

Medford co-op hires general manager

Market also will lease top floor of building for community space

By [Meg Landers](#)

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The yet-to-be opened Medford Market food co-op has hired a general manager and will lease the top floor of the Hubbard's Hardware building, organizers announced Friday.

Paula Harris of Concord, N.H., will begin in July as general manager of the store, which is set to open on three floors at Main Street and Riverside Avenue before Thanksgiving. Harris helped open and was general manager of a food co-op in Concord, according to a press release from the Medford Market Cooperative.

The second floor of the Hubbard's building, occupied for three years by the Highwaters nightclub, has been vacant for several months. The board of directors decided to lease it after requests from co-op owners for the organization to sponsor community rooms, workshops and classes, family activities and services, and garden tool rentals.

When the store opens, it will offer a variety of products with an emphasis on natural, organic and locally-produced food. Those who pay a membership fee will earn annual dividends on their purchases, though the store will be open to the general public. The main floor of the store will be dedicated to the deli and retail grocery. The building's basement will be used for stocking and preparation of grocery inventory.

The co-op is purchasing a lot of the nightclub's equipment, including a full-service kitchen that has proper ventilation for deli and bakery food preparation, eliminating the need to modify floor plans of the first floor.

About 3,500 square feet will be available on the top floor for subleasing.

Velda Welch, president of the board, said the organization has just launched its campaign to raise \$300,000 through low-interest loans from members. The money will make the co-op eligible for a substantial loan from the National Co-operative Bank.

In November, the co-op board signed a lease with Bob Seus, whose family owns the Hubbard's Ace Hardware building on the northwest corner of Main Street and Riverside Avenue. The family is renovating the exterior of the building, with assistance from Medford Urban Renewal Agency's façade improvement program.

Seus didn't know why Highwaters closed. Attempts to reach the business owner and manager were unsuccessful Friday because the phone numbers had been disconnected.

To learn more about the Medford Market, including how to become a member, call 944-COOP or visit www.medfordmarket.org online. Anyone interested is invited to the owner/member meeting, 6 p.m. Monday at the Santo Community Center, 701 N. Columbus Av., Medford. The group meets the first Monday of every month.

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