– On May 24th, we're gonna have a half an hour, forty five minutes something like that, on Channel 21. We're from the Women's Workshop at Portable Channel, and they decided to give us an hour or two and we did. So we're just trying to get tapes showing different kinds of women. Women who are doing something other than housewife, or mother, or just working, but doing something. You know. I like what you're doing.

– Well, this department doesn't only consist of the co-op. There's a senior citizens program. Well, before you put it on tape, my suggestion, I was getting ready to say, rather than talk just about the co-op, we could have Mrs. Camino, who is in charge of the senior citizens, talk, Mrs. Wilson, who is the director over the whole neighborhood development, and Kathy, who is–

– [Interviewer] Kathy Osta.

– Yeah, program planner of, well, that's not her title, but it's in the lines of proposal writing, stuff like that. You could have each one come in and give you their version of what this department really consists of. Would you like to do that?

– [Interviewer] Yeah.

– Just sit there.

– [Interviewer] Don't worry, she'll call them.

– Okay.

– [Interviewer] How did you get started?

– The co-op?

– [Crew Member] Could you repeat it?

– [Interviewer] What made you wanna start this? What made you wanna get involved in this co-op?

– Well, it was a need for a grocery store, grocery store down here. And they started in 1970 before I came on board. I started in August of last year and Dennis Albright was in charge. And what he did was he got 30 something people to join. So out of the 30 something people, they purchased three scales. And with the three scales, they went from there, and the staff of neighborhood development went out and did a survey, and entered the community and asked the people to join the club. They explained it to 'em what the purpose of it was and told 'em what the reason why they thought that the co-op was needed in the– in the community. So they started out with something like from 30, went to 116, and then Dennis resigned. Then Valerie Workman came on board

and she increased the membership up to 216. And then she went back to school. And that's when I came on board, August of last year. And now we total up to 284 members, and we've increased the membership and we've increased the amount of bags that we do, which is not a total of 283 bags we do a week. We do about 86 to 87, sometimes drop down to 83, according to how many orders we get in for that week.

- [Interviewer] Well you mean every member doesn't order?

- No.

- Every member doesn't order then, right?

- No, no. Some members, we have charter members, there's about 11 charter members. And what they did, they wanted to see a co-op in this community, mainly because they needed it here to service the people. For one instance, the senior citizens who don't have transportation to get back and forth to the store. They can come down here, they might want juice, a can of juice. So rather than to walk down two or three blocks to get a can of juice, we try to supply 'em with what we think they need. All right, now the survey that they took, they had sheets of papers with different items on it. And they asked them to fill it out, mail it back in, send it and mail it here, or bring it in. So most of them that did this, and sent it in or brought it in, this is what they required. They wanted juice, canned milk, beets, ketchup, little item things like that, where normally they have to go two blocks just to get that. And now that there isn't any stores in this community at all, except say about four or five blocks away, we are making a hell of a big turnover. We've increased, as I said, membership. We order eggs now. When they had the milk strike last week, well we did a beautiful job on that, in which they've come in this week asking us to order some more milk, but we haven't did so, so far, but we will start back this week, ordering milk.

- [Interviewer] Who do you order from? Did you just go to different companies and see which one had the cheapest, and then-

- Yes, we did. Cloverdale called us one day and we made an appointment to go up and see him. Well, when we got there, we looked around and we saw he was doing a tremendous turnover himself. People go in and order milk with food stamps, so it's only 25 cents a carton of milk. Normally around here costs 37 to 60, 69 cents for half a gallon of milk. So we figured that if we could get the milk for 24 cents, which would be a penny discount to us, if we picked it up. Now if he delivered, it would be 28, 29 cents. But since we picked it up, it cost us 25 cents, 24. Okay, so what we did, we increased it to 30 cents a carton. So they still were getting a pretty good deal just on the 30 cents a carton of milk. Some of the members had come in and bought up 10 cartons milk in one day, so we had to turn around and go back and get another order of milk, which was a beautiful thing. But

when the store opens up, we know we'll have quite a bit of business just with the four projects that's in this neighborhood alone.

- [Interviewer 2] What are these four projects in your neighborhood? Can you tell us about the neighborhood that this co-op is operating within?

- [Lilian McNeil] The projects?

- Yes.

- I'm speaking of Hanover Housing, Holland Town House, Chatham Gardens, and the Northeast District Council Homes that are across the street.

- [Interviewer 2] And about how many people do you think are in these four projects who will be taking advantage of your store?

- Oh, well take Hanover alone. It's over, say 16 to 1700 families in Hanover alone. Okay, Chatham, I can't roughly give you a figure of how many is in Chatham, but it's got to be over a hundred families in Chatham. Hollands has 72 families. Northeast District Council Homes across the street, they're not quite filled up yet. So you got about maybe six families over there. And then we're looking into the future when we open up the grocery store, that we have number nine, number six playground, which services quite a bit of recreation during the summer months. So you're looking at, say over two or 300 people, and roughly about 500 kids in this neighborhood alone that would be using that playground. So you're looking at popsicles, ice cream bars and different things like that.

- [Interviewer 2] Well, when are you anticipating opening the store. I gather right now, you don't have the refrigeration facilities-

- [Lilian McNeil] No, the store should be opening up the last of May.

- [Interviewer] Where did you get the refrigerators and freezers?

- We don't have them as of yet. Mr. Rubin from Star Market is our resource for that. He's looking around for us now, like Urban Renewal might be tearing down some stores in -- in Upper Falls. So what he'll be doing is looking around for secondhand refrigerators to start us out. And we're looking around ourselves.

- Who's gonna staff the store, the cashiers, the managers? Who decided who's gonna be the manager? The members?

- No, well since I'm in charge of the buying club, I will be the manager. We do have in mind of a male being Assistant Manager. And we're using volunteers to work in staffing stores, as far as setting

up our canned goods on the shelves. And we have Casey from Amalfi's will be coming down, giving us a hand as far as showing us where to put our canned goods and things. So that should be pretty nice too. We've had a lot of people call in and that is coming to volunteer and help us to set it up because they know that we need a store in this neighborhood, but we won't be touching them because he's on one side and we'll be right in the heart of the four or five projects around here, so we won't be hurting him at all, and we won't be hurting Star or A&P.

- [Interviewer 2] How much saving are you anticipating for your customers when have your store finished? Will items be what, 3 cents cheaper or 2 cents cheaper? Or is it merely the convenience that you're after of putting it right in the projects?

- We're both, we're both. Like as I said before, we're not trying to, we know we won't be at the level of Star Market, so we won't mark our canned goods up no 30 or 40 cents when normally they can go and get five cans for 89 cents. No, we won't do nothing like that, but we will be saving them about two to 3 cents on a can. And most of them do use food stamps, so we'll be saving them there too.

- And the only way you keep your products cheaper is by picking them up, or how else do you do it, just...

- Well, right now, yes, we are saving on picking up our own, but as when the store opens up, we'll probably be having them delivered if you get a certain amount, like two or $300 worth of canned goods, then they'll deliver. Right now, we're not in that bracket of two or $300. So we have to pick up now ourselves.

- The saving will come then because your store is not making any profit on the goods and any profit that is, any kind of profit that is made will be, will be returned to your charter members or will it-

- It'll be returned to the store. It's gonna be a rotating thing. And the charter members will be getting benefits out of it. Right now, I can't answer that because we're working on that. We have an advisory board, a management committee, and a legal committee working on that right now. So I can't answer that.

- Kathy Osta said that you might, that at the end of the year, if the customers who came to the store saved all their receipts, then at the end of the year, they would get a patronage refund, is-

- [Lilian McNeil] Right.

- And that's how, the profit that's made, you'll return to the customers as a patronage refund or to the members?

– To the members and to the store. The members will be getting it and then they'll probably come right back and use it over in the store again. So the store will be making a profit as well as the members getting our rebate.

– So people have been working on this co-op since 1970? Takes a long time to get a co-op started.

– Yes, well, we just went to Ithaca and visit the one in Ithaca. They started theirs in 1934.

– [Interviewer 2] It's still going.

– And it's still going. They have a membership of 5,800, and each year they have been adding on, and now this store doesn't even touch. I mean, it's over, Star Market and Wegmans can't touch them. That's how big it is down in Ithaca. And you know, Ithaca's a very small town, and it's really beautiful.

– [Interviewer] Is that what you hope to do?

– Yes, by 1975.

– [Interviewer 2] Five year plan.

– Long range plan. Well, this is what we're anticipating to happen in '75, to open up a regular big supermarket. In other words, community owned supermarket.

– That's great. Can we, should we ask some questions? Can we ask you some questions about you yourself and who you work for, and how you got involved in this work? Okay, let's start off with your name, your full name. I don't think we have it on tape.

– Lilian McNeil. I once was a member of Baden Street. as a teenager and, well, this is my home and I worked in Michael–

– [Interviewer] Were you born here?

– Born here, yes. Worked at Michael Stern for 12 and a half years. And–

– [Interviewer 2] What kind of work were you doing there?

– I was a machine operator on men's clothing.

– [Interviewer] Do you have any education besides high school?

– No. Well, I did go to RIT for a training course. When I left Michael Stern, I applied for a job at Model Cities, and I was hired through

ABC and I was being paid.

– [Interviewer] To do what?

– Community Worker.

– [Interviewer] Social work?

– Well, community work is on the same lines as a social worker. And I went to, I was being paid by Baden Street. So when the funds ran out last year, we were moved from the organizations into Model Cities and we were refunded for another year. And I heard of an opening over here at Baden Street and working with the buying club. And I came over and talked to Mrs. Wilson. She offered me the job. I resigned from Model Cities and I've been here since. But I did have a couple of courses in social work at RIT under Mr. Madre last year.

– Now, how is Baden Street funded? Is that an ABC?

– No, Baden Street is a Community Chest funded program.

– Community Chest. And is the Buying Club initially being funded by the Community Chest as well?

– Not its not.

– [Interviewer 2] It's being run independently by its members?

– [Interviewer] How does Community Chest feel about that?

– Well, I think they're in favor of it because they know that the conditions in this neighborhood is a grocery store and a co-op is very well needed too.

– [Interviewer] Do you have a family?

– I have four. Three girls and one boy, and my oldest is 15.

– So, you've been in community work then, how many... You said you were at Michael Sterns for 12 years. Then how long have you been working in the community, Model Cities in this...?

– This coming August would be a year that I've been here at Baden Street. And I started in August of '71 as a community worker.

– [Interviewer 2] I know this is probably a very loaded question, but what would you say were some of the major problems facing the Baden Street area here, besides what your co-op is addressing itself to? What other problems do you see that the greater Rochester community may not be aware of?

- Well, I tell you one that we just got through talking about. If Neighborhood Youth Corps isn't funded this year, that's gonna be a major problem because that's-

- Can you go into that more detail?

- I would rather you let Kathy go into more detail on that.

- Oh, okay. And how have other OEO cutbacks been affecting this program and others in the past?

- Well, it would've affected this program at one time because, Nixon, after he got elected, Model Cities programs were cut 45%. So thanks to Steven Mays and Baden Street staff and the other organizations that were involved such as ABC, we did our homework and we did it good. We went to city hall. First of all, the staff of neighborhood development took the proposal that was wrote for the $18,000 to open up the grocery store. We went to each city council member's home and dropped a package off to them, let them read it, go over it before city council that Tuesday night, and it was passed, okay. Nixon came on board again as your President and he slashed it. So Steve Mays went to Washington and they got the extra 45 that was cut, we got it back. So that brought our program back in. So we're happy to say that we got our $18,000 to open up in May. But then we want kids to work this summer. It's gonna be a hot summer for a lot of us.

- I think that would be an interesting question if we could go in to someone about the neighborhood program.

- Mrs. Wilson might be better to answer that question for you. Let me, if you-

- [Interviewer] Should we stop for a minute?

- Hi, Nelly.

- [Pauline Wilson] Hi, I'm Pauline.

- [Interviewer] It's not so bad now, but it was really that white line at the bottom. It's really jumping a lot more.

- You're taping, right?

- [Interviewer] Yeah. First maybe if you could introduce us to our...

- This is Mrs. Wilson, Pauline Wilson, Director of Neighborhood Development.

- Mrs. Wilson, we'd like to discuss with you what the effects of the

rollback of neighborhood youth court corps are going to be in this area and maybe in the Rochester area as a whole, as far as you...

– Oh, I can see it really being a catastrophe. As you know, Neighborhood Youth Corps employ quite a number of children. I think it was somewhere between four and 500, give or take a little. As we found out of last week, the City Rochester will not be getting any money for summer programs, but the county of Monroe will be receiving some. And I don't know exactly what that means, except I do know it means a great loss to this community as far as summer jobs for our youth. The Baden Street settlement itself have been employing some 20 neighborhood youth kids in that day camp and Pied Piper's program over the summers. Now we don't have any monies for summer programs, which mean that those 20 children, if Neighborhood Youth Corps do not get funded, would not be working in the day camps this summer. That's only a small minute kind of problem because other years what we've done is the kids have come over here and we refer them to different jobs. And we had sort of an agreement with the city that if we take so many kids down, that they would employ them. In fact, a couple of summers ago, Ms. Alexander for Model Cities and myself donated a whole day to the City of Rochester, just filtering kids out, putting 'em in prospective target areas, like the children from target area, ABC one, two and three, to try and get a cross section of children and not try to get 'em all from one part of town, but they were all kids at the poverty level. And without NYC, I don't know what's gonna happen to the kids this summer. And so I can see it's being a long, hot summer. And my suggestion yesterday to the executive staff was that we should get together, call some press releases, put out some flyers and let the general community know that there is no money for summer jobs, so that when June gets here, the kids won't be out saying, and the parents won't be out saying that, we don't have jobs for the kids and what good are we in the community because we cannot employ the kids, number one. And number two is that some of our programs we can operate, with volunteer kind of help. But we are afraid that we get that kind of dilemma that the kids won't believe they'll volunteer help, they'll just see them as working at the settlement, and then see us as lying saying that they're not getting paid because they're accustomed to working over here. And I just really don't know what we can do about it. We had just discussed it really seriously yesterday. And we are thinking in terms of trying to go to some other funds, like the Strong Fund or some fund to try and generate some funds for summer programs. We do know that Model Cities have a revolving fund of some $150,000, am I correct? That's not being used. And it seemed to me that they should be thinking in terms of using some of that money to hire kids for summer jobs. Now doing exactly what, I don't know, but if they say we could use the money, I'm certain we'll come up with some kind of things that the kids could do.

– How much money are you to talking about being cut back? You said about 400 kids were enrolled in the program?

– [Pauline Wilson] Yeah.

– And they were paid what, a minimum wage for working a job in some kind of public agency?

– [Pauline Wilson] Right, right. In fact, they're paid $46 a week.

– $46 a week.

– Before the social security and that sort of thing was taken out.

– [Interviewer] Which isn't really that great a sum anyway, but it still was something.

– Yeah, you're talking kids from 14 To 17, I think basically. So it was enough money for them to buy clothes for school and that sort of thing, be ready for school in September. So now they won't even have that option.

– [Interviewer] And how much money is the whole cut back, can you just say. How much money do you have to seek out from other agencies to just to run the same kind of program you had last year?

– We figured yesterday, and I don't have my notes, but figured yesterday we were, you see, we employed 20 children and I think it was somewhere... Well, I don't have the correct figures, but you figure 20 kids at $46 per week.

– [Interviewer] For 10 weeks through the summer.

– For seven weeks during the summer, and one week the Settlement paid them. So they worked eight weeks, they trained them one week that the agency picked up itself, and then seven weeks were from NYC.

– So you're saying that there are approximately 400 kids who would ordinarily have some type of summer job and some kind of income who are virtually unemployable by the general labor market, most of them being under 16.

– [Pauline Wilson] Right, right.

– Who just have nothing to do for the summer.

– [Pauline Wilson] That's right.

– And you view this as being a very horrible situation.

– Right, and that's only a small group of kids. Now those are only the kids that was employed for NYC. But we are not talking about the kids

that was employed through various other programs. That's just one of the programs.

– [Interviewer] That you were referring to other programs.

– Yeah, that we were referring to other programs that they placed their kids within the agencies, okay. ABC itself also picked up various kids, like the campus career kind of program and those sort of things. Those jobs are out too. The city administration itself employed several kids, and that's in jeopardy 'cause they're saying to us, they don't have any jobs, all right. So some of the kids in this community we were referring to the city, and they were putting 'em in what, city beautification and all kinds of jobs to employ the kids. They're saying they don't have money for summer jobs either.

– [Interviewer] But this is independent of the money that you're not getting.

– Yeah, that's independent.

– Is the money that they were using before federally related at all?

– [Pauline Wilson] Yeah.

– And this is not coming to the city this year.

– [Pauline Wilson] That's not coming to the city this year. So it's gonna be kind of rough.

– [Interviewer 2] Do you have anything to do with the buying club co-op?

– Yes, I am the director of this department and Mrs. McNeil is the operator. It's her project. So it's an agency function, but it's her baby total.

– [Interviewer 2] You're the director. What does that mean? What do you do?

– I sorta see that they do what they're supposed to be doing. No, I oversee the projects and make sure that they plan objectives and that they meet the goals that they set out to do.

– [Interviewer 2] Oh, so they do the planning and you just look it over kinda see if you like it.

– Kinda, right.

– [Lilian McNeil] And if it's not right, you have to redo it over.

– Right. Right, because one of the things that people had cried about for a long time was community involvement and hiring indigenous people, et cetera, et cetera, right. So what we are trying to do here was not to hire all professionals. To hire indigenous people and then along with that has to be some training in order to make 'em grow. If I tried to do it myself, it would not be Ms. McNeil doing it. But if, we set some goals, she set some goals for herself, and for the department, and then we work 'em through together, then she can lead this agency and go anywhere in city of Rochester and be employed. That's the general idea.

– You said training, are you gonna be training the people that volunteer to work in the co-op? What kind of training you mean, for manager or how to start your own co-op?

– This is one of her projects. When the store itself opens, we will be letting her work in the store and the agency will be paying her to do that, okay. Star Market is overseeing the training for our managers, for the operation for the store itself, because we're not experts in training managers.

– Do you have to pay them to teach you?

– Oh no, they're doing it on a completely volunteer basis. And also at Amaalfi's on Portland Avenue also has some input into that. They're gonna be helping with some training and teaching us how to stock shelves, all kinds of little things that they have experience in that we do not have the experience. And he also went as far as to say that he would help us stock the shelves and show us where you put certain kind of items that move faster, all the little tricks in the grocery store. So, and along with that, he, Casey, I mean, that's at Amalfi's, made a commitment to come down and volunteer some of the services to us.

– I saw the room that the co-op is gonna be in. It looks like you're still gonna have to do a lot of work. Who's doing that work?

– ABC's fix up team is going to actually renovate the building. But Star Market engineers are now in the process of planning how its to be laid out.

– [Interviewer] They're doing that for free too?

– [Pauline Wilson] For free.

– Wow. Must be nice.

– Yeah. They've been very cooperative. Mr. Rubing from Star Market came down, spent the afternoon with us, and give us all kind of hints, and promised to send his engineer which he followed through with. Also

promised to look over some of Star's cast-asides, and if it was feasible, that we could use them, they would see what they can do in that area. And I think he talked to Mrs. McNeil yesterday.

- Yes, I told her that he said that they was gonna call the city and check out some of the Upper Falls and Urban Renewal buildings that was tore down, grocery stores, and see if they can get some equipment from the city for a dollar or something like that.

- So he's been very helpful.

- Is this the first food co-op in the city of Rochester that you knew about?

- [Pauline Wilson] No, its not.

- A community food co-op.

- [Pauline Wilson] No, it's not.

- [Lilian McNeil] No this is the first one on this side.

- On this side.

- I think there's one other in the city and it's quite different from what we are trying to set up. 'Cause I think they have a lot of loose products, like barrels of flour or barrels of beans, or what have you, Genesee.

- [Interviewer 2] Genesee Health Co-op, right.

- Genesee Health Co-op. And I think that's the only other one that I know of.

- [Interviewer] Yeah.

- In the city.

- Well, there's one. On Monroe avenue, there used to be a Wegmans, and in November it closed down.

- [Pauline Wilson] Oh yeah.

- And on the news a month or two ago, they interviewed a man who was trying to start a co-op. Did you know about that?

- Yeah, in fact, one of our employees was at the meeting that they had.

- Well before that, they had called here to have Mrs. Wilson come down

and talk to the group down there since Wegman's closed up. But at that time, Mrs. Wilson took sick and she was unable to go, but they had called back again to have her come down to explain the co-op and how we got started down here.

- What other stores have been helping you besides Star?

- Amalfi's is the only other one. It's a supermarket, but it's run on a smaller scale than the Star Market.

- It seems strange to hear Star Market helping someone start a grocery store.

- We're not the first one they helped. With the help of Joan O'Brian from legal services, They helped start one in one of the rural towns-

- [Lilian McNeil] A small little town.

- The small town, I can't think of the name of it now, but they even went farther than that. They helped them set the store up, the layouts and all that sort of thing. And then they also provided a manager two days a week for a whole year to get that store on its feet. So I'm sure this is one of their projects, and they know that a small store of this nature cannot hurt the Star Market in the city.

- Is there gonna be like a board of directors or stock for your... Could you explain that? How it'll be run.

- No, I really wouldn't like to get into it this time because of the fact we are working on it. We have a steering committee-

- Who makes up the steering committee? volunteers or...

- Yeah, okay. Some volunteers are buying club members. Then there's a representative from the Fight organization.

- [Interviewer] All 280 members?

- No, there's about 25 people makes up the steering committee now that's working on the tentative plans, on how much of the shares are gonna cost, what kind of rebates are we talking about. How many the board of directors consist of, and that's sort of thing. Those 25 mainly consist of community organizations. As I was saying before, Fight, ABC, Urban League, Neighborhood Health Center, Jordan's Health Center now. Sorry, I'm so used to saying Neighborhood Health Center. Jordan's Health Center. Mr. David Gantt, also from the health center.

- [Interviewer] RIT.

- Yeah, it's 25 different organizations.

- [Interviewer] Different community organizations are making up the board of the steering committee?

- [Pauline Wilson] The steering committee, but they will not make up the board of directors. All right. That's being worked at now how the board directors are gonna be formalized, but they're interested in the project. So they're working hard with us trying to set it up the best way for the community, which I think is really great.

- [Interviewer] Oh, yeah I do too.

- we get together with one goal and one objective, and that's really something.

- Yeah.

- [Interviewer] If we could stop for a minute. Could we get something... You said that we missed something Friday when you were packing bags and stuff. Maybe you could, 'cause we can leave the camera on. Maybe we could get some pictures of showing-

- [Interviewer 2] I'd like to get down to the store.

- Yeah, could you...

- [Lilian McNeil] On the outside?

- [Worker] Oh boy, I look a sight.

- [Interviewer] But you could be standing in the back, so we could only see you from here up.

- Wait one minute.

- [Interviewer] We wanna see how you and how you work in here when you're working. Move this. Do you usually-