
2021 - A Year of Triumphs and Transitions

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2021 was a year of triumphs and transitions for CDF. We said goodbye to Leslie Mead, an exemplary leader who strengthened the organization's mission, programmatic work and financial footprint during her eight-year tenure as CDF's Executive Director. And we lost a great co-op hero, our friend and longtime CDF Board member, Chuck Snyder. Chuck's commitment to the cooperative community inspires us and will forever live on in CDF as we continue to focus on our mission "to promote and develop cooperatives to improve economic opportunities for all," particularly in historically underserved communities – a mission that Chuck wholeheartedly embraced.

In 2021, we welcomed Mary Griffin as CDF's new Executive Director. No stranger to co-ops, she is deeply committed to exploring new horizons and meaningful opportunities to use the co-op business model as a powerful force for good in a troubled and tension-filled world. A noteworthy triumph in 2021 was our fundraising. Both of our major fundraisers – Co-op 5K and Hall of Fame – were successful, exceeding expectations.

Promoting an inclusive economy – one that works for all of us – is at the heart of CDF's mission. In partnership with NCBA CLUSA, we continued this important work. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we sponsored a survey of cooperatives on *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Trends in the Cooperative Community* conducted by the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives. This work formed the basis for peer learning cohorts to share how cooperatives can be better at DEI. This is leading to action plans to bolster DEI efforts through four projects. We also partnered with NCBA CLUSA on work with the Native American Agriculture Fund, which included an excellent and well-received webinar series on how cooperatives can enhance Native food economies.

The pandemic and its aftermath have shed new light on the challenges facing caregivers. To support home care worker co-ops, we again secured funding from USDA's Rural Cooperative Development and Socially Disadvantaged Group grant programs. This funding enabled CDF to host our 5th annual home care cooperative conference, which virtually connected and trained 200 people engaged in this vital work. We also utilized this USDA funding to provide operational and governance support to individual home care cooperatives, and to launch a secondary cooperative, Elevate.coop, which will provide marketing, operational and other support for home care co-ops.

Our Cooperative Education grants in 2021 continued to make a difference. CDF provided scholarships and support to 23 organizations, from the rural Northeast to downtown Los Angeles, to enable individuals in numerous co-op sectors -- including food, worker, agriculture and others – to participate in needed education and training.

2021 was a strong year for CDF and we are excited by the opportunities that lie ahead. The board and staff of CDF thank all cooperators and cooperatives for their commitment to the cooperative community through support of CDF, the nonprofit arm of the U.S. cooperative community. Your contributions to CDF are put to good use, every day of the year, to promote and develop cooperatives. We are immensely grateful for your support.

In Cooperation,



Mary Griffin, Executive Director



Richard Larochelle, Board Chair