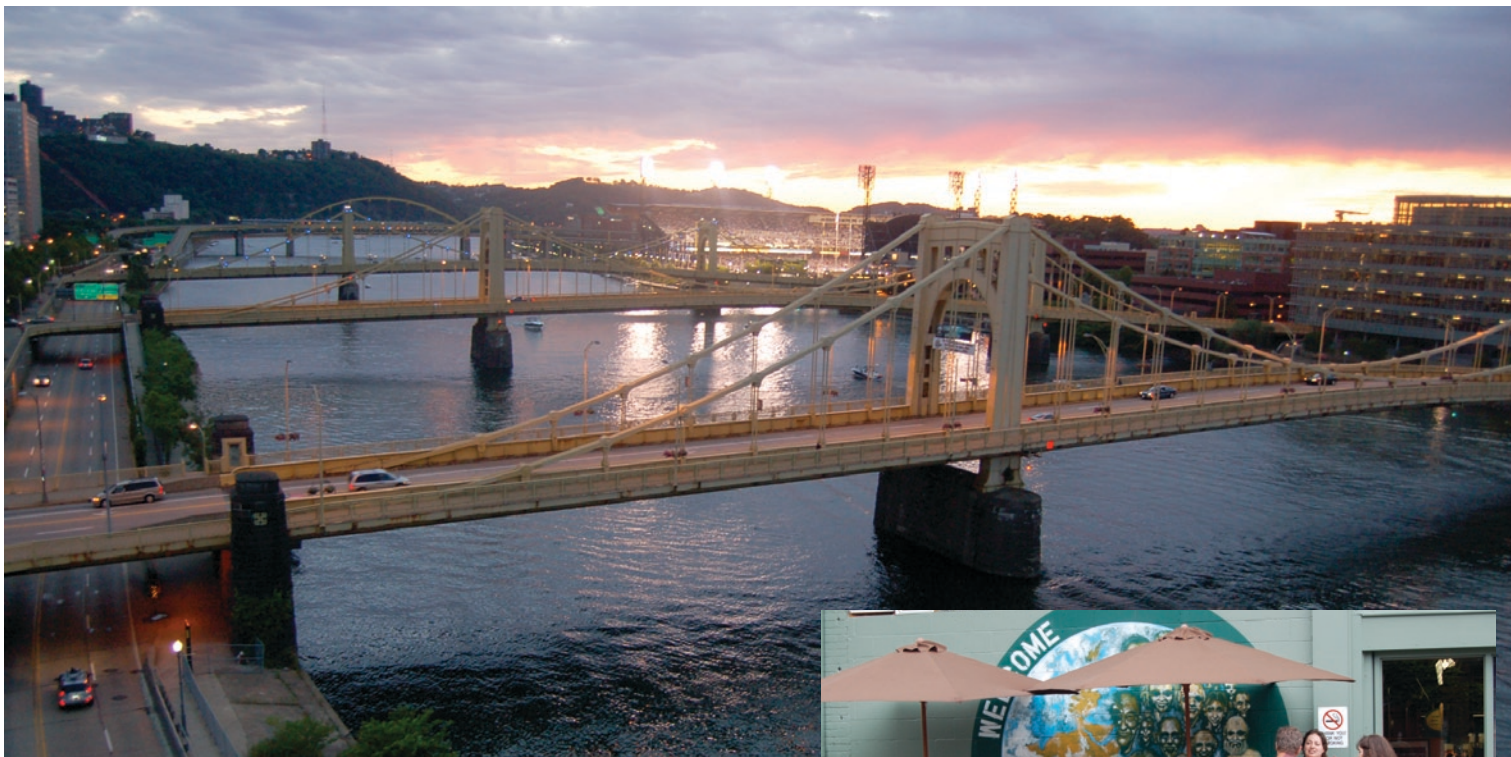


CCMA Crowd Enjoys Pittsburgh, Honors Achievements

BY DAVE GUTKNECHT



Under a theme of “By Art and Design: Thriving in Trying Times,” some 350 food cooperative managers, directors, and trainers from across the country gathered in Pittsburgh June 11–13 to learn and to celebrate. Hosted locally by East End Food Co-op, the Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) held its 53rd annual gathering in a city that is turning industrial decline into sustainable design.

Sponsored by the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA), the CCMA conference is planned by Ann Hoyt and staff at the UW-Madison Urban Cooperative Initiative. Adam Schwartz of NCBA welcomed attendees and reminded them of the impact of cooperatives in multiple economic sectors and the increasing recognition and opportunities for co-ops in addressing serious economic and social needs.

Other speakers covered a wide range of themes, from differentiating our businesses, to critiques of retail co-op services, governance methods for the board of directors, business practices that reduce energy use and enhance sustainability, and initiatives that expand local food systems. The CCMA conference offered both fun

The bridges of Pittsburgh (above) made a spectacular backdrop for CCMA events. Thursday’s tours featured a visit to the host co-op, East End Food Co-op (right).



and fund-raising along with challenging speakers and workshop sessions. Local tours visited East End’s bustling store and learned about the co-op’s involvement in exciting urban green initiatives and collaboration with local institutions.

The conference also is a focus for the work of the Howard Bowers Fund, named for a former dedicated co-op manager. The fund, sponsored by the Cooperative Development Foundation, provides scholarships for co-op training and also sponsors recognition awards for leading organizations and individuals. Over \$23,000 was raised at this year’s CCMA conference through various contributions. These included a year’s use of two popular co-op quilts for large contributions by the eastern and western corridors of the National Cooperative Grocers Association; a generous contribution by members of CDS

Consulting Co-op; and additional contributions through a silent auction of co-op items.

At the conference awards banquet, co-op milestones were announced for several food co-ops: 40 years of operations for Alternative Food Co-op in Providence, R.I.; and 30 years for Community Food Co-op in Bozeman, Mont.; Mississippi Market in St. Paul, Minn.; and St. Peter Food Co-op in St. Peter, Minn. New co-ops also were celebrated, and growing numbers of community-based efforts are opening new stores, including 10 or 11 in each of the past two years (see page 4 for a listing of this year’s newcomers). This is the largest wave of new food co-ops since the 1970s.

Howard Bowers Fund 2009 awards were announced for the following:

■ **Cooperative Excellence:** Valley Natural ■>

CCMA Awards, continued



PHOTOS BY DAN NORDLEY

Clockwise from top left: Gail Bartlett of Blue Hill Co-op in Maine (left) is congratulated by Marilyn Scholl of CDS Consulting for winning the Board Service award. Terry Bowling of La Montañita Cooperative accepted the Cooperative Innovation and Achievement award on behalf of the co-op. Susan McGaughy (in green) was honored along with her store, Valley Natural Foods, with the Cooperative Excellence award, presented by Ann Hoyt and Gail Graham.

◀ **Foods** (Burnsville, Minn.) and Susan McGaughy, the co-op's manager for 29 years, have modeled outstanding store performance and productivity, strong member education programs, and the creation of community through this suburban cooperative. Guiding the organization through recovery from setbacks including a fire and, more recently, a major expansion, McGaughy's professionalism, positive attitude, and tenacity have inspired her staff and also have served others in the regional and national food co-op sector.

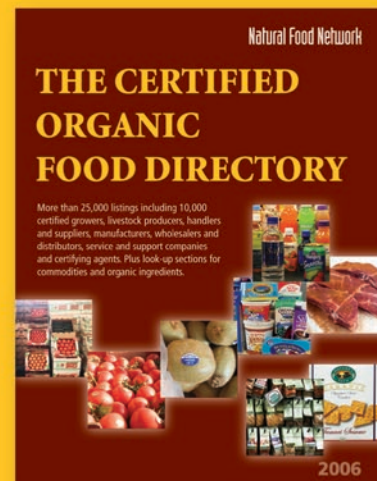
■ **Cooperative Innovation and Achievement:** La Montañita Cooperative, after successfully operating two stores in Albuquerque, N.M. for many years, more recently has undertaken ambitious expansion of the co-op economy. In 2005, La Montañita rescued a struggling food co-op in the distant town of Gallup and also acquired, from retiring store owners, the only private natural foods retail in Santa Fe. In addition to integrating these stores into the cooperative—tripling sales at the Gallup store and doubling sales at the Santa Fe site—in 2007 La Montañita launched a regional food-shed project and distribution center that now serves several hundred local producers within a 300-mile radius.

■ **Cooperative Service:** Dan Nordley has actively promoted and helped lead co-ops since the 1970s. From his board of directors seat (including several years as president) at Seward

Co-op, as well as from his design firm, Triangle Park Creative, Nordley has provided innovative and strong support for co-op businesses through networking and improved print and web communications. At Seward, he encouraged and helped lead the co-op's recent major expansion; and at Triangle Park he leads a company that for 20 years has generated excellent services to many co-ops, co-op associations, and neighborhood and nonprofit organizations—including, since 2003, the publishing of *Cooperative Grocer*.

■ **Cooperative Board Service:** Gail Bartlett has provided years of dedicated and resourceful leadership at Blue Hill Co-op in Maine. As a founder of that co-op more than 20 years ago, she has generously offered her time, energy, vision, and determination to the co-op's improvement. As a director, including a period as board president, she led Blue Hill Co-op through major bylaw revision, creation of a sound patronage distribution structure, and establishment of a disciplined governance system—all in a spirit strongly promoting cooperative principles and values.

Unprecedented opportunities face cooperatives in this era of capitalist crisis and decline. We'll have a dramatic year to review at next year's conference, to be held June 10–12, 2010, in Bloomington, Indiana and hosted by Bloomingfoods Cooperative Market & Deli. ■



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