

JULY 2022

BUSINESS Connections



The
Chronicle

Centralia - Chehalis
Chamber of Commerce

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CENTRALIA-CHEHALIS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Greenbrier Companies *The Hospital for Freight Rail Cars*

■ *The Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce celebrates the diversity of businesses in our community each month by featuring member businesses.*

The history behind The Greenbrier Companies began in 1919 when the Gunderson brothers formed Wire Wheel Sales and Service as a leading steel fabricator in Portland, Oregon. Nearly 40 years later, in 1958, Gunderson received its first order for railcar underframes. They have since expanded to a global company, providing nearly 40% of all freight railcars in North America. The location in Chehalis is a repair and maintenance facility and a part of the largest refurbishment service network throughout

North America. Repairs can take anywhere from 4 - 900 hours. The Chehalis location is one of seven repair sites in America that help keep rail cars running smoothly across the country.



Todd Richardson
Plant Manager

The Chehalis site is managed by Plant Manager Todd Richardson, an Army Veteran of 32 years. Richardson started with Greenbrier nine years ago, working in L.A. and Modesto before relocating to Chehalis where he has been for six years. Richardson gave Chamber staff a tour of their facility showing where mangled wrecks were waiting for service and three-



car-tall transport boxcars, grain transporters, and a menagerie of rail car parts and pieces were waiting for their turn to be repaired. Welding is one of the main repair methods, along with the use of big cranes and other large industrial equipment. Greenbrier uses certified welding processes with gauges for their work.

Richardson manages about 50 employees at the Rail Services site and is currently looking for additional



employees. Finding quality employees post-COVID has been a challenge, as many businesses are struggling to find and maintain qualified staff. As he spoke in his office, there were stacks of employment flyers in different languages on his desk. Richardson mentioned he was working on increasing the diversity among his crew.

Greenbrier in Chehalis is currently getting more involved

in the community. Richardson explained, "I am excited to start helping out with the area High School CTE programs." CTE, or Career Technical Education, prepares students to be college and career-ready by providing core academic skills, employability skills and technical, job-specific skills. Greenbrier's commitment to education helps to expand the skilled-labor workforce needed in our county.

We Must Make Home Ownership Affordable and Attainable!

By Rep. Peter Abbarno

Growing up, many of us heard home ownership was an essential part of the 'American Dream.' I still believe that to be true. It is part of a family's retirement planning, security, and stability. Unfortunately, that 'dream' seems less and less attainable with interest rates on the rise, inflation out of control, housing inventory virtually nonexistent, and the cost of construction skyrocketing.

Despite the Legislature spending billions of dollars over the past decade on housing, Washington state's housing shortage continues to grow. A report last year indicated



Rep. Peter Abbarno

Washington needed over 225,000 new housing units to meet current demand. A major contributing factor is government grinding construction to a halt with overregulation and the Legislature 'spending' funds on permanent-temporary housing rather than 'investing' funds in growing housing inventory and increasing home ownership.

On average, Washington zoning law account for \$72,000 on the price of a new home and that continues to increase with new zoning and planning requirements. The median new home price is about \$522,000 which means about 74% of Washington households can't afford a new home. More than 2,500 families are priced out home ownership for every \$1,000 added to the cost of a home.

What is the Legislature doing to help ... or hurt residential

construction and home ownership?

House Bill 1277 created a new law that added \$100 to the document recording fee to pay for eviction prevention rental assistance. This is in addition to the \$85.50 already being charged related to planning, homeless housing, and assistance surcharges. This additional cost contributes to the cost of purchasing a home.

Senate Bill 5042 created a new law that changes the vesting law so that now builders don't know what law will apply when they go to build in specific situations. It can change from the time of site plan to the time of building. The uncertainty and costly delays produce situations where builders are less likely to invest in new projects and create much needed housing inventory.

Luckily, additional layers and costs were proposed but did not pass this year. For instance, House Bill 1099 would have added climate change mitigation and vehicle miles traveled as a planning goal; House Bill 1770 would have required all new building to be net-zero by 80% by 2034; and although the State Building Code Council keeps restricting the use of natural gas, House Bill 1084 would have unnecessarily eliminated natural gas in new residential and commercial construction.

All of these proposals would increase the cost of home ownership and increase the cost of housing generally as we price out working families from the

dream of home ownership and financial independence.

On the other hand, House Bill 2001 created a new law that allows tiny house communities to be part of an affordable housing incentive program under the Growth Management Act, increasing the use of alternative dwelling units, and incentives for first-time home buyers are all moves in the right direction.

As the assistant ranking member on the House Capital Budget Committee, the 2021-23 capital budget invested more in home ownership, infrastructure, and home security. The budget included \$10 million for weatherization grants to assist homeowners with upgrades to reduce heat loss; \$10 million for the continuing affordability in current housing program to ensure affordable housing stays affordable; and \$5 million for the rural rehabilitation loan program that provides deferred loans to rural, low-income households that need necessary repairs and improvements to their homes. I am also proud to also say that funds were allocated in the past two Capital Budgets specifically for rural infrastructure to help with affordable housing creation.

Many communities in Southwest Washington have aging infrastructure. My family lives in a 102 year-old home in Centralia and I know firsthand the cost and headaches of aging infrastructure. Sewer and water improvements are

expensive for homeowners and city-wide improvements are unlikely without state or federal assistance.

For too long, the Legislature has ignored the fact that our communities need infrastructure like sewer and water first, in order to build housing inventory, protect our critical aquifer and waterways, and reach our full economic potential. Luckily, there were some good investments made in the past two years that recognize rural communities and reverse the course of Puget Sound centric investments.

I believe to improve housing inventory and help families achieve their dream of home ownership, we must act to help expedite the permitting process, reduce overburdensome and redundant planning processes, identify and address State Building Code Council updates that unnecessarily increases the cost of building homes, and consider changes to land use policies within urban growth areas. The Legislature must also resist 'raiding' funds dedicated to improving rural infrastructure by supporting and investing in the Public Works Board and Community Economic Revitalization Board.

The upcoming session will have a lot of opportunities to address housing inventory and home ownership. I will continue to advocate for rural communities impacted by lack of housing inventory and the influx of new residents. Smart investments and proper planning tools will help communities maintain their rural charm, improve their historic downtowns, and grow to meet the economic, housing, and quality of life needs of its citizens.

...

Rep. Peter Abbarno is an attorney with Althausen Rayan Abbarno, LLP and represents Washington State's 20th Legislative District in the Washington State House of Representatives and serves as the assistant ranking member on the House Capital Budget Committee.



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Cynthia Mudge
Executive Director
director@chamberway.com

Christine Demus
Office Manager
thechamber@chamberway.com

Sarah Bent
Marketing Manager
marketing@chamberway.com

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Jill Anderson
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CONTACT US:

500 NW Chamber of Commerce Way

Chehalis, WA 98532

Office: 360.748.8885

Fax: 360.748.8763

TheChamber@ChamberWay.com

Timberland Regional Library

Libraries aren't just for our reading pleasure. They are a wealth of information for business owners or those looking to start a business too. Chehalis and Centralia are fortunate to have great libraries that are part of the Timber Regional Library system. This translates into online resources that small businesses and non-profits can use.

Online business resources include links to business plans and templates, legal forms, grant resources, and a broad selection of business courses available by videos, among many other tools.

All it takes to access these services is a library card, which is easy to get. Simply visit <https://www.trl.org> and choose the "Get a Library

Shown here (from left to right) is Muriel Wheatley, Chehalis Library Manager; Cheryl Heywood, TRL Executive Director; and Stephanie Cahill, TRL Marketing

Card" button at the bottom of the page or visit a branch closest to you.

Centralia Library
110 South Silver Street

Chehalis Library
400 North Market Boulevard



- CHAMBER BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS -

Annalee Tobey Appointed to Centralia College Board of Trustees

Congratulations to Annalee Tobey, Executive Director of Experience Chehalis, for being appointed to the Centralia College Board of Trustees. The appointment is made by Governor Jay Inslee. She serves on a number of local boards, including the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, Discover! Children's Museum, Washington Main Street Advisory Board, Women United, and the Chehalis



Annalee Tobey

Par 4 Sports Official Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting Event

It was a joy to help commemorate the Grand Opening of Par 4 Sports in Centralia! We had a great turnout for the Ribbon Cutting on June 23 to celebrate the completion of the new deck where you can sit back, relax with a meal or a drink and enjoy the great views of Borst Park.

Inside you will find the new bar and seating area, and of course the multisport simulator games for just about



any interest, with football, basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, lacrosse, bowling, cornhole, bocce, carnival toss, zombie dodgeball, Alien shooting, zombie shooting, Hunting games, archery, and more! Owner Andrew Pullin commented, "Par 4 Sports is the perfect entertainment

venue for all ages and interests. Friends, families, golfers, or businesses, we cater to them all."

Rain or shine, Par 4 Sports is the place to go, to play simulator sports with friends; for birthday parties, corporate events, team building events, or date nights.

AMBASSADOR OF THE MONTH:

Dianne Dorey

As a lifetime Lewis County resident, attending Pe Ell High School and Centralia College, Dianne Dorey has seen our community change and grow over the years, and has made a positive impact in our community in many different ways. Dianne has served the county for 47 years as Lewis County Assessor, and is retiring from public service. She began working for the Assessor's office in 1975 and was elected as Assessor in 1998, and has since been involved in the Washington State Association of County Assessors (WSACA), and the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO) in her professional capacities as Assessor. Dianne loves and cares about this community and is a wealth of knowledge and a go-to historian about the area.

Dianne's love for the community extends far beyond her profession and volunteering. Her and her late husband not only have 3 grown children of their own, but starting in 1990, opened their home to over 125 long term foster children, and over 200 short term foster children. When reflecting on her foster experience she said "Getting to know and love the kids is the best part of the profession. Each one brings their own perspective of life. I have learned more from them than

I think they learned from me."

When asked why she decided to join the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce Ambassador program in 1999, Dianne recalled, "I felt it would be a great way to network with the business community and for others to see me in a different light than an elected official."

Dianne has served in many volunteer capacities in our community over the years. She has served on the Board of Directors for United Way of Lewis County since 1985, served as Treasurer for the Lewis County Foster Parent Association (LCFPA) and the Foster Parents Association of Washington State (FPAWS).

Volunteering as an Ambassador has given Dianne an opportunity to get to know members of our community she normally wouldn't, network with other business owners and citizens of Lewis County, while supporting and encouraging local businesses in our community.

If you have thought about volunteering, but don't know where to start, stop by or call our office for more information on how you can get involved in our Ambassador program, or other local volunteer opportunities.



Monthly Events

Chamber Forum

2nd Thursday of each month
11:30 am - 1:00 pm
O'Blarey's Irish Pub
221 N. Tower Avenue (Centralia)

Thursday, July 14

The Forum is replaced by volunteer training for the STP event. We encourage all Ambassadors and other volunteers working Penny Park to attend.

Business After Hours

3rd Thursday of each month (except July) 5:00 - 7:00 pm

July BAH

Visiting Nurses Foundation Annual Golf Tournament & BAH
Thursday, July 14
5:00 - 8:00 pm

Riverside Golf Course
1451 NW Airport Rd. (Chehalis)

Upcoming Events

Seattle To Portland Bike Classic

Saturday, July 16

Penny Park
1451 NW Airport Rd
Volunteers contact
thechamber@chamberway.com
or call 360-748-8885

LAST MONTH...

The Chamber helped two businesses with ribbon cutting ceremonies. Gravity Coffee in Centralia had their Grand Opening events starting June 3 and Par 4 at Sports Hub in Chehalis celebrated their renovations on June 23.

The Chamber welcomes any new businesses or those celebrating meaningful anniversaries, or renovations, to schedule a ribbon cutting ceremony through the Chamber. Businesses do not have to be a member to schedule a ribbon cutting.

Email
thechamber@chamberway.com
or call 360-748-8885 to learn more.



Hiring in Lewis County

Lewis County businesses are still facing many challenges post-Covid these days. Between low numbers of applicants, finding qualified applicants, and retaining employees- the difficulties are plenty. There are many available jobs even for people with minimal experience.

Walmart, for example, was a participant in the Chamber's Lewis County Hiring Event in June and are looking to hire 75 people. Manager Tabitha mentioned that they have raised their starting wage to \$17/hour and even more for those working the graveyard shift. In addition to a salary well above minimum wage, Walmart also offers plenty of room for advancement, continuing education opportunities, and tuition programs.

Kendra from Great Wolf Lodge

commented on how many opportunities her company has for promotion, stating that they have many locations in the US, and that they are rapidly expanding. Great Wolf Lodge employs about 650 people and once employed, many times will promote from within. Post-Covid they have become more flexible with scheduling, adding more part time positions, raise increases and referral bonuses.

The Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families who sponsored the Lewis County Hiring Event last month stated that their biggest hiring challenge has been raising awareness, and battling public misconceptions about what they do at Green Hill School. They have begun using social media and ads more to convey the message of making a positive

impact on the young males that reside there.

Industrial employers attended the Hiring event as well, many with great starting wages, and on-site job training. MacCallum Rock, Chehalis Sheet Metal, Scot Industries, Greenbrier, and ZEV Technologies are a few. The one thing they all seem to be searching for is finding the right people for the job, who want to work. Covid has made hiring more difficult for employers, but if you are looking for work, the time has never been better to secure a job. From better starting wages to a variety of benefits, tuition and medical, there have never been more incentives to get a new job than now!

Biggest challenges:

- Low number of applicants
- Applicants ghost employer during

- interview process
- Getting workers who want to work
- Finding qualified applicants
- Retention
- Battling public misconceptions about work
- Finding people who want to work

Changes Post-covid- more employers are:

- Using Job Fair opportunities to find employees
- Increasing starting wages, and raise increases
- Offering referral bonuses
- Offering sign-on bonuses
- Increasing job marketing
- More flexibility for family and personal
- Reaching more applicants by social media, and job sites like Indeed.



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to our 2022 Scholarship Recipients!

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS



Alyssa Davis
from the
Olivia Mitchell
Scholarship



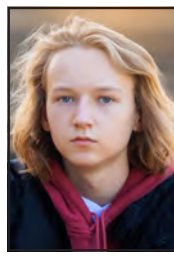
Annarazelle Garcia
from the
Visiting Nurses
Foundation



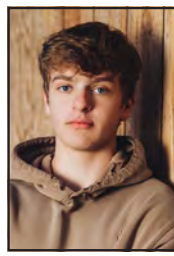
Claire Kuykendall
from Title
Guaranty
Company of
Lewis County



Evie Rooklidge
from the
Cheylynn
Collinsworth
Scholarship
& from the
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Community
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Taylor Shipp
from the
Twinstar
Credit Union
fund



Austin Ulrigg
from
Rainier
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ROB FULLER SCHOLARSHIP FUND RECIPIENTS



Esmeralda Acuna-Gasper



Kate Alexander



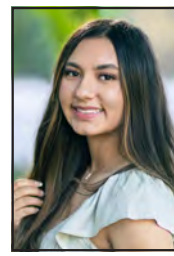
Amelia Etue



Logan Moore



Gideon Priest



Cassandra Sanchez-Franco



Member Update



We love our members!

We encourage you to patronize Chamber members. These are the businesses that are committed to their customers and their community. Many donate, volunteer, and support our local non-profits, schools, and community activities. Our 2022 Member Directory is available in the office or we can email a link.

June New Members

Honeybucket
A Joyful Noise Child Development Center
T-Mobile
Edna Fund (community member)
Evergreen Home Loans

May New Members

Lickety Split Mobile Notary & Loan Signing
Pickett Services, LLC
Mercury Auctions

June Renewing Members

All County Rooter
American Workforce Group
ARTrails of Southwest Washington
Ash & Roberts DDS, PLLC
Assured Hospice
Best Western PLUS Park Place Inn & Suites
Bethel Church
Bloodworks NW
Bonanza BBQ & Catering
Centralia Pet Resort, Inc
Centralia Pharmacy
Chehalis Dental Care-Richard

C. Downing, DDS
Clear Creek RV
Craig S. Ruthford, CPA
D.B. Cooper Appliances
Edward Jones, Derek Burger
Embody Movement Studio & Lifestyle Boutique
Evexia IV Nutrition and Wellness
Floyd Smith, M.D Internal Medicine
Foot & Ankle Surgical Associates Inc, PS
Foresight Surveying, Inc.
Lakeside Industries
Lickety Split Mobile Notary & Loan Signing

M & K Town Store
Mano, Paroutaud, Groberg & Ricks
McCallum Rock Drilling, Inc
McGregor Auto & Muffler
Mortgage One Northwest
MultiCare
Nordin Exposure Farm
Party Connections, LLC
Phillip S. Garnett CPA
Prestige Post Acute & Rehabilitation
Riffe Lake Campground
San Juan Arms Apartments
Schinnell Surveying & Mapping, PLLC

Smile Centralia Dental Care
Strand Insurance of Centralia
Taggagon, LLC
The Community Foundation of South Puget Sound
The Creative Office
The Man Cave Outfitters
Thorbeckes Athletic Club-Centralia/Chehalis
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