

## **NEW LOCATION FOR A LOCAL LANDMARK: BOISE CO-OP THRIVES IN MERIDIAN**

**BY LETTIE STRATTON**

Locals and visitors alike have been shopping at the Boise Co-op since 1973, and they can now enjoy a new Co-op location in the Village at Meridian.

“As the Treasure Valley grows, we see more and more of a need for natural and organic food,” says Marketing Director Mo Valko. “The demand for these products is increasing over time, so the next logical step for us was to expand and open a second location.”

Valko says the new Village location provides Boise customers who have relocated further west the opportunity to continue shopping at the Co-op, but in a more convenient way. “We’re also seeing a lot of new faces,” she says. “It’s going really well.”

There are plenty of great reasons to visit the Co-op’s Village location. “We have a really great classroom space out there, which we put into the custom design of the building,” Valko says. The classroom has a full working kitchen and will be the meeting space for a variety of classes hosted by the Co-op. Valko says one of the most popular classes involves pairing wine with cooking (always a crowd favorite) where people learn about wine while experimenting with great recipes. “We’re also doing nutrition workshops and sushi classes,” Valko says. “We have some really fun things.”

For those who don’t want to get their hands dirty in the kitchen, there’s also the Food for Thought book club that features a different book about food each month. The club is in partnership with the Meridian Library District, so people can check out the book from a Meridian Library and then enjoy dinner at the Co-op.

But what really sets the Co-op apart is their dedication to local and organic produce. “We’re the only deli in the Treasure Valley that’s using all organic produce,” Valko says. “We make everything from scratch in the deli, from dressings to soups to baked goods. People like the convenience of getting quality fast casual food that they can take home and have a healthy dinner for their family. We’re really excited that we can offer that to people.”

While 80 percent of sales at the Downtown location are to Co-op members, Valko says it’s important to remember that you don’t have to be a member to shop at any Co-op location. But if you do want to become a member, the process is simple. “It’s a one-time payment of \$65 for an entire household,” Valko explains. “It’s not an annual fee. And if you ever move or decide you don’t want to be a member anymore, \$50 of that initial payment is refundable.”

First Fridays at the Co-op (which occur the first Friday of each month) offer free live music, free wine, beer, and food sampling as well as discounted membership fees.

First Friday attendees (or regular shoppers) may have the chance to try something from the Co-op’s award-winning bakery. Valko says at a Meridian chocolate festival this past year, the bakery won the people’s choice award for a chocolate torte with chocolate ganache. “We have some really talented people on staff,” Valko says.

That talent extends to the Co-op meat department, where house-made sausage is created every day of the week using over a dozen recipes and a great deal of local meat.

“We carry more local products than any other grocery store in the Treasure Valley,” Valko says. “In our last fiscal year, we sourced from over 400 local producers in the State of Idaho. It’s really important for us. We’re a locally owned business and we understand the importance of supporting other locally owned businesses.”

Valko says the Co-op’s relationship with farmers, producers, and ranchers is one of the things that makes them tick. “One of the most exciting things about Meridian is that we’re increasing business for the Co-op and business for all the producers we source from.” She says. “It’s great because we get to introduce a whole new customer base to the idea of eating local, seasonal foods and introduce them to some farms they haven’t heard of yet.”