

NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016

Visit ncsha.org/awards to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

Instructions: Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact awards@ncsha.org or 202-624-7710.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

Entry Name: _____

HFA: _____

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member) _____ **Email:** _____

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

HFA: _____

Entry Name: _____

Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

OVERVIEW

MaineHousing's mission is to assist low income households in achieving and maintaining quality affordable housing. We do this through partnerships with developers, lenders, community action agencies, homeless services providers, fuel dealers, non-profits, and many more. Each of our departments are regularly in contact with its clients through letters, notices, meetings, and other forms of communication.

In our own arenas of responsibility, the methods we choose to reach out work well. But, as we learned through our Strategic Plan effort in 2014, we did not communicate in a satisfactory manner with our most important clients – our employees.

The Strategic Plan endeavor consisted of four groups each with a specific purpose, and to show how important it was to improve outreach to employees, one of the groups focused on internal communications.

Two primary methods of communication were in use before the internal communications team made its recommendations. They were all staff emails, which could be disruptive when a little window appeared at the bottom of a computer screen to say, for example, that the quarterly parking passes were available or that cream was ordered for the coffee service, and a monthly newsletter that was designed, turned into a pdf, and sent via all staff email. It took quite a bit of time to produce, copy was hard to come by, events may have occurred at the beginning of the month and employees were reading about them at the end, or works in progress that were noted may have changed without notice to the newsletter editor.

Communication was not the only problem. Insurance health forms were in one location on a share drive. Organization charts and phone lists were in another folder. Policies and handbooks in yet another folder. And so on.

The Internal Communications team developed what it called a “tool box,” an intranet that would be the primary venue for news, information, forms, manuals, event pictures, and other “must haves” that make employee life easier. It needed to be interactive, like social media, with a section for employees to post messages, celebrate others' accomplishments, and share personal information such as school fund raisers, camp rentals, or other goods for sale.

The Internal Communications Team worked with the Communications and Planning Department and its webmaster, as well as the IT Department, to design the MaineHousing Intranet. Its first full year of operation was 2015 after having been put online at the end of 2014 to work out the kinks. It has proven successful for those who use it. They have expressed their satisfaction with being kept in the loop. Our only hiccup is that some employees forget to use it.

All staff email now is used only for major announcements.

MAJOR UNDERTAKINGS AND EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION

One other major complaint from employees prior to the implementation of the intranet was that they were not being kept current on major undertakings take place by administrators or group. In 2015, MaineHousing began a compensation study, a building and facilities review, a continuous improvement tract, and others. Outside contractors met regularly with study groups – and still do. The intranet became a vehicle to keep employees updated. The intranet’s directory includes a link called “transformation tracks,” and on that page are the studies or initiatives that are underway. All reports pertaining to them is posted.

DESIGN AND STRUCTURE

Easy access to the intranet was paramount in its development. The IT Department placed a shortcut on each employee’s computer screen, including the laptops of inspectors who primarily are on the road. It’s also available on MaineHousing’s portal that is used by employees who telecommute.

The front of the intranet is called the dashboard. The public information manager and webmaster have access to it to post important company-wide messages. Program updates, facilities and securities messages, headlines on work-related topics, fun activities, and other information are shared on the dashboard. It’s updated at least once a day. Some days may have quite a few posts.

To the left on the front page is a directory, which includes links to pages that house the organizational chart and phone list, HR forms, expense and travel forms, an images library, department-specific pages, classified ads, and others. Also, the front page includes links to a page that specifically features “quotes of the day” and a page that includes headlines with links to media sites. On the right of the front page is an AccuWeather site that includes current weather and forecasts. It is viewed often during Maine winters. Sometimes it’s fun to read that rain will start in 16 minutes, and time it to see if it happens..

Employees, too, can log in to the intranet to post or “like” posts. By logging in they have access to the second primary screen of the intranet, which is the activity feed. On this page, similar to a Facebook timeline feed, employees can post notices, see what new information has been posted on other pages, and, most importantly, give fellow co-workers “merit badges.”

The “merit badges” feature was a priority to employees. During the Strategic Plan endeavor, employees were surveyed and many mentioned that they wanted a way to recognize co-workers who went above and beyond in their job, in their assistance with a project, or even to help another person in the parking lot who may have fallen on ice. The webmaster created numerous badges, and employees choose the appropriate one. Each employee has a page on the intranet that lists the hours they are in the building and the days they flex or telecommute. The badges appear on the individual pages, as do anniversary badges.

NUMBERS

MaineHousing has almost 160 employees, and our numbers show that not everyone goes on to the intranet each day. That doesn’t mean they don’t go on at all. In January 2015, the site got 1,803 total hits. By December, it reached 3,106 hits. The average length of stay is about 4 minutes.

To increase traffic, we needed to change our approach in how information was posted.

Initially, a daily blog was written and posted. It could be lengthy. Readers would get a cup of coffee, pull up to their screen, select the link, and read the blog. Others, however, felt that was too time consuming. Now, each post is focused on one topic and not a compilation of many. That's proven easier.

And, lately, to encourage participation, a co-worker is creating crossword puzzles, trivia contests, and requesting guest columns (such as restaurant reviews). The result has been a greater sense of community and friendship among co-workers.

Now that we're halfway through our second full year of the intranet, Communications and Planning is developing a survey to ask co-workers for their thoughts and ideas. We want to ensure that the communication that employees requested is being delivered, and what better way to do that than to ask our readers.

Intranet home page

The screenshot shows the mSHARE intranet home page. At the top, there's a navigation menu with links to Dashboard, Activity Feed, Directory, Groups & Organizations, News and Events, Libraries, Awards, Resources, and Transformation Tracks. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, there's a 'Good Afternoon' greeting. In the center, there's a news article titled 'Housing bond: After the vote' dated Nov 10, 2013. Below it, there's a 'BE CAREFUL SAFETY FIRST' warning. On the right, there's a 'Feb now needed to open lobby doors outside business hours' notice. A sidebar on the far right displays a weather forecast for Augusta, ME, showing a high of 75°F and a low of 52°F, along with a 'Get Your MinuteCast' section.

MaineHousing's intranet serves many purposes. It's an internal newsletter of program updates, activities, announcements, and news, and it's a source for company information such as forms, organizational charts, phone numbers, expense sheets, and other information.

Major agency initiatives are posted under transformational tracks.

Weather updates are included, and viewed often during winter months.

It's also interactive. An activity feed lets employees post personal events that may be of interest, such as a school fund raiser, give "merit badges" to co-workers, and share other announcements. Plus, the site includes a classifieds section so employees can share information such as camp rentals or items for sale.

The screenshot shows the mSHARE login page. It features a login form with a Username field (containing 'DTurcotte') and a Password field (containing '*****'). Below the password field is a 'LOGIN' button. To the right of the login form is a sidebar menu with links to Dashboard, Activity Feed, Directory, Phone List, Organizational Chart, Groups & Departments, News and Events, Libraries, Awards, Resources, and Transformation Tracks.

Intranet “dashboard” page

The intranet “dashboard” is updated by the Communications Department only and features news that is important and needs to be shared with the entire agency.

■ Coming soon: Vending machine replacement

Posted On: Oct 27, 2015



From Facilities Manager Jan Archer

Our vending company has reported that since Pepsi redesigned its product bottling, many of its customers have reported bottles becoming stuck. To correct this, the vending company is swapping out our existing machine for a smaller model with a dispensing mechanism that better fits the new bottle shape. **But don't worry. The vending company tracks our most popular items, so rest assured, they will continue to be available.**

■ Don Gean honored at the place he created

Posted On: Oct 22, 2015



The York County Shelter Programs announced yesterday that it is changing its name in honor of its “visionary” founder, Don Gean, for Human Services, and will continue to operate on Shaker Hill in Alfred. [Read more about the name change here.](#)

Last week, at the 2015 Maine Affordable Housing Conference, MaineHousing presented Don with the Stephen B. Moore Award for Lifetime Achievement (pictured). Director John Gallagher presented the award, which was a surprise to Don. Also pictured is Don's wife, Mary, who works at Penquis CAP, who is a longtime co-worker and friend of the late Stephen Moore, who was CEO of housing services at Penquis CAP.

■ Question 2 – the \$15 million senior housing bond

Posted On: Oct 22, 2015

Between now and the election you'll hear more in the media about the bond proposals on the Nov. 2 ballot, including Question 2, the \$15 million senior housing bond. [MaineHousing published its explanation of the bonds](#), including Question 2. We spent time talking to the reporter about the bond.

Earlier this week I posted a link to the Maine Secretary of State's Citizen's Guide to the election, which includes information on a citizens' referendum and two bond proposals.

Also the bond supporters, including the Maine Affordable Housing Coalition, are circulating a document ([Senior housing bond info by Yes on 2 group](#)) with their own explanation of the bond.

FYI: MaineHousing is neutral on the housing bond issue, and will do what is asked by the ballot measure if approved. The \$15 million is another funding mechanism for affordable housing units, including four developments in areas with under 100,000 in population.

Also, FYI: The information posted on the intranet about the bond is not intended to persuade you in how to vote.

■ Property Management course!

Posted On: Oct 20, 2015

It's here! It's here! After almost two years of effort by Director John Gallagher and others here, Southern Maine Community College will begin offering a [Property Management course](#). (Select the link to learn more.)

With so many affordable housing properties, John believes it's important for people working there to be properly trained on rules in order to serve tenants. John and the adjunct professors are trained and ready to go!

■ Affordable housing in new Portland market-rate developments

Posted On: Oct 20, 2015

The Portland City Council on Monday voted for an “inclusion rule,” which means that at least 10 percent of any new housing development be affordable housing units.

Intranet “activity feed” page

Once logged in, any employee can post information on the “activity feed” or award “merit badges” to co-workers.

The screenshot displays an activity feed with four posts. Each post includes a user profile picture, name, and timestamp. The first two posts are by Tracey Anderson on 4/12/2016, announcing updates to the Communication Access Guide. The third post is by Linda Grotton on 4/4/2016, announcing a dinner and presentation for the El Faro. The fourth post is by Carol Bernard on 3/24/2016, announcing an award for Jamie Johnson and including a thank-you message and a graphic of an ear.

Tracey Anderson
4/12/2016 12:19:17 PM
The Communication Access Guide has been updated, and is suitable for sharing outside MaineHousing. The "Communication Access Guide - Internal" is a separate document just reminding staff members of the option to ask Human Resources about bilingual employees as a resource for communication with those with limited English proficiency
updated the document Communication Access Guide in the Legal library.
[Like](#)

Tracey Anderson
4/12/2016 12:17:02 PM
updated the document Communication Access Guide-Internal in the Legal library.
[Like](#)

Linda Grotton
4/4/2016 2:03:24 PM
Search for the lost El Faro, Dinner and Presentation April 13!
US Navy Capt. Gregg Baumann was the "on scene" senior Naval Officer during the search effort in locating the container ship El Faro. Captain Baumann was interviewed and told part of the story of the Navy's Salvage and Diving Team's efforts during a 20/20 program a few months ago. He has agreed to come to Maine to provide a presentation about that effort and what they found. Hosted by the Casco Bay Navy League, the plated dinner and presentation will be held in Topsham. I have posted an informational flyer in the lunch room, or let me know you are interested and I'll send you a copy. RSVP by April 7. Let me know if you have any questions. Hope to see you there!!
[Like](#)

Carol Bernard
3/24/2016 1:07:10 PM
was given the award **Great Listener** by Jamie Johnson
Thank you for all your help!

[Like](#)

Intranet images library page

The screenshot shows the mSHARE intranet interface. On the left is a navigation menu with links to Dashboard, Activity Feed, Directory, Groups & Departments, News and Events, Libraries, Awards, Resources, and Transformation Tracks. The main content area is titled "Image Libraries" and displays a grid of 15 image library categories, each with a small icon and a title. The categories include Affordable Housing Conference, All Staff Days, Board Meetings, Craft Fair, Craft Lunch, Dessert Auctions, Developments, Field Images, Fish & Ski, Halloween, Harvest Festivals, Holiday Parties, Outreach Events, Retirement Parties, Staff Meetings & Retreats, Strategic Planning, and Wallpaper.

Image Libraries

[Dashboard](#) / [Image Libraries](#)

Image Libraries

- Affordable Housing Conference
- All Staff Days
- Board Meetings
- Craft Fair
- Craft Lunch
- Dessert Auctions
- Developments
- Field Images
- Fish & Ski
- Halloween
- Harvest Festivals
- Holiday Parties
- Outreach Events
- Retirement Parties
- Staff Meetings & Retreats
- Strategic Planning
- Wallpaper

An example of a directory page. Our events are captured in pictures, and we share them via the intranet's images library. Our IT Department appreciates that we don't use email space to share pictures.