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## **Seth Elsen '13 Recounts Working for CST**

*Summary: Seth Elsen '13, Shelton, Washington, discusses his experiences as a student employee with the Center for Small Towns.*

(May 9, 2013)-In the three years that Seth Elsen '13, Shelton, Washington, has worked with the University of Minnesota, Morris's Center for Small Towns (CST), he has engaged in a large range and variety of projects. His first undertaking was with the Students Using Natural Energy (SUN-E) team, which made it possible for solar energy to be used in [heating the pool](#) at the Regional Fitness Center. During his second year, Elsen began working with the [Upper Sioux Community](#) to explore potential uses of renewable energy. In his final year, he partnered with the Morris community to improve the [local public access channel](#).

Elsen spoke fondly of his first CST project, which involved working with a team of students to help create more sustainable energy options for the local Regional Fitness Center. He noted that this project was a great way to get involved with, and be introduced to, the campus and local community. Elsen's work with the SUN-E team allowed him to visibly impact the community as he was acclimating to life at Morris.

In the fall of 2011 Elsen began working with the Upper Sioux Community tribal council and planner to examine the feasibility of using wind and solar energy on tribal land. Using maps and data compiled by the United States Department of Energy, Elsen explored which combination of renewable energy options would make the most sense for the community and later presented his findings to the tribal council. He resumed work on the project in spring 2013.

In the fall of 2012 Elsen began working with the city of Morris to improve the local public access television channel. The goal of his work was to create a plan for streamlining the channel's operating system, which utilized an inefficient system of DVDs and alarms. This arrangement left considerable dead air time, so Elsen was hired to help the station improve its functionality.

When asked what he liked best about serving CST, Elsen praised the team's positive energy and their commitment to their work. He added that he deeply enjoyed working with both the local community and the Upper Sioux Community. He cited the latter as his favorite project, the one for which he was and is most passionate. Elsen notes that he would "love to pursue a career in tribal natural resource management," and that this project provided new insight into work that he would like to do for the rest of his life. After graduating, Elsen plans to return to his home in the northwestern United States to look for work in the fields of natural resource management and communications.

The University of Minnesota, Morris Center for Small Towns (CST) is a community outreach program that serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, k-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize the Center's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Their mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at [morris.umn.edu](http://morris.umn.edu) or call 888-866-3382.