

Five area co-ops join hands to celebrate

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Community invited to cooperative breakfast Saturday

Demonstrating the cooperative spirit to which each adheres, five area co-ops are joining forces to put on a breakfast in honor of the International Year of Cooperatives.

Saturday, Oct. 27 from 7-10 a.m. at the Biesemeier Room in the Event Center at the Phillips County Fairgrounds, a free breakfast will be served to community members.

Sponsoring the cooperative venture are Grainland Co-op, Highline Electric Association, PC Telcom, Holyoke Community Federal Credit Union and Paoli Farmers Co-op.

Encouraging the community to attend, the sponsoring co-ops will be awarding two big prizes to lucky drawing winners. One person will win a Samsung 32-inch LCD HDTV flat screen, and second prize is a blue ray DVD player.

“Cooperatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility,” said Ben Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General.

October is celebrated as National Cooperative Month each year.

In 2009, the United Nations decided that 2012 would be the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). As the world’s leading proponent of the cooperative movement, the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) is deeply involved in promoting this UN International Year.

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IYC celebrates a different way of doing business—one focused on human need, not human greed, where the members (who own and govern the business) collectively enjoy the benefits, instead of all profits going just to shareholders.

Having an International Year of Cooperatives provides an opportunity to captivate the attention of national governments, the business community and, most importantly, the general public on the advantages provided by the cooperative model.

The theme for the International Year is “Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World.”

By specifying a theme for an international year, the UN draws attention to issues of global significance. This theme was chosen for 2012 in part because cooperation is clearly part of what the UN is all about.

The United Nations’ goals for the International Year of Cooperatives are to:

—increase public awareness about cooperatives and their contributions to socio-economic development and the achievement of the millennium development goals.

—promote the formation and growth of cooperatives.

—encourage governments to establish policies, laws and regulations conducive to the formation, growth and stability of cooperatives.

As the global voice of cooperatives, ICA has chosen to focus on increasing public awareness during the IYC as the most efficient and effective way to use its resources.

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Cooperatives are owned by their members—the people who receive services from them—and are found in many industries.

The cooperative movement traces its roots to a store started by weavers in the town of Rochdale, England in 1844. The Rochdale model revolved around a set of guidelines drawn up by one of its members, Charles Howarth.

When introduced into the United States by the National Grange in 1874, these Rochdale Principles fueled a cooperative explosion.

Although stated in many ways, the seven Rochdale Principles hold that a cooperative must provide:

—voluntary and open membership.

—democratic member control.

—members' economic participation.

—autonomy and independence.

—education, training and information.

—cooperation among cooperatives.

—concern for community.

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