

Co-op Grocery Opens on Northeast Alberta

By Lee Perlman
The Portland Observer

Inner-Northeast Portlanders have a new place for groceries.

The Alberta Co-operative Grocery recently opened its doors at 1500 N.E. Alberta St. The store serves customers from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays.

A grand opening with free food tastings and entertainment is set for July 28.

The co-op grew out of a community survey conducted by the Sabin Community Development Corp. in 1996. Asked what services the neigh-

borhood did not have and could use, 98 percent of participants mentioned a grocery store. Based on this, a group of 25 interested neighbors held a meeting in April 1997 to consider starting such an enterprise. "There was so much energy and enthusiasm," board

treasurer and spokesperson Bill Boyd says. The group began with a "buyer's club," buying items in bulk at wholesale prices to save money, in 1999. They learned the ins and outs of operating a store from other co-ops and from Portland State University's Business Outreach Program, whereby students advise businesses on sales and marketing practices. The Portland Development Commission provided about 35 percent of their \$135,000 startup costs, the rest coming from their 230 members.

The store offers many - though not all - of the features of a full-service

grocery store, including a produce section, whole grains, dairy products, canned goods, coffees and teas, herbal remedies, home and health care products and pet supplies.

There are some limitations. In part, the storefront's 2,900 square foot size - half the size of the old Nature's Fremont store, before the company moved out in search of more space - precludes stocking everything you'd find in a conventional grocery. Many products are precluded by

Steinfeld's Pickles. Nor does it provide meat, fish or poultry.

However, they do stock bananas. "I know they're organic, but clearly they're not local and I can't be sure they meet fair labor practices," Boyd

admits. "I don't think we'll ever have perfect standards."

Store representatives are aware that organic products do tend to cost more, and that "price is a huge barrier to people." Still, Boyd says, "For some things, we're holding true to our values. If people want Coke or Kellogg's cereals, they don't need another outlet for that. We can't be all things to all people."

One thing the grocery will offer is a chance to get involved in the store beyond merely shopping there. For \$36 a year you can join the co-op, which gives you both a five percent discount on purchases and a vote on policies. If you volunteer at least five hours of work a month, the discount could be as high as 15 percent. They also honor discounts for members of

other cooperatives. All their current members live within a mile of the store, Boyd says. The store also devotes some of its precious space to a bulletin board, a play area for children and easy chairs for adults. "We want to be more than a place to load up the goods," Boyd says. "Not everyone will appreciate what we do, but we've heard an incredible amount of excitement about this in the community. For months people have been asking us, 'when are you going to open up?'"



A wide variety of fresh produce, featuring organically grown varieties, are featured in the new Alberta co-op.



PHOTOS BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Bill Boyd of the Alberta Co-operative Grocery welcomes a customer to the new store at Northeast 15th and Alberta.

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New Vision Outlined For Lloyd District

A revised vision is taking shape for the development of Portland's Lloyd District. The Portland Development Commission approved a strategy that will help guide development efforts in the Lloyd District and identify public-sector capital improvements to support develop-

ment over the next 10 years. The new vision, led by a 16-member Steering Committee and the community, includes new urban housing, thriving specialty shops and a variety of different types of office space in attractive mixed-use developments. It also includes diverse dining and entertainment options and

a robust tourist economy, as well as pedestrian friendly walkways, tree-lined streets, bikeways and transit, and many parks and plazas.

More detailed strategies for increasing housing and economic development are being explored further in two adjacent studies being conducted this summer including, the Lloyd District

Housing Strategy and the Central City Jobs Strategy.

Kids to Visit Ghana, West Africa

A group of nine kids and six adults, from All the World Ministries and Fellowship Church, will leave July 24 for two weeks in Ghana, West Africa.

The children will learn about their heritage and the culture of the Ghanaian people. In turn, the African children they meet will learn about

the culture of the United States.

The group also plans to take school supplies, toiletries, clothing and toys to donate to their African hosts. Most of the children, 10 to 15 years old, are from single parent households. The ministry welcomes contributions to offset the \$2,000

cost for each person on the trip, which includes tickets, hotel fees and other expenses. Contributions in checks or money orders can be made in care of Fellowship Church, Trip to Ghana West Africa, 5131 N.E. 23rd Ave., Portland, OR. For more information, call 503-249-0347.

Manage Your Business Reputation

The Public Relations Society of America at Portland State University will be having a reputation management conference for public relations newcomers and professionals. Participants can discover how to assess reputa-

tion and explore approaches to building, preserving and restoring reputation. Keynote speakers will be Gail Dundas, Community Affairs Manager at Intel and Pat McCormick, partner within Conkling Fiskum & McCormick,

Inc. The event is on Wednesday, July 25, from 1 - 4 p.m. at PSU's Smith Center, Cascade Room. For reservations, call 503/725-3536 or make your request by email at prssapsu@yahoo.com.

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