

CHAMBER CHAT

February 2023

Skagit County Economic Outlook and Employee Recruitment and Retention Strategies

By Andy Mayer/President & CEO

The economic outlook for Skagit County, Washington, is positive overall. In November 2020, the unemployment rate for Skagit County was at 6.1%, slightly lower than the national rate of 6.7%. In the long term, economists expect steady job growth over the next several years. Businesses in Skagit County should look to utilize innovative methods to attract qualified employees. It's important for employers to be proactive in building their talent pipeline to maintain a steady supply of talented individuals. This can include targeted online advertising, networking, utilizing job boards, utilizing local recruitment agencies and expanding the job market to look for prospective employees outside of the Skagit County area. In terms of retention, it's important for businesses to establish a culture of open communication, trust and career advancement opportunities. In addition, employers should look for ways to add more flexibility to their employees' lives such as remote working, increased vacation time and telecommuting. This can lead to increased productivity, employee satisfaction and ultimately higher retention rates. It is also important to remain competitive when it comes to employee compensation, benefits and other perks to ensure talented employees stay with the business.

***The paragraph above was generated word for word by an AI writing generator. I'm sharing it with you for a few reasons. First of all, AI has been in the news a lot lately for a variety of applications, including writing. No surprise, opinions on its use go from positive to it being the end of the world as we know it. I think the sample above suggests that it might be somewhere in between. If I had written it I certainly wouldn't have used data that is over two years old. It missed the pandemic and its impact entirely. The suggestions on employee recruitment and retention are better. Even so, it's rather generic and doesn't reference any factors that are unique to our area.

This all brings me to suggest that you should get your information on these important topics, in-person at two programs this month from organizations and speakers that you can trust. EDASC's Economic Forecast Night is on the evening of the 15th and the Chamber's Luncheon on the 22nd features a presentation on "Building a Better Workplace: Recruitment & Retention Strategies." I hope to see you at both of them!



GOLD



SILVER



Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce
(360) 428-8547
mountvernonchamber.com

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Skagit Valley College

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15+ Years

Children's Museum of Skagit County
Skagit Transit
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5+ Years

Helping Hands
Skagit Tradition Realty
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10+ Years

B&B Financial Resources Opportunities Corporation
Chad Fisher Construction
Conway Pub and Eatery
Foss Heating & Cooling
Manpower
McDonald's- College Way
Thousand Trails Mount Vernon

Less than 5 Years

Mutual of Omaha Reverse Mortgage
SB&C, Ltd.
Temperate Habits Brewing Company

Calendar of Events

Latino Business Leaders - Preparando sus Impuestos - Presented in Spanish-

Wednesday, February 22

6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Skagit Station

105 E. Kincaid, Mount Vernon

[Register here](#)

thrivent[®]

Shawn Steffens, ChFC, RICP
(360) 707-7677

Membership Luncheon - Building a Better Workplace: Recruitment & Retention Strategies

Wednesday, February 22

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

Hillcrest Lodge

1717 S 13th St

Mount Vernon

[Register here](#)

Sponsored by:



2023 Skagit Chili & Chowder Cook-Off

After a very successful comeback year in 2022 we are excited to announce the 2023 Skagit Chili & Chowder Cook-Off. Amateurs and professionals are invited to compete on Saturday, April 1, at Farmstrong Brewing Company for the title of Skagit's favorite chili and chowder. Cook-off attendees pick the winners by voting with their bowls. The top prize in each division is \$150, a commemorative plaque and bragging rights for the best chili or chowder in the county!

Ready to throw your hat in the ring? It's just \$25 for amateur or professional entries. See page 9 for the entry form.

Interested in sponsoring the event? We have sponsorship levels available for every budget, which include opportunities through print and digital advertising as well as day-of-event visibility. See page 10 for sponsorship opportunities.

For questions regarding the cook-off or sponsorships, contact Jeremy Kindlund at Jeremy@MountVernonChamber.com.

Welcome New Members

Country Financial - The Elton Group

Morgan Elton
(360) 873-7530
www.representatives.countryfinancial.com/services/rep.morgan.elton.html
127 East Hazel Ave
Burlington
Family owned insurance business. We provide auto, home, life, health, and business insurance.

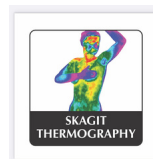


Sabores Catering

Sandra Rosales
(360) 899-5631
www.facebook.com/SaboresCateringWA
810 W Division St
Mount Vernon
Skagit Valley family restaurant featuring authentic Mexican flavors. We serve breakfast and lunch. Our food is made from scratch. We offer delicious tacos, enchiladas, quesadillas, burritos and more.

Skagit Thermography

Sarah Herlickson
(425) 879-3578
www.skagitthermography.com
320 E Fairhaven Ave Ste 205
Burlington
Featuring Breast and Full Body Medical Thermal Imaging for Men, Women and Children.



Strong Family Insurance

Gloria Castro
(360) 812-6466
www.strongfamilyinsurance.business.site
811 Cleveland Ave Ste 105
Mount Vernon
Our agency specializes in business insurance and bonds for all company types.



Strong Transportation LLC

Jeremy Strong
(971) 645-0698
Mount Vernon

BRONZE LEGACY



Board of Directors

Chair - Brian Ivie

Skagit Regional Health

Past Chair - Bill Henkel

Community Action of Skagit County

Treasurer - Tammy Reim-Ledbetter

Alaska USA

Member at Large - DUBY PETIT

Skagit Publishing

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COA Mexican Eatery

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City of Mount Vernon

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All About Hearing

Matt Gill

Marathon Petroleum Corporation

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Puget Sound Energy

Flora Lucatero

Children of the Valley

David Lukov

Kern Funeral Home

Andrew Miller

Tulip Valley Farms

Todd Owsley

Farmstrong Brewing Company

Julia Phillip

Julia Phillip Realty

Dr. Amanda Rentschler

Roosevelt Dental Center

Jon Ronngren

Mount Vernon School District

Liz Theaker

Camp Korey

Tony White

Skagit Valley Food Co-op

STAFF

Andy Mayer President/CEO

Silvia Reed Business Development and
Foundation Director

Jeremy Kindlund Operations Director

Marinus Rouw & Bob Johnson

Visitor Information Services

Member Announcements

Raise the Roof Gala & Benefit Auction

Skagit Habitat is excited to present "Unmasking Affordable Housing." Our annual gala and benefit auction is a key fundraiser that helps us make a greater impact in our community by providing affordable housing solutions and empowering hard-working families in Skagit County! Join us for a fun-filled night including a silent auction, served dinner, a dessert dash, entertainment, and dancing. The night will be Venetian-carnival themed, so come prepared with your best masquerade mask! [Purchase tickets here.](#)

Date: Saturday, March 11, 2023

Time: 6-9pm *doors open at 5p*

Location: Skagit Casino Resort - 5984 Darrk Ln. Bow, WA 98232

Skagit Regional Health opens new Station Square clinic in Mount Vernon



Members of the Public Hospital District #1 Board of Commissioners, the Skagit Regional Health leadership team, Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau, project team members and local leaders gathered on January 4, 2023 for a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of Skagit Regional Health – Station Square. The new, 30,000 square foot clinic located at 901 S. 5th Street in downtown Mount Vernon, opens to patients on Monday, January 9, 2023.



Tune In

Chamber Chat
Wednesday Mornings



8:05 a.m.



8:20 a.m.

For more member announcements, visit
mountvernonchamber.com/member-announcements

Send your announcements to
Jeremy@MountVernonChamber.com

“Speaking of Women”, the chamber first program for woman-only

Speaking of Women is a brand new chamber program designed to create an outlet for business women to connect with one another, empower each other and mentor upcoming business leaders. It is more than exchanging cards, it's about sharing our stories.

The program includes 3 featured presentations:

- The Power of the Pack
- Women in Male-Dominated Industries
- Successful Businesses by Women

By joining Speaking of Women, participants will

- Attend quarterly presentations that inspire and empower women
- Experience a sense of belonging in a welcoming environment
- Expand their professional network with like-minded women

The program includes a social time, networking but primarily meaningful conversations among women and a featured presentation that will inspire and empower participants. Topics have been selected to address the needs of women and deepen those relationships that sometimes start with a card exchange at a business event and is ready to evolve into a business partnership, mentorship or friendship.

No better time to kick-off the “Speaking of Women Series” than on International Woman’s Day, on March 8 when we bring Debbie Page from Bellevue to present on The Power of the Pack.

Debbie Page is an internationally recognized and award-winning entrepreneur, business coach and advocate for women’s economic independence. For over two decades Debbie has worked with women and money and has acquired, scaled and sold two businesses of her own. She knows first hand how the Power of The Pack can transform lives and businesses.

Members Program Fee \$150.00

Some levels of membership (Bronze, Silver, Gold) will be able to send one or more women representatives to join the program. If you are not sure about your membership level, please contact me at (360) 395-2944 or via email Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com

Partner Members

Allstate - Mayra Nava Agency, Barron Smith Daugert, PLLC, Best Western PLUS, Skagit Valley Inn, Birch Equipment Co., Budget Towing & Repair, Coastal Farm & Ranch, Costco Wholesale, D&P Electronic Home Monitoring, Foothills Toyota, Fortiphi, Haggen Food & Pharmacy, Hampton Inn & Suites, Infinity Painting & Renovations, Kern Funeral Home, Landed Gentry Homes & Communities, Loving Farms, Max Dale's Steak and Chop House, Mount Vernon School District, North Coast Credit Union, Northwest Escrow, LLC, Pacific Premier Bank, PogoZone, Port of Skagit, Puget Sound Energy, SERVPRO, Skagit Public Utility District 1, Skagit Valley Casino Resort, Skagit Valley College, Skagit Regional Health, Tacos Tecalitlan, Testing and Commissioning Services, LLC, Walmart, White Branches, Williams & Nulle, PLLC, CPAs

Ambassadors

Chair - Liz Theaker

Camp Korey

Betsy Anorbe

Betsy Anorbe Real Estate

Marla Chapa

Skagit Social

Susan Cooper

Susan Cooper

Ector DeLeon

Tulip Valley Winery

Joley Garner

WAFD Insurance Group, Inc.

Gerardo Gonzalez

Umpqua Bank

Carol Harris

PrimeLending

Jaime Huss

Washington Federal

Crystal King

NW Technology

Brian Largent

Flatstick OTG LLC

Blake Rawlins

Guardian Northwest Title &

Escrow

Tammy Reim-Ledbetter

Alaska USA

Tony Salas

Eden Home Health

Clarissa Wong

CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC

January in pictures



Ribbon Cutting at
Ca Phe Song



Chamber Ambassadors meet at
Temperate Habits Brewing Company



Chamber members and staff take
advantage of the photo booth at
Dwayne Lane's Skagit Subaru



Julie wins the grand prize of the Shop
Local campaign where over \$85,000 was
spent at local businesses

Annual Awards

We were very happy to announce our 2022 Annual Awards winner at the January Membership Luncheon. Not pictured is Rhonda Tingley, SaviBank who won the Chairperson Award for her long-time service on the Board of Directors. She has also been our Treasurer for many years. Thank you to everyone who voted and congratulations to the winners!



Peoples Bank won
Business of the Year



Tammy Reim-
Ledbetter, Alaska
USA won Making a
Difference Award



Flora Lucatero,
Children of the Valley
won Business Person
of the Year



Custom Cleaning
Services won the
Rising Star Award



Crystal King, NW
Technology won
Ambassador of the
Year

A Mount Vernon Chamber program designed as an outlet for business women to connect with one another, empower each other and mentor upcoming business leaders



SPEAKING OF WOMEN

2023 SERIES

THE POWER OF THE PACK
MARCH 8 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM

WOMEN IN MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES
JUNE 14 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM

SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES BY WOMEN
SEPT. 13 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM

Various locations

WHY JOIN?

- Attend quarterly presentations that inspire and empower women
- Experience a sense of belonging in a welcoming environment
- Expand your professional network with like-minded women

Members: \$150.00

Admission and hors d'oeuvres included



For information

Silvia Reed | Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com | (360) 395-2944
www.MountVernonChamber.com

A Mount Vernon Chamber program designed to create an outlet for business women to connect with one another, empower each other and mentor upcoming business leaders



SPEAKING OF WOMEN

THE POWER OF THE PACK

Presented by Debby Page
Business Coach for Women

Wednesday March 8

4:30 - 6:00 PM

Skagit Landing

Join this dynamic and interactive presentation where you will learn the top reasons women have limitless potential in business, greater success with money, excel at relationships and how YOU can create The Power of The Pack!

Speaking of Women Series

Members: \$150.00

Includes 3 events:

- The Power of the Pack
- Women in Male-Dominated Industries
- Successful Businesses by Women



For information

Silvia Reed | Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com | (360) 395-2944
www.MountVernonChamber.com



Presented by:



Saturday, April 1, from 1pm to 4pm at Farmstrong Brewing Company

1st Place Professional Division - \$150 and an award plaque

2nd Place Professional Division - Entry Fee Refunded

1st Place Amateur Division - \$150 and an award plaque

2nd Place Amateur Division - Entry Fee Refunded

Craft Stove Best of Show Award - Award plaque

Team Name: _____

Team Captain: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Yes, I will need electricity to prepare my chili/chowder

No, I have a camp stove or propane to prepare and keep my product warm

I am entering Chili and/or Chowder to the competition

I will be competing as a Professional or Amateur

Space is limited! Please fill out and return by Friday, March 17

Please send your completed form and \$25 entry fee to:

Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce

301 W Kincaid St.

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

For more information please contact Jeremy Kindlund at
(360) 428-8547 or Jeremy@MountVernonChamber.com



Sponsorship Opportunities
Saturday, April 1 2023
at Farmstrong Brewing Company

Royal Sponsor: **\$1,000**
Company logo on promotional poster
Company name on printed and digital marketing materials
Logo with a link to your website on MountVernonChamber.com
Social media promotion on all Chamber channels
Mentions in both the weekly and monthly Chamber newsletters
Display table at the cook-off
Special recognition during the event

Major Sponsor: **\$550**
Company logo on poster
Company name on printed and digital marketing materials
Logo with a link to your website on MountVernonChamber.com
Social media promotion on all Chamber channels
Mentions in both the weekly and monthly Chamber newsletters
Special recognition during the event

Supporting Sponsor: **\$325**
Company logo displayed on promotional poster
Company name on printed and digital marketing materials
Logo with a link to your website on MountVernonChamber.com
Promotion on Chamber Facebook page
Mentions in both the weekly and monthly Chamber newsletters
Special recognition during the event

Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 1007
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 428-8547
Jeremy@MountVernonChamber.com





AVAILABLE
BEGINNING
JANUARY 1ST

2023 Corporate Memberships

THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS PERK

A GREAT WAY TO:

- Thank Customers
- Reward Employees
- Strengthen Vendor Relationships

Purchase by February 28th and receive a special bonus offer!


Please contact Head Golf Professional Eric Ferrier for more details.
eferrier@avalonlinks.com




Fiber Internet for Condos & Apartments

City of **MOUNT VERNON** Washington


- Lower pricing and quality service means Higher Occupancy Rates!
- Elevator phones, Kiosk parcel storage, HVAC are available!
- Common area WiFi
- Turnover is lower when value is High!
- Speeds up to a Gigabit
- Affordable TV
- 24 hour Support
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- Telephone Services
- Fiber Optic Speeds
- Friendly help
- Month to Month



High-speed Internet



Locally owned & operated



Unlimited monthly access

1. Get the services you want: Pick your Internet speed, add Phone, Fax, and TV if you like. Our process is seamless for making changes... **That's PogoZone!**
2. If you have older infrastructure and don't know how the owner will consider spending thousands of dollars on new wiring? **Think PogoZone!**
3. Saving time and money while upgrading services for your tenants? **PogoZone!**

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We can make your infrastructure run circles around our competition and usually on your existing wiring! **We are PogoZone!**



Internet speed 100/100
Starting at
\$49.95/month

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Starting at
\$34.95/month

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Starting at
\$24.95/month



Contact us for more information
 (360) 676-8772 - Option 3 (sales)
 Sales@Pogozone.com

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