

Cedar Falls Food Co-op organizing



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CEDAR FALLS -- While the Cedar Falls Food Co-op hasn't secured a location and started its retail grocery operations yet, the community-owned corporation has come a long way in its first year of existence.

"About 250 households from the greater Cedar Valley area and beyond have joined as members," Tom Wickersham, board member of the Cedar Falls Food Co-op, said in a news release. "We're also hiring our first employee and holding our first board election next month."

The Co-op, which began signing up members at last year's Fall Food Fest, has been the effort of many community members and businesses to bring a cooperatively-owned grocery to the Cedar Falls area, an effort which got underway after Roots Market closed in 2012.

The plan is to open a full-service food co-op that focuses on local, healthy and organic food, and is modeled after many other successful co-ops across the country, including many in Iowa like New Pioneer Co-op in Iowa City, Oneota Co-op in Decorah, and Wheatsfield in Ames.

Helping to celebrate its one-year milestone, the Co-op is hosting its second annual Fall Food Fest from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Cedar Falls Community Center. The public is invited to attend to the free event and enjoy the food samples, demonstrations, live music, and kids' activities. Local farmers and businesses offering samples include fresh picked apples from Blueridge Orchard, Latin-inspired appetizers from La Calle Bistro, and teas from Laughing Tree Cafe.

Local duo Amelia and Melina will be performing, and Factory City Gastropub's executive chef Jorge Santiago will do cooking demonstrations. Numerous door prizes will be offered as well.

Co-op organizers hope to open a 10,000 to 14,000 square foot store in 2017.

Details about the Cedar Falls Food Co-op are at www.cedarfallsfoodcoop.org.