

# CHAMBER CHAT

MAY 2021

## Are you having trouble finding employees?

By Andy Mayer | President & CEO

I suspect that you are because we are hearing that is the case for most businesses. Of course, what we're experiencing isn't really new. Pre-Covid, it was hard for many of you to find qualified applicants. But our perspective changed a lot this past year. Many of us felt fortunate to keep the employees we had working. And even if we could have used more help, the uncertainty of the situation dictated caution. The good news is, even though we're not out of the woods yet, business is picking up for a lot of you. You know the bad news. So, what can be done?

The Chamber doesn't have perfect and immediate solutions for you. But we are committed to bringing ideas and tools to your attention as we find them. We are talking with those of you who are involved in the business of recruiting employees. We're also exploring what pools of under-utilized potential employees are out there.

Let's face it, as employers we will benefit from shifting our ideas about who we're looking for. Our assumptions on the ideal candidate for our job openings are probably flawed – or at least more rigid than they should be. What about retired people? I'm hearing that many are going back to work. They typically have strong skills and experience. How about younger workers? Some are quick to dismiss them by assuming they have an inferior work ethic. But do they? How about people that would

*continue on page 3...*



## LEGACY MEMBERS

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## **J.E.D.I. Speaker Series: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace**

Tuesday, May 4

1-2 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

The Skagit County Chambers of Commerce and EDASC present the monthly J.E.D.I. (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Speaker Series. This month, certified diversity speaker Zenovia Harris presents Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace. Harris is former president for the Washington Diversity Council Advisory Board, is the CEO and Lead Facilitator at Zenovia Harris LLC, and is the CEO of the Kent Chamber of Commerce.

## **Motivation & Marketing Mastermind: Understanding Analytics**

Thursday, May 6

10-11 a.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Do you know how to use the analytics from your website or social media? Understanding what key metrics to track can help you understand how your digital content is performing, so you can make better decisions moving forward.

## **Latino Business Leaders: PPP Loans**

Thursday, May 6

6-7:30 p.m.

via Zoom

Presented in Spanish

[Register here](#)

The Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship invites the Latinx business community to learn about the requirements

and the application process for PPP loans. Industry experts will help you navigate PPP loans. Latinx businesses will also share their experience in the loan application process.

## **Knowledge NOW: The Industrial Athlete – A proactive approach to helping your workforce**

Presented by: IRG Physical & Hand Therapy  
Wednesday, May 12

12-1 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported 2.8 million recordable injuries with about 31% of these injuries resulting in lost work days in 2018. Employees missing work due to injury impacts productivity, performance and operational costs. Learn how you can maintain a healthy and productive workforce.

## **Chamber Membership Luncheon: State of the City**

Wednesday, May 26

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Mayor Jill Boudreau presents an update on the City of Mount Vernon.

Sponsored by:



## **Drive-in Movie Night: Jurassic Park**

Friday, June 4

9:35 p.m.

Skagit Valley College

Free

This month we'll be screening *Jurassic Park*. Ticket reservations open one week prior to the showing.

## PSE awards workforce development grant to the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has awarded the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation a \$6,000 grant in support of its workforce development efforts through Experience Work Project. The grant is funded through Puget Sound Energy's Powerful Partnerships Program, which is committed to helping organizations supporting the environment and workforce development in our region.

The pandemic has accelerated the demand for a more skilled workforce as well as entry-level positions in various industries. The partnership with PSE will allow the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation to enhance its program by launching new experiential learning/on-the-job opportunities with a clear pathway to access high demand careers and occupations.

Participants will be able to learn from the growing job market and potential career paths interacting with professionals and establishing relationships for employment opportunities.

powerful  
**PARTNER**



With a focus on economic recovery, the partnership will also deliver valuable resources, tools and training on ways to save energy as well as safety and emergency preparedness for low-income adults served by the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation.

The Chamber Foundation's workforce development and Career Connect programs are funded by the Opportunity Grant Program/Northwest Workforce Council, Skagit Valley College, Shell Puget Sound Refinery and Puget Sound Energy.

For more information please contact Business Development and Foundation Director Silvia Reed at (360) 395-2944, [Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com](mailto:Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com).

## Retaining employees more necessary than ever

*...continued from page 1*

add to the diversity of your staff, in whatever way you currently lack? You may have to communicate using different methods to find these new folks, but it will be worth it.

A few more things are important to consider: First, more people will be willing or able to return to the workforce post-Covid, but that will likely be only a small and temporary benefit. Also, retaining the employees you already have will be more necessary than ever. You will be far better off if you develop their skills, help them reach their full potential and compensate them accordingly, compared to having to replace

them. Finally, our severe housing shortage must be addressed. People will travel only so far before your job isn't worth having.

Let's continue a conversation on this topic. If you have any knowledge or expertise on finding employees at a time when it is difficult to do so, please get in touch with me. The Chamber will share such information, along with any tools/programs available, to assist businesses in finding good employees.

**Tune In**  
Chamber Chat  
Wednesday Mornings

**KAPS**  
Country  
8:05 a.m.

**KBRC**  
Classic Hits  
8:20 a.m.

# Get to Know Fernandez Dental

Dr. Lupita Fernandez of Fernandez Dental in Mount Vernon knew she would be a dentist from the age of 9.

At the time, growing up in Puerto Rico, her mother was concerned about Lupita's teeth and sent her to the nearby dental college for an examination where her older cousin was training to be a dentist.

Young Lupita was hooked from that first visit to the dental college.

"I loved the white coats; I loved the smell; I loved the sounds," she said. It was then and there she decided to become a dentist.

Today, Dr. Fernandez has been practicing dentistry for nearly 31 years and will celebrate five years in her Mount Vernon office in June. Her practice offers general dentistry for all ages, and she is bi-lingual, speaking both English and Spanish. Dr. Clarence Holden also works in the practice part time.

Dr. Fernandez says her entire team is a "tight-knit group that cares immensely about the benefit of the patients."

When it comes to patient care, Dr. Fernandez wants to involve her patients in the decision-making process in determining treatments.

Modern dental technology plays a role, she says.

"Now, we have inter-oral cameras that help you see what I see," she explains, so patients can really understand what is happening to their pearly whites.

Dentistry has changed in many ways since she started practicing, Dr. Fernandez says. Novocaine is no longer used as an anesthetic, amalgams aren't used in fillings, and rubber impression trays have been replaced with 3-D scanners can make an impression of the teeth instead.

"Whitening techniques are better and faster,"



**Dr. Lupita Fernandez**

she adds. Now, what may have taken several weeks to accomplish can be done in one visit.

And if patients need specialized care, Dr. Fernandez has developed a network of specialists to refer to.

Talking with Dr. Fernandez, you quickly realize how much she loves her work.

"Dentistry is fun for me," she says. "I love working with my hands. It allows me to be a bit of an artist. And dentistry allows me to pursue my passion for helping people."

The social aspect of her work is also rewarding for her. She enjoys developing lasting relationships with her patients, often with entire families.

"I love that teeth come attached to people!"

To learn more about Fernandez Dental, visit [www.fernandezdental.com](http://www.fernandezdental.com)

## Member reveals positive return on investment

Becoming a member of the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce has been very beneficial. As a leader of a local nonprofit agency, I was at first hesitant to join, thinking our agency does not meet the criteria (we are not selling a physical product). However, I decided to give it a try. I took the opportunity to learn more about my community and meet some amazing people.

I appreciate how the Chamber staff strategically plan and tailor events to meet the needs of the community while also promoting the various businesses, events and nonprofits. I especially appreciate Silvia Reed and her willingness to check in with me just to see how things are going and if she can be of assistance with any upcoming projects or events. This personal connection allows for leaders such as myself to feel connected and supported, especially during the pandemic.

Through this membership, I've learned more about business strategies, marketing our "product," and found easy ways to network with other leaders. Our investment in the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce has really been an investment in myself as a leader and ultimately in the agency I represent.

As a local nonprofit serving Skagit County, I proudly support the Chamber, and I encourage other nonprofits to invest in their professional development by becoming a member.



**Amanda Sloan**

**Amanda Sloan, Executive Director**  
**Skagit Preschool and Resource Center (SPARC)**

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### Tammy Reim-Ledbetter

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## STAFF

President/CEO **Andy Mayer**

Business Development and

Foundation Director **Silvia Reed**

Operations Director **Jeremy Kindlund**

Marketing Specialist **Hilary Parker**

Visitor Information Services

**Marinus Rouw**

## Member Announcements

### Mount Vernon Chamber partners with Skagit County

#### Department of Emergency Management to provide masks to restaurant workers

Under a Governor's Initiative, the Washington State Emergency Management Department is providing masks to all restaurant employees. Skagit County Department of Emergency Management has partnered with the local chambers of commerce to distribute those masks. Each employee will receive three KN95 masks and two cloth masks. Chambers will handle distribution in their municipality, and restaurants don't need to be chamber members to participate. Please contact Jeremy Kindlund to arrange pickup in Mount Vernon, (360) 428-8547.

### Skagit Regional Health sponsors Cooking and Nutrition: Eating for Fuel

If you are getting ready to hike a mountain, walk in your first 5k or are a seasoned triathlete, your food choices and eating schedule can help or hurt your performance. Learn how to adequately fuel for various activities and optimize recovery. Practical strategies for food and drinks will be shared. This free presentation will take place Thursday, May 20 from 2-3 p.m. and be led via Zoom by a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist from Sound Dietitians, LLC. Pre-registration is required by visiting [stillyvalleyhealth.org](http://stillyvalleyhealth.org) or call (360) 386-9918. This event is sponsored by Skagit Regional Health.

### Envirostars for Business

If your business has started or is just thinking about ways to become more sustainable or environmentally friendly, EnviroStars is the best place to start. EnviroStars is a FREE, one-stop hub for businesses across Washington to get info, help and recognition for actions that protect their workplace, community, and planet. PSE is an EnviroStars member agency and can support your business on energy saving projects and make it even easier to become a recognized EnviroStars business! Learn more at [www.envirostars.org](http://www.envirostars.org)

## Thank You Renewing Members

### 30+ Years

Hawthorne Funeral Home,  
Crematory & Memorial Park  
Woodcraft Wood Floors, Inc.

### 20+ Years

Goodwill - Mount Vernon  
Washington Bulb Co., Inc.

### 15+ Years

Red Apple Market

### 10+ Years

Bayshore Office Products  
Conway Pub and Eatery  
Group Benefits Northwest  
Ideal Rent-All  
Lithtex Northwest  
McDonald's - College Way  
Rosario Skin Clinic  
Thousand Trails Mount  
Vernon

### 5+ Years

Banner Power Solutions  
Dwayne Lane's Auto Family  
FSC Enterprises, LLC  
Heritage Flight Museum  
HKP Architects  
La Conner Seafood & Prime Rib  
House  
Loving Farms  
Mary Kay - Nicole Bauer  
McIntyre Hall, Performing Arts  
Rainy Day Basement Systems  
Skagit Tradition Realty  
The Grand Willow Inn  
Event Venue and B & B

### Less than 5 Years

Chinn GYN, LLC  
Hilltop Pharmacy  
La Conner Channel Lodge  
Minuteman Press  
Mr T's Family Cafe  
New Life Services  
Pacionis Pizzeria and Lounge  
SkagitTalk.com  
SPARC - Skagit Preschool &  
Resource Center  
Willowbrook Manor

## Ambassadors

### Chair - Marla Chapa

Skagit Social

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Take I-5 Exit 227 (College Way), go West and then North on Freeway Dr. (across from Walmart)



# The Chamber hits the road



**Willowbrook Manor owner Terry Gifford**

This month, your Chamber staff was busy meeting and greeting you, our members. It's great to see your warm smiles – or at least your smiling eyes!



**South Fork Farms owner Gary Wiegand (L)**



**Antojitos El Mangal LLC owner Maria Lezama with the Chamber's Silvia Reed.**



**Chamber Ambassador Liz Theaker at Pyung Chang Korean BBQ.**



**Chamber Ambassador Liz Theaker with the staff at Cascade Prosthetics & Orthotics, Inc.**



## The Chamber hits the road



New member Mitch Britt of Bold Eye Media was greeted by Chamber Ambassador Crystal King.



Lee Thomas Palmer (R) passes the torch to Melissa Howlett, the new executive director at Logan Creek Retirement Community.

## Welcome, Papa John's



Papa John's Pizza celebrated the opening of its first Skagit County location with a ribbon cutting on April 16. Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau was among those in attendance to mark the occasion. Papa John's is located at 100 E. College Way, sharing space in the Denny's location. It offers delivery and take out options and is open seven days a week.

**Please Vaccinate!**

**So that restaurants, gyms and all businesses can survive;  
For the health of our friends and communities;  
So that we can get back to the events we enjoy;  
So that we can be together without fear.**

**Thank you!**

# Welcome New Members

## Gravity Coffee

Mark Miller  
(253) 447-8740  
1701 Continental Pl.  
Mount Vernon  
[www.gccoffee.com](http://www.gccoffee.com)  
Drive-thru coffee stand

## Skagit Autoworks

Juan Galban  
(360) 440-5703  
17713 Dunbar Rd.  
Mount Vernon  
[skagitautoworks.com](http://skagitautoworks.com)  
Quality autobody repair shop serving Skagit County. Family owned and operated. Se habla español.

## Garden Rosalyn

Ector Mendoza  
(360) 202-7872  
16645 Jungquist Rd.  
Mount Vernon  
Find Garden Rosalyn on [Facebook](#)  
Located in the heart of Skagit Valley with an impressive view of the Cascade Mountains, Garden Rosalyn showcases beautiful tulip fields during the tulip festival season (April) and dahlias between May and early fall. Se habla español.



## No 7 Development LLC

Lisa Munson  
(360) 899-4143  
2103 Old Hwy 99 S. Rd.  
Mount Vernon  
[www.no7development.com](http://www.no7development.com)  
No 7 Development is a licensed, insured, bonded, and certified custom home builder and remodeling contractor serving Whatcom County, Skagit County, Island County and Snohomish County.

## Sherwood Community Services

Angie Ramsey  
(425) 334-4071  
2021 E. College Way, Ste. 120  
Mount Vernon  
[www.sherwoodcs.org](http://www.sherwoodcs.org)  
Sherwood strives to create an inclusive society where children and adults with disabilities have the ability to live full, independent lives as a part of their community. Sherwood takes pride in serving all people with disabilities and their families, including individuals with significant disabilities, those in rural areas and non-English speaking communities.



## Partner Members

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# Upbeat Award Winner: Linda Tyler

Linda Tyler has worked for the Port of Skagit for the two years, but is no stranger to the Valley. She grew up in the Sedro-Woolley area, then attended the University of Washington, where she received her bachelor's degree in communications. She immediately put her degree to use working for a small radio station. Eventually, the non-profit world became her calling and she was the first program director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Skagit County. As the Community Outreach Administrator at the Port of Skagit, Linda works on the Port's website, publications and various outreach projects that highlight the good work of the Port.

Linda is involved in several community organizations, including serving on the boards of the Sedro-Woolley Chamber, Burlington Chamber,



**L-R: The Chamber's Silvia Reed, Linda Tyler and Macklin Hamilton, who nominated Linda for the award.**

Innovation Partnership Zone and the Padilla Bay Foundation.

## BRONZE LEGACY



### ORTHOPEDICS & SPORTS MEDICINE

For more information, visit:  
[skagitregionalhealth.org/orthopedics](http://skagitregionalhealth.org/orthopedics)



# MOVE WITHOUT HESITATION

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Locally founded in the fall of 2006, Children of the Valley provides a safe, compassionate, and enriching after-school program for under-resourced children enrolled in the Mount Vernon School District. Our mission is simple: provide a positive, caring, and supportive environment for children-in-need. We offer instructor-led academic, enrichment, and social-emotional learning opportunities in a safe after-school setting for Mount Vernon School District students grades K-5.

Join us as we kick off our Annual Art Auction during a live Facebook event Friday, May 7th at 7pm! This will be the official start time for our online auction featuring beautiful works of art from beloved local artists such as Ben Mann, Jennifer Bowman, and Maria Wickwire as well as from our very own COV students! Visit us on Facebook @ChildrenOfTheValleyMV to learn more!