



the dirt

Open Harvest Co-op Grocery
May + June 2014 / free



SUGARING IN THE NORTHWOODS OF MINNESOTA

MEMBER BENEFITS

+ MORE



Open Harvest Co-op Grocery
1618 South Street / Lincoln, NE 68502
www.openharvest.coop / 402.475.9069

General Manager

Kelsi Swanson

Board of Directors

Carla McCullough, Chair
Robert Hutkins
John Christensen
Barbara DiBernard
Mary Hansen
Megan Jackson
Steven McFadden
Nick Svoboda
Sarah Disbrow
Brandé Payne
Lin Quenzer
Janet Squires
Sarah Bauman
Molly Phemister

Newsletter

Amy Tabor / 2, 3, 6, 7, 9
Carla McCullough / 4
BJ Birkel / 5
Rosina Paolini & Barbara DiBernard / 8
Hudson Gardner / 10-15
Hudson Gardner / layout, editing
BJ Birkel / layout, managing editor

For advertising rates and other information, please send an e-mail to harvest@openharvest.coop

This newsletter is archived at www.openharvest.coop and at the Nebraska State Historical Society, and is printed on at least 30% recycled paper.

When finished, please pass this on to a friend.



Moose's Tooth Kayak Demo

Friday, May 2nd from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Holmes Lake, Lincoln

Come try out different models of kayaks on the lake! Watch for details on Facebook and our blog: moosestoothblog.blogspot.com or call the shop at 402-475-4453.

First Friday Art Walk

Friday, May 2 and Friday, June 6, 2014 at 5:00 p.m., closing times vary by venue

Downtown Lincoln / University Place

Paintings, photography, clothing, sculpture, music and much more can be found as you stroll from gallery to gallery.

Lincoln Bike Kitchen at Open Harvest

Saturday, May 3rd from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Open Harvest Loading Dock

Show your bike a little love and bring it in for a basic tune-up!

Open Harvest Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, May 7th & June 4th from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Two Pillars Church, 1430 South Street, Suite 110

Member Owners are encouraged to attend these regular monthly board meetings. Please enter the building on the 15th Street side.

2nd Annual Spring Cleaning Sale

Saturday, May 3rd from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Porridge Papers, 1422 South Street

Browse the piles of extra paper, envelopes and cards collected over the last year marked at special sale prices. In addition to stationery items we will also have some type cabinets, bookbinding cover material scraps, even a printing press or two—plus various other types of printing apparatus!

Songwriters in the Round

Monday, May 5th from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m.

Meadowlark Coffee & Espresso, 1624 South Street

Local songwriters come together and share their craft every Monday in May.

Bird Walk in Wilderness Park

Saturday, May 10th at 8:00 a.m.

14th Street Entrance of Wilderness Park (south of Yankee Hill Road)

Join local expert Larry Einemann for an exciting morning in Wilderness Park, one of eastern Nebraska's best settings for birding. Everyone is welcome, no matter your level of birding experience. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. The walk will begin at the 14th Street entrance of Wilderness Park just south of Yankee Hill on 14th Street. Sponsored by Friends of Wilderness Park and Wachiska Audubon Society.

Community CROPS Spring Plant Sale

Saturday, May 10th from 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

Lancaster County Extension, 444 Cherry Creek Road, Lincoln

Join Community CROPS at their annual plant sale for a fantastic selection of vegetable plants, tasty herbs and beautiful perennials. Buying plants through CROPS is a great way to help support community gardens in Lincoln!

Get to Know Your Co-op

Thursday, May 15th & June 19th from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

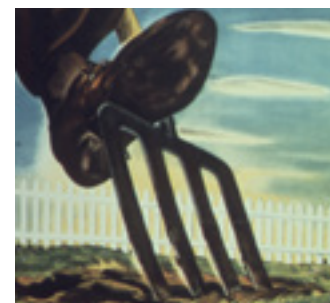
This on-going class is for new or renewing Member Owners interested in learning a bit more about their Co-op. A detailed store tour, delicious samples and small discussion are all part of this quick and friendly store orientation. Please RSVP via email to amy@openharvest.coop or call 402.475.9096. Walk-ins are welcome!

TAKE 5: Keeping Our Kids Alive

Saturday, May 17th from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lincoln Yoga Center, 2127 Winthrop Road, Lincoln

Learn various yoga poses, movements and activities that provide children (and ourselves) with a safe and effective way to de-stress, de-compress and self-regulate. Perfect for parents, teachers, and anyone interested in providing a better future for our youth. Cost \$30. To register, email LincolnYogaCenter@gmail.com or call 402-570-1114.



Urban Homestead Series: Transforming Your Kitchen and Lifestyle

Antelope Park Church of the Brethren, 3645 Sumner St.
All Classes Held 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

May 6th	Magical Microgreens
May 20th	CSA 101: Getting the Most Out of Your CSA
June 3rd	Herbal Extractions
June 17th	Vegetarian Sushi

ONGOING FARMERS MARKETS

Old Cheney Road

55th St. and Old Cheney Rd.

Sundays, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

oldcheneyroadfarmersmarket.com

F Street

1302 F Street

Opening Day May 27th

Tuesdays 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

University Place

48th St. and Madison Ave.

Wednesdays 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Opening Day June 11th

www.upcolincoln.org/community-market

Fallbrook

Fallbrook Town Center, 570

Fallbrook Blvd.

Thursdays 4:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Opening Day May 15th

fallbrookfarmersmarket.com

Lincoln Haymarket

7th and P Streets

Saturdays 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Opening Day May 3rd

www.lincolnhaymarket.com

C

O

O

P

E

V

E

N

T

S

the benefits of membership

reexamining the value of member benefits

FROM BOARD CHAIR CARLA MCCULLOUGH:

building a strong membership

Over the past year, the Board has formed a Membership Structures Committee. The committee's task is to examine our current membership structure (benefits and equity) and look at alternatives that would address two concerning trends over the past several years: (1) declining membership and (2) discounts going out are much greater than profits (and given during unprofitable years). During the Annual Meeting and Member Owner discussion evenings, the committee has sought to educate Member Owners about our history and current system and get feedback regarding possible future changes. Our goal is to develop a more sustainable membership structure that benefits both Member Owners and the Co-op.

On a basic level, benefits are what Member Owners get for joining the co-op. Some benefits include Member Owner discounts, Community Co-operation program and voting rights. Equity is what you invest to become a Member Owner. Currently our Member Owners pay \$40 in equity annually. The Board and Member Owners make decisions about equity by voting for any changes in Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation and the General Man-

ager makes decisions about benefits at the store level. While maintaining these decision-making boundaries, the board felt strongly that benefits and equity should be looked at more holistically, making coordinated efforts between our Board, Member Owners and General Manager.

On the benefits part of Membership Structure, the Board and General Manager have come to the conclusion that our current system is unsustainable. In February, the Board passed a resolution that, "The Board supports the General Manager to continue to assess alternatives and implement a more sustainable Member Owner benefit program." Since that time, our General Manager has started transitioning us for the future (see the next article, "Creating more sustainable Member Owner benefits at the Co-op.").

The equity part of the equation continues to be researched by the committee. We have learned that overwhelmingly, most NCGA co-ops (food co-ops like us all over the country) do not have annual equity payments like we do. The majority have a full-share or fair-share system where once you pay the required equity amount you are

an owner, without annual payments to maintain ownership. Examples of other co-ops using full-share equity memberships include Willy Street Co-op, Madison, WI (\$56), New Pioneer Co-op, Iowa City, IA (\$60), The Merc Co-op, Lawrence, KS (\$75), Wheatsfield Co-op, Ames, IA (\$100), Outpost Co-op, Milwaukee, WI (\$200). These co-ops have a variety of payment options, including annual payments until reaching their full-share amount. We still have questions to address regarding making a change to a full-share equity system for Open Harvest. Is our current system holding us back? Would making such a change reinvigorate people to join the Co-op? Would it address one of our major concerns - declining numbers of Member Owners over the past few years? What effects might this change have on short and long-term finances? As we continue to assess our equity system we will continue to seek input from Member Owners. The Board has comment periods for Member Owners during board meetings and we welcome feedback at board@openharvest.coop.

FROM BJ BIRKEL, BRAND MANAGER:

what's fair?

rationalizing the need for a new member benefits system

What is the first benefit of joining the Co-op you can think of? I'd be willing to bet that the 5% monthly discount. It's the first benefit we list in our Join brochure and it's one of the first things our cashiers tell customers who are interested in becoming Member Owners. We've offered that discount off and on for 20 some years now.

Our ongoing examination of the Co-op's equity structure has forced us to take a hard look at the way we deliver value to our Member Owners. We've come to the conclusion that the 5% discount is not the most equitable or sustainable way of delivering that value.

For example, let's compare two customers: the first we'll call Leroy. Leroy is an Open Harvest Member and typically shops once a month where he spends \$200. The second customer we'll call Tildy. Tildy is also an Open Harvest member and typically shops twice a week where she spends about \$40 each trip. At the end of a typical month, Leroy has spent \$200 and Tildy has spent about \$320.

When Leroy makes his monthly shopping trip, he uses his 5% discount, which gives him \$10 off his total purchase. Tildy also makes sure she uses her 5% discount and receives \$2 off one of her purchases. If both customers continue these shopping patterns over the course of a year, Leroy will receive \$120 back in benefits on his initial \$40 investment. Meanwhile, Tildy will receive only \$24 back on her \$40 investment.

With this simplistic example, we can illustrate exactly how our current discount system becomes inequitable. Leroy contributed \$2400 to the Co-op's bottom line while Tildy contributed \$3840, yet Leroy received 5 times the amount that Tildy received back in discounts.

In addition, the costs of the 5% discount add up rather quickly. In a typical year, the 5% discount costs Open Harvest around \$50,000. That money comes right off the top, regardless of whether the Co-op was operating in the red or the black for the year.

This is money that in a profitable year could be reinvested into provid-

ing a better store and shopping experience for our customers, saved for a future expansion (bigger store means more selection and more buying power, which leads to better prices), or paid back in the form of Patronage Dividends, a common practice among other Co-ops where each member receives a check for a portion of the profit the Co-op made that is directly proportional to the amount they spent at the Co-op that year. And in a year where the Co-op isn't profitable we're giving away money that we don't have to begin with, which eats into the Co-op's cash reserves and puts our future at risk.

Looking at both the inequitable value delivery to our Member Owners and the impact on the Co-op's finances, we've decided that the best course of action is to reallocate the Co-op's resources away from the standing 5% discount and instead put them into a new set of Member discounts and savings that we hope you will find exciting, valuable and fair.

what's new:

Additional Member Owner only savings in various departments each month

An increase from 5% to 15% off case quantity orders

Coupons books mailed twice a year that include a \$5 off \$50 purchase or more

The Dirt E-News coupons, received via email once a month

Multiple Member Appreciation events throughout the year

what's staying:

10% savings on vitamins in the wellness aisle

5% savings every time you shop if you are a volunteer

Discounts on Co-op classes and other events

Voting rights for the Board of Directors

An invitation to attend the Annual Member Meeting each year

Savings on case orders - now the savings will be greater at 15% vs. 5%

Discounts at local businesses through the Community Cooperation Program



Printmaking is a craft that can be traced back thousands of years. Transferring thoughts to paper with a simple press revolutionized the way humans communicate with each other all over the world. With advances in printing technology, the process has gotten easier and the quantity of printed materials more abundant. Between online services and big box stores it takes a lot to stand out in a market saturated with an endless number of printing options. Despite the competition, the professionals at Eagle Group have found success by producing high quality products and delivering service worthy of paying a little extra.

Eagle Group is located in downtown Lincoln at the corner of 14th and N Streets, and has wowed thousands of businesses with quality print products and their superior customer service for over twenty years. A locally-owned business that started off with simple plate-to-press printing in a small room has grown in size and expanded services as digital printing and other technologies have continued to revolutionize the printing industry.

Last summer, a transition of Eagle

Group ownership from Gary and Jaci Ashmore to their son Matt was completed, creating a new opportunity for the next generation of Ashmore printmakers. Matt has taken over the management of the business with fresh enthusiasm and flexibility to meet a client's goals—two qualities that are clear at the first handshake.

From the street, Eagle Group may seem like a standard print shop, but their capabilities incorporate products and services beyond paper and ink. Each detail found in the process of creating a product from first concept to finishing touches can be taken care of by Eagle Group. You don't have to worry about how the job gets done—whether by large-format digital printer or old-school offset printing press. Their experienced staff that knows how to get the most out of your ideas and budget—you just tell them your goals and they help you get there.

Need more than just printed materials? They can also help you find creative solutions in brand development, website design, direct mailing and customer surveys. Eagle Group does it all.

Eagle Group has sustainability in

mind too. In addition to recycling typical office waste, they use soy-based inks, and purchase low-energy equipment—details that can help reduce the carbon footprint of their business.

When you support a local business like Eagle Group you not only help support the livelihood of several local families but you help invigorate our local community ties as well—and that's what community cooperation is all about.

Eagle Group's office is located in downtown Lincoln at 1340 N Street and can be reached at 402.476.8156. Find them online at www.eaglegroupnow.net.



We are excited to add another great local business to our Community Cooperation Program. Stop by Eagle Group today and show them your Open Harvest Member card to receive 15% off all services.



Most Lincolniters can rattle off a long list of Mexican-style restaurants scattered throughout the city that serve a very similar array of food— but only one of these boasts an all-vegetarian menu, incorporates local ingredients, and encourages you to ride your bike to dinner. That's Pepe's.

Pepe's Bistro is located at 3227 South 13th Street in the Indian Village Shopping Center. Pepito Fierro, known to his customers as Pepe, has spent the last eight years connecting people with food and bikes and describes his restaurant as just a piece of the puzzle and a dream thirty years in the making.

Pepe first opened his doors in downtown historic Havelock in the summer of 2008, featuring an all-vegetarian menu and the option to barter bikes and bike parts for food on Saturdays. A change in location about a year ago has done nothing to compromise Pepe's commitment to community, bikes and sustainable food.

Upon entrance, patrons immediately notice a vibrant blue wall that holds the artwork of several local artists. A giant bike sculpture created by an employee fills the window and bike

chain rings melded into napkin holders adorn each table. You can see that Pepe's Bistro is indeed a convergence of bikes and community and once your plate hits the table and your taste buds recognize the fresh ingredients you know that this restaurant is different from all others.

The best part about Pepe's menu is that almost everything is made from scratch – it's fresh, it's unprocessed – he cares about ingredient quality, product packaging and the overall carbon footprint of each plate of food. His menu is always changing due to seasons, product availability and his culinary imagination.

If you are looking for a plate of orange-colored beans and rice, go somewhere else. For starters, all entrees incorporate fresh made tortillas, local cheeses, breads and array of veggies.

Pepe likes to experiment with unique flavor combinations like avocado popples and black bean gooseberry enchiladas wrapped with fresh-made plantain tortillas. You can find wonderful Mexican staples like bean and cheese burritos, chimichanga and quesadillas—but be prepared for a fresh flourish of apple

peel, a smattering of pepitas or fresh greens with pomegranate vinaigrette. Oh, and don't forget to quench your thirst with a refreshing cucumber lemonade or almond horchata!

Pepe gives just as much thought to supporting community projects as he gives to the pepper-tomato ratio he uses for his pico de gallo. Most recently, Pepe's Bistro hosted a fundraiser for the Southside Boxing Club, and last month a Souptacular raised money for the Lincoln Bike Kitchen (another Pepe project).

For menu updates and information about upcoming community events, check out Pepe's Bistro on Facebook. Visit Pepe's at 3227 S. 13th St. Find him online pepesbistro.com.



Pepe's Bistro is an original member of the Community Cooperation Program. Show your member card and receive 10% off any of his fabulous entrées.



“LET’S GROW! GET OUT AND GARDEN”

ROSINA PAOLINI AND BARBARA DIBERNARD

Gardens and gardeners come in all shapes and sizes—whether you are a new gardener, or have been gardening for decades, the Local Foodshed Working Group is asking the citizens of Lincoln to sign a pledge to grow food and exclaim, “Let’s Grow!” We want to put Lincoln on the map for our commitment to growing our own food.

The “Let’s Grow! Get Out and Garden” campaign is an active initiative of the Local Foodshed Working Group to encourage Lincolniters to grow their own food this summer. It’s a great way to save money at the grocery store, eat more fruits and vegetables, get exercise, and connect with your community. Big gardens or small – whether it’s a pot of herbs on your balcony or half an acre of vegetables and fruit trees - every little bit of local food counts!

Mayor Chris Beutler, who wants to

make Lincoln the healthiest city in the U.S., sees the “Let’s Grow” campaign as part of this initiative. At his press conference on April 10, he stated, “We are fortunate in Lincoln to have a great variety of local food options in our grocery stores, restaurants and farmer’s markets, but there’s always room for even more. Raising your own vegetables is fun and healthy!” The Local Foodshed Working Group presented him with a lettuce bouquet to recognize his support.

The “Let’s Grow!” campaign officially began at the Lincoln Earth Day Celebration at Union Plaza on April 12th. Hundreds of people stopped by our booth to sign a pledge to grow some of their own food, to be registered in a drawing to win plants or gardening supplies, and to obtain information with gardening tips and local gardening resources.

Interested gardeners can continue

to pledge until June 1st. You can pledge online through the Community CROPS website at www.communitycrops.org/letsgrowlincoln or visit participating businesses to sign and submit a pledge. All pledges will be entered into the drawing for some great gardening prizes by our local “Let’s Grow!” sponsors, and all gardeners will have access to information, resources, and mentors through the “Let’s Grow” handouts and Facebook page.

Local sponsors include: Community CROPS, Nebraskans for Peace, Open Harvest Co-op Grocery, Bodhi Organic Garden Supply, Earl May Garden Center, Campbell’s Nursery, Common Good Farm, Oak Creek Plants & Flowers and Chiron Communications.

LINCOLN IS FULL OF GARDENING RESOURCES:

ASK A MASTER GARDENER: Contact the University Master Gardeners at 402.472.8973 with your garden question or e-mail a picture of the plant/bug/vegetable and your question to nemgs@unl.edu.

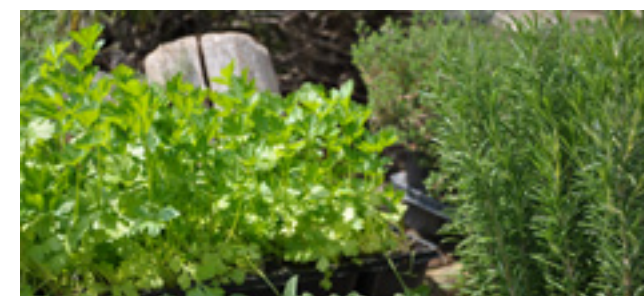
ATTEND A CLASS: Check out the gardening classes offered at Southeast Community College or the Urban Homestead Series through Community CROPS and Open Harvest. Visit their websites for more information.

CONNECT ON FACEBOOK: Join our group on Facebook (facebook.com/letsgrowlincoln) to see what other “Let’s Grow!” gardeners in Lincoln are up to!

PIONEERS PARK NATURE CENTER: Come grow with your child at the Children’s Garden! You can plant, tend, harvest, and learn about the wonders of nature through a variety of crafts and exploratory activities. Visit parks.lincoln.ne.gov/naturecenter or call 402.441.7895

JOIN TODAY!

PLEDGE TO GROW YOUR OWN FOOD AT WWW.COMMUNITYCROPS.ORG/LETSGROWLINCOLN



Ochre & Cobalt

Sugaring In the Northwoods of Minnesota

by Hudson Gardner

EXCERPT FROM “THE SOUND OF WOODSMOKE”

From the dark red mud of the road, the uneven trail runs west over waist deep snow into the forest. I walk along, carefully watching my feet, but the snow is melted out underneath, and my feet often go in above the knee. Trees surround the path: maples, and the odd birch. After walking for a long time I spot a white bucket hanging from a tree—the first sign of what I was not sure existed. Ahead lies the camp, deep in the north woods of Minnesota, where for seven years a group of people have come to tap trees and make syrup.

In January, a person appears at the edge of the forest with snow shoes and breaks a path along the marked blazes. He checks the caches of wood left curving from last year, and begins to set up camp. As March wears on, more people appear with wall tents and provisions. They bring everything in from the road, a half mile distant, on toboggans or on their backs—cinderblocks,

tarps, cardboard, food, pots and pans, knives, spoons (forks are rare here), extra clothes, extra boots, blankets, sleeping bags, packs, axes, and a hundred other things. They dig down through the snow to bare dirt, make a floor from spruce bows, set up stoves, and begin to cut wood for the cold nights where temperatures often drift below 0°.

I wake on the second morning to temperatures in the mid forties, and as I walk through camp I see sap collecting in the cans. The forest is suddenly full of nuthatches singing and pillaging suet from the deer carcasses that lay around camp. In the silence I listen to the sound of sap falling into buckets. In some areas I can hear five or six trees dripping at once, the drops falling in cycling asynchrony. Some trees have only two seconds between drops, but with others some twenty seconds pass. That it is silent enough to hear such a small sound is itself remarkable.

In the evening we gather at the boil-

ing tent for collection. The sections of trees are broken up into areas with esoteric names—shitter run, east side, fast runners, maple flats, Katie, west side, and Memorial Parkway, which divides east and west, and includes the Bill Watterson Memorial Snow Way; a suicide run down a steep hill. My job is to pull a toboggan along the main paths, equipped with tied down milk crates that are loaded with 5 gallon buckets. It serves as a moving vector for the collectors who wander from tree to tree.

At each viable tree there is a can that fills slowly with sap dripping out of a hand carved plug called a spile. The sap is pale yellow and tastes like spring water with the slightest hint of sweetness. Collectors walk between the trees with a five-gallon bucket in each hand, adding the sap to their buckets with a beautiful watery sound. Calls of “toboggan!” light up the woodland, as do curses and yells as people fall into the snow when their snowshoes break

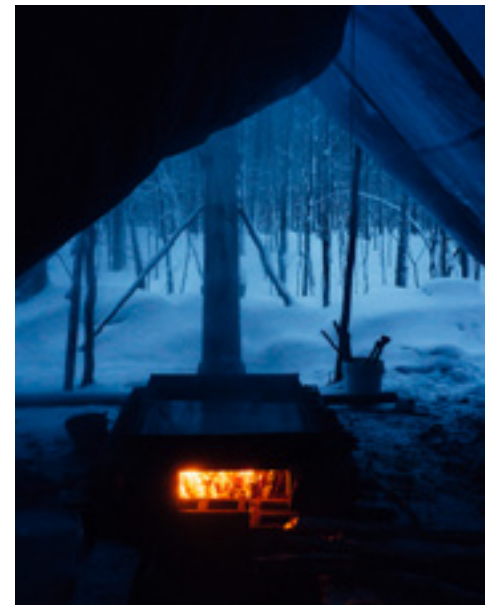


through. It is very hard work, and lasts about two hours. There are nearly six hundred trees tapped in a quarter mile radius from the central tent. With just six people collecting, we bring in over one hundred gallons of sap.

The next few days pass in a blur of mistakes and learning experiences. On the fourth morning, we hear that snow is forecasted, and it begins with 20° and ice pellets in the morning. Six to twelve inches might fall. I am staying

with my friend Molly, and we sit in our tent making tea from spruce needles and lemon-ginger sachets. The scent of the steam mingles with woodsmoke, and I fall into a doze as we speak of town things, and about life in the woods.

The snow thickens by 3pm, and we go outside to look at it. It comes down in what the Scottish may call “partial conditions”: about halfway to a whit-eout. We all gather at the boiling tent to check our gear. We have filled three fifty



five gallon barrels with sap, so we will begin boiling today, and also collect.

The boiler pit is constructed from cinderblocks packed with mud that run along a trench with two levels. Two rectangular boiling pans sit atop, the longer being about twelve feet long, the shorter about six. At the far end there is a large smokestack about 1 foot in diameter. No fossil fuels are used in the operation here, only wood: for cooking, boiling, and heat.

The boiling setup sucks the heat of a



wood fire at one end along the bottom of the pans through a draw between the bricks. The wood being burned is felled, bucked, and dragged by hand from the surrounding woods, and is a mixture of spruce, ash, tamarack, birch, maple, and ironwood. Nearby, around forty-eight cords are waiting, covered over with tarp. The logs have been curing there for a year. The pit itself is sheltered by two large tarps built on an A frame of tree trunks, about fifteen feet high.

Amidst the blowing snow S—, who has been sugaring for seven years, de-

termines that one of the boiler pans isn't level. We heat it up over a fire to make it malleable, and pound it with an axe head. We wash it out, and check for leaks by filling it with sap. We find two leaks, one under the front radiating fin, three rows in, and another on the far right side.

We determine that two welds in the pan have broken through. The snow gets heavier. With the snow blowing around us, we pick up the pan and put it on a sled. S— tells us that he knows someone who has a welder, but if he's not around then he'll drive the pan

to Minneapolis. N— hands over his truck's keys, and S— goes off, pulling the two hundred pound pan behind him, the snow quickly filling his tracks.

We pour sap into the remaining pan, and start a fire underneath with a hand drill. N— begins splitting more wood to last boiling through the night. Others put up a tarp at one end of the A-frame to reduce snow coming in. In the middle of the storm, we gather our buckets, put on snow shoes, and go out to collect. We bring in another hundred gallons or so of sap.

After the sun goes down, N— tends

to the boiling and the rest of us gather in the westernmost tent to wait out the storm. In it's warmth our clothing steams, and water streams down the sides of the tent. It continues snowing outside, sounding like rain hitting the heated canvas around us. After we have eaten and the fire burns low, S— comes in through the door near midnight. Because of the snow, he had to leave the pan back at the road, but he managed to get it welded. After silent deliberation, he decides that we should boil all night.

As I walk back to my tent, the question "why" keeps coming up. Why go



to all this work for syrup? Why do it in such a difficult way? The people who come don't sell the syrup, it is simply divided between everyone who helps. As I crawl through the frozen flaps of my tent, I realize that the work is it's own reward. As we work each day, we all depend on one another. No matter the size of our contribution, it has real, tactile worth. Every person becomes essential.

Fifth morning

I wake up to the cracking of logs splitting; I guess it is about 4:00am. It is a

startling sound to hear in the dark of the night, reminding me of the cracking of branches a bear walking nearby makes. This morning I am on third boiler watch, and Molly comes to wake me at 4:30. She has a black eye and a broken headlamp from splitting wood in the dark—the fragment of a log hit her in the face. My jobs are to skim scum that collects on the boiling sap, split more wood, feed the fire, and add sap to the pan as needed. I put on my warmest clothes and head over to the boiling tent.

Snow has piled up on everything



turning the woodland into a place of soft, rounded hills and gentle contours, making the landscape unrecognizable. When I get to the boiling tent, I see that the fire has gone low and there is a buildup of scum. I skim it off in patterns of waves from front to back. The snow still falls outside, making a sound like sizzling rain on the stovepipe. There are patches in the clouds above, and stars shine through, bright, sharp, clear. The barest sliver of a moon has risen.

As I run through my tasks, the light begins to brighten, until the snow outside becomes a deep crystalline blue. I wonder if there is a word for it: after a snowfall in the early morning when the light is the color of cobalt. I head back to the tent for my camera and snap a few photos of the orange coals and blue snow. Soon it is bright enough to write without a light.

I get into a rhythm: stoke, skim, split. Steam comes off the the sap and fills the tent, turning it into a sauna that is hot and cold at the same time. The steam smells sweet and woody like cottonwoods, but sharper, deeper. My mind drifts from thought to no thought. The warmth and scent in the tent, and the quiet sounds of bubbling sap and sizzling stove are hypnotizing. I stay awake without trouble, so absorbed am I by the beauty of the experience. Though it has been hard, and the work is just beginning, I feel that the world has been whittled down to just the necessary, just what is needed for human comfort. And because of this, the most subtly beautiful things can recieve my full attention, and I give it to them without self conciousness.

Each night as I fall asleep the barred owls call back and forth. They move

through the air on silent wings: suddenly near, suddenly far off. They, too, understand the beauty and goodness of these woods, though they do not know it. They accomplish something by simply being: they are part of the woodland, and part of its beauty. As I drift between dreaming and waking, I listen to the silence between their calls, and the sounds of rising woodsmoke, of falling snow, of the living earth.





YES!
We have
BABY
registries!

Circle Me
Natural Baby Boutique

YES!
We have
BABY
registries!

CLOTH diapers
& accessories
slings & WRAPS
CLASSES & books

learning TOYS
GIFTS & more
natural BODY
PRODUCTS

402.435.6767 3129 'D' St., Lincoln, NE 68502
www.circleme.me Located within, Friends, Champagne, Parking located behind the building



**Gomez
ART
SUPPLY**

120 N 14th St. - Lincoln, NE
Open Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 12-5
Free parking behind store
(first hour free in parking garage across 14th St.)
Friendly, knowledgeable service
Locally owned
Find us on facebook
gomezartsupply.com tugboatgallery.com



SCREEN INK

PRINT STUDIO
ART GALLERY
WWW.SCREENINK.COM

BLENDING ART & CRAFT.



Flower Remedy Mixing Bar
Online & by appointment in Lincoln
GoodMedicineApothecary.com



Lynette Zimmer

**Piano and
Voice
Lessons**

(402) 309-6232

Pepe's

Bistro

daily menus at
pepesbistro.com



**OPEN HARVEST
CO-OP GROCERY**
1618 SOUTH ST. • LINCOLN, NE 68502