

# Good food brings us together



2024  
Annual Report





# Good food brings us together



Since 1970, Outpost has been a gathering space for the neighborhoods we serve. Offering more than just groceries, we work to be a place where everyone feels they belong—whether you're a long-time owner or new to the co-op, community through food is the unifying force.

We're built on the idea that everyone, from shoppers to farmers, vendors to employees play an essential role in the health and success of the co-op. Our strength lies in the diversity of voices we all bring, our future relies on our engagement to maintain our mission of providing access to wholesome food and fostering a welcoming space for all.

Outpost is proud to be a community that celebrates cooperation, and the simple joys of sharing good food with good people.



## CEO REPORT

As we reflect on 2024, I am proud to highlight the remarkable progress we have made as a co-op. This year has been one of growth, resilience, and transformation, guided by our commitment to our mission and values.

### Performance Highlights

In 2024, we achieved strong financial results, surpassing key revenue and profitability goals. Total revenue increased by **\$784,485**—totaling **\$49,329,229**—driven by increased customer engagement and operational efficiencies. These outcomes underscore our ability to adapt to changing market conditions while remaining steadfast in delivering value to our owners.

Another way to measure the long-term strength of the co-op is by measuring our earnings without the interest we pay on debt, taxes we pay, and depreciation and amortization which are non-cash expenses. EBITDA means “earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortization.” This shows the level of profitability solely based on the operations of the business. EBITDA for Fiscal Year 2024 was **4.5%**, outperforming previous year’s goal of **2.5%** and achieving this year’s goal of **1.8%**.

Operationally, we focused on staff financial literacy throughout the organization, modeling after our Leadership Mentor Program financial training. This not only strengthened our operational effectiveness but also reinforced our commitment to developing our staff. We understand that staff education and training ensure we can promote from within and retain top talent.

### Community and Sustainability

A sustainable community exists when our stores (employees and shoppers) keep unnecessary waste out of the landfills. If we sort our waste, then the only waste that should end up in the landfill is that which can't be composted or recycled. In FY24, **72%** of our waste was diverted from the landfill, slightly up from the 71% previous year, achieving our goal of improvement.

Staying true to our cooperative principles, we deepened our engagement with the community through our current and new partnerships, volunteering, and educational programs. We also advanced our sustainability goals by sourcing locally and adding new vendor partners. In 2024 we added 27 new local vendors, which was a **10%** growth versus previous year.

### Challenges and Adaptation

No year is without its challenges, and 2024 was no exception. We navigated supply chain disruptions and market volatility, responding with agility and innovation. These experiences have further strengthened our organization and positioned us for future success.

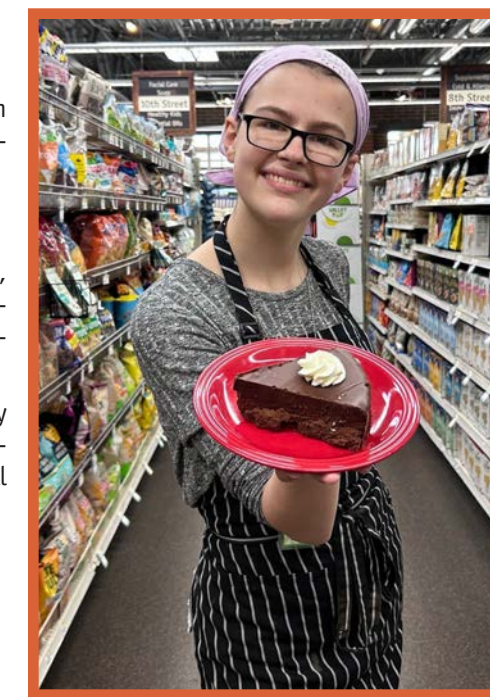
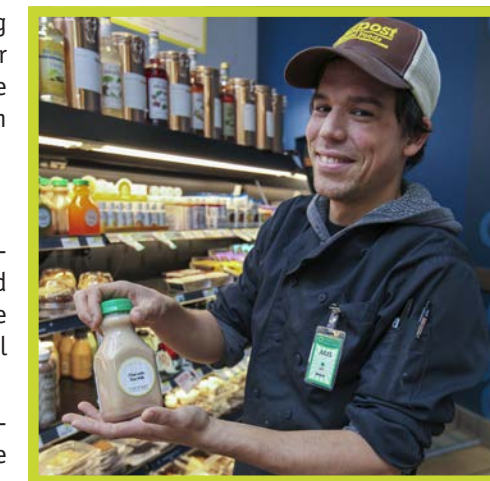
### Looking Ahead

As we move into 2025, our focus will be on creating access for many more customers, expanding our offerings, strengthening customer relationships, and fostering a more inclusive workplace. We are also committed to technology investments and additional community partnerships.

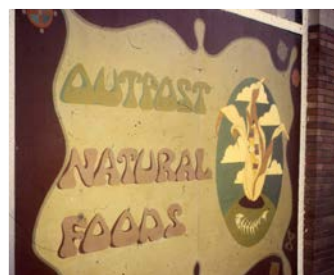
I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our employees, whose dedication and creativity drive our success, and to our customers, owners, and partners for their unwavering support. Together, we have built something extraordinary, and I am confident that we will continue to thrive and grow in the years ahead.

Here's to an exciting future for Outpost!

Sincerely,  
Ray Simpkins  
Chief Executive Officer







# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Dear Owners of Outpost Cooperative,

It is a pleasure to write this annual letter as President of the Board of Directors. Over the past several years I have overseen the transition from former General Manager Pam Mehner's 35-year tenure to CEO Ray Simpkins. Now in his second year, I am pleased to share some highlights that speak to his leadership and Outpost's work in achieving its mission of a healthy, diverse, and sustainable community.

While the Treasurer's Report discusses the organization's strong financial standing, I want to underscore that this success allowed base wages to be raised across all employees in support of ongoing work toward living wage compensation. This is particularly notable because it was not a union negotiation year. The Board is proud of this accomplishment on the part of Ray and his team of directors.

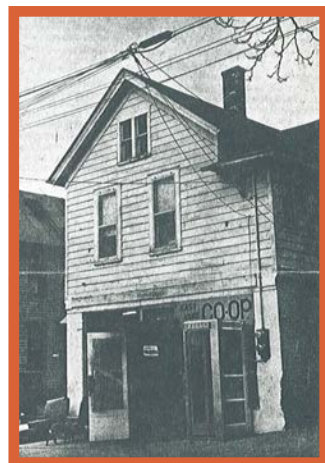
Another success has been the growth in new ownership, which increased by 926 people over the past year. New ownership is one of many indicators used to discern the cooperative's health, and the Board looks forward to continued growth in this area. Accessibility for those with fewer economic resources is also a priority, which means that shoppers can find Wisconsin FoodShare program products.

Other highlights include the tremendous achievement of ranking 27th nationally on the Environmental Protection Agency's Green Power Partnership Top 30 Retailers list; diverting 72% of waste from landfill; increasing the number of vendors owned by People of Color by 44% (27 businesses); maintaining diversity in top management that includes 50% women in those positions; and enhancing partnerships that benefit community programs, including over \$150,000 raised in stores to support the work of local non-profits.

In conclusion, I want to express gratitude for the nearly 400 employees, over 22,000 owners, and the many vendors and producers who make Outpost what it is. Cooperatives are by their nature a claiming of people's rights to economic equality. They are the physical embodiment of the ideals of a community. The Board of Directors is proud of Outpost's achievements and looks forward to continued success and service on behalf of its owners and the Greater Milwaukee community.

Thank you for your shared ownership of Outpost.

Ashley Fisher  
Outpost Board President



## UFCW Union Since 1980

Outpost Co-op has been a proud union store with UFCW since 1980, utilizing interest-based bargaining to foster collaboration, mutual respect, and shared success between employees and management. Outpost and UFCW have been recognized for their Labor and Management relations and awarded the Melvin Lurie Labor Management Cooperation Award by the University of Milwaukee Masters in Human Resources and Labor Relations Program.

## Outpost Expands Partnership with MPS's School to Work Transition Program

Since 2020, Outpost has partnered with Milwaukee Public Schools' School to Work Transition Program, offering high school students with special learning needs real-world work opportunities. Initially starting at the Capitol Drive location, the partnership expanded in 2023 to include our Bay View and Wauwatosa locations, providing vocational training across various departments such as Produce, Café, Central Kitchen, and Grocery.

Outpost participates in the Community Assessment Training Program alongside 20 local businesses, supporting student volunteers with special education teachers. Students spend two hours per day at their job site, gaining hands-on experience that may not be available in tradi-



tional classroom settings. "The work environment allows students to develop skills and recognize their own potential," says Danielle Shotola, special education teacher.

One example of success merging the MPS team with the co-op, was the creation of themed bulletin boards, highlighting employee feedback on teamwork, developed by students working on social skills. Mentorship is also a key component of the program, with Outpost employees guiding students in their roles. Our store managers are proud of how staff embraced their roles as mentors, making students feel like part of the team.

## Healthy Soil, Healthy You:

### DOUDLAH FARMS SETS A NEW STANDARD

If you're looking for an Outpost vendor that truly embodies a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, look no further than Wisconsin's Doudlah Farms Organics. This family-owned and operated farm is dedicated to producing high-quality organic foods using sustainable and regenerative farming practices.

When Mark Doudlah's father, Earl—the man who taught him everything he knows about farming—passed away in 2011 after battling Mantle Cell Lymphoma, Mark made a life-changing vow. Believing that the chemicals his father had used contributed to his illness, Mark committed to transitioning to organic farming. The shift took years

and required him to relearn everything about agriculture. He abandoned harmful chemicals and instead adopted regenerative and biodynamic farming practices—fancy terms for growing nutrient-rich, safe food. "It's a lot more work to farm organically, but we think it's worth it for the land and for the consumer. Healthy soil, healthy crops, healthy you," Mark proudly says.

In 2024, Doudlah Farms was awarded the prestigious "Tested Clean" Seal from HRI Labs, the most rigorous pesticide testing program in the United States. The Tested Clean Seal signifies that a product meets and continues to uphold the highest standard available. In fact, HRI Labs informed Doudlah Farms that their products were not only clean but entirely undetectable for chemicals—an incredibly rare achievement, even for organic standards. We're proud to give them a well-deserved shoutout for their commitment to keeping us healthy.

Look for Doudlah Farms' organic beans,



flours, popcorn, and sunflower seeds on our shelves and in our bulk department today. By choosing their products, you're supporting a small farm that puts health above profits.





# TREASURER'S REPORT

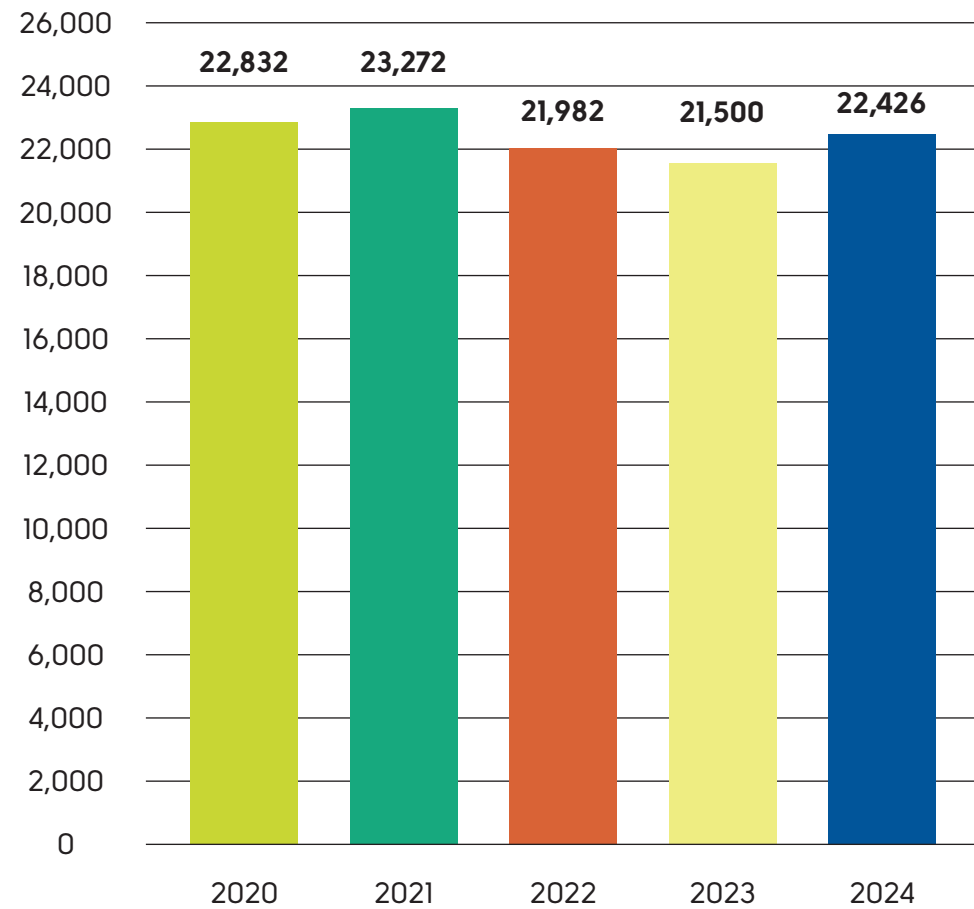
While we have seen successes in many areas, challenges remain with regard to inflation and in stock position due to weather related issues. These areas will be a focus as an Outpost commitment to improve and innovate to meet the evolving needs of customers and staff.

Despite our challenges, there were some positive outcomes for the year. Consistent with previous years, the board utilized the services of Wegner CPA to provide an independent evaluation of our financial statements, balance sheet, and related statements of income, equity, and cash flows. We are again pleased to report that Wegner gave a clean opinion on their audit of our financial position. Outpost experienced strong financial gains, ownership and in-store processes, reflected in a 1.6% increase in sales in the year 2024. We continue to maintain a debt-to-equity ratio below our targeted goal of 1.75:1, achievable by strong financial performance that allowed us to lower our debt. Ownership increased by 4.3% in 2024. Efforts to maintain the growth of co-op ownership will continue in the upcoming years.

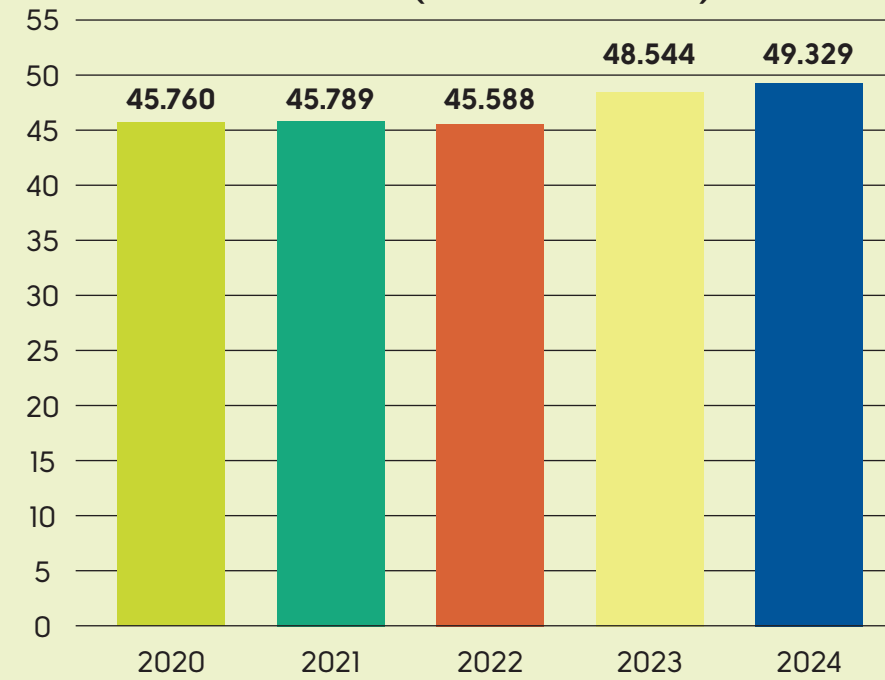
Overall, Outpost is well positioned for continued success in the coming year with the addition of new programs, dedicated staff, and strong financial health. The board is optimistic that we can continue to face any challenges with the same positive outlook and remain steadfast to our mission to deliver value to both our community and owners.

Eno Meier  
Outpost Board Treasurer

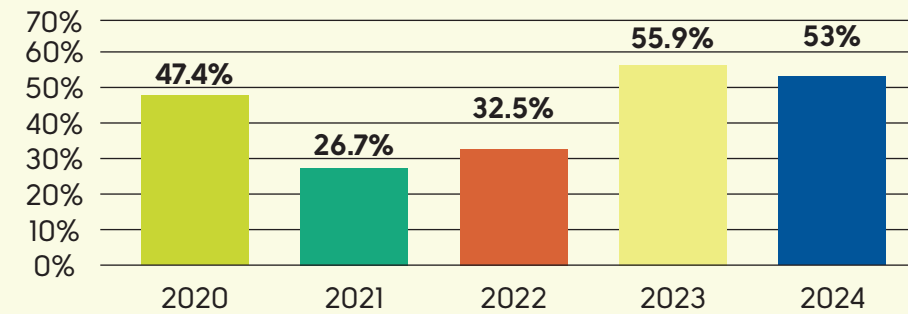
## ACTIVE OWNERS



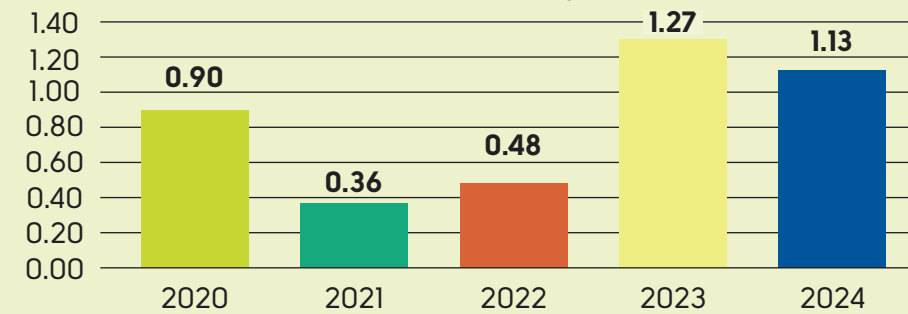
## SALES (IN MILLIONS)



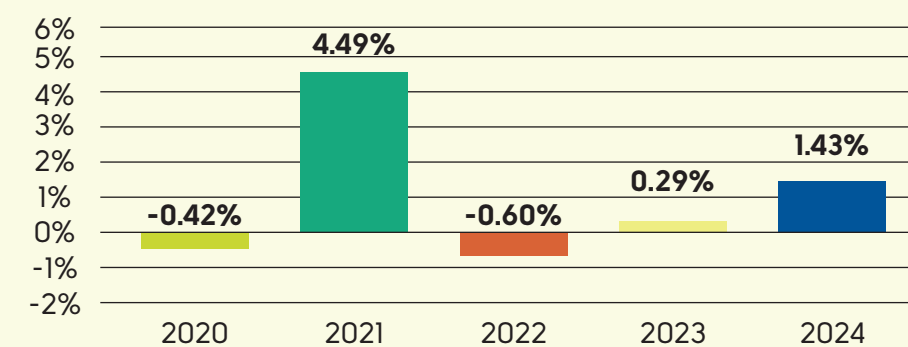
## DEBT AS % OF ASSETS



## DEBT TO EQUITY



## PROFITS AS A % OF SALES







# Good Food Gives Back

**BUY A BAG \$107,206**

2023 was a record year for Outpost's Buy A Bag fundraiser. Outpost shoppers donated \$107,206 to our program so that our co-op could purchase \$214,412 worth of food for Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee.

**FOOD FOR HEALTH \$3,389**

In Fiscal Year 2024, Outpost forged a new partnership with Milwaukee-based non-profit, Food for Health. To help them end chronic diet-related disease, such as diabetes and heart disease in underserved communities, Outpost held a round up at the registers fundraiser in February and March that raised \$3,389 for them.

**THINK OUTSIDE THE LUNCHBOX \$14,896**

Outpost's 2024 Think Outside the Lunchbox Summer Fundraiser raised \$14,896 in round up and cash donations at the registers. These funds help families with children during the summer months when school meals aren't an available source of nutrition.

**TEENS GROW GREENS \$2,803**

In an effort to help local teens develop important life and leadership skills, Outpost raised \$2,803 through round up at the registers for Teens Grow Greens in September at our four store locations.

**MILK MONEY \$10,596**

In Fiscal Year 2024 Outpost shoppers contributed an amazing \$10,596 to our Milk Money program. A \$4.00 Milk Money donation (the average cost of a gallon of milk) at checkout supported both local food pantries and Wisconsin dairy farmers.

**ROUND UP \$1,578**

In April and May 2024, we tried something new and held individual store round up fundraisers. At the Capitol Drive Outpost we raised \$702 for Kinship Community Food Center and at the Mequon Outpost we raised \$876 for Family Sharing of Ozaukee County.

**NOURISH MKE \$9,975**

Through the sale of 478 handmade bowls at our stores in Fiscal Year 2024, Outpost raised a staggering \$9,975 for Nourish MKE to support their four local food pantries.

# \$150,443

That's a grand total of \$150,443 in shopper-supported donations made in Fiscal Year 2024!

## Balance Sheets

Years ending September 30, 2023 and September 28, 2024

	2024		2023	
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Current Assets	\$6,179,267	26.8%	\$4,836,441	21.1%
Property & Equipment	\$8,627,103	37.4%	\$9,308,792	40.6%
Other Assets	\$8,263,501	35.8%	\$8,756,475	38.2%
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$23,069,871</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$22,901,708</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Current Liabilities	\$4,257,919	18.5%	\$4,066,900	17.8%
Long-Term Liabilities	\$7,975,297	34.6%	\$8,736,580	38.1%
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$12,233,216</b>	<b>53.0%</b>	<b>\$12,803,480</b>	<b>55.9%</b>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>\$10,836,655</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>\$10,098,228</b>	<b>44.1%</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>\$23,069,871</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$22,901,708</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Statement of Income

Years ending September 30, 2023 and September 28, 2024

	2024		2023	
<b>SALES</b>	<b>\$49,329,229</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$48,544,774</b>	<b>100%</b>
Cost of Goods Sold & Operating Expenses	\$34,074,008	69.1%	\$34,188,018	70.4%
Total Personnel Costs	\$12,799,813	25.9%	\$12,462,498	25.7%
Selling & Administrative Expenses	\$1,725,623	3.5%	\$1,870,086	3.9%
Net Operating Income	\$729,785	1.5%	\$24,172	0.0%
Net Other Income (Expense)	\$65,350	0.1%	\$85,111	0.2%
Net Income (Loss) Before Income Taxes	\$795,135	1.6%	\$109,283	0.2%
Provision for Income Taxes	(\$94,000)	-0.2%	\$33,000	0.1%
<b>NET INCOME (LOSS)</b>	<b>\$701,135</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>\$142,283</b>	<b>0.3%</b>

## Kinship Community Food Center & Outpost Capitol Drive Partner to Raise Funds Through Art

Outpost is committed to alleviating hunger in our community. When a local artist approached the co-op to raise funds for Kinship Community Food Center through an ongoing art show at our Capitol Drive store, we eagerly agreed! For an eight-dollar donation, anyone can purchase an already-framed art print right off the wall of our café seating area. In Fiscal Year 2024, \$1,584 was raised to help increase food accessibility in our area.







# Community Dinner

GOOD FOOD, GREAT COMPANY:  
OUTPOST BUILDS COMMUNITY

In October 2023, Outpost hosted its first-ever community dinner, offering Capitol Drive area shoppers a healthy, tasty, and affordable meal. For just five dollars, our expert kitchen team, led by Café Manager Andrea, served generous portions of authentic jambalaya (available in both regular and vegan versions) alongside fresh cornbread. All of this was accompanied by DJ LoFi spinning some toe-tapping tunes to keep the good vibes going.

The event was such a success that we continued hosting “Feed Your Soul” community dinners throughout 2024, expanding them to both our Capitol Drive and Mequon locations. In June, we even hosted a special “kitchen takeover” featuring local chef Shelita Furlow from Taste of Love Catering. She wowed us with her exceptional smoked wings and an ear of corn—all for the same low price of just five dollars!

These photos capture the fun, delicious food, and sense of community we shared with our shoppers.



## Inclusive Trade

In the summer of 2024, Outpost partnered with the Mileston Cooperative through the Federation of Southern Cooperatives to bring fresh, sustainably-grown watermelons to our customers. Mileston Cooperative, the oldest Black farmers’ cooperative in the U.S., was founded in 1940 to promote economic development and landownership for Black farmers. Based in Holmes County, Mississippi—an area renowned for its rich history of Black landownership—Mileston now connects 16 farmers cultivating over 2,000 acres, all united in their commitment to regenerative farming.

Co-ops across the country partnered through the National Co-op Grocers (NCG) watermelon program, moving an impressive 115 bins of Mileston watermelons in just four weeks. Outpost alone purchased 49 of those bins! By supporting these cooperatives, Outpost celebrates the dedication and resilience of underrepresented farmers while fostering stronger communities. With less than 1% of fresh produce consumed in the U.S. being grown by African American farmers, inclusive initiatives like this play a vital role in improving market access for historically marginalized growers.



## Cooperation Among Co-ops

### Wild Onion Market

At Outpost, cooperation among cooperatives is a fundamental value that shapes our work. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) highlights seven core principles that guide cooperatives worldwide, and Principle 6—“Cooperation Among Cooperatives”—underscores the vital importance of cooperatives collaborating with one another. By supporting each other, sharing resources, and collectively strengthening the cooperative movement, we create a more resilient and interconnected network.

This past year, our team had the opportunity to support Wild Onion Market Co-op’s grand opening in Chicago, a perfect example of how cooperation among co-ops leads to shared growth and success. At Outpost, this spirit of collaboration is central to everything we do—from strengthening local economies to fostering cooperative growth and knowledge sharing. Our team showed up bright and early to break down their first delivery, staying until every shelf was ready for opening day.

### Equal Exchange Coffee

In fiscal 2024, our commitment to cooperation filled our cups: we sold 5,760 pre-packed bags of Equal Exchange fair-trade bulk coffee beans and nearly 8,000 pounds of bulk coffee, generating \$158,691 in net sales. We are proud to work with this worker-owned co-op, and it’s a testament to the power of co-ops working together to create something greater. After all, when co-ops collaborate, it’s always a “latte” better for everyone!







## A Champion for Outpost's Mission & Growth

After an amazing 27 years of leading Outpost's marketing department, in June of 2024 we bid a fond farewell to Lisa Malmarowski, director of brand & store development, as she retired from her position at Outpost. Hired in 1997 as Merchandising & Marketing Manager, then in 2004 becoming the director of brand & store development, Lisa expanded Outpost's marketing department from a small three-person group to overseeing a team of three managers and 13 employees across four integral areas: purchasing, merchandising, graphic design, and social media.

Lisa's unwavering commitment to Outpost's vision and mission, combined with her dedication to the cooperative spirit, guided the opening of three dynamic new stores, oversaw multiple store remodels, and led the

creation and development of GRAZE magazine—just a few of her many remarkable achievements.

Throughout her tenure, Lisa's work supported the vision of a grocery store that was not just a place to shop but a vibrant community gathering space where everyone felt welcome and a sense of belonging. Under her leadership, the Outpost brand flourished, becoming a recognized leader in natural, local, and organic foods in Metro Milwaukee and earning its place as one of the top 10 grocery co-ops in the United States.

We celebrate her co-op career and wish her all the best as she embarks on this new adventure in life.

*Happy retirement, Lisa!*



## Thank You Simple Soyman!

It all started with a meatless Sloppy Jo. Back in the 1980s, Barb and R. Jay met while preparing a tofu-based Saucy Jo for an Outpost community dinner. The dish was such a hit that they decided to start a company, The Simple Soyman, to share their tofu sensation with as many people as possible. The business—and their romance—quickly took off. A year later, they were married, with wedding guests throwing soybeans instead of rice to celebrate the occasion.

For over 40 years, Simple Soyman set the gold standard for tofu in Wisconsin. As with all good things, this chapter has come to an end. In 2024, Barb and R. Jay decided it was time to retire. "It's a physical job," Barb explained. "We've been doing this for more than 40 years, and the hours are getting really long. We're not spring chickens anymore."

Their tempeh and sesame rounds can still be found on store shelves, the silky tofu that made them famous is currently on hold. The couple is hopeful they'll find someone passionate enough to carry on their legacy. "We're actively looking for someone who feels as strongly about this as we do—not just someone who wants to make a quick buck," Barb shared. "This is hard work. It's rewarding work, but it's a commitment."



GOOD FOOD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW SINCE 1970