

## **DNF 40 YEAR LEGACY - MEMBERS HAVE A VOICE!**

A Brief Historical Synopsis to 2014 by Pat Blair, DNF Manager 1974-83

**Everyone is welcome to shop at Durango Natural Foods (DNF), member or not.** Spring 1973, a few grassroots visionaries chose to establish a local **nonprofit outlet for low-cost, quality food which was and is locally owned and operated.** From a food-buying club to its first 10X30 ft. rented room located in the back and northern side of 700 Main Ave., DNF operated on all volunteer efforts and donations using an unlocked, red fishing tackle box as its cash register. In 1974, it was legally registered with the state of Colorado as Durango Natural Foods, Inc. In 1975, it moved to a 600 sq. ft. rented space in the alley of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. and 7<sup>th</sup> St. next to Family Craft Memorials. DNF invited a Social Services Program, named SPARS, to initially share the premises so it could afford the rent. In addition to manning the store, DNF volunteers worked with the community through SPARS by providing services and transportation for the elderly and the disadvantaged. Its first organic community garden flourished on the grounds where The Mears House now stands. DNF organized a network of local farmers and producers to supply a majority of its bulk grains, beans, nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables, herbs, honey, beef, and eggs.

In order to accrue sufficient assets to buy its own building, DNF first invested its savings in a duplex at 3100 & 3104 W 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Using this property as collateral, members stepped forward to loan the down payment in March 1979, to purchase the northern half of its current 575 East 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. property. Community involvement continued through helping the Local Organic Produce Project (LOPP), the Soup Kitchen and San Juan Resource Recovery, among others. Education, too, has been one of DNF's priorities so throughout its history, informative newsletters have been sent plus a wide variety of classes and training videos have been offered.

July 1987, DNF planned a parking expansion with improved handicap accessibility by first selling the duplex in order to buy the adjoining property to the west, building a wheelchair ramp entrance, and then removing the house on the west property in August 1990, in order to accomplish the larger current parking lot. January 1999, DNF purchased the adjacent property to the south, removed an older house, and constructed an adjoining building, which created new space for a fresh-food deli, plus larger retail and storage areas. In 2010 DNF, Inc. became Durango Natural Foods Co-op. The deli was upgraded during 2012 and again recently improved in 2014. **At 40 years strong, DNF has nearly 1,800 members, gross sales of nearly \$2 million and is operating in the black!**

With each expansion DNF has risen to the challenge. It has grown from a rented "closet" to owning its own expanded building because committed, loyal members/community customers, too numerous to name, have supported this nonprofit organization with their countless hours of volunteer time, their loans/donations, and their purchases for 40 years. **DNF is proud of its vision come true: LOCAL OWNERSHIP, LOCAL VOICE, LOCAL CONTROL, LOW COST, and QUALITY FOOD. A heart-felt thanks goes to all. Come join the cause!**