

Grassroots Grocery brings local, fresh, affordable goods to the River Bend

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - After over a year of strenuous planning, fundraising and hard work, **Grassroots Grocery**, located at [415 Ridge St. in Alton](#), finally opened its doors to the public on **Saturday, Aug. 22.**

Grassroots Grocery is not your traditional supermarket; the store embraces its farmer's market vibe in an effort to make sure its shelves are consistently stocked with fresh and natural items.

The store is also proud to advertise that they make their greatest attempt to stock the shelves with items that have been grown or created within a 50-mile radius, whenever possible.

“Of course, items like bananas and avocados do not thrive well in this area, so we ship those in,” **Alton Main Street’s Sara McGibany** said.

Once you walk inside Grassroots, you are welcomed to a large island display of fresh fruits and vegetables. Signs within the displays make it extremely clear where each item comes from around the area. This pattern is the same around the store with some of the grocery and non-food items. Grassroots also features local artisan soaps and health items, as well as all-natural cleaning supplies.



Alton Main Street played a pivotal role in the inception of Grassroots Grocery. After going back in forth for many years about the idea, it became a serious part of their goal as an organization.

“That’s our job here at Alton Main Street;” McGibany said, “businesses approach us and we do our best to help them become a successful part of the Alton market.”

With the help of the generous donations of local residents and sponsorships, the store earned over \$50,000 that allowed them to open up the store.

One of the most unique things about Grassroots Grocery is its ownership; no one person is considered the sole owner of the new business. Instead, the store has created a cooperative that allows patrons around the area to gain membership. Members are also welcomed to a 10-percent discount on all of the store's items for joining the cooperative with a yearly fee.



“Our store is owned by our members,” McGibany said, “with the membership, one would have a say in what goes on our shelves, what growers we choose; everything!”

One does not have to become a member of Grassroots Grocery to shop there. The store is open to any and all, member or not.

The 10-percent discount is also available to any person in the area who receives any kind of government aid such as SNAP benefits, food stamps and WIC; even folks who live in senior citizen centers or assisted living environments are eligible for the discount.

“Everyone has an opportunity to shop here at Grassroots Grocery,” McGibany said.

For more information about Grassroots Grocery, visit their website at www.grassrootsgrocery.org.

