

# THE ECONOMIC REPORT

A SUPPLEMENT OF *The Chronicle*

## Hiring Developmentally Disabled a 'Win-Win'

*Grocery Outlet an Example of the Benefits to a Business With an Open Mind in Hiring Practices*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Michael Morgan is co-owner of the Grocery Outlet in Chehalis. About 20 percent of his staff come from agencies that place disabled people with jobs.

He calls his hiring practice simply doing "the right thing," but it runs deeper than that.

"My view of someone with a disability is that everyone has a disability of some form," he said. "We're the ones that put limitations on them. My mindset is that everyone has something to contribute. ... And as a community business we have a responsibility that far exceeds our personal needs."

He said a first step for business owners is to first demystify that some people are not capable of employment. He said once hired, it takes time and patience to find that perfect fit for a disabled employ-



Grocery Outlet co-owner Michael Morgan (far right) poses with some of his employees. About 20 percent of his workforce have some form of disability. He calls hiring those with disabilities "the right thing to do."

ee. He said along with simply time spent working, those with disabilities need the right tools and knowledge gained while on the job. He said he helps them set

goals and find out what kind of work they are best at, and that they enjoy.

■ SEE **HIRING**, PAGE C3

### DIRECTOR'S CORNER

## Hiring Those With Disabilities Is a Positive Situation

*Morningside Services Leads Panel Discussion of Cultivating Inclusion in Lewis County*

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

Executive Director Economic Alliance of Lewis County

I was proud last month when the Economic Alliance of Lewis County at its monthly luncheon featured a panel of two that have overcome disabilities to find employment with the help of Morningside Services.



RICHARD DEBOLT  
Executive Director  
- Economic Alliance of Lewis County

As part of the Alliance's focus on business development each month, the two panelists talked about their struggles and successes in finding and holding jobs, of being able to get that first paycheck, of the importance of being a productive part of society to their mental well being. Morningside Director Lisa Davis led the panel discussion. Davis, tasked with helping those with disabilities to find gainful employment, is also the president of the Lewis County Autism Coalition. The title of the discussion was "Cultivating Inclusion in Lewis County Operating Under the Lewis County Autism Coalition." The discussion focused on inclusive hiring practices and support available to employers to hire disabled adults and the benefits of companies that do so.

In a time where "Hiring Now, Apply Within" signs are on just about every corner where businesses are located, hiring through Morningside and other agencies in Lewis County offers a path for businesses to hire and train those with disabilities.

As profiled in a story in today's Economic Report, the co-owner of the Grocery Outlet details why he uses disabled workers to help power his business. He calls it simply doing "the right thing."

One of the panelists works for Grocery Outlet. She said, "Now I feel more confident than ever." When asked what she is doing with the money she is earning, she said she is saving up to take her family to Disneyland.

The other panelist, who is neurodiverse, said, "Just give us a chance, we're not defined by our disabilities." He works from home dealing with tech issues. He said the job has helped him be more self disciplined, brings him into a better mood about life, and makes him "excited to just work in general." When asked what he did with his first paycheck, he said he bought a software painting program to extend his skills set.

Helping people find and keep decent employment seems to be one of those win-win situations. Morningside, and the other Lewis County agencies that assist those with disabilities to find jobs, is truly an inspirational tale. Kudos to those that understand the value those with disabilities can bring to area businesses.

Richard DeBolt is Executive Director of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

## Elks Golf Course Rezoned by Centralia Council

*Change in Zoning on 48 Acres Will Allow Denser Development*

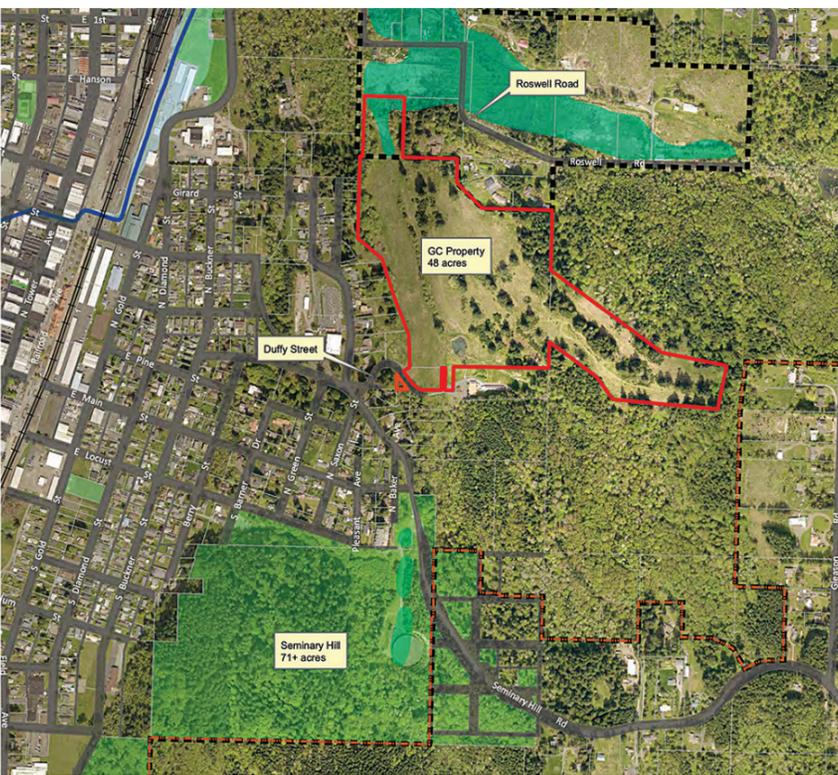
BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Centralia City Council has voted 7-2 to rezone 48 acres of the former Elks Golf Course situated between Seminary Hill and Ham Hill, which will allow construction of housing including duplexes.

The zoning before the vote was for single-family housing only. Opponents of the rezone don't want the higher-density zoning, citing possible water runoff problems and also loss of recreational space.

Councilors in favor of the rezone said for those living near the property should realize an increase in property values. Those in favor also said Centralia has a pressing need for housing and that growth is inevitable for the Hub City.

According to a City of Centralia report, "the Centralia Elks Golf Course was a public, 9-hole golf course provided by a state land grant in 1949 and 1963 and has been closed for over 15 years. The properties are situated within a valley formed by Seminary Hill to the south and Ham



An aerial map of the former Elks Golf Course.

■ SEE **ZONING**, PAGE C3

## Economic Alliance Features Golf Skills Contest

*The Evening Before Big Tournament Showcases Long Drives, Chipping and Putting Competitions*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The eve of the second-annual Economic Alliance of Lewis County's golf tournament at Riverside Golf Course will feature a Skills Competition Night

at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 15.

The tournament on Friday, Sept. 16, is sponsored by Fortescue Future Industries North America and is already full but still accepting teams on a waiting list. The Skills Competition Night, however, is open to anybody willing to put their golf talents up for prizes and enjoy an overall great time.

Sponsored by Nomad Truck and SUV Outfitters and LC Coffee Company, skills events will be Longest Drive, Chipping Contest and Putting Course, with \$1,000's in prizes. Cost to enter is \$100 for all three competitions or \$50

per category. Entry includes two raffle tickets and one drink ticket.

Music, appetizers and two no-host bars will keep competitors swinging easy. One top raffle ticket is an overnight stay at the Ridgefield Ilani Casino in their new hotel, and dinner for two at the casino's exclusive Michael Jordan's Steak House.

Come on out and show off your golfing skills while also supporting your Economic Alliance of Lewis County. To pre-register call 360.748.0114 or you can register at the event.

### SPONSORED CONTENT

## THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

## Scot Industries Joins Growing Apprenticeship Wave

Scot Industries Inc., has launched a registered apprenticeship program in Lewis County that will keep the firm on the cutting edge of production and innovation.

It's one of many companies statewide that are taking up the apprenticeship advantage. In fact, the number of people and companies participating in registered apprenticeships reached an all-time high just late last year.

"Apprenticeship programs are thriving across the state," said Jody Robbins, Apprenticeship Program manager for the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries. "We're encouraged to see a growing number of employers, educators, and other workforce partners get involved."

The quickest way for an individual or company to find out about registered apprenticeships is to go to [www.Lni.wa.gov/Apprenticeship](http://www.Lni.wa.gov/Apprenticeship).

### What Scot Industries is Doing

Scot Industries, located in Centralia, is a supplier of specialty tubing product. It recently started the apprenticeship for Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) Machinists. CNC Machinists are key in moving forward in the manufacturing and precision process the company uses.

The registered apprenticeship is an intensive effort to recruit employees. Apprentices obtain hands-on training and classroom education while receiving competitive pay in a growing industry.

The company was founded in 1949. The 73,000-square-foot Centralia plant was completed in 2007.

### About Apprenticeship

Last year, there were about 21,700 active apprentices in the state – ranking the state ninth nationally. There are more than 5,000 participating employers

covering more than 400 different occupations.

In fact, the total number of participants would make registered apprenticeship programs the third largest "school" in the state. It would be placed behind only the University of Washington and Washington State University.

Construction trades such as carpenter, ironworker, and electrician remain at the top of the training list. But apprenticeship is expanding into high tech, health care, and other fields.

"Employers need a reliable talent pipeline and workers need pathways into rewarding careers," Robbins said. "Registered apprenticeship programs provide an opportunity for employers and workers, boosting our entire economy."

For registered apprentices who become journey-level workers, the results are very real. Six to nine months after completion of a program, an apprentice



in the trades can earn more than \$85,000 annually.

### What Happens Next

Apprenticeship will continue to expand in non-traditional fields. In 2022, the state approved more than \$8 million in grant funds to support services and technology upgrades for apprenticeship programs.

Last year, L&I distributed another \$15 million in grants. Recipients included the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace, representing engineers at The Boeing Company. The effort will include partnerships with community and technical colleges to expand training and help underserved populations enter the aerospace field.

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# BRANDON JOHNSON - BUSINESS: JSA CIVIL

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

**A:** Since 2017.

**Q: Why did you join The Alliance?**

**A:** In all honesty, I joined somewhat reluctantly at the encouragement of some local community members. But, once I joined The Alliance I saw the vision and passion for Lewis County, and I was hooked.

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

**A:** For just about everyone tied to the construction industry, the local economy plays a huge role in our business. We need strong financial institutions, job creation, effective permitting and a supply/demand for local housing.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about volunteering?**

**A:** Between The Alliance, the United Way of Lewis County, the United Learning Center and multiple youth sports programs, I spend a lot of time

volunteering. It has definitely connected me to the community in a way that I wasn't before I became involved.

**Q: What do you love most about your industry?**

**A:** I love everything about my profession. I'm a math geek, love problem solving games and have had a small Monopoly addiction since I was kid. Those traits all transfer seamlessly to land development engineering.

**Q: How do you define success?**

**A:** The freedom to choose the projects I want to work on, for the clients I want to work for, with the people I want to work with.

**Q: Who inspires you?**

**A:** Safe answer here — my parents and wife inspire me. My dad is one of the hardest working people I've ever met, my mom has always spent a majority of her time volunteering with one



BRANDON JOHNSON  
JSA Civil

organization or another, and my wife is unbelievably compassionate and empathetic.

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

**A:** I finally learned how to hit a low draw with my driver but give it a week and I'm sure I'll have forgotten how to do that.

**Q: What's the last book you read?**

**A:** Shoe Dog – By Phil Knight. It's my third time reading it. The origin story and perseverance of Nike is great, and admittedly my love for mid-90's basketball shoes doesn't hurt either.

**Q: What is your favorite meal?**

**A:** I make a mean blackened rockfish taco with mango salsa.

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

**A:** When I'm not coaching one of my kid's sports teams or traveling with my wife to fill up our McMenamins Passport; I love to snow ski, wakeboard, golf, kayak, or do

generally anything else I can outside.

**Q: What is the favorite car you have ever owned?**

**A:** Your first car has to be your favorite car. My first car was a 1985 S10 Chevy Blazer. I liked to go faster than I should have, and that thing was a gutless, indestructible tank that topped out at about 87 mph and got about 7 mpg, so it kept me out of a lot of trouble.

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

**A:** Not really a fun fact, but I've torn my right ACL three times. The first time I was at a 70-year-old's birthday party and a pickup basketball game broke out. I was wearing the wrong shoes (Georgia Boot Romeo's) and went down like a ton of bricks early in the game. The second time was about 18 months later at an office kickball game. I tried to make a Derek Jeter style jump throw from the hole and that didn't go well. And, the third time, was the last time I tried to snow ski above my skill level.

## Southwest Washington Grain Project Update

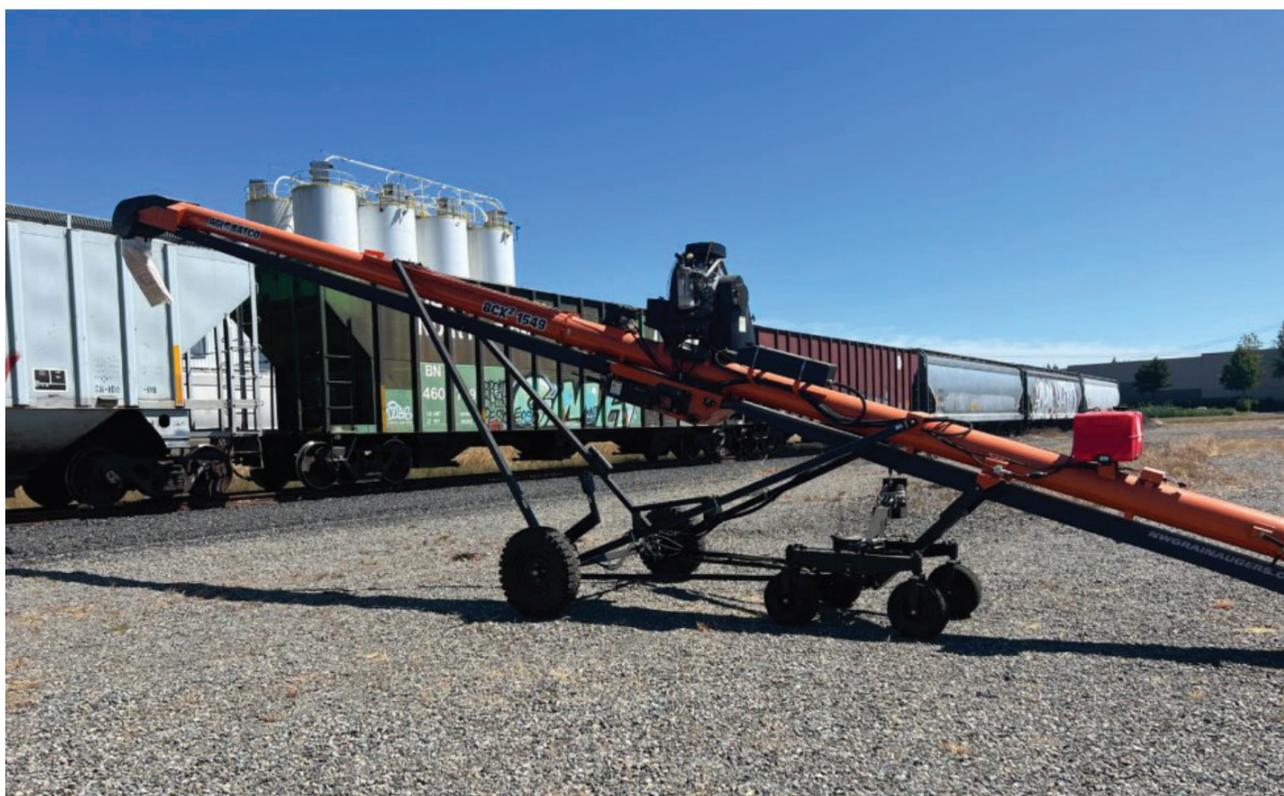
*Storage Project Will Inject an Estimated \$18 Million into the Local Economy Over the Next Nine Years*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County has a long-time heritage of farming and agriculture, with some farmers being the third or fourth generation to grow in Lewis County. For many years, these local farmers and growers have dealt with flooding and natural disasters, loss of processing facilities, and a lack of infrastructure to support agribusiness.

In response to these issues, regional producers formed the Southwest Washington Growers Cooperative to support agricultural development in Southwest Washington. Today, the Cooperative has 31 active members seeking to increase the viability of family farms through collaborative opportunities. These producers worked closely with Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) and WSU Extension and found that grain, especially malting barley, could serve as a viable crop replacement for both growers and buyers. However, infrastructure was still needed to provide storage and facilitate transporting crops to regional buyers, most of whom require rail transport.

In 2019, the Port of Chehalis and the Cooperative successfully petitioned the Lewis County Commissioners and were awarded \$800,000 for the installment of a rail spur on the Port's property. The rail spur was completed in the spring of 2020 and allowed growers to transload



A grain conveyor belt moves grain from a truck to a hopper car to be shipped out to regional and international markets via rail.

malting barley to Great Western Malting in Vancouver, Washington, that summer.

The first year saw 600 metric tons of barley delivered, followed by 1,400 metric tons in 2021. It's projected that 2,500 metric tons will be delivered in 2022, produced on approximately 1,000 acres.

The next phase of the Southwest Washington Grain Project began shortly after the completion of the rail spur, with the goal of creating an aggregate storage and rail transload facility along-

side the rail spur.

In support of this goal, the Port of Chehalis was awarded \$1.75 million through the Washington state Capital Budget in 2020. This funding will allow for the construction of a publicly accessible rail transload facility consisting of upright grain bins and conveyors for loading and unloading grain.

The Port of Chehalis is actively pursuing additional funding for the design and construction cost associated with the installation of roads and utilities

to serve the facility. If the necessary remaining funding is secured, construction could begin sometime in 2023.

Once completed, the storage and transload facility will allow the region's grain producers to access regional, national and international markets. The project anticipates generating over \$750,000 in producer payments and handling fees in 2022 and injecting an estimated \$18 million into the local economy over the next nine years.

— Source: POC Media

### PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT

## Port of Chehalis Offers Plenty of Purchase Options

The Port of Chehalis has land available for sale or lease in a master-planned industrial campus setting. The port can assist your business with permitting and can offer customized parcel sizes. Flexible financing options, tax credits and waivers are available for qualifying businesses. Contact the Port of Chehalis by calling 360.748.9365.

For information on other properties 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 lewisedc.com.

Chehalis Industrial Park properties		
1.	Chase Road rail property	
2.	Bishop Road Commercial Site (BRCS)	33 acres
3.	Maurin Road Industrial Site 2 (MRIS2)	15 acres
4.	Maurin Road Industrial Site 1 (MRIS1)	17 acres
5.	103 McBride Court and Pernerl Building	
6.	Port of Chehalis professional building	
7.	Dawson Road Commercial Site (DRCS)	9.5 acres
8.	Rush Road Industrial Site (RRIS)	34 acres
9.	Bishop and Rush intersection property	
10.	Bishop Road Industrial Site 1 (BRIS1)	23 acres
11.	Bishop Road Industrial Site 2 (BRIS2)	59 acres

**HIRING:**

*Continued From Page C1*

“We offer a place where someone with a disability can walk in with a resume and have a shot,” he said. “In the end, we just want people to be who they are, and to create an environment of inclusion.”

Morgan tells the story of one such young man. He said it took a while to get to know each other.

“He became our best merchandiser,” Morgan said. “He literally does the best work. Quality came first, then speed came later.”

One of Morgan’s employees was a panelist at the recent Economic Alliance of Lewis County’s monthly luncheon. She shared how working at Grocery Outlet gives her a boost to her confidence. She was placed via Morningside Services and the Lewis County Autism Coalition.

Nicole Miller introduced the panel discussion. Miller is operations director for the Lewis County Autism Coalition. She said the coalition formed in 2010 and became a nonprofit in 2015.

“Together, our mission is to promote lifelong inclusion and independence for neurodiverse individuals and their support systems,” she said. “Neurodivergent refers to an individual who has a less typical cognitive variation such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, etc.”

She said cultivating Inclusion has three areas of focus — “work, which we are here to talk about today, school, and community.”

In work, she said, “our focus is on supporting both employees and businesses. We have a hiring campaign promoting hiring those with differences and pair interested parties with employment support in Lewis County. We also encourage business to become more inclusive for both staff, and customers.”

She said supported employment refers to service provisions wherein people with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, mental health, and traumatic brain injury, among others, are assisted with obtaining and maintaining employment.

“There are many reasons to incorporate hiring people with disabilities,” Miller

said. “Disability is diversity. Those of you who have DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) policies or are looking to implement them, should consider that inclusion and diversity mean many things, all of which are key to a robust business.”

Morningside’s rehabilitation services are provided by the Employment Services Division. Services are provided in six counties in Western Washington including Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Clallam, Grays Harbor and Pierce counties.

Services are individualized and focus on preparing for, securing and maintaining employment opportunities for people with a variety of disabilities and other barriers to employment.

More than 90 professional staff provide employment planning and preparation, job development, training and coaching to ensure each individual achieves his/her employment goals. Staff receives intensive and on-going training focused on person-centered techniques, positive behavior supports, individual choice and advocacy.

Richard DeBolt, Executive Director of

the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, said hiring those with disabilities is a “win-win” opportunity.

“Hiring is tough right now with low unemployment,” DeBolt said. “By hiring those with disabilities, you not only find quality workers, but you help people find meaningful jobs and make them a productive and proud part of our society.”

Grocery Outlet’s co-owner Michael Morgan encourages other businesses to follow his lead.

“I ask people to suspend judgment and look at those with disabilities as having possibilities,” he said. “Treat them like they would like to be treated. ... I’m looking to invest in tomorrow. And it’s both an opportunity and an obligation. Don’t wait for a manual or a policy. You’ve just got to wade into it.”

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To contact the Lewis County Autism Coalition call 360.520.0515. To reach Morningside Services call 360.943.0512.

**INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES CAN:**

- Bring stability to your business through higher than average retention rate — the Department of Labor found that employers who hire people with disability report a 90% increase in retention. This also saves you money. A study states the median cost of turnover on an employee who earns \$45,000 a year is \$15,000.
- Demonstrate unique strengths just like all your employees
- Become valued workers who can improve workplace culture and morale
- Increase business success through greater productivity and innovative solutions
- Improve the public image of your business in Lewis County
- Secure tax benefits for hiring workers with differences
- There is no extra cost to hire someone with a developmental disability. In fact, with a higher than average retention rate, you may save your business some money.

- Most of the time, no accommodations are required when hiring an individual with a developmental disability. Nationwide data shows that if accommodations are needed, most are under \$500.

— Source: Nicole Miller, operations director for the Lewis County Autism Coalition

**ZONING:**

*Continued From Page C1*

Hill to the north.” The western boundary of the property is adjacent to single-family homes with lots that range from .25 acre to just under an acre in size. To the east is property owned by Allito Properties, LLC that is zoned R:2. To the north are single-family homes zoned R:2 that are sized from .5 to 5.3 acres.

On a separate but related topic, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County was approached to assist with finding solutions to the housing shortage in our county. The current need is for an additional 6,000 new homes in the next 10 years along the Interstate 5 corridor in Lewis County. The coalition working on the housing shortage also includes the city managers from the Twin Cities, county government, developers, engineers, Security State Bank, title companies and Realtors.

**SEPT. 15**  
**THURSDAY | 2022**  
**5:30PM**

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**LONGEST DRIVE · CHIPPING CONTEST · PUTTING COURSE**

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**ENTRY INCLUDES 2 RAFFLE TICKETS & A DRINK TICKET.**

**MUSIC, APPETIZERS, & 2 "NO HOST" BARS.**  
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**RAFFLE - STAY AT ILANI CASINO'S "NEW" HOTEL & DINNER FOR 2 AT MICHAEL JORDANS STEAKHOUSE.**

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