

From the Mouths of Babes

CoFED spreads the cooperative message to the next generation

BY AVA CHURCHILL

There is always a need for more support and encouragement to new co-ops, so I have been thrilled to see CoFED spring up and create an effective outreach and training program for college campuses. Their model for small, cooperative cafés that provide quality food and a meaningful work experience—while far different from a typical retail store initiative—has the potential to introduce thousands of youth and campus workers to the advantages of cooperation. Food Co-op Initiative has been assisting the founders and advising some of the pilot projects. I am very impressed by their organizing skills and the effective programs they have designed. I believe that CoFED has the potential to help create a whole new sector of co-ops across the country and urge you to support them and the new student co-ops in any way that you can.

—Stuart Reid, Food Co-op Initiative
www.foodcoopinitiative.coop

After a year or more of research, 1,000+ Google documents, and a handful of senior theses, the Cooperative Food Empowerment Directive (CoFED) is bringing the cooperative business model to college campuses across the nation. After officially launching its training last June, CoFED quickly grew to encompass six pilot teams across the West Coast. Their mission: to empower students to create financially sustainable campus hubs for sustainable food and social justice activism.

Apart from being dedicated to real food for college students, the leadership of CoFED has been studying the ins and outs of cooperative enterprise. Following the examples of student-run cooperatives such as the University of Maryland's Student Food Collective, the CoFED training manual sets out a



clear path for building a cooperative café from the ground up.

Recently, CoFED has trained regional directors to replicate student leader training this summer. Regional directors help campus teams deal with things such as price points, creating bylaws, and dealing with university administration by creating regional networks. Although some cafés are technically part of the university as a club or student government project, they are all based on cooperative principles and operate effectively as co-ops.

Students are realizing that hard work and economic success don't have to lead to inequality. The cooperative model is teaching this generation that profit-sharing and transparency may be a viable alternative to the self-seeking competition found in many corporate circles.

With these strong cooperative principles providing a solid foundation, CoFED is projected to grow exponentially, with dozens of new storefronts opening in every region of the U.S.—bringing fresh food and cooperation to the mouths and minds of over 700,000 college students in the next five years.

To keep track of this growing movement, check out www.cofed.org and prepared to be inspired!

For more information, send an email to info@cofed.org or send correspondence to: CoFED; 2150 Allston Way, #400; Berkeley, CA 94704. ■

What you can do

Help us reach 100 monthly donors to match our Launch Committee's support of \$30,000! Your donation will support our posse of rock star organizers from regions around the U.S. to further the work that will constitute CoFED's national programming: providing high-quality education and services to student leaders as they launch ethically sourced, cooperatively run sustainable food storefronts and cafés on their campuses.

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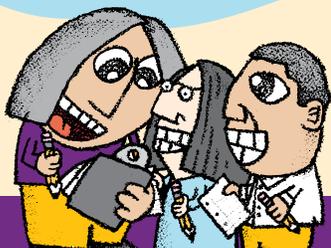
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Dan worked with ZingTrain to roll out Open Book Finance at Wheatsville co-op in the spring of 2010. Since then, the co-op has paid out one pool of \$12.5K to staff and is on track to pay out a second pool of \$25K!

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