Co-op bank holds day-long conference

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

More than 100 persons gathered at the University of Maryland Medical School's Teaching Facility Saturday to hear representatives from the recently formed National Consumer Cooperative Bank discuss the organization and the benefits of forming community cooperatives.

Currently, there are several food co-ops in Baltimore, as well as housing co-ops, such as those located in Reservoir Hill.

Philip St. George, North Atlantic region director of the bank, opened the day-long seminar with an overveiw of the bank.

"The co-op bank is an idea which grew out of bith congressional people and co-op interests," he stated. He explained that the need for such a bank was evidenced by the problems existing co-ops had getting loans from private banks.

In 1978 legislation was passed in Congress authorizing the creation of the bank, and capitalizing it at $300 million. As of yet, St. George said that the bank has only received $138 million of that intial total.

The bank presently is government-funded and run, but provisions in the original legislation calls for the bank to re-pay the government and gainfull independence eventually become a private, non-profit enterprise.

The bank, which was officially opened in March of 1980, has so far given technical and financial assistance to projects ranging from 1500-house housing co-op in Greenbelt, Md. to a community supermarket in Schenectady, New York.

The Greenbelt cooperative, he pointed out, currently has branched out to include SCAN furniture stores, and is still growing.

The bank has three main programs. Their Bank Fund provides loans at current market rates to established co-ops; the Self - Help Fund fund provides below-market-rate loans to fledgling co-ops, those with no credit, or co - ops experiencing financial problems; and the bank's Office of Technical Assistance provides free or low-cost professional advice and action in organizing or maintaining a co-op.

Sran Straughter, Regional Devel Development Director, said that the Self-Help, or Title II program of-currently offered loans at rates as low as 8.9 percent. $16 million of the bank's orgiginal $138 million allocation has been targeted for this program, and $75 million is expected to be pumped into it.

Straughter said that the program can provide some equity for co-op ventures that are cash-poor, but stressed that "We don't give grants, we're a bank."

That message was repeated by other speakers, who all pointed out that, although the bank's self-help philosophy was in line with the Reagan administration's policy, the bank is slated to be shut down by Reagan budget director David Stockman.

"David Stockman is really aware of the Co-op Bank," Matt Sleppen, a bank lobbyist, said wryly. "This administration has been bad business for community groups, ...the bank is targeted for elimination."

Sleppen said that moves are underway on Capitol Hill to strip the bank of its charter, rescind the 1981 allocation, and cut off the bank from receiving any 1982 monies. He urged those present to write their congressional representatives to enlist their support in saving the bank.

Following a talk by Christine Heeg, from the bank's Technical Assitance program, a series of workshops on co-op development in housing, food, energy initial organization were held.

Lywonda Megginson-Scott, a local co-op expert with six years of experience, said that there are several co-op efforts already underway in Baltimore. She cited the Reservoir Hill and Upton Housing cooperatives, as well as the Bethel AME church food-buying club, as examples of local efforts.

(Continued on Page 7)

Health Fair '81 called success

Over 28,000 Maryland residents took advantage of preventive health services in their own neighborhoods during Health Fair Week, April 3 through 12.

An estimate $4.2 million of free services were provided

Sponsored by the American Red Cross, WBAL-TV, Blue Cross and Blue Shield, and the National Health Screening Council for Volunteer Organizations, Health Fair '81 offered basic screening tests and health promotion activities to detect potential health problems.

The services were offered throughout the state at over 80 locations, including Essex Community College, Union Memorial Hospital, the Baltimore Convention Center, Frederick Town Mall, and Easton High School. Over 5,500 volunteers donated approximately 40,000 hours to make Health Fair '81 a success. Fifteen nursing schools and 800 community agencies contributed time and resources to the project.

Physicians, health specialists, LPN's and service agencies conducted screenings on location for height and weight ratio, blood pressure, visual acuity and anemia.

Metpath Laboratories provided an optional seven dollar blood test to all participants.

Many health professionals, socoeties and community agencies—the Maryland Podiatry Association, the Maryland State Dental Society, the United Way of Central Maryland, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the American Cancer Society, the Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons - provided screening services, educational information, and health promotion activities on a statewide basis.

According to Kevin B. Rowe, project director, "Health Fair '81 was an overwhelming success." With 82 sites located throughout Maryland, Health Fair '81 reached 30 percent more participants than last year's project.

Mr. Rowe said that planners met or exceeded all of their goals, and "this can be attributed to the broad base of cooperative support from volunteers all over the state."

Without their help," Rowe said, "Health Fair '81 would not have been possible."

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Week-long convention

Vietnam veterans to gather in city

By Deborah R. Feaster
AFRO Staff Writer

Beginning Monday, May 18, Vietnam veterans groups from all over the state will unite to address the problems and concerns of veterans of the war in Vietnam.

The national convention of the National Association of Concerned Veterans will be held Monday, May 18 through Thursday, May 21 at the Holiday Inn Downtown.

The National Association Of Concerned Veterans, according to convention chairman Terry Laster, is a political organization whose chief activity involves lobbying for legislation that benefit Vietnam - era veterans.

He said the convention is held each year to identify the problems of the veterans and allow for discussions between members of the veteran community and representatives of federal departments. The resolutions reached in these discussions are presented to the board of directors of the NACV and are then voted on by NACV members. The final step involves presenting these resolutions to Congress.

In addition to serving as the convention chairman, Laster is the president of the Fraternal Order of Veterans of Maryland, a coalition of Maryland veterans' groups. He says the Maryland group bidded for this year's convention in order to bring it closer to Washington, D.C. so that the convention would have a stronger impact.

The Fraternal Order Of Veterans is currently in the stages of reconstruction in order to become the state chapter of the NAVC. The FOV may be contacted in the offices of Del. Walter Dean, 4710 Liberty Heights, Baltimore, Maryland, 21207 or call 542-9744.

Interested persons may register for the convention on Sunday at 9 a.m. The opening general assembly will be 5:30 Sunday. Guest speaker will be Dr. Bruce Parry, professor of Economics at the University of Baltimore and vice-president of FOV. His topic will be "Economic development of Veteran affairs".

Other activities include a luncheon and awards ceremony on May 18, and a dinner dance and awards ceremony on May 20. Scheduled guest speaker for this activity is Dr. Don Crawford, head of a federal psychological out reach program, "Operation Outreach".

Daily activities should last from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m.

Films will also be presented during the convention. "Good morning, Vietnam" tells about the situation of veterans during the Vietnam years and after their return home. Another film will discuss the subject of Agent Orange.

Numerous panel sessions and seminars will be conducted during the convention. Topics for these include employment, Agent Orange, psychological readjustment, budget cuts, community based organizations, minority affairs, veterans in politics, education and discharge review.

Panel members will include Vietnam combat veterans.

Laster said the NACV was formed to help the returning veterans cope with the feelings much of the public had for them. "Certain segments of society, as well as government and business aspects of society, developed a negative attitude of the Vietnam war," he said. "As a result of these negative attitudes, the veterans returned and found these attitudes and withdrew into the woodwork. NACV was formed to assist the veteran, primarily at the time, in education and employment. It was formed basically out of the universities and colleges throughout the country." He said the NACV expanded their service to veterans when they began experiencing problems with upgrading of discharges, psychological adjustments, Agent Orange, and most recently, the proposed cuts of the veterans programs.

He claims the group has had some trouble in gaining support. "I think, as far as veterans the biggest problem is contacting veterans." He said, "they lost their identity and self-respect in being veterans. We seem to have a problem of getting their support."

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—Co-op

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She added that it is no accident that churches have taken the lead in establishing co-ops.

"If cooperatives are going to succeed, it will have to be with the aid of the church. It's the onlyinstitution with the proven ability to keep the community together. Besides, churches are basically structured on co-operative principles, and they are the existing authorities in our community."

Megginson — Scott serves as a co-op resource persons for Bethel, which is organizing a housing cooperativeunder her direction. She became involved in co-ops six years ago, while a student in Washington D.C. "I credit 'Cornbread Given',(a community organizer and head of the Mayor Marion Barry's Commission on Cooperatives and Economic Devlopment), with giving me my grassroots philosophical appraoch," she said. Ms. Megginson-Scott has also participated in a series of nation-wide conferences sponsored by the Co-op Bank.

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