

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 30, 2003

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COOPERATIVES HONOR CONGRESSWOMAN KAPTUR AS CHAMPION FOR INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Washington, D.C. -- Prominent state and national cooperative development groups named Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) a National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) Honored Cooperator today for her ongoing commitment to developing new cooperatives—businesses owned and controlled by those who use their services or buy their goods, not by outside investors.

"Congresswoman Kaptur has been a steadfast proponent of a program that provides critical support to the nation's cooperative development centers," said Travis West, program coordinator for the Ohio Cooperative Development Center in Piketon, Ohio. "Through her ranking position on the House Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee, Ms. Kaptur has secured steady funding increases for the Rural Cooperative Development Grants program that provides funding for our center and others around the nation. With her help, the program has grown from just \$700,000 ten years ago to \$6.5 million in fiscal year 2003."

The 17 cooperative development center-members of CooperationWorks!—the national network of co-op developers—have been leaders in finding innovative cooperative solutions to the challenges facing farmers and others in rural America. The centers have developed new farmer-owned and other types of cooperatives that enhance income and create jobs in rural communities. The Ohio center is currently incorporating a pine producers marketing cooperative and assessing the feasibility of forming a cooperative within the organic grain, meat goat and hydroponic vegetable sectors.

Joining the Ohio Center in sponsoring the award were national, regional and state-level co-op development groups including CooperationWorks!; Cooperative Life and the Cooperative Development Institute; The Kentucky Center for Cooperative Development; The Nebraska Cooperative Development Center; The Northwest Cooperative Development Center; The Rocky Mountain Farmers Union Cooperative Development Center; The South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Center; and Winrock International and the Arkansas Rural Enterprise Center. Together, the 17 center-members of CooperationWorks! have helped develop more than 100 new businesses owned and controlled by more than 27,000 member-owners, and have created more than 1,700 new jobs in rural areas.

The NCBA Honored Cooperator Award allows cooperatives to recognize leaders who have worked to grow and strengthen the cooperative sector. NCBA is a national partner in CooperationWorks! and played a primary role in creating the network and securing legislation that authorized the Rural Cooperative Development Grants program.

The National Cooperative Business Association, based in Washington, D.C., is the lead national membership association that represents cooperatives across all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, food retailing, childcare, credit unions, housing, healthcare, energy, telecommunications and many others. There are 48,000 cooperatives in the U.S. and 120 million cooperative members.

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