



Food Co-op Initiative followed its announcement of new co-op openings by presenting its *Startup of the Year* award to Durham Co-op Market (N.C.) and its manager, Leila Wolfrum. The co-op, after eight years in development, is exceeding its sales projections by 50 percent.

Finally, we gave a fond farewell to Alex Gyori and honored his 20 years of service, marked by dedication, integrity, and humor. He is retiring as general manager at Brattleboro Food Co-op in Vermont. The CCMA raucous bunch, the Italian Grocers Caucus, nearly expired with the departure of Gyori, who blessed the crowd after being gifted with a papal mitre.

Yet another important feature of CCMA is fundraising for the Howard Bowers Fund; see the accompanying report by Annie Hoy on this year's results and scholarships.

We wound up a well-run and well-targeted conference with a dinner party, complete with delicious paella and traditional dancers, in the local Basque neighborhood, which maintains some of the cuisine and shepherding tradition from its origins in the Pyrenees—a region that also is home to the world's foremost worker and consumer cooperative complex centered in Mondragon, Spain.

In June 2016, the CCMA conference, always packed with training, inspiration, and solidarity, will be held in Amherst/Northampton, Mass. It is clear that for food co-ops to survive and thrive in the coming era will require more business improvements, market differentiation, and cooperation among cooperatives. Strong competition, opportunities for reaching new constituencies, and our shared cooperative values demand that we address these multiple challenges. □



Milestones for the Bowers Fund #CCMA2015

BY ANNIE HOY

The Man. The Myth. The Grocer. The iconic Blues Brothers-ish image of Howard Bowers was fiercely evident during this year's CCMA conference. It served as a reminder of the essence of cooperation—that joining together for a common purpose gets the job done. The Bowers Fund strengthens our sector by giving grants to support training and education for food co-op managers, staff, and boards. These grants are made possible because our sector collectively donates to the Fund.

Who was Howard Bowers, and how do we tell his story? The black-and-white rendition of him with glasses, moustache, and goatee somehow made Bowers more accessible and intergenerational. All ages donned Bowers-style sunglasses at the Thursday welcome event, reinforcing the open and sharing grocer he was and that we strive to be. We followed that with Friday morning's explanation of the Bowers ribbons worn on the nametags of many Bowers Fund scholarship recipients who were present. On Saturday at breakfast we heard testimonials from Outpost General Manager Pam Menhart and People's Food Co-op General Manager Michelle Schry about the impact Bowers had on their careers. The puzzle pieces fit together, and there was a feeling that this man, the grocer, was no longer a mythical figure.

Bowers was launched into the new world of tech this year with the hashtag #CCMA2015 and the implementation of an easy way to donate to the fund by texting COOP to 91999. You can do it right now before finishing this article! We still had the familiar conference silent auction, pitting cooperators one against the other for the best co-op swag, services, and collectibles ever—including two quilts, one for outright purchase and one to hang for a full year in a generous food co-op. These fundraising efforts brought in over \$11,000 in donations.

While there were many hellos to both long-term and just-met friends, there was also a big goodbye to Bowers Fund advisor Alex Gyori. Gyori has served our committee for the past 11 years. He has been a kind, yet firm, facilitator who kept us on track during our sometimes-unwieldy conference calls. His history, experience, and dry wit has helped the committee make tough funding decisions when grant reviews take place. The Fund advisors and the staff at CDF thanked him with a lovely glass apple etched with the image of the continents, symbolizing our global movement and our food sector specifically.

This was a transition year for #CCMA2015, when the conference reins of control were passed from longtime organizer Ann Hoyt to the NCBA. On behalf of the Bowers Fund advisors, I thank NCBA for their support through increasing the presence of the Fund both in imagery and access to attendees. It made a difference. Now search the hashtag, and post all your pictures on Instagram and Facebook. Or start a #CCMA2015 Pinterest board for us. Howard Bowers is a bit bemused!