

# tpss

Co-operative Effort News



Food for People, not for Profit Since 1981

DECEMBER 2003 / JANUARY 2004

## Community Participation Can Balance Chain, Local Stores

By Chrissy Wigginton

This article is the third and final installment in our series on the health of the Takoma Park business sector. It focuses on some of the key issues and options affecting future business development in Takoma Park.

The businesses in Old Town Takoma and Takoma Junction are an integral part of the communities they serve. They offer vintage clothing and house wares, work by artisans from the area and around the world, and many other valuable products and services. However, Takoma Park businesses don't provide for such mundane necessities as athletic socks, insensible shoes, or fresh-from-the-factory winter coats.

Chain stores in malls and shopping centers fill many of these basic needs, as well as many non-basic wants, but they funnel dollars and customers away from locally owned businesses. As it stands now, Takoma Park residents have to spend much of their money for daily necessities outside their community, a situation that many deplore but don't know how to correct. How do we as a community balance our needs with our support of the community? Takoma Park and the surrounding communities would do well to have a broader base of retailers that would provide products and services to fill this commerce gap.

### Takoma Park Business Development

As you may know, a Subway sandwich shop is currently being built on Carroll Avenue near Park Avenue. So the arrival of chain stores is an immediately relevant issue for city residents. And it is one of many issues being addressed by the Old Takoma

Business Association (OTBA), a coalition of merchants, restaurants, service providers, nonprofits, and educational institutions in both Takoma Park, MD and the Takoma Park neighborhood in DC. The OTBA, which recently reorganized and incorporated itself, has received a matching grant of \$25,000 from the City of Takoma Park over the next three years toward helping the downtown businesses community. OTBA must raise \$25,000 of its own money to qualify for this grant.

In addition, OTBA is a participant in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street" program, a national public-private collaboration helping communities breathe new life into their historic commercial areas. The Main Street program began as an effort to save historic commercial architecture; more importantly, it has also stimulated economic development in many participating communities. Takoma Park's Main Street program includes the area near the Metro around 4th Street NE in DC, Takoma Park Old Town, and Takoma Junction. OTBA plans to hire someone soon to manage its Main Street program and to work with the National Trust and other Main Street organizations.

OTBA needs the support of the DC, Old Takoma, and Takoma Junction communities. Visit the OTBA's Website, Takoma Online (<http://www.takomaonline.org>), to learn about upcoming events, meetings, and member businesses. The organization will be launching a membership drive soon. You can also participate by attending a monthly general meeting or by sharing your ideas with OTBA members, such as the TPSS Co-op's own Bob Atwood.

### Why Chain Stores?

Large chain stores provide shoppers with a greater selection of the best products at the lowest price, which in turn frees up money for the consumer to spend on other things that are of value, like savings or healthcare. The Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a Michigan-based nonpartisan research and educational organization, states that niche-specific commerce is safe from big business because of their focus on premium quality, personal service, and hard to find services and goods. According to the Center, "Local [businesses] simply do not have the resources to provide their customers with the greatest array of product choices" like the big stores can ("Giant Chain Stores vs. Mom and Pop Stores," <http://www.mackinac.org/article.asp?ID=677>).

For example, in her article "Two — Make That Three — Cheers for the Chain Bookstores" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 288, no. 1, July/August 2001, online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2001/07/allen.htm>), Brooke Allen argues that chain booksellers and online booksellers have made more books available to more readers than ever before. These bookstores target a wider audience, offer a greater selection, and make ordering easy. Most good independent bookstores are clustered in and around large cities; chain stores fill the need for bookstores in small towns and suburbs. Good independents are hanging on and attracting more customers.

The "free-market" argument states that large chain stores simply force local stores to make themselves more competitive. Local stores that can compete with the larger busi-

nesses flourish, while the ones that can't close. This argument, however, tends to minimize the role of the significant political and legal power that large chains can bring to bear. Large chains can and often do push for tax breaks and changes to local zoning and workplace ordinances that puts them on unequal footing with their competition.

### Leveling the Playing Field

So what, if anything, is the answer? Many communities have faced similar challenges and have developed their own strategies. Many of the communities have explicitly defined the parameters within which businesses in their community can develop, operate, and grow. Policies and ordinances designed to "level the playing field" encourage locally owned businesses and chain businesses to truly compete in areas such as quality of products and services, customer satisfaction, and convenience, without resorting to legislation or tax incentives.

Another option is to charge companies a sliding licensing fee calculated according to the number of non-local branches owned by the company. The revenue could then be fed back into the community to fund new business ventures or to help businesses survive shortfalls. This financial assistance would be matched sector for sector: for example, if a chain clothing source came into town, the funds from their licensing fee would be funneled toward the local clothing stores in the community. The license fee would counter-balance some of the strategies used by chain stores use to squeeze out local competitors, like undercutting prices.

The city government could give preference to local businesses when tendering contracts, in cases where local companies bid within a certain percentage of the lowest bid received. Another option would be for the city to require comprehensive economic, environmental, and community impact reviews for all new business proposals. The review would focus on issues such as the amount of traffic they would bring into the community, anticipated tax revenues, and costs incurred by the public.

These are only samples of the innovative, citizen-oriented solutions that communities across the United States have tried in their efforts to serve the needs of residents while supporting locally-owned and -operated businesses. The primary purpose of this article — and this series as a whole — has been to spark thought, discussion, and debate about the business climate of Takoma Park, of which the TPSS Co-op is an important part. This is a community issue, and every member of the community has a stake in ensuring that our local businesses not just survive, but meet our needs as best they can. ●

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:  
[www.adbusters.com](http://www.adbusters.com)  
[www.globalideasbank.org](http://www.globalideasbank.org)  
[www.newrules.org](http://www.newrules.org)

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Remember to cast your votes for the Board of Representatives!

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 14TH AT 6 PM!

# Happy Anniversary, Silver Spring: Two Years of Dedicated Hard Work

By Ami Ra Bevel



FRESH PRODUCE IS ONE OF THE MAIN ATTRACTIONS OF THE SILVER SPRING CO-OP.

**I**n October, the Silver Spring Co-op celebrated its two-year anniversary. The Co-op is a small store that promotes health and helps customers and Co-op members to find alternative roads to achieving their life goals. Though it is tucked

away in a location that some feel is too hidden from the general public, and though it sells products that are unfamiliar to many people in the community, this Co-op has maintained its integrity and is now moving into its third year — the year of charm.

The Silver Spring Co-op opened on October 15th, 2001 in a shopping center on

Grubb Road, off of East-West Highway. If you follow that road east, you will eventually find the Takoma Park Co-op, the “mother store” that spawned its younger kin. The two stores are linked by more than just a road, though. The two co-ops work closely together to serve their own local communities of Silver Spring and Takoma Park, as well as to serve the larger, shared, community of members and customers. If it weren't for the Takoma Park Co-op, the Silver Spring store simply wouldn't even exist. The Takoma Park Co-op has nurtured the Silver Spring store and invested heavily into it with much hope that one day it will — like the Takoma Park store — look back in celebration after twenty years of being in business.

The Silver Spring Co-op is staffed by a group of goal-oriented, openhearted youth who are supervised by down-to-earth, friendly, and professionally experienced elders. The staff has a family-like bond and everyone feels at home and comfortable enough to just be him- or herself. Eager to learn and eager to help, the Silver Spring Co-op's crew appears to be willing to stick around for the long run. Though employees are assigned to specific posts, everyone who works there sees the whole store as their responsibility. Everyone is willing to help out when there is a shortage in other departments, or to stand in for someone else who must make a run. Even though, admittedly, there are still a few kinks to work out in the store, the staff work hard

to make the Co-op a welcoming and fulfilling experience for every customer whom ventures in.

To my surprise and pleasure, customers whom I interviewed greatly emphasized how valuable the store is in their lives. “It's essential, I really depend on this store,” said Sarah Mejac. “I love the Co-op and what it stands for.” Another customer named Andi emphatically exclaimed “It's critical! This is my life line.” She listed the many products and services that the store provides has that she cannot find in stores elsewhere.

Regularly, a new customer will venture into the store and react as if they just ran into a gold mine. As one man browsed through the store, he discussed how it reminds him of stores in his native Colombia. “Everything is organic in my country,” he explained. First-time customers usually become regulars, so that they can explore new areas of the store and simply soak up and give back love.

In the co-op world, the Silver Spring store is by comparison a tiny community store. But that is its strength, not a disadvantage. The Silver Spring Co-op strives to serve the community and provide customers with what they need at reasonable and competitive prices. After two years of taking root and becoming known in the Silver Spring and the surrounding area, the Silver Spring Co-op is eager to become the member of many people's families and to uphold itself as an asset in their lives. ●



DUFFEN SEAWART IS A MEMBER OF THE FUN, LOVING AND HARD-WORKING SILVER SPRING CO-OP TEAM.

## Results of the Bylaws Vote – October 27, 2003

### INITIATIVE 1:

Changes related to having two stores and housekeeping (correcting typographical errors, etc.)

For: 41  
Against: 0

### INITIATIVE 2:

Changes related to the Board of Representatives

For: 38  
Against: 3

### INITIATIVE 3:

Changes related to membership

For: 35  
Against: 6

### INITIATIVE 4:

A new section related to the legality of the by-laws

For: 41  
Against: 0

### INITIATIVE 5:

Staff representation on the Board of Representatives

For: 36  
Against: 5

Your Board of Representatives extends its thanks to all members who participated in the voting.

DON'T FORGET TO

VOTE IN THE

UPCOMING BOARD

OF REPRESENTATIVES

ELECTION!

DEADLINE FOR VOTES

IS DECEMBER 14TH

AT 6 PM.



TPSS Co-operative Effort News is published bimonthly by the Takoma Park Silver Spring Co-op

• 201 Ethan Allen Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912  
301-891-2667(COOP)

• 8309 Grubb Road  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
240-247-2667(COOP)

Editor

Paul Lagasse  
editor@tpss.coop

Graphic Design

Nicolas Basalgète  
nikobasal@verizon.net

Contributors:

Robin Anderson  
Bob Atwood  
Sam D'Amico  
Ami Ra Bevel  
Paul Kelly  
Adeena Reitberger  
Denise Roseland  
Mike Tabor  
Chrissy Wiginton

Board of Representatives

Adam Frank, president  
Joseph Klockner, vice-president  
Larry Haller, treasurer  
Rae Murphy, secretary  
Ryan Neher  
Rima Shaffer  
Adam Witt

General Manager

Bob Atwood

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**Next Issue:**

February/March, 2004

Editorial Deadline: January 12, 2004

## Co-op al Fresco: New Mural Highlights Takoma Park Store

By Paul Lagasse

For some time now, drivers and pedestrians traveling east on Ethan Allen Avenue in Takoma Park have been watching a giant tree take root and grow alongside the Takoma Park Co-op. The tree is growing on the wide brick wall that overlooks the store's dirt parking lot. As well as leaves, the tree is also growing letters: TPSS Co-op.

The wall facing the side parking lot has been something of a non-landmark, or maybe an un-landmark — it calls attention to the building's presence, but it reveals no hint of what goes on inside. Though the store has a sign in the front window, TPSS Co-op members have frequently suggested putting a sign on the more-visible side of the store as well. General Manager Bob Atwood decided to take the suggestions one step further. He recently commissioned Arlia Schwartz, the store's refrigerated buyer, to paint a large mural on the red brick wall.

"I'm really honored to be given a chance to work on a mural in Takoma Park," Arlia says. "The city has a lot of murals. I was more than willing." Arlia works on the mural on Sundays with an assistant, and they get a lot done each time they work on it. "My goal is to definitely get it finished before the end of the year," Arlia says, "I want to finish working outside before the cold weather comes!"

The mural's design incorporates the themes and basic images that are associated

with the Co-op. The tree at the center of the mural derives from the Co-op's logo (which is also proudly displayed in the masthead of the TPSS Co-operative Effort News). "I love trees, and the tree image was already associated with the Co-op," says Arlia. "But I decided to do a funky rendition and take a little artistic license." The tree is actually made up of a mosaic pattern; each brick on the wall is painted a different shade of brown. The white background will eventually be painted in colors that blend into the bare brick wall, Arlia says.

As well as deepening the co-op's link to Takoma Park, the mural strengthens its connection to the larger community of cooperative stores as well. "Other co-ops in the Cooperative Advantage Program have done murals too," Arlia notes. "It's a cultural, more funky thing to do. I think it's fun."

Arlia has been a muralist and artist for many years. When she was in high school in Virginia, her art club painted a mural on the cinderblock walls of another school's bathroom building, covering them with Dr. Seuss characters. "It turned out really nice," Arlia remembers. "The kids liked it a lot." At the last Earth Day event, Arlia set up an arts and crafts table for kids, with finger painting, markers, paints, and all kinds of artistic activities. Her current art studies emphasize the use of art for community restoration projects, which ties in neatly with the mural she is working on. Plus, she's going to be painting a mural inside the store, too. Between her art project, school studies, and work, Arlia is very busy these days!



THE MURAL TAKING ROOT ON THE WALL OF THE TAKOMA PARK STORE

Arlia would like to see the TPSS Co-op capitalize on its status as a Takoma Park icon by offering opportunities for residents to encounter the creative processes of art. "I think that art is a great community activity," she says. "I hope the Co-op can get into that more." She envisions warm-weather art activities and programs for children at the store, where members of the local community can show children how to make structures and sculptures using Earth-friendly materials. "It's just an idea that's percolating," Arlia says.

Arlia says that she very much needs and wants to hear your opinions and feedback about the mural. "As an artist I have to go with what works," she says, "but I really want to know what people think." So the next time you happen to be passing the Co-op on a Sunday and see Arlia out there painting away, or when you find yourself shopping in the refrigerated section, please remember to let Arlia know how she's doing! It's another way to participate in the Co-op community. ●

## Remembering Isabel

By Adeena Reitberger

On the dark evening of Thursday September 18th, 2003, Hurricane Isabel swept through the east coast of the United States. As a result of the storm, the mid-Atlantic region suffered over 4 million power outages. In our local area alone, wind gusts that reached between 50 to 70 mph left over 700,000 homes and businesses in the dark in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County.

By noon on the following day, PEPCO had restored power to over 200,000 customers in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. "We were the lucky ones," said Jen DeGregorio, a Hyattsville resident, and a frequent shopper of TPSS. "We got our power back right away. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to throw away everything in my refrigerator."

Other area businesses and residents were not as lucky. The Silver Spring Co-op lost electricity for approximately 36 hours, and lost close to \$15,000 in sales and spoiled food. The Takoma Park store fared even worse. Takoma Park residents lost power for nearly five days, until late Tuesday evening. During that time, the Takoma Park Co-op lost close to \$100,000 in food and sales.

*"Some people think nothing is going to happen, but we still need to be prepared. We have to know how to handle the situation." The experience of Hurricane Isabel was, and will continue to be, a learning experience for the Co-op.*

### Business as Unusual

"I came in Saturday to clean out the refrigerator," said Arlia Schwartz, the refrigerator buyer at the Takoma Park location. "It was dark, and it smelled bad. We left the outside doors open to get in as much light as possible, and then we threw out milk, cheese, orange juice, and yogurt. Everything that could possibly go bad we needed to throw away. I was so upset."

Not surprisingly, the chaos caused by the power outage disrupted the store's business hours. "There was a lot of confusion about when the store was open. I came to the co-op many times before I was able to get in touch with anyone," said Prisca Egocheaga, the Co-op's finance manager.

"We wheeled shopping carts full of food

that was still safe to eat out to the sidewalk and wrote 'FREE' on a sign," remembered grocery employee Peter Figgis. "People came and picked up trunk-loads full of food. We did give away a lot, but I think we could have done more." Peter pointed out that the experience highlighted the need for a thorough disaster plan to address future crises, including advance culling of food shelves for perishable items.

### A Lesson for the Future

"It was a wake up call," agreed Prisca. "Some people think nothing is going to happen, but we still need to be prepared. We have to know how to handle the situation." The experience of Hurricane Isabel was, and will continue to be, a learning experience for the Co-op. "We need a better plan," Prisca said. "We are working on that now."

However, acknowledging the need for a better plan is not as easy as finding a solution. Abdou Diagne, the grocery manager for both the Takoma Park and Silver Spring stores, noted that his biggest problem is twofold; "In one way you want to have enough food for the customers, but too much food is also a problem. We are working on purchasing a generator, but they are very expensive."

### Something for (Almost) Everyone

"Horrible," "expensive," "alerting," "petrifying," "blustery," "moist," "disaster," "exciting," and even "tame" are just some of the words that TPSS Co-op employees used to describe Isabel. "It was overpowering... And under powering at the same time," said Alice Richardson smiling. "It was a ying-yang storm."

Others did not see Isabel as particularly wrathful. Peter Figgis, a native of Ireland, and a current D.C. resident said, "We had the back door open. It seemed like a typical day in Dublin where I grew up. I wanted something more. I've never been in a hurricane before... I wanted to watch the tips of trees touching the ground." Peter stressed that he didn't want people to get hurt, of course — he was only hoping to see nature at its most powerful.

Whether or not the show Isabel put on was as wild as expected is endlessly debatable. But there is no question as to whether or not Isabel was debilitating, and that it taught important lessons. "We have not had to deal with something like this before," Prisca said. "We'll know better for next time." ●

## Comment Corner

By Bob Atwood, General Manager



As many of you have noticed by now, the new ATM machine is up and running in the Takoma Park store. Thanks for everyone who poke up and wrote in about this issue. We hope it was worth the wait, and we're very happy to be able to offer this necessary convenience (or convenient necessity?) again.

Welcome to another edition of Comment Corner, where each month I address questions, suggestions, and comments that our customers and members place in the customer comment boxes in the front of both stores. We sort all comment cards and distribute them to the appropriate managers on a regular basis, and they write their responses to each of them. Then the managers file the cards, with their responses, in the customer comment logs in the front of both stores. These logs are always available for your review, and they are an effective way for you to monitor how well we are addressing your needs.

Please feel free to contact me, or any department manager, at the Takoma Park store at 301-891-2667 (COOP) or at the Silver Spring store at 240-247-2667 (COOP), if you need more information or if you are seeking a more detailed answer to your questions. Or you can always e-mail me directly at bobatwood@tpss.coop. Remember, if you want a direct response to your concerns, please include contact information (name, phone number, e-mail address, etc.) on your comment cards.

As you can probably imagine, we get many comments in the customer comment boxes in both stores. We always enjoy hearing from our members and customers, and we try to answer everyone's comments in a timely manner, whether here or in the comment logs. I encourage you to take a moment the next time you are in the store to read some of the questions and comments and their responses.

— "Can you only print the last four digits of credit card numbers and block the rest with asterisks? It'd be better for privacy/security. Thanks."

— "Speed up credit card processing. Dial up is too slow!"

We are currently looking into the best ways to update our computer software to take care of both of these concerns. The current software that we use can't cover up credit card numbers, and the upgrade that is currently available has too many bugs in it. We are waiting on the arrival of a bug-less updated version, which should be available soon. The update will allow us to truncate card numbers. Please bear with us on this!

With regard to the processing speed issue, we have looked into this and frankly

we are stumped. We have talked to many processing companies but have not been able to determine why some are faster than others. It may be related to the capacity of the phone lines that we have installed. If that is the case, then pulling them out and replacing them could be a very expensive proposition. Some members have suggested that we look into using a satellite dish connection. The research we've done on dishes, however, suggests that we would likely experience frequent disconnections during inclement weather. For example, after Hurricane Isabel the Muzak people had to send technicians out to readjust every one of their dishes in the area, because all of them had lost service. (Whether or not this was a positive result of the hurricane, I'll let individual readers decide for themselves!)

— "Can we get the 'play space' at the front of the store back? I stop here every week with a 2-year-old and that was a high point of the trip for her. I'm sure others feel similarly. If it's a matter of getting someone to move stuff around I'd be happy to volunteer."

Thanks for your offer. We could use the help, in fact. The play space has been a popular feature, and we would like to have it back again. The person who ran the play space is currently out on maternity leave, and in her absence the play space just simply fell through the cracks. When she returns, she will resume running the play space. But in the meantime if anyone else is interested in volunteering to clear the space or supervise activities there, just let me or any staff member know.

— "Please bring back Big Sky Bread!"

— "Please, please, please stock more of the Bonaparte multi-grain loaves. It's rarely

available in the evenings during the week. On weekends we will hoard 2 or 3 loaves because we can't get it during the week."

Big Sky Bread is on the way back, I promise! As for the Bonaparte breads, from what we can tell the Co-op is one of the only, if not *the* only local store carrying this popular, locally-made brand. By the time you read this, we should be getting breads in on Wednesdays as well as continuing to receive them on weekends.

For those of you who don't know about Bonaparte breads, they are made fresh at bakeries in Savage Mill north of Laurel and in Fells Point in Baltimore. Both of these locations also feature cafes with great coffee and pastries.

— "Please put nutritional labeling information on the granola bins to help us make informed decisions about our purchases."

Thanks for bringing this to my attention. The bulk food distributor is supposed to provide us with labels for bulk items, which we then put on the bins. We will ask them to provide us with a list of ingredients and nutritional information.

— "Why isn't tofu considered a member basic? Most vegetarian cooking makes use of it somehow."

That's a good question! I'll bring this up at the next management meeting for consideration and discussion. Look for an answer to your question soon on the bulletin board or in a future issue of the TPSS Co-operative Effort News. ●

## Apples and Christmas Trees

By Michael Tabor

The farm season is slowing down. I've got my cover crop of rye and clover in the 10-acre bottom field where 3,000 tomato plants plus squash, pumpkins and cucumbers recently grew. Plus, the garlic crop is poking its way through the heavy layer of mulch. Garlic needs to go through our winter before we get to harvest it in early summer. And, believe it or not, here in the second week of November, there are apples that still need to be picked.

The York Imperials, probably the hardest and crunchiest of the local winter apples, aren't ready until they're hit by several hard frosts. Yorks, an apple you'll rarely see except at the co-op and farmers markets, have a blemished and lopsided look which makes them unsuitable for supermarkets. Supermarkets prefer pretty and sweet fruit, saccharine-y red delicious and mushy golden delicious that are usually grown in the Northwest states — Washington and Oregon — which can grow unblemished fruit.

Consumers have had their taste in apples molded and controlled by a public relations industry that stressed cosmetically perfect fruit over taste and variety. There are thousands of varieties out there — all with their unique flavor that you'll probably never taste. Cox Orange Pippins, Spitzenburgs,

*Consumers have had their taste in apples molded and controlled by a public relations industry that stressed cosmetically perfect fruit over taste and variety. There are thousands of varieties out there — all with their unique flavor that you'll probably never taste.*

Black Twigs, and Sheepnose are all wonderful apples. I've just tried — and liked — "Goldrush", an acidic and slightly sour variety just bursting with flavor, which my neighbor grows. My personal favorites are Mutzus (Crispins) and Stayman Winesaps. I bring all of these varieties to the Co-op, so give them a try!

Getting back to the farm, the one final task is getting ready for our Christmas tree harvest. We finished shaping the trees last month. Evergreens don't normally have that perfect conical look — excepting the plastic trees. If allowed to grow naturally, they'd have a less dense, natural look. So, I have to



shape them each year. The Colorado Blue Spruces, however, have a naturally elegant, regal shape — perfect for candles that many of my customers still use.

My trees are grown on marginal land that can't support intense vegetables or fruit production. Growing them without the use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides and artificial coloring has presented challenges though. A lot of extra labor and time means keeping them affordably priced has been a problem since it takes 12 to 20 years to grow a nice looking tree. My average price is \$35 with an 8-12 foot tree running between \$45-65. I am willing to discuss the

prices, however.

Call me if you'd like to order a tree. Let me know the date you need it by; I will go up the day before, cut and wrap the tree, and bring it down for you. If you pick up a flyer and mention the Co-op, I'll make a contribution to the Co-op.

If you'd like to read a good book with a great section on apples, check out, *The Botany of Desire*, by Michael Pollan (Random House \$13.95). Another, more political one on corporate branding and marketing is Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, (Picador, \$15.00). Both would make excellent gifts! ●

## FEATURED EMPLOYEES



SUE DELETTERA

Sue is the manager of personal care products, pet care items, books, and magazines at the Takoma Park store. Sue's mission is to find the best quality items at the best prices, and that's sometimes more than a full-time job, even with a staff of six to eight people to help. In her never-ending quest to find new or better products Sue visits stores and trade shows, reads catalogs, and talks with vendor representatives. And she also listens to her customers! She loves to answer your questions and help you find what you need. Whether you're looking for a favorite product or advice for a new pet owner, you'll never go away empty-handed when you seek Sue out!

Sue walked across the country in 1986 as part of the Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament. The march started in Los Angeles in March and ended in Washington, DC, in November. Over the course of the trip, the number of walkers ebbed and flowed but averaged about 1,200 strong. "We were a traveling city," Sue remembers, "Food, toilets, and all." Not surprisingly, hiking is one of Sue's hobbies! Sue's also been involved in the development and maintenance of a dog park in College Park. The park is open to anyone who registers their dogs with the Association. (You can learn more by visiting their Website at <http://www.cpdogpark.org>.) "I've been reading a lot about dogs lately," she says, "But I'm a novel reader mostly."

Sue has been with the Co-op for 15 years. Back then, the store was run as a collective. "I guess I'm the last of the collective people," she says. As a result of her long association with the Co-op, Sue has a unique perspective on the Co-op's history. "The store has had its ups and downs, but it has worked well," she said. "The TPSS Co-op has a good working environment and good people." And as for the future of the Co-op, Sue has this to say: "We're never going to be as big as Whole Foods, but if we can be big enough for this community, that would be a good thing!"



SHERRI COLLINS

Sherri comes to work at the Takoma Park Co-op so she can get away from stress! When she's at the store, she says, "I am light all day." Sherri is the bread buyer for the store, and her fans know her as the Bread Lady. In addition to buying breads and keeping track of what is and is not selling, Sherri will special order anything for you, from a large order all the way down to a single loaf. "No one has yet asked me to order something that I could not get," she says.

Sherri was born in Flint, Michigan, and discovered Takoma Park when she came to the area to visit her mother, who had settled nearby. It seemed the perfect place to raise her three kids. "It's so peaceful here!" she says. She likes the Co-op because it is a family affair. Her kids volunteer at the store on Saturdays, and this past Halloween Sherri's mother pitched in to paint pumpkins. Every winter, she throws a holiday party for kids at her house, including her friends from the store. Sherri enjoys getting to know the customers, and she encourages shoppers to say hello when they come by the store. "I'm very chatty!" she says with a laugh.

Sherri works hard to make sure her customers are able to get what they want. Sometimes, however, being an advocate for customers means having to make tough choices on their behalf. For example, when one vendor started putting lard in their pies instead of vegetable shortening, Sherri ended up having to cancel their order until they switch back. Many customers miss their favorite pies, but the message to the vendor — "please go back to using healthy ingredients" — was transmitted loud and clear. "Hopefully, we'll get them back," Sherri says.

With the holiday season coming up, Sherri is already taking orders. "If you have any holiday favorites that you are looking for," says Sherri, "Just ask for the Bread Lady!"

And by the way, if anyone has a good recipe for pineapple upside-down cake, please let Sherri know in time for her holiday party...



AMI RA BEVEL

"I multitask," says Ami Ra, describing her life and her work. It seems an apt description of this very busy writer, poet, entrepreneur, and recent member of the Silver Spring Co-op staff. Ami Ra orders and stocks personal care merchandise and helps out with anything else that needs doing. She's also in training to be Janiece's assistant.

Ami Ra was born in Cleveland, where she was raised on natural products. She moved to the area with her son in search of a better quality of life and to be closer to family. "It is a cleaner, better environment here," she says. Plus, she found a second family at the co-op. "I think Janiece is the mother of the store," says Ami Ra, "and everyone here is like family. I'm happy to come to work." Her last job, for a large corporation, was stifling. "You can't be you" in an environment like that, she says. "Here, I don't feel like a slave."

Ami Ra has written a book of essays and poetry. "I started writing to work my way through life issues," she says. (Ami Ra is also a contributor to the *TPSS Co-operative Effort News*, and wrote this issue's article on the anniversary of the Silver Spring store.) She is also developing a children's foundation to help foster development in impoverished neighborhoods. She is currently forming a board and developing relationships through networking. "It's going to take patience," she says. Ami Ra envisions starting with a community center that over time will develop a theater, a library, and classrooms. "People don't know that everything they need is actually already out there," says Ami Ra. She encourages co-op members to get involved in their communities and with the Co-op. "Give what you can, where you can, when you can," she asks.

## Upcoming Events at the Co-op

### Membership Appreciation Days

To show how grateful we are for the loyal support of our members, both the Takoma Park and Silver Spring stores will be offering members a 5% discount on everything in the store (except special orders) all day December 26 from opening to closing. It's our way of saying "thank you!"

### Annual Old Takoma Holiday Open House

The first weekend in December is Holiday Open House weekend for member stores of the Old Takoma Business Association (OTBA). From Friday, December 5th to Sunday, December 7th, 2003, participating businesses from Old Takoma Junction all the way to the theater on 4th Street in

DC will host a "holiday gift extravaganza." Stores will be open later than usual (until 9 or 10, depending on the store) and offer seasonal refreshments to all visitors.

Plus, in honor of the season of giving, you could win a valuable gift guaranteed to lift your holiday spirits. If you spend at least \$50 at any participating store, you will automatically be entered in a special raffle.

Three lucky winners will each be awarded \$25 gift certificates from *all OTBA stores!*

For more information about Holiday Open houses, visit the OTBA website at [www.takomaonline.com](http://www.takomaonline.com).



# The Experimental Pasta Salad

By Paul L. Kelly, Sevananda Natural Foods Co-op; Atlanta, GA

**T**he weather warms, summertime nears, and I am inevitably thinking about what sort of food is good to eat in hot weather. It's not a big question, really. Something needs to be cooked on an outdoor grill, and then some other things need to be made to go along with it. These "other things" are some of the mainstays of my culinary repertoire: salads. I grew up in the South with a capital "S", which means that I grew up eating potato salad and cole slaw and watermelon along with whatever was coming off the grill. I'm sure you can guess the extent of the seasonings available for our salads back then. They consisted of the current favorite brand of mayonnaise (or "salad dressing" as it was sometimes misnamed,) salt, and pepper. The same was true of another occasional visitor to our backyard picnic table, the macaroni salad. The basic recipe for this monstrosity was: cooked macaroni (forget the al dente illusions you may harbor,) boiled eggs, onions, pickles, maybe some celery and bell pepper, all chopped very fine, so as to hide the fact that they were there. If the cook was feeling adventuresome there

might be poppy seeds and garlic salt added. Finish by adding almost as much mayo as you have noodles, and you've got a nice batch of the macaroni goop we ate when I was a lad.

I hate to sound so snobbish about food. After all I still eat some things that lots of other people might find reprehensible, so I need to be careful lest I become a target myself. But there is one great truth here: The noodle salad I was subjected to in my youth was unfit for consumption by any human, gourmet or gourmand. Sometime during my college days I discovered this fact, when I learned to call macaroni salad by the more chic term pasta salad (college is great for this sort of thing) and likewise learned that there could be more things in a salad than mayonnaise and vegetables chopped down to the size of microbes. Along the way I also discovered one of the central tenets of my cooking philosophy, which is that cooking should always involve experimentation. I consider cooking an adventurous pursuit. I look at a recipe not as a script for producing a standard item, but as a starting point from which to create something new. Naturally this approach can lead to disaster, as I have sometimes discovered. Likewise it can lead to the occasional masterpiece that elicits the most compliments at a party or a picnic, and

that makes the cooking worth the trouble. I think this is analogous to the world of investing: With the greatest risk comes the potential for the greatest reward.

With that in mind, I will share some of my ideas on pasta salad. First, while elbow macaroni is okay to use, there are lots of other kinds of pasta that also work great. Part of the fun of pasta is that it can be made into virtually any shape. It is surprising how much just changing the shape of pasta used in a recipe can make a standard recipe into a completely new dish. Second, vegetables should be chopped into bite-sized pieces. Not everyone agrees with me on this, but I think being able to see what kind of vegetables are in the salad adds to the appeal-it also reduces the frequency of questions like "Um, what's in this?" Third, make your own salad dressing, according to your favorite flavors. Bottled dressings can be useful, but they limit the spectrum of flavors you can put into your project. It's better to make your own, adjusting for your taste. Fourth, don't overcook the pasta. Fifth, don't overcook the pasta. And finally, don't overcook the pasta! Did I make my point? I have embarrassed myself a few times with this; when someone asks, "So what shape were these before you put them in the salad?" you know the pasta was overcooked. As a general rule, the pasta will absorb liquid from the rest of the salad, so you can cut a minute or more off the recommended cooking time.

So what sorts of things can we put in pasta salad? Practically anything. We can probably rule out ice cream and rutabagas, but short of that the field is open. Raw or steamed veggies are great, and don't be afraid to try fruit or raisins for a sweeter salad. Sundried tomatoes, nuts such as walnuts or pignolias (pine nuts,) squash, broccoli, onions (Vidalias are awesome,) carrots... whatever. The key is to use things you like to eat. Likewise, for dressings the possibilities are endless. A basic olive oil and wine vinegar is a good starting point, along with whatever herbs and spices you like. If fresh herbs are available, they will make the most impact; whole fresh basil leaves give an intense flavor that is impossible to ignore. Again, the key is to experiment. Figure out what you like and what's available, and use it.

Of course not everybody likes to ad lib in the kitchen. Some people feel lost without a recipe, or at least don't feel comfortable improvising a dish the first time they make it. If you fall into one of these categories, I'll give you a start with a recipe I've made a few times-always, of course, with variations, but the basics are here.

## Mediterranean Pasta Salad

- 1 Package Eden® Organic Vegetable Spirals
- 1 cup broccoli florets
- 1 cup julienne or sliced carrots
- 1 medium red bell pepper sliced julienne
- 1 medium green bell pepper sliced julienne
- 1 medium onion (or 1/2 Vidalia onion) sliced
- 1/2 cup pignolias (pine nuts)
- 1/2 package dried tomatoes
- 1/2 cup black olives, sliced

### SALAD DRESSING

- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar (or 1/4 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup water)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 medium onion (or 1/4 Vidalia onion) chopped fine
- 1 or 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. thyme
- 1 tsp. basil
- 1 tsp. salt

- Mix the dressing the night before, so the flavors can "marry." Mix the olive oil and vinegar (or vinegar and water for less intensity), herbs, chopped onion, and garlic.

- Prepare pasta according to package directions, subtracting about one minute from cooking time. Allow to cool.

- Soak dried tomatoes according to package directions. Chop coarsely.

- Toast pine nuts in a 350°F oven for 10 to 15 minutes.

- Chop and slice veggies, and mix veggies, nuts, and dried tomatoes together with dressing. Add to pasta, stirring only enough to mix together (too much stirring will turn the pasta to mush!).

- Chill and serve.

Some things that are fun to add to this recipe are artichoke hearts, mushrooms (I like to marinate them overnight in the dressing) and either Calamata or mixed green ripe olives (make sure you remove the pits!) You may also want to try different kinds of vinegar. Raspberry red wine vinegar is nice, and garlic vinegar can give an extra jolt to the recipe. Again, I encourage you to treat the recipe as a starting point, rather than a set procedure. Experiment with other kinds of herbs and spices, other vegetables, or other kinds of dressings. Sometimes you may not be completely happy with the results, but that's part of the game. The other part is the unique combination born of luck and a willingness to try something new, which results in someone saying, "Wow! This is the best thing I ever tasted!" ●

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Jersey City, New Jersey. 1994-0512. 3/4 -30

**But what minutes!  
Count them by sensation, and not by  
calendars, and each moment is a day.  
Benjamin Disraeli**

# Consider a Winter Get-Away with a Conscience

By Denise Roseland, Lakewinds Food Co-op;  
Minnetonka, MN

**T**ourism is the world's largest industry. Yes, you read that correctly... not computer technology, auto manufacturing or even coffee. This isn't likely to change in the next 10 years either. By 2010, it is estimated that 1 billion people will spend \$1.5 trillion on travel. This staggering number is almost 4 times what we spent in 1999.

There doesn't seem to be any harm in a get-away to a warm sunny climate during the dead of winter, right? Well, it certainly is good for the spirit but some of the hidden consequences of our travels far and near are these:

- Increased number of available low-wage jobs in the local economy of the destination
- Increased demand and strain on resources of the destination area

And for foreign travel, increased presence of non-native owned companies. This means that 70% of the profits of these businesses leave the destination country.

Travelers with a conscience have been turning to eco-travel options by the thousands in recent years. It is now the fastest growing segment within the travel industry. Popular destinations in recent years have included Central and South America, Canada, the Caribbean, Antarctica, Africa, Australia and of course, the United States. The growth of this segment of the industry has led to a certain amount of "greenwashing." Many companies promote eco-travel options with a focus built around outdoor-related activities. Unfortunately, many of those tours do little to protect or preserve the environment or local cultural treasures and falsify the objective of the tour to appeal to a potential traveler's desire to do good.

According to the National Audubon Society, eco-tourism means responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well being of local people. This philosophy emphasizes the two sides of eco-tourism: the environment and preservation of local culture. Many organizations in the field of eco-travel support this ideology and are working to establish an industry-wide standard for travel packages that can be sold as eco-travel.

Many of us with a concern for good, healthy natural foods might find some appeal in the idea of eco-travel. Here are



some ways to tell if a tour operator claiming to offer eco-travel tours is truly doing so responsibly:

- Is this tour operator committed to strong ethical and environmental standards? Do they support their claims with action and strong evidence? Do they have a waste management policy and advise you in advance of acceptable materials?
- Are the activities planned culturally sensitive and in respect to local customs?
- Do the activities and accommodations support locally owned enterprise?
- Does the tour operator monitor impact of tours on the area and make adjustments to travel packages as necessary in order to protect the resources of the destination?

Once you have satisfied your concerns with a tour operator, you will want to take a few steps to prepare to be a good eco-traveler yourself. Begin by answering these questions: Why am I taking this trip? What environmental impact will I have on the area? What resources will I consume to take

this trip? Will my presence at this destination increase the demand for products and services from foreign companies? Will my travel and the travel of others to this area force local residents and business from the area to make room for tourism development?

If your conscience is satisfied with your answers to those questions, you can now begin preparation for your travels. Begin by educating yourself on the local culture, its history, its people, its food and music, its landscape and resources. Then consider your impact on the area in advance and make choices in advance that will minimize the footprint you leave behind. Try traveling by your own muscle power. Rent a bicycle rather than taking a cab or renting a car. Know more about endangered plants and animals in the area. Make a note to be mindful of the things you buy so as not to contribute to the demise of those endangered species when you arrive. Consider whether your presence will influence young people who reside at your destination.

Young residents of areas frequented by travelers are often removed from school and exploited in the workforce to support the needs of the tourism industry. Finally, think of ways to continue your experience once you return home. Show a slide show at your neighborhood library or school and talk about your adventures. Host a dinner party for friends featuring foods from your vacation spot. Write an article or essay and try to publish it in a travel magazine or your local newspaper. Think of ways to share your experiences with others, emphasizing your preparation and reasons for choosing an eco-tour.

Interested in learning more about eco-travel? Try picking up a copy of *Outside* or *Backpacker* magazines. Check out the following websites for various eco-travel groups:

[www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org)  
[www.ecotour.org](http://www.ecotour.org)  
[www.green-travel.com](http://www.green-travel.com)  
[www.gorp.com](http://www.gorp.com)

Many groups recommend starting your eco-travel adventures in your own backyard. Try cross-country skiing or bicycling in a local park, being mindful of the trails, respecting the animals and their habitat, observing the ecosystem in its entirety. After your local adventure is complete, think about how the things that you saw link to broader issues facing your neighborhood, state or the country on a whole. Be mindful of the relationships between everything. Spend time studying the facets that fascinated you that day at the local library or online. Even if an eco-tour somewhere exotic isn't an option, this adventure closer to home will take you to many places new! ●

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## MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION DAYS

**M**ark your calendar with these important dates! To thank you for your support of the TPSS Co-op, one day a month is set aside as **MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION DAY**.

Shop at the Co-op and receive a 5% discount on your purchases! Just our way of saying thanks!

*(Discount does not apply to special orders)*

### UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION DAYS:

**2003**

*December 26*

**2004**

*January 24*

*February 15*

*March 22*

*April 21*

*May 20*

*June 25*

# The Priceless Value of Our Beloved H2O

This article is a continued examination of what it means to be healthy. A previous newsletter presented 13 “pearls” for being healthy. Subsequent newsletters will continue to describe each of these “pearls” in more detail. To recap, the 13 “pearls” for being healthy are:

1. Acknowledge and apply the fact that you are what you eat.
2. Get one hour of physical activity every day that produces sweat.
3. Drink at least 2 liters of fresh water every day.

4. Meditate for one hour every day.
5. Obtain more than enough rest.
6. Detox the body every season.
7. Acknowledge your responsibility in hurtful situations. Own your stuff!
8. Closely examine debilitating emotions, thoughts and feelings that you are holding on to. Become a spiritual warrior in order to obtain the courage to let them go.

9. Develop a relationship with your Higher Power.
  10. Become in alignment with your gifts and purposes for being on earth. Express these gifts in all areas of your life.
  11. Establish supportive, loving nurturing relationships. Let all negative relationships go.
  12. Set up healthy boundaries with everyone in your life.
  13. Live life large and loud.
- This article focuses on Pearl #3.

By Robin Anderson, Holistic Health Practitioner

As I write this article, I am sipping on a liter of water. Not a glass, mind you, but an entire liter of fresh, clean water! I drink three liters of water a day, every day. This may sound like a heck of a lot to some people, but believe me, my body knows when it has not received its three liters of water. I feel dried out, foggy, and unclear. My throat becomes parched, and I begin to feel sluggish. Perhaps this is because I have been drinking three liters of water for as long as I can remember. So my body is used to it, and even begs for it.

Some people feel energized from that first cup of coffee. Not me. I feel energized from drinking my first liter of water, which I drink when I first wake up. I like for water to be the first fluid that my body absorbs. I feel as if I am cleaning the inside of my body. Many mornings, following a day when I burned the candle at both ends, I awake with tired bones. I go into the kitchen and pour my first liter of water. As I drink, I begin to feel refreshed, stimulated and awake! I feel *alive* again.

Shortly after drinking water and doing some physical activity, I have a wonderful, long bowel movement. I realize that many people do not become excited about great bowel movements, but I do. This tells me that my body is cleaning and purging itself properly. A good combination of water and exercise always produce a good bowel movement for me.

## Drought Teaches Importance of Water

Personal experience has taught me never to take water for granted. In 1992, I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Swaziland, teaching math and physics in a small village high school. When I arrived, the country was in the midst of a drought, with little prospect for rain. I remember how hard, brown, dry and cracked the earth appeared. You could see the ribs of the cows and goats that wandered around in desperation, looking for something green to eat. One desperate goat actually charged a friend of mine who was wearing a green skirt.

The lack of rain meant that local streams, where people fetched their cooking and cleaning water, were becoming barren. The streams were a traditional gathering place for village women to find fellowship, gossip jovially, wash clothes, bathe, and draw water. But because of the water shortage, these gatherings had mutated into a deadly competitive activity. No longer were women glad to meet one another at the stream for camaraderie. Instead, they treated one another with suspicion, fearing that someone might take more than her ration of precious water. All because of a lack of water, a peaceful village changed into one where I believed people did not trust or even like one another.

The whole country seem to have a feeling of despair as, day after day, month after month, the hot African sun baked the earth, providing no mercy or relief with even a sprinkle of rain. The country was so desperate that humans were gathering water from unsafe places, such as streams in which cows cooled themselves off, drank, and relieved themselves. This unhealthy water would be boiled and used to make hot tea. Have you ever tried drinking hot tea on a hot summer day, with no available air conditioning, in hopes of satisfying a parched throat, lips and tongue? For me, it only made me thirstier! Thirsty for that cool, wonderful, natural drink from nature.

Then one day, about a year after arriving in Swaziland, I was outside cooking some food on our makeshift grill. The sun was shining brightly as ever; however, I began to feel

these water droplets on my face. Thinking it was a passing bird, I looked up at the sky but there was none. I put my hand to face and felt that it was water. For a moment, I could not figure out where this water was coming from. Then it dawned on me that it was beginning to rain. Even with the sun shining, we were experiencing our first rain in years. I ran inside my house to fetch my Peace Corps roommate, Michele, so she could experience this most magnificent event! Michele was more practical than I was; she

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*Water — clean, pure, wholesome water — is in a league of its own. It is one of nature's miracle drugs. It cleanses the body both internally and externally. It helps to clear the mind.*

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immediately fetched a bucket. Michele knew that the roofs in the village were constructed so that rainwater would run off the roof onto the ground, where people would place buckets to catch the runoff.

Apparently, our roof provided a better supply of water than most houses around ours, because people began to move our buckets out of the way and place their buckets in their place to catch “our” water! Wow! The power of water! I really believed that the water that fell on my property was my water and no one else's. I did not care that families, little children, the elderly needed water just as much as I did. I wanted all the water from my roof for myself. I had totally lost my sense of compassion and community. I feared that this might be our only rainfall for years to come and that Michele and I had better grab all the water we could get.

Michele and I got soaked, as we stood steadfastly by our bucket. We even developed a system to collect as much water as we could. Once it was full of precious water, Michelle handed it to me and I ran inside the house and pour it into four huge water storage drums. While I was in the house, Michele guarded the spot, not allowing anyone else to gather the runoff water from the roof that was simply falling on the ground. Can you imagine that?! But I was right there with her in this insane mindset. This was *our* water! So even though it was raining, my little village did not initially revert back to a peaceful community. Instead there was mass excitement, panic and a charge to gather up all the water. It was as if money was falling from the sky.

Little did any of us know that this rain was the beginning of Swaziland's monsoon season and that it would rain almost nonstop for the next three months. So very quickly we went from dry, parched land to mudslides. The mud was so dense and massive that it was like trying to walk on ice... very tricky and slippery.

I smile to myself now when I think of the total state of panic that I was in that produce such senseless and callous behavior towards my neighbors. I also feel ashamed.

Even though the drought ended and water was now plentiful, I never felt at ease when it came to water. We did not have running water in my village but there was a nearby beautiful stream that provided fresh, clean, sparkling water. However, this was not enough for me. The psychological damage of not having plentiful running water was done. I never got over the experience of the drought that first year in Swaziland.

## Don't Take Water for Granted

After serving my two years as a Peace Corps volunteer, I returned to the United States where I had running water in

my apartment. I felt complete and total gratitude for a service that we take for granted in this country. However, when I first came back to this country the sound of water being wasted — a leaky faucet dripping, grass being watered, or a car being washed, really bothered me. I thought we were being terribly wasteful of such a precious and priceless gift. I had an even harder time expressing my concerns to loved ones who had never lived through a drought or who had not experienced life without running water.

I relay this true story to try to express the awesome, hypnotizing power of water. It cannot be substituted by drinking soda, coffee, tea or even juice. Water — clean, pure, wholesome water — is in a league of its own. It is one of nature's miracle drugs. It cleanses the body both internally and externally. It helps to clear the mind. It lifts up sluggish moods. It keeps our skin soft and smooth, preventing premature aging. It also is a powerful agent in losing weight! Oh the power of water! As you can see, I am a big fan of water. I am delighted to see people walking around with water bottles. However, the key is to drink the water that is being clutched! Not just holding it like a wallet or purse. Drink it up!

## The Dangers of Dehydration

Linda Page's book *Healthy Healing* describes what happens when your body does not get enough water:

1. A “water short” message is sent from your brain.
2. Your kidneys conserve water by urinating less (constipation and bloating occur).
3. Ever more drastic physical effects manifest as water depletion increases:

**At 4% water loss**, muscle endurance diminishes and you start to get dizzy.

**At 5% water loss**, headaches begin, ranging from mild to quite severe. You get drowsy, lose the ability to concentrate, and get unreasonably impatient.

**At 6% water loss**, body temperature is impaired and your heart begins to race.

**At 7% water loss**, there is a good possibility of collapse.

Other common signs of dehydration include unusually dry skin and loss of appetite, dull back pain that is not relieved by rest, and unexplained weight gain, and swollen hands and or feet (caused by water retention).

Linda Page also states that from an early adult age, our thirst sensation begins to fail. This puts us at risk for dehydration. Our thirst signal shuts off before we have had enough water for our well-being. Therefore, thirst is not a reliable signal that your body needs water. Instead, plan to drink the medically recommended eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of water every day. If you are physically active or work in hot weather conditions, then you will need more water. I am very physically active so I drink a good three liters of water every day. A sports nutritionist once told me that one should never drink more than a gallon of water a day. If too much water is consumed, then we begin to lose electrolytes, which are necessary for vibrant energy, pH balance and mineral uptake.

So, the next time you are about to reach for that cup of coffee or soda, why not reach for a bottle of water instead. If you do this on a regular basis, you will see and feel results. You will feel rejuvenated and energized, and the appearance of aging and fatigue will fade. You will be helping your body stay in perfect working condition, thus creating a sense of balance and harmony. So go ahead and drink up a good wholesome glass of H2O! Your body will thank you for it! ●