

## Summary from Summit Motivator – Mark Willmarth

*For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year I have had the opportunity to participate in the Back to Basics Cooperative Summit. My role has been to listen, observe and provide a summary at the end of each Summit. This year's Summit had a much larger attendance than the first year and a broader scope. A significant emphasis this year was on the WHAT? ...what did I learn? SO WHAT? ...why does it matter to me or my business? WHAT NOW? ...What can I do with this information? Participants were asked at the beginning of the Summit to record their What, So What, What Now as a way to remember those ideas that were most valuable. Too often we attend educational sessions like this Summit, feel good about the experience, and then go back to our lives not practicing anything we learned. In order for real change to happen we must do something with the information. The Wednesday morning sessions (captured above by different regions of the state) was a way to encourage action beyond the Summit.*

*An aspect of my summary comments to the group was how challenging it is to keep the momentum from an event like this. I shared with the group the following observations from the 2017 Back to Basics Summit:*

- *You weren't fed up, you were overfed and stuffed.*
- *You paid attention and it wore you out!*
- *It is hard to be here, focused and present.*
- *Relationships matter; especially in small towns – good or bad.*
- *The Riverside Crossing Adult Cottage Co-op has many valuable elements from which we all can learn.*
- *We need to be better at selling the Co-op Model.*
- *One of the biggest hurdles is financing. And, those with the finances do not understand or know what to do with Co-ops.*
- *How do we close the gap between the idea and the business?*
- *Technical Assistance is critical. Networking is essential.*
- *You have your own language. Understand that others don't know the language.*
- *You are leaders in your communities of the co-op movement.*
- *My fear is that the innovators in the room may have their passion worn down because of frustration with the process.*
- *The food was really good!*

*One of the more valuable takeaways for many of the participants was the opportunity to network and develop relationships with people committed to the cooperative model. One of the barriers to success for co-ops in Montana is not knowing what resources are available. The need for technical assistance as well as a network to share ideas is essential to both the start-up of cooperatives and the long term success. This Summit, I believe is creating the opportunity to have a strong network for cooperatives. In reviewing the comments from the World Café it is evident that people want to have a better way to connect with other cooperatives in the state for support. MCDC can play a key role in making that happen.*