

COOPERATIVE CONNECTION



Winter 2017 Blackfoot Newsletter • Online at: Blackfoot.com/CoopNewsletter

Our focus is on the communities we serve.

One of Blackfoot's core values is: *We are committed to the success of our customers, owners, the communities we serve and each other.*

Our employees play a vital role in ensuring we live and uphold our mission and core values every day. Whether we're installing broadband, supporting fire crews or driving in a parade – it's all part of Blackfoot's vision to enrich the lives of our customers, owners and employees.

This year, Blackfoot proudly supported over 200 community events and we are excited to continue our commitment in 2018. Check out these photo highlights of Blackfoot employee ambassadors out in our communities this summer, including our team at the Missoula United Way Day of Action.

We invite you to connect with us on Facebook to stay up-to-date on community and Blackfoot happenings.

Do you have an upcoming community event?

Request support from Blackfoot at Blackfoot.com/Community.

Photo Captions (Top to Bottom): 1) We were proud to help fund new grand stands for the Helmville Rodeo with Missoula Electric Cooperative. 2) The town of Philipsburg turned 150 this year, and we were there to help celebrate! 3) Blackfoot was proud to continue our support for the Arlee Esyapqeyni Celebration. 4) Team Blackfoot at the Trout Creek Huckleberry Festival!



TECH TIP

How to Keep Your Devices Protected

Blackfoot's Tech Home plans help keep all of your connected devices safe and secure.

Tech Home offers world-class anti-virus software, personal data backup and a password management tool. Plus, we provide 24/7 premium technical support to ensure your devices are always connected.

4 Benefits of Tech Home

World-Class Security: Fully-supported web security and anti-virus helps protect you against the latest online threats. Plus you can find, locate, lock and wipe your phone or tablet.

Personal Data Backup: Sync and backup all of your files, photos, contacts and important information to help protect against damage or device failure.

Keep Personal Info Private: Cloud-based protection helps keep your personal information secure and convenient wherever you are.

24/7 Premium Tech Support: Get setup support and troubleshooting for all of your connected devices.

Contact Blackfoot today to learn more about how Tech Home can keep you connected and protected.

866-541-5000



Easy Access



August Institute

Education is a primary focus at Blackfoot, and this year we ramped up our efforts to provide more than \$100,000 in financial support through several initiatives.

- **Easy Access:** This free program was developed to help our cooperative member-owners learn basic computer skills. In 2017, Blackfoot provided 18 classes in 9 communities. Look for our fall schedule in early 2018.
- **August Institute:** Blackfoot was the premiere sponsor of this technology conference for educators held at The University of Montana in August. We provided scholarships for over 80 teachers from our rural schools to attend.
- **EEE Program:** A partnership with Blackfoot, Missoula Electric Coop and Energy Partners, the EEE Program provides funding for classroom technology across our shared service areas. Students and teachers attended an awards luncheon in November where over \$30,000 was awarded to local schools.



EEE Program

Upcoming Scholarship Opportunities

Blackfoot annually provides academic scholarships and funding for students to participate in the FRS Youth Tour. We encourage students in all of our service areas to apply! For deadlines and applications, please visit Blackfoot.com/Education.

- **Blackfoot Scholarship Fund:** Scholarships for cooperative area students to support their post-secondary education. Recipients are invited to our annual cooperative meeting to receive acknowledgment for their hard work.
- **Foundation for Rural Services Scholarship:** Blackfoot provides an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. for two students to learn first-hand about our government.



“ Entrepreneurship and innovation play a key role in Montana’s current and future economy. At Blackfoot, we see how that innovative spirit fuels our economy every day.” *–Jason Williams*

1) Innovation Symposium: CEO, Jason Williams was chosen to participate one-on-one with Governor Steve Bullock in a Fireside Chat at this year’s Innovate Montana Symposium in Billings. The conference connects entrepreneurs with the resources they need to succeed under the Big Sky. Attendees learned about Blackfoot’s commitment to deliver broadband products and services to foster innovation and economic success in our service areas.

2) Montana High Tech Jobs Summit: Blackfoot was a key sponsor of the Montana High Tech Jobs Summit in October. The biennial summit, co-hosted by Senator Steve Daines and the Montana Chamber of Commerce Foundation, brought together local and national tech leaders to discuss Montana’s growing technology sector. The summit highlighted Montana’s expanding role in our national high-tech economy and served as an opportunity to highlight Blackfoot’s growing work force needs. During the Summit, Senator Daines toured the Blackfoot campus and data center to see our technology behind the scenes. In 2017, Blackfoot has hired over 20 high tech positions. For employment opportunities, visit Blackfoot.com/Employment.

3) Facebook Showcases Blackfoot: In October, Facebook hosted a Boost Your Business event in Missoula. Blackfoot’s Marketing Specialist, Lacey Hawkins, spoke on a local business panel and shared how engagement on social media has helped Blackfoot reach customers in a more meaningful way. Following the panel, Blackfoot was invited to be featured in a photo shoot. Facebook visited our Missoula campus in early November and photographed our operations in action. We were thrilled to represent as an innovative business for Montana! Connect with us at [Facebook.com/GoBlackfoot](https://www.facebook.com/GoBlackfoot).

4) Blackfoot Hosts Montana High Tech Alliance: Members of the Montana High Tech Alliance met at the Missoula College to review research findings from the Kauffman Foundation on our state’s business ecosystem. The report cited Montana as having a high level of entrepreneurship, great networks of support, a high quality workforce, and a high quality of life. The Kauffman Index has ranked Montana first for startup business activity for four straight years. We value our role in helping Montana businesses succeed by delivering high quality technology solutions.

SAVE THE DATE! Blackfoot Annual Member Meeting

Saturday, April 21, 2018 • Hilton Garden Inn, Missoula

This year’s annual meeting promises to be our best one yet! More prizes and more chances to connect with Team Blackfoot. Please plan to join us to learn what your cooperative is doing.



1221 North Russell St | Missoula, MT 59808



Pick up a 2018 Blackfoot calendar!

Stop by our office to get your 2018 Blackfoot calendar featuring member photos from our annual photo contest.

Enter to win \$250!

It's our 3rd Annual Great Give Back where we award one nonprofit (as voted by you!) with \$500 and one lucky Blackfoot fan with \$250. Enter by 12/15 at Blackfoot.com/GreatGiveBack.



A Message From Jason Williams

Blackfoot Chief Executive Officer

Blackfoot is closing out on another exceptional year thanks to the hard work of our employees, the dedication of our Board of Trustees and, most importantly, the patronage of our member-owners. December also marks the anniversary of my first year as your CEO. I remain humbled and honored to serve in this capacity.

In 2017, one of Blackfoot's top initiatives was our multi-year network improvement project that kicked off in St. Ignatius. Blackfoot currently delivers voice and data services over a hybrid network of fiber optic and copper cables. In some areas, the copper cables are more than 30 years old and need to be replaced. Our next phase of construction will be executed in Arlee and Charlo. This multi-year network upgrade will ensure all of our member-owners continue to have access to the best internet, voice and cloud services.



I'm very pleased that we can invest in our infrastructure thanks to the stewardship of member-owners like you.

To help us better serve you, I invite you to let us know how we're doing. One great way to do that is to attend our Annual Member Meeting. I hope you'll join us in April to learn how we're 'Building on Success', our meeting theme, and all the ways we are working to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season,