

SCOOP

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES IN BC

2012

It's time to celebrate



Plus: Urban co-op success story • CHF BC gets new scholarship fund • Co-op Youth Story Project





In 2012 the United Nations celebrates co-operatives

From fair trade to safe food to environmental protection, co-ops offer people-driven solutions to the daily challenges faced by individuals and their communities the world over.

John Restakis is the Executive Director of the BC Co-operative Association.

When the UN proclaimed 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives in 2009, the fiscal crisis of 2008 was still fresh in the minds of everyone—from policy makers and politicians to the millions who lost their homes and jobs. But few would have suspected that in the fall of 2011—three years on—almost nothing would have changed in how the global financial system was working, or that not a single individual would be charged or convicted of the massive frauds that imperiled first the American and then the global economy. It took the Occupy movement to finally give voice to the outrage at an economic system that enriched entitled elite to the detriment of everyone else. Occupy showed how strong was the yearning for something better.

Rarely has there been a moment when the co-op message resonates so clearly with the spirit of the times. Global recognition of the co-op heritage in the international year comes in the

midst of a deep crisis of confidence in our current capitalist system. In 2012 the co-op movement has a unique opportunity to make its case and to tell its story. And there's much to tell. Over three billion people—almost half the world's population—trace their livelihoods in some way to a co-op. Unlike other models, co-ops create economic opportunities for everyday people, not just the powerful and the privileged. And in rich and poor countries alike, co-ops provide essential human services: safe and affordable shelter; quality education; and affordable health care. From fair trade to safe food to environmental protection, co-ops offer people-driven solutions to the daily challenges faced by individuals and their communities the world over.

Co-ops are not a thing of the past. They are the key to humanizing our economies and the only real hope for a future in which people matter more than profits.

2012 is our time to bring this message loud and clear to the world. ■

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Happy New Year! It's 2012 and CHF BC turns 30! In this issue you'll hear more about 2012—the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives. This is the time for housing co-ops to celebrate what it means to be a co-op and reach out to connect with the wider co-operative community.

Co-operative enterprises do build a better world. 2012 is also CHF BC's 30th anniversary, so there is double reason to celebrate. Find out how you can join in—check out the 2012 toolkit on our website and don't miss our articles on 2012 in this issue.

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Co-op listings are published separately.

Check www.chf.bc.ca and click on "Find a Co-op" to find our directory of co-ops. You can ask for a printed summary of the co-op listings by email to info@chf.bc.ca or phone 604-879-5111 (1-866-879-5111).

ON THE COVER: CHF BC and CHF Canada directors unfurled a banner to launch the International Year of Co-operatives in 2012 at the CHF BC AGM in November 2011.



hot dates Mark your calendars for upcoming co-op housing events you don't want to miss.
Mainland **7** Island **12**



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Burrardview Housing Co-op members celebrate the recognition of their work to be "bear-aware".



Burrardview Housing Co-op in Deep Cove is "bear aware"



Most co-ops put a lot of energy into making their communities attractive, but here's a co-op that won an award for making itself unattractive...at least to bears.

Garbage attracts bears to residential neighbourhoods, and the result leads to risks of human-bear conflict and often bears put to death. In North Vancouver in 2011 eleven bears were killed. This past June, Burrardview Co-op's children's committee invited Christine Miller, the Bear Aware Community Coordinator for the North Shore, to visit the co-op and show them how to prevent the human-bear conflict that leads to so many deaths.

Here's what she recommended:

- Stop feeding birds and squirrels as the food attracts bears, as well as rodents.
- Cut berry bushes back to the fence line.
- Place garbage directly from the kitchen into the community garbage cans.
- Close and lock dumpster lids.
- Thoroughly wash recycling and place in the community bins.
- Turn the barbecue burners on high for 10 minutes after cooking to burn off any remaining food, and then scrape the grates.

- Feed pets indoors, if possible, and store pet food indoors.

In October, the co-op was recognized for its success with the presentation of the North Shore's first ever Bear Aware Award. CHF BC's executive director, Thom Armstrong attended the ceremony.

Get more information on being Bear Aware at www.bearaware.bc.ca and www.northshorebears.com. ■

DID YOU KNOW you can order a bear-proof garbage bin from BFI? To learn more, contact Arnold Sang: asang@chf.bc.ca or 604-879-5111 (1-866-879-5111) ext. 138. ■

Co-op Energy Survey

Fifty-four member housing co-ops completed CHF BC's Co-op Energy Survey, sponsored by BC Hydro, FortisBC and BC Housing. City Green Solutions will now analyse co-op building energy-use data from BC Hydro and FortisBC. City Green will also perform detailed assessments on five or six of the participating housing

co-ops, choosing good examples of different housing types to get more in-depth information. Once the analysis is concluded, CHF BC will be able to use the information to match co-ops up with funding organizations that will help them with energy upgrades. *Watch for the latest progress reports at www.chf.bc.ca ■*



Charleston Terrace's Sprouts program grew potatoes last summer.

For one co-op in Vancouver, 14 children are a growing concern: **they're growing vegetables**

Over several months last summer, 14 children at Charleston Terrace Housing Co-op in Vancouver's Fairview Slopes neighbourhood took part in the co-op's "Sprouts" program, led by co-op member and master gardener-in-training, Rylo Santana.

Working in age-related groups, the children planted radishes, potatoes, carrots, onions, and tomatoes. The youngest began with the radishes. Then they moved on to a greater challenge—carrots.

To help with the costs, the co-op's landscaping committee contributed \$50 for seed potatoes and a watering can. The newsletter committee provided \$50 for the purchase of educational material on mason bees and other equipment,

like hanging baskets, planters, seeds, soil, fertilizers. The mason bees, came from co-op members. As a return on that investment, the kids harvested over twenty pounds of russet potatoes with French fries to follow.

Santana notes that, due to an unusually cold summer, the tomato harvest was a little light, "but we got a bumper crop of cocoons from the Bee House."The committee has arranged to trade in half of these cocoons for a second, larger nest.

Santana explains the approach used with the kids. "The educational model we used was, essentially, Montessori / Piaget, in that confidence, enthusiasm, and self-direction were the intended intrinsic rewards. Experiential learning—add fries."

Next year the kids plan to have a "grow your own pizza" theme, and will bring their fresh vegetables to Rocky Mountain Pizza Company who will use the vegetables to build pizzas for a co-op pizza party. ■

Get in the communications loop

Check out the social media links on CHF BC's new website at www.chf.bc.ca. Keep current with our latest news on Facebook and Twitter. And remember you can sign up for Members' Only access to our site so you can use member resources and take part in the online

forum, BC Talk. When you sign up be sure to check the box to get our e-newsletter, *Essentials* and we will send updates directly to you. *If you have any questions, contact Fiona Jackson at fjackson@chf.bc.ca or 604-879-5111 (1-866-879-5111) ext. 139.* ■

New development partnership takes shape

CHF BC, Vancity and Terra Housing Consultants have taken the next step in their efforts to help co-ops get access to the financing they will need to invest in their aging buildings.

Social Purpose Development Partners Inc (SPDP) was incorporated on November 25, 2011. CHF BC is the majority shareholder in the new company. SPDP will help co-ops take stock of their buildings, make a plan for the future, and find the money to turn that plan into reality.

For more information on this new service for CHF BC members, contact Darren Kitchen at dkitchen@chf.bc.ca. ■



hot dates

Come and get all fired up about co-op housing at these mainland events:

- Mar 12** Member Forum— Spring networking for members, Vancouver
- 31** Spring Education Conference, Burnaby

chip rates

Preferred rates for CHF BC member co-op operating accounts. These rates were effective Dec 1, 2011 and are subject to change.

CCEC – variable	0.38%
CCEC – fixed 12-month	1.35%
Coast Capital (Vancouver Island)	1.2%
Vancity	1.35%



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Richmond's employment project helps co-op members with disabilities

Kevin is a member of Meadow Walk Housing Co-op in Richmond.

A new employment project, "Resources for Career Development" at the Richmond Centre for Disability is helping him get traction.

Kevin gets around in a wheelchair after a spinal cord infection made him a quadriplegic.

Kevin has been able to work with Career Development Facilitators who helped him map out his goals. He hopes to be able to work with computers.

"It made it clear to me that I need to improve my English," says Kevin.

The Centre's Community Access Point (CAP) provides access to computers for preparing letters or work assignments. The facilitators can also help set up work experiences or arrange wage subsidies and short-term funding for retraining.



Participants can find community support and job-finding tips at twice-a-month Peer Employment Circle meet-ups.

Kevin is now enrolled in skill upgrading and ESL classes with a

long-term plan to attend BCIT for training in information technology.

For more information contact Louise or Ian at 604-232-2404 or louise@rcdrichmond.org and ian@rcdrichmond.org. ■

Is your co-op ready for an earthquake?

At the Member Forum on September 12, 2011 co-op members learned what they can do to be ready to survive an emergency.

Jackie Kloosterboer, Emergency Planning Co-ordinator for the City of Vancouver's Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP) presented key points on preparedness and answered members' questions, with a special focus on survival during and after an earthquake. Members also got an inside look at a detailed co-op emergency preparedness plan with a presentation from Kim

Worrall and Kathy Danby of Garry Point Housing Co-op in Steveston.

Garry Point's plan includes a well stocked supply cupboard with everything needed for 72 hours along with detailed descriptions of roles and responsibilities for members in the event of an emergency.

If you live in the City of Vancouver, the NEPP will come to your co-op and give an hour-and-a-half workshop on emergency preparedness—no

charge. Other municipalities offer similar workshops for residents. ■



Kim Worrall of Garry Point Housing Co-op shared her co-op's Emergency Preparedness Plan at the September Member Forum.

NEW STAFF

CHF BC welcomes Arnold Sang



Arnold Sang joined CHF BC last August as our new Commercial Services Director. Arnold is familiar to co-op members for his work with COHO Management Services as a co-op coordinator for the past four years. One of his client co-ops was Connaught Housing

Co-op in Vancouver, Canada's first 2020 co-op.

Arnold brings an entrepreneurial spirit and an enthusiastic, customer-first attitude to his new position. Be sure to get in touch with Arnold for any of your group buying needs at 604-879-5111 (1-866-879-5111) ext. 138 or asang@chf.bc.ca.

CHF BC welcomes Deanna Ferguson



Deanna Ferguson joined CHF BC last September a newly created position, Program Assistant, Member Services. Deanna assists various CHF BC programs and leads the organization of key member events. Deanna is familiar to CHF BC members

for her work as registrar and organizer for CHF BC's Education Conference in the spring and fall of 2007. Since then she worked with the Condominium Home Owners Association (CHOA) of British Columbia. Deanna has lived in a housing co-op for over eighteen years and has a strong background providing services to members in the non-profit sector.

You can contact Deanna at dferguson@chf.bc.ca or 604-879-5111 (1-866-879-5111) ext. 140. ■



You can watch CHF BC's video, *Housing co-ops build community* on the CHF BC YouTube channel.

CHF BC made a video

CHF BC has a new video.

Housing co-ops build community is for everyone who has ever wondered what it would be like to live in a housing co-op, as seen through the eyes of co-op members.

Viewers see firsthand how

co-ops build communities and how CHF BC builds the community of housing co-ops.

You can watch the video on our YouTube channel (coopsbc). The video was produced by Novel Pictures with generous support from Vancity. ■

Invite us to your party

Is your co-op having an important anniversary? Invite CHF BC – we'd love to come to your celebration and congratulate

you on your success. Contact Fiona Jackson at fjackson@chf.bc.ca or 604-879-5111 ext. 139. And don't forget to let us know if your co-op

plans to celebrate the International Year of Co-operatives (see the 2012 toolkit on our website at www.chf.bc.ca). ■



CHF BC Scholarship Fund

KICK START YOUR EDUCATION!

Application deadline: March 23, 2012

If you:

- live in a CHF BC member housing co-op
- will be in college or university full time in 2012-13
- are making a positive contribution in your community
- can demonstrate financial need

You could be eligible for a CHF BC scholarship.



Co-operative Housing
Federation of BC

Get more details at

www.chf.bc.ca/scholarship or 1-877-384-9444

Hello and goodbye:

CHF BC AGM welcomes new Mainland directors and finance committee representative and gives thanks to retiring directors

At CHF BC's AGM in November 2011, member delegates acclaimed five directors-at-large for two-year terms: Alana Van Dam (Kinross Creek), Fred Silvergieter (Hillside Place), Amanda Skillin (Delta Green), Manon Bertrand (The Brambles) and Jane MacDermot (Van East). Derek Darling (Common Ground) was acclaimed as a member of the Finance Committee. Members also paid tribute to retiring directors, Dave DeRé (Greenland), Lawrence Boxall (Juniper) and Kamal Yazbek (Access). A new Vancouver Island director, Nicole Chaland (Roofs and Roots) was elected at the Vancouver Island Council meeting in October. ■



CHF BC directors: L to R: (back row) Fred Silvergieter, Alana Van Dam (Secretary), Amanda Skillin, Marty Norgren; (front row) Lisa Berting (Treasurer), Dianne Brubaker, Isabel Evans (Vice-President), Manon Bertrand, Catherine Porter (President), and Jane MacDermot.

CHF BC launches new scholarship fund!

Members at our November AGM applauded the launch of the new CHF BC Scholarship Fund. The Fund will offer financial support to members of housing co-ops in BC attending publicly funded Canadian colleges, universities or approved

apprenticeship programs. CHF BC was inspired to create the Fund by our sister federation in Toronto, CHFT. Its successful CHFT Diversity Scholarships program has awarded more than \$700,000 to deserving co-op members since 2004. The CHF BC Scholarship Fund

gets its start with legacy funds from our Aaron Webster Memorial Fund and a generous donation from Vancity. The first scholarships will be awarded at our semi-annual meeting on May 5, 2012. Go to our website for information on how to apply: www.chf.bc.ca/scholarship. ■

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vancouver Island



Nicole Chaland is the new Vancouver Island Director on the CHF BC board.

Island Council Meeting in October—new Island director

Nicole Chaland of Roofs and Roots Housing Co-op was elected as one of two Vancouver Island Directors on the CHF BC board at the Vancouver Island Council meeting on October 12.

CHF BC director Larry LeSage reported to the Council on the Federation's current priorities and common strategies with other federations across the country. These priorities include: addressing the loss of subsidy in co-ops coming to the end of their operating agreements, doing a better job of advising our members on sustainability and energy efficiency, and developing a capacity for refinancing our co-op homes.

Delegates were pleased to meet Arnold Sang, CHF BC's new Commercial Services Director and Deanna Ferguson, CHF BC's new Program Assistant.

Guest speaker Beth Cougar Blom talked

about the work of Volunteer Victoria. Delegates were especially interested to hear about the emerging leaders program. Beth went on to describe Volunteer Victoria's innovative approach to valuing and managing volunteers. This approach recognizes that people volunteer differently based on their age, life situation and time. It asks volunteers what they need and want and is based on the idea that the motivation for volunteering can include building job and life skills, socializing, or simply helping others. ■ ▶

island dates

Come and get all fired up about co-op housing at these great events:

- Mar 10** Island Education Day, Victoria
- 17** Island Trade Show
- 31** Spring Education Conference, Burnaby

Sara Krauel BSc CA



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commercial services news

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Commercial, Industrial
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Co-op kitchen and bathroom make-overs

KBCC

with KBCC Counter and Cabinets



Alberni Housing Co-op in Vancouver and Lock Lane Housing Co-op in Mission got new counters and cabinets installed by KBCC Counters and Cabinets.



Vic Manolache of KBCC Counters and Cabinets works with co-ops on their counter and cabinet renewal projects. He helps them to make the right selection for their members at the best possible price (lower than retail).

Here are a couple of examples of recent “before” and “after” photos from Vic’s housing co-op counter and cabinet projects. ■

How do I get rid of this? make-overs

Landfills are overflowing and the unfortunate part is that 68% of the garbage that people throw out can be recycled. Next time you put something into your garbage can, take a second and

think about whether it is recyclable. If you live in Metro Vancouver metrovancoverrecycles.org is a handy reference site for alternative places to recycle materials. And the recycling hotline 604-RECYCLE

connects you with a live person who can help find alternative companies. If you have questions about junk removal remember you can call Scott at 1-800-RID-OF-IT (1-800-743 6348). ■



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KBCC supplies and installs kitchen and bathroom cabinets and countertops at discounted prices to CHF BC member co-ops. Choose from a variety of materials, custom or standard.

Call Vic for a quote at 604.765.5975!



BFI offers organics recycling

BFI is now offering organic recycling in all areas where it currently provides waste and recycling service.

The organics recycling service will take:

- Food scraps, including meat and bones

- Food-soiled paper
- Yard trimmings

It comes with a clear list of what can't be put in recycling including wood, concrete, brick, metal and plastic.

And completing the circle, BFI takes the organics to the composting

facility Fraser Richmond Soil who then sells the compost to farmers and nurseries. The compost is used to enrich soil without the use of chemicals and is widely used at golf courses, farms, and in residential gardens. ■

How do you maintain your laminate flooring?

Here are some tips:

- **Use a damp cloth** to blot up spills as soon as they happen. Never allow liquids to stand on your floor.
- **For tough spots**, such as oil, paint, markers, lipstick, ink, or tar, use acetone/nail polish remover on a clean white cloth, then wipe the area with a damp cloth to remove any remaining residue.
- **Sweep, dust, or vacuum** the floor regularly with the hard floor attachment to prevent accumulation of dirt and grit that can scratch or dull the floor finish.
- **Periodically clean** the floor with cleaning products made specifically for laminate floor care.
- **Do not wash** or wet mop the floor with soap, water, oil-soap detergent, or any other liquid cleaning product. This could cause swelling, warping, de-lamination, and joint-line separation, and may even void the warranty.
- **Do not use steel wool**, abrasive cleaners, or strong ammoniated or chlorinated type cleaners.

- **Do not use any** type of buffing or polish-ing machine.
- **For spots** such as candle wax or chewing gum, harden the spot with ice and then gently scrape with a plastic scraper, such as a credit card. Be careful not to scratch the flooring surface. Wipe clean with a damp cloth.
- **A more frequent** dust-mopping or vacuuming schedule may be required in very sandy areas such as a beach home.

And you can protect your floor to help keep it looking new:

- **Entry mats** will help collect the dirt, sand, grit, and other substances such as oil, asphalt, or driveway sealer that might otherwise be tracked onto your floor.
- **To prevent slippage** of area rugs, use an approved vinyl rug underlayment.



Michael Dondera of CD Contract discusses flooring options with members at CHF BC's Fall Education Conference.

- **Use floor protectors** and wide-load bearing leg bases/rollers to minimize the chance of indentations and scratches from heavy objects. As a rule, the heavier the object, the wider the floor protector.
- **Avoid excessive exposure** to water during periods of inclement weather.
- **Keep your pets nails** trimmed to prevent them from scratching your floor.
- **Never try** to slide heavy objects across the floor.
- **A protective mat** should be used for furniture or chairs with castors. ■

CHF BC's flooring partners offer discounted prices to member co-ops on a variety of flooring products and installations. They would be happy to provide a quotation or more information about carpeting or other flooring products. Please contact:



Vancouver Island:

Hourigan's Carpets and Linos –
250.220.8811 or lee@hourigans.com



Lower Mainland:

CD Contract – 604.323.2027
or flooring@chf.bc.ca



Icy weather solutions

Protect your members and property by choosing the right ice melt product. Basic road salt has a lower cost than other ice melt products but can be harmful to concrete, landscaping and pets. It is important to choose an environmentally friendly ice melt product that is friendly to plants, pets, people and concrete. RONA sells various environmentally friendly ice melt

products such as Meltz All and Alaskan. Both of these products provide the benefits of:

- Environmentally friendly
- Fast acting/long lasting
- Reduced tracking
- Friendly to plants, pets & people
- Highly visible color marker
- Deep penetrating power.

RONA has special discounted pricing available to CHF BC members by the bag or save even more by the pallet. Contact your local RONA store for availability and pricing. RONA is your one stop shop for all your winter seasonal needs, with a wide selection of ice melting products, snow shovels, scrapers, and snow blowers and everything else you need for a safe winter. ■

Toilet rebates

Co-ops on water meters can save significantly on their water bills by installing low flow toilets, showerheads and faucets. If your co-op is in the Lower Mainland (outside of Vancouver and Surrey who are not

offering this program) your municipality may be offering a toilet rebate—exchange your toilet for money to buy a new low-flush toilet. Check with your municipality to see if you're eligible.

Then purchase your new toilets at RONA and save money.

RONA has a wide selection of toilets eligible for municipal rebates. Contact CHF BC Commercial Services for more information. ■

Trail's new flagship Vancouver store NOW OPEN



This store promises an ultimate appliance shopping experience with 13 live displays, complete kitchens and over 800 models on display. CHF BC members are welcome!

www.trailappliances.com



The Fall Island Education Day in November set a registration record.

Fall Island Education Day

The Fall Island Education Day on November 5, 2011 saw a record turnout for both workshops: “Aging in our co-op communities” and “Housing subsidies in a post-operating agreement world” were full with 30 members from 12 co-ops in attendance.

Both workshops focused on planning ahead: for the needs of aging members in our co-ops and for the end of subsidies once

government operating agreements are over. In the subsidies workshop, members looked at the pros and cons of:

- using a co-op’s own resources to offer reduced housing charges to low-income members, or
- relying on government to provide housing charge assistance to low-income members.

Participants also looked at the challenges

involved in meeting the requirements of sound operation in co-ops while still offering reduced housing charges to low-income members after government assistance ends.

Co-op members gave positive feedback about why the workshop information will be useful for their co-ops: “We have a lot of planning to do and it’s important to start now.”

The next Island Education Day is Saturday, March 10, 2012. We hope to see you there! ■

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Check out CHF BC’s 2012 toolkit
and join the celebration!

www.chf.bc.ca/2012toolkit

On the road to 2020:

Getting Management Right in 2012



CHF BC members work hard and connect at the Fall Education Conference.



2011 was the Year of Getting Governance Right. As part of the 2020 Vision program CHF BC and CHF Canada put special emphasis on good governance as an important ingredient for a co-op's success. At federation events and workshops, in member discussion at CHF BC's general meetings, through CHF Canada's Good Governance Test and other online tools, we increased awareness of what it takes to have strong leadership and quality governance.

And CHF BC members responded. The education program saw record demand: portable workshops increased from 50 in 2010 to 73 in 2011; co-op consultations, including 2020 Compass sessions, increased from 101 in 2010 to 143 in 2011. To date, 36 co-ops have signed on for CHF BC's 2020 Compass and 24 have completed the program. And our Fall Education Conference had a record attendance with 72 co-ops and 181 people participating.

Now in 2012, the International Year of Co-operatives, we'll take a

cue from the slogan: "Co-operative enterprises build a better world" and look at the "enterprise" of the housing co-op. Housing co-ops are small businesses that manage property worth millions of dollars. The average co-op takes in revenue of half a million dollars every year. While housing co-ops are a unique way of doing business because they serve important social and community purposes, their members want the business side of the co-op to run soundly—with well-maintained buildings and grounds, strong finances and good service.

In 2012 our focus is on "Getting Management Right" to help co-ops become successful enterprises now and in the future. This is achieved through results-based management in the day-to-day running of the co-op.

In partnership with CHF Canada, CHF BC's education events and resources will focus on how co-ops can be sure they have sound management.

CHF Canada developed Core

Management Standards for housing co-ops in 2004. Those still apply. A well-managed co-op will achieve results in these five areas:

- managing the finances
- keeping the co-op in good repair
- keeping the co-op full
- meeting your co-op's legal requirements
- supporting good governance.

Management is especially important as we prepare for the future, including the end of government operating agreements. Co-ops that strive to meet 2020 standards understand that sound, expert management is the key to successful operations and being able to offer members good service. ■

CHF CANADA'S video "Co-op housing at the crossroads: What's in your future?" outlines two visions of the future for co-ops. You can watch it on CHF Canada's YouTube channel: "cohousing". Check out CHF Canada's website for information on the Year of Getting Management Right: www.chfcanada.coop.

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View Court members celebrated their 30th anniversary last August.

30 years and counting

View Court Housing Co-op turned 30 in 2011 and this small urban co-op just might hold the key to co-op housing success

Set on a tree-lined street in Vancouver three blocks away from the bustling intersection of Broadway and Main Street, View Court Housing Co-op is urban: close to everything in the city. It's also small—32 units mostly one bedroom and bachelor units housed in a century-old brick building with adjacent solid stone house. These qualities make it a distinctive co-op with its own special spirit. Amy Kiara Ruth is a View Court member. Amy explains, "It's a balance of being a small co-op, and a self-selecting process in terms of people who are okay living in a smaller space, and sharing common ideals."

One of the co-op's ideals is sustainability and members use an extensive recycling program that includes recycling Styrofoam and soft plastics. Members share the task of riding bicycles in a group and towing a bicycle trailer full of recyclables into the Pacific Mobile Depot pick-up location each month.

As one of the first co-ops to come out of its federal operating agreement, if View Court can continue to maintain its values and its resources in the face of post-operating agreement challenges it could be a case study for how co-ops can do it right.

Five years in, the co-op has already taken a small loan for roof repairs, but it now begins the much bigger

project of electrical upgrading. Financing isn't the problem because the co-op has good relationships with CCEC Credit Union and Vancity. But they need to hire a project manager, engineers and contractors who can do the potentially risky work to upgrade from knob and tube wiring. The co-op would also like higher efficiency windows, but because the building is older, all the windows are different sizes and would have to be custom built.

As it moves forward with its decisions, it works with a legacy of experience.

"It's a very mature environment," Amy says. "Personality issues, rifts between committees, those come

“...if View Court can continue to maintain its values and its resources in the face of post-operating agreement challenges it could be a case study for how co-ops can do it right.”



up, but there is an underlying intention to work it through. There are a number of people in the co-op now and in the past who have or have had that capacity to address what the issues are and recognize that the personality stuff is always going to creep in from time to time.”

Amy recalled her own discovery of how the co-op works. “I have a memory from my first general meeting – the discussion was tense as the co-op was fairly divided at that time...I remember thinking, ‘what have I got myself into?’ Yet I was impressed that despite the disagreements, everyone was still speaking to each other respectfully and continuing to engage in the co-op process.”

View Court still maintains an internal subsidy in its annual budget to support those who can’t afford the full housing charge. And as part of giving back to the community where they live—the seventh co-op principle “concern for community”—the co-op donates \$1000 each year to a community project chosen by the membership.

The co-op’s community spirit extends to the smaller things too like members’ willingness to take care of everyday things like straightening out the front door mat. For Amy, that just might be the key.

“I often feel like why our co-op works well is because there are people doing those small little things.” 🏠

IN AUGUST, Amy Kiara Ruth gave a short speech at her housing co-op’s 30th anniversary celebration where she compared her co-op to a garden. The co-op has been mortgage-free and outside its original operating agreement for five years.

Here’s an excerpt from her speech:

“... a co-op can be seen as an organic body; a system of healthy, mutual interdependence and relationship that connects us to cycles of growth, nourishment, and rest. The strength and resiliency of our co-op community is evidence of the depth of contribution and participation by members both past and present.”

2012 Fever!

2012
International
Year of
Co-operatives



Housing co-ops across Canada are celebrating their successes as part of a one billion member global phenomenon

By Scott Jackson, CHF Canada's Program Manager of National Communications

Our year has arrived! The United Nations International Year of Co-operatives (IYC) has started, with launch celebrations across the country and around the world. In Canada, the official launch was January 12, 2012 with simultaneous events in ten provinces.

Co-operative enterprises of all sorts—housing, retail, financial, healthcare and more—are taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity to build awareness and support for our movement. Under the slogan “Co-operative enterprises build a better world” we are telling our stories, and showing how co-ops serve important social needs, create jobs and democratize the economy.

for housing co-ops to purchase IYC 2012 merchandise, including pins, signs, flags and banners.

The banner campaign has taken off with housing co-ops and their federations. In BC, CHF Canada and CHF BC have put up a banner on the office building they share on Fraser Street in Vancouver. They are also arranging larger banners to hang at Skytrain overpasses in the spring. In Ontario, in co-operation with federations in that province, IYC billboards are going up in Ottawa and Toronto, and Windmill Line Co-op is flying a huge 30-foot banner in full view of Toronto's Gardiner Expressway and Go Train commuters. And individual housing co-ops, credit unions and stores

“IYC 2012 is a once in a lifetime opportunity, a real gift to the co-operative movement.”

Canada's co-operative associations are working full out to harness and support this grass roots enthusiasm, with special IYC websites, materials and merchandise. CHF Canada, in partnership with the Canadian Co-operative Association and BC-based company The Flag Shop, has co-ordinated a special bulk discount

are ordering banners for their buildings, meaning the average Canadian can't help but notice the co-op presence.

We hope you will join us for what promises to be the biggest IYC event of the year for housing co-op members: CHF Canada's Annual Meeting in Niagara Falls, from June



6 to 9, 2012. This special event will include a Co-op Showcase and IYC guest speakers, including Lyndsay Kyte, author of the play *Tompkinsville*, the story of the first co-operative housing built in North America. All this, plus the usual great array of workshops, with a focus in 2012 on our Year of Getting Management Right as part of the IYC focus on co-operative enterprise.

Hopefully, your co-op is already making plans for your celebration. It could involve a banner, or a new co-op sign, or some special event or project of your own or together with other co-ops in your neighbourhood. Whatever you do, we hope you will let CHF Canada know what you are planning so that we can support, recognize and publicize it.

IYC 2012 is a once in a lifetime opportunity, a real gift to the co-operative movement. Let's make sure we make the most of it!

For more information about IYC 2012 and CHF Canada's Annual Meeting, visit www.chfcanada.coop. 📍



Windmill Line Housing Co-op in Toronto display their IYC 2012 banner.



20
VISION
20

CHF BC Spring Education Conference

**Saturday
March 31, 2012**

Executive Hotel and Conference Centre, Burnaby

All workshops will help your co-op excel in the *Year of Getting Management Right*. Here are just some of the titles to expect in a line-up of 12 workshops:

Capital financing for housing co-ops and Housing subsidies in a post-operating agreement world both back by popular demand. You'll also see basic workshops like *Privacy primer for housing co-ops*, *What makes a good board?* and *What makes a good director?* And look for some exciting new titles!

Watch for CHF BC's Spring Education Conference brochure coming soon to your co-op and check for registration details on the CHF BC website.

Rooftops

Women overcoming social barriers in Kenya

By Danika King, Rooftops Canada Intern



Agnes Muyaa was able to build a home with help from the National Co-operative Housing Union in Kenya.

When it comes to finding housing, Kenyan women face several challenges. Patriarchal social norms, an inheritance policy that favours men and a lack of access to financial services hinder women from attaining affordable and safe housing.

Agnes Muyaa understands these challenges all too well. Her husband died of pneumonia in 2004, leaving her alone to raise three children in their home of Athi River, about 30 km southeast of Nairobi. Her part-time employment as a seamstress was not enough to pay her rent and allow her sons to continue their education.

Luckily, Agnes is a fighter. She and her husband had joined Rooftops Canada's long-term partner the National Co-operative Housing Union (NACHU), in 2003. They had hoped to build a family home and move out of their small rental. But when Agnes was widowed, her in-laws reclaimed her husband's land. Although Kenyan inheritance laws give land ownership to brothers over wives, Agnes

fought for her inheritance rights and managed to convince her in-laws to let her keep the land.

With training and support from NACHU, Agnes saved her earnings from sewing uniforms and in 2005 she took out a NACHU loan of 400,000 Kenyan shillings, just over \$4,000. With this she was able to build the first floor of a house on the empty plot, and she began to rent it out. Her seamstress earnings and the rent money together enabled her to pay back the loan and ensure that her sons could enrol in secondary and post-secondary education.

Agnes is now in the process of paying back her second loan from NACHU, which paid for the construction of a second floor.

"I am where I am because of NACHU," she laughs modestly. She intends to wait until her youngest son is finished university before moving into her new home for a comfortable and well-earned retirement. 🏠

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the co-op connection



CHF BC and CHF Canada display a banner on their Vancouver office building; watch for more banners on co-ops and on a couple of Skytrain overpasses during 2012.

Join the party for 2012

CHF BC is celebrating—and you can too. Not only is 2012 our 30th birthday, but the United Nations has named 2012 “the International Year of Co-operatives”. This is our chance to celebrate what makes co-ops special. It’s also our chance

to learn more about other kinds of co-operatives in our communities.

Check the CHF BC website for a 2012 toolkit where you can find ways to join a “co-op cluster”—a chance to meet with other co-ops in your neighbourhood to share open

houses, get involved with community celebrations or have a potluck or block party. Co-ops can also order promotional material through the 2012 website: www.canada2012.coop and learn more about other celebrations. ■

BC Co-operative Association’s 2012 Co-op Youth Story Project: are you ready to uncover a mystery?

There are two ways co-ops can get involved. Young people in your co-op might want to sign up to be a part of the story project: uncovering “hidden” co-op stories and re-telling them through a creative art project. And if your co-op has a story, the Story Project just might be interested in hearing it.

Sarah Hyde grew up in a housing co-op and is the project coordinator for the 2012 Co-operative Youth Story Project.

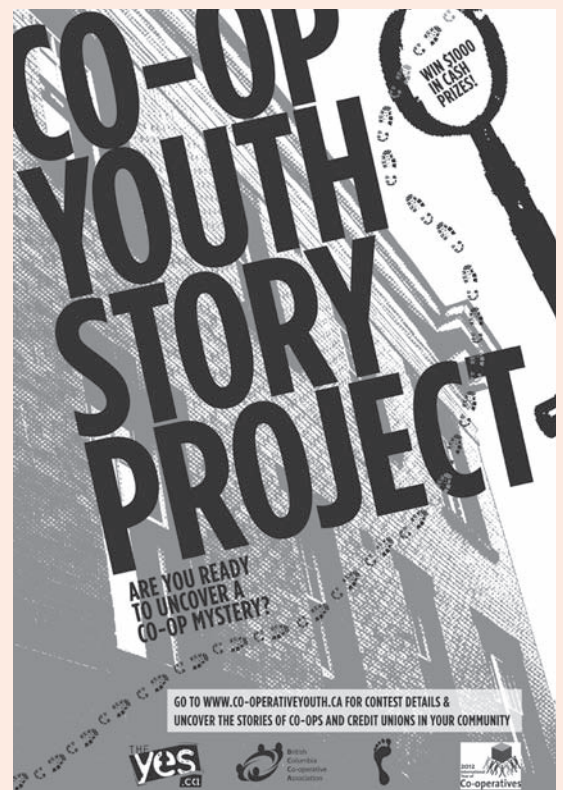
“We’re hoping that not only young people in co-ops get involved but that some of the stories that get told and made into art pieces are of housing

co-ops.” She encourages co-op members to share the history of their co-op with the young people doing the research for the story project.

“If young people could tell the stories of the places where they grew up, that would be really cool. It definitely shaped my growing up.”

You can also find the Co-operative Youth Story Project on Facebook. Contact Sarah Hyde, Project Coordinator at 604-662-3906 or sarah_hyde@bccca.coop.

CHF BC has made a financial contribution to support the participation of co-op youth in this project. ■



Find out more about the Co-op Youth Story Project at www.theyes.ca.

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