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UMass Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative receives international recognition

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS, July 8, 2015 — At a special awards celebration on July 14, international cooperative educators will thank UMass Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative (UMassCEC) for being an important partner of the 2015 Association of Cooperative Educators (ACE) Institute, held for the first time at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

UMassCEC is a collaborative effort among faculty and students at the Department of Economics at UMass Amherst, the Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives, and the Neighboring Food Co-op Association to develop curriculum on the cooperative movement, including an undergraduate Certificate in Applied Research on Co-operative Enterprise.

Each year, ACE chooses a city in which to meet, notes ACE Executive Director Sarah Pike. While in that location, Institute participants learn local stories and see first-hand how co-ops are employed to address issues. “In 2015 we are fortunate to be in the Connecticut River Valley, home to an abundance of worker, producer, and consumer co-ops,” she says. “There are many examples of co-ops coming together, learning from one another, sharing their experience, (and) pushing the cooperative economy forward.”

Pike explains that for this reason and others, the theme of the Institute is peer-to-peer learning.

Accepting the Outstanding Contribution to ACE Award on behalf of UMassCEC is Erbin Crowell, executive director of the Neigh-

boring Food Co-op Association and an adjunct lecturer on the cooperative movement at UMass Amherst. “It’s such an honor for us to be hosting ACE here in what we like to call ‘Co-op Valley,’” says Crowell. “In an atmosphere of growing inequality, the Institute is an important opportunity for educators, activists and cooperators to get together and share ideas on how we can better empower people in their own lives and communities.”

Five others will be honored at the awards ceremony including Toolbox for Education and Social Action whose founders were students of Hampshire College, also of Amherst. All award recipients are dedicated to education and understanding of cooperation and cooperatives.

The 2015 ACE Institute runs from July 12 to 15 and draws leaders primarily from the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. More information is at www.ace.coop.

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