

Appreciating Wheatsfield

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To the Editor

As small business owners in Ames for the past 15 years, we are excited to hear that another longtime downtown small business has plans to expand. We think Wheatsfield Cooperative exemplifies the true meaning of the word community, and here's why.

In the fall of 2005 after being employed by Wheatsfield for only a short time, our adult daughter, Shelley, became paralyzed in a freak accident. In the midst of our shock and grief and long hours spent at the hospital, the Wheatsfield "gang" came to our rescue by holding a huge benefit fundraiser making it possible for Shelley to later purchase a handicap accessible minivan. It was truly amazing the way her "Wheatsfield family" came together to plan and prepare all the homemade entrees for several hundred meals, obtain donations from vendors, schedule musicians for entertainment, arrange for the banquet at Collegiate Methodist Church, not to mention spread the word in a matter of weeks to pull off such a successful and worthwhile event.

If you've ever had doubts about the commitment and drive of the younger generation, we have seen firsthand their energy and imagination and know they have a lot to offer this college community. Even board members and customers of the store were instrumental in Shelley's recovery.

Many of them spent hours making trips to Des Moines to visit Shelley in the hospital as well as bringing her some great organic foods. When she recovered, they welcomed her back to work even though she was unable to perform her previous job duties and the store was not as accessible for her wheelchair as they would like it to be.

It is hard to convey all our thanks and appreciation to the wonderful group at Wheatsfield, but we wanted to take this opportunity to share our story.

We would love to see the small businesses downtown such as Wheatsfield get the support and incentives the city provides for some of the large corporations. It is obvious Wheatsfield Cooperative is committed to its members' wishes to remain downtown even though it would be more cost effective to build a new store in another Ames location. Their confidence in the downtown cultural district is to be admired when all the large corporate stores are trying to lure the public to the edges of the city.

In closing, we would sincerely like to encourage the generous Ames community to join in helping raise funds necessary for Wheatsfield Cooperative to realize its dream of a large full-service natural food store offering fresh local meats, organic bakery, deli and coffee shop all in one terrific, convenient central location.

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