

# SPROUT!

Summer 2020



**CURBSIDE  
PICKUP**

**PICKUP  
ZONE**

**Seward**  
COMMUNITY CO-OP





# SPROUT!

## Seward Co-op's Ends Statement

Seward Co-op will sustain a healthy community that has:

- Equitable economic relationships
- Positive environmental impacts
- Inclusive, socially responsible practices

**General Manager** Sean Doyle

**Editor** Carla Cardenas

**Designer** William Hoben

**Marketing Manager** Karah Barr

**Proofreading** Sid Korpi, Proof Positive

**Sprout!** is published quarterly

## Hours of Operation

Each day our opening hour—from 9 to 10 a.m.—is reserved for shoppers who are at a higher risk of severe illness by COVID-19.

## Franklin store

(612) 338-2465  
Open 9 a.m.—9 p.m. daily  
2823 E. Franklin Ave., MPLS, MN 55406

## Friendship store

(612) 230-5595  
Open 9 a.m.—9 p.m. daily  
317 E. 38th St., MPLS, MN 55409

## Creamery Café

(612) 230-5575  
Temporarily Closed  
2601 E. Franklin Ave., MPLS, MN 55406

## International Cooperative Principles

Voluntary & Open Membership  
Democratic Member Control  
Member Economic Participation  
Autonomy & Independence  
Education, Training & Information  
Cooperation Among Cooperatives  
Concern For Community

## Sprout! Printing Policies

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**On the cover:** JD poses next to our Curbside Pickup zone sign. Learn more about our online ordering program, Curbside Pickup, on pages 8-9.

**On the back:** Marco greets shoppers as we limit capacity in our stores.



# A Message From the General Manager Sean Doyle

Three months ago, the COVID-19 pandemic began. I hope that you and all in your household are well. This is the hardest challenge that Seward Co-op has faced in my 16 years as general manager. With one of the first positive tests in the state, we acted quickly to close and clean the Franklin store. We also closed our Creamery Café. As a community co-op, we made the decision to retain any employee who wished to work at the co-op because we know our employees are critical for our co-op's success.

The Friendship store implemented social distancing practices that altered the way our co-op operates. We began prepacking bulk items, ceased allowing reused containers and bags, installed Plexiglas at the registers and implemented six-foot distancing reminders. We reserved 9–10 a.m. every day for older adults and those who are immuno-compromised. We adopted these practices at Franklin when we reopened, and we launched Curbside Pickup—online ordering and pickup at both stores—for these individuals, plus first responders. Recently Curbside Pickup expanded to serve everyone.

The board of directors held its first virtual listening session on April 1 with co-op owners to share the financial status of the co-op. More than 50 people attended. Topics included the financial impacts to our business caused by the closures of our store and café, the launch of an owner capital campaign, and the importance of retaining staff. Board

and management answered many questions. The greatest concern was that sales at the co-op have decreased while costs have remained the same or increased. Projections at that time showed the co-op entering financial crisis by the end of May.

Fortunately, in April the co-op obtained \$2 million from the SBA Paycheck Protection Program. Our capital campaign has been well received, with over 100 co-op owners interested in investing. We have closed on over \$130,000 in loans or C stock. We have several commitments that are in process. We are grateful for the community support. Please contact us at [invest@seward.coop](mailto:invest@seward.coop) to learn how you can participate.

With immediate financial crisis averted, Seward Co-op still has a long road ahead. The disruptions to the conventional food system tell us we need a localized Community Foods system now more than ever. It is important to reflect on the changes we all have made to flatten the curve of the spread of the coronavirus, and to protect the lives of fellow community members. We appreciate your support of the co-op. We are grateful to those in our community who made enough masks for our 270 employees. We are grateful for our hard-working employees who show up every day amid this crisis to serve everyone in our community.

# Local Summertime Staples



Days of summer grilling are fast approaching. Entertaining and celebrations will be different this summer, as we practice social distancing. Nice weather days still call for firing up the grill at home with those in your household, or you might plan a shared menu with distant friends to enjoy together virtually! Seward Co-op has summertime staples to make it happen. This season, cook up foods that not only taste good but do good by supporting local Community Foods producers. Whether you enjoy these favorites or some of your own this summer, look for the Community Foods logo throughout our stores to support a food economy that aligns with our values.



**Holiday Store Hours**  
**Independence Day**  
9 a.m.—8 p.m.  
**Labor Day**  
9 a.m.—9 p.m.





Good food requires the investment of a whole community. We continue to maintain that investment even during this challenging time. Seward Co-op's direct relationship with small-scale, local, cooperative, sustainable and/or inclusive producers allows us all to have access to exceptionally high quality food and other products. This access is a lifeline when the supply chains around us are strained due to rapid shifts in demand. Our Community Foods partners keep us well fed and healthy. We support them, in turn, by buying their products at a fair price. A few of our Community Foods partners shared the impact of our cooperative support.

Coffee farmers, like many farmers around the world, live on the economic edge. The bulk coffee offered at Seward Co-op is sourced from small-scale farmer cooperatives helping coffee farms survive. "For every pound of coffee that Peace Coffee purchases, we invest three cents into the Cooperative Coffee's Impact Fund, which supports farmer-to-farmer training, agronomic assistance, and climate resiliency strategies...\$130,000 of this fund has been committed to immediate COVID-19 relief," said Anne Costello, Peace Coffee's Director of Coffee. A farmer co-op in Mexico that supplies Equal Exchange was "able to provide food for two weeks for 490 coffee co-op members in order to keep them at home and protect the most vulnerable people and prevent the spread of the virus." This is the power of cooperation; by working together, we help one another survive difficult times.



"The directness of our supply chain benefits us in times like now, with COVID, because supply chains are being disrupted and delayed at every interval: from farmer to warehouse, warehouse to port, port to boat and boat to NY [New York] then to EE [Equal Exchange]. Because there are less steps in our model, it means that while we are experiencing delays, there are fewer hurdles to overcome before receiving this coffee," said Equal Exchange's Coffee Buyer Kim Coburn.



In this economically unprecedented time, many small-scale farmers have lost markets for their products, such as restaurants and farmers' markets. Seward Co-op is a lifeline offering a reliable and predictable return on all their hard work. When we shop at Seward Co-op, we support not only our co-op; we also support a strong network of small-scale food producers.

When restaurants closed or went to carryout service only, a number of local meat producers suddenly lost much of their market. According to Andy Peterson of Peterson Craftsman Meats, "If we did not have our relationship with Seward, once the restaurants shut down, we would've been in a serious pickle. The [co-op's] orders literally kept us afloat!" Aaron Johnson at Kadejan chicken told us, "Without the co-op business, Kadejan would not be able to continue operating."



Perhaps nearly as much as we take pride in knowing who raises much of the meat sold at our stores, Seward Co-op farmer producers value the relationship we share, not only the business transaction. According to Paul Smith of Blooming Prairie, "There's just something about actually knowing the person at the other end of the conversation. Problems and different accommodations can be resolved almost instantly."

Throughout the summer, please fill your cart with fresh, locally grown and raised items, and coffee sourced from small-scale farmer cooperatives. When in season, most of the vegetables and fruits on our produce shelves are grown by real people right here in the upper Midwest. Community Foods purchases are important, everyday

investments in a sustainable and equitable food system. Your purchases help Community Foods producers survive and thrive for another year. Our collective investments provide them the financial resources to keep their businesses safe and their staff employed. We are so grateful—together we are building a strong local food system!

Conversations with Community Foods producers and growers will continue. We will discuss the challenges of the current climate and how direct relationships with food cooperatives like ours can be a lifeline in these uncertain times. Stay tuned to our social media and website at [www.seward.coop](http://www.seward.coop).





Seward Co-op’s annual Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) Fair has ushered in the beginning of spring—even when we have contended with a late-season snowfall! For the past 19 years, we have held our CSA Fairs under a big tent outside our Franklin store and, in more recent years, outside our Creamery Café. With social distancing in place, we wanted to make sure our local, small farms and producers still received support from our community. So this year, our CSA Fair went virtual! From April 20–30 we featured prepared videos from 24 farms and producers that provide our community with amazing food throughout the growing season from Minnesota, Wisconsin and a fishery from Alaska. Going virtual allowed the direct connections to farmers to be more accessible to our community.



During this time of crisis and supply-chain disruption, we need community-based farmers, fishers, and producers more than ever. Our featured farms offered a variety of CSAs including vegetables, fruit, meat, cheese, bread, mushrooms and seafood. Some farms also offered add-ons like honey, maple syrup, eggs and flowers. CSAs are not only a great way to supplement your shopping trip, they are an opportunity to invest in the people who grow and harvest our food.

These CSA Fair farms supplied us with photos from the farm as well as videos that give us virtual tours of their land, a chance to hear from farmworkers, and of course, some sneak peeks of cute farm animals. These videos really offer a chance to connect with the folks who grow our food. If you missed our virtual CSA Fair in April, you can still explore the farms and watch producer videos! Check out [www.seward.coop/csa\\_fair](http://www.seward.coop/csa_fair).



We are living in extraordinary times. COVID-19 has had most of the United States in lockdown. Minnesota is no exception, with much time spent “sheltering in place.” We have learned new phrases such as “social distancing” and flattening the curve.”

Many of us are seeing and experiencing the fragility of multiple systems. The systems of inequity and oppression are more obvious. Violent acts are targeted at people of Asian descent. Black people are more likely to die from COVID-19, and Native folks are devastated by the lack of resources for their communities. The public health system cannot spread the word fast enough, nor can it provide the personal protection equipment necessary to keep workers safe. The pandemic is straining our education systems. Stay-at-home orders highlight the lack of Internet access for Black, Brown and low-income White folks.

The pandemic has also exposed us to the truth about our food system. We knew that food access is a big issue. Eating well is not possible for many people living in poverty. Those using EBT/SNAP to access food are prohibited from purchasing groceries online. Multifaceted and fragile, the food system is not as resilient as we would like to believe. We are witnessing the food and agriculture supply chain struggle with consumer product shortages and at the same time, commercial over supply. Farmers across the country are forced to dump huge quantities of milk and vegetables. While other producers are forced to euthanize chickens and cattle, while many Americans wait in line at food pantries.

The pandemic has exposed the inequity in labor. The pandemic has divided the labor force into two categories: essential and non-essential workers. Our food system has inequity built into it. From seed to savor, the food system is exploitive of land and labor. The workers that are some of the most essential are our food-chain workers. From the field to the checkout line, each worker is essential to feeding our communities.

I am proud to be an owner of Seward Co-op. We have local producers that are committed to local farming and delivering good food grown sustainably. Seward is serving the community because of the dedication of our workers, whether they work at the Creamery, Franklin store or Friendship store. Each and every one of them is doing extraordinary work. The greatest teams need great leadership. We are fortunate to have one of the best leaders in the co-op industry at the helm of our co-op, General Manager Sean Doyle. Sean is doing a fantastic job of leading the co-op through this challenging time.

And there is more work to do. It will take all of us to keep Seward Co-op going. Please consider investing in Seward. Please shop at Seward. Buy what you can, when you can. Practice social distancing. Consider wearing a mask when you come to our stores. Wash your hands and don’t touch your face. AND, don’t forget to say thank you to the staff and leadership of Seward Community Co-op.

We are stronger together.

#### Current Board of Directors

Shiranthi Goonathilaka	Cassandra Meyer
Vina Kay	Sally Nixon
Jill Krueger	LaDonna Sanders Redmond
Roderick McCulloch	

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# Together We Sustain a Healthy Community

Seward Community Co-op is committed to our Ends—or mission statement—to sustain a healthy community. We root all decisions made throughout our co-op in our Ends; it is why we commit to nurturing relationships with local farmers, food makers, and producers and why we are dedicated to employing hundreds of community members. Our co-op's founders were looking to do the right thing for each other by creating a community-owned store that protected the health of people and the environment. When illness and fear encircled society earlier this year, we leaned on our co-op's Ends Statement.

In unprecedented times, without a playbook provided, Seward Co-op was spurred to adapt. We acknowledge that while all of us are in the same boat, we do not all weather the same storm. Varying factors contribute to what our fellow community members' experience. Many are at greater risk of physical and economic consequences from COVID-19 and its ripple effects. Our operational changes—many of which felt odd when compared to our previous practices as a community cooperative—were made to sustain the health and safety of our staff, co-op owners, and community members.

One of the major changes was our quick creation and launch of Curbside Pickup. In its initial launch in April, the program was limited to first responders, folks 60 and over, and those with compromised immune systems. After learning how to best manage this new way of providing groceries, we have expanded access to Curbside Pickup. We are proud of our ability to adapt quickly in order to provide a safe shopping experience for our community.

Our SEED program is a robust giving program that is also rooted in our Ends. Since March, co-op shoppers have rounded up at the register for those most vulnerable and affected by the pandemic. When the pandemic hit locally, our SEED recipient was St. Stephen's Human Services, which operates two shelters in Minneapolis for adults of all genders experiencing homelessness. In April, we rounded up for Mobile Outreach Outdoor Drop-In (MOODI). MOODI offers hospitality, community care, nursing and outreach services daily—at Peavey Park, near Franklin and Chicago Avenues—to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and/or insecure housing during this time of crisis. Later in the month,

Seward Co-op shoppers generously donated to our Staff Solidarity Fund. This fund supports our own staff who need to take additional time off—but have used up all of the paid time off we already provide—as a result of health-related absences during the COVID-19 crisis. We are grateful to all who contribute to SEED. Rounding up when you shop is a simple way you support Seward Co-op's Ends Statement and fellow community members. Learn more about our SEED recipients this summer on pages 10 and 11.



Our staff members are first responders during this time of crisis. We made a number of operational changes to protect the health and wellbeing of our staff, such as implementing social distancing policies and installing protective acrylic guards at the registers. Seward Co-op provided staff with a \$2 per hour hazard pay bonus as they work very hard amid fear, anxiety and uncertainty. It is not easy to be on the front lines of serving our community's fundamental need for good quality food and wellness products in a time of pandemic. Staff continue to innovate new ways to make shopping at Seward easy and safe.

We are proud of our ability to be resilient thus far. We are heartened by the creative ways community members have found to show up for one another and live from a place of cooperation, kindness, and community. And we'll continue to show up for co-op employees, co-op owners, customers and food producers as we lean into our Ends to sustain a healthy community. These community relationships are the backbone of our cooperative identity—and they are more important than ever.

Please stay up to date on future updates on our website at [www.seward.coop/coronavirus](http://www.seward.coop/coronavirus).

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# Summer News & Events

## Gold Standard



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**Free Nourish 101 Summer Series**  
Join us for a series of free virtual cooking classes this summer! Learn great summer recipes and tips for cooking on a budget using common pantry items. When you register you will receive a Zoom link and recipe before the day of the class. Register at [www.seward.coop/events](http://www.seward.coop/events).

**Ground Beef Burgers**  
Tuesday, June 16, 6–7:30 p.m.  
*Cecka Parks*

**Vegetarian Black Bean Burgers**  
Wednesday, June 24, 6–7 p.m.  
*Chef Jess*

**Breakfast Hash**  
Saturday, July 18, 10–11 a.m.  
*Chef Jess*

**Summer Picnic Salad**  
Tuesday, Aug. 11, 6–7 p.m.  
*Chef Jess*

**Meet the Instructors**  
Cecka Parks is a Meat & Seafood Specialist at the Seward Co-op Friendship store and an expert on how to find and cook affordable cuts of meat while supporting the local and humane farms we carry in our stores.

Chef Jess is a regular Nourish 101 instructor at the Friendship store and is excited to bring her expertise to an online, interactive platform!

**Update Your Contact Info, Please!**  
More than ever, we need to be able to connect with co-op owners and shoppers. Please, if you are an owner of Seward Co-op, email [cs@seward.coop](mailto:cs@seward.coop) to ensure we have your updated email address and phone number on file. Thank you.

## Summer SEED Recipients

**June: Hope Community, Inc. (Community Choice)**  
Hope Community creates connections that strengthen the power of community members and communities. They cultivate community leaders, build community capacity, care for the housing and community spaces we develop, and pursue equity and diversity in all we do. SEED funding will support Hope’s work with community members to create urban agriculture gardens in Peavey Park on Franklin Avenue.

**July: Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)**  
The Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) works to advance the economic prosperity of Hmong farming families in Minnesota by addressing racial and economic disparities while also making fresh, locally grown produce available to Twin Cities residents.

**August: Sabathani Community Center**  
Sabathani is the largest food shelf in South Minneapolis—providing food to over 160 people per day. Sabathani Community Center has been providing basic-needs services for nearly 50 years. Sabathani provides food, clothing and housing to 26,000 neighborhood residents each year in South Minneapolis. We feed the chronically poor, those on disability, or chemically dependent individuals and families.



**Want to Run in the 2020 Board Election?**  
Many co-op activities do continue during the pandemic, including our annual board of directors’ election. The current board invites potential candidates to learn more by attending their online monthly meetings this summer. Candidates must be current owners of Seward Co-op and be committed to the long-term sustainability of our co-op.

**Attending Summer Board Meetings**  
All candidates are required to attend an online board meeting to be eligible to run in the election. Board meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month, calling to order at 6:15 p.m. Upcoming meeting dates are May 26, June 30 and July 28. Prior to each of these meetings, the board will host a candidate information session beginning at 5:30 p.m. Please email [board@seward.coop](mailto:board@seward.coop) to receive the meeting link and phone number.

Upon attending a meeting, you’ll hear more information and receive documents with details about the expectations of candidates in 2020. All interested candidates will need to submit a form, essay and questionnaire by Friday, July 31.

Candidates are strongly encouraged to attend the Aug. 25 and Sept. 29 board meetings as well, in addition to a (likely online) candidate forum on Oct. 6. The 2020 election will occur in October.

**About the 2020 Election**  
There are three at-large seats open. Two are three-year terms and the third seat is a one-year term. The at-large candidate who receives the third highest number of votes will serve the one-year term. There is one designated employee director seat open for a two-year term. Current employees of Seward Co-op are eligible to run for the designated employee director seat.

Employees are ineligible to run for an at-large seat this year. This is because Seward Co-op bylaws restrict the total number of employees on the board to two, and one employee director is currently mid-term in an at-large seat.

Remember: to obtain a candidate application, attendance is required at a board meeting this summer. Options are May 26, June 30, and July 28. Prior to each of these meetings, the board will hold a candidate information session beginning at 5:30 p.m. Mark your calendars now and RSVP to [board@seward.coop](mailto:board@seward.coop)!

**Virtual Happy Hours with Board of Directors**  
Join our co-op’s board of directors for a series of virtual “happy hours” this summer. This time of crisis is an important moment to reflect on our identity and future work as a community cooperative. Who are we now and how can we best meet the needs of our community in the future? How will the COVID-19 pandemic inform the co-op’s long-term vision moving forward? Each session will be hosted by Seward Co-op board members with a focus on community input, questions and sharing.

Please RSVP to [board@seward.coop](mailto:board@seward.coop) in order to receive the virtual happy hour link.

- Thursday, May 28, 7–8 p.m.
- Thursday, July 2, 7–8 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 7, 5–6 p.m.
- Thursday July 30, 7–8 p.m.
- Tuesday, Aug. 4, 5–6 p.m.
- Thursday, Aug. 27, 7–8 p.m.





**Seward**  
COMMUNITY CO-OP



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