

The Birth of Port Orford Community Co-Op Market Idea

February 16, 2011 the PO Main Street Revitalization Association sponsored an informational meeting with a State Representative to explore a State Program called FEAST. There were nine citizens in attendance to hear the presentation. After the presentation Karen Auburn asked Grace Lee Bonnell to Chair the Port Orford effort to start a local Food Co-op. Laurie Prouty agreed to Co-chair and the process was off and running.

At that first meeting were local growers, producers and interested parties namely Rick Hazard, Jim Auburn, Yarrow Carter, Millie Hass, Terry Mock, Karen Auburn, Aaron Longton and Grace Bonnell. We have gone on to refer to those people and the ones who have subsequently joined the efforts as the Core Group.

The Port Orford Main Street Revitalization Association (POMSRA), a 501c3 organization, being the sponsors to the project, has adopted this group as a Standing Committee until such time as the Co-op becomes a 501c3 or For Profit Organization on its own.

Susan Brown as Director of Curry County Economic Development met with us shortly after that first meeting and gathered our ideas from which she created a Concept Letter to go to the USDA for a Start Up Grant. We were ultimately given the green light to proceed with the Grant Application, which Susan completed for us prior to her County Department being dismantled. During the process of our Grant Concept submission Susan Brown's position with the County was essentially dissolved. She took the opportunity, with our approval, to present to the City of Port Orford and the City Manager, Mike Murphy, clearing it with the USDA, for the City to management of the Grant should we be awarded.

We ultimately received the Grant and instruction and were advised that we would work specifically with Northwest Cooperative Development Center out of WA State. They would direct us in the formation of the business feasibility study and foundation of the Co-op.

Then the Core Group requested that the City hire Susan Brown, now an independent, to be the Project Manager. The City Council approved Mike Murphy to manage the Grant. Ultimately when the Grant was awarded, the amount awarded was \$15,000, with an In-kind requirement of \$8,000. On September 15, 2011 the City Council further approved the appointment of Susan Brown as Project Manager and the Work Order Agreement with Northwest Cooperative Development.

We have hosted enthusiastic General meetings monthly since 3/23/2011 at The Joan of Arc. We have formed a Steering Committee as of 4/29/11: Grace Bonnell, Laurie Prouty, Jeff Mecredy, Pamela Berndt, Yarrow Carter, DeEtte Miller & Rick Hazard. The Steering Committee's first meeting was at the Hawthorne Gallery in May and they meet monthly as well. The Core Group numbers continue to increase and to date about 30 citizens are on

our enthusiastic mailing list. As of July, Nadine Grootenk, offered to be the Historian but has not taken over that position - we are looking forward to her offered help.

We have taken part in the Hawthorne Saturday Summer Market, providing information and surveying people for comments and interest. We have begun fund raising, which the Core Group deemed be used as Petty Cash; This fund is being held by Grace Bonnell until it reaches the total of \$100.00, at which time she will deposit it into the POMSRA Bank Account. As of September 14, 2011 the Core Group Volunteers took part in a three way sponsorship, Arts Council, Port Orford Main Street & Port Orford Co-op, for the Cycle Oregon event. This event was spearheaded by Pamela Berndt and Laurie Prouty and earned an additional \$333.33 for each of the three sponsoring groups.

The vision list for the Market includes: Local and Regional produce, products with a focus on local farmers and producers; local meat & fish; classes on food preparation & nutrition; deli of local items to eat in or out; support of local artists & crafters; all in a friendly country store atmosphere. The vision of a Compounding pharmacy is also on the vision list. We hope to have a commercial kitchen so favorite recipes can be made in house and sold. The Co-op's vision will be guided by all the Citizens of Port Orford, funds and space availability. Most certainly the market will be somewhere along Highway 101 hopefully opening in 2012.

The enthusiasm for this project by the citizens of Port Orford, both Core Group Members and non Core Group, has been heart warming and we are moving along very well for the short time since conception. A very big Thank you to everyone.