

CO-OP CONNECTIONS



Virginia
Cooperative Council

Quarterly newsletter of the Virginia Cooperative Council

Summer 2019



VICE winners (seated, from left): Ruth Fitzgerald, Jonathan Ames, Lauren Gibson, Andrew Tuck and Jacob Craun. VICE alternates (standing, from left): Ellie Holter, Paige Baker, Jonathan Azenon, Carter Wasser and Ethan Jackson.

2019 VICE recap: gaining co-op insights & memories to last a lifetime

A bumper crop of 52 students took part in this year's Virginia Institute of Cooperative Education (VICE), held March 29-31 at Graves Mountain Lodge. Guided by nearly 20 experienced adult and student leaders, who included several past VICE participants, attendees discovered what sets cooperatives apart from other businesses while getting to know other young people from across Virginia.

Icebreaker exercises included "Coloring in the Lines," a multipart personality assessment conducted by Dr. Kim Morgan, a Professor at Virginia Tech's Kohl Centre. Dr. Morgan gave students details on their basic personality traits and provided helpful insights on how to better understand those whose traits align with their same color or three other major color profiles.

On Friday evening, Delegate Bobby Orrock gave a well-received address filled with inspirational advice. Students then divided into eight teams split

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"I learned so much through the "Who's Minding the Store?" simulation! As general manager, my role was vital at the beginning, but I still felt included in all the departments' decisions..."

*- Hannah Burton,
2019 VICE participant*

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Brand to headline Oct. 3 Co-op Month breakfast

Virginia native and past VCC board member Bette Brand is scheduled to serve as keynote speaker at the Council's Co-op Month Breakfast on Oct. 3 at The Place in Glen Allen, Va.

Brand, a longtime co-op employee and past VCC board member, has served as Administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Business- Cooperative Service since January 2018. She will share with us her vision for rural development needs across the nation, and discuss challenges and opportunities facing rural America and the key role that cooperative businesses must play.

The Co-op Month event will also honor latest recipients of the Council's Cooperative Leadership Awards. Nominations are welcomed through **August 30**, with forms and more information under the "News" tab at www.virginia.coop.

Both Council members and guests are welcomed to attend and participate in a silent auction to provide scholarship funds that will benefit student attendees at next year's Virginia Institute of Cooperative Education, scheduled for March 27-29, 2020 at Graves Mountain Lodge.



USDA Administrator Bette Brand



Larraina Campos (at left) and Jonathan Azenon develop teamwork skills during a VICE icebreaker exercise.

VICE recap, continued

between two market areas. Led by Adam Shiflett with Farm Credit of the Virginias and Eric Stogdale, an agriculture education teacher at Fort Defiance High School, the students practiced running a farm supply business, making decisions on personnel, marketing, inventory, credit plans and pricing.

Through the course of five quarterly sessions totaling 15 months, each team adjusted their planning based on profit and loss statements generated at the end of each quarter. showed how successful they'd been in making decisions to help increase their store's net worth.

VICE evaluations reflected enjoyment of the event. Wrote one student, "I loved meeting new people and seeing what I could do when I pushed myself out of my comfort zone!"

This year's top-scoring VICE participants who earned a scholarship to attend the National Institute on Cooperative Education include Jacob Craun, Andrew Tuck, Jonathan Ames, Lauren Gibson, Ruth Fitzgerald. Alternates are Ellie Holter, Ethan Jackson, Jonathan Azenon, Carter Wasser and Paige Baker.

Members in the news

Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative has been named one of the Best Places to Work in Virginia, part of an annual survey conducted by Virginia Business Magazine and Best Companies Group.

Fredericksburg Food Cooperative has passed the 1,100 member mark and secured \$1.6 million in loans from members as their dream of a community-owned grocery store is nearing reality. Visit fredericksburgfoodcoop.com to learn more.

Longtime Virginia Cooperative Council advisor **Dr. Dixie Watts Dalton**, who serves as Dean of Humanities, Social Sciences & Business at Southside Virginia Community College, just received Virginia Tech's Distinguished Alumna in Academia Award from VT's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. For 17 years, Dr Dixie, as she was known by her students, provided leadership to the Dept. of Agricultural and Applied Economics and contributed academic and career advising to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Want to share news from your cooperative? Email mary.howell@sscoop.com or contribute a guest post on the Council's Facebook page.

VICE participants: Where are they now?

This column profiles past attendees of the Virginia Institute for Cooperative Education. Please contact VCC to suggest a VICE graduate to feature in an upcoming issue!

Marty Harris

What did participating in VICE mean to you? What are your favorite memories of this experience?

I took part in VICE back in 2011. Two of my favorite memories were participating in the “Who’s Minding the Store?” management simulation and later having the opportunity to travel to the National Institute of Cooperative Education (NICE) later that summer. NICE was held at Purdue University in Indiana, and continued my exposure to their store management simulation. Both experiences helped open my eyes as to how much effort, planning, and analyzing goes into running a business – something I’d not been exposed to much at all through high school. The trip to NICE gave me even more opportunities to broaden my Co-op and business knowledge, as well as gain a lot of valuable friendships and connections.

Please share how participating in VICE has influenced your career:

Participating in VICE absolutely helped shape my current career. I am a project engineer for a Cargill turkey harvesting plant, and much of my job requires me to analyze the economic aspects of a project and determine the correct course of action – very similar to the simulation at VICE. While I don’t work directly with co-ops, I have used my learnings from VICE to become better at my job every day. I also currently have a mortgage with Farm Credit, so I guess you could say I do work with that co-op!



Marty Harris, 2011 VICE participant

Executive Secretary’s Message: The Magic of VICE

I’d heard about VICE for years, but this was my first time experiencing the action-packed educational event firsthand. Thanks to extra effort made to promote this year’s opportunity to agricultural education teachers at high schools across Virginia, as well via social media and our website, just days before the conference’s start, I was still receiving applications and figuring out how to assign everyone to the limited number of rooms at Graves Mountain Lodge. (Note to self: set deadline a week earlier for 2020!)

As VICE got underway on March 29, I was battling a bad head cold. VICE veteran facilitators Adam Shiflett, Allen Melton and many others helped keep our jam-packed agenda stay pretty much on schedule. I was delighted by the FFA officers’ zany methods to keep students amused during breaks, and delightedly watched how eight store teams in two market areas of the “Who’s Minding the Store?” saw how their decisions played out for each three-month block of the computer simulation, making adjustments for future business quarters. The best part of VICE was witnessing students who arrived as strangers to each other but left with new friends, while gaining greater awareness of the unique role cooperative play across Virginia. The Council’s goal to develop future co-op leaders who will be committed to helping ensure quality of life in rural areas of the Commonwealth.

If there’s any downside to having a bumper crop of students, we went a bit over our budget! The VCC board and committees are reviewing feedback from both students and adult advisors to consider needed improvements we can make for 2020, and we are also planning a silent auction during our Oct. 3 Co-op Month breakfast, with proceeds to benefit next year’s VICE. Even if you aren’t able to attend, donations and ongoing contributions from our member co-ops to VICE are much appreciated!

Staff are also working to create an electronic database of recent VICE attendees to begin outreach to past participants, inviting them to contribute to the Council’s mission and join as individual members. Three retirees, Allen Melton and Shirley Bowen of Southern States and Debbie Swiderski of the VMD Association of Electric Cooperatives, were the first to join in our individual membership campaign. Our goal is to reach 25 individual members by year’s end!

- Mary Howell



Pictured above: Scholarship winner Jacob Craun, a rising senior at Turner Ashby High School.

VICE scholarship winners

Congratulations to these three high school students who earned educational scholarships for outstanding participation at the 2019 Va. Institute on Cooperative Education:

Jacob Craun, Bridgewater (\$2,000)

Andrew Tuck, Moneta (\$1,500)

Jonathan Ames, Stephens City (\$1,000)

Welcome to our newest VCC members!
Individual memberships are \$25/year and are open to all those not currently employed by a member cooperative and who wish to support the Council.

Shirley Bowen, Southern States retiree

Allen Melton, Southern States retiree

Debra Swiderski, VMD Association of Electric Cooperatives retiree

The Virginia Foundation for Cooperation, Inc. welcomes tax-deductible contributions to support our educational and scholarship programs.

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