

THE ECONOMIC REPORT

Centralia Pledges \$2.1M Toward United Learning Center

Line of Credit Allows Construction to Begin This Spring

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Centralia City Council last week approved an agreement to pledge \$2.1 million in credit to the United Learning Center project.

The ULC will be a campus with two buildings in downtown Centralia — the Early Learning Center and a community center — located on property on the corner of Maple and Pearl streets near Centralia City Hall.

The now funded United Learning Center will eventually house the Discover! Children's Museum and the Bezos Academy, as well as some health care classrooms.

The United Learning Center will provide free early learning and day-care to 80 students in the Bezos Academy, which will cover all of the costs of the facility to operate, said Todd Chaput, project manager for the ELC early learning campus.

Chaput said the project is raising money through a variety of revenue streams but they are not expected to fund until late summer.

TODD CHAPUT
Project Coordinator

The ELC will have six classrooms at 800 square feet. Each will provide a well lit, well equipped, healthy, and safe learning environment that will give children practical skills that they can use in their home, via a Montessori approach to education, according to a press release.

The ULC will also include a 3,000-square-foot partially covered playground, an 850-square-foot multipurpose room, and a 700-square-foot kitchen, to ensure that each child has their every need met. Covered walkways and a brick facade is aimed to integrate seamlessly into the historic Centralia downtown, and will set a new bar for both environmental and community stewardship.

■ SEE CHAPUT, PAGE C2

Port of Centralia Receives \$1.7M to Complete Centralia Station Infrastructure

Funding Comes from State Transportation Budget; Project Predicted to Bring In 500 Jobs to the Hub City

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Port of Centralia announced that the Washington State legislature has included an additional \$1.7 million to complete infrastructure for the Centralia Station project.

According to a press release, the gap funding will help cover cost increases due to delays relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. The funding is part of the newly passed \$17 billion "Move Ahead Washington" transportation budget passed on March 10, 2022.

Port of Centralia President Kyle Markstrom stated, "The Port would like to thank the 20th District delegation for their support of the Port's job creation efforts. We are truly fortunate to have the representation and advocacy our delegation brings to the table. We would like to especially thank Senator Braun for his leadership and perseverance in seeing



An architect's drawing shows the future of Centralia Station from ground level.

that this critical project is funded and completed."

Port of Centralia Executive Director Kyle Heaton stated, "We appreciate this support as we move into the construction phase for Centralia Station. The Port expects to bid the Yew Street extension very shortly with construction of a new interchange ramp to immediately follow once final federal agency review is complete. When completed, these improvements will allow for the Port to move forward with an anchor tenant and begin the long-awaited site development process."

Conceived in 2010, Centralia Station

will include retail, commercial and light industrial businesses when completed. Centralia Station is projected to create more than 500 permanent jobs, produce over \$118 million in annual sales and generate over \$7 million annually in state and local taxes.

Founded in 1986, the Port of Centralia operates two industrial parks and one planned mixed-use development that provides more than 2,100 jobs to the local community. The Port's over 30 tenants include Sierra Pacific Industries, Michael's, UNFI and Dick's Brewing Company.

CHAIR'S CORNER

Lewis County Is Undergoing a Construction 'Boom'

BY BEN KOSTICK

Chair - Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Take a drive throughout Lewis County and you will see a housing boom.

Construction is everywhere. For sale signs are abundant. They pop up and quickly are replaced with sold signs.

Last month Lewis County Assessor Dianne Dorey gave a "state of the economy" presentation at the monthly Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce meeting. She detailed rising property tax payments, lots of construction projects underway, with rising home values and population numbers. She said our county is undergoing a "booming boom time."

She said home valuations in Centralia and Chehalis are experiencing a 19% average increase, with rising valuations remaining a constant. Dorey said homes are selling fast, usually within 10 days once placed on the market. She said new construction is at an all time high.

Jill Anderson, city manager for Chehalis, echoed Dorey's assessment. She recently told the Sertoma Club that growth is exploding. Another example: Lewis County PUD General Manager Chris Roden said his crews are busy across Lewis County with new service connections.

This will lead to population growth, estimated to reach 100,000 in Lewis County by 2025. Growing pains are expected. Whether you like it or not, being located along Interstate 5, growth was and is inevitable. The added tax base should help ease the pain of those hoping to keep Lewis County rural.

Alliance Monthly Meetings

As Chair of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, I get to work with the staff of the Alliance, and I would like to single out Dolly Tardiff, our Business Development Center/Program Manager. She has lived in Lewis County for the past 32 years.

Part of her duties is to put on the monthly Member Meeting. She has put together a quality list of speakers for the meetings. This upcoming meeting on April 20 is focused on a Renewable Clean Energy panel (for details including how to register for the luncheon, go to page 3 of this report under the news briefs heading).

Dolly is doing a great job. You should take advantage of these excellent luncheon meetings; they are excellent as is Dolly.

Tax Season

Finally, as an accountant, I am all too aware of the upcoming tax filing deadline of Monday, April 18. Not only is it tax season, it is also scam season.

The White House and the Internal Revenue Service plan to hire 80,000 new employees to catch tax evaders, tax cheats. The tax resolution firms are picking up on this to scare you to use them.

My advice? File your taxes on time, pay your taxes and don't be scared by what you read or hear.

...

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

SPONSORED CONTENT

THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

WSLC Uses Power of Unity to Benefit All Workers

BY THE WASHINGTON STATE LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

When workers join together in unions, they have more power to negotiate better wages and working conditions than they do as individuals.

"When unions work together, their members can negotiate better contracts, earn more money, and boost our state and local economies," said WSLC President Larry Brown. "But they also use that power to fight for working standards that benefit everyone. Higher minimum wages, paid sick leave, paid family leave, access to overtime pay—all of these were fought for and won by Washington's labor movement, but they benefit all workers. That's

the power of collective action and joining together."

The WSLC also has a number of programs of specific benefit to all workers, including:

Workforce Development—This department advocates for all workers from initial entry into the workforce by promoting apprenticeship opportunities, to career transition when workers need help with retraining, to assisting those facing job loss.

For example, the WSLC Workforce Development helps file petitions for the Trade Adjustment Assistance, a federal program that provides aid to workers who lose their jobs due to offshoring or increased imports. As a result, thousands of workers in Washington

state currently have access to TAA benefits like relocation assistance, training/tuition support, extended income support, partial wage replacement for older workers, and more.

Project Help—This WSLC program assists injured workers in Washington with the early and successful resolution of workers' compensation claims. It provides educational and one-on-one claims assistance to all interested persons. Get details at www.ProjectHelpWA.com.

Learn more about the WSLC at www.wslc.org and get the latest information about Washington's union movement at the WSLC's award-winning news service, The Stand, at www.TheStand.org.



Longmire Springs Brewery Leases Packwood Site

After County Commissioners' Approval, Award-Winning Brewers Will Set Up Shop in Far East Lewis County

BY THE ECONOMIC
ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Lewis County Commissioners last week unanimously approved leasing its Packwood Business Park located just west of downtown Packwood to the Longmire Springs Brewery.

The site was previously an ammunition manufacturing facility. The business park was created in 1996 to help build jobs and additional tax revenues via the East Lewis County Public Development Authority.

Husband and wife team Amy Besunder and Peter Charbonnier, former Seattlites who closed up their Ballard brewpub following a downturn in

the once thriving business due to COVID-virus disruptions, are the new tenants. The brewers relocated to living full-time in Packwood in 2008 (but still kept brewing in Ballard) and have long planned to open a brewpub and taproom in Packwood. The Packwood building is a great fit for their plans, Besunder said.

The former Ballard brewpub operated by the husband and wife team, called Populux Brewing, was highly regarded before it closed at the end of 2020. In 2018, it won the prestigious Small Brewery of the Year by the Washington Beer Awards. The competition featured 1,297 beers entered by 181 Washington breweries.

"We had always talked about, envisioned bringing a high-quality brewery to this community, with living-wage jobs, with a community space for people to gather," Besunder said in a previous report by The Alliance. "We looked around at several spaces, none looked right for us."

That changed this last summer when they spotted the PDA's space. Besunder has been flabbergasted by the sup-



The East Lewis County Public Development Authority's Packwood property has been leased by Longmire Springs Brewery.

port from area leaders.

"We have been offered all the assistance in the world," she said. "It is a very different attitude than you get in Seattle. The difference in support is night and day. It's amazing. The way people connect here is just so authentic."

The brewers recently visited Dick's Brewery Company in Centralia, a titan in the state's brewing industry.

"They (Dick's) make it work in a space that is very similar to the Packwood space," she said.

According to their website,

"When we open, we will have outdoor and indoor seating areas with cozy fireplaces. Our establishment will be family and dog friendly. While we won't have a kitchen, customers can bring their own food to enjoy with a pint."

Proposed \$200M Mount Rainier Golf Course and Resort Stays Alive

Pierce County Judge Sends Project Back to Hearings Examiner

BY THE ECONOMIC
ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The proposed \$200 million Park Junction golf course resort development between Elbe and Ashford in the shadow of Mount Rainier has been put on hold due to a ruling by the Pierce County Superior Court.

The project, proposed by Park Junction LLC, would develop a 400-acre destination resort between Elbe and Ashford that would include a golf course, a conference center and a 270-room hotel, retail and other amenities.

Superior Court Judge Timothy Ashcraft earlier this month sent back a conditional-use permit to the Hearings Examiner.

"To be clear, nothing in this decision (as to the remanded issues) should be interpreted as this Court implying or directing any result," Judge Ashcraft wrote in his decision.

According to an article in the Tacoma News Tribune, the Mount Rainier Resort at Park Junction received its conditional-

use permit in 2000, subject to 100 conditions and periodic status review hearings.

In recent years, the county and opponents with Tahoma Audubon Society have questioned whether substantive progress was being made on the project, leading to the eventual establishment of milestones in late October 2020 for the project to proceed.

A milestone to create two test wetlands was deemed unmet by the Nov. 30, 2020, deadline by Pierce County Planning and Public Works, leading to a recommendation to revoke the conditional-use permit.

In May 2021, hearing examiner Stephen Causseaux sided with the county, and in July of that year issued a decision denying a request for reconsideration. The revocation decision was later appealed to Superior Court by the developers.

The court rejected Park Junction's argument that the only relevant time frame to consider whether reasonable progress had been made was from Nov. 14, 2019, to now.

The judge added: "Likewise, the Court rejects Park Junction's argument that only intentional, egregious acts can support a petition for revocation. While this may be the 'norm' for such petitions historically, nothing in the law precludes Pierce County

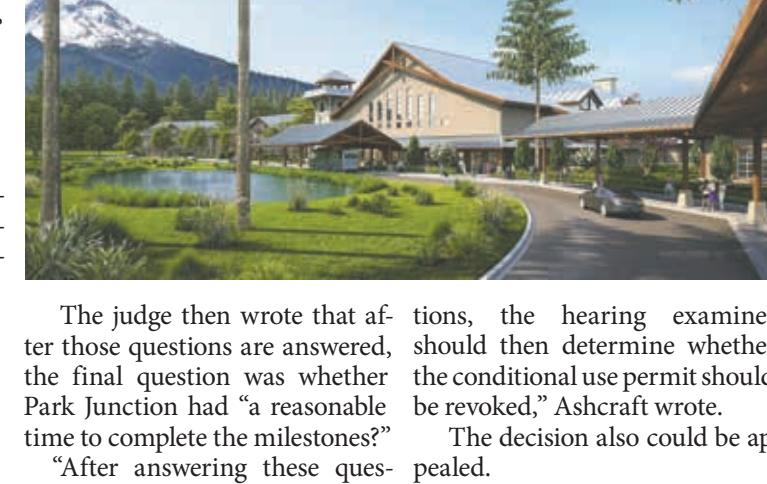


Renderings of the proposed Park Junction project are included on the developer's website.

from bringing such an action in this case."

In sending the hearing examiner's decision back, Ashcraft said five questions needed to be considered in "future evidentiary proceedings."

Those questions, essentially, call for more evidence according to the news article, asking what were the milestones agreed to and were those understood; how did a wording change involving the wetlands affect that understanding; did a change in requirements "affect the ability to complete the originally agreed upon or changed milestones;" and did COVID-19 impact "the ability to complete either the original or changed milestones such that completion was impossible or impracticable?"



The judge then wrote that after those questions are answered, the final question was whether Park Junction had "a reasonable time to complete the milestones?"

"After answering these ques-

tions, the hearing examiner should then determine whether the conditional use permit should be revoked," Ashcraft wrote.

The decision also could be appealed.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED MOUNT RAINIER RESORT:

of 22,000 square feet of high tech conference space. Because of the seasonal nature of the area, conferencing will serve to extend the season and augment the usage of the lodge. The Conference Center will also inject life into the surrounding community during off season months.

Mount Rainier Golf Course

The Mount Rainier Golf Course at Park Junction will be an 18-hole championship course that meanders through the property's fields, lakes, and hills with

views of Mount Rainier and the surrounding hills and valleys.

Resort Residences

Resort Residences will be located on and around the golf course, consisting of 220 condominium units, 30 cottages, and 75 single-family homes. The single-family homes will be located at the northwest section of the property, nestled in the hills and bordering the golf course. Situated in the center of the project will be condominiums bordering the golf course, and the cottages will be located close to the

lodge. All of the residential units will be for sale, however, any owner who wishes to place his unit in a rental pool may do so under management by the lodge operator.

Upper Nisqually Interpretive Center

The Upper Nisqually Interpretive Center will feature the story of the forest products industry including the life cycle of forests and the history of logging. Additionally, it will display steam engines and rail cars depicting their use in logging

and transportation. The center will also include the history of the Nisqually region, the story of Mount Rainier National Park and the mountain itself.

Shadow Mountain Center

The Shadow Mountain Center will have for lease to retail and tourist shops 20,000 to 30,000 square feet. Tenants are likely to include a convenience store, sports and apparel shops, bakery, ice cream shop, gift shops and art galleries.

— Source: Park Junction developers

CHAPUT:

Continued From Page C1

The Discover! Children's museum, situated next door to the ULC, will provide 2,500 square feet of open exhibit space to engage children in hands-on educational activities, as well as an enclosed 200-square-foot music room, and a rentable 350-square-foot multipurpose room.

The proposed United Learning Center project has largely completed the design phase and is preparing to go to bid for construction, according to a re-

port by the city of Centralia.

Like most large projects, the scope has seen a number of changes since inception. The exact needs of users, unforeseen state regulations and Covid have all played a part in amending the plan and design. The total project cost is projected to be \$7.2 million. This cost is exclusive of the adjacent Community Center that the city of Centralia is constructing.

At this point, the United Way of Lewis County and Discover Children's Museum have secured \$5.1 million in funding. Sources for the remaining

funds have been identified and the ULC is "very confident full funding will be realized within a few months."

However, the ULC Board needs to put the project out to bid soon in order to meet the seasonal construction window and deadlines for disbursement of funds. The ULC cannot collateralize city property and therefore has been unable to secure credit that would enable the project to go to bid.

The ULC has asked the city to extend a pledge of credit for the \$2.1 million so they can proceed. The city has currently

committed \$1.9 million in Real Estate Excise Tax reserves to construct the adjacent community center. Of the \$1.9 million, \$180,000 has been committed to complete the design phase.

This leaves about \$1.7 million.

City staff recommended the City Council use funds from the Real Estate Excise Tax reserves and not proceed with construction of a community center until the ULC secures their remaining \$2.1 million. There are sufficient reserves in the Real Estate Excise Tax fund to cover this if needed, city staff reported in a council meeting

last week, adding in a worst case scenario, the community center construction is delayed until another source of funds is secured.

The proposed community center does not have the tight constraints associated with it that the ULC has and would not be severely impacted by a delay in construction.

The vote for the pledge of credit was 6-1, with Councilor Leah Daarud the dissenting vote. Daarud said she supports the project but needed more information before supporting the credit pledge.

NEWS BRIEFS

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Port Executive Director Kyle Heaton said this financial support will allow for

moving into the construction phase of Centralia Station.

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Port of Chehalis to Sell 34 Acres to Realty Group for \$9.3 Million

The Port of Chehalis Commission recently authorized the sale of a 34-acre industrial site, located on the corner of Rush Road and Jackson Highway, to Clayco Realty Group (CRG) for \$9.3 million.

In order for the sale to be finalized,

CRG must fulfill the requirements set in an initial 90-day due diligence period, during which the organization will have the right to access the property to conduct necessary surveying and reporting activities such as geotechnical and wetland surveys as well as topographical reports, according to Port Chief Executive Officer Lindsey Senter.

Ted Knapp, vice president of development for CRG in the region, said CRG also needs to conduct a traffic impact analysis and a cultural resources investigation.

"Typically, in order to make a sale final, the buyer will be required to present final building designs as well as an end-user to the commission before they will formalize the sale," Senter told The Chronicle in a statement. "Before the Commission can authorize the sale of the property, they will require disclosure of an end-user and their industry to ensure that the user will be a good fit for the Port district."

CRG is a national development company that's affiliated with Clayco Construction and is headquartered in Chicago with a major presence in St. Louis, though it does work all over the nation.

Locally, CRG has paved the way for Clayco Construction to build a 1.1 million square foot distribution center for Costco in Tumwater off of 93rd Avenue and Interstate 5. Another project it worked on recently was the completion of an Intel campus in DuPont.

— The Chronicle

Economic Alliance to Host Renewable Clean Energy Seminar

On April 20 the Economic Alliance of Lewis County will host a Renewable Clean Energy Luncheon from noon to 1 p.m. at Jeremy's Farm to Table restaurant, located at 576 W. Main St. in Chehalis.

Guest speakers are Joe Clark from the Energy Innovation Coalition, along with Monica Brummer from the Centralia College Center of Excellence for Clean Energy.

To register contact Alliance Business Development Center/Program Manager Dolly Tardiff at Dolly@lewiscountyalliance.org or 360-748-0114.

ENERGY:

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economy with evergreen hydrogen made right here in Washington. That includes making a strong statement of bipartisan support for a public-private partnership so Washington can compete to be a regional clean energy hub under the U.S. Department of Energy," said Washington Green Hydrogen Alliance Executive Director Tim Zenk.

"We especially want to thank Rep. David Hackney and Rep. Peter Abbarno for agreeing to co-chair the newly-formed bipartisan Hydrogen Caucus in the House of Representatives," added WGHA Government Relations Director Dave Warren.

"Evergreen hydrogen is a growing industry in our state, and a key to our clean energy future," said Rep. David Hackney (D-Tukwila). "We will continue to work with communities, experts, and stakeholders to explore other steps we can take to expand the production and use of evergreen hydrogen here in our state."

"I am proud that we worked together across party lines to advance a clean technology that is good for our economy and our entire state," Abbarno said. "Evergreen hydrogen is an important fuel technology for transportation in our state, and we are in a position to be a national leader in making and using renewable hydrogen."

Washington state is positioned to be a global green hydrogen leader because of abundant supplies of low-cost renewable electricity from hydropower and wind. In addition, Washington state has responsible climate, clean energy and clean fuels policies that are driving additional investment in clean energy, and are directing us on a path to a carbon-free future."

Last year, Lewis County received \$2.55 million in funding through the Capital Budget for Washington state's first hydrogen refueling station in Chehalis. Abbarno, assistant ranking member on the House Capital Budget Committee, helped secure the funds in partnership

with the Port of Chehalis, Twin Transit, Lewis County and the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

In 2022, Abbarno worked on funding in the state operating budget for a grant application to the U.S. Department of Energy to make Washington state a "hydrogen hub" and passed an amendment that improved bipartisan Senate Bill 5910.

According to the Washington Green Hydrogen Alliance, over the last 60 days, House and Senate members acted to:

- Pass bipartisan legislation, SB 5910. The legislation, which was approved in a 49-0 vote in the Senate on Feb. 12 and then by a 96-2 vote in the House on March 7, followed by a unanimous concurrence vote in the Senate on March 9, will accelerate the availability and use of evergreen hydrogen in the use of state by, among other key provisions, authorizing municipal utilities and public utility districts to produce, use, sell, and distribute green hydrogen.

- Invest \$1.1 million in the newly-created Office of Renewable Fuels

- Invest \$2 million to support an application by a public-private partnership entity for federal funding, potentially up to \$1 billion, to develop a regional clean hydrogen hub

- Form the new, bipartisan Hydrogen Caucus in the House, which will be taking shape over the interim under the leadership of Rep. David Hackney (D-Tukwila) and Abbarno.

"Energy security and grid reliability is more important now than ever and I don't believe we can merely electrify everything," Abbarno said. "Hydrogen must be an essential part of our state's energy portfolio. Good for the economy and good for the environment do not need to be mutually exclusive. We can do both by investing in hydrogen, creating jobs, increasing economic opportunities, and improving the quality of life for all Washington."

"What is Green Hydrogen? Fossil fuel-free energy produced in the Evergreen State," Abbarno said. "A limitless renewable resource we can use to

decarbonize our state's economy and transportation sectors. It is called 'evergreen' because it will never emit any CO₂ when it's being made or when it's being used."

Both electric vehicles and hydrogen vehicles run on battery electric powered systems. The only difference is hydrogen vehicles use a fuel cell that turns hydrogen into electricity. The fuel cell sits in the engine as opposed to hooking the battery up to an EV charger.

The benefits of a fuel cell vehicle are that it already has a range in excess of 400 miles and can be fully refueled in five minutes, similar to a car with an internal combustion engine, Abbarno said. And H₂ can be stored indefinitely versus batteries that lose a charge over time. Hydrogen also has a greater energy density than electricity, making it more suitable to power buses, trucks, cargo ships, and airplanes."

Members of the Lewis County-based Energy Innovation Coalition presented information earlier this year to the Port of Chehalis Commissioners regarding their progress in the planning of Washington state's first hydrogen fueling station — slated to begin construction in the Chehalis Industrial Park off of Bishop Road (at LaBree Road, exit 74) in June.

According to the EIC group, including members of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, Twin Transit, and others, the plan is to begin construction this summer on what will eventually become a 30 to 40 acre site in the industrial park that will include both a hydrogen fueling station and a business park focused on catering to high-tech hydrogen research, development, and innovation organizations.

Ultimately, this EIC would like to see Centralia and Chehalis together become what's called a "hydrogen valley" that both creates energy and facilitates the creation of Washington's hydrogen energy market. There are currently 36 existing hydrogen valley projects worldwide and they often start in former "coal communities," meaning those communities

that previously had a wide economic base in coal that no longer exists.

This planned fueling station would also be providing hydrogen to Twin Transit, who will obtain hydrogen transit vehicles, and also create research opportunities for TOYOTA & Toyota USA, who have already agreed to donate several hydrogen-powered vehicles to local Twin Transit, pending local hydrogen fueling availability.

Tesla Charging Stations Coming to Chehalis

Eight new electric vehicle charging stations will soon pop up near the Chehalis Home Depot at 700 NW Arkansas Way.

The Chehalis City Council voted earlier this month to enter into an agreement with Tesla, Inc. — a leading electric vehicle manufacturer with over 30,000 supercharger sites across the nation — to install the changing stations.

The action comes after the

council approved four additional EVgo Services LLC (EVgo) charging stations at the same site last month, a move that ended an exclusivity contract between the city and EVgo.

According to the Chehalis City Council meeting's agenda documents, the eight Tesla charging stations will come with about 200 to 400 square feet of additional space for equipment, all for an aggregate rent of \$600 a month to the city of Chehalis.

Tesla is set to move in Sept. 1, and will take charge of all the improvements necessary to the site for the purposes of the charging stations' functionality.

The charging stations will be functional within a year following Tesla's Sept. 1 move.

While the contract will expire five years after the stations go live, the corporation will have two intervals in which it can extend the agreement by an additional five years.

— The Chronicle



Save the Date...

POST COVID SUMMIT

June 15th

★ The Loft in Chehalis-547 NW Pacific Ave.
3-4:30pm-Speaker Panels
★ State Elected Officials*Economist*Media Host

★ 4:30-5:30pm-Local Craft Brew & Distilleries & Small Live Auction

★ Topics: Supply Chain Disruption, HR, Logistics, Changing times & much more.

(COST: \$25 per person or VIP Table for 8 - \$250)

Must pre-register & pay at
360-748-0114 or email
Dolly@lewiscountyalliance.org
Register early-Limited Seating

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY & STAFF



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