***Making a Splash in 2012:***

***The International Year of Co-ops***

***Co-op Profiles for Food Co-op Newsletters***

*As part of our celebrations of 2012: The International Year of Co-ops, the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is working with partners to provide our member food co-ops with a range of resources to help them celebrate, including articles on other co-ops in our region for use in newsletters, e-newsletters and on websites. These materials help communicate how co-ops build a better world and, in the spirit of collaboration among co-ops, encourage food co-op members to consider their role in the wider co-operative movement. For more resources, please e-mail Bonnie Hudspeth at* *bonnie@nfca.coop* *or visit* [*www.nfca.coop/iycresources*](http://www.nfca.coop/iycresources)*.*

**(544 words)**

**Cabot Creamery Co-op: Farmer Owned Since 1919**

**By Erbin Crowell**

The United Nations has declared 2012 the International Year of Co-ops (IYC), recognizing the contributions of co-operative enterprises to economic development, employment and food security. As a member of your local food co-op, you appreciate the difference your co-op makes in your community. And as part of our celebrations of the IYC, the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) is spreading the word about other co-ops in our region and how they help build a better world.

For example, Cabot Creamery Co-op of Vermont has been in operation since 1919. Owned by the 1,200 farm families of its parent co-op Agri-Mark, Cabot operates four creameries — two in Vermont, one in New York and one in Massachusetts. As one of our region’s best known and most-awarded co-operative brands, Cabot has been honored an unprecedented three times at the World Championship Cheese Contests as makers of “The World’s Best Cheddar.” Today, this regional co-op offers a full line of dairy products including cheese, butter, sour cream, cottage cheese and yogurt. More recently, the co-op worked with the Cellars at Jasper Hill to create “Cabot Clothbound,” a natural-rinded traditional cheddar that is aged a minimum of 10 months. This delicious cheese was featured during Co-op Month in 2011 as part of the NFCA’s *Cave to Co-op* program that offers regional artisan cheeses at an affordable price.

Underlying Cabot’s business success is its commitment to initiating marketing programs among different co-op sectors such as food co-ops, credit unions and energy co-ops. Community, democracy and local ownership are integral to the co-operative business model — service to, and for, the communities in which members live, work and shop.

“A co-op represents an investment of more than just money,” says Dr. Richard Stammer, President and CEO of Agri-Mark. “Hard work, passion and ownership by our farmers are the true secrets underlying our success. These same values and benefits are universal to the co-operative structure and are fundamental to our mission.”

In this spirit, Cabot works with the NFCA and other partners in the region to grow the wider co-operative movement. For example, a generous contribution from Cabot that helped launch the Cooperative Fund of New England’s Cooperative Capital Fund, a source of patient capital for co-op development. And on a national level, Cabot helped launch a new website, [www.go.coop](http://www.go.coop), to serve as a gateway to the wider co-operative community. Visitors to the site can find resources on different kinds of co-ops, a video on the movement, and testimonials from co-op leaders.

Cabot believes in educating others, especially young people, about the value of co-operatives. “The biggest priority for co-ops has to be educating the next generation about the value of co-ops and the power generated by this most democratic form of business,” says Roberta MacDonald, Cabot’s Senior VP for Marketing.

To that end, Cabot co-sponsored the “Co-ops for Community” Girl Scout Patch booklet in partnership with the National Cooperative Business Association. The booklet’s activities help girls and young people become more business savvy, understand how co-ops contribute to the communities they serve, and develop business leadership by learning how to form their own co-ops.

To find out more about this free booklet, other co-ops across our region, and resources for celebrating the Year of Co-ops, visit the Neighboring Food Co-ops website: www.nfca.coop/iycresources

*Erbin Crowell is Executive Director for the Neighboring Food Co-op Association,* [*www.nfca.coop*](http://www.nfca.coop)*, and serves on the Board of Directors for the Cooperative Fund of New England,* [*www.coopfund.coop*](http://www.coopfund.coop/)*.*

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