

# Connections

NORTHWEST COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Fostering community economic development through the cooperative business model



## Building Local Food Systems

Food grown and sold locally builds healthy economies and healthy communities. Over the years, NWCDC has received many requests from people who want more access to local foods in their community. In response, we have made a commitment to support cooperative efforts to bring local growers and consumers together.



In December 2009, we welcomed Co-op Food Systems Specialist Marian Gillis to our staff at NWCDC. Marian comes to us with 30 years of community economic development experience. Her previous work experience included general manager of a consumer food co-op, and development of affordable housing, and land use plans for the benefit of communities in Maryland.

Marian's first project, funded by USDA's Farmer's Market Promotion Program, is the development of a "How To" manual for establishing online food co-ops that link local producers and consumers together. The manual will pull together information from the successes and lessons learned by existing online food markets like Idaho's Bounty that can

be replicated by others.

Additional "Food System" projects currently in the works at NWCDC include support of the Ellensburg Food Co-op and the Kitsap Food Co-op start-ups. For Oregon, NWCDC has undertaken an initiative to produce, with the assistance of Stoel Rives law firm, white papers that provide

guidelines for co-ops utilizing volunteer labor and member loans. The intent is to give co-ops tools for staying within legal parameters of Labor & Industries and state securities safe haven statutes. Access to secure ag land is an important element of local food availability. NWCDC is working with the South of the Sound Farm Land Trust in their exploration of the feasibility of farm land held in trust and leased to a farmer co-op. These are a few of the areas NWCDC, along with our funding partner, the USDA, and other local partners are working to assist local food systems.

The addition of Marian and our associated research will benefit local communities from farm to fork. We are happy to have her at the table.

## Manzaneros Mexicanos

On September 28, 2009, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA had selected 10 organizations in eight states to receive \$1.4 million in grants to assist small, socially disadvantaged agricultural producers and cooperatives in rural areas. Washington, where approximately 650,000 Latinos currently live, was among those eight states.

The Yakima Valley is the largest apple producing region in Washington. It is also home to many Latino apple growers. They know firsthand the struggles small apple growers face on a daily basis to compete in a global economy. They believe that by working together they can overcome these challenges and can be more competitive in the market place. Their beliefs led them to form Manzaneros Mexicanos de Washington (MMW), an agriculture marketing cooperative. MMW were

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NWCDC is a 501(c)3 providing development services for co-ops. Founded in 1979, we serve WA, OR, ID and HI

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- Marian Gillis**  
*Food Co-op Systems Specialist*

NW Co-op Development Center  
1063 S. Capitol Way # 211  
Olympia, WA 98501

# We're Seeking Co-op Development Proposals

NWCDC is accepting requests for co-op development technical assistance as part of our annual planning and application to the USDA's Rural Co-op Development Grant.

One of the main hurdles for co-ops is the large amounts of time it takes to organize, get started and stay on track. To help with these challenges, NWCDC provides advising, facilitation and access to information and tools that will enable effective governance and management.

We want to hear about your project by Friday, March 31! Please contact us if you are part of a group seeking to form a co-op or if your existing co-op seeks any of the following activities:

- Business and strategic planning
- Co-op education
- Feasibility studies
- Trainings (board, member, leadership, etc.)
- Other co-op business development activities



*Please send us your bright ideas*

Projects must provide at least 25% match of the total project cost and preference will be given to projects with more. Pending an estimated August USDA approval of proposal, work would begin October 1st 2010.

Please contact Diane Gasaway for more details.

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selected as one of the 10 organizations to obtain an USDA grant.

“ These grants will help owners of family farms, cooperative members and small business owners to better market their products and services; to add profit and efficiency to their operations,” Vilsack said. For MMW, this grant is an opportunity to explore different marketing and branding options for their product. Members of this organization take pride in the fruit they grow and believe it can be strategically positioned to provide value to the growing Latino community.

A strong team of consultants composed of Heritage University, WSU Extension, NWCDC, and Community to Community will provide MMW the needed market research to design production and marketing systems, establish a corresponding business plan, improve member business skills, and provide a foundation of cooperative excellence for the future of Northwest Latino growers.

## Rural Food Co-op Initiative

Ellensburg, WA – On January 31, a new cooperative organizing group made their debut community appearance at a event in Ellensburg. The group, called “A Food Co-op for Ellensburg”, made connections with like minded individuals, shared information about their efforts, and began distribution of a community survey.

The survey will help A Food Co-op for Ellensburg learn what people in the community value most about the food they eat, how they shop, and their interest in supporting a food co-op.

In March, survey results will be compiled and used to shape a clear vision and action plan. The group desires to create a member-owned natural foods store to provide sustainably-sourced products all year long, including local, organic and other natural items. At its core, the co-op will be about building a healthy community and supporting local producers.

Creation of a robust market for locally sourced food is a common value held by the group. Dan Beck, a member of the group’s Steering Committee, is especially passionate about creating deeper connections between people and the food they eat.

“It’s much easier to exploit or misuse people and natural resources if we do not see a direct connection between them and ourselves... If we know where our food is grown, we’ll more likely understand the connection between healthy soil and healthy people. When we know the people

who grow or provide our food, we naturally build community,” he said.

As of February 16, the survey had been taken by almost 300 people and the group was only halfway through their month of data collection - Ellensburg’s total population, including students at Central Washington University, is an estimated 17,000 people. This and other achievements are tangible demonstrations of community support for the group.

A Food Co-op for Ellensburg have been incredibly encouraging, the group has good energy to continue moving forward. Next steps include:

- Analyzing the data from the community survey
- Build out the market research to assess feasibility
- Build a concrete vision
- Work with the NWCDC and an attorney on incorporation and bylaws

A Food Co-op for Ellensburg got its start in October 2009, the way most food co-ops do: with a good conversation between a few passionate community members.

Through word-of-mouth outreach and social media (visit the group’s Facebook page), more than 80 people have thus far shown up to give input at an organizing meeting or at a potluck. A core group of 20 individuals have signed on to be members of the Steering Committee and various working groups.

For more info, visit [www.ellensburgfoodcoop.org](http://www.ellensburgfoodcoop.org) or call 509-210-7417.



*If we know where our food is grown, we’ll more likely understand the connection between healthy soil and healthy people.*

*-Dan Beck*



## NW Cooperative Development Center

1063 Capitol Way #211  
Olympia, WA 98501  
www.nwcdc.coop  
360.943.4241

# Cooperative Event Calendar

## March

Seattle's 5th Annual Farmer-Fisher-Chef Connection  
March 1

Herban Feast Sodo Park  
3200 1st Ave. South  
Seattle, WA  
Meg Chadsey  
seattle@chefscollaborative.org  
206-669-1387

WA MHOA Board Meeting  
March 6th. 9:15 am  
Silverdale Mobile Estates  
160 Saturn Ln  
Bremerton, WA  
Bob Burton  
360-373-2436  
mhoa2002@donobi.net

Planning for the future of family-owned forest and farmland  
March 11, 6:00 pm. and April 1, 6:00 pm  
Arlington Boys & Girls Club  
18513 59th Ave NE  
Arlington, WA  
Kevin Zobrist  
425.357.6017  
kzobrist@wsu.edu

Residential Renewables  
March 27  
9:30 - 1:00pm  
Olympic College

1600 Chester Avenue  
Bremerton, WA  
1.866.759.SEED  
www.nwseed.org

## April

Co-ops 101 & How to Start  
April 6 at 6:00-7:30pm  
People's Food Co-op  
Portland, OR  
Lori Burge  
lori@peoples.coop

People's Memorial Funeral Co-op Annual Meeting  
Saturday April 17th, 10 am  
UU Church in Seattle  
206-529-3800  
www.funerals.coop

## May

Oregon Woodland Co-op Annual Member Meeting and Educational Program  
Sat., May 15th, 9 a.m.  
Kinton Grange  
Kinton, OR  
Neil Schroeder  
503-628-2344

## June and beyond

The Assn. of Manufactured Home Owners  
2nd Wed. of every month  
Kylin Parks  
425-772-5174

Washington State Grange annual convention  
June 30 – July 3  
Meridian High School  
Dan Hammock  
360-943-9911  
dhammock@wa-grange.org

Kickapoo Country Fair  
Organic Valley Headquarters  
La Farge, WI  
July 24-25  
Wendy Allen  
kcf@organicvalley.coop  
608-625-3519

WA Credit Union League Convention and Annual Business Meeting  
September 14-17  
Doubletree Hotel, SeaTac, WA  
www.waleague.org  
800.552.0680 ext. 122

13th Annual Farmer Cooperatives Conference  
Nov. 8-9  
Denver, CO  
Anne Reynolds  
608-263-4775  
www.uwcc.wisc.edu