

# THE ECONOMIC REPORT

A SUPPLEMENT OF The Chronicle

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### Ameresco Sees Lewis County as an Emerging Power

*Global Company Joins the Alliance, Believes the Region Is Poised for a Power ‘Renaissance’*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Ameresco, with 60 offices around the world and regional offices in Vancouver, B.C., Seattle and Portland, focuses on clean technology, renewable energy, and rehabilitating old and failing energy infrastructure.

Joel Hansen, senior account executive for Ameresco, said his job is to find “possibilities and strategies” to harness those opportunities, and he thinks he’s found those possibilities in Lewis County.

“We focus on what we can do and how do we get it done,” Hansen said.

Ameresco recently joined the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, stating they did so because the county is poised for growth in the energy sector and they want to be part of it.

He believes the Alliance is central to those opportunities, and sees Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt as key to successful efforts not only in Lewis County, but through collaboration with the surrounding counties of Thurston, Grays Harbor, Mason and Pacific.

“These five counties already work together really well from an economic development standpoint,” Hansen said.

He said his company reaches both for “low-hanging fruit” and large energy projects.



Courtesy photo / Ameresco

An Ameresco solar photovoltaic project in San Joaquin County, California.

For an example of low-hanging fruit, Hansen mentions the rehabbing of decades-old light fixtures in public buildings such as public schools, which don’t have the funds to fulfill new state requirements to remodel for energy efficiency and have long backlogs of deferred maintenance.

At work are new state laws — the state Clean Building Act, along with the state’s commitment to climate control initiatives — that requires the upgrades, and not just for public buildings, but also private buildings that are over 50,000 square feet.

“We’re interested in bringing private money in to help meet those requirements,” Hansen said.

His company can come in, replace the aging, energy-wasting fixtures, and pay for the fixes. He said the change can realize a savings of 50% of a school’s monthly energy bill. Ameresco, in turn, gets paid over time in the energy savings.

They can also replicate that in HVAC, roofs, windows, doors, siding, insulation water and wastewater upgrades. All without a real cost to the schools.

His company makes the money; the schools get their energy efficiency without paying out any extra dollars.

An example of a bigger project: Ameresco is in a partnership with the weighty Southern California Edison power company. Together they are building one of the country’s largest solar banks in California. The need for more solar power is to help balance the power grid that almost suffered from rolling blackouts last summer, caused by electric power shortages due to extended drought, wildfire and heatwaves. The project, upon completion, will provide the electricity demands in the San Joaquin Valley, Rancho Cucamonga and the Long Beach area.

■ SEE **AMERESCO**, PAGE B2

## CHAIRMAN’S CORNER

### I’m Excited to Help the Alliance to Continue Its Growth

*The Alliance Has Built a Solid Organization; I Want to Assist in Attracting Family-Wage Jobs to Lewis County*

BY LUKE MOERKE

Chair - Economic Alliance of Lewis County

I’m excited to be the new chairman of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County and the possibilities this dynamic organization has to offer.

I started my new post this month, following the departure of former Chair Ben Kostick, who led the Alliance as it transitioned to a new team led by Executive Director Richard DeBolt, starting in March of 2021. Ben held a solid, steady and friendly demeanor at a time when the Alliance needed such direction. It is a pleasure to follow in his footsteps and I want to publicly thank him for his time as chair.

I’m excited because Richard has built a strong staff that does amazing work. The Alliance is taking on a lot of business assistance and development projects, from helming the website Discover Lewis County to a higher level, to the day-to-day assistance to Lewis County businesses that often just need a helping hand.

I’m excited to be a part of the effort to bring cutting edge businesses to Lewis County and nuts and bolts manufacturing jobs that will bring family-wage jobs to our area; attracting new high-energy labor and also allowing our sons and daughters to remain in Lewis County in these decent jobs.

Simply put, I want to help the Alliance to make this community a better place.

I also believe, while the Alliance is becoming the go-to economic driver of Lewis County, we can do even better. We can build up the Alliance’s presence in the county, region and state. Many don’t know enough about the Alliance, and I aim to improve those relationships. I’m looking forward to enhancing transparency at the Alliance, as well as building upon the community relations between the Alliance and the public.

Mostly, I am excited to be in a position to make a difference in a place where I grew up. I was born and raised in Lewis County, and before that, my father and grandfather both operated successful businesses in this county in the logging and drilling industries.

At my business — Exodus Engineering based in Centralia — “I endeavor to be a family friendly and faith based business that continues to make a difference in the community.”

One of our driving principles at Exodus Engineering, is “to maintain integrity in business practices, and be someone who is down to earth and easy to work with.”

I want to bring that same attitude — trusted, down to earth and easy to work with — to the Alliance and in turn to all of Lewis County.

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*Luke Moerke is chairman of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, and president and owner of Exodus Engineering in Centralia.*



LUKE MOERKE

### ToledoTel Moving Forward with Massive Broadband Expansion

*With \$23.5M Granted, Winlock’s 2,300-Plus Homes and Businesses Will Soon Have High-Speed Internet*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

At a business meeting of the Lewis County Commissioners on Jan. 3, the county approved a grant contract with the Washington State Broadband Office awarding Lewis County \$23.5 million for the installation of fiber optic broadband infrastructure to every parcel within Winlock and the surrounding rural areas through ToledoTel.

This was essentially a formality, as in October of 2022 Lewis County Commissioners and ToledoTel held a kick-off meeting for their public-private partnership to expand high-speed internet services in and around Winlock.

The grant will pay the way for internet service to eventually be extended to over 2,300 homes and businesses in Winlock. The total project will consist of 134 miles of mainline construction. ToledoTel will now begin engineering and design of the project, plus provide an additional \$2.35 million in matching funds toward the project.

The Lewis County Commissioners’ resolution accepting the grant stated, “The broadband services from this project will be a game-changing boost to the Winlock area’s growth, economic development and quality of life.”

Lewis County Manager Erik Martin said this is a great opportunity for



Courtesy photo / Lewis County Commissioners

From left, Lewis County Budget Administrator Becky Butler, County Manager Erik Martin, ToledoTel VP/COO Dale Merten and County Housing and Infrastructure Specialist Eric Eisenberg following the October 2022 kick-off meeting celebrating a \$23.5 million award to expand broadband into Winlock and beyond.

South Lewis County.

“There’s the convenience, there’s business purposes; all those are really vital and becoming more and more a part of everyday life, and we want to provide those services to everyone in Lewis County that we can,” Martin said. “This project is really the beginning, in terms of getting service out to

folks, and we want to focus on getting broadband out to all rural areas and all residents of Lewis County.”

At the completion of the project, which is expected to run through 2026, the county will own the broadband infrastructure and ToledoTel

■ SEE **TOLEDOTEL**, PAGE B3

## SPONSORED CONTENT

### THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Here’s a hard fact about Washington: by the age of one, nearly half of the children born in our state are enrolled in Apple Health, Washington’s provider of Medicaid services. In Lewis County, approximately two-thirds of newborns are enrolled in Apple Health. Which is to say that despite Washington having one of the strongest economies in the US, more and more children in our state are being born into poverty every year.

Although the circumstances of one’s birth aren’t necessarily a guaranteed predictor of future opportunities, the proven pathways out of poverty are getting further out of reach. Capital barriers to entry are preventing our neighbors from accessing the key tools for wealth building: homeownership, entrepreneurship, and education.

Want to earn a living wage thanks to an apprenticeship or higher education?

That degree or certification requires capital.

Perhaps you have the next billion-dollar idea or just see the need for a service in your community? Those business licenses or the seed funding required for a business loan, that’ll require capital.

Or maybe you’re just looking for the basic stability, pride, and financial security of homeownership? That down payment requires capital.

Initial capital barriers prevent millions of our fellow Washingtonians from even getting to the starting line to climb out of poverty.

Cities and towns across our state are seeing this lack of capital slowly corrode once thriving communities that supported living wage jobs and families.

Whether you’re from a rural community or an urban center, systemic disinvestment and draining of capital assets have dwindled opportunities to build family wealth and growing communities.

One idea being proposed this legislative session to address these capital barriers is called the Washington Future Fund.

Proposed by the Office of the State Treasurer, Senate Bill 5125 (sponsored by Sen. Yasmin Trudeau and Sen. Ann Rivers) and House Bill 1094 (sponsored by Rep. Monica Stonier and Rep. Paul Harris) would set aside \$4,000 for every newborn enrolled in Apple Health (nearly 40,000 newborns a year) and invest those dollars similarly to the way we invest our pensions with the State Investment Board.

Over time, that initial investment

would grow and depending on when eligible recipients activate their claim (as an adult before the age of thirty-six) the Washington Future Fund could direct anywhere from \$10,000-\$30,000 toward homeownership, postsecondary education, or starting a small business.

Simply put, when these young Washingtonians come of age and are ready to invest in themselves, the Washington Future Fund would provide the capital assistance needed to take those first steps toward building wealth for themselves, their families, and in time their communities.

It will take decades to reverse the economic trends and disinvestment that has brought us to this moment. But saving money and investing now through the Washington Future Fund can be the cornerstone to give a fighting chance for generations to come.



# Lewis County PUD Hires Plotz as Its New General Manager

*Longtime Lewis County Resident Has Deep Roots with the PUD; His Father Worked for the Power Utility for Most of His Life*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

David Plotz was hired by the Lewis County PUD as its newest general manager on Jan. 3.

PUD Commissioners Michael Kelly, Ed Rothlin and Mike Hadaller voted unanimously on the hire.

Plotz said he aims to keep rates as low as possible, provide exemplary service to customers and continue to build up infrastructure to keep the power humming and the people of Lewis County safe.

One of his first declarations was to form an advisory committee including retired Pacific County PUD Manager Doug Miller, retired Columbia Bank Branch Manabe Connie Bode and former Lewis County PUD Manager

Dave Muller. His goal with the advisory committee is to discuss issues with the Lewis County PUD staff and sitting commissioners. He hopes the advisory panel will offer guidance on the best avenues to take for the PUD to provide top-notch service to its customers and to keep power rates low.

In a statement, Plotz said, “I grew up in Chehalis and have strong ties to the PUD. My dad worked almost his entire life for Lewis County Public Utility District and had a deep loyalty to this organization. He retired as a line crew truck driver and later came back to work part time washing PUD trucks. He was all about loyalty, hard work and giving back to the community.”

Plotz graduated from W.F. West High School and earned degrees in finance and accounting from Washington State University. Subsequently Plotz



DAVID PLOTZ  
Lewis County PUD  
General Manager

earned his license as a Certified Public Accountant. He then worked for international banking business Citigroup.

“In 2009, I chose to step away from that corporate life to return to Chehalis to be closer to my father as he neared the end of his own life,” Plotz wrote in his statement. “At that time, I came to work for the PUD for the first time as Power Supply Manager managing power contracts, interfacing with BPA among other duties, under Dave Muller as manager. ... Leaving Citigroup and coming to Lewis PUD was not for the money. My motivation goes back to my dad and to my love of our community. I came to the PUD because I felt I had something to offer.”

Plotz has long wanted to be general manager of the Lewis County PUD. He applied for the position when it opened up three years ago but the commissioner passed on his application. Instead, Plotz resumed his work with Citigroup, first in Manila and then Japan.

He reapplied for the post when it recently opened up.

“We knew we were looking for a candidate who understood and connected with the community and was ready to lead,” said Rothlin in a prepared statement. “We have found an excellent candidate to lead the utility in our mission of providing the community with safe, reliable, and affordable services.”

Commissioner Kelly said he sees a bright future for the PUD, and believes Plotz is the right person to lead the PUD staff.

“I look forward to working with my fellow commissioners and new manager to achieve many great things for the PUD rate payers of Lewis County,” Kelly stated.

Commissioner Hadaller campaigned in his successful run for his new PUD post this past year on making the PUD lean in its spending.

“Our new manager and his group of experienced advisors are now reviewing all PUD operations,” Hadaller stated. “Gathering the facts will take some time. Until then, we all have to be patient.”

# Hadaller Sworn in as Lewis County PUD’s Newest Commissioner

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Michael Hadaller was sworn-in as Lewis County PUD commissioner at the agency’s regular commission meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022.

Lewis County Commissioner Dr. Lindsey Pollock administered the oath of office for Commissioner Hadaller at the meeting held at the PUD’s Chehalis office.

“It is the start of a new adventure,” said Commissioner Hadaller. “I hope we can get everyone working together for the good of our ratepayers and our PUD.”

Commissioner Hadaller, an East Lewis County business owner, represents District 3 which comprises the southern and eastern parts of Lewis County, including Toledo, Onalaska, Ethel, Salkum, Silver Creek, Cinebar, Mossyrock, Morton, Mineral, Glenoma, Randle and Packwood.

Commissioner Hadaller joins commissioners Michael Kelly and Ed Rothlin on the board after winning the seat in the fall to represent District 3. He officially took office on Jan. 1, 2023.

Lewis County PUD is a community-owned, locally governed utility providing power services and telecommunications infrastructure to about 33,000 customers throughout most of Lewis County and adjacent communities. Commission meetings are generally the first and third Tuesday of every month at 10 a.m. PUD Commissioner terms are six years.

As set by state law, it is the board’s responsibility to set utility policy and to hire and oversee the work of the general manager.

In November of 2022, the PUD commissioners passed a balanced, two-year budget for 2023 and 2024 with no expected rate increases. This was accomplished through a combination of cost management efforts and strategic investment. This will allow the PUD to continue reinforcing their system, invest in broadband and provide great service

While the cost of goods has risen over the past five years, PUD staff have worked to responsibly limit rate increases, according to a news release.

“To pass on a 0% increase for the customers is significant because inflation is

**“It is the start of a new adventure. I hope we can get everyone working together for the good of our ratepayers and our PUD.”**

Michael Hadaller  
Lewis County PUD commissioner District 3

impacting everyone including the PUD,” said Commissioner Rothlin. “We will continue to maintain not only affordability but also safety and reliability and in the future that will be a focus.”

## ABOUT DISTRICT 1 AND DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Rothlin, a retired superintendent of the Chehalis School District, represents PUD Commission District No. 2. District No. 2 generally comprises the western portion of Lewis County, including parts of Chehalis and Centralia, Adna, Boistfort and Pe Ell.

Commissioner Rothlin was appointed to the Board of Commissioners on Nov. 1, 2019. He was subsequently elected to the Board of Commissioners in 2020, with his new term beginning in



Courtesy photo / Lewis County PUD

Lewis County Commissioner Dr. Lindsey Pollock swears in new Lewis County Commissioner Michael Hadaller.

January of 2021.

Commissioner Kelly, a computer and controls professional at TransAlta Corporation’s Centralia coal-fired power plant, represents PUD Commission District No.1 which includes the central part of Lewis County east of Centralia and Chehalis, including the Big Hanaford, Little Hanaford, Coal Creek, Logan Hill, North Fork, Forest, Napavine, Evaline and Winlock areas.

Commissioner Kelly was elected to the Board of Commissioners, with his term beginning in January of 2021.

# Moerke Starts His Term as Economic Alliance Chairman

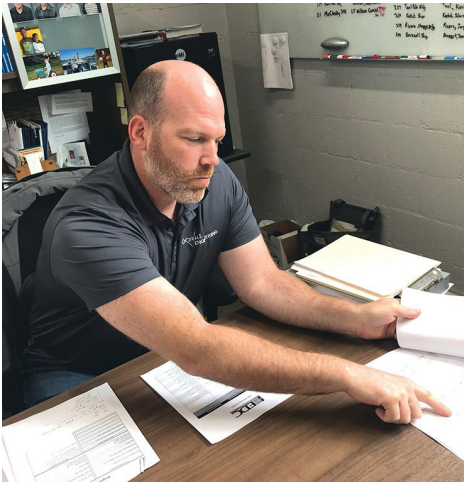
*He Brings a Strong History with Lewis County and a Successful Business Acumen to the Alliance*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

New Lewis County Economic Alliance Chair Luke Moerke brings his honesty, his straightforward approach and a drive to make his community a better place to his new post.

Moerke replaced outgoing Chair Ben Kostick this month. President and owner of Exodus Engineering in Centralia, his engineering firm focuses on residential and commercial “problem solving,” a trait he aims to bring to the Alliance.

“We are extremely pleased to have Luke as our leader as the Alliance moves forward with building coalitions, promoting job growth and development, and attracting clean-energy industry into Lewis County,” said Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt. “Luke



Michael Wagar / Economic Alliance of Lewis County

President and owner Luke Moerke of Exodus Engineering in Centralia goes over residential home plans at his Centralia office.

is definitely hands-on — he attends our weekly staff meetings — and offers solid advice and input.”

Moerke was born and raised in Lewis County. His grandfather and father both operated successful businesses in Lewis county in logging and well drilling respectively. His business Exodus Engineering provides engineering support for residential and commercial buildings, residential home design and drafting, commercial plan support and drafting and site plans.

Along with his business, he also oversees his family’s 200-acre forestry farm in Adna.

“I like the design part, I like problem-solving,” Moerke said of his professional duties.

Moerke earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from Central Washington University followed by obtaining a license in civil engineering. Before that, he worked for the family business — Moerke & Sons Pump & Drilling — which was first started by his grandfather, then directed by his dad and mom.

His dad pointed him to mechanical engineering, as there was a need for the family business to produce pumps and water system designs.

After university graduation, Moerke worked for Pacific Northwest Engineering in Tacoma until 2012. He started Exodus Engineering in 2012 to be closer to his Adna roots and the family forestry farm located in the Curtis-Boistfort area.

Moerke’s grandfather worked in logging, and partnered with several homesteaders in the Adna area, purchasing timber tracts along the way. Moerke’s dad managed the timberland. Moerke took over the family duties overseeing the timber. He took forestry stewardship classes and became certified in family forestry planning.

Moerke has six boys, two of whom he adopted as siblings out of Haiti. The family rides dirt bikes and works the land together, as well as put in time hunting.

## AMERESCO:

Continued From Page B1

“The battery storage systems we have contracted for Ameresco will make the grid more resilient to the effects of extreme weather and will help us continue our progress toward the clean energy future, which is essential to combating climate change,” said Kevin Payne, president and CEO, Southern California Edison, in a news release.

The cost of the Ameresco project: \$1 billion.

“In recent years, California’s extensive wildfires have highlighted the necessity and importance of improved energy infrastructure. It has become clear that the time for action is now,” said Britta MacIntosh, senior vice president, Ameresco Western Region, adding the project is proof that working together via public/private partnerships can solve real problems.

“We develop a lot of energy-generating infrastructure, including solar, wind, biogas and renewable natural gas,” Hansen said.

One emerging need in Washington state is the rise of electric-powered transportation. Hansen said if the state transitions from its current use of gas to electric-powered vehicles, it will create

a dire need for more electricity production beyond the hydro power that Washington has depended upon for decades.

An article by KUOW titled, “Electric vehicle sales have surged in Washington state. But gas cars still dominate,” states, “The Washington Legislature has set a target of ending the sale of gasoline-powered cars in Washington by the year 2030. It has also approved spending millions to install more charging stations throughout the state.”

Another article — “Electric Cars Will Challenge State Power Grids,” by The Pew Charitable Trusts, states, “A U.S. Department of Energy study found that increased electrification across all sectors of the economy could boost national consumption by as much as 38% by 2050, in large part because of electric vehicles. The environmental benefit of electric cars depends on the electricity being generated by renewables.”

Hansen said as far as Lewis County, DeBolt was an early attraction. Hansen, working out of Tumwater, attended the Regional Economic Forecast & Innovation EXPO at Great Wolf Lodge this past Dec. 1. DeBolt was one of the speakers. Hansen also listened intently the year before when again, DeBolt took the stage.

The networking EXPO draws over

350 decision makers, community leaders and innovators from all sectors of business and industry from the five-county region of Thurston, Mason, Grays Harbor, Lewis and Pacific counties and beyond.

DeBolt was on the Economic Development Leaders panel, presenting solutions and strategies for businesses to use in planning and operations, and to build a strong, resilient and inclusive community. Hansen was impressed with DeBolt’s vision.

“Lewis County is fertile ground,” Hansen said, adding DeBolt is unique with his background in energy and politics. “We want to be a part of what he’s talking about.”

The county is already an energy producing player, with Tacoma Power, Centralia Power and TransAlta. He said the effort to turn Lewis County into a hydrogen hub has real potential.

Hansen said the possibilities, especially at TransAlta and its coal mine under reclamation, has explosive potential with hydrogen and fusion power, both projects in discussions for Lewis County.

“We are very interested in Richard DeBolt and what he is planning to do with TransAlta,” Hansen said. “Lewis County has a lot going on energy-wise and Lewis County has a business-

friendly environment. It comes back to Richard, along with the fact that the cost of doing business in Pierce County or King County, compared to Lewis County. You’ve got a visionary in Richard. If he can pull together these projects at TransAlta, we want to be a part of it.”

DeBolt appreciates the kind words, but deflects on his impact.

“It takes a lot of people, certainly more than one person in this community, to make these projects come to reality,” DeBolt said. “That said, we are extremely pleased that Ameresco has chosen to join with the Alliance. They are the type of industry leaders that can help us in our quest to turn Lewis County into a clean-energy hub.”

Hansen said one example could be building a massive solar-powered system at the former mine at TransAlta.

“The transmission is already there,” Hansen said, adding there are tax credits in place to build projects on reclaimed coal mines. “The numbers work.”

He said with the federal Inflation Reduction Act and the infrastructure bill, “quite a bit of money is flowing.”

Bottom line, Hansen said, is “we’re excited to be a part of the Alliance. This could be a time for a real renaissance for Lewis County.”



# County Commissioners Pass Resolution Honoring Gary Stamper

## WSDOT Is Asked to Rename View Pullout the ‘Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook at Riffe Lake’

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County Commissioner Gary Stamper, who passed away in September of 2021, loved his getaway home above Riffe Lake in East Lewis County.

Now the current Lewis County Commissioners want to honor his memory by renaming the Riffe Lake Overlook in his honor.

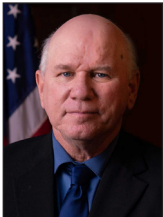
The county commissioners passed a resolution on Tuesday asking the Washington State Department of Transportation for a name change to the Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook at Riffe Lake.

The Riffe Lake Overlook, located in a pull-out on the south side of U.S. Highway 12, about 0.4 miles east of the Mossyrock Dam, provides views of Riffe Lake, which was formed after the 1968 construction of the dam flooded the site of two pioneering communities, Riffe and Kosmos.

Stamper helped spearhead efforts to remove trees that were blocking the views from the overlook, which is located in his District 3.

According to the resolution, “timber and transportation were two of Commissioner Stamper’s greatest passions during his years in office (2015-2021), and he worked tirelessly with state legislators and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) on several state and federal projects within Lewis County — such as efforts to widen Interstate 5 through Lewis County; efforts to relieve congestion at the Napavine interchange; the Chamber Way overpass repair project; countless fish passage/bridge projects; and the Highway 603, Borst Avenue and Silverbrook Road improvement projects.”

The resolution continues, “Commissioner Stamper established solid relationships with Lewis County’s nine incorporated cities as well as the area’s other governmental entities — such as the Lewis County Public Utility District,



GARY STAMPER  
Former  
Lewis County  
Commissioner



Courtesy photo / Lewis County Commissioners

The view from the Riffe Lake Overlook.

Twin Transit, the tribes and the county’s two ports — to develop infrastructure plans for the future while also working alongside private employers and other business leaders to identify transportation needs and develop solutions.”

“With Gary’s commitment to Lewis County and focus on East Lewis County, it is more than appropriate to rename the lookout in his honor,” said Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Director Richard DeBolt. “He’s probably looking down at Riffe Lake with a smile on his face today.”

Stamper was known for being a great leader, career educator, sought after mentor and a soft-spoken, big-hearted family man who had a passion for service. Stamper first grew up in Riffe and then Mossyrock. He was a Mossyrock High School graduate and went on to be a teacher at his alma mater and served as a youth sport coach for years. He was principal for White Pass Junior/High School as well as fire commissioner for District 3.

Stamper was buried at the Klickitat Cemetery in Mossyrock.

### TOLEDOTEL:

Continued From Page B1

will use the fiber optic lines to assist in connecting businesses and homeowners to internet service.

“Broadband infrastructure and access to high-speed internet service is critical to residents, businesses, schools, hospitals and public safety in Lewis County,” said Lewis County Commissioner Dr. Lindsey Pollock. “This is a big step in addressing the areas that are unserved or underserved, bringing us one step closer to closing the digital divide.”

The Washington State Broadband Office earlier announced funding

for 13 construction projects that will deliver reliable, high-speed internet access in 14 communities when completed. The \$145 million in Broadband Infrastructure Acceleration grants move Washington another step closer to its ambitious goal of connecting all residents of the state to broadband infrastructure by 2028.

“Infrastructure is the foundation for digital equity. From education and healthcare to e-commerce and community services, the daily essentials needed for people and our economy to thrive are increasingly found online,” said Washington Commerce Director Lisa Brown “Washington state’s goal is to ensure all of our residents have ac-

cess to affordable high-speed internet, as well as the devices, skills and confidence needed to connect with critical resources.”

Broadband Infrastructure Acceleration Grants conditionally awarded, pending final contract execution, are as follows:

- Lewis County — \$23.5 million, estimated project completion by Dec. 31, 2026
- Clallam County — \$20.27 million, estimated project completion by Dec. 31, 2023
- Spokane Tribe of Indians — \$16.8 million, estimated project completion by Dec. 31, 2024
- Snohomish County — \$16.7 million, estimated project completion by Jan. 31, 2024
- Washington independent Telecommunications Association — \$14.86 million for two sub-projects serving Mason and Island Counties, estimated project completion by Dec. 31, 2024
- King County — \$11.8 million, estimated project completion by Jan. 31, 2023
- Adams County — \$10.3 million, estimated project completion by Dec. 1, 2023
- Public Utility District #1 of Jefferson County — \$9.7 million, estimated north fiber project completion by Dec. 1, 2024
- Nisqually Indian Tribe — \$6.77 million, estimated OAN Phase II project completion by Dec. 31, 2023

### TOLEDOTEL NAMED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AT CHAMBER BANQUET

The Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce held its annual banquet in the TransAlta Commons at Centralia College on Friday night, Jan. 20. With hundreds in attendance, Chamber Executive Director Cynthia Mudge announced ToledoTel as the Business of the Year. Vice President and CEO Dale Merten accepted the award on behalf of the South Lewis County business, acknowledging other employees in the crowd. He noted the company’s effort to expand broadband internet to the Winlock area through a partnership with Lewis County.

- Lincoln County — \$5.2 million, estimated Connecting Lincoln County project completion by Dec. 31, 2023
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville — \$4.09 million, estimated broadband acceleration project completion by Dec. 31, 2024
- Port of Bellingham — \$4 million, estimated Whatcom County expansion project completion by Dec. 31, 2024
- Port of Whitman County — \$1.06 million, estimated project completion by Dec. 1, 2023

Applications for a second round of grants to award an additional \$120 million will open later this spring. Input from stakeholders is instrumental in shaping how the office distributes funds, according to Ann Campbell, manager of infrastructure programs for the Washington State Broadband Office, noting that local community broadband organizing groups are a focal point for this effort.

Campbell said for this funding round the office prioritized projects that would deploy service in unserved areas, or areas lacking access to reliable (wireline connection) service at speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (mbps) download and 3 mbps upload (25/3).

The selected projects will offer speeds of 1 gigabit per second symmetrical service unless otherwise precluded by topography and geography.



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## ECONOMIC ALLIANCE BOARD & STAFF

			Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Board	STAFF	PARTNERS
 <p><b>Economic Alliance of Lewis County Boardmembers</b></p> <p><b>Mike Alexander</b> Security State Bank</p> <p><b>Scott Brummer</b> Lewis County Commissioner</p> <p><b>Jereme Chapman</b> KPFF Consulting Engineers</p> <p><b>Paul Ericson</b> Shelton Lam &amp; Deck</p>	<b>Arnold Haberstroh</b> Haberstroh Properties	<b>Julie Shaffley</b> Port of Centralia	<p><b>CHAIR</b> <b>Luke Moerke</b> Exodus Engineering</p> <p><b>VICE CHAIR</b> Bob Guenther Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Central Labor Council</p> <p><b>TREASURER</b> Stuart Cavness First Allied Securities Inc.</p> <p><b>PAST CHAIR</b> Ben Kostick Ben Kostick CPA Inc.</p>	<p><b>Richard DeBolt</b> Executive Director</p> <p><b>Todd Chaput</b> Infrastructure Initiatives Program Manager</p> <p><b>Eric Sonnenberg</b> External Relations Manager</p> <p><b>Dolly Tardiff</b> Business Development Center Program Manager</p> <p><b>Michael Wagar</b> Communications Strategist</p> <p><b>Lenee Langdon</b> Tourism Project Coordinator</p>	<p><b>Lewis County</b></p> <p><b>City of Chehalis</b></p> <p><b>City of Centralia</b></p> <p><b>Port of Chehalis</b></p> <p><b>Impact Washington</b></p> <p><b>The Benaroya Company</b></p> <p><b>The Industrial Group</b></p> <p><b>Fortescue Future Industries</b></p>
	<b>Ralph Hubbert</b> Powersports Northwest	<b>Cindy Sorenson</b> Sorenson Transportation Inc.			
	<b>Brandon Johnson</b> SCJ Alliance	<b>Bob Spahr</b> City of Chehalis			
	<b>Dale Merten</b> Toledo Tel	<b>Samantha Styger-Magnuson</b> Lewis County Coffee, and Nomad Truck and SUV Outfitters			
	<b>Tyler McCallum</b> McCallum Rock Drilling	<b>Chad Taylor</b> The Chronicle, The Silver Agency			
	<b>Cameron McGee</b> City of Centralia	<b>Kirk Vigre</b> Dry Box			
	<b>Dr. Bob Mohrbacher</b> Centralia College	<b>Shane Wood</b> TwinStar Credit Union			
	<b>JT Mundi</b> Kodenum, Inc.				
	<b>Heidi Pehl</b> Dealer Principal - I5 Toyota				