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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Wild Oats Market Introduces *Healthy Food for All* Assistance Program

Williamstown, MA, April 20, 2009. Wild Oats Market, a cooperatively-owned market offering local and organic foods, would like the community to know about its *Healthy Food for All (HFA)* food assistance program for people with limited incomes. The program aims to make fresh and nutritious foods available to everyone. "Through the *Healthy Food for All* program, we hope to introduce more people in our community to the variety of healthy, local and organic foods that Wild Oats carries, and to overcome the belief that these foods are too expensive to buy," said Michael Faber, general manager.

The *HFA* program offers a 10% discount on all Wild Oats store purchases, except for consignment items and special orders, to individuals and families who currently participate in at least one of the following programs:

- EBT (Food Stamp Program)
- Medicaid
- WIC
- Mass Health* (Massachusetts residents only)
- Child Health Plus or Family Health Plus (New York residents only)
- Green Mountain Care** (Vermont residents only)

To sign up for the *HFA* program, individuals should stop by the Customer Service Desk at Wild Oats Market, 320 Main Street in Williamstown, and fill out an application. Individuals will be required to show a personal ID and written proof of participation in one of the qualifying assistance programs when they submit their application. Wild Oats will complete the approval process within 72 hours, and once approved the applicant will be notified by phone.

Qualifying individuals will be eligible for the 10% program discount through May of the following year. Membership must be renewed yearly. The program is open to all who qualify; one does not need to be a member of the Wild Oats Cooperative in order to be eligible.

The *Healthy Food for All* program replaces the *Low Income Assistance (LIA)* program that Wild Oats currently has in place for customers on limited incomes. Individuals must submit an application to participate in the *HFA* program, even if they are currently participating in the store's *LIA* program.

“Making healthy food affordable for everyone in our community, regardless of their income, is important to Wild Oats, and central to our mission as a community cooperative business,” said Faber. “While it’s true that high-quality foods can cost more, they also taste better and make your body feel better. And many nutritious foods, such as the grains and beans found in our bulk department, can be far less expensive than ‘convenience’ foods.”

Wild Oats Market is a member-owned, cooperative-based whole foods market that buys extensively from local and regional natural and organic food producers. One need not be a member to shop at Wild Oats, although membership offers several benefits. The market carries a wide selection of organic and naturally-made products, including: meats, eggs, dairy products, fruits, vegetables, breads, pastas, oils, cereals, juices and chocolate. Wild Oats Market also carries healthful supplements and body care products, as well as environmentally-friendly household supplies.

*** Qualifying programs under Mass Health include the Standard, Basic, Essentials, Senior Buy-in and Buy-in programs.**

**** Qualifying programs under Green Mountain Care include Catamount Health, Dr. Dynasaur and Vermont Health Access Plan programs.**

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