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**Neighboring Food Co-ops**

**Join 150 Co-operative Leaders at the White House**

(Monday, May 14th 2012) – The Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) was among 150 co-operative leaders who gathered recently with top policymakers at the White House to discuss how their organization spurs economic growth. The White House Community Leaders Briefing is a weekly program that provides a unique opportunity for community leaders to have a dialogue with the White House about issues that are affecting their communities, as well as to ensure that they are well informed about government policies and programs and how they can use or maximize these resources.

The May 4th event, organized by the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA), included a briefing by senior Obama Administration officials and breakout sessions where co-operative leaders met with members of the Administration to discuss small business development, job creation, agricultural programs and financial co-operatives.

“Our food co-ops have an important story to tell in terms of our impact on jobs, community ownership and local food systems,” said Erbin Crowell, executive director of the NFCA and a participant in the meetings. “What was exciting about our visit to the White House was being able to communicate that our story is just one of thousands across the country.”

The NFCA includes 30 food co-ops and start-up initiatives across Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Ranging in size from large, multi-storefront retailers to small community grocery stores, the Neighboring Food Co-ops include over 90,000 individual members, have shared revenues of more than $200 million and employ over 1,400 people. Taken together, NFCA member food co-ops in Vermont would be among the top 25 employers. According to an independent study, NFCA member co-ops purchased $33 million in local products in 2007.

Nationwide, there are an estimated 29,000 co-operative businesses spanning most industries, including agriculture, energy, financial services, food distribution, healthcare, housing, retail and telecommunications. Co-ops in the U.S. generate 2 million jobs annually and account for more than $3 trillion in assets, over $500 billion in total revenue and $25 billion in wages and benefits.

“Our co-ops have an important message to share at a time when people are looking for alternatives,” said Crowell. “We have a business model that puts people before profit, that builds local economies, and reinforces community ownership and wealth. And, most important, it is a model that works.”

**ABOUT THE NEIGHBORING FOOD CO-OP ASSOCIATION**

The Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is a network of 30 food co-ops and start-up initiatives in New England with more than 90,000 individual members. Together, the members of the NFCA are working toward a shared vision of a thriving regional economy, rooted in a healthy, just and sustainable food system and collaboration among co-ops. For more information, visit [www.nfca.coop](http://www.nfca.coop).

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