

Keystone Development Center Newsletter

Cooperating Throughout the Mid Atlantic

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Featured Article



This Issue's featured interview is with Brian Snyder,

Dear Friends,

As spring turns into summer KDC employees and consultants have been involved in many interesting things. In Philadelphia, a new food cooperative alliance continues to grow. Two KDC representatives attended "co-op week" in D.C. This included a Cooperation Works (CW) meeting. (CW is a service cooperative for co-op developers across the U.S.) We also attended the meeting of the National Cooperative Business Association as well as other co-op meetings and events. While in D.C., KDC representatives took the opportunity to educate several of our Senators and Congresspersons on Capitol Hill about the role co-ops play in the economy. In April KDC offered a webinar on cooperative law with KDC Attorney Anthony Andonizio. For this newsletter, Board Member Emeritus Brian Snyder PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) was interviewed about KDC, PASA, agriculture and life in general. We also added a new practitioner's column to the newsletter to maximize the practical benefit of this publication to cooperative members.

All of these topics are covered in the newsletter, please read on for more details.

→ Forming the Mid-Atlantic Food Co-op Alliance

On April 25 over 50 cooperators from 20 food co-ops, buying clubs and startups from New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland gathered in Swarthmore PA to form the Mid-Atlantic Food Cooperative Alliance. According to its new mission statement, MAFCA, which now has 27 member cooperatives, "exists for the mutual benefit of its members and the greater community in which we live. Our purpose is to grow the cooperative economy, provide education about co-ops, and build a sustainable and equitable

Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture. For more about PASA go to <http://www.pasafarming.org/>

system of healthy, local food production, distribution, and consumption."

The Alliance's objectives are to:

- establish a regional network of consumer food co-ops, businesses, and farmers
- promote a marketing brand for regional co-ops
- publicize, promote, and enhance resources for established and start-up co-ops
- and promote the principles and values of the cooperative movement.

In addition to its name and mission, the group formed a nominating committee for the purpose of proposing a slate of candidates for the steering committee. Other topics discussed included a conference, methods of information sharing, and group buying.

Persons interested in the Mid Atlantic Food Cooperative Alliance can reach Bob Noble at BobNoble@kdc.coop.



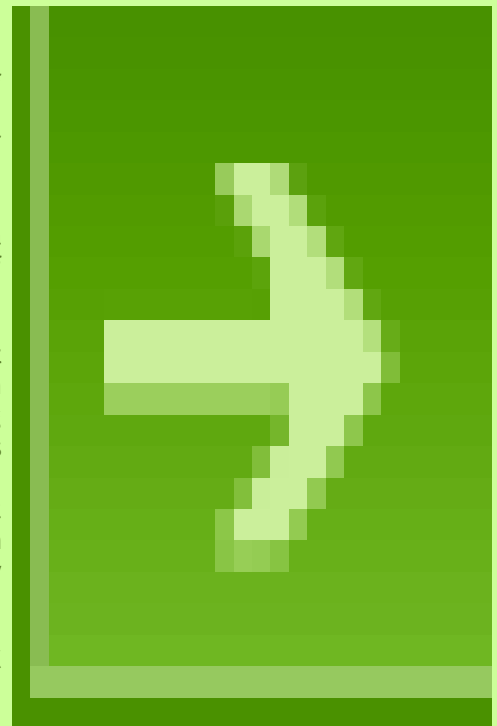
A View from My Doorstep: An Interview with Brian Snyder of PASA

KDC was in touch with Brian Snyder, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture in early June to talk about PASA, his time on the KDC Board of Directors, and his perspectives on life and agriculture.

KDC: Brian, you were on the KDC board of directors for a long time, exactly how long were you with the board of KDC?

Brian: I was 9 year on the KDC board, since 2001. My first contact with KDC was my first spring with PASA. I got an email from Cheryl Cook, who was ED at that time, telling me about the next board meeting. I had no idea I was supposed to sit on the KDC board; it turns out they held a spot on the board for the PASA director, but that was not part of my orientation here at PASA. As soon as I arrived in Pennsylvania Cheryl put me on the list. KDC was new organization at that time, maybe a year or two old.

KDC: Nine years is a long time Brian. How has KDC changed in those nine years?



Brian: How KDC has changed...let me think. We changed Executive Directors right in the middle of those years, maybe earlier than the middle. Cheryl was hired with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture when the Rendell Administration came in. During my time on the board I have also seen the organization become a little more organized and more professional in way it presents itself publicly. I have seen it grow and then shrink a bit with the realities of funding. KDC used to have greater variety of funding sources than it has now. Shrinking back to smaller staff means the recent trend has been to focus on key programs.

KDC: And what are the most important things about KDC that have stayed the same?

Brian: KDC's best asset is that it has a very dedicated group of board members that stick with it and participate. The board is committed to the idea of co-op development which is starting to make a come-back with the public. Farmers are looking for new ways to work together. An organization like KDC is important to help efficiently pull these organizations together. Lancaster Farm Fresh, a great example, started just a few years ago and is now a major concern.

KDC: Brian, you came to the Board of KDC as the Executive Director of PASA. Can you explain PASA to the readers?

Brian: PASA is a membership organization, we work with and for farmers who hold sustainability as a priority. We have 6,000 members. We encourage farmers to implement sustainable techniques and we advocate for them at the state and federal levels.

And I would say that we help to build markets. We have regional offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and we are engaged in building local and regional markets there, as well as from our main office in the central part of the state. It is quite a bit of work to match restaurants and farmers, and to pull together farmers markets and CSAs. We were instrumental in putting together the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign, which is meant to help farmers and retail customers to find each other. People need to know where their local food is available. We are also working with the Food Alliance in Portland on developing a "sustainable" certification in the Mid-Atlantic region.

KDC: What are the benefits of PASA membership to Pennsylvania farmers?

Brian: Member farmers have us out there working on their behalf... advocacy is near the top of the list of what we do right now. Two years ago I would not have mentioned it, but we have moved in that direction. The policy environment is changing very rapidly. More and more issues are affecting agriculture that the public is weighing in on and legislators are doing something about. We want to make sure that legislation is beneficial and not harmful to sustainable farming. Also, our education programs are second to none in terms of quality. Not only at the conference but other educational opportunities throughout the year, and there are cost discounts for members.

Another benefit our members are gaining is being connected to each other. Our list serves are very active. Members look for information on our lists, for help, for land, or for people to farm their land. The list serves have been very successful and we hope to add more social media in future.

KDC: How did PASA come to be?

Brian: I'll give you the abbreviated version. 20 years ago this February the founders of PASA began preparing for the first Farming for the Future Conference. These folks were enthusiastic sustainable agriculture supporters at Penn State University, students, faculty, farmers and extension officers. They came together to address what they saw as a lack of services for sustainable and organic farmers. They decided to address the situation by holding a conference so people could come to hear great speakers, learn from each other and possibly start an organization. They expected a couple hundred participants but they attracted 500 people to that first conference. People saw us as a forward trend in agriculture. So this cutting edge conference became part of our identity.

In years following, we found that the pent up need was not just in Pennsylvania but throughout the Mid Atlantic and across the country. I have seen farmers from other states tear up when they talk to me about the conference saying they wish there was something like it back home. There have been other organizations holding sustainable agriculture conferences around the country, but none are exactly like ours.

KDC: Can you tell me more about the Farming for the Future Conference? It is quite an impressive event every year in State College, the first week in February.

Brian: There is nowhere you can go that concentrates as much information about sustainable farming that you need to know, even stuff you don't yet know you need. We make an effort every year to have something for everyone at the conference. Any kind of farmer will find something of interest; there are multiple workshops regarding virtually every kind of sustainable farming imaginable. We try to pair that with speakers who will challenge the current thinking in regard to what is sustainable. It's a hallmark of the conference that we don't just have people in to speak who already think the way we think; we find people from other fields to help to stretch our imaginations. We have had Diane Wilson, author of *An Unreasonable Woman*, telling the story about pollution in the Gulf of Mexico; and Will McDonnough, the internationally recognized sustainable architect. We have had people come to speak who are specialists in health, nutrition, human rights, and other fields. All are overlapping with agriculture, but fundamentally different too, so we get new ideas and perspectives. On occasion we have turned down speakers who really wanted to speak at our conference because they were too close to us, they were already part of the choir.

KDC: Brian, do you or have you ever farmed? What is your experience with farming?

Brian: I come from Indiana, and both grandfathers were dairy farmers. I grew up on a small hog farm and as a teenager I showed hogs in 4H for eight years. So that was my background. When I left high school, I planned on going into political science and then on to law school, but was stunned by the local young farmers group annual scholarship, which went every year to a graduating senior to move ahead in agriculture. They chose me to receive that scholarship. When I went to accept the award I asked "why give this scholarship to me? You know I am interested in political science and law." And the man responsible for giving out the award, said "political science and law is just what farmers need." I guess they knew what they were doing; look what got for their \$1,400 a year for four years.

I went to Graduate School at Harvard Divinity School in the early 80's. As a part of that program I did a field training in pastoral counseling for Gould Farm, a mental health treatment program in Western Massachusetts. It's the oldest therapeutic community in the country, with the main facility located on a beautiful 600-acre farm in the Southern Berkshires (Monterey). I worked there as an intern and when I graduated became their Director of Programs in the Boston area, then later the Executive Director in the Berkshires. I stayed 19 years total, including the last 9 years as Executive Director. Gould Farm was sustainably minded, we ran a CSA, were involved in cheese production, and installed a commercial kitchen while I was there.

While at Gould Farm I earned a second graduate degree in Business Administration at the University of Massachusetts. After my time at Gould, I thought I would like to work a little more specifically on agricultural issues. At that time (2000) the job at PASA opened up and it seemed like a good fit, so I moved to Pennsylvania in 2001.

It's an interesting story how I got to know folks in Pennsylvania so that I would even know about the job at PASA. We had a tornado in 1995 at the Gould Farm and lost 100 acres of forest and a sheep barn. We cut the blown down trees into timber, sold some of the logs and kept some, and a group of Amish Pennsylvania farmers came up and built a barn for us out of that timber. I met my first Pennsylvania farmers that way. We kept in touch over the years and those PA farmers eventually drew me to look at Pennsylvania when I felt it was time to move.

...Continued at the bottom of the newsletter...

→ Practitioner's Perspective: Encouraging Effectiveness on Steering Committees



KDC Practitioner Lisa
Stolarski

By Lisa Stolarski

There are currently dozens of co-ops forming in the Mid-Atlantic States and hundreds of organizers who make up their Steering Committees and sub-committees. This is an exciting time to be in the business of helping new cooperatives to form and to witness the enthusiasm of people who are growing the cooperative movement. For my first editorial column, I have decided to write some guidelines that will help these Steering Committees to stay focused and effective in their efforts to develop their cooperatives. The following ten points of advice are for consumer and producer-owned co-op start-ups. However, some of these points may be helpful to worker co-ops and to established boards of directors.

1. Good meeting facilitation is critical to effective group-decision making. Whether you are sticking to Roberts Rules of Order, using a consensus model, or some other system -- all steering committee, sub-committee and membership meetings should be well facilitated so that conversations are clear, on-agenda and everyone has an equal chance to speak. If meetings are not well facilitated, then you run the risk of losing people. Critical is that the facilitator creates equal opportunity for each individual to speak at meetings, otherwise the loudest people in the room will have un-due influence and quieter members may disengage.

2. Treat the democratic process and record keeping seriously. Meetings should be democratically run so that all committee decisions are officially voted on or official consensus polls are taken. Decisions should be meticulously documented in the minutes. The minutes mark the progress of the committee's decisions and prove that those decisions are democratically decided. There should be a secretary who keeps all meeting minutes as well as the working bylaws.

3. Be mindful that the co-op has one purpose: to serve its members. Nothing will throw your co-op further off course than the development of side-agendas. Often steering committee members bring their own agendas to the table. Side-agendas come in many forms. For example, a member who owns a development company may want to develop a building four times bigger than the co-op needs. Another steering committee member might insist on a minority position such as having only vegan foods in the food co-op. Side agendas often have hidden conflicts of interest. The steering

committee should be mindful not to let side-agendas distract from the purpose and best interest of the co-op.

4. Keep in mind that a co-op is a revenue generating business. It is important that the steering committee understands that the co-op must operate as a business and generate surplus revenue to support operations. A steering committee that treats its co-op like a nonprofit entity will put it on track for failure. It is critical that as many people as possible on the steering committee have a basic understanding of how business finances work. If they do not understand this, then they should be prepared to undergo basic financial training before they proceed. This will be valuable in helping them to make sound financial decisions on behalf of the start-up cooperative.

5. Do not get ahead of yourselves in the development process. Each step builds upon the next. For instance, it would be counter-productive to spend a lot of early meeting time talking about a location for your store-front, which is a late-stage topic. In the beginning you should be focused on the first member equity drive. Focusing too far ahead in the development process can cause a steering committee to get in its own way of developing the cooperative. Follow logical steps in the development process, the latter steps are typically dependent on the success of the former, so you will want to concentrate just as hard on the first steps as you do on the last. If the development steps are not apparent, contact your regional cooperative development center; for most of you it is Keystone Development Center at www.kdc.coop.

6. Do not allow dominant personalities to take over the steering committee. A group dominated by one or two very vocal individuals is easy to spot. These folks often set the tone and agenda of every meeting. They are often self-appointed committee chairs. They may be in a facilitator's role but do most of the speaking rather than calling on others to speak. The group usually follows their will because to do otherwise is to invite conflict. If your steering committee is dominated by such a person or persons, you should do what you can to even out the power structure. You might try talking to the overly-eager committee member(s) about your desire for more inclusive and participatory atmosphere on the steering committee. If this does not come easily to them you can hire a professional facilitator, suggest rotation of facilitation responsibilities among members, change your meeting location to neutral territory, or invite others who will help to even out the dynamics to join the group.

7. Positive community perception of the steering committee is critical. The steering committee is the first impression the rest of the community will have of your co-op. Who you have on your steering committee matters. This reflects how the cooperative will be perceived by the local community as well as the professional community. Be aware of how your steering committee members present themselves to the membership and to the public. Steering committee members should be able to inspire the confidence of all kinds of people -- members and potential members, other community organizations, other businesses, local foundations and the media.

8. Follow the most practical path to getting your co-op into a building. Often by the time a co-op is ready to start talking seriously about a building they have a significant amount of member equity and have already elected a board of directors. However, steering committees often do research on location possibilities as early as the feasibility study phase of the project. When researching possible co-op locations, remember that your co-op is created for the purpose of serving its members. The steering committee should be researching buildings that are the right size for the start-up effort and should not concern themselves with larger or smaller locations that would complicate the start-up process with additional renovation needs or sub-leasing arrangements. Large building projects right off the bat will sap what precious little equity the co-op has away from its primary purpose of serving its members.

9. Seek to make friends with other community organizations. Many neighborhoods have Community Development Corporations or Community Based Organizations that do good work within

their communities. If start-up cooperatives make friends with such organizations then there may be the possibility for mutually beneficial relationships. However, from time to time neighborhood organizations will have conflict with certain individuals or with other organizations. Steering committee members must never bring neighborhood feuds to the cooperative; such distractions will throw the co-op effort off track. The co-op should strive to make only friends among the other organizations in its community.

10. The steering committee's main function is to get the co-op to the point where it can elect a board of directors. Steering committees are self-selected individuals who are not typically democratically elected from the membership since they exist before the membership body fully forms. They perform a critical function in the earliest stage of cooperative development. However, the goal of the steering committee is to grow the membership such that an election can be held and the steering committee can be replaced with a board of directors who are elected from among the membership. Often some of the people on the steering committee are elected to the board, but it is a good sign when there are new faces on the first board of directors. When the board is elected, the steering committee turns over its records and responsibilities to the board of directors. At that time steering committee members who did not join the board may join the membership committee which will remain intact throughout the final member drive.

➔ Anthony Andonizio, Esq. Leads Legal Webinar

On April 30th, KDC Attorney Anthony Adonizio instructed fourteen cooperators from Pennsylvania and nearby states in the some of the unique legal aspects of cooperatives. During the two-hour webinar arranged by KDC, using his prepared materials, Tony discussed a number of cooperative legal issues, and then responded to the participants' questions in other areas of interest.

Among the topics covered during the session were: cooperative directors' duties; cooperative contract law; various requirements for members' meetings under Pennsylvania law; recommended cooperative board policies; special legal requirements in arranging loans from cooperative members; access to records and information by directors and members; Federal tax exemption of cooperatives; and noncompetition agreements. The webinar materials included various sample board policies and other documents useful for cooperatives to ensure compliance with some of the rules discussed during the presentation.



**KDC Legal Council,
Anthony Andonizio**

One of the special features of the session was detailed instruction for the group on the benefits of the unique contract rights of cooperatives in Pennsylvania under the state's Cooperative Corporation Law, which was enacted in 1988, and which was written by Mr. Adonizio. Here he highlighted the special statutory remedies available only to Pennsylvania cooperatives in court actions for the breach of certain contracts, and for other conduct that may harm cooperatives, noting that these special features in Pennsylvania law are one of the advantages to organizing a

cooperative in the Keystone State.

Under the broad topic of cooperative member meetings, Tony discussed various aspects of the procedures and requirements, including quorum mandates; conference call participation; members' voting rights; the use of voting proxies; and annual report requirements.

Another interesting segment of the webinar focused on state and Federal law requirements for cooperatives considering raising capital through the issuance of preferred stock or by arranging loans from members. This centered on the importance of cooperative compliance with one of the exemptions from the costly and burdensome full securities registration requirements under both the Federal Securities Act of 1933 and the Pennsylvania Securities Act of 1972, as well as appropriate filings with the Pennsylvania Securities Commission.

Tony has over 30 years of experience in cooperative and corporate law, as well as related regulatory, project development, acquisition, finance and legislative matters. He currently maintains a private legal practice located in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. As part of his practice, he represents, advises and acts as counsel to a number of cooperatives, corporations, associations and municipal entities in Pennsylvania and other states.



Co-op Week in DC Productive and Instructive

The week of May 3rd was packed with cooperative activity in our nation's Capital. Every year a number of conferences and meetings take place around the NCBA Annual Meeting and Cooperative Conference during the first full week of May.

On Monday May 3rd and Tuesday May 4th, Cooperation Works! the professional organization of cooperative development practitioners, held their semi-annual meeting in the offices of Co-Bank. Members went through a strategic planning process with Rosemary Mahoney of Co-op Metrics. Coming out of this strategic planning meeting,

priorities were identified that will help cooperative development agencies to better serve cooperative businesses and start-ups. CW! also heard from Stuart Reid, Executive Director of the Food Co-op Initiative, a nonprofit that has been created as a result of the Food Co-ops 500 pilot program. The Food Co-op Initiative plans to help hundreds of new food co-ops get off the ground



across the United States. CW! also had a conversation with Leanne Oliver of the USDA about upcoming changes in federal grants and about a celebration of cooperatives USDA is planning for October 5th of this year.

On Tuesday May 4th NCBA hosted pre-session conference events at the Capital Hilton. Kevin Edberg of CDS Consulting and Jenny Kassan of Katovich Law Group provided a workshop on Co-op Development. Lynda Brushett and Noemi Giszpenc of the Cooperative Development Institute provided a workshop on Growing the Cooperative Economy. As in many years past, there was an afternoon tour of the Greenbelt Cooperative Housing Community in Greenbelt Maryland that attracted thirty conference participants. Simultaneously, international cooperatives were featured in a late afternoon workshop entitled "NCBA International Co-op Development Experience. International co-ops were again featured that evening at the Global Cooperative Networking Reception.

Wednesday May 5th NCBA President Paul Hazen presided over the NCBA annual meeting in the morning. New and returning Directors were announced, they include Lindy Bannister, Erbin Crowell, Ann Hoyt, Christine Neal and Jerry McGeorge. The membership acknowledged the long-standing and exceptional contributions of outgoing board member Jim Blaine. Mid morning participants heard from U.S. Representatives Sanford Bishop, (D-GA) and Bill Paxon, (R-NY). They then set off after lunch for meetings with more than fifty members of Congress and/or their staff. Cooperative advocates educated Congress members about the need for increased funding for domestic and international cooperative development programs and for an increase in the business lending level allowed for credit unions. Participants also discussed with Congress members a proposed change to SBA rules that would make cooperatives eligible for loans through the SBA.

Wednesday Evening of Co-op Week in DC is traditionally the evening of the Co-op Hall of Fame Dinner, held at the National Press Club. This year cooperators inducted into the Hall of Fame were Larry Blanchard, retired Senior Vice President of Special Projects at CUNA Mutual Group; Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association; the late Werqu Mekasha, former Country Director at ACDI/VOCA-Ethiopia and David Thompson, President of Twin Pines Cooperative Foundation.

Thursday May 6th was packed full of cooperative educational opportunities. Breakout sessions included Collaborative Networks: Building Cooperative Bridges to a Sustainable Tomorrow; Transformational Communication that Builds Cohesiveness; and Creating Cross Sector Connections for Affordable manufactured Housing. A brown-bag lunch session was led by John Dunn and Eric Wallace of the CLUSA International program entitled Member Involvement in International Cooperative Development. Afternoon breakout topics included On the Right Side of History: Democracy, Equity, Ownership and the Cooperative Business Model; Setting the Stage for Strategic Thinking: the Practical Significance of Policy governance; and Cleveland's New Evergreen Employee Cooperatives. The closing session featured a talk by Justin Conway of the Calvert Foundation.

On Thursday evening many conference participants went to the Annual Meeting of the National Cooperative Bank which was held at the Ronald Reagan World Trade Center.

On Friday May 7th most conference goers had already returned home, but Friday was a working day for the NCBA Board of Directors. The board discussed raising the profile of U.S. cooperatives through a coordinated, multi-sector effort. They also discussed promoting domestic cooperative development. They identified three priorities for domestic cooperative development:

1. Main Street Cooperatives, which are worker co-ops and co-ops supporting independent businesses such as purchasing and share service cooperatives,
2. Healthy Foods Cooperatives, which builds the cooperative food system through consumer, wholesale and farm cooperatives, and
3. Renewable Energy Cooperatives, which includes co-ops in biofuels, wind and solar energy, both in rural and urban areas of the U.S.

NCBA looks forward to having many discussions throughout the domestic cooperative community in regard to future cooperative development efforts.

[View from My Doorstep Continued...](#)

KDC: It is clear you love your job, Brian, what is it about your work that makes you the most passionate?

Brian: It's the fact that our members are farming and they can only farm because they make profit but they are farming for other reasons besides profit; they care about feeding people, they are interested in taking care of the land and in building stronger communities all around. It's true. When I listen to farmers talk, it would be hard not to be jazzed about working for these folks and making sure they get every advantage and ounce of fairness out of the system. Farmers are hungry for information, interested in making sure everyone succeeds, they are generally not competitive; they hold no secrets from each other. It's a whole social movement. Everything I have ever done, in science, agriculture, mental health, theology, it's all a part of what I am doing now. My work at PASA is not just about farming, it's about life.

KDC: Now that you have stepped off of the Board of KDC, Brian, what do you see for your future?

Brian: The job here at PASA gets more and more intense all of the time. I am glad to have Marilyn Anthony on the Board of KDC, so PASA is still connected. As for my future, it is not my own to manage. We will see where it goes. I've seen PASA double in size twice since I got here, and it's going on a third time. Could double a fourth time in a few years. I have watched the local food issue grow from a bumper sticker to a national movement. Lately I have been involved on a national scale on policy issues. I believe my role will continue to expand. PASA is still in many respects the best thing going in sustainable agriculture in the country.

KDC: This column is called A View From My Doorstep, Brian; what do you see when you step outside your door?

Brian: From my front porch at home I can see ten miles, all the way to State College. On the horizon during football games I can see the lights. I look at my neighborhood, and there are gardens and orchards across the street. There is an organic CSA [Community Supported Agriculture] next door. On the other side is a private home not in farming, but a home with people who love good food coming from local sources. And those folks happen to have a business that supports PASA; they do the monogramming for our hats and t-shirts. I can sit on my porch and see a Christmas tree farm thriving. I see a community in this burgeoning little neighborhood growing and feeding itself and its neighbors, and thriving economically.

But I also see the specter of development; I can see the highway and its trucks. One time I counted eleven Wall-Mart trucks in an hour from my front porch. It's an entirely different perspective on how we should live. I don't know which of these two perspectives will win or if they will coexist in some way. Those of us who care about sustainability, we should appreciate the wholesome high quality food grown in our own region. This we cannot take for granted. We have to work at it and

fight for it.

Thanks for reading the KDC Newsletter. Look for the next edition at the end of July. We hope to interview someone from USDA who can say a few words about the revised Value Added Producer's Grant as well as the upcoming Rural Cooperative Development Grant which funds many cooperative development centers across the United States. We will have a report back from the Association of Cooperative Educator's conference in Cleveland, as well as the "Serving the Underserved" Community Development Credit Union Conference in Pittsburgh. Until then, KDC wishes you all a happy and productive summer!

Sincerely,

Cathy Smith
Keystone Development Center

Cathy Smith is Executive Director of Keystone Development Center,
Lisa Stolarski is a Cooperative Development Practitioner with KDC in Pittsburgh,
Bob Noble is a Cooperative Development Practitioner with KDC in Philadelphia,
Brian Snyder is former Board Chair of KDC and Executive Director of PASA,
Anthony Andonizio is an Attorney with a private practice in Camp Hill PA.

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