

BCC Bulletin

Boston Community Cooperatives (BCC) is a 501(c)3 organization formed to build community through cooperative living, member education, neighbor-hood improvement and collective action. Members participate in a no-equity model of communally owned, democratically controlled and affordable residential cooperatives.

We did it!!! We bought a house!!!

In September, 1999, seven alumni from the 2D coop at Princeton University moved to Somerville, MA to form Millstone Cooperative and found a non-profit corporation, Boston Community Cooperatives. BCC was created to encourage cooperative living and provide affordable housing in the Boston area. In June, 2005, after 6 years of hard work from more than 30 people, BCC realized its dream and purchased its first house! It is a triple-decker in Dorchester, MA, tentatively named the Seed Pod, where 13 people now live (see photo at right). Welcome to our first newsletter, written to keep friends, family and supporters up to date on the project, and to let you know how you can continue to be involved.



Millstone Update

by Liz Liedel

After the whirlwind of activity and change over the summer, Millstone has settled into a rhythm this fall. We currently have nine members – Tim, Ty, Melanie, Rachel, Eowyn, Stephanie, Jess, Liz and Lukas – not to mention Simon and Bailey, the two cats. There are a lot of new faces, with a lot of fresh energy and enthusiasm. We are doctors, students, teachers, baristas, fundraisers, outdoor enthusiasts, medical researchers, and free and creative spirits. We are continuing the Millstone traditions of shared vegetarian meals, weekly house meetings, and open communication (among others), and we continue to be involved in the work of BCC.

One of our members, Tim, grew up in a cooperative farmhouse in Vermont with three nuclear families. A few of us visited his farm in October, and had a wonderful time tromping through the fields in the rain, drinking hot apple cider, visiting his mom's yarn (cont. p. 4)

Seed Pod Update

by Kelly McCoy

Hi folks! Welcome to the Seed Pod Coop on Leroy street purchased by BCC in June 2005. In June and July we filled the house with 13 fabulous members. Although half of the members were new to BCC, many of brought previous co-op experience from college co-ops. Since then we've had a sad (but expected) goodbye to longtime members Dylan and Ken, who left at the end of August to explore teaching opportunities in New York City. [If you want to start a co-op in NYC, they'd love to talk with you!] In October, REK also moved after devoting tons of energy, along with Dylan, to make the purchase of this house happen. We thank them all for their time and energy to start our new house.

We've enjoyed getting to know each other through many hours cooking and organizing, along with 3 house retreats full of many laughs, insights, and (cont. p. 4)

Priorities for 2005-2006

At the annual meeting in September, BCC members agreed on three main organization-wide goals for 2005-2006: expanding our Community Advisory Committee, developing an internal education program for BCC members, and addressing issues raised as a result of becoming a multi-coop organization.. Read on for more details of each of these goals.

Community Advisory Committee

by Stephen Bailey and Kelly McCoy

Boston Community Cooperatives is ready to further develop and expand its Community Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee is an informal advising and consulting body comprised of community members, leaders and organizations who provide occasional technical advice to BCC. The network helps BCC by providing advice and guidance with our projects and mission.

In the past, CAC members have provided support to Millstone regarding tenants' rights and many individuals helped us informally throughout the process of purchasing a property last spring. Now, BCC would like to devote more time to growing the membership of the CAC and forming relationships with community leaders and members. The amount of time and energy given by each CAC member depends on their individual interests and BCC's needs.

Examples of times BCC might request the support of a CAC member include:

- Answering legal, engineering or other technical questions,
- Providing feedback to BCC plans,
- Supporting fundraising efforts, and
- Helping BCC build relationships with other potential supporters.

BCC's responsibilities towards CAC members include:

- Keeping CAC members informed on the works of BCC, including providing occasional gathering opportunities for CAC members to meet each other and the BCC membership, and
- Respecting the busy schedules of CAC members and reasonably limiting the requests on CAC members.

If you or your organization is interested in deepening your relationship with BCC please feel free to drop us a line at bcc@bostoncoop.net. We would be happy to send you the CAC member job description. We also welcome your advice and ideas as we form the Community Advisory Committee.

Ty Sassaman
ponders a
Millstone house
meeting agenda



Internal Education

by Alissa Tan

The internal education goal has two main purposes. First, it assures that all members of BCC understand the policies and procedures of the organization, legally, financially, and as a community. Second, it creates an environment in which members are encouraged to exchange ideas and skills.

An internal education committee, made up of three board members, will direct the methods of internal education this year with the guidance of the membership. Last year, the board compiled information about BCC including its goals, methods, policies, and values, which has been made available to all BCC members. This year, the committee agreed on two main strategies to achieve its goals; the first is through a skillshare and the second is through an annual workshop. The skillshare will have individual members of BCC host demonstrations of a particular skill that other members are interested in learning. For example, a member might host bread making, and another member might host various home maintenance skills. Those who attend the skillshare are encouraged to learn the skills by participating in the activities.

The purpose of the annual workshop is to provide in-depth information about one aspect of the organization that is of particular interest to the membership that year. For example, the annual workshop for this (*cont. p 3*)

Multi-Coop Committee

by Tim Haineswood

Because BCC now includes a rental property (Millstone) and the house we have purchased (Seed Pod), the organization must now represent, include, and manage two fairly different housing cooperatives. Before, in many areas a precise distinction between Millstone and BCC was unnecessary, given that they were almost the exact same group of people. Now decisions must be made of what issues do individual coops have authority over, and responsibility for, and what issues go to the BCC Board. Our other significant issue is the different role BCC plays in our two coops.

Previously, BCC mattered to members of Millstone because that was how they would buy a house to live in. As the owner of the Dorchester property, BCC is a strong presence in the lives of those coop members. (*cont. p. 3*)

If we had a hammer...

by Micha Josephy and Dan Keshet

When we bought the Seed Pod property, we knew we had our work cut out for us. Starting the week we took over ownership, we have been working on maintaining and rehabilitating the property. Projects have ranged from the major (fixing the roof and remediation for lead and asbestos) to the mundane (cleaning off the graffiti in the front foyer).

Many of the projects are standard jobs familiar to all types of homeowners: repairing the furnace, installing a washer and dryer, or fixing water damage. Other projects are the kinds that might not have gotten done if it weren't for our cooperative ownership model where the residents of the house get to decide our own priorities. For example, we have done massive weatherization work to reduce the financial and environmental burdens from heating our house: these projects include insulating our hot water heaters and pipes, locating and fixing air leaks around doors and windows and installing programmable thermostats. This has helped us save money and reduce pollution compared to the typical Dorchester triple-decker.

We've also been adapting the physical structure of the building to our community lifestyle. We expanded our dining room to fit large community dinners by knocking out part of a wall. By installing a door, we converted what was previously a living room into a bed room. Fortunately for us, while we don't have extensive homeownership experience, two of the four members of the maintenance committee have worked on construction teams. We have also benefited from the labor and expertise of our neighbors, who pitched in to help with demolition work while we repaired leaks in our bathroom. On that same project, we took advantage of our resident toxics expert, who was able to help us assess whether we faced dangers from lead paint.

While we have completed a lot of work, we still have a lot to do. At last check, our maintenance projects list had over 35 wants, needs, and wishes on it. As our development consultant Holly Jo likes to say, "Welcome to the joys of home ownership!" Those of us on the rehabilitation committee, though, are both excited to have these challenges, rather than living at the whim of a landlord, and are relieved to have a cooperative community to share the burden of property upkeep.

Multi-Coop Committee *(from p. 2)*

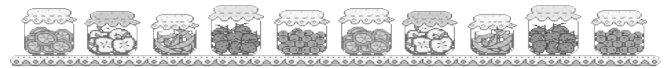
Given that moving out of Millstone is no longer a goal of most of the residents there, we are working to keep Millstone members and BCC closely linked. This runs the gamut from making sure that each coop is well represented on the board to throwing an all-BCC party. BCC also provides long-term support to both coops, to insure the stability and sustainability of coops in the Boston area.

YUMMMMMM Coop Cook Book

Do you miss Kelly's tofu? Do you dream of Scarlet and Peter's rice and beans? Do you wish you had Leah's zucchini bread recipe? Or maybe you've never cooked for more than 4 people before. Do you need to double, triple, or quadruple the recipe for that soup? And how on earth do you make vegan cookies?

Co-op cooking is a unique type of thing that many of us have never done before. Food brings us together, and some recipes become co-op staples. A BCC cookbook would compile recipes, both created by co-ops AND taken from cookbooks, which have been popular at the different houses. It would also include tips for cooking, such as how to soak beans, and how much rice to make for how many people.

If you have a recipe that you've made with great success (either your own, or from a cookbook, with or without modifications), or ideas for recipes and tips that you want included, please get them to Rek at rek@bostoncoop.net



Internal education *(from p. 2)*

year might focus on BCC's finances. The finance committee might organize a presentation in which the members learn to read financial documents. Since this year is the first in which such a workshop will be held, a main goal is to establish a structure in which future workshops may be held. For example, the committee will work to establish methods for communicating the information, gather information on the interests of the members for future workshops, and develop efficient methods for organizing such an event.



Yia., Elizabeth, Jess and Alissa hiking on Mount Monadnock

Millstone Coop residents (clockwise from front) Ty, Stephanie, Melanie, Eowyn, Jess, Tim, Rachel, Liz (Lukas not pictured)



Millstone Update

(from p. 1)

business, and helping his family cook an amazing dinner. Also in October, we had a day-long cleaning festival where we scrubbed, sanded, swept, mopped, and otherwise organized our common space. The music was blasting, and by the end we were all covered in who-knows-what, but we had a great time.

Also this fall we've held a few major house meetings to help build our community. One series of meetings addressed our consensus process, and another series of meetings served as a way for us to give and receive feedback from one another. Both topics were productive and were conducive to creating a strong community within the co-op. We are looking forward to taking on more topics in the future, and continuing to build our community. As always, friends of BCC and Millstone are always welcome to join us for dinner at 102 Morrison Avenue in Somerville!

Seed Pod Update *(from p. 1)*

good conversations. Live music, intriguing conversations and delicious food are regular features here.

Thanks to everyone who came and helped us scrub and clean in the first few months during our cleaning parties! Future events include possible painting and construction parties. If you're in the area and really want to check out our latest maintenance project, or really would just enjoy a good meal – our door is open. Thanks to everyone for helping us have such a good start.



Seed Pod residents, from left to right, Matt B., Dan, Kelly, Matt T, Alicia, Alissa, Micha, Eleanor, Johnn, Yla, and Steve

NASCO Institute

by Yla Tausczik

Six members of BCC traveled to Ann Arbor, Michigan in early November for the NASCO Institute. NASCO (North America Students of Cooperation), an umbrella coop organization, sponsors an annual gathering for members to learn through classes, discussions and brainstorming. Representatives from member coops also make business decisions for the organization. The conference provides the opportunity to exchange and learn practical tools for starting a coop, skills to make coop life better, and ideas about how housing coops can participate in political and social change. This year's topic focused on grassroots movements. In the spirit of the theme participants explored ideas through caucuses, of special interest to BCC was the community coop caucus.

Inspired by the keynote speakers Morgan Cousins and Paula X. Rojas of Sista II Sista Collective, an organization aimed at promoting leadership, community activism, and support among young women of color in Brooklyn, NY, coopers moved to recognize other types of collectives, particularly ones from non-Western cultures and nations. There was widespread interest in looking at coops broadly and creatively to foster diverse coops in our organization and develop cooperative structures to be more inclusive. As more individuals move from student coops to community coops, members expressed a desire to make NASCO supportive of different and new coops.

BCC's progress in purchasing the Seed Pod was featured in several panels and classes. Kelly and Micha were able to share insights and tools for starting a new coop. The NASCO institute ignited enthusiasm for the cooperative movement, and reminded us of the many successful coops throughout Canada and the US. We also enjoyed attending classes and discussions on dynamic facilitation, gentrification and alternative education. In February, BCC members who attended the NASCO Institute presented information from workshops and discussions to each of the BCC coops as well as eight other Boston-area coopers.



Eowyn (of Millstone), Matt Kavanaugh (formerly of Millstone) and Rek (formerly of Millstone and Seed Pod) hanging out on a cold October day

What do we do with our money?

BCC is a financially sustainable non-profit organization. Our ongoing operations are funded through member payments. However, in order to grow our organization at the rate we would prefer and bring the benefits of affordable, community housing to more people, we need to raise more money from donations and allied loans. In addition to the major goal of acquiring real estate for affordable housing, we use these funds to invest in the environmental sustainability and physical and social infrastructure of our cooperatives.

This year, we have realized the first major use of our funds in our first property acquisition: the Seed Pod (see page 1). With that purchase, we have increased BCC membership by 150%, bringing in a new generation of members to extend our work. We've performed major physical renovations to protect our investment in the Seed Pod, including: lead and asbestos abatement and repairs to the roof, bathrooms, and gas furnaces (see "If we had a hammer..." on page 3). We have more improvements planned for the property, including more insulation to reduce our operating expenses and energy footprint, and the expansion of our usable space through basement renovation. Further down the line, there are many possibilities for improving the property, including utilizing sustainable energy sources, such as solar power, and increasing the physical accessibility of the property.

Our model of cooperative ownership allows us to make these long-term investments. The more donations we receive, the faster we can build BCC's equity and spread this model of cooperative affordable housing.

The Seed Pod Coop and Field's Corner Neighborhood

by Micha Josephy

One of the emphases of the new coop in Fields Corner has been to get involved in the community. This not only helps contribute to BCC's goals of community involvement of its houses, but also helps create meaningful communication between BCC and its membership with the neighborhood community. The main focus of our community involvement has been over half of the coop's membership participating in various neighborhood organizations; including:

- 5 Streets Neighborhood Association- The association brings together neighbors on Leroy Street and the 4 other small streets in its vicinity to discuss and take action on local issues, including safety, development, cleanliness and community building.
- 5 Streets Clean-Up- The clean up is a monthly event where residents of the 5 streets neighborhood come out of their houses and into the street to clean up trash and debris.
- Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT)- DHAT brings Dorchester residents together with community organizers, city officials, professionals in Dorchester health centers and staff from community development corporations. This group focuses on coordinating efforts to transform vacant and neglected properties in Dorchester's core into community assets, including affordable housing, neighborhood parks and community-oriented businesses.
- Close to Home aims to prevent domestic violence and get help for those affected by educating, supporting, and developing leadership from the existing network of friends, family, and neighbors.
- Dorchester People for Peace (DPP)- DPP's Mission is to oppose the war in Iraq and US militarism in general, to build a multi-racial peace movement throughout the neighborhoods of Dorchester, and to work against the war at home, including violence, budget cuts, racism and political repression.



Eleanor (from The Seed Pod) and Tim (from Millstone) at Micha's birthday party

Boston Community Cooperatives

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BCC's Wish List

Starting up a new household always means needing to acquire things that you don't already have, even when you merge 13 people's belongings! Below is a wish list of furniture, appliances, tools and other things needed/wished for by the members of our two houses. If you have one of these items you'd like to donate – please let us know! (Items marked (S) are needed by the Seed Pod Co-op, items marked (M) are needed by Millstone). And, since BCC is a non-profit organization, all your donations are tax deductible.

- Couches &/or arm chairs (S)
- Permanent water filter (S)
- Commercial Food processor (S)
- Bread maker (S)
- 2 Large pressure cookers (S&M)
- Rice Cooker (M)
- Large (think HUGE) mixing bowls (M)
- Trowel (S)
- Garden hose (S)
- Mailbox (S)
- A circular saw and other tools (S)
- Food scale (S)
- People scale (S)
- Artwork & other wall decorations (S)
- A long, skinny table for the porch (S)
- Heavy curtains or other heat-retaining window coverings (S&M)
- DVD player (M)
- Sewing Machine (M)
- Vacuum Cleaner (M)



Thank you!

BOSTON COMMUNITY COOPERATIVES

102 Morrison Avenue, #2
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