

Burlington, N.C., Welcomes Company Shops Market

BY SHARON DENT

What started as an exploration of interest in Company Shops Market in August 2007 led to a very quiet soft opening on May 21, 2011, in downtown Burlington, N.C. Folks from other co-ops, our staff, and board members all worked side by side to get ready.

We sent a “Hey, we’re open!” email to our owners, and it took very little time for a stream of excited owners to arrive. From that point forward, the number of people who come in to purchase local and wholesome groceries, sit down with a cup of coffee, eat lunch or dinner with friends and family, or just share a bottle of wine on the patio has increased daily. It’s good to finally be able to be a downtown neighbor to the other businesses working hard to revitalize Burlington.

We held our Grand Opening on June 11, and many in our community came to celebrate at an all-day event—1,000 people came through the registers that day! All of us—the board, General Manager Chris Bartlett, and all of the co-op’s teammates are extremely proud of what our entire community has been able to accomplish in four short years. Company Shops Market is not only a grocery store and café, it has also become a gathering place, especially on Friday evenings and for weekend brunch.

We are proud to have 31 dedicated and hard-working teammates (19 full-time and 12 part-time). Our net sales through July 15 (less than two months) total \$441,350 in approximately 7,000 square feet of retail space—and we use every single foot of that space!

Company Shops Market is a \$2.5 million project



Top: The restaurant patio at Company Shops Market.
Bottom: The staff gathers on opening day.

financed by a \$1.1 million loan from Fidelity Bank and \$305,000 in grants from the state of North Carolina and Burlington Downtown Corporation, with the remainder of the funds provided by ownerships (2,000 at the time of opening), preferred-

share investments, community investment notes, and outright gifts.

I’m sure I speak for the rest of the board when I say that, every now and then, we have to pinch ourselves. ■