

Connections



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Organizations Recognized for Co-op Development



Jennifer Grove of Northwest SEED accepts a certificate of Excellence from USDA's Bruce Robinson, a special guest from the Washington, D.C. office. The certificate cited excellence in marketing, promotion and overall delivery of the Renewable Energy Program.



Diane Gasaway, NWDC Executive Director, and Dave Howard, NWDC Board Chair, accept a ceremonial check from USDA Specialty Lenders Division Director Bruce Robinson, right, and Chris Cassidy, USDA Business and Co-operative Programs Director, left.



John Brugger, Cooperative Development Specialist for USDA Rural Business Cooperative Services, accepts an award from Chris Cassidy for outstanding service in the field of rural cooperative development.

In October, cooperatives across the nation celebrated their commitment to community—a core cooperative principle—as part of their annual Co-op Month observances.

At the NWDC Co-op Month celebration, guests included members of local and state cooperatives, NWDC staff and Board of Directors, NWDC co-op project coordinators, USDA staff and dignitaries, Value-Added Producers Grant recipients, and others involved in rural development. The event took place in the State Office of the

USDA in Olympia, and NWDC Board Chair Dave Howard officiated.

Guest speakers Jim Lowery, Washington Rural Development Council Director, and Mike Dunn, Thurston Union of Low Income People (TULIP), Board Chair, offered their experience and expertise in developing cooperatives to make a positive contribution to rural communities.

USDA officials presented a check symbolizing the USDA Rural Cooperative Development Grant recently awarded to the NWDC. Deb Ross of The Last Mile Electric Co-op received a check representing their award of the USDA Renewable Energy Systems Grant.

Value Added grant recipients honored were Sharon Appelt of West Farm Foods (formerly Darigold), and Terry Peters, CEO of Seeds, Inc., who was accompanied by Jim Butala of Butala Consulting.

Cooperatives:

*Owned by Our
Members,
Committed to Our
Communities.*

2004 Co-op Month Theme

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NWCDC is an association of consumer, producer and worker cooperatives in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho and Hawaii. Formerly known as Puget Sound Development Foundation, NWCDC was founded by cooperatives in 1979. The mission of the NWCDC is to foster community economic development, primarily through use of the cooperative business model.

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Diane Gasaway, Executive Director
Laura Aymond, Public Relations Mgr.
Mark Johnson, Tech. Assist. Consultant
Eric Bowman, Project Manager
Aaron Maurer, Information Systems

1063 S. Capitol Way, Suite 214
Olympia, WA 98501
Phone: (360) 943-4241
Fax: (360) 357-6085
nwcdc@nwcdc.coop

www.nwcdc.coop

*Nurturing
Cooperative
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NWCDC Awarded Leadership Grant

Mountain Community Co-op (MCC) of Eatonville, Washington will benefit from the assistance of the NWCDC, thanks to a recent grant award from the Nationwide Foundation of Columbus, Ohio.

The NWCDC received a \$5,000 George and Gladys Dunlap Cooperative Leadership Award to provide operational training to the MCC. Andrew McLeod of the Olympia Food Co-op will conduct the training.

The annual award supports projects that promote cooperatives as a way of doing business, or that increase the capacity of existing cooperatives. The NWCDC was one of four recipients nationwide.



Jan. 20-21

Great Falls, Montana

The 5th Annual Harvesting Clean Energy Conference is the Pacific Northwest's premiere event that brings the agriculture and energy industries together to advance opportunities for agricultural producers and rural communities to profitably diversify into clean energy production and other bio-product markets. To register online, visit www.harvestcleanenergy.org/conference, or call NWCDC at (360) 943-4241 to register by phone.

Small Forest Landowner Series Begins



by Eric Bowman, Project Manager

The NWCDC held its first Small Forest Landowner Cooperative Workshop October 29 to 31. The workshop is part of a nine-month three-part series.

Thirteen landowners and forestry professionals joined to learn the beginning steps of forming their own co-op and conducting feasibility studies.

The attendees were all at different stages of co-op knowledge and formation. It was an incredible opportunity for ideas to cross-pollinate. The group benefited from several people who had already formed co-ops or non-profits to inspire those who had only begun to decide that a co-op would fit their regional situations.

In February the group meets again to discuss leadership, members and markets. During the interim, the group will meet via conference calls to discuss the steps they are taking to reach their measurable objectives.

The primary goals are for participants to clarify what they want to accomplish by working collaboratively, to give them the tools to research feasibility, and if feasible to create plans of action. In addition, one of the primary focuses of the workshop series is to train-the-trainer so there will be more skilled technical assistance providers to help landowners across the state.

For further information, please contact Project Manager, Eric Bowman at Eric@nwcdc.coop, or at 360.943.4241.

Jim Lowery...Investing in Rural Communities

Ten years of experience in the field of rural development has given Jim Lowery a wealth of wisdom concerning the challenges facing Washington's rural communities today. As an NWCDC Advisory Board member, Jim is a great asset.

Jim served five years as Executive Director of Pacific County Economic Development Council and five years as Executive Director of the Washington State Rural Development Council (WSRDC).

"We need to empower rural communities at the local level"

The WSRDC mission was to define rural community barriers, needs, issues and resources at the grassroots level, then to inform legislators, the governor and state and federal agencies about the rural perspective on communities and economic development issues. The WSRDC also identified recommended improvements and served as liaison between rural communities' public and private resource providers.

Jim's job as a rural developer was to help these communities to redefine, and then to renew themselves for the future.

His experience taught him some valuable lessons. The first, Jim says, is to "listen to the residents of these communities. We need to care about rural people. They're a very valuable part of our society. We need to develop processes that recognize that value. Rather than tell them what to do, we need to ask them what they want to do, make them a part of the process."

"I've lived and worked in rural communities all my life," Jim says.

He has worn many hats in his working life, including business agent for a woodworkers union, owner of two small businesses, and working with dislocated loggers and mill workers to help them find work or to access retraining programs. He also served as Mayor of Shelton from 1976 to 1980.

Jim's favorite experiences were the Community Assessments conducted in Quincy, Chelan-Manson, Oroville, Omak-Okanogan and Mattawa.

Over 110 representatives from businesses to large agencies to small nonprofits participated in this process. Partners included Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), USDA, the Department of Health, and other nonprofits. "They were extremely intense. We'd spend 2 to 3 days hearing from 17 to 25 different sectors of the community. We'd meet with the ministerial association, youth, the medical community, police, schools, bankers, growers—all parts of the community."

Jim's favorite quote by a colleague is "When you've seen *one* rural community, you've seen *one* rural community." Jim agrees. "The cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach can't work in rural Washington because of the diverse cultures, the diverse economies and the diverse lifestyles," he explains.

In his work, Jim has seen a pattern emerge. Creating a Community Center was the most frequently proposed project. "Rural residents need to have a sense of identity as a community," he



Jim Lowery, Director, WA State Rural Development Council

says. "Most have gone through major economic changes and are wrestling with that identity."

Economic development was the most crucial need. "How do they create family wage jobs that will keep their children there or give their children a place to return to?"

"Many rural communities exist only because they had fish or trees or farmland. The transitions in their economies have created tough issues. It's very difficult to recruit businesses, to persuade them to go off the major transportation routes to start a business in a rural community," he says.

Jim feels that growing a community locally is the best way to ensure a sustainable future, adding that residents will have more commitment than an outside business, as they have a vested interest in seeing their communities flourish.

In his leisure hours, he pursues gardening, bow and arrow hunting, golfing, reading, and says he "dabbles" in politics. Jim and Barb, his wife of 35 years, live in Centralia. They have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild.

The Administration has chosen to eliminate funding for the WSRDC, so Jim is currently exploring the possibilities for the next chapter in his life.

**Northwest Cooperative
Development Center
1063 S. Capitol Way, Ste. 214
Olympia, WA 98501
www.nwcdc.coop**

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