

CHAMBER CHAT

May 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Andy Mayer, President & CEO

I hope you are finding your way through the challenging times we're in. I know many of you are shut down completely, some are doing a bit of business, and a few, such as our banker friends, are extremely busy. No matter what your circumstances, I'm sure you are ready for us all to be working again. Evidently there's nothing like a crisis of this nature to demonstrate how interconnected our businesses, our economy and our lives are.

As I write this, the timetable for business re-openings, besides construction, recreation and some elective surgery, hasn't been announced. Likewise, the details on an extension of the stay home order are yet to come. But it appears the governor will announce a phased restart that recognizes different areas of the state could proceed on different schedules, which could affect Skagit County. Businesses classified as essential will be joined by those that can be operated safely for workers and customers.

Guidelines to do so are being developed, which apply to all types of businesses and for specific industries. Factors in the timetable and recommendations for operating safely will vary by the type of activity and the necessity of operations in a specific location. Industry associations are already introducing such plans. We will compile them for you.

It is important to prepare for restarting your business, including plans to address safety. But I think we will all miss an opportunity if we don't also "reimagine" our businesses at the same time. I've learned a lot during these last two months, and plan to do some different things and some things differently, on an ongoing basis. I guess some pain turned into gain is a positive thing. I'm going with that.

I truly look forward to seeing you in person, in all the familiar places – as circumstances allow!



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GET TO KNOW SKAGIT GLEANERS



Morgan Curry, executive director of Skagit Gleaners, wants to make sure everyone in the community is aware of the valuable services the organization provides – especially during this time when people are being financially impacted by COVID-19.

Skagit Gleaners provides food and household merchandise/clothing to frugal, waste conscious and working families. They do this by rescuing surplus food and product from local grocery stores, manufacturers, restaurants and thrift stores in Skagit County.

Each family who uses the services is required to contribute by volunteering for the organization. Each family also contributes a nominal overhead fee to help cover organizational expenses.

“This model creates an atmosphere of ownership and responsibility, where families are able to ‘give and receive’ instead of just ‘receive,’” Curry says.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Skagit Gleaners has proven to be an essential program for families. During the month of March, the organization rescued 127,191 pounds of surplus food from grocery stores and restaurants (more than doubling what they normally rescue). The food was distributed to nearly 340 families, helping these families save roughly \$180,000 in grocery costs. The organization also gifted roughly 15,000 pounds of food to other organizations in March, including migrant worker housing complexes.



Curry said the Gleaners are always looking for community partners, such as grocery stores, markets and restaurants, willing to donate excess food items, and she is hopeful there may be some Chamber members who can help fill that need. She also notes that donations of goods are tax deductible.

The Gleaners’ shop is open seven days a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday-Sunday: 9 am - 1:30 pm, and Tuesday, Thursday: 3 pm - 7:30 pm. People who want to learn more can visit during any of these for a free shop/tour.

www.skagitgleaners.org

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Member Announcements

Gateway Automotive offers free oil changes to medical professionals

Even before Gov. Inslee's shelter-in-place order went into effect, Bill Orsborn was implementing new procedures in his business to protect against the spread of the coronavirus. Gateway Automotive introduced its Touchless Repair Service along with an explanatory video to help customers understand how it works. But Orsborn wanted to do more. Gateway Automotive is now offering free oil changes for doctors and nurses at all three of their Skagit-Island County locations. "This is our small way of giving back to medical professionals who put their lives on the line at times like this." Orsborn is spreading the word of the free oil changes, Touchless Repair Service, as well as their free drop-off and pick up service for customers who reside within two miles of any of their three locations.

Skagit Regional Airport Receives CARES Act Funds

Skagit Regional Airport will receive \$69,000 of funding through the CARES Act to maintain and support continuing airport operations. More than 3,000 airports are eligible for funding, ranging from large commercial airports to general aviation airports like Skagit Regional Airport. Skagit Regional Airport has remained open during the pandemic as an essential public transportation hub, providing access for emergency medical flight arrivals and departures, and continued operations of essential businesses. The Port of Skagit has not made any decisions yet on how these funds will be allocated. Further evaluation of the funding requirements and Port projects is currently underway to determine the best fit and highest need area for using the funds.

Barron Heating donates ductless heating system to Sedro-Woolley cancer patient

A Sedro-Woolley great-grandmother living alone in an inadequately heated home while battling cancer, recently received a free heating system from Barron Heating & Air Conditioning. Phyllis Queen has been battling cancer since 2017. Chemotherapy has caused neuropathy in her extremities, causing consistent pain that is unbearable in the cold. Living on a fixed income, she's unable to afford the skyrocketing power bill due to her 30-year-old furnace. Taking some of the worry out of her life, Barron Heating installed a Daikin ductless mini split system, ensuring Queen would stay warm and comfortable throughout her home. Barron Heating also donated a Daikin ductless mini split system to a Stanwood grandmother raising six of her grandchildren and a new Carrier furnace to a Sumas cancer patient and mother of six children. The value of Barron Heating's donated equipment with installation in the past year is estimated at more than \$25,000.

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President/CEO **Andy Mayer**

Business Development and

Foundation Director **Silvia Reed**

Operations Director **Jeremy Kindlund**

Marketing Specialist **Hilary Parker**

EWP Coordinator **Jessica LaSota**

Visitor Information Services

Marinus Rouw

Stephanie Fernandez

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Webinar: How to Manage Employees and Deal with Difficult People

With Glenn Shepard

Monday, May 4

11 a.m.

Free for members, \$199 for non-members

[Register here](#)



Latino Business Leaders: How to Finance your Business

Tuesday, May 12

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Presented by Dr. Ed Jaramillo in Spanish

via Zoom

[Register here](#)



Knowledge NOW: Stress Management and Resiliency in the Workplace

Wednesday, May 13

Noon

Presented by Nathan Ray, MSW, Certified Traumatologist,

Rays of Hope, LLC

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Chamber Virtual Luncheon: State of the City Address

With Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau

Wednesday, May 27

11:30 a.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)



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Member Reveals Positive Return on Investment

It's easy to talk at length about the extraordinary things the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce has consistently done for the community. They are my go-to for all things Skagit Valley because they offer the perfect balance of engagement, insight and advocacy. I know that if I need guidance on connecting with the community, I can reach out to any of the staff (or ambassadors for that matter) for advice.

The first Chamber event I ever attended was the Biz Buzz luncheon, which on paper may seem a little daunting because so many people attend. Jeremy and a volunteer warmly greeted me at the door; Silvia went out of her way to make introductions and make me feel welcome; and Andy followed up afterward to see how my experience was. An ambassador invited me to join their table, and I instantly knew I'd made the right decision in attending. I later realized that concierge experience is the culture of service we all receive. Going above and beyond to provide us the resources we need to thrive is what they do each and every day. Everyone is encouraged, supported and welcomed at the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce. It doesn't matter if you're a lifetime member with hundreds of employees or a brand-new small business owner. We are all important and valued.



There are not enough superlatives to describe the value you bring to all of us. Thank you for allowing us to play on your team!

Mandi Rothman, Northwest Youth Services

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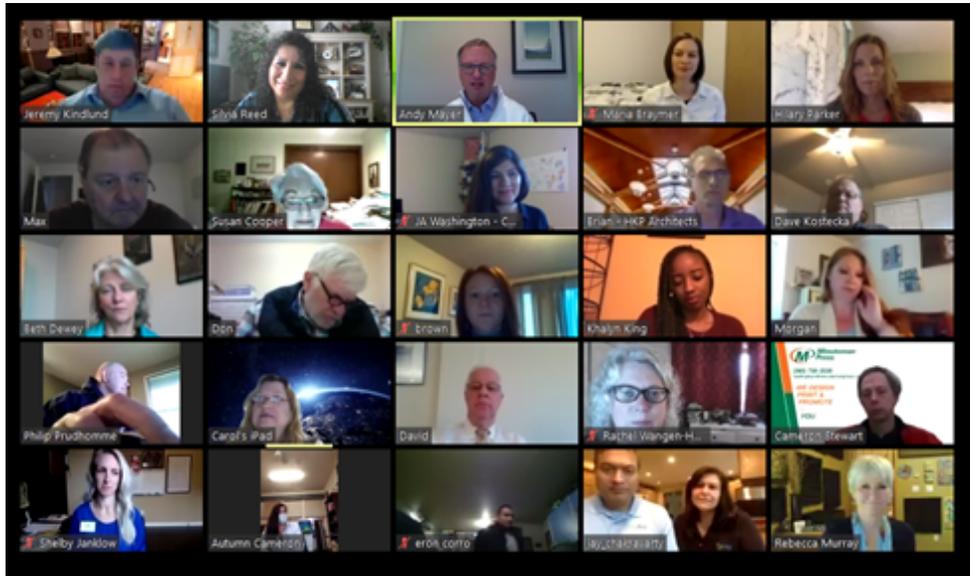
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Biz Buzz goes virtual with great success



The Chamber hosted its first virtual "luncheon" meeting in April. Scheduled as a Biz Buzz, the meeting was complete with "tables" and one-minute elevator speeches. We are pleased to continue helping businesses make connections!

This month, we'll host Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau for the State of the City Address, sponsored by Primerica.

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