



Community
FOOD CO-OP
Bellingham's Natural Grocer

Natural Cooperative Grocer Creates Recyclable, Durable Signage, and Sees Significant Savings with REVLAR® from Relyco

Opened in 1970 with about forty members and 8 items (cornmeal, bread, honey, flour, rolled wheat, rice, wheat germ, and granola), the Community Food Co-op is known today as Bellingham's (Washington) natural cooperative grocer. The member-owned Co-op now has two full-service locations and 30,000 members, and offers a full line of fresh, natural, and organic foods.

With departments like a garden center, bakery, and deli, the Community Food Co-op was challenged with producing signage that would stand up over time, especially in high-traffic areas or places where moisture was common. The Co-op had used laminated card stock, which did the job but was expensive and time-consuming to produce. "To ensure the longest life for the finished product, we created our laminated signage in a two-step process," explains Habiba Sial, the Community Food Co-op's graphic designer. "We designed, printed, and cut each individual sign, then laminated them and trimmed them again. At certain times of year—such as the spring when our garden center needs dozens of signs for new seedlings and larger plants—the lamination process took time away from other more important tasks."

For some time, those at the Community Food Co-op had been hearing "buzz" in the industry about plasticized, recyclable paper, and Sustainability Program Coordinator Melissa Elkins began to review synthetic-paper options as a potential replacement for lamination, considering a number of vendors and ultimately requesting samples from Relyco. "The service we received from Relyco from the beginning was a big part of our ultimate decision," Elkins says. "Relyco sent us many samples of their REVLAR paper to test so that we could make an informed decision, and Relyco was very patient throughout our purchasing process."

At A Glance:

Customer
Community Food Co-op

Industry
Grocery Store

Relyco Products
REVLAR Waterproof Paper

Website
www.communityfood.coop

“Even before we tested REVLAR to see how it would work in our printers, we wanted to find out if it could be recycled. It passed our recycling company’s tests and is conveniently recycled with sheet plastic or plastic film, like the plastic wrap used at home or the plastic used in the stores to wrap large pallets. In addition to traditional paper recycling bins, we now have ‘plastic’ paper recycling bins around our stores. In the future, I can envision preprinting the back of each REVLAR sign with the recycle symbol, so that everyone who shares our commitment to sustainability recognizes that we’ve printed on a recyclable product and learns how it should be disposed of.”

Habiba Sial

Graphic Designer | Community Food Co-op

In addition to ensuring that REVLAR would have the rigidity, durability, and waterproof quality needed for their applications, the Community Food Co-op was also looking for a synthetic-paper product that could be recycled. The Co-op is committed to sustainability and ecological responsibility, and in fact, all of Bellingham is engaged in an effort to reduce landfill use by working toward zero waste. “Even before we tested REVLAR to see how it would work in our printers, we wanted to find out if it could be recycled,” Sial says. “It passed our recycling company’s tests and is conveniently recycled with sheet plastic or plastic film, like the plastic wrap used at home or the plastic used in the store to wrap large pallets. In addition to traditional paper recycling bins, we now have ‘plastic’ paper recycling bins around the store. In the future, I can envision preprinting the back of each REVLAR sign with the recycle symbol, so that everyone who shares our commitment to sustainability recognizes that we’ve printed on a recyclable product and learns how it should be disposed of.”

“The laminated signs couldn’t be recycled, so they just went into the garbage,” adds Elkins. “We closely track all our recycling efforts. As our company’s sustainability program coordinator, I’m always looking for ways to cut back on our landfill contributions, and REVLAR has definitely fulfilled this requirement. We love that our REVLAR signs can be recycled.”

With REVLAR, the process to create signage is much simpler. Sheets of REVLAR are preprinted with a light green color to create a two-tone color image, and then individual department managers run the sheets through black and white printers to add text as the signs are needed. “We still use a two-step process, but we only need to cut each sign once, which makes everything much faster and easier,” Sial notes. “REVLAR works well in our printers and easily withstands double print runs. Most importantly, the finished signs are bright and the type appears crisp and is easy to read.”

In addition to time savings, Community Food Co-op has benefitted from cost savings with REVLAR. “Laminating a typical piece of card stock cost about \$1.17 per sheet for the lamination alone; the REVLAR plus toner is as much as \$0.20 less per sheet,” Elkins says. “This is on top of the time our team members save on sign production, something we really appreciate since they often have only a few minutes to produce a sign before they’re needed back on the sales floor.”

Community Food Co-op has identified many potential uses for REVLAR, putting it through its paces first in the stores’ floral department. Plans are underway for creating REVLAR signs for the stores’ deli and bakery cases, as well as for use in check-out lines and for the Co+op Essentials “Everyday Low Price” program. “Moisture is the challenge with signage in the floral department or deli case, but our ‘Everyday Low Price’ signs are used throughout the store and need to stand up to a lot of wear and tear. The same is true for signs posted at the check out,” Sial explains. “These signs are also used for long periods of time so the fact that REVLAR resists fading and looks good even months later is a plus. We currently replace 60 to 70 signs every few weeks, and we know we can avoid that with REVLAR.”

“Our experience with Relyco has been fantastic,” Elkins concludes. “They are so quick to respond to my questions and everyone I’ve come in contact with has been incredibly helpful and patient. I’ve already recommended Relyco and REVLAR to others in my industry, especially colleagues who are committed to recycling and have recycling options available in their communities.”

About Relyco: For almost 30 years, Relyco has been the premier supplier of unique and innovative paper products that are designed for laser and inkjet printers. Our products are great for thousands of uses, which enables you to get the most value out of your printer investment. Understanding and meeting our clients’ needs is always our first priority. Visit us at www.relyco.com or call (800) 777-7359.