

THE ECONOMIC REPORT

A SUPPLEMENT OF *The Chronicle*

Top 10 Biz Stories of 2021

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County Highlights Key Developments



Clayco Project Superintendent David Cordray, left, in charge of the construction of the Lowe's Home Improvement regional distribution center just off Interstate 5 near Winlock, points out details of the 1.2 million square foot project during a tour earlier this year. Next to him is Lisa Goodman, The Benaroya Company marketing director, Lewis Economic Development Council External Relations Eric Sonnenberg, a Clayco project manager, and LEDC Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

1. LOWE'S OPENS WINLOCK DISTRIBUTION CENTER

Penske Logistics, in partnership with Lowe's Home Improvement, opened the new 1.2 million square foot distribution facility in Winlock's industrial park.

At the time of the facility's grand opening Nov. 2, the facility had 116 total employees and was serving 30 Lowe's stores, with plans to expand service to 63 stores by the end of 2022.

"We're really proud to have the Lowe's-Penske partnership here in Western Washington, in beautiful Winlock, Washington, which for many of us, we did not know what Winlock was six or eight months ago. We do now and we're very very appreciative of the great support we've gotten locally," said Peter Bayer Jr., senior vice president of distribution for Penske Logistics, at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the facility.

The project was developed by Bellevue-based Benaroya. Located just adjacent to I-5, The Benaroya Company's Winlock project is the largest industrial building — 1.2 million square feet — in Washington state for 2021.

Cost of construction on the 74-acre project was more than \$100 million bringing hundreds of construction workers to lodge and eat at local establishments for more than a year. Another 250 acres are available for development at the Winlock site in the coming years, with various parcels available to accommodate buildings from 1.4 million square feet to 75,000 thousand square feet (for sale or lease).

Once a proposed electric substation is completed, the site will attract hundreds, if not thousands of jobs to the county. Construction jobs alone on the Lowe's project numbered about 400.

The project has been under development by Benaroya for more than 10 years as industrial growth has extended south from the Seattle metro area. The Winlock property — the largest fully entitled industrial site in Western Washington — can accommodate the largest of distribution centers between Seattle and Portland with excellent access to I-5.

2. TAYLOR'S PURCHASE THE CHRONICLE

Chad and Coralee Taylor, owners of The Silver Agency in Chehalis, acquired the 131-year-old newspaper The Chronicle from Lafromboise Communications owner Jenifer Lafromboise Falcon. The sale also includes the company's other newspapers, the Nisqually Valley News in Yelm and The Reflector in Battle Ground.

Chad and Coralee Taylor said The Chronicle would remain at its location at 321 North Pearl St. in Centralia through a lease agreement.

Chad Taylor is publisher, Coralee



Chad Taylor (pictured) and his wife Coralee purchased The Chronicle at the beginning of 2021.

Taylor is the CEO and their son, Franklin Taylor, is the vice president. The name of the new company is CT Publishing.

They said their appreciation of The Chronicle as the primary source of local news for the area and their desire to see it remain viable helped drive their decision to purchase the newspapers.

"The thought of not having a local family-owned newspaper was troubling to us," the Taylors wrote upon their purchase. "Having been in the media business for as long as we have, we understand how expensive it is to report the news and operate the other side of the business, the side that helps companies attract customers and grow their bottom line. Without The Chronicle, the independent nature of Lewis County will slowly blend into Olympia or Seattle to the north or Longview, Kelso, and Portland to the south."

3. TOLEDOTEL PLANS BROADBAND EXPANSION

ToledoTel was among 18 companies statewide announced in early November of 2021 due to receive a share of roughly \$4.85 million from Washington state Universal Communications Services Program to help support broadband services in Lewis County.

ToledoTel was named among companies that will receive funding to support existing broadband services. A news release states that the companies have "certified that 100% of their existing customers have broadband access, and also (are) committed to expand service to all new locations."

In addition, as announced in October of 2021, ToledoTel along with the Lewis County Board of Commissioners is moving forward with a proposal from ToledoTel to secure grant funding through the Washington State Broadband Office to build out fiber optic networking connections to more than 2,300 homes and businesses in the

Winlock area.

The Toledo-based telecommunications company beat out two other proposals submitted by Comcast and the Lewis County Public Utility District. The two-member county commission voted to move forward with ToledoTel's proposal.

Dale Merten, chief operating officer at ToledoTel, said the goal of the project is to expand its already-existing broadband network of 200 customers in the Grand Prairie and downtown Winlock area and bring that infrastructure "deep throughout the Winlock area."

Aside from 3 miles, almost all of the project would be buried fiber cable, Merten said. The cost to connect houses and structures to the network would be free of charge and include a month of free service. The project would provide households 10 gigabits of symmetrical internet speed.

These grants, funded through the state's Infrastructure Acceleration Grants program, are expected to range between \$10,000 and \$250,000, according to a news release from the Washington state Department of Commerce, and pay out a total \$135 million in its first round of funding.

ToledoTel estimates the total cost of its project will be \$22.3 million. The company would provide 10% matching funds to the project through this proposed project. Merten said he expects they should be able to have costs obligated by 2024 and the project built out by the 2026 deadline laid out by the state.

With more than 1,800 broadband subscribers currently, this project could theoretically double the company's servicing network over the next five years. The project would cover 250 miles of fiber construction within the Winlock area. ToledoTel hopes to have about 820 new customers connected by the end of 2022.

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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Covid Continues, Top Stories of the Year Should Mention New Executive Director of the Alliance

BY BEN M. KOSTICK

Chairman Economic Alliance of Lewis County

As we wrap up our Christmas festivities this weekend, we now turn to the next big event — New Year's Eve and putting behind 2021 and the ringing in of the new year 2022.

This past year has been a doozy. The pandemic was looking like a houseguest who overstayed his welcome and was about to finally leave this summer. Then came Omicron, and the pundits and politicians geared up their campaign to get vaccinated once again. Hopefully, this strain, while way more contagious than Delta, will prove mild in its health impacts and finally Covid will be more of a nuisance annual flu. Let's cross our fingers.

In the meantime, let's do what we can to put up with state edicts and stay safe until we know what this new Covid reality means. Be responsible for yourself and those around you. Get informed via a wide variety of informational outlets.



BEN M. KOSTICK
Chairman of the
Economic Alliance of
Lewis County

PAYROLL TAX CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Last week businesses received an early Christmas package from our Democrat leaders in Olympia, one that is favorable for business interests.

With much pressure from the public and leaders from both sides of the aisle, Gov. Jay Inslee, the state House and Senate agreed to delay the implementation of the Washington Cares Tax, the 0.58% payroll tax that was set to become a reality on Jan. 1, 2022, just a week away.

"Legislators have identified some areas that need adjustments," Inslee said. "There is an appetite to refine and improve this bill. And I feel pretty good about having some resolution about that."

"My actions mean that the state will not collect those funds until the Legislature sorts through these issues. While legislation is under consideration to pause the withholding of LTC fees, employers will not be subject to penalties and interest for not withholding fees from employees' wages during this transition."

Kudos go to our own 20th District state Rep. Peter Abbarno, R-Centralia, who has spent much effort and time in pushing against the payroll tax. Earlier this month Abbarno pushed hard against the tax and has prefiled five bills aimed to gut the payroll tax for the next session.

Let's hope in the short session starting in January in Olympia the Legislature will make some permanent cuts to the payroll tax.

MY TOP STORY OF THE YEAR?

Along with this column, this month's The Economic Report features the top business-related stories of 2021. While not listed, because, well, it's better to be humble, I would be remiss in not adding the selection of Richard DeBolt to the post of Executive Director of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County at the beginning of the year.

The growth of import, membership and activity by The Alliance has been impressive in the past 10 months. Richard has put together an impressive staff. I could point to many successes of The Alliance — a project mapping effort across the county to streamline projects, a new business incubator support program, revitalization of the monthly membership meeting, a first-ever and profitable golf tournament, a county bus tour of some key industries by the board of directors, a vibrant budget, and many others projects both large and small.

■ SEE CHAIRMAN, PAGE C3

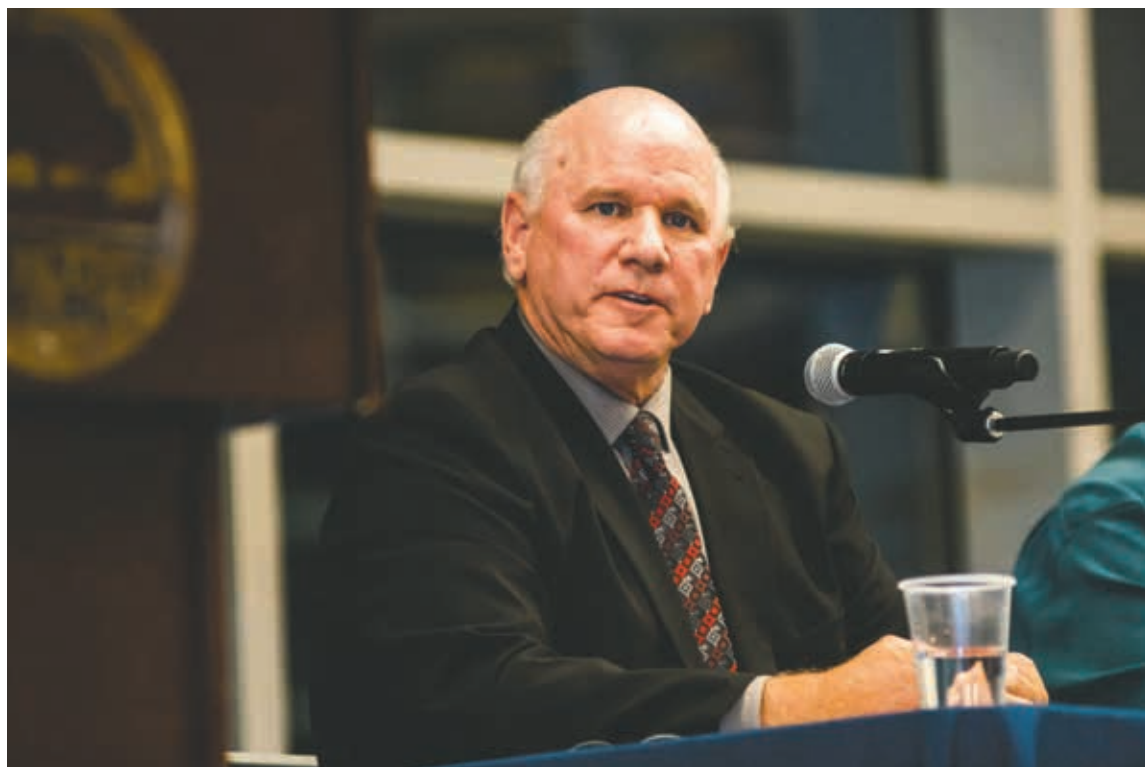
Contributions Still Being Accepted for Stamper Scholarship fund

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County established a scholarship in memory of the late County Commissioner Gary Stamper as announced at its annual meeting.

Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt announced the scholarship fund in honor of the Mossyrock native that will benefit East Lewis County students pursuing a career in education.

At least \$10,000 was raised by attendees to help launch the fund. “We’ve had a lot of our members call us to donate, we’ve had a lot of people want to give money to support Gary,” DeBolt said.

The Alliance is still accepting contributions. They can be mailed to the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, PO BOX 916, Chehalis WA 98532 or by calling our office at 360-748-0114 in memory of Gary Stamper.



Former Lewis County Commissioner Gary Stamper.

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

DR. BOB MOHRBACHER - BUSINESS: CENTRALIA COLLEGE PRESIDENT

Q: How long have you been a member of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County?

A: Since 2016

Q: Why did you join the Alliance?:

A: The Board of Directors has a standing position for the college president. Across the state, the community colleges and the local economic development councils have strong partnerships, because the colleges play a central role in workforce development.

Q: What is a key for the success of your business?:

A: The college is successful if we are able to make students successful. We need to make it easy for students to enroll, to secure the funding they need to pay for their education, to be successful in their classes, and

to complete their requirements for graduation. It’s important for us to stay connected to local and regional businesses in order to deliver relevant programs that will meet the needs of employers and give students the skills they need to thrive as they move into their career paths.

Q: What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

A: The more involved I am, the more I learn about what is happening in our community.

Q: How do you define success?

A: The college’s success is defined by the success of our students. When I talk to people like Randy Mueller,



DR. BOB MOHRBACHER
Centralia College
President

who just finished his role at the Port of Chehalis, and who is a Centralia College graduate, I know that the college is successful because I can see it in the work of our graduates. We are giving students the tools, skills and guidance they need to find a career that is right for them and that helps to support our community.

Q: What is one thing, either industry-related or not, you learned in the last month?

A: It’s nearly impossible to buy a new car during a global pandemic.

Q: What’s the last book you read?

A: I’m reading a book right now called, “The Big Roads: The Untold Story of the Engineers, Visionaries, and Trailblazers who created the American Superhighways.” It’s a history of the interstate highway system, which is a huge factor in the economic and social

life of the country.

Q: What is your favorite meal?

A: My favorite meal is usually the one I’m eating at the moment. I love food and I love to cook. I worked in restaurants for about 15 years before going into education.

Q: What do you do for pleasure outside of running your business?

A: I love to play guitar, love to cook. My wife, Liz, and I love to travel but there has been a lot less of that than usual for the last year and a half. We also enjoy home improvement projects. We built a new deck last year and we’re just finishing up a bathroom remodel.

Q: What is something about you (a fun fact) that not many people know?

A: I was once thrown out of the Library of Congress.

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT — FOR SALE IN CHEHALIS



Dawson Road - Port of Chehalis

\$1.66 million • 9.5 acres

- Build-to-suite available
- Direct access to Interstate 5 interchange
 - Zoning: Industrial
- Electricity: Lewis County PUD
 - Water: City of Chehalis
 - Sewer: City of Chehalis
- Natural Gas: Puget Sound Energy



For information on this property and others available throughout Lewis County (or to list your industrial/commercial property for sale or lease), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at 208.206.5407 or eric@lewiscountyalliance.org, or go to lewisdc.com.

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY & STAFF



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

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TOP 10:

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4. SENTER CHOSEN TO LEAD PORT OF CHEHALIS

The Port of Chehalis selected Lindsey Senter as the incoming CEO of the Port of Chehalis.

Senter replaces outgoing Port of Chehalis CEO Randy Mueller, who has accepted a position to lead the Port of Ridgefield as their incoming CEO.

“We were very pleased with the top three candidates that we interviewed. All of them had significant strengths — different, but significant,” said Port of Chehalis Commissioner Mark Giffey, speaking on his own reasons for choosing Senter. When asked about his own decision to choose Senter to lead the Port of Chehalis, Port Commissioner Mark Anders highlighted his first-hand observations of Senter’s past performance with the Port of Chehalis.

“She’s a known commodity,” Anders said. “She came in as a bookkeeper and rose well beyond that, taking over operating functions at the port and various projects. ... Every time a new challenge came up, Lindsey stepped up to the plate.”

“Through the whole process, to me, she (Senter) was the clear choice,” said Port of Chehalis Commissioner Paul Ericson, echoing the other two port commissioners. “I’ve not worked with her that long, but it’s clear that she has the energy, the enthusiasm, and the drive to do this job well. Her relationships with key organizations that the port already works with are invaluable. I have no doubt in my mind that she is the right choice to work with.”

He continued, adding, “With her natural drive, I just had a feeling she was gonna work harder than the other candidates. And, she will have plenty of help and support from us as commissioners.”

Senter has previously held positions with the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, in addition to managing and operating her own business ventures. Senter took over as CEO on Dec. 1.

5. SHELTON OUTFITTER TAKES CONTROL OF SUNBIRD SHOPPING CENTER

Just months after the death of former co-owner Ghassan “Gus” Salloum — Ron Sturza’s partner since the 1970s — Sturza announced the sale of Sunbird Shopping Center to the owners of Shelton Outfitters, which is located in Mason County.

The sale, which has been in the works over the past year, went into effect Oct. 1.

Shelton Outfitters, located at 707 Cascade Ave. in Shelton, is a clothing store specializing in providing “premium apparel at affordable prices for men, women and children,” including work and recreation wear, its website says.

Though the store may be re-named Chehalis Outfitters sometime in the future, Sturza said, he called them the “perfect buyer.”

“They’re younger, quite frankly more tech-oriented than us old guys are,” Sturza said. “It’s the right move. It’s a good move for Sunbird, the employees and the community.”

Since 1977, Sunbird Shopping Center has been Lewis County’s darling outfitter store, selling products including sporting goods, clothing, hardware, housewares, gardening and canning supplies and more.

6. POWERSPORTS NORTHWEST SOLD TO LOCAL FAMILY AFTER FOUR DECADES WITH PREVIOUS OWNERS

Roughly four decades ago, Dave Lipinski and his business partner, Jeff Ashe, bought what was then Steve’s Suzuki from the Rasmussen family. This last month, the duo handed off the same business with a new name to another family — the Hubberts. The Aug. 1 sale marked the

end of an era for two local motor-sport enthusiasts, but a new one for a local family keen to continue the business’s track record of ambition.

Jonathan Hubbert, the new president of Powersports Northwest based in downtown Centralia, said the goal is to bring “new energy” into the dealership while building upon the strong foundation and years of commitment Ashe and Lipinski have poured into it.

Powersports Northwest, located in downtown Centralia along Tower Avenue, currently buys, sells and finances motor and electric vehicles from Honda, Polaris, Suzuki and Yamaha.

“I’m excited to be back and owning a local business again. I think with the growing market here, and the big footprint that we have, I think the opportunity to expand and grow is very good here in Lewis County ... I’m very excited,” Hubbert said.

He and his sister were previously the fourth-generation owners of Tires Incorporated, which did business in Chehalis and Olympia. It had commercial facilities, a retread plant and retail departments before its sale in 2019 to Bridgestone Corporation. Hubbert went on to work as a sales manager for GCR Tires and Services before purchasing the beloved Centralia business.

Hubbert said they have ambitious plans for the dealership moving forward. They plan on adding a 5,000 square-foot showroom floor.

7. PACKWOOD SEWER EXPANSION

Packwood finally will get its much needed sewer project thanks to state funding passed in the Legislature this past year.

It’s a “long time coming,” according to Eric Sonnenberg of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County. Some residents have been pushing for a sewer for more than two decades.

This year, \$8 million was secured for the project from the Legislature, in part thanks to Rep. Peter Abbarno, R-Centralia, who served as the assistant ranking member of the House Capital Budget Committee.

The first-term lawmaker is a self-proclaimed “sewers guy,” and has affectionately deemed sewers his “love language.”

“I saw opportunities to work on a number of different infrastructure projects, and the one infrastructure project that rose to the top was the idea of sewers in Packwood,” Abbarno told the crowd Thursday, noting that it seemed like a “long shot.”

A new sewer system would not only speed up economic development, officials noted, but could also address environmental concerns.

According to County Manager Erik Martin, Lewis County will acquire a consultant to figure out exactly what the sewer system will look like, and the project could be complete by 2024.

8. WINLOCK ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION TURNED ON BY \$3.55M

Thanks in large part to efforts by state Rep. Peter Abbarno, R-Centralia, a new electrical substation and transmission delivery project has been funded to provide an economic boost to the Winlock area.

Abbarno helped usher in a \$3.55 million capital budget project that will pay for the substation under the direction of the Lewis County PUD. Chris Roden, the Lewis County PUD manager, said the project will bring needed expansion of electrical utilities for the Winlock area as it is poised for significant residential and industrial growth.

“We will continue to see growth in the area,” Roden said.

The substation and transmission lines project for Winlock started in the fall of 2020 when the Lewis County Commissioners passed a grant for initial studies by the PUD.

“That really helped kick us forward,” Roden said.

Now the PUD is undergoing land acquisition for the substation site, as well as pursuing needed permitting thanks to the \$3.55 million in funding. Roden expects the project to finish the first phase of the project in about two years. Key is building flexibility

into the design of the substation. “We’re going to build flexibility for decades to come,” Roden said, explaining that the substation will be able to expand based on need in the coming decades.

9. PORT OF CHEHALIS CLOSES \$2.5M SALE TO MCCALLUM ROCK DRILLING

The Port of Chehalis has closed the largest sale in its history with a \$2.5 million sale to McCallum Rock Drilling. The company will be adding 100 new jobs over the course of the next two years, port CEO Randy Mueller said.

“Those employees at McCallum, they’re making two to four times the average income of folks in Chehalis, so these are not just jobs — these are great jobs,” Mueller said.

A family-owned company since 1988, McCallum Rock Drilling has provided controlled drilling and blasting services in several states in the U.S. The contractor performs drilling and blasting for road and highway construction, quarried and residential and commercial development.

McCallum Rock Drilling has already been operating in Lewis County at the Chehalis Industrial Park and currently employs about 100 technically-skilled employees. The company has purchased the 123 Habein Road industrial complex at the Port of Chehalis, which includes three buildings on about 10 acres.

“McCallum Rock Drilling are recognized leaders in their industry, and they offer some of the highest-paying industrial wages in Lewis County,” Port of Chehalis Commission President Mark Anders said. “This property sale is the largest in the port’s history and a big win for our local economy. We couldn’t be happier that they chose to stay in Chehalis as their business continues to grow.”

Tyler McCallum and Hayley (McCallum) Coronel purchased the company from their father, Rich, in 2016 and have steadily grown the business by about 20% each year, according to a press release from the Port of Chehalis.

10. CENTRALIA PORT ENTERS \$1.6 MILLION SALE FOR 7 ACRES

Port of Centralia commissioners voted unanimously late October to execute a sale agreement with Texas-based Furgerson Schmidt for 7 acres of property off North Park Drive.

Port of Centralia Executive Director Kyle Heaton said the port was selling the property at a rate of \$5.25 per square foot, which would translate into a price tag of more than \$1.6 million.

Founded in 1949, Furgerson Schmidt is a member of the GVH family of companies based in Lubbock, Texas.

According to a news release from the port, the company plans on constructing a 100,000-square-foot facility on the property.

“We are pleased that the port was able to provide a site that could meet GVH’s needs and bring these much-needed jobs and tax base to our community. This project will create an excellent addition to Park 1, and we look forward to a long relation-



A Ryerson employee measures a product coming out of one of its processing machines.

ship with GVH,” Port Commissioner Kyle Markstrom said in a statement.

According to the news release, Furgerson Schmidt’s parent company is a premier supplier of supermarket and food service packaging with locations throughout the country.

The company offers packaging supplies to all aspects of the food industry with innovative, specialty and sustainable packaging solutions.

According to the Lewis County Auditor’s Office, the port-owned property located at 3704 Ives Road totals 9.2 acres in size and is valued at roughly \$1.2 million. The port originally obtained the property in 2006 for roughly \$551,400.

HONORABLE MENTION: RYERSON LOCATES TO CENTRALIA

Ryerson Holding Corporation, taking advantage of close proximity to Interstate 5 and a central location for its West Region operations serving Idaho, Oregon and Washington, is relocating its Renton plant to a new facility in Centralia.

The move will bring in about 60 employees to the Hub City with its 215,000-square-foot facility at 3010 Harrison Avenue. The site will be used to ship orders and also to process metal, including aluminum, stainless steel and carbon steel. Initial site development started this week. The new building should be ready for business likely in the third quarter of 2022. The company started taking in local applications this fall in anticipation of starting to hire in the second quarter of 2022. Jobs will be filled with both existing employees from the Renton facility that is set for closure and also from the local labor market.

Ryerson processes and distributes metal products and is one of the largest metal suppliers with operations in the United States, Mexico, Canada and China, and is listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Started in 1842 in Chicago, the company now has an extensive network of warehouses, service centers and facilities to serve all metal needs. Today Ryerson has about 100 similar facilities across the United States and Mexico.

HONORABLE MENTION: STIHL NORTHWEST CELEBRATES OPENING OF FACILITY IN PORT OF CENTRALIA

STIHL Inc. and its Lewis County associates celebrated the

opening of a new 100,000-square-foot distribution facility located at 3122 Kuper Road in the Port of Centralia in March with an open house.

The facility is the new home of STIHL Northwest distribution, which supplies about 500 authorized STIHL dealers in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska with replacement parts and accessories. STIHL Northwest has served the region for nearly 30 years. Planned expansions are expected to nearly triple the size of the new facility when all is said and done.

The Port of Centralia first announced in 2018 that STIHL Northwest, previously located on Hamilton Road in Chehalis, would relocate its operations to the port’s Park II development.

Though the project to construct the facility was four years in the making, STIHL Inc. leaders say it couldn’t have come at a better time.

At 54-feet tall in the middle and many hundreds of feet long and wide, the building is among the tallest and largest of its kind in the area. The Centralia facility is one of 11 throughout the United States serving more than 10,000 locally owned STIHL dealers nationwide.

Casey Kralovetz, director of branch operations in Centralia, said 32 employees will work out of the new facility.

Kralovetz said their 30-year plan will expand upon the facility in phases, adding 80,000 square feet through consecutive construction phases to about 275,000 square feet in that timespan.

STIHL originally purchased the 12-acre property from the Port of Centralia back in 2018 for approximately \$2.17 million. The plan is to expand into neighboring land south as demand increases.

Editor’s Note: The Chronicle contributed to this listing.

CHAIRMAN:

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Through it all, The Alliance remains with its focus of incubating and attracting responsible growth and building coalitions within our community.

This new year will give us plenty of surprises, both good and bad. This community will thrive throughout it all, as we always do.

One thing I do know? As Yogi Berra said, “The future ain’t what it used to be.”

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Ben Kostick is chair of the LEDC and owner of Ben M. Kostick CPA Inc.

You're Invited to the Economic Alliance of Lewis County (formerly Lewis EDC)

Monthly Luncheon
*Open to everyone

Guest Speaker
Jana Dean Coaching
"Speaking about Mindset"

When: Wednesday, January 19th, 2022
Where: Riverside Golf Course Bistro
Time: 12:00-1:00pm
Fee: \$25 per person includes lunch

Please call to pre-register & pay 360-748-0114

