

JustLocalNews

News & Views from the Clearwater Collective

Issue 3

August 2004

You're making a significant local impact

Each time we spend a dollar, we should consider the full value of our choices, and remember that each dollar is a vote for the future direction of our community. The votes we cast with our dollars every day influence our community at least as much as those cast on election days. With better information, customers might more often choose to patronize local businesses because it benefits the community. Local owners with much of their life savings invested in their businesses have a natural interest in the long-term health of the community.

So I find it is our job as a local business dedicated to the local economy to provide information to our customers as to how their money significantly impacts the local economy. In our particular business that job is fairly simple. We are the "middlemen" between local farms and you the consumer. Most of the money you spend on food with us goes straight to the farmers. The rest goes to cover our costs in marketing and distributing the food. You can be assured that we take every one of our purchases as a business seriously.

For example, we knew that driving a truck would entail importing non-local fuel, lubricants, parts, etc. So we thought of ways to replace the non-local petroleum with local resources.

We chose bicycles for one as they circumvent fuel altogether. Our bikes are purchased and serviced at small local businesses. Some are even manufactured in Wisconsin. And when we order custom work bikes, they will be made by local folks. However we still need to transport products by motorized vehicle.

Our truck runs on local farm-produced biodiesel fuel without modifications to the vehicle. (That means pretty much any diesel vehicle out there can run this fuel as well.) Biodiesel throws the concept of "dirty-diesel" out the window. The biodiesel fuel is made by a farmers cooperative in Iowa, and brought to us by a farmers cooperative south of Eau Claire, Countryside Coop.

And by it's nature, our delivery business is efficient in that it replaces trips (invariably by car) taken by our customers to one of the outlying grocery stores. A good comparison is the postal service. Imagine if, instead of mail carriers delivering mail, everyone had to make their way down to the post office each day! More on this topic in future issues...

Thanks for your support!

Vegetables

You'll probably notice an absence of vegetables on the order forms this month. As you are well aware, we are experimenting with various ideas and the vegetables taught us a good lesson last month. Our first priority is to ensure the best quality local food. With vegetables, that means picked fresh. And for our delivery service, that means picked fresh really early on Friday morning. We also strive to provide our customers with produce that is not tainted with chemicals and pesticides. Our order forms need to be out a few weeks in advance, so we also need to predict accurately what produce will be available up to six weeks from today.

Well, I think we did pretty good working with ROMAR farms last month but it turned out it just wasn't worth it. It was a lot of work on Fridays for ROMAR, as that is the day they have their farm open to customers. It was hard to predict the availability of produce in advance, particularly with the weird growing season so far. Since ROMAR is in Augusta, there were some transportation issues there as well. In the end, it turns out it wasn't worth the trouble (although you folks who got those excellent greens may disagree, I know!).

Anyhow, it's not that we don't intend to have veggies and fruits available in our delivery service. We will. It's just turned out to be a little more difficult to work out than the other products we have. We hope to have some greens and other season-extended vegetables for you later in the fall, particularly

when the farmers markets wind down and the local options are limited.

And for now you can hopefully make it to one of the farmers markets in town and rustle up a pesticide free source for your local fruits and veggies straight from the farmers.

SUUUEEY!

More pork

The Kostka's down in Osseo have made a few more options available to us. First off are some pork "breakfast" links. These have the exact same ingredients as the seasoned ground pork: salt, pepper, sage and sugar. They've also had the meat locker work up some pork brats. They are using the standard meat locker recipe, but this may change as demand for natural and organic food increase: pork, soy flour, salt, hydrolyzed soy protein, BHA, propyl gallate, citric acid and spice in a collagen casing. They are also offering up ham steaks, which are basically ham in a more manageable pack size. All of their meat is naturally grown and fed organically.

Eggs

Well believe it or not, we're still struggling to find a great source of local fresh free-range eggs. We are still sourcing eggs from a number of small local farms, and hope to keep a consistent supply to our customers. All eggs are from **free range** chickens raised naturally. Color and size will vary from week to week as a result of this. Please let us know if you have concerns or questions.

Payment options

Sometimes it's hard to predict exactly what the total of your order will be. In fact, if you order cheese or meat, it's impossible to know! Since we get products fresh from the farms every week, we just don't know exactly how much cheese or pork you'll be getting. So we're trying to find convenient and safe ways for you to make payment.

One way is to make a lump sum prepayment. Maybe your average order is about \$20 a week, you could pay us \$100 at the beginning of the month and you won't need to worry about payment for awhile. We keep excellent records of payments and debits and will let you know each week what you've got left in your account.

Another option for our established customers is to leave exact payment for the previous week in your cooler. This would be the opposite of the above, and certainly less preferable from our business standpoint. However we want to keep the options open and make these local food deliveries as convenient as possible for you.

We're also happy to take your estimated payment each week and reconcile the differences the following week. In this scheme, you would pay the amount estimated using the average prices listed on our order forms for items like cheese and pork chops.

Other payment ideas being explored right now are "epay" and other electronic transactions. I'm sure these will become a popular option in the future.

If you have questions about these payment options or about your bill, invoices or account with us, please call Crystal at 579-0106.

Fair trade coffee

Our local non-profit coffee supplier has added two more options, swiss-water decaf and espresso. The decaf is a medium roast. Both are available in one pound or half pound bags, and can be whole bean or ground. Thanks for supporting responsible, sustainable third world development!

If coffee ain't your thing, we have fair-trade organic teas from Equal Exchange through the buying club, as well as other coffee alternatives.

Turkey Pre-orders

Want to have a spectacular local food Thanksgiving Feast? Look no further than your favorite home delivery service. You now have the unique opportunity to order a **fresh** or **frozen Thanksgiving Turkey** for your table. If you order now, the farmers can raise just the right number of chicks and steward a special bird just for you. Then, just before thanksgiving your order will be ready fresh - never frozen - for your family. Just call or email us and let us know you want one!

Vegetarians don't fret - check out our **buying club** for access to **meat alternatives** such as Tofurky. It's not local, but hey.

Buying club

Our Natural Farms buying club is going strong. Take advantage of access to thousands of natural and organic products delivered right to your door every four weeks. Get great prices on products you already use and check out lots of new items as well. How about fresh organic tortellini or organic orange juice from Organic Valley? Sign up anytime, order as little or as much as you want. Call Crystal to get started at 579-0106.

Standing orders

Many of our customers have found it convenient to place a standing order with us. Here's how that works. You call, email or leave an order form to us marked with the items you know you want every week. We mark that order on our upcoming deliveries and you don't need to call if that's all you want. If you'll be on vacation or would like extra items on a particular week, just let us know. The standing order can be changed at any time. It's that simple. You just need to remember the cooler on Fridays!

Downtown Farmers Market

We're downtown on Saturdays between 7 am and 1pm. Come see us and all the other local farmers down by the post office! Although we can't make it, the market is also open on Wednesdays from 7 to 1 and Thursdays from noon to 6.

What are we missing?

We're always on the lookout for more local and fair trade food to add to our delivery list. Any ideas or suggestions? Let us know!

Fun fact:

For every \$100 in consumer spending at **Borders**, the total local economic impact is **only \$13**. The same amount spent with a **local** bookstore yields **more than three times** the **local economic impact** (\$45).

source: Civic Economics

Our co-op

The Clearwater Collective is organized as a **worker owned cooperative**. Each member is part owner/investor and has equal decisionmaking power. We chose this model to accommodate our lives (raising kids, other jobs, gardens, etc.) and to provide a sustainable income for ourselves down the road. We are incorporating as the Just Local Food Cooperative. Just as in justice for the farmers, the earth, the workers, and the consumers. Local as in produced nearby in Western Wisconsin and regionally where appropriate.

Home delivery:

To get local fair trade food **delivered to your door** every week, call Lissa at 577-5564
Buying Club and billing:

To sign up for the buying club and ask questions about billing and invoices, call Crystal at 579-0106.