



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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National Service Participants Gather for ServeMontana Symposium

Montana AmeriCorps members convening at Carroll College for 11th annual event

HELENA, MT- AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and NCCC participants from across Montana are meeting for the 11th annual ServeMontana Symposium, March 4-6 at Carroll College. The theme for the event is, “Service in Montana: Your Path to the Greater Good.”

Hosted by the Governor’s Office of Community Service (OCS), the symposium brings together nearly 300 members from across Montana for service, training, and resources. This year, the conference also celebrates the 25th anniversary of AmeriCorps.

“The ServeMontana Symposium is a great opportunity to emphasize the collective impact that AmeriCorps programs make in Montana every day,” said Dan Ritter, Executive Director of OCS. **“For decades, dedicated national service members have been meeting critical community needs and improving lives and landscapes throughout the state.”**

Symposium kicks off on Wednesday, March 4th, at 1 p.m. with an address from First Lady Lisa Bullock and Executive Director of Helena Food Share, Bruce Day. AmeriCorps Service members will then spend the afternoon canvassing neighborhoods and grocery stores across Helena to collect food for the [“Doorsteps to Kid Packs”](#) food drive. This group service project benefits Helena Food Share’s Kid Pack program, which provides afterschool and weekend food to over 1,100 students at 17 local schools each week. Last year, service members collected 7741 pounds of food and over \$31,000 in monetary donations.

Thursday and Friday’s events include four plenary speakers, three rounds of break-out sessions, and a regional networking gathering. In-service training presentations are designed to provide AmeriCorps members information about volunteer management,

tribal relations, civic engagement, philanthropy, poverty in Montana, and more. Attendees will also engage with a panel of AmeriCorps alumni and learn more about becoming community contributors after service.

ServeMontana Symposium plenary speakers will include:

- Chester Spellman, CNCS, National Director of AmeriCorps State and National;
- Dr. Shane Doyle, Native Nexus;
- Sarah Calhoun, Red Ants Pants; and
- Shannon Stober, Verve Exchange.

AmeriCorps alumnus, Melissa Lavinder and Senior Corps volunteer, Orrin Johnson will be honored Friday morning as recipients of the Abby M. Zent Service Recognition. The recognition is awarded to national service alumni who continue to serve Montana through volunteerism and community service

For more information about the 2020 ServeMontana Symposium:

<http://serve.mt.gov/ServeMT/serve-montana-symposium>. Learn more about the city-wide “Doorsteps to Kid Packs” food drive on March 4: <https://helenafoodshare.org/doorsteps-to-backpacks/>.

The Governor’s Office of Community Service expands and promotes national service and volunteerism in Montana and engages citizens in service. Learn more at serve.mt.gov.

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