

Please stand by for real-time captions. Ladies and gentlemen this is the operator. Today's webinar is scheduled to begin momentarily. Until that time your lines will be placed on music hold. Thank you. -- Music hold. Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, this is the operator. Today's webinar is scheduled to begin momentarily. Until that time your lanes -- lines again will be placed on music hold. Thank you.

Good morning everyone and happy cooperative month. Welcome to our last seminar for this month campaign on national cooperative month. Today we have a seminar celebrating diversity, race and Ethnicity in the cooperative movement. I am the acting director for community economic development division. I'm also going to be your facilitator today. We are joined by a person that I admire for her years of experience and dedication and passion for her helping. She also provides leadership to three key agencies and USDA, while utility service, housing service, and business cooperative service. Without further ado let's give her a round of applause.
Undersecretary Lisa.

Thank you and thanks to the team for organizing this event. It is a pleasure to be with you. Yes, happy cooperative month. You thought it was Halloween, but it is cooperative month. One of my great choices as Undersecretary is to shine a spotlight and try to bring attention, some of the powerful work that is done here at the Department of Agriculture and Rural development. I think many don't know how deep our involvement is in supporting the cooperative movement in the United States. I have been a long time aware of the cooperatives in every form from credit unions. They bailed -- build while they create jobs and help Rural infrastructure in this country -- country. We know they play a key role in developing local and regional food systems that support fibers and help grow Rural economies. We know the farmer and rancher and Fisher cooperatives remain one of the largest employers in many Rural communities and that electric co-ops are often the sole providers serving sparsely populated areas with below average income level. We know cooperatives. If you're a fan of Rural America or live there are no somebody who lives there, it should be about everybody. And Rural development we know firsthand the power of cooperatives to empower underserved communities and to enable marginalized groups to organize and improve their conditions. We know that cooperatives can help communities unite, even if it means building a cooperative grocery store like they have at Renaissance community cooperative in Greensboro North Carolina or the emigrant farmers from Somalia can band together to strong -- form strong FEMA farmers cooperatives -- female farmers cooperatives. It is why we feel fortunate today to have a wonderful three speakers today. Join us. There from the Federation of seven cooperatives, the community purchasing alliance, and the California Center for Cooperative development. I am very thankful to the office of community engagement for helping us have them here with us. I want to explain who is here and I want to start with Dr. Zippert Dr. Many don't know that cooperatives is sometimes the only way for low income people to store and organize an economic unit. Cooperatives come in so many shapes and sizes. You'll find some of the most conservative Americans on the political spectrum love cooperatives in some of the most progressive as well. This is really an American style organization. She is joined by Mai and Laura. Their experiences demonstrate the strength of the cooperative movement and how it is based on diversity and on the cooperative's ability to tackle challenges collectively. The latest research shows that the growth of worker owned cooperatives in the last five years is largely being led by people of color. And immigrants. Especially in the caregiving industry where 90% of the caregivers are women, two thirds are minorities, they are the cooperative

model that is empowered [Indiscernible] to come together to achieve better hours and higher wages is empowering women. I hope I know you -- you know what I am speaking about. Anybody have an elderly relative or somebody with a medical emergency, you need caregivers. This very all-powerful model of cooperatives is finding the resurgence. And Rural development we are proud to support organizations like cooperatives for our program. This year alone we are pleased to support 29 organizations with five \$28 million in grants through our -- over \$5 million in grants. We're proud an additional \$3 million went to cooperative development organizations to serve socially disadvantaged groups like the speakers today. My job is easy today. I get to say thank you for coming, thank you to all of those who are listening, and we have a big group listening by webinar and the wonderful thing about webinar and video is that they continue. Your remarks will be heard by many who cannot be with us in person today. Well this seminar nearly concludes cooperative month, we know the journey continues. So thank you for joining us today and thank you all. Happy cooperative month. [applause]

Thank you Undersecretary. For your support and leadership supporting and advocating for cooperatives and cooperative development. This event were not of been possible if not for the partnership we have built and garnered from our friends and colleagues and Rural development . Special thank you to office of outreach and community engagement for sponsorship and getting the speakers here today here in Washington DC. Also special thank you to office of civil rights. I would like to introduce our next speaker who is acting director for office of civil rights to provide some welcoming remarks as well regarding Rural development commitment to civil rights and equal opportunity.

Thank you. Good morning to Undersecretary, Deputy administrator Parker, Rural development employees here as well as those of you on the line and also are distinguish guests. Greetings on behalf of Angela Denton, civil rights director for Rural development. I would like to thank [Indiscernible] for inviting and including civil rights to be part of the national cooperative month even. I was asked to discuss Rural development commitment to civil rights and some of the civil rights initiatives. During my 2 1/2 years here I can surely say that Rural development is committed to civil rights. What is civil rights? Oftentimes and we think about civil rights, we only think about the allegations of the difference in treatment applied against an individual of a protected group or the disparate impact any policy or practice has are members of a protected group. But is that all the civil rights is about? Now know. When we think about civil rights, we need to look at civil rights in a broader context. Civil rights involved effective communication, good customer service, and respect in our daily interactions. As a proactive measure, we're working to provide meaningful and effective outreach to ensure that all individuals and representatives of entities are aware of the many opportunities to enhance and prosper in role America. -- In Rural America to promote Rural development programs. We are equipping our partners in the field and state offices with a variety of civil rights training to assist in increasing access to our program. We are also conducting analysis of our Rural -- roles, regulations, notices of solicitation of applications, are notices of funding availability and doing all of that prior to their publication in the Federal Register. We are reviewing those documents to eliminate language or requirements that would have an adverse impact on the health, the safety and welfare of civil rights of minority and persons with disabilities. Enclosing, I would like to add that we are exemplifying diversity and inclusion. We are not only doing this by respect, but we celebrate and incorporate the very differences and similarities to create new ideas, initiatives for the betterment

of Rural development and the people that we serve. Again, thank you for the opportunity to partner, and I am looking forward to hearing information from our distinguished presenters and learning more about cooperative month. Thank you. [applause]

Thank you. Appreciate that very inspiring welcoming remarks. Also to add, office of civil rights is offered diversity training credit for the USDA employees attending today in the room as well as those who are online. We have almost 200 participants right now online. Quick housekeeping item. This seminar is recorded, and if you have any questions, if you are in the room please use the microphone so that others on the line can also hear what your questions are. And also be able to capture your comments or questions through the recorded webinar as well. For those of you online, we have members monitoring the chat room and making sure that your questions, comments and suggestions are captured. At the end of the event we will make sure that everybody's questions and comments are available for discussion. We will leave some time at the end for some back and forth and dialogue. With that, any questions so far in the room? The most exciting part of today's seminar is hearing from our guest speakers our first speaker describes her life work as focus on youth leadership development, cultural celebration and community economic development. She is a founding member of the Federation of seven cooperatives and continues to serve as a community organizer and trainer in the field of grassroots cooperative development and education. She is also a founding board member of the Federation of Greene County employees Federal credit Union, the black belt community foundation, in the 21st century youth leadership movement. Currently she serves as the board governance. She also served more than a decade as a trustee of the [Indiscernible] foundation in the southeast region, including as a board chairperson. Please give her a round of applause. [applause]

Good morning. Thank you very much for the introduction. The morning to you my brothers and sisters because that is how I see you and embrace you this morning. I hope to get that same embracing in return. Thank you for the introduction. I [Indiscernible] one of my most significant characteristics, I am a grandmother. That is a blessing. I want to share my story. I don't mind getting a signal if it gets too long. I am a storyteller. I view myself as a child of the cooperative movement. Because I came up very young in initiating that movement in Louisiana. I live in Alabama now. I have lived in Alabama longer than in Louisiana. But as a young person, with our parish priest, we were engaged with adult literacy programs. This was the early 1960s. We were hoping Rural learn to read so they could register to vote and get in the struggle of trying to register to vote. Getting the opportunity to vote. When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and desegregation and those things came about, we said so what. We said so what. We could go to restaurants now. We can hopefully be served at hotels. But we did not own anything. They were not ours. We began with the leadership in Louisiana, a very special [Indiscernible] who dig this year. He began to explore that question with us. What do we have that we could use to build from? That was taken from in a -- from campfires at that time -- -- adage at that time of taking what you have to make what you need. We began to explore the concept of working together, cooperating, and he had information about the cooperative lead of the USA and began to explore the information from them. They really became a mentoring [Indiscernible] for us during those years. We began to say what did we have. In Louisiana, we have a lot of pecans. We had pecan trees and people would -- that was something that added to the income, farm income was harvesting them and selling them. We wanted to use that later on, also develop data to one of the farmers cooperatives of marketing directly and not selling the pecans to another person. So we

decided something else that people -- that the pecans would make food [Indiscernible]. Our first was a bakery selling consumers cooperative. We organize this bakery using pecans for various kinds of bakery items, cakes and all kinds of things we made. We had a mail order business. As a young person, I was head of packaging. We found out that there were groups like ours who had raised the same questions in other Southern states of so what. We have nothing of our own. What can we do to be really in charge of our lives and what we are producing and how we were -- building our own sustainability? We found out there were groups like ours talking together in Mississippi, Alabama, for the, Georgia, South Carolina, Texas and Appalachia. We began to make contact with them and talk about building local cooperatives, and what came about in 1967 was the formation of the Federation a Southern cooperatives. The Federation is a co-op of cooperatives. It is made up of producers, operative farmers, consumer cooperatives, credit Union, craft making, so we had all the that. That was the diversity of what we were building an co-op. I was also the diversity of the people themselves. From Texas to South Carolina, including Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee. We had the Appalachia folks as well. We had the diversity of people as well. These were communities that really had been left out or ignored and everything was inaccessible. You wanted to make it accessible for ourselves. 22 cooperatives were organized under the Federation, and at that time representing over 30,000 families. In 1967. The Federation is celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. We began to train ourselves as I came up with it as a young person. That became my personal formation and all of the decisions I made in my life were dependent upon my being able to stay in this movement and in this commitment. That is even how I figured out who to marry. He had to be a co-op man. And he was. We organized together. He was organizing with the sweet potatoes cooperative and I was organizing with the southern consumers cooperative. We were out in the field together, and we announced we were getting married, [Indiscernible] said that we just thought he was talking about sweet potatoes. Anyway, the Federation has three primary goals. Cooperative and credit union development in Rural , poor and especially black communities in the South. Assisting black farmers and landowners in particular to retain, utilizing expander landholdings in the South. Support public policy changes which facilitate the development of our communities. In terms of legislative and regulatory changes, the Federation has been involved in farm bill debate since 1985 to promote more equity, access and justice for blacks and other minorities, and small family farmers including Hispanics, Native Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, women and limited resource white communities in places like Appalachia. The Federation does support greater funding and support for our Rural cooperative development and disadvantage group grant programs. We also support greater funding of section 25 for social edition advantage and veteran farmers and ranchers under USDA advocacy and outreach. We support also continued [Indiscernible] in USDA programs to serve traditionally underserved constituents and low income Rural communities. Those are some of the goals and the focus of the Federation as far as having US government or our country really pay attention to folks who need and not for a handout, but folks who were asking for help and help to build the community. That is what I want to give focus to. When you're organizing cooperatively, when you organize to form cooperative businesses, those efforts, that commitment, that passion spills over into the rest of your life. It doesn't just -- co-ops are not static. They are not isolated from the rest of the way that you live. In the 60s, when we were organizing businesses, various kinds of cooperative businesses, and doing literacy programs and registering folks to vote, that spilled into getting communities to pay attention politically, how they were going to participate locally politically, registering to vote, learning what it means to be an active voter. Using that vote to make changes

that needed -- are needed and local communities and helping them prepare to participate as a public official running for office. Going to city Council meetings, going to County Commissioner meetings, going to all those kinds of public events where you have a voice and everybody else needs to hear what you have to say. When the Federation in 1971 open the Rural training center in Alabama, and -- in Eps County, 14 families move there to run that training center. That came about when in Sumter County there were Siddall -- still sharecroppers at that time in about 100 families have been displaced off their land because under the leadership of some various organizers at that time, which included [Indiscernible], had help them organize to insist on their part of the cotton payment. Sharecroppers would do that. They sued the owners and landowners and got the money, but what happened, they got kicked off the land and had no place to go. So there was some national organizing around that. The Federation help that group name themselves the [Indiscernible] land buying association. They bought land to build houses. The Federation has part of that land to build the training center there. The Federation uses that training center to prepare people who are working in our cooperatives. We have management training, Board of Directors training, marketing training, workshops. It is the center for training are cooperative education training center is that facility. It has a central office, administrative office, dormitory, and cafeteria. It has some other buildings. It is also a demonstration farm. If you come to Eps we want you to know that the community built those. The Federation at that time gave back 1% of their salaries to pay for the materials needed and the community put in a lot of the labor to build that facility. That was true cooperation. It is part of our commitment. This spillover effect, want to get involved in building a cooperative, you truly have that commitment and that spirit. It spills over into the rest of your life. We are trying to engage young people, young folks into learning this concept. We're trying to pass on these values in my local credit union I serve as president of [Indiscernible] our bond is our County and our county is small. Greene County Alabama has less than 10,000 people. That is the whole County. Or credit union was established in 1975 and about five years ago we talked to -- top the \$1 million mark in assets and that was a big deal. We could legitimately call ourselves are \$8 million credit union. What we -- a \$1 million credit union. But we have instituted is a youth project. We have the [Indiscernible] they had all the components of a credit union. The Board of Directors, supervisory committee, and they raise money through activities and that was their account, the credit union. They were learning the principles of that and also learning money-management. They would decide as a group what they would use the resources for. So we're trying our best to really continue that spirit, that commitment of cooperation. I have to say, even celebrating co-op month, we cannot -- it is not all icing on the cake and all of that. There are still struggles in the movement. There are still struggles. Right now the national credit Union administration does not seem to favor community development credit unions. I have to say that. I cannot be pretentious. The Federation used to have about 20 community development credit unions in the membership. 10 years ago. Now I think we have about six. They get close down. There seemingly is an effort for that. I am calling attention that we need help in changing the mindset. I have been trying to get on that board myself. I have been trying to get appointed. I submit myself every time, let me. Check me out. Anyway, my time is up. I want to say that what do with community education, especially with young folks because I have a passion for them, I tell them, don't think about what your career is going to be, think about what your commitment is going to be. Because you can always set a career into a commitment, but you cannot always get that same commitment to a career. I pass that on to all of us. If we continue to take what we have to make what we need, we

will have greater cooperation and will be able to continue to celebrate co-op month, co-op your, co-ops forever. Thank you. [applause]

Thank you. I wish I had known you when I was a student in Georgia. I definitely would've been connected to your organization in assisting other use at the time. I think it is a match made in heaven. I still ended up in USDA and got to meet you. It is a pleasure. Our next speaker, Mai, -- Laura , she has been working for cooperatives since 2014 when she opened a callout market in -- co-op marketing North Carolina. She wanted to ensure the cooperatively owned grocery store was accessible to all members of the community. While there she fought a long successful battle for workers ownership. This past summer she transitioned from Durham to manage media outreach a membership for communities purchasing alliance, a socially impactful collective kitchen co-op. [applause]

Thank you all so much of thank you for having me. I am so honored to be in the company of such distinguished speakers. I am coming here today with my view of the cooperative movement and celebrating diversity within it. Through the lens of my current role as outreach and membership manager for the community purchasing alliance, and my prior experiences being the marketing manager for the Durham market , cooperatively owned grocery store in North Carolina and building that from the ground up. I wanted to start with talking about community purchasing alliance because purchasing co-ops are something that are new to me, and I am very amazed and happy to see the success of this cooperative based here in DC. I'm very happy to be a part of the movement. To give you background, community purchasing alliance -- alliance is a trust in Washington DC. We use the power of the people in bringing people together to help our member organizations save money on their operational budgets, electricity bills, so that they have more resources to reinvest in themselves, their employees and their mission. We primarily are owned by state institutions, schools and nonprofits in the DC area. We use the power people in bringing them together to make sure they are saving money so that they can reinvest into what matters most. It is very exciting to be a part of this because it brings together such different institutions into the same place. We can all come together around the things that matter, even though we are very different. We have started through doing energy aggregation. We started that in 2011 where 10 state institutions in Washington DC got together and said we're paying more money to [Indiscernible] and paying our business administrator. Can we see if we can reduce our electricity costs so we can reinvest more back into our schools? Those 10 organizations got together and purchased one energy supply contract together and those ended up saving \$100,000 on their electricity bills collectively in the first year. We realized this is working. Since then we've expanded to public charter schools, nonprofits, and help the not only realizing they can save money on their electricity bills, but together we can help them go solar to make sustainable economic decisions with their businesses. We have helped them expand cleaning services as well as trash and recycling. These are collective programs that we can bring people together to help them save money through the services. What is also exciting about community purchasing alliances we are a 100% member owned cooperative. All of these organizations in DC have bought into our collective purchasing program and also are the owners. They provide governance, they provide leadership, and together bringing together very different organizations into this cooperative model has also had some very interesting results that I've experienced recently. We actually had a meeting back in September, with the transit union in Silver Springs. We brought together administrators from

public charter schools, business managers from churches and synagogues, nonprofits and we were sharing best practices, figuring out ways we can reduce our operational budgets together. It just so happened through our discussions that we realized a business administrator for major which a member of the DC Baptist convention and the business administrator from a mega-church in Silver Springs were applying for the same grant. It was one of these wonderful synergistic moments where these three very different people who may be would not have met previously could share best practices in figure out how to use their share to work together to get this grant. So that was one of those beautiful moments of bringing diversity together for a common goal. Was really inspiring for me to see. Was also been adjusting as being a part of this cooperative model, we are flexible. We want to serve our member organizations and see what they need and see what services we can deliver and add value to their institution. We started in 2011 by merrily with those 10 churches saving money on their electricity bills, and since then we have grown. By the end of 2015 we had 59 member owners, almost \$3 million in savings through these programs, and we had started to expand to other organizations that need us with no programs -- new programs. One thing I am excited about as well is, as we see the needs in our community, in our organization, we not only can a spammer we offer, but we can hold everyone more accountable collectively. For example, we expanded janitorial services. We have community purchase alliance, preferred vendors. They are janitorial companies that are owner operated, smaller, minority owned, it usually union and through finding these socially impactful companies, we are now able to strengthen our local economy by linking these companies with our member institution to make sure they are living up to their social goals as well by employing and hiring vendors have good labor practices. One in particular story that sticks out was through the power of the co-op in bringing people together, we were able to help [Indiscernible] church in DC. They had a janitor they loved but was hired to a company they did not like. Through our research we found that the company was taking a big overhead but not actually paying the janitor that much money. So through the power of community purchasing alliance and the cooperative model, we were able to figure out a way for that church to hurt the janitor directly, in-house, raises wages by 15%, give him benefits all while keeping their cleaning budget the same. Stories like that give you a tingling feeling. We're thinking of empowering people and holding each other accountable through our decision-making and not just lost in the shuffle of everyday life and paying the bills. We're really asking questions and saying is this the right choice for my church, my school, my students, the world. Recently we've expanded into the public charter school system in DC which makes me very happy because previously I was a teacher in the public charter school system. I lived a life of a teacher. Many people know, that is very exhausting, but so rewarding. What I realized through serving public charter schools is it's really exciting to help the schools in DC install solar panels, so they have a 20% reduction in our energy cost every year. There producing their own electricity and that money can that be reinvested in the school, in the students, in the teachers. Really serve the students in a new way and serve the teachers. That makes me really proud to be a part of this collective purchasing club. You can see the amount of money we have saved the schools. These are annual numbers. Through a variety of programs. It is really exciting to see them, what schools can do with that savings. What they can do beyond that. We also have meetings once a month for school administrators, seeing these administrative come together discussing best practices and taking time for themselves to really reflect on their job and how they can reinvest back into students and make sure they are using the dollars wisely within the school. Many of those dollars are going to socially impactful ways and not just paying the bills. Thinking about diversity in the cooperative

movement has really been illuminating to me. Through my experience at community purchasing alliance, because it is a new model I had not experienced before, prior to this I opened the Durham co-op market and the under secretary earlier mentioned the Renaissance cooperative which is dense -- just down the road from there. A sister cooperative in North Carolina. I wanted to focus on my time there as well. Because we built a cooperative grocery store from the ground up. Which was amazing..net we to be intentional better practices and the staff we hire and the store that we wanted to create. This is a picture of our staff taken in March. We're located in Durham North Carolina and the store opened last March 2015. We really wanted to have a cooperatively owned grocery store owned by the community and really live up to those values. Not just show up and sell what would make the most money, we wanted to sell with the community wanted, provide resources for the community, really build a local sustainable economy around the store. Before the store was built, working in offices and coffee shops and people's living rooms to define what we wanted the store to be and to really reflect the community, which is a very diverse community and make sure the store can actually serve everybody. One of my favorite stories about building the grocery store from the ground up is, we were scrapping out resources and were really resource will. I made the aisle size. I would print out the stickers. There were little things like making sure all of our signs were in English and Spanish. That was a fun project we did. The community we were opening the grocery store and was incredibly diverse, and I think we were kind of scared that are co-op would come into the community and be like a second whole foods. We wanted to ensure that people trusted us, that we provided things the community wanted. As marketing for this grocery store, one of my favorite things was I actually written off 200 \$205 gift cards and walked around the community and asked people to try us out. If you like this come back, if you don't, tell us what we are doing wrong. See what you can do. That was really fun also to meet our neighbors and see what the community wanted. We had some very intentional steps that we took to ensure there was diversity not only in the clientele, but in the staff. We held job fairs in the neighborhood community center to make sure we were hiring people directly from the community. We wanted to make sure we didn't just have our employee application located online because that means you have to have access to a printer and a computer and the Internet. So with that same sticker printer, I printed a giant banner that said now hiring and printed out the applications so people walking by to pick up an application to apply. We also ignored prior felony convictions to make sure we could employ anyone hopefully that applied. We also took food accessibility measures. We make sure to accept food stamps. We also wanted to make ownership available to everyone. We did not wanted to be cost prohibitive. To become an owner is \$100 for a lifetime ownership. We realize that \$100 could be cost prohibitive to some people. So we started a food for all program for anyone who receives any government assistance, you can become an owner for \$15 instead. Just really being intentional about those things to create a welcoming space is what we wanted. If you work -- I have a screenshot of one of our Facebook posts. This is one of my proudest moments. Once the store was open and we were living that diversity and really wanting to have a welcoming store, our government are -- pass the law that saying that people have to use the bathroom of the gender on the birth certificate. We had two unisex bathrooms. When this legislation passed, we took a moment and said we don't want to isolate conservative customers and should we be quite. We said we need to live our values and make sure everyone feels welcome in our store. So I took this picture. I gathered as many staff on that day to get in the bathroom. A tagline is everyone welcome. So I made everyone again the bathroom. Everyone is welcome in the co-op bathroom. As you can see, 52,000 people viewed this post. It was one of

those moments where it was really good to live your values. If they create controversy, so be it. It is more important to bring people together through the cooperative movement than to isolate people. And to share your values and have a conversation as well. That is one of the things I take away for my time at the market. I just wanted to wrap up by saying cooperatives a lot of times don't get as much exposure as we would like them to. I think because it is hard work. It is hard were cooperating with people and bringing diverse people, organizations together to work together for a common goal. It is a lot of grunt work and sometimes it can be awkward and challenging to do with people who are not like-minded. But I think, if you are a cooperative my the people, you get like-minded results. That is why cooperatives are so powerful because repeat -- bring people from diverse experiences and perspectives enforcement to work together and come to a common goal with shared knowledge and results. I think it is tough work ahead of us, but as long as we have the energy and the stamina to keep going, I think we really can make an impactful difference. In our communities by embracing that diversity. That is why embracing and celebrating diversity is critical. We would not have such a hard task for a lot of us if not. I want you to embrace that challenge. Thank you for having me. [applause]

I have to say, [Indiscernible] I challenge you to be on TED talks. thank you for that story. Our next speaker, Mai, brings us from the California cooperative [Indiscernible] housing cooperative member and organic farmer. As a cooperative development specialist, she is this agricultural and worker cooperatives such as Korean and other Asian Americans, worker cooperative farms. Let's give her a round of applause. [applause]

Good morning everyone. Thanks for having me here. Is great to be able to celebrate co-op month with all of you. [Indiscernible] I work at the Center for Cooperative development. I love this job. In my interview for it I told him that I was born to do it. I really believe my mom had been trending me my whole life to be a co-op developer even though she wanted me to be a doctor engineer. [Indiscernible] she really chain -- trained me in cooperative with the balls from when I was young. She came over -- principles from when I was young. She came to America in the 80s and live through the war and reeducation camps and a very treacherous escape by boat with very little. That is the case with my dad, and many people in the community that I grew up in. Without many resources, without job prospects, good housing, people worked together to create childcare system so that all of us kids, even though her parents were working multiple jobs, could have a good place to stay. Also lending circles, a more basic form of a credit union so that people could actually lend each other money to buy homes outside of the gang zones. Throughout these processes I saw my mom engaging other people, asking them what issues are they facing and how they can work together to address them. That Democratic anticipatory approach -- participatory approaches something she value because when she was in Vietnam living under communism she really valued being able to have freedom of speech, the freedom to self organize and self-determination because it was taken away from her. I saw an action, how she engage these processes to make a better life and as a community the power of cooperation to make a new life in America. I started out, but then I saw cooperation of a formal into the when I went to college. Here you see photos of housing co-ops I joined. This is where he learned about cooperation as an institution. That there are structures that we can follow to help reinforce these principles. Housing cooperatives, assisting people, [Indiscernible] managing a house together. You learn how to cooperate. It was very helpful to have the older housemates teach us new folks, consensus decision-making, so that we can have discussions on what [Indiscernible] to buy.

Understanding through a broader co-op structure with a Board of Directors and to really engage in a process that enables everybody to have a really good quality of life, to be able to afford rent in the bay area which is really hard to do. And also to really experience the joy of cooperation. That is not just a formal process, not just basic needs, but also cooperating to build a roof deck to enjoy it a view of the San Francisco Bay [Indiscernible] it was a really good microcosm of life in general. Cooperating, cooperative living is what we are doing all the time. We are trying to pursue our own goals, pursue happiness, in doing that in relation to others. Doing that with respect to others. I got to get a snippet of this life when I was living in the housing co-op. I took the skills of cooperation on a formal level II other -- to other aspects of my life. This is the café that I started with some friends. We formed a cooperative for a café in Toronto where we source from a local farm friends and had a great fresh food source on campus. That is when I got into co-op policies. I have gotten to deepen my knowledge of all kinds of co-ops since working at the Center for Cooperative development. I work with all kinds of cooperatives, but predominantly agricultural, thanks to [Indiscernible] and I get to work with a lot of disadvantage groups. Among them are some Korean farmers who grow in the -- San Bernardino County in the high desert of California. Usually people [Indiscernible] drive-through going from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. You can get a sense of the landscape from this photo. Imagine the trees and not being there, but to fall that flat sand and a few mountains in the background. This is where they are growing because this is where land is cheap. They are growing some crops that are really important to many East Asians. These are ginger beans also known as Chinese dates. This crop is used as, not just food, but also as medicine and is really important for a lot of traditional [Indiscernible] it can be grown in the desert with very little water. In the California context where we are in a major drought, this kind of farming is really important for our future and agriculture economy. There is a group that grows [Indiscernible] plums. [Indiscernible] Japanese restaurant, also made into a vinegar, sauces. [Indiscernible] these crops are really important for the region in terms of being able to provide jobs, but also for having culturally relevant food locally grown for California and the rest of US. Here is one of the celebrations. Every time we meet we get to enjoy a lot of delicious Korean food. These groups have come together to increase their power through engaging in the economy of scale, small producers, they would not be able to be as competitive in the broader market, but together, they been able to find that they can't compete. Also, they are finding a lot of difficulties in furthering their businesses, especially around organic certification. So what I provide from the center is technical support and with organic farming, they have been using organic practices but actually getting certification is really hard. The packet itself is about 150 pages. A very technical language. So I translated all of that into Korean. It is not just a language issue, is also about understanding. What the co-op has done is apply for the grant themselves so that they can do their own interpretation and hire people within their group who already use the organic practices to them provide these services within. Unfortunately, this year, even though we helped [Indiscernible] apply for this grant, they did not receive a. We have seen this often. With these groups that have really strong applications but understand [Indiscernible] still cannot obtain additional resources. Another group I work with [Indiscernible] San Diego. You can read more about them in the current Rural cooperative magazine outside. Kind of the centerfold. They have also applied for the farmer rancher grants. [Indiscernible] used to be the International Rescue Committee national grant writer. The application was very strong. They scored very high and made it to the final level, but just for whatever reason, did not get the funding. The proposal was to work with a few of the cooperatives, including the [Indiscernible] who the under secretary mentioned earlier. Again,

these groups, even though they have a lot of these tools, and the foundation to continue their great work, they are still facing a lot of challenges getting support. This is where I think we as co-op developers, the USDA can direct our energy. To build brother -- better structures to directly support these groups, to fund their education and training within the organization and by cooperating with other cooperatives and also just helping them in developing their own trajectory. Because we really see that for these groups that are politically marginalized, are outside of the conventional agricultural system, that this is a chance for them to determine their own activities and future. This is where you really see that cooperatives are of the people, by the people, for the people. This is what as co-op developers, [Indiscernible] living our values through principles of self-determination, agency, and economic empowerment and democracy in our day-to-day. And you see that cooperatives are an institution, but formalized, these principles that my mom taught me that cooperatives share internationally and we see in our own legislation and history. Moving forward, I really hope that there is more cooperation, more support for cooperatives, and that we can expand the movement by diversifying, democratizing and building a better world together. [applause]

Appreciate your note about your parents teaching your kids. I have to teach my kids as well. I would like to invite the speakers to sit in front of the crowd here so we can start the Q and a process. For those of you in the chat room, I encourage you to go ahead and submit or type your questions and comments. Somebody on staff is monitoring all of your questions and comments coming in through the webinar. Also here in the room we will have some back-and-forth. For those of you who have questions, I want to make sure you actually communicate your question by ensuring that you have access to a microphone so that everybody can hear you. Just to take us off. We had learned a lot of great stories from her speakers today. A question to trigger some dialogue to get people submitting their questions, based on the success stories that we heard today, what is next? How do we replicate your story and other places? Whether it is Rural or urban communities, particularly in Rural communities where human capital may be limited. And how do we continue this movement? How do we grow in the next years for the next generation to continue on and drive? -- Thrive? How do we replicate your success stories and what is next for the movement?

This is Mai -- Laura. That is something we are exploring at community purchase alliance trying to see how this cooperatives can meet the needs of different communities in all parts of the United States. We were looking and seeing how can I purchasing cooperative work in North Carolina where the energy market is not deregulated like it is in Washington DC. Right now through that exploration we are realizing that there is always a funding need to find feasibility, and also in the community is finding with the needs are, putting feet on the ground and asking people, nonprofits, schools, churches, what you need. Where are you resources going and how can we support that in a really collaborative and collective way. There's a lot of questions that need to be answered. I do think in order to replicate these cooperative models in other places, it takes funding and a lot of energy and time and questions the menu sure we're talking to each other.

Some of the things I don't want replicated that we went through. I do think that engaging young people, because when I started I was very young, that was a good time for the impression to be within me. That is why I think starting with young people getting them involved in various

projects like at the Federation we have a continuous use group and they have their own garden that they have to build a compost and build -- do everything. Peer-learning that the reason we have a demonstration [Indiscernible] they are part of that and learning the farming component of that but also learning the management and financing and all of that. I think get young people involved. I gave the example of the credit union, but also get young people involved in administration of the collapse. What it means to be a board member, what it means to be on a committee, a credit committee or to be a manager of something and having them shadow all the other folks who are actually doing that work. So I think starting with the use to build -- young people to build is an important for the continuation of the cooperative movement.

I think that there could be more cooperation among cooperatives. So we can learn from each other. We know that school curriculum, University programs on how to one a -- run a cooperative. And so I think there's a lot we can learn from each other and also for the co-op developers, it is not a career track, that you can choose in school. We have experienced through working with different cooperatives through my involvement in cooperation works which is a group of Allied co-op developers, there have been some training where we have been able to gather together, but it is not enough. We're just scratching the surface. I think that cooperation among cooperatives, cooperation among co-op developers can really help us build on this education and further the movement.

That is great. We have about 200 people on the line. I would like to open it up in the room. Do you have any questions or comments?

Hello. I work with [Indiscernible] nonprofit here in DC. That works to promote economic opportunity for residents through building a healthier food system. I am curious from all of you, what you would ideally like to see from USDA in terms of directly support lien -- supporting cooperatives to address historical injustices faced by minority and low income communities in both urban and Rural areas, particularly given some of the history that USDA has around business -- disenfranchising minority owners and [Indiscernible] the drive a lot of the obesity that we see.

USDA has to begin to take risks, take chances by listening to people in the communities about what it is we need and helping us secure those resources. Not saying here are the resources and here is what we want you to do. That may not be what we need. Having the guts to take a risk and think outside of the box. [Indiscernible] to hear us and the proposal submitted, to pay attention and at least talk with the folks in those communities before you tell them no no because you may be saying that to something that would be revolutionary. I think listening to folks and hearing what they need and helping to find support to help them meet those needs.

Very good point. Additional comments?

This risk-taking element but also thinking about the long game. It is not just the risk, but an investment. If you are building capacity within the community, and maybe actually extending the grants so it is not just a year, which may be too short for a program to really become full-fledged or for people to understand how to meet deliverables, to extend that process. I would emphasize giving it directly to these groups because, for example, I am also a farmer. When I have gone to

ask for assistance from USDA, corporate extension, I've been told again and again not to grow these crops. They are not popular. There is no market for them. But there is a large southeast Asian population around me in California. We know it is culturally important to us. So giving to farmers and people who know what the issues are and no how to achieve -- know how to achieve certain goals to have a healthy life. That is what USDA can do. Sometimes go around the little person and give to the communities to know what their issues are and know the solutions.

I want to echo quickly. Yesterday we were at another panel and they said we need to take, as opposed to trickle-down economics, a gushing up. Bottom to the top approach is what really needs to happen.

Any additional questions in the room?

Good morning everyone. [Indiscernible] I was wondering where your grocery stores, what they move up towards DC because we would like to have some [Indiscernible] [laughter]

This is a question of replication I believe.

I do know from a grocery store perspective, being a part of the Durham co-op market was an inspiring experience because we were part of a co-op of cooperative grocery stores. [Indiscernible]

There were several questions online. I'm going to start with a big one. This comes from one of the folks asking about -- you've talked a lot about the opportunities that exist within the co-op structure, the coming together people, the ability to express agency and self-determination, those are great opportunities. But there are a lot of challenges. I was wondering what are some of those challenges of bringing these people together? When you say takes a lot of time, it is also because of certain conflicts? Can different perspectives not be managed? Walk us through some of the struggles of actually bringing a cooperative model to a particular community.

Diverse community. So many challenges, so little time. Mine is also about limited [Indiscernible] thinking about community purchasing alliance and the power collective purchasing. People's time. Time is valuable and time is money. I think about my time often as a community organizer and approaching these often overworked school administrators and saying if you let us install solar panels you will be generating your own energy and saving money on your electricity and there will be more money to pay teachers and invest the students. But they are so busy, they don't want to take the time to not only listen to the speech, but then go through the bureaucratic process. It is time. Had to convince tired workers to take an extra step even though there is value at the end. I think that is something we all face every day what I think about how this work is challenging. To convince people to take on extra work an extra energy for a very -- and extra energy for a very positive. Just convincing them that their time is worth it and the outcome will be immeasurable. Beyond the time they spent.

There were hurdles, especially within the group of black folks. Still to some extent, that hurdle of trust. We have the internalized oppression. That when you have to struggle against folks that has that all of the negative things that said you are, having to go through that, push that aside, push it

down and try to eliminate it to believe in yourself that you are capable and worthy and that you can come together and trust each other to do something. Because there was abuse and racism [Indiscernible] a great obstacle and it still is. Where I live in Alabama in an area called the black belt because counties are predominantly African-American in population, and that is because that is where the cotton growing areas and enslavement were. They were the ones, they were the ancestors who were slaves. That area is almost ostracized. Nothing comes there. We work to make it come there. There is still very little in the black belt. Believing in ourselves was a big obstacle, a big challenge I guess. Believing in ourselves and working together. Than also, [Indiscernible] it was hard at first you can bring the two races together in a group, get white folks -- if white folks are in charge. I am just saying it like it is. It could not stay that way in a cooperative. You have to load folks do what they were capable of doing. It was that trust and just being able to take those chances and risks. That is still a challenge for us across the South.

Any additional questions?

There is always going to be diversity in the group. And the level of detail is going to vary, for example, I work with a tech co-op and they say [Indiscernible] middle-class white guys who went to the same school but they still have different ideas and conflict. The way to address it is to make sure that you come up with ground rules together to have a common code of conduct when interacting with each other. As a cooperative, there are other structures to help people work together even though they come from diverse backgrounds or ideas. Another thing that I always encourage is to celebrate together, to have parties and to get to know each other as people because ultimately the co-op is made up of its members of people. The more you can build up communication with each other and to acknowledge each other as whole beans and not just as your coworker, as is person who is been blocking some ideas, you really just know each other and work with each other a lot better in the long run.

The -- there were three or four questions around the excitement about, what are the first steps are highly recommend if I want to start a co-op and also questions like where do I find a co-op in my community. People get excited, anyone to be able to direct them to information that will keep that excitement going. I am not sure our website creates great excitement, but we do have a website. If you Google Rural cooperative development programs we have resources about how to start a co-op and financing. From your perspective, where are great resources where they can learn about cooperatives in their community and starting a co-op?

There is that new project [Indiscernible]

We're documenting the co-op legislation state-by-state. In each state there is a person who have contributed resources. You can contact that person. Look it up by state. That is very important because co-ops law is different state from state. There is not a federal code. Contact your state co-op developer to start and also there is cooperation works network where there is a map with development centers and also community development centers that have a co-op focus.

The Federation is made up of member cooperatives. In each state we have an association of cooperatives. They are put on training for folks who want to get more information on how to start a cooperative and to share their ideas of what they would like to work together on within

their community. The Federation has a business office in Atlanta and the training center. You can contact the Federation to find the sites in your state where you can go for training or workshops with regards to starting your cooperative.

One thing I love is the southern cooperative -- seven cooperative principles and one is cooperation among cooperatives. It is one of those things where if you find one, you'll find more. Going out in the community and finding one and see who they have collaborated with can start this great slippery slope. I know my time at the market [Indiscernible] you can find all the grocery stores in that cooperative and back to be a nice jumping off point. My time working there I realized the Cabot creamery was a cooperative and they donated cheese. I do love the cooperation among cooperatives.

Thank you for that. Appreciate the speakers stories and guidance. All the information that you provided and all the questions of participation from the chat room and from the folks here in the room. Before we close, it is my pleasure to introduce somebody who I consider a mentor. And also a very strong champion for cooperatives and cooperative programs in USDA. Deputy administrator Chad Parker.

First I want to thank our speakers. Tremendous presentations. I hope everybody out in the webinar world as well as everybody in the audience enjoyed them as much as I do. Great presentations that we really appreciate. Inspiring. I would also like to recognize [Indiscernible] and the rest of the team. We've had a great series of webinars and events. We're very pleased at USDA about all of the activity going on. I would like to also thank the under secretary and the rest of the Rural development family. They have all been inspiring as we've gone through different cooperative development engaged activities. I would like to talk about [Indiscernible] we kicked off our interagency working group meeting. It is a group that was organized where USDA was given the authority to develop under the last farm bill. We held our first meeting at USDA last October to kick it off and at the beginning of this month. We've held meetings at the White House, at FDA, and [Indiscernible] posted the last working group. We're working on issues allowing co-ops to get a better understanding of federal programs that are access to -- better access to federal programs. FDA is publishing a regulation of getting better access to food and retail co-ops to some of their programs. We're working with EDA, department of commerce to develop better data for the 2017 sensitive. Lots of positive federal interaction I think between our agencies and the co-op stakeholder world. Very positive efforts have been going on their. USDA has also held a great series of webinars this past month. Co-op board training, legal basics for entrepreneurs, we had a session on grocery stores, Farm to school program and how youth co-ops to access opportunity. We will have all of those links on our very -- on a website will also distribute them through our partners. It is been a busy month. We also had our Indiana State office convention where they distributed materials to lots of new farmers as well as a lot of high school teachers with information on co-ops. Trying to build the next generation for co-op efforts. We've had a busy month. At some point, take a look at our website and the information and events that have gone on this past month and review those. We've had some really special times. I look forward to our continued partnership with our stakeholders come our federal partners, and with our speakers. Thank you all for taking the time to come today, and we appreciate everyone's efforts. [applause]

Thank you everyone. Please do not forget to sign in if you are a USDA employees so we can capture your name and attendance and get diversity training credit. For those of you in the chat room, we have your information will and will submit your names to our office of civil rights. Make sure you get credit. There are some refreshments in the back of the room. You can ask more personal questions to our speakers. Thank you. And happy cooperative month. [applause]
[Event concluded]

Actions