



A sneak peak at the 2017 Montana Statewide Housing Conference

Conference preparations are well underway for the 2017 Montana Statewide Housing Conference. This year's conference will be May 8th-10th at the Best Western Heritage Inn in Great Falls, Montana. The conference steering committee has been hard at work trying to pack the conference full of great speakers and information.

We are pleased to share with you one of the main session speakers for this year's conference, Dr. Holmes Hummel. Dr. Hummel is the founder of Clean Energy Works. Dr. Hummel started Clean Energy Works to accelerate investments in the clean energy economy with inclusive financing. As the champion for the Pay As You Save (PAYS) system, Dr. Hummel led Clean Energy Works to win the FiRe Award for high-impact innovation at the Bloomberg New Energy Finance "Future of Energy Summit." Dr. Hummel also serves on the board of [Cornerstone Capital](#) as well as [Cleantech Open](#). Previously, Dr. Hummel served as the Senior Policy Advisor in the Department of Energy's Office of Policy & International Affairs from 2009-2013. In addition to prior work with energy innovators in Silicon Valley, Dr. Hummel earned a doctorate degree from Stanford University for interdisciplinary research on energy technology scenarios that achieve 100% clean energy for all.



If you're interested in signing up for the conference or finding out more details, you can [click here](#). If you have more questions, please [click here to contact Katie Biggs](#).



News from the Partner Network

NeighborWorks Montana's partner network has been busy these last few months! Hanna Tester, NWMT's Housing Network Specialist wanted to fill you in on some of the exciting things happening within the network.

NeighborWorks Montana was approved in December to be a Rural Development 502 direct loan packaging intermediary. NWMT's partners will become certified 502 loan packagers, and NWMT will serve as Quality Control for those loan packages before they are sent to RD. This is an exciting opportunity to help Montana residents access the excellent mortgage products and rates that the USDA has to offer.



At the end of 2016, HUD announced a Final Rule to their HUD Certification requirement for counselors. This certification requirement had been being discussed for a number of years, but the rule had not been finalized until December 2016. In December, it was announced that, among some other rules, all housing Counselors would have to take and pass an exam administered by HUD in order to be a HUD-Certified housing counselor. According to that rule, current counselors would have 36 months to obtain that certification, and could still counsel and educate during that 36 months. The exam was set to be posted on January 13th to HUD's website. The exam has yet to be posted, due to the advent of the new administration, and implementation of the final rule that had been published in December is being delayed.

The partner organizations across the state have been busy training and getting NeighborWorks Center for Homeownership Education and Counseling (NCHCEC) certifications. It's a busy year for training, as there are a fair number of new counselors in the network. Montana will be well represented by counselors in the NWMT network at each of the four NeighborWorks Training Institutes in 2017.



A VISTA Year in Review



Logan Smith has just completed a year of service to NeighborWorks Montana through the AmeriCorps VISTA Program. The following is written by Logan as she reflected on her year. On behalf of all of us at NWMT, we appreciate her service!



This year I had the pleasure to be a VISTA with NeighborWorks Montana. From learning the ins and outs of the housing world to huge amounts of personal growth to creating meaningful relationships, this year has been an unforgettable whirlwind. Being able to see the projects I was assigned come to fruition and impact the partner network was rewarding and hopefully useful. This year has helped me realize what direction to go for my career and what type of impact I would like to continue to make. Public service is essential to meeting the needs of everyone with the goal of lessening the gap between socio-economic classes. My goal is to work for the equality of all in areas where my skills can be utilized, from those experiencing homelessness to at-risk youth. My passion for people is what will continue to drive me forward. As our nation is fighting for the rights of its people, and there is uncertainty in what the future holds, know that what you are doing in this moment makes a difference. You have the ability to create change in one of the most meaningful fields, housing. Thank you for your commitment to housing, your time, knowledge and dedication to the needs of your fellow Montanans.

