



### **“Just One Thing” Contest Entry**

Submitted by: Megan Straughen, Sustainability Coordinator

Company: Mondadnock Food Co-op

#### **Challenge or Opportunity:**

During construction of the Monadnock Food Co-op the acting Board of Directors and General Manager, Michael Faber, recognized an opportunity to incorporate into the physical building some of the values the community had identified as being an important part of their Co-op. These included environmental sustainability, supporting the local economy, and utilizing community resources. Michael and the Board believed there was financial opportunity, in addition to recognizing member values, to make the building as efficient as possible through measures such as improved insulation and triple-glazed windows. These improvements really needed to be completed during the initial construction phase, unfortunately this was a time of high capital costs before the flow of income began. The Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), owners of the building, were already beginning construction and building in accordance with funding approved by the bank, which didn't incorporate any sustainability measures. As the Board identified this opportunity and subsequent barriers, events were unfolding unknown to them would enable this efficiency dream to become a reality!

#### **Approach or Solution**

The Board discovered that the improvements to increase the efficiencies of the building would cost \$120,000 – an amount the developer could not get funding to support. Simultaneous to this, a group of local investors were identifying the same funding issue and began creating the Green Gap Fund. Ultimately, the creation of this fund by community members allowed MEDC to offer the Co-op a low interest loan to help cover the cost of sustainability improvements. It was an ideal scenario where people who believed change was possible united in action for a common cause, enabling a tangible and measurable difference in the community. These efficiency improvements not only make the Co-op more sustainable in the long term from a financial and environmental perspective but it also makes the Co-op a better neighbor and community member of the Monadnock Region by reducing emissions.

#### **Impact:**

These added improvements nearly doubled the efficiency of the building, decreasing the amount spent on energy every month and allowing us to decrease our carbon footprint significantly. Through our network of Co-ops we are able to track some energy and efficiency measures across Co-ops. In a square foot comparison of energy use from Co-ops in the Eastern Region we rank third overall.

As happy as we are with our progress towards efficiency, we are a stubborn bunch still not satisfied! The Monadnock Food Co-op recently partnered with the Monadnock Sustainability Network to pilot a new to our state type of Community Owned Solar Project. While details are still in the works, this project would allow the Co-op and community members to invest together in order to install solar panels up on the roof of our Co-op. This will further reduce our carbon footprint and dependency on fossil fuels while increasing our resiliency and commitment to ever increasing sustainability.