

SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS IN CONSUMER EDUCATION

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Consumer Education

The National Coalition for Consumer Education (NCCE) builds upon partnerships to increase its reach and effectiveness. Each year, new partnerships create new opportunities to increase emphasis on consumer education. 1989 was an outstanding year for the number of partnerships nurtured through NCCE.

NATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS LEAD TO PROGRESS

Networking is key to the success of the National Coalition for Consumer Education. At the national, state and local levels, effective partnerships allow the Coalition to maximize the use of the dollars provided through contributions from corporations, foundations and individuals. Rosella Bannister, NCCE Treasurer, talked of the organization's accomplishments resulting directly from successful partnerships.

Through partnerships with Avon Products, Inc., NCCE held its first conference for State Coordinators in five years. At the conference, Carole Glade, State Coordinator from New Jersey talked about how she was able to build a statewide Coalition within a period of 3 months. Her example, which we will present shortly, resulted in the formation of a statewide network in South Carolina, and the start of one in North Carolina.

In partnership with General Motors, Allstate Insurance, AT&T, Southern California Gas Co., Household Financial Services and the Federal Trade Commission, NCCE is undertaking a much needed survey on the Status of Consumer Education, Grades K-12. And, in 1990, again in partnership with Avon, a major conference on "The Literate Consumer."

BUILDING A STATE-WIDE COALITION

It takes networking and contacts to build a state-wide coalition. But it's worth it. Says Carole Glade, New Jersey State Coordinator and national board member, "By expanding your resources and network, consumer education can become a dynamic force in your community." The New Jersey Coalition was established in April 1989, just one year ago. Already it has proved to be a successful demonstration of how leaders from government, business, education, consumer and community groups, the media and religious organizations can work together to stimulate and enhance consumer education across the state.

Within one year, the New Jersey Coalition was able to accomplish the following:

- Completed a state-wide survey of consumer needs by reviewing and compiling existing statistics about consumer expenditures, which served to identify priority consumer education issues.
- Planned a state-wide opinion leaders dialogue to identify consumer education strategies pertaining to auto insurance.
- Initiated a community organization database for health related information.
- Appointed a committee to review consumer education needs on housing: financing and affordability.

By working together, the Coalition has focused attention on consumer education, making it an issue of importance in the state.

LOCAL NETWORKING WORKS

According to Kathy Rau, NCCE Board Member from Long Island, "The geography and demographics of our area create a real challenge for the delivery of consumer education resources." Long Island has a land mass of 1200 square miles containing 896,945 households and a population of over 2,7 million people-- greater than that of 22 states.

In 1984 we formed the Consumer Education Coalition of Long Island (CECLI) with the goal of "promoting the educational resources and consumer education available to the general public. CECLI has over 40 members, all from local agencies and not for profit groups. Through training, sharing of information and coordination and co-sponsoring of programs, the group is able to share its wealth of knowledge.

CECLI adopted a Consumer Education Month (instead of a week) to compensate for the different dates celebrated by the state and federal governments, and in 1990, put together a packet of educational resources for the 80 libraries and their 40 outreach centers which contained information provided by the 40 CECLI members. Most successful over the years has been a Speaker List which lists speakers available from 23 agencies on a broad range of consumer topics.