Eat up

'Tiny' food-op stocks edibles for sound diet

By DEBBIE HOWLETT
Of the Emerald

The University Food-op can help students avoid the "soda and chips" syndrome.

Located near Agate Street in an alley behind the campus employment offices, the food-op sells low-priced "health" foods such as tofu, kefir and a wide variety of teas. The store is staffed by work-study students, who serve as indispensable guides to the tiny structure's shelving system.

"People have a lot of misconceptions about the food-op. We are here to give students an option to Safeway," says food-op director Don Coulter.

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The food-op sells fresh produce, often organically grown, at reasonable rates — quite a change from TV dinners and canned peas. On a recent visit the food-op even separated the fresh veggies from the week old items, with reduced rates on the older fare.

The food-op also carries the area's cheapest Humble Bagels at 15 cents each. Coulter says the bagels, which the food-op prices even lower than the Humble Bagel bakery, are a kind of "drawing card" to bring in customers.

Bread — whole wheat and other varieties — also is sold, along with onion buns. If you prefer to bake your own, the food-op offers both whole wheat and unbleached white flour.

Cheese and milk are sold, but the prices tend to be a little bit higher than most grocery markets. A wide variety of tea is sold in bulk quantities.

Coulter stresses that most of the food sold is produced locally and that there is "high rotation with very little spoilage at the food-op."

When the food-op went from the drawing board to reality about six years ago, it was used mostly to serve the fraternities and sororities on a wholesale basis, Coulter says. In the past couple of years, the food-op has shifted to a more retail outlook, now serving the entire campus community, he says.

For a time the food-op was operating in the red, Coulter says, but thanks to effective management in the last 18 months, the non-profit store now operates on solid ground. Coulter says he believes this also shows a trend toward better service.

While the food-op carries a large variety of foods, it can't completely supply every individual's needs, he says, adding that he would like to better educate the community that while the food-op can't stock everything, it can

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