

**The Great Basin Community Food Cooperative turns 10 years old soon, and there is so much to celebrate!**

Your co-op is here to stay! We came back 122% from 2014's \$184,000 loss, and we are finally making a profit for the first time in our history!

GBCFC had its first meeting on September 14th, 2005 in the Nixon's home, the original meeting place

for several of our original co-founders. A few months later we kicked off the first buying club in the kitchen Nicole and I shared. Within 9 months of our start date, we had saved \$814 in a cash box that we hid under the bed. As far as we were concerned, we were rich! We gladly accepted an offer from the Fergusons to move into a 100-square-foot room in the back of their record store, Sound & Fury.

The \$814 we had saved bought us two thrift store fridges, two metro racks, twenty-four used Jelly Belly bulk bins, and a small inventory of organic items and farm-fresh goods produced by the first seven farms and ranches that we contracted with: Lattin Farms (cantaloupe, raspberries, and cucumbers), Churchill Butte Organics (dried herbs), Smith & Smith Family Farms (grass-fed NV beef), Sierra Valley Farms (kale, spinach, and leafy green mix), Farmstead Oasis Dairy (handmade goat cheeses), Mewaldt Organics (tomatoes, garlic, and basil), and Carroll's Corner Truck Farm (onions and garlic).

Much to our surprise, Great Basin Community Food Cooperative grew at an alarming rate since its inception. We have moved several times to accommodate increasing business; we are grateful now to have vendor relations with over 120 local farmers, ranchers, producers, and artisans. Our sales have grown from \$23,828 in 2006 to nearly \$3 million in 2014!

Our business plan was always to buy great local products, to support good growing practices, and to pay a decent wage to our workers. Being at the forefront of Reno's burgeoning local food movement didn't lend itself to a downhill coast. In fact, we spent the majority of the last decade identifying and inspecting local producers while also trying to build our buying power with national organic vendors. We knew that this was the key to being able to offer great prices to our members and shoppers. We climbed each hill grateful that we had made a small dent in Nevada's food industry, and we felt fortunate to have paid all of our bills and employees.

Moving to 240 Court St. in February of 2012 gave us a big run for our money, literally. It was at this time that our members contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars in member loans and the game of managing debt began. We found ourselves in the midst of what many refer to as the trajectory of start-ups. The big move wasn't just a new building; it was like opening a brand new business that was nearly fourteen times the size of our last retail storefront on Plumas Street. Our staff jumped from 7 to 24 overnight, and we rushed to create and implement dozens of new standard operating procedures.

At this new location our overhead was at an all-time high, while our buying power and the economies of scale that we needed to offer better prices for our members weren't quite there yet. Fortunately, there was a national association that assists co-ops with developmental skills, The National Cooperative Grocers (NCG). NCG leveraged the combined buying powers of over 140 co-ops across the nation and they soon became the second largest for organics behind Whole Foods.

GBCFC submitted our first application to NCG in 2010; we were denied based on not having the minimum requirement of \$2 million dollars in annual sales at that time. That situation changed quickly as we were one of the fastest growing co-ops in the nation: 138% YOY in 2012, 96% YOY in 2013, and 38% in 2014. It was at the tail end of this growth that we were finally accepted as full NCG members.

Growth in the triple digits brings with it every kind of growing pain that one could imagine, and burnout was visible on most our faces. Around the time of our last application period, I decided to take an unpaid leave of absence for a year. Since the co-op's birth eight years prior, it had become like a child to me—long days and nights, plenty of messes and tantrums, yet an overarching and constant supply of growth and joy. We were starting to become financially stable, yet it was still a risky time to leave. Fortunately, I met Jolene Cook earlier that year at an interview for a front-end position. I was so taken by her organizational skills, her ability to see the bigger picture, and her work ethic that I immediately started training her to take on my current role as GM. Jolene came out of the gates running, and she embarked on some very keen marketing efforts and initiatives that I feel helped to "open the doors" for our co-op. Her husband Steve Cook took over as our creative director and his genius has shone ever since!

During the next 12 months the co-op had many great achievements and accomplishments. Yet beneath it all our internal culture was beginning to crack and divide as seemingly irreconcilable conflicts within our various food politics presented themselves. Polarized groups of upper management and

	Jan - Jun, 2015	Jan - Jun, 2014	% of change
<b>SALES</b>	<b>\$1,452,610</b>	<b>\$1,409,087</b>	<b>3.09%</b>
<b>COST OF GOODS</b>	<b>\$913,574</b>	<b>\$934,511</b>	<b>-2.24%</b>
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>\$539,036</b>	<b>\$474,577</b>	<b>13.58%</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$518,690</b>	<b>\$548,130</b>	<b>-5.37%</b>
<b>TOTAL OTHER EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$5,843</b>	<b>\$7,894</b>	<b>-25.98%</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$16,521</b>	<b>-\$73,632</b>	<b>122.40%</b>

directors formed and war broke out within our very organization.

Our story is not new or unique; it probably follows that of most sizeable business and community-based organizations. An incredibly insightful human once told me that when any group or person wants to re-create some perceived flawed aspect of their world, at some point they will have to challenge, examine, and re-route every cultural and family of origin issue that lives within them.

In our case, the “perceived flaws” scenario we sought to re-create was a new version of our unjust and ecologically unsustainable global food system that pervades every aspect of our urban and rural lives. Amongst our long-standing co-op crew are some of the most intense and passionate political foodies that you will meet in Reno, individuals dedicated to providing food that is local, organic, and non-GMO while ensuring fair and safe labor practices and promoting neutral waste practices within agriculture.

Perhaps this is why the old saying of being the change you want to see in the world rings so true? Anyone who has ever honestly and bravely examined the geography of their own heart and psyche (especially in group process), quickly understands that volatile elements often present themselves. We become faced with the bigger beliefs we carry in this world and within this strife the opportunity arises to examine what is true, what is false, and what promotes peace within our lives and our world. Seeing something for what it is can oftentimes be hard and painful, but the beauty is that it allows us all to make a choice about the things we want to continue thinking, doing and being. It is here that we begin to understand the open and closed places inside of ourselves where empathy, forgiveness and compassion are concerned. We also get to examine our own issues and ability to communicate clearly, engage in healthy dispute resolution and share resources.

Despite how painful and troubling this time was for every person involved, I have a gut sense that it was exactly the strife that our organization needed to reach a higher level of clarity, focus, and determination. The paradoxical side of any person or situation that we tend to cast away in our minds with hatred and antipodal alignment is that they very well could be our “angels of adversity”... This conflict may have been the basis of the unseen molecular colliders that kicked us all into high gear and helped to turn our sinking ship around.

So big ethereal life and human nature speculation aside, our co-op's lifeline was hanging by a thread as we continued to hemorrhage money. By June 30, 2014 we had already lost \$73,631, a loss that would culminate to a negative amount for our co-op of \$184,000 by year-end. I returned to the co-op in the fall of 2014 with a strong sense of needing to create healthier boundaries and weed out the situations that had hurt the co-op in the prior year. Needless to say, we experienced huge staff transition during this time. The remaining team took it in stride and we all worked harder, smarter, and longer to compensate. Even at the height of our frequent 15-18 hour work days, we stayed positive and laughed tremendously. We all saw the experience as a huge opportunity to cut the labor fat, realign with our mission, and keep the co-op in business!

Our first point of operational priority was to bring more local into the co-op and begin to eliminate as many GMOs as possible. Nicole and I set off on a plan to scrutinize our overall co-op purchasing and engage in as many contracts with local farmers in our foodshed who we knew could grow the majority of the food that we were still purchasing through other out-of-state, large-scale organic distributors.

Enter Zach Cannady and Andrew Yokom. These guys jumped into the 2015 contract planning and helped to fill our Local Product GAPS list with an abundance of high quality goods from every kind of local rancher, producer, artisan, and distributor. To this day I truly believe that Andrew & Zach were sent from someone above looking out for us. Shortly after that, Jacob Nachel flew down to enlighten the refrigerated and frozen departments, and Phineas Porter dove head into our flailing kitchen with his kinetic cerebral recipe intelligence that only your taste buds can truly understand and appreciate. Each worked hard to infuse the finest, freshest, most ethical ingredients into every aspect of their departments and they all brought new levels success within months. A LOCAL FOOD THRIVING MINDSET! Quick note: by the spring of 2015 Andrew Yokom transformed the entire bulk department to 100% GMO FREE!

Meanwhile, my sister Nicole Sallaberry, the co-op's Local Food, Sustainability, and DROPP (Distributors of Regional & Organic Produce and Products) Coordinator, continued to build relationships with local producers that would further expand the co-op's food network. In case you haven't heard, DROPP is the co-op's very own local food hub that pays farmers 80 cents on every dollar for their produce! Nicole worked closely with the new DROPP programmer, Josh Koberstein. Together, they put in long hours behind the scenes to rebuild DROPP from the ground up, a hefty recovery for a system that crashed and burned in its first inception.

In the wake of all this change, Geneva Mora warmly filled the role of our Human Resources Coordinator. Her intelligence, adherence to form, and grace created a new sense of peace at the co-op that made us all feel safe and productive. Andrew Pierson began as our first-ever dedicated Finance Coordinator and began taking our data and spreadsheets to a new level. David Benke boldly stepped into the role of Forefront & Member-Owner Services Coordinator and has elevated our customer service team with cheer, odd jokes, and impeccable communication. Nicole Madden, a professional sommelier, joined us later in the spring, bringing a sweet-yet-firey presence and generations of wine, viticulture, and artisanal food knowledge with her. Flash joined on to

help run our first-ever fresh juice and smoothie bar! His ideas are tasty, fresh, and healing, and he is busily preparing for the Juice Bar grand opening on September 19th, 2015.

When Jolene left for maternity leave on January 1, 2015, I began solo GM-ing. Jolene rejoined the team on April 1 with new baby Genevieve in tow, filling the role of our Wellness Department Coordinator and infusing our upstairs with knowledge, compassion, and her very bright loving energy!

We knew this was the make-it-or-break-it year with no more residual capital to cover losses. Several of my co-op peers made irritating but true comments to me about the high risk of GBCFC going out of business in 2015. We had to make a profit or else the co-op would need to pack its bags and claim defeat in the name that Local Food at this scale was not a viable business in Northern Nevada. But instead of facing that defeat, we kicked butt.

Mary McCallum, Dane Haman, Owen Bryant, Julian Jacobs, Evan Standifer, Isabella Jacobs, Jordan Gustin, Serj Sing, Lisa Zimmerman, Willow Romska, Brett Derby, Manuel Nunes, Emily Grey, Jacqueline Guzman, and Tina Uzzle are the unsung heroes and the true micro-ecology that comprises the intelligence framework that is GBCFC! These folks are the faces you see every time you shop at the co-op: when you need help identifying a local squash, finding pastured eggs, or choosing an herbal tincture to reduce anxiety or help you to fight a cold. They are the force and love that delivers fresh-baked organic cookies, zesty kale salads, and incredible organic burritos daily. They are the hard-working, quick-witted individuals who make your experience at the co-op so wonderful every time you shop.

Our Hands On Owner program is in its final stages of life as we prepare to align with what most co-ops in our nation have done, which is to eliminate the program because it poses a legal risk. It should be noted here (ten thousand times over) that there is no way we could have ever made it to where we are today without the help of so many friends, family members, and committed co-op owners. You guys were the true "behind the scenes" lifeline of GBCFC.

Let's wrap this up, shall we? To date we are trending nearly \$90,000 over last year's net income at this time. Our sales continue to grow and for the FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY WE MADE A PROFIT BY THE MID-YEAR MARK!! Every major benchmark that we needed to reach this year has been exceeded and more than half of the funds that we need to repay the last year of \$100,000+ in members loans is in the bank! Nothing feels better than making a comeback!

So here we are, on the other side of our most ambitious local food planning season and a complete overhaul on the operational systems. I can honestly say that I have never felt so honored to be part of the GBCFC team. The incredible grit, heart-driven work ethic, and dedication that we have within the entire GBCFC staff brings me a few small tears each week. Be sure to join us at the co-op's 10 year Birthday Block Party on September 19th to meet all of these great souls and celebrate this stellar year with us.

It really is true that a very small yet committed group can move mountains (and that speaks volumes coming from our high-desert, drought-laden position in the world). I can only imagine what the remainder of this year carries with it. First wish – RAIN & SNOW.

Amber Sallaberry  
Co-Founder & General Manager

---

**BIG NEWS! In a first of its kind project in America, we're launching the 'Meet Your Farmer' digital app. Download the free app and you'll be able to point your smartphone at the Meet Your Farmer stickers around the store and a short video will automatically play about the farmer and their produce. You can literally meet your farmer without leaving the store!**

