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Co-op's Ends Encompass Community Vision

As the Neighborhood Co-op Grocery in Carbondale, Ill. grew over the years, the role of the board had also changed exponentially. This prompted the board to think about the co-op more broadly as a community asset, and in turn, it realized that its mission statement had not kept up with the times. It was detailed and directive, and it didn't really say much about the co-op's purpose. For example, it said things like "patrons will have access to green space," something that turned out to be an impossible promise in their current operation, and wasn't necessarily about fulfilling a vision for a cooperative economy.

That's why in 2013, the board of Neighborhood Co-op Grocery turned its attention to revising their Ends. In the lead-up to changing them, board chair Mary Avery noted that other food co-op Ends statements were much simpler. "They were so much more concise, which is what we thought they should be," she said. Additionally, she said that new Ends would provide something better for the general manager that would allow him more latitude in terms of interpreting the Ends. "The prior mission statement was too specific. We saw we could organize them under simpler concepts," Avery said.

Another part of their motivation to revise their Ends was to be able to better apply the Four Pillars of Cooperative Governance to the board's work. Avery said they realized that regarding strategic leadership they would have been challenged using their old mission statement to be congruent with that idea. "We could see that we could do so much more by being organized around the co-op model," she said.

After they researched Ends statements, the board found the process to change the Ends was not long or difficult. They decided to devote time at their annual board retreat to discussing them and came up with the final version the same day. "It's unlike a 'mission statement' in that the Ends are inspirational. We can focus on what

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we want our organization to do in the real world," Avery said.

The board presented the Ends to the co-op's owners at their annual meeting in March this year. "People seemed glad they were something they could 'get.' It wasn't wonky," Avery said. "It sounds more like a special kind of good in our community."

Neighborhood Co-op Grocery Vision & End Results

Because of Neighborhood Co-op Grocery, the people of Southern Illinois and surrounding areas will have:

- A more engaged, vibrant community focused on local sustainability
- Access to meaningful products and services
- A model of a cooperatively-owned and profitable business
- An increased understanding of food systems

"We can focus on what we want our organization to do in the real world,"

Mary Avery, board chair, Neighborhood Co-op Grocery, Carbondale, Ill

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4PCG Focus—Strategic Leadership:successfully articulating the cooperative's direction/purpose and setting up the organization for movement in this direction. Each issue of Connections will focus on one pillar of the Four Pillars of Cooperative Governance. For more information about 4PCG, read the articles in the January/February 2014 and March/April 2014 issues of *Cooperative Grocer.*

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