

OTHER AVE-NEWS

SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER



Other Avenues Grocery Cooperative
3930 Judah Street, San Francisco CA 94122
415.661.7475 www.otheravenues.coop



Other Avenues Celebrates 40 Years Part Three: The Future

by Nicole
Gluckstern

To celebrate our 40th Anniversary, Other Ave-News presents a series of articles that tell our story. Shanta began by recounting our early days from 1974 to 1999. In the fall issue, Tina described our challenges and successes from 1999 to the present. In this edition, Nicole writes about our current presence in the Outer Sunset, and our vision for a sustainable future.

The Future is NOW.

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."
—Abraham Lincoln

Welcome to 2015! As many of you know, Other Avenues turned 40 in 2014. Now that we're entering our maturing years (just barely!), we're taking stock of what we've achieved thus far, and what lies ahead for ourselves, our neighborhood, and the worker-cooperative movement at large.

What has Other Avenues achieved in 40 years? As detailed in the first two parts of this series, we've gone through multiple changes and permutations over the years, from a volunteer-run buying coop to a hybrid consumer/worker coop to the fully worker-owned establishment we are today. We've expanded in size, refined our mission, and we even man-

aged to buy our building, thanks in large part to our community of shoppers, neighbors, and sister cooperatives. We model democratic, consensus-based decision-making, conscious buying practices, collab-

And it's a model that's gathering momentum, and not just in the natural foods biz. In the San Francisco Bay Area alone, there are dozens of worker-cooperatives, ranging from bakeries to bike shops to biofuel stations.



orative department management, and good stewardship of our resources and assets, proving that worker-ownership is more than just an achievable business model, but a practical, profitable one.

Nationally, the cooperative movement is gaining traction in larger, manufacturing concerns and unionized workplaces, and internationally as a natural component of economic development programs and fair

(continued on page 2)

trade/direct trade labeling practices. The recognition that labor should directly benefit that individual speaks to the desire for self-determination, while the evenly-distributed responsibilities and egalitarian management of a cooperative business speaks to the equally compelling desire for collaboration. In fact, the cooperative economy could well be labeled the “real” sharing economy, as all aspects of the business—the burdens and the rewards—are shared by the workers.

But coops do more than just benefit its workers. An infographic published last year in *Yes* magazine shows the impact food coops have on their immediate communities. Compared to conventional grocers, food coops source three times as much of their product and spend almost twice their revenues locally. With more sales per square foot than conventional grocers, coops are also able to create more jobs per million dollars in revenue, and a higher percentage of them offer benefits in addition to wages. Other Avenues has been an anchor business for the now-bustling Judah Street corridor for 40 years, weathering changes in both neighborhood and business model by putting access to good, wholesome, and sustainably-produced food above whatever catchphrases or trends sweep the conventional grocery world. And in our long tenure, we’ve watched the neighborhood evolve, refining itself into the beachside oasis we enjoy today. The Sunset diwstrict renaissance has arrived, and we wholeheartedly embrace the vibrant energy that’s infusing our once-sleepy street.

One tangible effect of this renaissance has been a movement among the merchants on Judah Street to create an atmosphere of inclusion for the influx of

visitors, familiar and new faces both, by building a series of public access parklets. Parklets create public spaces for socializing and relaxation, and the parklet shared between Other Avenues and Sea Breeze Café offers our friends

our workers, the health of our city, and the health of, well, the entire planet. It’s no modest goal, this saving the world stuff, but we feel fortunate and honored to be doing our part.

“Our once-fringe fantasies of cooperation and egalitarianism within the workplace may someday be considered the new normal”

and neighbors a place to recharge and connect with each other, much as the front stoops and open porches of residential streets might do. It also connects us to a broader coalition of urban planners and livable city proponents who are striving to create multi-functional, people-friendly spaces within the finite borders of our city limits.

On an even larger scale, our big project for the beginning of 2015 has been our solar panel campaign. This project has helped us further connect with our immediate community (many of whom directly supported our fundraising campaign by donating money and/or spreading the word), as well with the larger community of solar energy proponents, whose commitment to creating sustainable systems of alternative, eco-friendly energy is one that speaks very strongly to our own mission statement: “Healthy Business, Healthy People, Healthy Planet.” We firmly believe that each component of this mission links directly to the next, and by focusing on “health” as a core principle, we’re able to embrace a wide variety of issues that effect the health of our business, the health of

We are living in a time of change, and the rising awareness of our business model is just one facet of a cultural shift towards “disrupting” convention. Our once-fringe fantasies of cooperation and egalitarianism within the workplace may someday be considered the new normal, and as veterans in the field we can feel proud of the struggles and sacrifices we’ve endured to create the thriving workplace we enjoy today. Does the future of business lie in worker-cooperativism? We can’t say for sure, but there’s no doubt in our minds that the future of Other Avenues does. With the addition of new workers and influx of new energy and new ideas, one thing that we can be certain of is that we will be constantly evolving and growing. We look forward to sharing our evolution with you, our friends and fellow travelers, as we head off together into the brave unknown. The future is already here, let’s see where we can take it next.

This issue is Nicole’s last for Other Ave-News. Thanks for all your work, and best of luck to you in the future!