

Credit union community relations officer is honoured as exemplary co-op promoter and educator in province

GUELPH ON, Sept. 25, 2017—Quinte First Credit Union’s Michelle Christmann has been chosen as a recipient of one of three Ontario Co-operative Spirit Awards, to be presented at the 2017 Provincial Co-op Conference on Sept. 28 at the Courtyard by Marriott at 475 Yonge St., Toronto.

Christmann is recognized for heightening the profile of co-operation in the Quinte Region. As community relations officer of the credit union, she is a certified credit union “Each One Teach One” instructor who helps elevate financial literacy in area schools and among credit union members. She also brings the message of co-operation to high schools through the educational module, “All 4 Each,” developed by the Ontario Co-operative Association (On Co-op).

“Michelle champions co-operative principles every day, in every discussion, in every event and in every detail of her daily dealings,” says Carrie Gregoire, president and CEO of the credit union.

She has worked with educators at Centre Hastings Secondary School in Madoc to launch a co-operative — The Smoothery. It was a self-sufficient smoothie business created and operated by students studying entrepreneurship. Furthermore, she connected aspiring skateboard shopkeepers and their classmates to Chris Lake who shared his experience as a founder of London Skateboarding Co-operative.

Most recently, she submitted a grant application on behalf of Quinte First Credit Union to continue co-op education in schools and received \$10,000 from Concentra Bank. “As of this September, we have three area high schools in the process of opening student-run co-operatives,” says Christmann.

Others recognized this year are Simone Swail of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada Ontario Region who has helped raise the profile of the Co-operative Movement among Ontario policy makers, and Libro Credit Union of southwestern Ontario for its dedication to sustainability and willingness to share its social purpose self-assessment tool with other credit unions.

“The “People, Planet and Prosperity: Co-operatives and Sustainable Development” conference, will focus on the UN’s [Sustainable Development Goals](#), and how Ontario co-operatives can and should work towards becoming more sustainable - both within their own organizations and together, as a movement,” says On Co-op Acting Executive Director Peter Cameron.

“We are Not in Kansas Anymore,” is the title of the keynote to be delivered by Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Limited President and CEO Michael Barrett. “In the whirlwind of geopolitics, it is more critical than ever to have a strong foundation based upon co-operative principles,” says Barrett; “sustainability will be discussed as a principle.” Meeting participants will also reflect on food security, governance, climate change, renewable energy, and gender equality. The conference will end with a fundraiser for the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada.

ABOUT THE ONTARIO CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

On Co-op exists to strengthen and unite the co-operative movement in Ontario. We believe that co-operatives are the solution to creating stronger communities, which help to build a better world. Our members are organizations that believe in the co-operative principles and are invested in the future of the movement. With their commitment, we are able to deliver co-operative research, education, advocacy, networks, tools and resources, that support the success and sustainability of all co-operatives and the movement as a whole. On Co-op is an information and resources network with a mission to lead, cultivate and connect co-operatives.

Visit www.ontario.coop. facebook.com/oncoop. twitter.com/ontariocoops.

###

Contact: Audrey Aczel, Communications & Event Manager, Ontario Co-operative Association, 30 Douglas Street, Guelph, ON N1H 2S9 Tel 519.763.8271 x 24 [aaczel@ontario.coop](mailto:aaczal@ontario.coop)