

The Co-op Goes to the Farm
By Heather Crone, Board of Trustees

Full Circle Farm, which lies about 45 minutes outside of Seattle (near Carnation), has grown organic vegetables, herbs, and fruits for over a decade. Most of you Madison Market member-owners are probably familiar with their harvest as seen in our produce department, at area farmers' markets, or via their CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. In addition to regionally selling their sustainable produce, the farm participates in efforts that truly complete the food system circle. In partnership with Cascade Harvest Coalition (an organization that links harvesting volunteers to small, local farms), Full Circle Farm has literally donated tons of fresh produce to Hopelink food banks. Realizing the value of such labor, our Member Involvement Committee set out to recruit a few member-owners for an afternoon of volunteer work.

On a perfect Sunday afternoon in September, a dozen co-op folks arrived at Full Circle Farms. Ready to work, and equipped with gloves and hats, we joined a handful of other volunteers already weeding the herb beds. The small fat mounds of intentionally planted foliage: thyme, oregano, marjoram, etc., were being overtaken in foliar size and strength (not to mention what was going on with all of the usual, extra-vigorous underground characters): Plantains, thistles, dandelion, dock, ragweed, quack grass, and plenty of other competitors were enjoying the luscious soil. Though one of the most labor-intensive aspects of farming organically is hand-weeding, in about an hour we were able to accomplish what would have taken days without our help. After removing as many and as much of the uninvited guests as we could, we jumped on the tractor and headed out to the farthest fields of kale.

After a brief lesson in the quickest way to remove the leaves, we distributed ourselves, our twist ties, and waxed cardboard boxes amongst the rows of waste-high dinosaur and green kale. With our numbers and enthusiasm, we filled the boxes quickly and effortlessly despite our lack of experience. The kale was washed and ready to go to the food banks as we finished the day. Amy, the farm manager, thanked us for our work, gave us a tour of their facilities, including the biodiesel production area which they use to fuel the tractors and other farm equipment, and sent us home with bags of gorgeous vegetables.

In only a few hours and with a small degree of exertion, we helped to provide food bank clients with fresh, organic greens, assisted Full Circle Farm with their weeding tasks and, perhaps most significantly, were able to see, feel, hear, smell, and taste where our food comes from. When I see a bundle of produce with the name of one of our local farms on it, I have some idea of what goes into getting that food to me and where my dollars are going. As I am reminded and remind myself (with greater and greater regularity) of our interdependence on each other and the land, I deeply appreciate our access to such food. Many thanks to the member-owners who signed-up for the trip and worked well together.

The Member Involvement Committee meets the second Tuesday of each month, at 6:00 p.m. in the administrative conference room. Our next endeavor, at which all volunteers are welcome, is a Saturday or Sunday-morning clean-up of our nearby Adopt-A-Street area – a date has yet to be established. Consider this an opportunity to realize microcosmic urban interdependence and to appreciate the difficulty in keeping concrete and asphalt clean.

For additional information regarding the Member Involvement Committee or to volunteer for our Adopt-A-Street cleaning adventure, please contact webster walker at: 206.329.1545 Extension 304 or board@madisonmarket.com.