

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Andy Wright
Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union
Phone: 206-398-5866
andreww@smcu.com
www.smcu.com

SMCU Celebrates the Co-op Difference

Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union is kicking off the [International Year of Cooperatives](#) with **Co-opalooza**, a free, all-ages celebration of local cooperative businesses, emceed by Northwest comedy legend, Pat Cashman.

October 16, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Fisher Pavilion in Seattle Center

Live music from Moondoggies, Ravenna Woods, Recess Monkeys, and Caspar Babypants, free food samples, and fun activities for kids.

The economic crisis and stalling recovery have left consumers disenchanted and distrustful. Major players in the drama, such as Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers and AIG, have made the subject of corporate social responsibility a topic of concern for most Americans. Against a backdrop of unemployment and waning consumer confidence, the cooperative business model provides hope for everyone, just as it has since the 19th century.

To celebrate the wonderful things that co-ops do in their community [Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union](#) (SMCU) will be gathering co-ops from across the country in the Fisher Pavilion at Seattle Center from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on October 16 for Co-opalooza. Co-opalooza is a free, all-ages event that gives attendees a chance to see the impressive diversity of cooperatives and gives each co-op a chance to tell its story.

“Co-ops play a critical role in the Pacific Northwest economy,” said Eric Bowman, Co-op Development Specialist at the Northwest Cooperative Development Center. “Co-ops market farmer’s products through [agriculture] co-ops like Tillamook, provide housing to families and at-cost financial services through credit unions like SMCU. Co-ops demonstrate that a different, more civilized and more rational, economy is possible. By focusing on consumer-owners or producer-owners, they avoid the volatility of a Wall-Street-driven business. They are a way forward for our country in these times of economic turmoil. It’s critical for these vital businesses to tell their story and explain what sets them apart.”

Nearly two dozen co-ops from almost every sector. Co-ops in attendance include Cabot Creamery, Group Health, PCC Natural Markets, Central Co-op, Equal Exchange, the National Cooperative Business Association, Organic Valley, Northwest Cooperative Development Center, Pangaea Organica, Olympia

Food Co-op, PUNCH Gallery, Seattle Wholesale Growers, New Seattle Massage, North Seattle Community College Cooperative Preschools, Circle of Life Caregiver Cooperative, Tacoma Food Co-op, Bellingham Bay Builders, Green Cleaning Alliance, Web Collective, and the Flying Bike Cooperative Brewery. A special Kids' Area will be sponsored by the Children's Museum of Seattle. Additional support for Co-opalooza comes from Darigold, Honest Tea and Seattle Met Magazine.

Participating co-ops will offer free food samples, discounted massages, coffee samples and more. There will also be live music from popular local bands, Caspar Babypants, Recess Monkeys, Ravenna Woods and The Moondoggies.

For more information about Co-opalooza 2011, visit <http://www.smcu.com/coop>.

About SMCU

Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union, "Home of the Seven Cooperative Principles," has provided sound solutions to its members' financial needs since 1933. Originally founded by City of Seattle municipal employees who wanted a fairer and more accessible financial institution, Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union now serves the entire State of Washington with a full range of financial services.

More on Cooperatives

Cooperative businesses have played an important role in the United States since pre-independence times, especially during economic downturns. During the Great Depression, before government programs became prevalent, people set up "self-help" groups to help each other meet their needs for basic household goods and financial products.

Cooperatives can now be found in nearly every sector of the economy including over 700 co-ops in the State of Washington. From credit unions to grocery and farming co-ops, cooperative businesses work to provide unique value to their members. Not only do they provide great deals on the products and services they offer, they often look to create a social balance in the arenas in which they do business.

Cooperatives often work together to achieve their goals, not just as a matter of convenience but as a matter of principle. Cooperation amongst cooperatives is one of the foundational tenets that make the co-op system great for everyone.

More on the International Year of Cooperatives

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives, highlighting the contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development, in particular recognizing their impact on poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

For more information about the International Year of Cooperatives, visit <http://social.un.org/coopsyear>.