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## Co-op pledges to cut fuel bills for members

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WARRENSBURG — A new cooperative purchasing operation based in the Capital District has now expanded into the Warrensburg-Lake George region.

Galway Co-op is now seeking customers in northern Warren County, and they are pledging the lowest possible prices for propane, trash removal and by later this year, heating fuel.

Co-op founder Michael Casadei cited instances in which Co-op members routinely purchase propane at 20 to 25 percent off prevailing prices, and in some cases, 70 to 75 percent lower.

"The bottom line is, with our membership we have a two-million-gallon buying power per year for propane, so we can offer a significantly lower price," he said.

Homeowners and businesses join for an annual administrative fee of \$35, then get the advantage of buying fuel at the lowest possible mark-up from wholesale prices, he said.

Galway Co-op prices aren't illusory promotional prices that jump upward after an initial period, he said. Also, the Co-op has low, competitive rates for service, he said.

In addition, the co-op offers protection against prices that jump without reason, he said, citing propane providers in the area that boost prices to whatever they think they can get out of particular customers — a practice that has been investigated by area news organizations, Casadei said.

"Propane prices can be all over the board," he said. "Propane providers can charge whatever they want whenever they want, and they don't have to give you a reason why."

In contrast, Galway Co-op publicizes the prevailing wholesale and retail prices of propane to keep their customers properly informed about price fluctuations, he said.

The co-op also offers to their members a 30 percent discount off list price for trash removal through County Waste in the firm's service territory.

Casadei is now negotiating a partnership with a fuel oil supplier for delivery of heating fuel at discount rates. Also, he is looking towards offering discount electricity, food and other essential services through cooperative buying.

The Galway Co-op was founded by Casadei and a group of neighbors in Galway who sought to boost their buying power. The co-op grew from an initial 16 members and when they told their friends and co-workers, the co-op grew dramatically. It now has nearly 3,000 members, Casadei said.

Cutting fuel costs is not the only benefits provided by Galway Co-op. The group donates 10 percent of its profit to charities, and this has amounted to many thousands of dollars to community-service groups, including money to groups that combat illnesses and conditions like breast cancer and autism, and towards local emergency service groups, like fire companies.

"This is a win-win situation," Casadei said. "People are going to be saving a lot of money while charities benefit."

In northern Warren County, Casadei plans initially to donate money to local food pantries, considering that need for such basics has grown so much in the last 18 months, he said.

That sum might be as much as \$5,000, based on propane sales projections, he said.

"This is simply a matter of giving back to our customers' communities," he said.

Galway Co-op members are offered a variety of other discounts for services, and details are on the co-op's website at: [fuels4less.com](http://fuels4less.com).

There, people can examine an added benefit to members, which is a bonus of up to \$75 credit for customers who refer new propane customers. This credit can mount up, Casadei said, noting that one pizzeria in the region hasn't used their credits to pay for propane costs for more than two years. Information on the referral program — offered through Galway Co-op's propane partner Ferrellgas — is on the [www.fuels4less.com](http://www.fuels4less.com) website.