

Winnipeg's Cindy Coker recognized for her ability to inspire and involve others

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, July 2011 -- The executive director of SEED Winnipeg Inc. is recognized by members of the Association of Cooperative Educators for mentoring volunteers and employees on both sides of the Canada/U.S. border toward creating cooperatives and solutions in many communities.



29630 - 109th Avenue North
Hanover, MN 55341

Phone: 763.432.2032
E-mail: pike@ace.coop
www.ace.coop

Cindy Coker arrived in Winnipeg, Manitoba 17 years ago from the U.S., and joined SEED (Supporting Employment & Economic Development) in 2002. The organization employs 26 people and has a volunteer board of directors. SEED assists several social enterprises including award-winning Diversity Foods Services that provides employment to many, and local, ethically-grown, nutritional food to students and others at the University of Winnipeg.

Coker has also been instrumental in the Prairie province's visioning strategy to use cooperative solutions and the University of Winnipeg's move to offer more instruction about cooperatives.

She was a founding member of a worker cooperative network in the field of childcare and served as its initial president. She also founded and served as the executive director of a non-profit set up by the network to oversee development, training and organizing projects. Coker was an organizing member of the National Network of Sector Partners in the U.S., served as one of the delegates for the Ms Foundation for Women to the United Nations International Conference on Women in China in 1995, and is a member of the Cooperative Charitable Trust. She is chair of the long-running Manitoba Cooperative Promotion Board that funds work on cooperative policy, education and marketing, and is also a past chair of the Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council.

Coker says she tries to take an inclusive approach to mentorship, involving others in decision making and equalizing opportunities between employees. Regardless of roles within SEED, all staff members have the same opportunity to education. She adds that her style of mentorship benefits from a workplace where importance is placed on all staff receiving education about conflict management with a focus on the creativity and learning that can happen if conflict is managed well, truly listening to others' views and making sure information is clear and accessible.

Vera Gousseart, executive director of the Manitoba Cooperative Association, says she enjoys Coker's experience on her board of directors: "Cindy has a strong cooperative background and with that knowledge she is able to connect and engage people in the formation of cooperatives and cooperative policy. She is an asset to the Manitoba cooperative community and it has been a great pleasure working with her to strengthen and grow Manitoba cooperatives."

Coker will be recognized at the ACE Awards Banquet on July 28 at the University of Winnipeg, Convocation Hall as part of the ACE Institute from July 26-29. Four other leaders will be honored for their contributions to education and research about cooperatives. Monica Adeler, an instructor at the University of Winnipeg, receives the new John Logue ACE Award recognizing those who connect educational resources to practical solutions to benefit communities; the University of

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Coker Awarded

Winnipeg is acknowledged for its assistance to ACE during its Institute; Arctic Co-operatives Limited is honored for outstanding work to provide board and staff training across the Far North and its management of a revolving fund to assist cooperative development in the Arctic. José Julián Ramírez Ruiz of the Liga de Cooperativas de Puerto Rico is named the 2011 outstanding young cooperative educator for overseeing the use of radio and print media as well as other methods to reach and teach cooperative members across Puerto Rico.

ACE members are educators, researchers, communicators, and students and developers of cooperatives and credit unions, primarily in Canada, United States and Puerto Rico. An annual Institute, held in a different city each year, allows members to learn from one another and their host region, and highlights new learning about cooperatives and credit unions.

Learn more at www.ace.coop. More information on the 2011 ACE Institute is posted in English, French and Spanish on www.2011ACE.com.

Contacts: Sarah Pike, executive administrator, pike@ace.coop, 763-432-2032
Cathy L. Chamberlain, communication director, chamberlain@ace.coop, 905-814-8705

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