



BY DAVE GUTKNECHT

# Celebrating Excellence and New Co-ops

With gratitude and pride, our cooperative associations regularly recognize leading contributors to our improvement and success. We also have new food co-ops to celebrate, from communities where seeds of cooperation are taking root.

Congratulations to award winners announced at the June 11–13 Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) conference in Pittsburgh:

**Valley Natural Foods** (Burnsville, Minn.) and Susan McGaughey, the co-op's general manager for nearly 30 years, received the Cooperative Excellence award for years of growth despite challenges, for outstanding store performance, and contributions to the food co-op sector.

**LaMontañita Co-op** received the Cooperative Innovation and Achievement award for expansion beyond its two Albuquerque, N.M., stores through merger and acquisition of two more stores, and for launching specialty food distribution and a "Co-op Trade" initiative that is serving food producers in the region.

**Gail Bartlett** of Blue Hill Co-op (Blue Hill, Me.) received the Cooperative Board Service award for her years of resourceful and formative work, strengthening the co-op's operating structure, its governance and communications, and its cooperative spirit.

**Dan Nordley**, a member of the Seward Co-op board of directors (Minneapolis, Minn.) and chief ranger for 20 years at Triangle Park Creative (the publisher of *Cooperative Grocer*), received the Cooperative Service award for his steady leadership during 12 years on the board as Seward expanded, and for many services to co-ops by the design firm he founded.

The CCMA conference also announces new cooperatives that have opened since the previous year's recognition. Welcome to the newest retail members of our food co-op sector:

- Chatham Real Food Market (Chatham, N.Y.)
- Eagle Rock Co-op (Eagle Rock, Idaho)
- Fiddleheads Natural Foods Co-op (Waterford, Conn.)
- Fresh Connections (Algona, Iowa)
- Lakes Community Co-op (Stone Lake, Wis.)
- Littleton Food Co-op (Littleton, N.H.)
- Local Roots Co-op (Estes Park, Colo.)
- Mandela Foods Cooperative (Oakland, Calif.)
- Market Community Cooperative (Spirit Lake, Iowa)
- South Bronx Food Co-op (Bronx, N.Y.)
- Walsh Community Grocery (Walsh, Colo.)

Cooperative excellence is also shared elsewhere in this edition. Marketing ideas that

are lively and low-budget, yet memorable and effective, are highlighted by Melissa Cohen of Isla Vista Food Co-op. That town may have an unusual demographic, but the guerilla marketing that is illustrated can be applied most anywhere. Additional marketing perspectives and recommendations, emphasizing new forms of social networking, are reported by Ellen Michel in a follow-up to a recent Marketing Matters session, attended by staff from 55 food co-ops.

Excellent store design is another field in which co-ops and their advisors have learned much during years of expansion. P.J. Hoffman provides a seasoned and succinct summary of the diverse components of a design team and the essentials of design planning.

A contribution on evaluating the general manager describes how the board of directors can encourage excellence. Reviewing manager performance can be handled in a thorough, productive and professional manner by the board—but that is not always how it is done. Carolee Colter and Mark Goehring provide a detailed and illustrated guide to carrying out this important board duty.

## Where's the local food stimulus?

Not even a mere \$250 million for local food systems is being promoted. As noted in my recent editorial on the food crisis and opportunities, public policy support for more sustainable food system is being neglected during the bailout of financiers. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) late May newsletter described the announced results of the Obama administration stimulus bill as "100 days, 100 projects and one big missed opportunity":

"NSAC is disappointed that at the same time these announcements are being made, nowhere [on federal agency websites] is there any mention of the \$250 million in guaranteed loans available (\$125 million from the stimulus bill and the rest from regular appropriations) to develop local and regional food system enterprises set aside within the \$3 billion in Recovery Act funding provided to the Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program. This \$250 million could kick start local food business development, boosting farm income, creating jobs, reinvigorating local infrastructure, providing better food for consumers, and cutting transportation-based pollution. Furthermore, the local food system funds roll back into the general B&I loan fund if not applied for, so promotion and outreach by USDA is critical right now, without further delay." ■

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