

Business Connections



MAY 2024

Centralia - Chehalis
Chamber of Commerce

Promote ♦ Protect ♦ Inform

Inside This Edition: This month features restaurants, education, and the top 25!

The Shire Bar & Bistro and The Branch Bar & Public Room provide quality dining to the Twin Cities

By Emily Fitzgerald

For the C/C Chamber of Commerce

Despite opening over a decade apart in separate cities, The Shire Bar & Bistro in Chehalis and The Branch Bar & Public Room have much in common: excellent chefs, a commitment to fine dining, and a shared owner.

Joel Wall opened The Shire in the former Guido's location in 2002.

"Back then, there weren't as many smaller, independent restaurants. That's kind of grown a bit over the last 20 years," Wall said.

The business initially hosted live music performances, benefits, comedy shows and other forms of live entertainment while Wall and his team worked on some unfinished spaces in the building.

"But over the years, we just kind of decided to focus more on the restaurant," Wall said. "It's just a small, neighborhood place that has a longstanding following in the community."

The Shire has become



deeply integrated into downtown Chehalis over the years, Wall said. "All of a sudden, we find ourselves here 21 years later and it's still going strong," he said.

Much of that success has been thanks to The Shire's chef, Robert Lamore, who has been with the business since the beginning.

Another longtime Shire employee, Chris Bruce, became Wall's business partner in The Branch when that opportunity presented itself in 2016.

The owner of the Centralia Square Ballroom, where The Branch is now located, had approached Wall about possibly putting a restaurant into that space, Wall said.

"He talked to me and, over time, we just kind of made that restaurant happen," he



Photo by Owen Sexton for The Chronicle.

The Shire Bar & Bistro's owner Joel Wall, left, stands next to one of The Shire's original employees, Chris Bruce, and bartender Lacey Heaton in February 2023. Wall and Bruce co-own The Branch Bar & Public Room in Centralia.

said. "That's a neat spot, you know, being just down from the college. We get a lot of locals, but also a lot of out of town guests."

Unlike The Shire, which is open for lunch and dinner, The Branch is only open for dinner. Chef Anthony Eckerson heads The Branch's kitchen and focuses on elevating simple, classic dishes.

"He's an incredibly

knowledgeable, skillful chef, and ... the things that he does are really incredible," Wall said.

Both The Shire and The Branch as "scratch kitchens," meaning the businesses do their own shopping and make everything from scratch.

"Both are unique restaurants to the area, so we enjoy them a lot. It's a lot of hard work, but it's well worth it," Wall said.



Courtesy photo.

Cocktails are served at The Branch Bar & Public Room in Centralia.

The Shire, located at 465 Northwest Chehalis Avenue in Chehalis, is open 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday to Friday and 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday.

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The Branch, located at 202 West Centralia College Boulevard in Centralia, is open 5 to 10p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.

Education Must Be Flexible and Cultivate Passion

By Peter Abbarno

20th District Rep. R-Centralia

Over the past few years, I have toured schools, skills centers, community colleges, and many Career and Technical Education (CTE) classrooms around the state and in the 20th Legislative District. Washington state is finally realizing; what many of us already knew; that children don't all learn the same, don't all think the same,

and don't all have the same career goals.

Some students are career ready and other students are college bound. Education must be flexible and help cultivate a student's passion so they can turn that passion into a productive career. That requires Olympia to start thinking outside of the box.

As an employer, as well as a parent of students, I want our education system to be flexible, adaptable, and

teach students how to think and help them develop the skills most important for our next generation of employees, employers, and leaders.

As the ranking member on the House Capital Budget Committee, this year we invested \$115 million for the Small School District Modernization program, which provides planning and construction grants for smaller school districts that have significant building deficiencies. A boost to rural communities.

In addition, \$68.2 million was invested in Career and Technical Education projects at Skills Centers and Technical Schools, including \$1.154 million for the Cascadia Tech Natural Resources Learning Center at Kalama High School in the 20th District.



Peter Abbarno

Although the State continues to have the wrong Olympia-down approach on education, I do believe many investments have been made through policy to expand opportunities for our students outside the classroom. This will create a stronger workforce and stronger communities.

Recently, I toured schools in the Centralia School District and met with students to discuss career-readiness, trades careers, apprenticeships, college and secondary education, as well as opportunities in the legal and governmental fields.

My first stop was Futurus High School, a small pioneering school in an alternative setting that provides a personalized learning environment. I later met with several classes at Centralia Middle School to discuss how to help students build upon their educational foundation to be successful in their personal and professional lives.

After spending many years volunteering in classrooms, serving as a mentor at W.F. West, and helping in school classrooms, a theme has emerged; there is no theme. They all have different passions, motivations, and skills. Some students thrive in brick-and-mortar schools and others need greater flexibility and options. Some learn by 'doing' and others are better at reading and analyzing text.

The advice I gave students during my tours was 'Find your passion. Focus on whether a job you love. Make sure it brings you satisfaction in life. The most fulfilling careers make a positive difference in your life, and the lives of your family, friends, and community.'

Basic education is the paramount duty of the State of Washington. We must continue to invest in diverse learning opportunities, build a solid foundation in reading, writing, and mathematics, and ensure students graduate with life skills that will help them be successful regardless of the job or career. This is what I will continue to advocate for in Olympia.

I will also continue to encourage parents and families to stay involved in their students' learning and education. We have some amazing local schools and local teachers. However, the family home is the first and last classroom a student learns in every day.

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Rep. Peter Abbarno represents the 20th Legislative District and is an attorney with Althausen Rayan Abbarno, LLP.



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Jessica and Devin Britton smile for a photo inside JJ's in Centralia.

JJs ToGo opens its first brick-and-mortar in Centralia after over two years of success

By Emily Fitzgerald

For the C/C Chamber of Commerce

When Jessica Britton's sister-in-law asked her to meal prep lunches for her out of her tiny Chehalis apartment in November 2021, Britton didn't imagine that fulfilling the simple request would lead her to start a business.

And it might not have, if not for a timely late-night epiphany.

"I don't have any other explanation besides, like, the Lord woke me up, and I just had the JJs logo in my head and I knew what I wanted to do," Britton said.

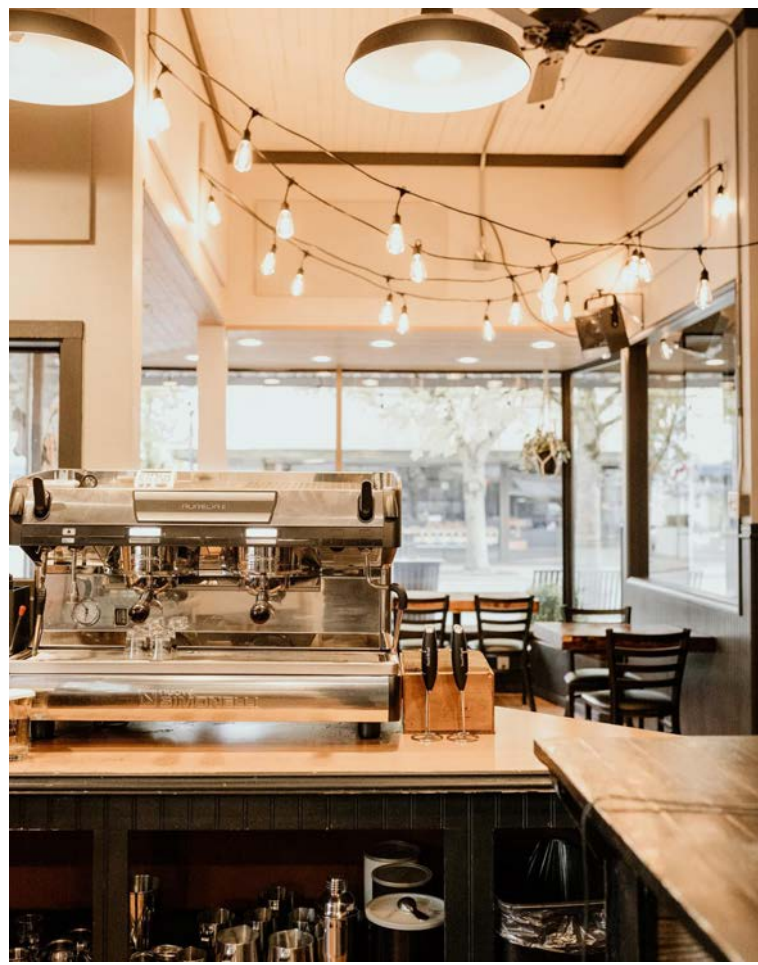
Originally from California, Britton had fond memories of her late husband buying \$7 burritos for lunch from a Latina woman driving her van to different local mechanics shops every day.

"When I woke up that night, I knew I wanted to do that but like,



Patrons mingle at JJ's in Centralia.

times 10," Britton said. "I'm not going to sell you a \$7 burrito. We're going to do a full-fledged meal for a different price."



The remodeled interior of JJ's in Centralia.

JJs To Go started with Britton taking to-go meal orders out of her 10-foot galley kitchen in her apartment.

"My first day selling lunches, I just cold-called (and) I walked into businesses," Britton recalled.

With Jessica and her sister-in-law Devin Britton as co-owners, JJ's ToGo has seen success over the last 2 1/2 years operating out of Jessica's apartment, averaging over 100 lunch orders a day by the end of March 2024.

In January 2024, the Brittons learned that recent changes to the license JJs had been operating under meant that they could no longer base the business out of Jessica's apartment.

"We started praying," Jessica said. "We knew that there was something coming, we just didn't know what."

The Brittons looked at 12 possible locations before settling on purchasing a food cart, despite it not feeling like the right fit.

The morning Jessica was set to drive to Bend to purchase the food truck, she received a Facebook message from Dawn Merchant.

"She asked me 'Do you know who I am?' And I'm like, 'No?'" Jessica recalled.

With just 30 minutes before she had to leave to go pick up the food truck, Jessica called Merchant, who she then learned was the owner of Dawn's Delectables & Sandwich

Shope in downtown Centralia.

The Brittons ultimately canceled their reservation on the food truck and met Merchant on Jan. 15.

"In meeting with and talking to Jessica and her team over the past few months, we are confident that JJ's ToGo will continue to provide wonderful lunch options for our downtown customers and community," Merchant said. Merchant said in a February news release announcing the closure of Dawn's Delectables after nearly 11 years in business.

In her meeting with the Brittons, Merchant went through several options for passing her downtown location off to JJs To Go.

"Just from literally the get-go, there was nothing but peace about it. It's been the most seamless transaction and switch-over of anything that we've ever dealt with," Jessica said.

The Brittons officially got the keys from Merchant on April 1 and officially opened with a ribbon cutting on April 22.

"It's going to make Tower Avenue bigger and better," Jessica said of JJ's opening its brick-and-mortar. "It'll set the tone to start kind of revamping and living up this street."

For information on business hours and other updates, visit <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079273550401>.



Joy Templeton holds a plate of muffins inside Once Upon a Thyme in Chehalis in 2022.

Joy's Once Upon a Thyme continues bringing fresh, healthy food to Chehalis

By Emily Fitzgerald

For the C/C Chamber of Commerce

Joy's Once Upon a Thyme in Chehalis is looking to embark on a new chapter as founder and owner Joy Templeton works to purchase the building her restaurant has operated out of for years.

"I'm happy to say I'm purchasing the building for what I think I can afford, and we'll be heading in that direction," Templeton said at an Economic Alliance of Lewis County Women in Business Seminar in March.

A second-generation chef and longtime caterer, Templeton opened Once Upon a Thyme after moving north from San Francisco.

"After spending a lot of time on an organic farm, I tended to look at food every differently, seeing how it was grown and how it can be more nurturing than satisfying. And that's how I ended up where I am today at Once Upon a Thyme," Templeton said at the seminar.

Once Upon a Thyme focuses on bringing fresh,



Joy's Once Upon a Time in Chehalis, photographed in 2023.

healthy dishes made with seasonal ingredients to Chehalis.

The restaurant also hosts cooking classes and has a market that sells prepared dishes to take home, as well as some of the ingredients the restaurant uses.

Coming up, Once Upon a Thyme will have an earlier opening time, 9 a.m., and will have some promotions centered around customer appreciation, Templeton said.

"We're hoping to generate some more customers, or if someone has a meeting or wants to get together earlier," Templeton said.

Once Upon a Thyme has also extended its catering work, frequently catering



events for the Chehalis-Centralia Railroad & Museum.

Joy's Once Upon a Thyme is located at 1090 Northwest State Avenue in Chehalis.

For more information on the business and upcoming events, visit <https://www.facebook.com/JoysOnceUponAThyme>.

BIZZBUZZ



WHAT'S THE BUZZ?



Blue Skies Drones

Blue Skies, April Clouds
April's clouds bring soft spring rains, Dampening earth with tender strains. With gentle patter, showers fall, Awakening life with nature's call.

As skies clear and blossoms bloom, May brings drones to cut through gloom. In gentle breeze, they take their flight, Dancing through the day and night.

Above the fields and rivers wide, Drones in May take to the skies. They capture moments, far and near, Revealing wonders, crystal clear.

With silent hums, they roam and play, Mapping the world in their own way. As April's showers quench the earth, May's drones give a new view birth.

So as the rain gives way to sun, May's bright drones bring work and fun. From April's showers, May's skies grow, And with them, drones soar high and low.

Chehalis-Centralia Scenic Railroad



Ride 'n' Dine with Mom on the Chehalis-Centralia Scenic Railroad

Enjoy a fun and relaxing day for Moms, Grandmas, and the whole family. Ride the rails and be catered by our crew as you take a memorable brunch and train ride into the Chehalis River Valley. The Chehalis-Centralia Railroad celebrates Mother's Day by offering two options, Mother's Day Brunch at 11:00 am and Mother's Day Tea & Dessert at 5:00 pm. Make reservations now to join these Saturday excursions on May 11th. A ride in the 1920's diner and the attached open coach make this fun day a memorable experience. We'll make your special someone feel special. You just provide the special company.

Relax and enjoy the sights and sounds of railroading as it used to be. All trains depart the Depot at 1101 SW Sylvanus Street in Chehalis, across from the Veterans Memorial Museum. Take Exit 77, halfway between Seattle and Portland. The Depot is located approximately one mile from I-5. Parking is free. We are ADA Accessible.

Reservations are required
www.SteamTrainRide.com



Centralia Outlets Shop for Mother's Day Gifts at the Centralia Outlets

Find your fuchsia fancy here at the Centralia Outlets. The Fuchsia Fanciers will host a plant sale on May 4th at the Centralia Outlets from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Various fuchsia 4-inch starters, gallons, and hardies will be on display and available for sale.

Mother's Day is around the corner! Find quality and affordable gifts for moms

including jewelry, perfume, candles, scarves, handbags, and more.

Kay Jewelers offers a great selection of fine jewelry to fit any budget. Indulge mom in soaps, lotions, and candles from Bath & Body Works. Or seek out amazing deals on handbags and scarves at Coach, Polo Ralph Lauren, Lane Bryant, Chico's, and Pendleton. Find signature perfumes and scents at many of our other brands like GAP and Aéropostale and for home décor, kitchenware, inspirational books, and customizable options shop Christian Outlet.

Don't forget, new summer savings will kick off Memorial Day weekend! Any time is great for shopping and saving on trusted name brands at Centralia Outlets. Follow on social media to see the latest arrivals at our brands, and always save on the brands you love every day at the Centralia Outlets.



Evergreen Playhouse

The Addams Family – A New Musical
May 24-June 9, 2024

Pay What You Can Performance
Thursday, May 30th 7:30 pm
Friday/Saturday performance time 7:30 pm, Sunday matinee performance at 2:00 pm
Adults \$18/Seniors and students \$15

Evergreenplayhouse.com
THE ADDAMS FAMILY, a comical feast that embraces the wackiness in every family, features an original story and it's every father's nightmare: Wednesday Addams, the ultimate princess of darkness, has grown up and fallen in love with a sweet, smart young man from a respectable family—a man her parents have never met. And if that wasn't upsetting enough, Wednesday confides in her father and begs him not to tell her mother. Now, Gomez Addams must do something he's never done before—keep a secret from his beloved wife, Morticia. Everything will change for the whole family on the fateful night they host a dinner for Wednesday's "normal" boyfriend and his parents.

Bring this article with you for a free non alcoholic drink and small popcorn.



Experience Chehalis Seeks Volunteers for Spring Beautification Project!

Experience Chehalis invites

our community to become part of the tradition welcoming spring to Downtown Chehalis.

The organization is seeking sponsors for the annual spring beautification project, planting flowers and tree pots throughout Downtown Chehalis.

We extend our thanks to everyone who continues to support this beautification effort.

We hope you will consider sponsoring an island this year to help brighten and beautify our community. The cost of sponsorship is \$50, and remember – as a contribution to a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, your donation is tax-deductible. Contact Experience Chehalis at info@experiencechehalis.com, by phone at (360) 345-1738, or download the sign-up form at www.experiencechehalis.com/beautify-chehalis-this-spring/.

Falcon National Paintings

One of our newest members, Falcon National Paintings, has a lot to offer!

Looking for someone with great experience as a painter? Welcome to Falcon National Paintings LLC, where I am thrilled to show my professional experience and project work to the community. With Falcon National Paintings it is the right choice to begin with your project that you may have pending on. I'm a professional Painter with great skills in painting. Not only do I paint but I also do small repairs, pressure washing, fresh paint, satin, varnish, cabinets, millworks and ECT! If you have any more questions please feel free to contact me anytime. It is a pleasure to hear from you!

JJ's ToGo is The Place To Go!

At JJ's ToGo we use our God-given talents and gifts to serve fresh and unique items to our customers. From the quality ingredients we use, to our packaging that stands out above the rest, and our top-notch customer service; a level of excellence that you cannot find anywhere else is expected and found at JJ's. Whether you are enjoying breakfast, lunch, family dinner, or catered meals from us, you will taste quality and flavor combinations you have never had before- and we guarantee you will be hooked. NOW OPEN!
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The Learning Center Can Help!

When you or your child are struggling with a learning disability, it can be quite lonely. It's easy to feel like you are the only one feeling stuck, or frustrated. It's easy to feel like no

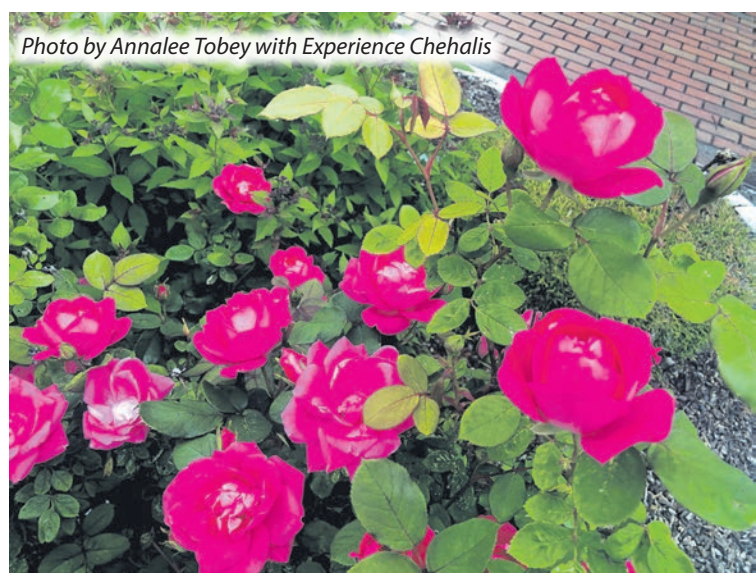


Photo by Annalee Tobey with Experience Chehalis

one can help. If I could impart one piece of wisdom to you, it would be that you are not alone. It is estimated that 1 in 5 people suffer from dyslexia. That is more than 40 million adults in the US alone, not including children and not including other related learning difficulties. I encourage you to reach out to me, to local school teachers and administrators, or others, to find out about all of the resources that are available to you. With that in mind, I will be hosting a story time Q&A event on May 27th through the Washington Homeschool Organization to help raise awareness for neurodivergent thinking, the struggles you may be facing, and resources that are available to help you. I can assure you there is hope, and there is help. All you have to do is ask. Feel free to reach out for a free phone consultation at (208)705-3760 or visit www.the-learning-center.com to learn more.

Miss Lewis County and Miss Lewis County's Teen are available for community events and classrooms.

Service to the community is one of the foundational pillars of the Miss Lewis County Scholarship Program. This year's title holders are eager to be involved in various events throughout Lewis County.

Katelynn Guenther, Miss Lewis County 2024, is advocating for the importance of agriculture. She speaks with passion on the value of farming and ranching, and the impact they have on the community. Katelynn also sees a need for voters to be educated on the impact they can have on state and local regulations. Miss Lewis County's Teen, Capri O'Neill is an advocate for children in need of eye care and eyewear. Speaking from firsthand experience with vision impairment, Capri's focus is on educating children on the diagnosis and treatment of impaired vision. She wants kids to feel proud and confident wearing glasses.

In addition to their chosen platforms, they are available to promote and increase awareness for other community programs throughout Lewis County. Both are available for public speaking engagements, educational outreach, classroom

visits, or to assist during community/business events. Requests for appearances can be made through the link at www.misslewiscounty.com

Quiznos Announces New Philly Sandwich!

Quiznos in Centralia has a NEW! QUESO PHILLY SANDWICH. Have your order Delivered. Order online at order.quiznos.com

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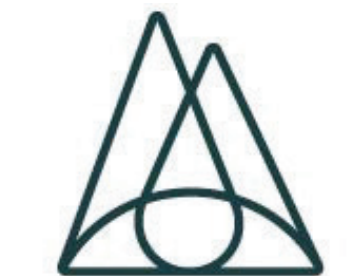
Rainier Eye

Is It Time To Ditch The Readers? Do you struggle to read up close, yet never seem to have readers around when you need them? Do you work in a warm or wet environment that is always fogging up your glasses? Have you been told you're not a candidate for contact lenses? Do you wear contact lenses but can't see well up close? Multifocal contact lenses may be the solution for you!

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The doctors at Rainier Eye fit multifocal contact lenses which correct both near and far vision. Even if you have never worn contact lenses before, Drs. Ferris and Loeb will determine the best lens for your eyes. Their friendly assistant will teach you how to get the lenses in and out with ease.

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PLATINUM



Congratulations!

The Annual Rob Fuller 25 x 25 Luncheon Honors The Top 25 students from Centralia & Chehalis High School Seniors

Centralia Top 25

- Daniel Abarta
- Susannah Berry
- Chihiro Bringman
- Alan Cox
- Joshua DeMaris
- Kendra Dimaggio
- Andres Flores Bravo
- Ruth Gonzalez
- Isabelle Gruginski
- Shalyn Hall
- Olivia Hedgers
- Tig Hedgers
- Summer Holmes
- Johnathan Kaech
- Lauren Mannikko
- Victor Morales
- Kiersten Moxness

Joselyn Sanchez Gomez

Diann Semenchuk

Ignacio Sevilla-Moctezuma

Brady Sprague

Makenzi Van Der Hoeft

Lauren Wasson

Von Wasson

Emily Wilkerson

...

Chehalis Top 25

Mailyn Arevalo Cerritos

Hayden Blanton-Lamping

Tommy Caperon

Chloe Chloupek

Justin Chung

Maddysen Creech

Natalie Eklund

Carly Ericson

Lena Fragner

Aspen Goble

Audrey Greene

Shelby Hazlett

Lia Hornby

Mya Jensen

Braden Jones

Grace Oien

Courtney Pinkerton

Rene Remund

Zoey Robertson

Andrew Scheer

Jenna Smith

Laurel Toynbee

Brea Tracy

Freya Wearner

Ella Young

Each year the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber honors the top 25 students from WF West and Centralia High Schools. In 2011 the event was named in honor of the late Rob Fuller along with the creation of a scholarship fund. The Rob Fuller 25 x 25 luncheon not only honors the top 25 but is where nine different scholarships are awarded, including ten recipients of the Rob Fuller Scholarship Fund. We thank those who have contributed to all of the scholarships awarded:

- Boys & Girls Club of Lewis County
- Centralia Community Foundation
- Cheylynn Collinsworth Scholarship
- Lightcurve STEM
- Olivia Mitchell Scholarship
- Rob Fuller Scholarship Fund
- TwinStar Credit Union
- Valley View Health Center
- Visiting Nurses Foundation



ROB FULLER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

APRIL HAPPENINGS

2024 UPCOMING CHAMBER EVENTS



Centralia Point Assisted Living and Memory Care

Photos by Jacob Larson

Centralia Point Assisted Living and Memory Care hosted the April Business After Hours (BAH). Shown here are Chamber Members Chris Larson with Cedars HomeCare of Washington and Pam Devekos, Community Relations Manager for Centralia Point.



May Forum

Thursday, May 9 • 8 am
 NW Salmon & Smokehouse
 486 N. Market Blvd., Chehalis
 Speaker: Paula Burrows with The Paula Burrows Team
 Brokered by eXp Realty.
 Topic: Real Estate in Action;
 Current Trends and Local News

Business After Hours

Thursday, May 16 • 5 – 7 pm
 Lewis County Boys & Girls Club
 2071 Jackson Highway, Chehalis

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony & Open House: Expert Restoration

Thursday, June 6 • 3-7 pm
 20223 Old Hwy. 99, Centralia

STP: Seattle-To-Portland Bike Ride

July 13 & 14
 Penny Park
 To Volunteer email
 TheChamber@Chamberway.com
 Or call 360-748-8885

Chamber Event Sponsor Opportunities

First Annual Chamber Golf Tournament!

Friday, July 26
 To register a team or sponsor an activity email
 director@chamberway.com

3-on-3 Streetball Festival

August 3 & 4
 Chehalis along Pacific Avenue
 Visit www.ChamberWay.com
 Under "Events" Tab
 Choose the 3-on-3 Link
 Email director@chamberway.com
 or call 360-748-8885
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

- Please join us in welcoming our new members!*
- Cedar Home Care of Washington
 - Easy Edible Edens
 - Falcon National Painting LLC
 - Infinite Chiropractic and Regenerative Care
 - Lewis County Gospel Mission
 - NAMI Lewis County
 - Summit 2 Seas Coaching & Consulting
 - Zipty Fiber



Chamber April Forum

District 20 Representative Peter Abbarno was the featured speaker at the April Forum. He provided a great overview about the good, the bad, and the ugly of the most recent legislative session. Show here is (left to right) Chamber Board Member Chris Thomas, Representative Peter Abbarno, Chad Taylor, and Chamber Board President Coralee Taylor.



Valued Kids

Valued Kids celebrated their remodel and reopening with a Ribbon Cutting on April 19. Their facility was closed for three months following a water pipe breaking.



JJ's ToGo Ribbon Cutting

JJ's ToGo celebrated their grand opening with a Ribbon Cutting on Monday, April 22, at 204 N. Tower in Centralia. JJ's staff help celebrate as Centralia City Council member Max Vogt, Owners Jessica and Devin Britton, and Centralia City Council member Mark Westley cut the ribbon!



Annual Home & Garden Show

Russ and Janel Ketzenberg were the big winners at the Home & Garden Show in April having drawn the winning ticket for the chicken starter kit and \$45 gift certificate from Tractor Supply. Winners of The Farm Store prize of the backpack sprayer was Doug Larson.

How to Schedule a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

The Chamber offers Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies as a free service to members and non-members. It is our way of acknowledging the hard work and investment of time and money to opening, expanding, moving, or re-branding a business. To learn more or secure a date call 360-748-8885 or email director@chamberway.com