



FOOD CO-OP INITIATIVE

New co-ops start here.

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News from the
world of startup
food co-ops & those
who support them.



Up & Coming, Coming Soon!

by JQ Hannah

The Up and Coming Startup Food Co-op Conference will be happening May 11–15 and for the first time in its 12-year history, will be a virtual event. We are expecting record attendance for five days of online, video-based learning. “To adapt the level of content we usually pack into two days in-person, we had to go to five days of virtual learning,” explained Deb Trocha, Executive Director of the Indiana Cooperative Development Center, who founded the conference and co-hosts it with Food Co-op Initiative. “The goal was to get that same level of content Up and Coming is known for, but to schedule it to be as accessible as possible for home-based viewing and participation.”

Each of the five days of the conference has a topic theme — Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Ownership; Black-Led Co-ops; Capital; and The Shift, which will feature responses to how organizing and running food co-ops has changed since the March 2020 Up and Coming gathering when the Covid pandemic was just starting to change our lives. Each day will kick off with a “frame setter”, a speaker (or speakers) that will set the tone for the topic of the day. Following the frame setters’ presentations, participants will have their

continued on p. 4

Is something exciting happening at your co-op? We could feature it in our next issue! Email us at info@fci.coop

Co-ops in the News

Everyone must have been busy during the pandemic, because there is a LOT of news to share. We have more site announcements and imminent openings than ever before. How about your co-op? Find some inspiration here and send us your own news!



A message from Stuart

I got my first COVID vaccine a couple of weeks ago, and I am starting to feel the stress of the last year beginning to lift. Spring has sprung, and so have our startup seedlings. Right now **we have more co-ops in Stage 3 getting ready to open their storefronts than I have ever seen in my fifteen years of providing startup support.** And we are talking quality as well as quantity! Just take a look at the updates in this issue and feel your heart warm. Thanks to all the “big brother and sister” co-ops, our sponsors and partners that have helped these startups and FCI. The pandemic has shown us all how important community is and time after time, food co-ops have led the way in times of need — including many of the startups that are not even open yet. Yes, there is good reason for hope!

—Stuart Reid
FCI Executive Director
Stuart@FCI.coop

Terre Foods Cooperative Market has found their brick and mortar home after 14 years of committed organizing. They will move to the Amy’s Corner Mall building along Lafayette Avenue in 12 Points, and they plan to open to the public by summer. The area is currently without a grocery store and the target of additional community development support.



With over 850 owners, **Bethlehem Co-op** has signed a lease with a developer for a property in the north downtown area of Bethlehem and will soon be kicking a Capital Campaign into high gear to raise the needed funds to build out the store.



Construction has begun on **Dorchester Food Co-op’s** multi-use site.



They are anxiously awaiting completion (about a year from now) when they can finish the interior work to make it their new home. The co-op has hired a Community Organizer to focus on ownership growth and community partnerships.

Over the last year, the **Detroit People’s Food Co-op** has seen incredible growth in its ownership and now has over 1,240 owners toward a goal of 2,000. Their growth has been stimulated by the co-op’s active engagement in the local black community as it struggles with historic disenfranchisement and the extra burden imposed by systemic racism during the COVID pandemic.



Dan Arnett has been hired as General Manager for **Chicago Market** in Chicago, IL. Dan comes with many years’ experience managing co-ops in Sacramento and Seattle and is on the job now to help them complete their capital campaign and storefront preparations.

After a lengthy process required to incorporate as a co-op in Montana, **The Butte Food Co-op** became official on March 5. Under Montana law, a cooperative may be incorporated once a sufficient number of community members pledge to be co-owners and have elected a board of directors. The co-op hoped to have 250 ownership pledges by March, but when they kicked off on January 10, 540 people signed up in less than 12 hours! They are now over 864 and going strong



Pastor Reginald Flynn, executive director of the **North Flint Reinvestment Corporation** says, "We're looking at breaking



ground in June or July this year. We're looking at a period of 8 or 9 months in terms of construction," In the last six months, he says the group was able to

nailed down funding for the \$7.5M project and hire a local contractor. Anticipating a soft open at the end of this year with a grand opening in 2022, Flynn says COVID-19 re-ignited the flame for many — reminding people of the necessity of the food co-op.

With 1st year projections of \$3 million in sales for their 4500 sq. ft. site, **Oshkosh Food Co-op** is planning to open around July 1. Construction and hiring are both underway, and the co-op just got their license to sell alcohol. Cheers to their 1550 owners!



Prairie Food Co-op has set an audacious goal of \$3.1 million for their Community Investment Campaign. Since kick-off on March 15, they have already gotten commitments of over \$760,000.



An owner family and an anonymous donor made a challenge grant for the first week of April, matching \$50,000 in new investments. Their team of volunteers has already made over 6000 calls to nearly 1300 people.

Kodiak Harvest Food Cooperative (KHFC) is the grant recipient of the USDA Local Foods Promotion Program. KHFC was awarded \$292,940 in Federal Funds, which will be matched at 25%.

KHFC plans to use these funds to connect local producers with Kodiak's consumers by establishing an online food hub for food producers to connect directly with consumers, securing a storefront within city limits, and launching satellite market locations outside of city limits.



America's
**HEALTHY FOOD
FINANCING INITIATIVE**
REINVESTMENT FUND

Five Food co-ops awarded Health Food Financing Grants

Out of 245 applications, 25 projects were awarded grants in December 2020. *Five of those were startup food co-ops!* Oshkosh Food Co-op, North Flint Food Market, SHARE Cooperative's Harvest Market, Little Africa Market, and MARSH Community Grocery all received grants ranging from \$116,000 to \$200,000. Application information for 2021 is not yet available, but we will let you know when we hear something.



Because of the food co-ops, individuals, organizations, and foundations who give generously each year, FCI is able to offer our services at no cost to food co-op startup community organizers. Donations are always welcome! [FCI.coop/donate](https://www.fci.coop/donate)

choice of four different pre-recorded sessions that explore the topic of the day, followed by their choice of live sessions that also explore the topic. All conference registrants will have access to the pre-recorded sessions and many of the live sessions for six months after the conference.

New this year is Up and Coming's partnership with the National Black Food and Justice Alliance (NBFJA), who have crafted the entire content line-up for the Black-led day of the conference. "We've been partnering with NBFJA in multiple ways for years now, but we're truly excited that the leadership of NBFJA accepted our invitation this year to take that partnership to the next level at Up and Coming," shares Jacqueline Hannah, Assistant Executive Director of Food Co-op Initiative. The frame setter and recorded sessions on the Black-led day of Up and Coming will



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— JQ Hannah

be open to all, but the live sessions will be for Black food co-op organizers only, with an additional live session for non-Black participants to dive deeper into how we can do the work of addressing white supremacy in our communities and in our organizing.

There has been one surprise so far in looking over the list of who has registered to attend. "We're seeing a higher than ever level of registration from established, open food co-ops," says Stuart Reid, Executive Director of Food Co-op Initiative, "which says to us the content we're offering really speaks to this moment and what all food co-ops are wanting to talk about, not just startup food co-ops." Early bird registration has passed, but it is not too late to join in the learning with cooperators from across the country. You can register at www.upandcoming.coop



Our Own JQ Hannah recognized by NFCA

The **"Neighboring Co-operator Award"** acknowledges special contributions made to the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) and the advancement of our vision by a staff member, director, or member of an NFCA Member Co-op or partner organization. At our 10th Annual Meeting in 2021, the NFCA honored JQ Hannah, Assistant Director at Food Co-op Initiative (FCI), with the award.

JQ's passion for and support of the next generation of food co-ops is profoundly impactful, both in our region and across the country. In addition to delivering technical assistance, best practices, and cutting-edge innovations in startup development at NFCA's monthly peer Coordinated Startup Calls, ze also worked with the NFCA and Co-op Development Coordinator, Bonnie Hudspeth, to create the annual "Northeast Startup Day," bringing together startup organizers in our region for peer learning and DeepDive training. Ze helped to replicate NFCA's successful peer calls and startup day across the country — FCI is now offering seven additional peer learning groups across the country with over three dozen startups participating monthly. JQ also has a major role in planning and hosting the Up & Coming Conference, a national annual conference bringing together over 300 startup organizers for workshops, networking, and training to help their food co-op organizing success.

Fredericksburg Food Co-op OPEN!

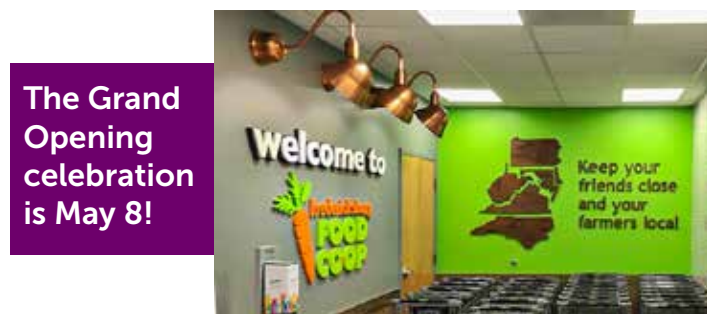
The new food co-op in Fredericksburg, VA quietly opened for business on April 1. There may not have been a lot of publicity for this “very soft” opening, but there was plenty of excitement. Gerald L. Anderson, Board Chair reports, “Everything about the store far exceeds my wildest expectations. And the comments I have received from our owners, future owners, and shoppers have been overwhelmingly positive.”

After a record-setting run of steady ownership growth — averaging about one new owner a day since they incorporated in September 2015, and by 50 new owners a week since opening (2,150 as of April 29!) — Fredericksburg now has a beautiful, full-service food co-op with 6,000 sq. ft. of retail space, ample parking and a lovely outdoor dining area.

Fredericksburg Food Co-op has led the way in other areas as well. With recent revisions to Small Business Administration (SBA) regulations, National Co-op Bank used an SBA loan guarantee to make a \$1.4 million loan to the Fredericksburg, Virginia Food Co-op. This is the first food co-op loan using the SBA lending programs in the agency’s 57-year history!

But that was just a third of the co-op’s \$4.3 million startup budget. Where did they find the rest? Their owners. Equity from 2,150 owners generated over \$400,000. Then Fredericksburg Food Co-op conducted two capital campaigns. The first, in 2019, raised \$1,704,000 in owner loans. The second campaign in 2020 raised an additional \$753,409, including \$491,900 in owner loans, \$238,000 in preferred shares (including Opportunity Zone investments) and \$23,500 in donations. Now that is exceptional community investment, and a new standard for startup food co-ops.

The co-op has benefited from a strong and deeply committed board of directors and volunteer teams, which have taken full advantage of the support offered by Food Co-op Initiative, Columinate, and National Co-op Grocers. Rounding out their amazing leadership, General Manager Chris Roland brings with him his successful experience opening the Sugar Beet Co-op in Chicago and the Sierra Vista Co-op in Arizona. Few startup co-ops are fortunate enough to find an experienced general manager, and to attract someone with management and new store experience is a double bonus.



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2. Then follow this link to set up your customer account: <https://my.domains.coop/index.php?/signup/>
3. When placing your order for 1 year, to discount the cost of purchase use the discount code **FCI2021**

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** offer available until 1st August 2021, for first time new registrations only. Eligibility and terms and conditions apply. Please contact tom@identity.coop for any questions or comments)*

Looking for More (and Happier) Volunteers?

Reward Volunteers is a free volunteer management system created by Cabot Creamery to promote volunteerism and help organizations like your co-op communicate their mission and attract dedicated volunteers.

The web-based program is easy to use and enables organizations track their volunteers' hours. You will find Rewards Volunteers to be extremely helpful and convenient to use, enabling you to support and recognize all volunteer efforts.

Reward Volunteers has created a free volunteer management system to help organizations attract, manage and reward dedicated volunteers. They also have a tool kit with a wide variety of downloadable marketing materials for your organization.

Reward Volunteers enables you to:

- Conveniently track and log time spent volunteering from any web-friendly device, such as a smartphone, tablet, iPad, or computer.



- Engage with other volunteers in your community.
- Win prizes for yourself — the more hours accrued, the greater the chances of winning.

Reward Volunteers was created by Cabot Creamery to celebrate all of those who make communities stronger — like you. We look forward to seeing all of your much-needed contributions, and the impact being made across the country.

For more information and to sign up, go to: <https://rewardvolunteers.coop/resources-for-organizations/>

Coming in Early May!

Jon Steinman, author of *Grocery Story – The Promise of Food Co-ops in the Age of Grocery Giants*, in collaboration with FCI, is publishing a collection of food co-op pictures from his American book tour. The premium quality magazine will include approximately 250-300 images across 144 pages of food co-op exteriors, interiors, displays, info boards, board candidate voting stations, smart signage, community-giving initiatives, local food maps, food producer signage, member engagement strategies, culinary learning centers, bike racks, ideas for acknowledging member lenders in-store, conventional-natural product integration ideas, space constraint ideas, CSA box program integrations, recycling ideas, humor, and more. Images will be captioned, however, any additional text in the magazine will be kept to a minimum as this will be a photo album above all else.

This is the resource you have always wanted to have, to show people in your community what a modern food co-op can be. If you are an active startup group signed up on our mailing list, you will be getting a free printed copy! The book will also be available on the FCI website as a free PDF download. If you are an open co-op or co-op aficionado, you can get printed copies for \$32, including tax and shipping, if you order early. Regular price for printed copies is expected to be \$45.

Pre-orders will be accepted until May 20 by completing the order form at this link:

<https://forms.gle/VDTWsaFyDMaPfMtg7>



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Sponsor Spotlight: Cooperative Education Fund

FCI would like to recognize and thank the **Cooperative Education Fund** for their many years of support of our work. Their generous contributions have helped us publish the FCI Guide to Starting a Food Co-op, launch our FCI Classroom, update and expand our Resource Library, host Up & Coming and other workshops, and complete a soon to be released guide to planning and conducting ownership drives. That adds up to a lot of essential support to the startup food co-op community!

STARTUP SUPPORT


HOW CAN WE HELP?



- > Site feasibility
- > Programming + store design
- > Equipment
- > Prepared foods

...and more where that came from!

sevenroots sevenrootsgroup.com/startups



Cooperative Education Fund

A Project of **CDF**



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Our Mission

FCI improves the success and sustainability of new food cooperatives delivering healthier food in diverse communities across this country.

The Store Opening Marketing & Messaging Guide releases on FCI.coop

In the leadup to store opening, so much is happening so quickly, and a carefully planned marketing campaign often gets lost in the shuffle. But strategic shifts in messaging and coordinated multi-channel campaigns need to be planned well in advance of store opening — it'll make a significant difference in the initial sales trajectory of your new co-op. To equip startups to meet this challenge, the team at Firebrand Cooperative has released a new tool in partnership with Food Co-op Initiative: the *Store Opening Marketing & Messaging Guide*, available on the FCI website.

This useful guide will walk your marketing and management team through all the steps to understand (and plan) strategic messaging, from three months prior to store opening through the day you throw open your doors for the first time.

This new resource includes:

- **Building a plan for success:** budgeting, partners, and messaging
- **Marketing channels:** know when it's best to use which channels, and manage your messages across all channels and platforms
- **Key messaging recommendations:** be proactive as your message shifts, your audience broadens, and the moment you've all been waiting for approaches
- **Campaign planning matrix:** build and manage the many components of your store opening plan
- **Plus tips** for keeping the marketing magic going well past opening, and helping your store succeed during those first critical months

