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Media Advisory

Okanogan gets Much Needed First Community-Based Seasonal Farmworker Housing – Riverview Meadows ***Join us for Hard Hat Ceremony, Thursday, April 19 (11A- Noon)***

April 12, 2018 | Okanogan, WA - Wafila, the largest agricultural guestworker provider in the nation, is holding a **Hard Hat Ceremony on Thursday, April 19, 2018 from 11A to Noon** to celebrate the construction of Riverview Meadows, a much needed 166-bed community-based seasonal farmworker housing facility in the city of Okanogan. *Now accepting reservations for next season at wafila.org/riverviewmeadows.*

Growers in Washington are increasingly reliant on legal foreign labor through the H-2A visa program. H-2A regulations require employers to provide worker housing, and on top of H-2A, migrant domestic workers are not interested in travelling to Okanogan County for seasonal work unless there is the promise of safe and comfortable lodging. But it can end up costing millions to construct housing, a big problem for small growers.

That's why wafila seeks funding to create and operate facilities like Riverview Meadows, providing housing options at minimal cost to farmers and farmworkers.

This project is projected to cost \$4.5 million. Wafila was awarded a low interest loan from the state Department of Commerce totaling \$3 million, with the remainder funded privately. The site has also been authorized for 112 additional beds, which will be constructed at a later date.

This is the second housing facility built by wafila with help from the Department of Commerce. We previously built, and operate, Ringold Housing in Mesa, Washington which houses nearly 100 workers. Ringold opened 7 years ago to provide housing for workers that were living in their cars or camping in unsanitary conditions on the Columbia River.

Riverview Meadows, located on the bank of the Okanogan River, is a 166-bed facility which includes an on-site resident manager, cooking and laundry facilities, recreation center, and outdoor park. It is conveniently located next to a grocery store and is on a city bus line. Wafila worked hard with community stakeholders to find a location that met everyone's criteria. Beds will be available for \$10 per night, which can be paid by either the farmer or a qualifying low-income worker.

Information for this event can be found at wafila.org/riverviewmeadows.

What: Hard Hat Ceremony – Riverview Meadows Seasonal Farmworker Housing

When: Thursday, April 19, 2018 (11 a.m. to Noon)

Where: Riverview Meadows Seasonal Farmworker Housing - 2454 Elm St., Okanogan, WA

Who: wafila members, press, community leaders, & public

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Wafila is a non-profit that provides labor and HR services to agricultural and seasonal employers in the Pacific Northwest.