

# Principle 6 Cooperation Among Cooperatives



Starting a new nonprofit organization is like starting a business; it requires a board of directors, annual IRS filing, and more. This seemed like too much to take on, so the committee began exploring local and regional community foundations. These funds are great assets to communities, yet their endowed investments grow with professionally managed stock market investments. Our committee then researched the Twin Pines Cooperative Foundation, which invests endowed funds in other co-ops, rather than in the stock market. We determined that this option would best meet our co-op's goals, ends, and cooperative principles.

In 2011 Bluff Country Co-op (BCC) board members began asking how BCC could help address inequities and disparities in the community. From these discussions, board members formed the BCC Social Equity Committee.

Over and over in committee discussions, the question about how to establish a BCC nonprofit branch arose. Because cooperatives are for-profit entities, we began to search for a way to start a co-op nonprofit fund.

## The Twin Pines Cooperative Foundation

The Twin Pines Cooperative Foundation (TPCF) launched in 1964, over 50 years ago, to serve educational and development needs of cooperatives. In 1995, TPCF formed the Cooperative Community Fund, offering a place for cooperative members throughout the United States to "Give Where They Live." Here's how it works: BCC is one of over 40



# Principle 7 Concern for Community

co-ops who have a permanent endowment fund with TPCF. We donate to our co-op's endowment fund (often TPCF finds an organization to match our donation). TPCF then pools our donation with the donations of other co-ops' endowment funds to finance cooperative projects throughout the country. The interest that our fund earns is dispersed back to us annually, and we donate that interest to a local non-profit of our choosing. BCC will receive its first fund interest payment in May 2019, and every May thereafter.

TPCF accepted BCC's application for an endowment fund in April 2018. We plan to donate to the fund using a combination of abandoned equity, donations (including donated patronage dividends), and round-up at the register proceeds. BCC members and Winona community members can give tax-deductible donations directly to BCC's fund as well. All donations to the fund are professionally managed and tax-deductible.

Establishing this fund will support several of BCC's Ends, which include, "We exist so that our community has access to sustainable organic local products and services;" "... our community is knowledgeable about food from farm to table and how our food choices affect health, economy, and the environment;" and "... our member-owners feel a sense of community, connection, and fellowship." What's more, the operation of this fund will provide an opportunity to leverage the economic power of our cooperative and its owners for good in our wider community. Establishing a BCC endowed nonprofit fund will provide a future income stream that BCC will use to help ensure, through charitable giving, that more community residents have access to good food and other essentials of life.

## Where is the impact?

Here, where we live! The BCC Articles of Incorporation state that, "...the purpose shall be to provide the community with high quality food, housewares, hardware and other essentials of life, and ...

conduct its affairs in a manner that honors the human spirit through respectful and compassionate treatment of all individuals..."

BCC's Social Equity Committee will be working with the board and staff to determine which nonprofit organizations and projects to support with our fund. Recipients will be chosen with our co-op's purpose, Ends, and the Cooperative Principles in mind. For example, we will consider nonprofit organizations or projects working to address food insecurity; organic and sustainable agriculture; cooperative education and start-ups; and food justice.

As we continue to roll out this project, you'll find more information in our newsletters, on our website, and on our board of directors' bulletin board in the store. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask! Johanna Rupprecht is the chair of our social equity committee, and you can email her at: [Johanna@bluff.coop](mailto:Johanna@bluff.coop)



Checks should be made out to: TPCF/BCCCF