



WELLSPRING COOPERATIVE

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2022

Updates from the Wellspring Community

As 2022 comes to an end, Wellspring looks ahead to celebrate our **10th year** with **10 co-ops!** In the last year, 4 co-ops have joined our network: Catalyst Cooperative Healing, Northeast Biodiesel, Natural Living Landscapes, and Energía. We continue to expand and improve as an organization to support our co-ops and better serve the needs of the greater community. We had some important community-building events in 2022 including our first Springfield Earth Day festival, the MA Solidarity Economy Gathering, and our first Leadership Caucus Event (see Page 7). We look forward to the many events we are already planning for 2023 (see page 8 for some dates to save).

On Page 7 you'll find an update on our Giving Tuesday campaign. We are grateful and humbled by peoples generous support during these economically challenging times. If you missed Giving Tuesday and want to support, we are still fundraising for our End of Year Giving campaign to meet our fundraising goals. Help launch us into 2023!



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Power to the People: Energía Converts to a Worker-owned Co-op & Joins Wellspring Cooperative Network

Energía is an energy services company that provides energy efficiency upgrades for residential and commercial properties. They aim to reduce utility costs and energy use and increase occupant comfort throughout western Massachusetts. They hire inner-city residents and provide on-the-job training in insulation to increase energy efficiency that benefits people and the planet.

Energía was founded by three non-profits–Nuestras Raices, Nueva Esperanza, and Co-op Power. They created a workers’ trust so that workers have always had a part in ownership. When the business started, workers owned 10% of the company and gradually increased their share of the ownership until, as of September 2018, the business became 100% worker owned. However, it wasn’t until a few months ago that they transitioned from a more traditional CEO-led model to a less hierarchical model of management. The shifts in the workplace in this short time have been encouraging and remarkable.

The head of Energía’s administration and co-manager, Ivelice, paints the picture of this shift, “... attendance is better, morale is better, people attend board meetings that didn’t attend them before. There’s a lot of interest in where we’re going and they participate in everything and want to help get the work done. It’s a totally different vibe in the last 3 months than what they were before. People that were timid and reserved are now speaking up and participating. It’s great. For years it was just me and Ben [Energía’s other co-manager] that would go to meetings, but now most of them do.”

The team has been working hard to change thinking and behavior, learn how to manage a worker co-op, and build a shared sense of ownership. Energía is currently going through a series of trainings with Boston Center for Community Ownership that starts from the basics of what a co-op is to deeper dives into finances, governance, and operations. The co-op joined Wellspring’s network to have ongoing support, deepen their roots in the co-op community, and engage with community-building efforts in the Springfield area.

To Learn More About Their Services, Contact Energía at

413.322.3111 MAIN

FAX 413.322.3155

info@EnergiaUS.com



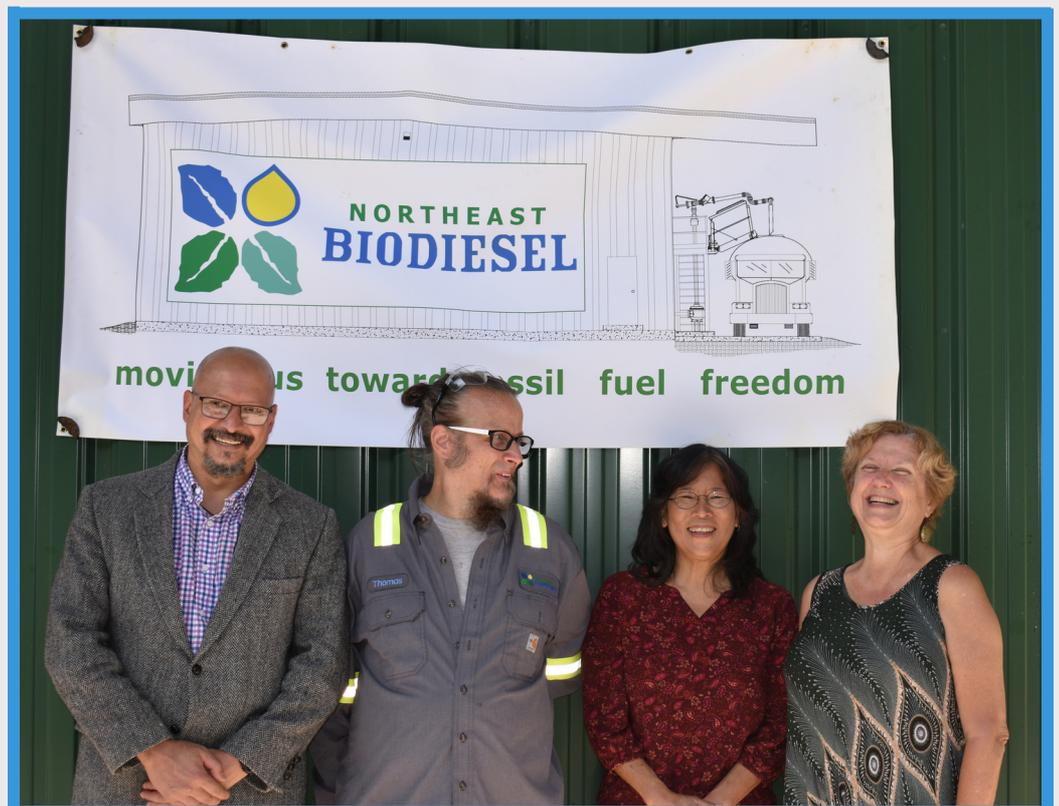


Clean Energy and Co-op Power: Northeast Biodiesel Presents a Blueprint for a Just and Sustainable Future

It has taken 14 years of hard work and perseverance to get Northeast Biodiesel (NB) off the ground. Led by Lynn Benander, director of Co-op Power and the NB Board, the vision of a locally-produced, fossil-free source of energy inspired community members to invest \$5.2 million over time which was enough to build the biodiesel production plant and prepare the launch. A wonderful milestone to be sure, but a multitude of challenges remained including the need to raise a substantial amount of additional capital and seemingly endless technical and regulatory hurdles. By 2018, a discouraged and exhausted Board had decided to sell off the enterprise for parts.

When Wellspring's co-director, Emily Kawano, heard of this, she reached out to Lynn Benander and together, they strategized about how to mobilize the co-op community to save the enterprise. Many meetings with the NB Board followed. Amine Benali from LEAF (Local Enterprise Assistance Fund) came on board early on and vetted the business model and developed financial projections that proved to be invaluable in helping with the financial restructuring and the \$1.3M capital raise. By the fall of 2021, NB was ready to bring together the first group of prospective worker-owners! Most of them were not familiar with a worker co-op model, but were eager to learn. Emily Kawano facilitated a 10-week co-op training for this group and continues to provide training support as needed.

During the Northeast Biodiesel press conference, General Manager Rick Durepo and Lynn Benander gave an enthusiastic, big thank you to Wellspring and specifically Emily Kawano and Amine Benali for helping to restore their faith in the viability and importance of Northeast Biodiesel's vision and place in the local co-op ecosystem.



Pictured: Amine Benali, NB worker-owner Thomas Ratte, Emily Kawano, and Lynn Benander.

Eight worker owners were hired and trained in June 2022 and have been at work refurbishing the plant and preparing test batches all summer. Speakers at the press conference including Greenfield mayor Roxanne Wiedegartner emphasized the remarkable amount of perseverance the Northeast Biodiesel community has had to bring this project forward. Many members of the community are motivated by their commitment to workplace democracy, clean energy, and a brighter future. As Northeast



Test Batch the Team Experimented with this Summer

Biodiesel Sam Bartlett shared, "Most conventional bottom-line oriented businesses would not have persevered this long, but our board and our investors and lenders are really determined to have more local control over our energy production, to reduce our carbon pollution, and to provide good local jobs. It is especially exciting to have a plant that is staffed by people who will have an ownership stake in the business."

Northeast Biodiesel is now beginning its production with ample community support and excitement! With clean energy and co-op power, Northeast Biodiesel is a blueprint for a just and sustainable future—one that rethinks how we produce and consume. They hope that fuel manufacturers in other parts of the country and world will look at their model and replicate it. Northeast Biodiesel is a very important part of the cooperative, economic, and local ecosystem and Wellspring is very excited to have them as part of our co-op network!



Wellspring Co-director, Emily Kawano, with some of Northeast Biodiesel's worker-owners

2022 General Assembly:

Cultivating a Thriving Cooperative Community Ecosystem

This year's General Assembly provided some insight into Wellspring's expanded mission that reflects a deeper ecosystem approach to fostering and sustaining community well-being as part of a cooperative, solidarity economy. Our panel featured riveting presentations by Dr. Beth Eagleson from Baystate Brightwood Health Center on the Springfield Prescription Produce Project and Terry Gibson from Western Mass Neighbor to Neighbor on community land trusts.

Why has Wellspring moved beyond just job creation to include food delivery and Community Land Trusts?

Wellspring's expanded mission is an intersectional approach that takes into consideration what communities and workers need in order to thrive. This encompasses quality, accessible and dignified co-op employment, housing, and healthy food.

Prescription produce is part of the national "food as medicine" movement that recognizes that hunger and poor diet are barriers to good health, while increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables can improve nutrition, reduce hunger and improve health outcomes. The Springfield Produce Prescription Project is a new collaborative effort by Wellspring and the Go Fresh Mobile Market (GFMM), Baystate Health, and Center for Research on Families at UMass Amherst. Beth Eagleson opened her presentation by saying "health doesn't happen in the doctor's office, sick care does." Health is rooted in quality of life, including food and quality jobs—which is why she took her medical students on a tour of Wellspring Harvest. Increasing food access is a priority for Wellspring Harvest, so when hunger increased during Covid, Wellspring's adoption of Go Fresh Mobile Market made sense as a way to expand delivery of fresh produce to food insecure families in Springfield.

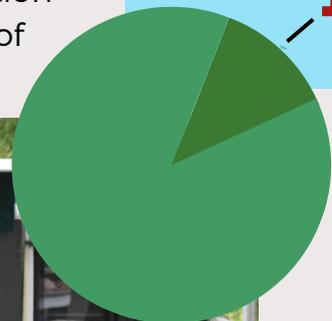
GFMM is a year-round mobile farmer's market where food insecure families across Springfield can use their SNAP/HIP benefits to purchase fresh produce.



Wellspring's Mission

Wellspring's mission is to create an economy that is cooperative, equitable, democratic, and sustainable. We work with historically under-served communities in the Greater Springfield region by developing a network of worker cooperatives and by supporting community-led initiatives to cultivate cooperatives and collective well-being.

The Food Insecurity Rate in Hampden County is **12.2% in 2022**



The prescription produce program has deepened relationships with partners and community members, and we have hope it will blossom into other food access co-op job opportunities in the future.

Wellspring is currently working in partnership with WMA N2N and Equity Trust to explore a Springfield/Holyoke Community Land Trust (CLT). A community land trust (CLT) is a structure that allows land to be held "in trust" for community needs. A classic CLT is an independent community-controlled entity that owns and stewards land to ensure that it is being used in ways that benefit the community. We are particularly interested in exploring how a CLT could help to root and connect affordable housing, co-ops, community production and regenerative agriculture. A collective culture of and ability to practice stewardship and autonomy over land, community, and local economy is a crucial foundation for adoption and infrastructure of a cooperative economy.

Communities need quality, affordable housing and accessible, culturally appropriate food to have the autonomy and energy to be stewards, designers, and workers of their local cooperative economy.

If you wish to get involved, support, or learn more about the Prescription Produce Program, contact Fred Rose at fred.rose@wellspringcoop.org. People with health, food access or farming backgrounds or interest could assist research or program support.

If you're interested in learning more or getting involved in the Springfield/Holyoke CLT exploration, please contact Emily Kawano at emilykawano@gmail.com.





Wellspring's First Leadership Caucus

This November Wellspring organized its first caucusing event to bring together actors from different sectors of our relationships. Wellspring works with our cooperative, anchor institution, community and labor, development and wider community partners to build a democratic and sustainable economy. The Leadership Caucus was a space for these sectors to caucus and discuss opportunities for collaboration and to support Wellspring's mission. It was also a wonderful opportunity for folks to build relationships and network with people and groups in the community. The discussions from the caucus provided valuable insights for Wellspring that are being used to inform events and priorities in the coming year and beyond. Overall, people were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn more about the breadth of Wellspring's work and the opportunity to dialogue and provide input. As always, folks wished for more time, which we take as a good sign that the discussions were useful and interesting.



**2022 Giving
Tuesday
Update!**

\$16,101

Raised by 70 persons

#GivingTuesday goal surpassed! Thank you!



\$12,000 GOAL

All donations are tax deductible

Upcoming Events

We have some exciting events planned for 2023. Two to mark on your calendars now is the union/co-op conference organized collaboratively by Wellspring Cooperative and members of UMass Amherst as well as our annual Co-op Boot Camp!

BUILDING WORKER POWER THROUGH SOLIDARITY, COOPERATION, AND CARE

A CONFERENCE FOR ACTIVISTS,
SCHOLARS, AND WORKING PEOPLE

In this time of economic crisis and ecological collapse, workers of all kinds are organizing to reject the alienation of racial capitalism. This conference explores the deep histories, current happenings, and future possibilities of collaborations between union organizing and worker-owned cooperatives. Please join us to discuss how to advance economic justice and social change in Massachusetts and beyond. Keynote speakers include **Kali Akuno** (Cooperation Jackson) and **Chris Smalls** (Amazon Labor Union).

For more information on registration, panels, and applications to lead workshops visit:
<https://www.buildingworkerpower.com/>

MARCH 24-26 2023
UMASS AMHERST

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WELLSPRING COOPERATIVE

CO-OP BOOT CAMP

Come learn about what cooperatives are, and why they are good for workers, the local economy, and community.

There are two courses:

Intro to Cooperatives

This 4-week course will give you the tools to understand what it takes to be a worker-owner and the knowledge to decide if working in, or starting up, a co-op is for you.

**4 Classes, Wednesdays
2/15-3/8 2023 6-9pm
Registration Fee: \$50**

Building a Co-operative Business:

This 10-week course will help you explore the feasibility of your idea and develop a business model/plan for your cooperative. Pre-requisite: Intro to Co-ops or equivalent

**10 Classes, Wednesdays
3/15-5/17 2023 6-9pm
Registration fee: \$125**

Held Online

Registration Deadline: 2/1/2023

Limited Scholarships available on first come, first serve basis

Intro to Co-ops

This 4-week class will meet once a week for 3 hours. Participants do not need any prior knowledge of co-ops. Topics include:

- What is a co-op? What are the different types of co-ops?
- What role have co-ops played in supporting social and economic justice? Why is there a current upsurge of co-ops?
- How well do co-ops perform? How can they benefit workers and communities?
- What does economic democracy and culture look like in practice? What does it take to be a worker-owner as opposed to a worker?
- Case studies and problem-solving. Exploration of starting up your own co-op.

Building a Co-op Business

This 10-week class will meet once a week for 3 hours. Participants are expected to have completed the Intro to Co-ops class or equivalent. Topics include:

- Business model/Business Canvas: what's your big picture?
- Legal & Human Resource Issues: Incorporation choices, articles and by-laws, worker handbook, hiring, evaluations, etc.
- Marketing: What makes sense for your business?
- Sustainability: How can you strengthen your co-op's economic, social, and environmental sustainability?
- Financials: Accounting, open book management, key metrics
- Raising Capital: Choices and strategies to raise startup capital



Natural Living Landscapes



...is Open for Business



We have been touched by the support we have received from the Wellspring community in getting our cooperative off the ground. We started work this past summer part-time and hope to more fully launch next Spring. We will be working into late November/early December. So, we may be able to take on a few small jobs in that timeframe or at least help you assess how we can beautify your property next spring!

While we do offer many traditional landscaping services, our intention is to provide ecological services where possible, which could range anywhere from helping you compost leaves and branches on your own property to installing a rain garden or perhaps even a permeable paver driveway. Currently, we are offering design and installation services, though we are considering launching an organic, electric lawncare business next season. If we do so, it would, by necessity, be in a limited geographic range, probably in the Springfield/Longmeadow area. If you're interested in any of our current or future services, feel free to give us a call at 413-579-8200 or send us an email at info@naturallivinglandscapes.com to set up a free consultation. Many thanks for your support! Visit us on the web at NaturalLivingLandscapes.com

Natural Living Landscapes

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