boy named Levi. The Springfield Museums has expressed interest in carrying their handmade hula hoops in the Museum store as well as have them do hula hoop workshops at some of their events. If you would like to have Jumping Jack Hoops run a workshop for fun, fitness and/or therapy, please contact Jaclyn at fallenxru-by@gmail.com or Jackie at Jackiebrown.if@gmail.com

Community Kitchen

We have been very involved in efforts to develop a shared-use community kitchen at Gasoline Alley to provide a certified space for food entrepreneurs to test their products and launch or expand their business. Wellspring was awarded a Collaborative Workspace grant through MassDevelopment to do a feasibility study. As we neared completion of the study, we learned that another shared-use kitchen, the People's Kitchen, which is very similar in mission and price structure, was planning on opening in the fall of 2019. Our feasibility study concluded that, while a community kitchen is both needed and feasible in Springfield, the city could not support two such similar shared-use kitchens. We have met with the developer of the People's Kitchen and agreed to merge efforts which will accomplish our shared goal of ensuring that there's a space in Springfield for food entrepreneurs to cook up good stuff. ❖

An interview with Gary Roby of Wellspring Upholstery

'This isn't a reason to throw this chair away – I can fix that,' Wellspring Upholstery shop manager Gary Roby says, pointing to a gouge on the underside of an armchair that he was stripping for re-upholstering. "Shop manager' isn't an official title,' Gary says; 'I do a little bit of everything, except stitching – work flow, quotes, delivery itinerary, cutting, stripping. I fill the holes. I just took out the trash.'

Gary had been talking about the practice of throwing institutional furniture away – sometimes by the ton – when parts or coverings begin to show wear. 'Hospital recliners are made almost entirely of metal – think of the tons of metal going into the landfills.' At Wellspring Upholstery, tons of furniture that would otherwise end up in the landfill, can be saved and reupholstered to look as good as new. For Gary, the chance to work in a field where materials are re-used rather than dumped in landfills has been a powerful motivator. 'Here are 58 pieces from UMass that weren't thrown away.'

Wellspring Upholstery has a healthy schedule of work for the next 2 to 4 months, and its clientele base continues to expand.. 'We're meeting more people, not just at UMass Amherst, Baystate, UMass Worcester Hospital, but also mom-and-pop restaurants, a physical therapist, barber shops and beauty salons. We're going as far as Dartmouth in New Hampshire, and...into Connecticut'

Gary (2nd from right) is heartened by seeing that

Wellspring Upholstery is 'making an impact locally.' 'I'm a lifelong Springfield resident,' Gary says, 'and to be able to do something in my city, that is for my city, is really good. In fact, there's a lot going on in Springfield right now that is positive.'

The job comes with small 'tips.' 'Another quarter - you can make money stripping chairs just from the change you find,' Gary says, pulling a quarter from behind a cushion. 'I've made \$5 already this morning.' ❖



WELLSPRING SUPPORTS CO-OP CONVERSIONS

Last year Massachusetts funded the Office of Employee Ownership and Involvement (OEOI) with \$150,000 to provide technical support for retiring business owners who want to sell their companies to their employees and convert to worker co-operatives. With the aging of the baby boomer generation, as many as 28,000 small business owners are nearing retirement in Massachusetts.

Wellspring is part of a national movement among co-op developers to help business owners explore the possibility of selling to their employees and to support owners and workers to make this transition.

Wellspring is working with the ICA Group to support conversions for local companies. ICA received some of the state's OEOI funding to work with owners to

Conversions (cont'd from p. 5)

assess the value of their companies and determine the feasibility of selling to employees. Once the decision to convert has been made, Wellspring is well positioned to provide cooperative training for workers and to help them to build a cooperative culture, establish cooperative bylaws and practices, and make collective decisions. We are already involved with these activities through work with our existing cooperatives and our Co-op Boot Camp.

Over the past year we have been approached by the owners of three companies who want to convert to worker ownership. Two of these are cafes and one is a house cleaning cooperative. The owners of these companies are not at retirement age but they all have reasons to sell their companies and change directions in their lives. They are at different stages in the process of deciding whether to move forward with co-op conversions, and also of determining what services they want to contract from Well-

spring versus other co-op developers in the area.

Strategically Wellspring is prioritizing conversion work because of the potential to retain established businesses as a balance to the challenges of creating new startup cooperatives. Over the next year our goal is to support two business conversions. While these companies may

or may not decide to be part of the Wellspring network, our goal is to convince them of the benefits of joining because of the mutual support and shared services we can provide each other. ❖

THE SMALL BUSINESS CLOSURE CRISIS A SOLUTION CO-OP CONVERSIONS

49% SMALL BUSINESSES
49% of all small businesses in MA are owned by Baby Boomers nearing retirement. Many do not have a succession plan for their business.

42,000 JOBS
42,000 jobs in Massachusetts are lost each year due to businesses closures, many due to owners retiring.

WORKER OWNERSHIP SOLUTION

Selling the business to employees:

- Retains local small businesses
- Preserves jobs, builds ownership
- Flexible terms and timeline for owners
- Tax incentives

LOCAL EXAMPLES

- Real Pickles, Greenfield, MA
- Ewing Controls, Greenfield, MA
- Downtown Sounds, Northampton, MA
- South Mountain Company, Martha's Vineyard, MA
- Yard and a Half Landscaping, Waltham, MA

BUILDING COOPERATIVES IS GOOD BUSINESS

Link to infographic:
<https://bit.ly/2osxq0g>

Grassroots Fundraising

We've had a spectacular year thanks to our awesome Development Committee, house-parties, the Community Investment Tax Credits, and the incredibly generous response of our donors. We are projecting that we'll break \$100,000 through grassroots funding this year.

We've had some really fun house-parties including one in May hosted by Dave O'Leary in Forest Park, Springfield. We had a great turnout and enjoyed the high energy buzz. We were also delighted to have a couple of City Councilors, Tracye Whitfield and Jesse Lederman, in attendance. In October, Lee Badgett hosted a lovely house-party in Florence which was also well attended and raised over \$10,000! The next house-party will be hosted by Betsy Johnson, on Mattoon St., Springfield on December 17, so we hope to see you there. ❖

Why I give to and invest in Wellspring Cooperative

Jennifer Ladd, Oct. 31, 2019

I give to Wellspring Cooperative and invest in Wellspring Harvest because I want to support a cooperative economy in Springfield, up and down the valley and throughout the country if possible. I believe that cooperatives help spread the wealth, create economic democracy and build resilient relationships. I see that Wellspring Harvest is based in Indian Orchard a part of Springfield somewhat isolated from downtown – the nearby neighbors who work there can easily get there without worrying about transportation. Old Windows Workshop and Wellspring Upholstery recycle, making new already existing products. I live in Northampton and I have a stake in an economically healthy Connecticut River Valley. The Wellspring Cooperative businesses and educational programs lead towards that vision. ❖

CONGRATULATIONS 2019 CO-OP BOOT CAMP GRADUATES!

Last June, ten people completed an intensive introduction or 'boot camp' for aspiring co-op entrepreneurs, taught by Wellspring Cooperative co-director Emily Kawano. The 14-week course, which meets 3-hours a week, is comprised of 2 classes. In the 4-week *Introduction to Co-ops* class, participants learn about

different kinds of co-ops, their history and role in social justice movements, and the current rising trend. In the 10 week *Building a Co-op Business* class participants embark on the adventure of designing a co-op business, sharing ideas and inspiration with each other.



Co-op Tour: Compost Co-op, Real Pickles, Artisan Beverage, PV Squared, Downtown Sounds, River Valley Co-op

Co-op Boot Camp (cont'd from p 7)

The Co-op Boot Camp walks participants through the process of developing their ideas for a co-operatively managed and worker-owned business. Right from the get-go, participants are encouraged to engage with the course as an exercise in cooperation, rather than exclusively as individual project-bearers. While hearing about the history, structure and values of co-ops, and moving forward with their business plans, participants also learn about the ups and downs of business start-ups and aspects that are specific to worker co-operatives. The highly interactive, participatory learning approach helps to build trust and mutual support among the participants. Being adept at communication, and ready to navigate differences that arise, are as essential to enabling a democratically managed co-op to succeed, as are the business skills that are the usual focus of business school.

The first 'jump into the deep end' comes in the form of developing a business canvas - a one page document that lays out the big picture, including its purpose, process, customers, financing, and impact on the local community. Participants also practice pitching their ideas early on and then hone it for final pitches at the end of the course.

Over the next several weeks, participants continue to test their assumptions and refine their business model. They learn and make choices about legal status, by-laws, governance, management, functional roles, customer base, and channels of communication, and these are evaluated in terms of the financial, social

and environmental sustainability of the business. Once these outlines of the co-op business have been colored in, the specifics of accounting, budgeting and cash management, raising capital, and debt vs. equity can be approached more clearly in the final weeks.

This year's boot camp participants came to the course with various interests and at different stages of business development. Ideas for co-op businesses included transportation, a café/activist space, agriculture, landscape design, a design-build and real estate co-op, and a grocery store conversion into a multi-stakeholder co-op.

The course wraps up with a tour of some of the co-ops in the Pioneer Valley. This year we headed up to Greenfield to visit the Compost Co-op, a compost hauling business that hires ex-prisoners, PV Squared, a solar photovoltaic installation co-op, Real Pickles, and Artisan Beverage, then traveled to Northampton to visit the newly converted Downtown Sounds and ended up at River Valley Co-op for lunch and a presentation. These tours are always one of the highlights of the course.

As the participants worked out their plans, their thoughts and interactions offered a refreshing glimpse of how the 'business leadership of tomorrow' could look. Let's support their visions, and continue to help build an eco-system of mutually supportive co-ops. ❖

#GIVING TUESDAY

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

While you are in the midst of your busy holiday season, remember **Wellspring Cooperative** on this year's **#Giving Tuesday**, a global day giving movement. Partner with us and give locally to Wellspring to help create jobs and wealth opportunities *and* a more just and sustainable economy in Springfield. Thanks!

Building a cooperative ecosystem

Wellspring is working to build a supportive co-op ecosystem which is critical to building and strengthening the local cooperative economy. Elements of this ecosystem include:

- Business and financial technical assistance
- Co-op education and training, which we provide through our Co-op Boot Camp, in-house training and consultation.
- Social service agencies
- Community and labor organizations
- Anchor institutions
- Public sector/economic development agencies.

We already have relationships with a broad range of these actors.

Last spring, we worked with the UMass Alliance for Community Transformation (UACT) to organize a *Building a Co-op Ecosystem Visioning* process in Springfield. The session included folks from various sectors that we need to work together to support a cooperative economy. It was a highly engaging, very energizing, and the ideas/discussions were captured in real

time a stunning graphic mural (see below).

As part of this effort, Wellspring is building on and strengthening our existing relationships with organizations and agencies in all of these sectors and working towards formalizing partnerships. We are also forging new relationships, some of which have been facilitated by MassMutual's convening of their grantees which has been very useful. For example, the connection with the Springfield Museums opened up opportunities to sell Jumping Jack Hoops and Old Window Workshop merchandise in their online store or gift shop (see Updates above).

Wellspring is also part of the newly formed statewide worker co-op network which is working to improve knowledge exchange, promote awareness about co-ops and the solidarity economy, and advance supportive policies.

We are grateful for funding from the MassMutual Foundation and the Beveridge Family Foundation to support this work. ❖



Cooperative Economy Visioning Session March 13, 2019 | Springfield Public Library

