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**COLUMBIA BANK AND THE WASHINGTON GROWERS LEAGUE AWARDED \$500,000
GRANT FOR SEASONAL FARMWORKER HOUSING IN WASHINGTON**

Grant will support expanding labor market in burgeoning local agricultural economy.

TACOMA, Wash, Jan. 9, 2017 - [Columbia Bank](#) and the [Washington Growers League](#) (WGL) announced today their proposal for seasonal farmworker housing has been awarded a \$500,000 grant under the annual 2016 Competitive Affordable Housing Program (AHP) offered by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines (FHLB of Des Moines). This year's competitive funding round included multiple submittals from members across the FHLB Des Moines district, consisting of 13 states and three U.S. Pacific territories. Columbia Bank and the WGL's selection as recipients will enable the creation of seasonal farmworker housing, a vital component to Washington's robust agricultural economy in Mattawa, Wash., a Grant County community with a surging fruit and wine grape industry.

"We can generate real benefit to the agricultural community as farmworker housing is a crucial component to the success of Washington's crops," said Melanie Dressel, Chief Executive Officer of Columbia Bank. "Alongside our partners, we will be able to continue our commitment to communities that are agriculture dependent by creating local economic development opportunities."

Seasonal farmworker housing is one of the most expensive and crucial facets growers must address to ensure they have enough hands to prune, thin and pick their crops every year. As the labor market continues to tighten, the availability of housing becomes a key advantage in recruiting. Growers who can offer safe housing to their farmworkers are generally more attractive to prospective workers. Mattawa has one of Washington's highest seasonal farm labor housing needs with available housing often maxing out occupancy limits. As labor specialists in the industry, the WGL is a non-profit, non-partisan association formed exclusively to assist and represent agricultural employers, providing vital human resource services to them in Washington.

With the help of their developer, the Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing, the WGL will break ground this spring on a 144-bed facility in Mattawa. The first phase is financed with a \$3 million award in 2015 from the Washington Department of Commerce, private debt and the AHP award with Columbia Bank. This much-needed farmworker housing facility should open for its first tenants in 2017. WGL was also recently awarded an additional \$3 million in December of 2016 to build an additional phase in Mattawa on the same grounds, with the goal of opening those units in 2018.

FHLB Des Moines is one of 11 regional Banks in the Federal Home Loan Bank System (FHLBank), and is a member-owned cooperative that provides funding solutions and liquidity to over 1,400 members to support mortgage lending, economic development and affordable housing in the communities they serve. Members include community and commercial banks, credit unions, insurance companies, thrifts and community development financial institutions in Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, the U.S. territories of American Samoa and Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Regulated by the Federal Housing Finance Agency, the FHLBanks are cooperatively owned by their members, operate independently with their own boards of directors and are registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

About Columbia Bank

Headquartered in Tacoma, Washington, Columbia Banking System, Inc. is the holding company of Columbia Bank, a Washington state-chartered full-service commercial bank with locations throughout Washington, Oregon and Idaho. For the tenth consecutive year, the bank was named in 2016 as one of Puget Sound Business Journal's "Washington's Best Workplaces." Columbia ranked in the top 20 on the 2016 Forbes list of best banks in the country for the fifth year in a row.

Columbia Bank operates more than 140 banking offices and branches throughout Washington, Oregon and Idaho. More information about Columbia can be found on its website at www.columbiabank.com.

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