

THE ECONOMIC REPORT

A SUPPLEMENT OF *The Chronicle*

At the Centralia Reclamation Mine: Hybrid Hydrogen Fuel Cell Project Gets \$250K Grant for Battery-Powered Mining Trucks

Grant Solidifies Development of New Centralia Facility with Potential for Long-Term Local and Regional Economic Impacts

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County could well become a symbol of Washington state's robust and growing clean energy economy when zero-emission trucks — the height of three-story buildings — are seen rolling around the First Mode Proving Grounds in Centralia later this year.

First Mode, a global carbon reduction company that developed the world's first integrated battery and hydrogen fuel cell powerplants for retrofitting the behemoth diesel-powered trucks, has established a proving grounds in Centralia, thanks in part to a \$250,000 grant from the state economic development strategic reserve fund, according to a news release.

The Department of Commerce awarded the funds to the Economic Alliance of Lewis County to assist First Mode with design and construction



GOV. JAY INSLEE



Photo courtesy First Mode Proving Grounds

A hydrogen-powered haul truck is the centerpiece of efforts by First Mode Proving Grounds to manufacture battery-powered haul trucks, as well as the associated infrastructure for recharging and refueling. They will be deployed at mines across the world.

costs for office and workshop space the company plans to renovate and expand at the former coal mine site leased from TransAlta.

The First Mode Proving Grounds will help the company accelerate the transition to clean energy for heavy industry, while supporting new uses for the infrastructure at the former mine site. The site is an ideal location, allowing haul trucks to operate in a true mining environment.

Following the successful deployment of a proof-of-concept hydrogen mine haul truck at Anglo American's platinum mine in Mogalakwena, South Africa in May 2022, First Mode leased land and office space at the TransAlta Centralia Mine and announced plans in October for the proving grounds. First Mode manufactures its proprietary hybrid fuel cell battery powerplants in

■ SEE **GRANT**, PAGE B2

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Looking Back: The Annual Banquet Was a Smashing Success

Looking Forward: Upcoming Forums Include March 15 Women In Business Seminar

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

Executive Director
Economic Alliance of Lewis County

If you turn to the third page of this Economic Report, you'll see a lot of smiling faces.

Photographer Heidi Marshall captured the essence of the 40th Annual Economic Alliance of Lewis County, a sold-out event, at the Jester Auto Museum in Chehalis on Friday, Feb. 3. We share her photos in this edition.

The banquet was an evening of celebration, and marks about two years since I was tasked to take over the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

In those two years the Alliance has put together a strong staff, who were present at the banquet, and were charged with putting on a celebration with a few hundred of our best friends, as well as helping me with the direction and the success of the Alliance.

It was a proud and entertaining evening, from Alliance Board Chair Luke Moerke taking the podium with his message, to Lewis County Commissioner Sean Swope looking like a big kid in a candy store while scoping out the desserts for the "Dessert Dash."

A highlight for the audience was listening to keynote speaker Brandi Kruse, a spark plug of a woman who entertained and captivated with her tales. A personal highlight for me was handing out the various annual Alliance awards.

It was an honor to share the stage, for example, with Buck Hubbard, a long-time mover and shaker in Lewis County, a man who truly cares about this community. Hubbard, a member of the Chehalis Industrial Commission, presented the Gail and Carolyn Shaw Industry Award to Paul Ericson of Shelton Structures.

For those of you who don't know, Gail and Carolyn Shaw were driving forces for the economic development of Lewis County, particularly Chehalis. It is good to remember the Shaws each year with the annual award.

Among the most deserving of honorees was Centralia City Manager Rob Hill, given the Alliance Staff Award. Hill for years has been a steadying force for Lewis County. He is firm, fair, organized and calm — all skills needed to run Lewis County's largest city, with more than 18,000 residents. Hill is razor sharp in his thinking and a gentleman to boot. A much deserved award.

I also want to thank the sponsors who helped us put on the annual banquet. Without their contributions the event would not have been as successful. They are:

■ SEE **DIRECTOR**, PAGE B2



RICHARD DEBOLT
Executive Director
Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Seminar Features Local Women Business Leaders

The Women in Business Seminar Is Set for March 15 at The Vintage-Washington Hotel in Chehalis

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County presents the Women In Business Seminar 1 to 3 p.m. Wednesday, March 15, at The Vintage-Washington Hotel, located at 545 N. Market Blvd., Chehalis.

The informative gathering features a panel of speakers, including local business leaders Coralee Taylor of The Chronicle and Silver Agency, Amanda Singleton of Rainier Connect, Suzi Swope of Gurl Gone Green and Samantha Magnuson of LC Coffee & Nomad Outfitters.

Come join the Economic Alliance of Lewis County for an informational, uplifting, empowering discussion about navigating through business between local women leaders.

The event is a partnership with United Way of Lewis County and Women United. Pre-register by calling 360-748-0114.

Coralee Taylor

Coralee Taylor, along with her husband Chad Taylor, are owners of The Chronicle and The Silver Agency. She is the CEO of the media company that owns The Chronicle covering Lewis County, the Reflector based in Southwest Washington in Battle Ground and the Nisqually Valley News in Yelm.



CORALEE TAYLOR



SAMANTHA MAGNUSON



SUZI SWOPE



AMANDA SINGLETON

Samantha Magnuson

Samantha Magnuson is co-owner of Lewis County Coffee & Nomad Truck and SUV Outfitters. After a corporate career with LINE-X Protective Coatings, Magnuson left to dedicate fulltime to her family's businesses — Lewis County Coffee Company & Nomad Truck and SUV Outfitters.

Suzi Swope

Suzi Swope is the creator and founder of Gurl Gone Green, an online resource of vast information on anything green, clean and healthy. Before she started blogging, she was an organic hair stylist

Economic Alliance of Lewis County Business Development Center Upcoming Programs:

March 15 | Women In Business Seminar

May 17 | Economic Summit

Oct. 18 | Realtor Forum

TBD | Hispanic Business Owner Forum

TBD | Inclusive Career Job Fair with LC Autism Coalition

TBD | Local Manufacturers Workshop with Impact Washington

as well as an esthetician and nail technician. In other words, she knows a thing or two about beauty and social media.

Amanda Singleton

Amanda Singleton is the Customer Care Manager at Rainier Connect. She is responsible for managing the Residential Customer Care Team and Sales, Centralia/Chehalis Commercial Care and Sales and the Quality Assurance Team. Rainier Connect is South Puget Sound's premier phone, cable TV and high-speed Internet provider in Tacoma, Puyallup, Centralia, Eatonville, Graham and beyond.

SPONSORED CONTENT

THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Public Employees Work Together to Help Washingtonians



BY THE WASHINGTON
FEDERATION OF STATE EMPLOYEES

Every day, public employees in Washington State work hard to make our state a great place to live, work, and grow up.

Since the 1940s, they have worked together to advocate for our communities and public agencies. Together, they form the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE).

"Washington counts on us. WFSE members provide critical services in every community in our state," said

WFSE President Mike Yestramski, a psychiatric social worker at Western State Hospital.

Helping Others

Today, WFSE represents over 46,000 public employees in numerous jobs.

At work, WFSE members provide medical care and behavioral health services for Washington's most vulnerable, from veterans and children in protective care to Washingtonians with developmental and intellectual disabilities and troubled youth.

WFSE represents skilled tradespeople such as the plumbers, pipefitters, and carpenters who maintain college campuses, hospitals, and other public buildings. Other

WFSE members form the specialized crews keeping our roads and bridges safe.

WFSE members play important roles in managing our state's natural resources, ensuring a strong and sustainable economy. They work in forestry management, help farmers and landowners conserve natural resources, and maintain Washington's many beautiful public parks.

These are only some of the important services WFSE members provide.

Public Service: A Calling

Despite facing long hours, scarce resources, and dangerous conditions, WFSE members are committed to helping others. Many describe public

service as a calling.

Our union is about joining forces to make positive change. Union membership provides an avenue to advocate for vital public services, improve public agencies, and promote respect, safe working conditions, and fair pay for public workers.

"Our union gives us a way to lift each other up," said Ashley Fueston, WFSE Vice President and WorkSource specialist. "When we stand together, we can fight for what's right and get through tough times."

Everyone in our state deserves a chance to work toward the American dream. Public service workers are here to help their neighbors, family, friends, and community members. Learn more about WFSE at wfse.org.

BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT — DARIN GOSS

Darin Goss serves as the Chief Executive for Providence Swedish South Puget Sound, accountable for Centralia Hospital.

He has appreciated learning more about Lewis County since his arrival in late 2020. Prior, he served as the Chief Operating Officer with Providence in Burbank, California. Goss started his healthcare career at Mayo Clinic in Arizona serving in a variety of leadership roles.

Darin and his wife, Gabby, love the outdoors and are enjoying being empty nesters. He is honored to work for the Centralia team.

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

A: Just beginning this journey. I am honored to be considered for this important role and to help build further on the Economic Alliance’s successes. Having a healthy economy with diverse strong sectors remains critical for the success of our community.

Q: Why did you join The Alliance?

A: Being better connected to thought leaders in Lewis County helps me in our decision making and I know I will learn from others. From the hospital perspective, Centralia hospital is one of the largest employers in Lewis County, so it remains important to be a voice at the table.

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

A: To remain a trusted resource for health care in our community and to care for our caregivers who are helping care for our patients.

Q: What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

A: I only hope I give as much as I will receive watching and learning from others who have already stepped up and led before me.



DARIN GOSS
Chief Executive
Providence
Swedish South
Puget Sound

Q: What do you love most about your industry?

A: Our staff. I am inspired to watch them work as a team. In hospitals, many people are aware of the important role of our nurses and providers. What they might not immediately notice are the hundreds of other roles that together help care for our patients. Supply chain, information technology, emergency preparedness, food service, admitting, care management, infection prevention, security, environmental services, quality, finance – the list is very long and it is our staff that make me the most proud.

Q: How do you define success?

A: I define success first that our pa-

tients trust us for their care and second, our caregivers are proud to call Centralia Hospital home. This has been more challenging the past several years and we remain focused on adjusting to meet the challenges of today.

Q: Who inspires you?

A: I am inspired by my wife who has helped me break through my own glass ceilings. Even as leaders, we have to work through barriers we place on ourselves that can limit growth or a better understanding of a situation and how best to respond. She has helped challenge myself to see other options that might be available and how we can be our own worst critics.

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

A: I was recently reflecting how I had taken for granted the ability to meet in person and the power of in-person events. I appreciate an in-person meeting over a video meeting any day.

Q: What’s the last book you read?

A: “That will never work: The Birth of Netflix and the Amazing Life of an Idea,” by Reed Hastings (2019). I am a big fan of underdog stories and how an idea must change to respond to the signs of the times.

Q: What is your favorite meal?

A: Slightly embarrassed to say lately it has been chicken and waffles. My wife and I are always on the hunt for great restaurants which can lead to having this for dinner when traveling. It remains in my top tier for food combinations I wish I had known when I was 10.

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

A: My wife and I love the outdoors. There is something peaceful about nature that helps ground me in my thinking and understanding how everything we do is connected or impacts others. I also dabble in hot yoga which is really just true survival for me.

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

A: Tough question. I am the second owner for every car I have ever driven, including my current one, a 2014 Jeep Grand Cherokee. Yes, I tend to get the “new car scent” when I wash my car so it smells new.

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

A: I am the stepfather of two really great girls (empty nester now). I am grateful to have met my wife and for this experience. If you are a step-parent, you might be able to relate to the complexities this role can bring, yet it has been one of my most humbling yet rewarding experiences.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Alliance Assists Mercury Auctions with Fast-Paced Relocation

Auction House Had to Find a New Home After Yard Birds Closed

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Mercury Auctions, a high-volume auction house based in Lewis County, had a small problem.

Their business was thriving out of their location at Yard Birds, said Zachary McLaughlin, president of Mercury Auctions, not a problem.

The problem: Yard Birds was shuttered in late November and the auction house was out of a home. McLaughlin remembers it as happening at Thanksgiving. Happy holidays. They were given until 12:01 a.m. Nov. 30 to get out. Many tenants were also evicted.

“We had no idea,” McLaughlin said. “We had just signed a five-year lease.”

Yard Birds representative Garett Russo at the time said the evictions and subsequent closure were due to unpaid utility bills over \$100,000 and failed Washington State Department of Labor & Industries inspections.

In a news release, the city of Chehalis stated it closed Yard Birds through condemnation, in part due to the ongoing lack of power due to unpaid bills.

So McLaughlin went driving around. He ended up at the Port of Chehalis, where he saw a sign in front of a property with an Economic Alliance of Lewis County contact.

“It was completely coincidental,” he said. “I was searching for a business site. I said, ‘Man, I just got to find something.’”

He called the phone number on the sign. Eric Sonnenberg, External Relations Manager for the Economic Alliance, picked up. Sonnenberg quickly, the next day, set up a meeting with McLoughlin, his partners and the property owner.

“He linked me up with the business owner and made it all work,” McLaughlin said. “It was super easy. I called him up, told him what I’m looking for, and the next day, met with landlords and my partners and Eric.”



Courtesy Photo Mercury Auction

Mercury Auction staff during an auction sale.

Between the eviction from Yard Birds to opening up a new space with 12,000 square feet of storage and 3,000 square feet of retail, it took less than a month.

Impressed, Mercury Auctions is now a member of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

“The Alliance not only helped us find our new location, but we have started to attend their events, which are great for networking and other ways to connect with people,” he said. “The annual banquet, I went to hear Brandi Kruse and she was great.”

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT — 1100 NW KERRON ST., WINLOCK

FEATURES:

- 12,500 square feet
- 0.5 acres
- 20 feet clear height
- Two 20-feet by 16-feet doors
- 200 amp single phase
- Blacktop loading area

ERIC SONNENBERG
Economic Alliance
of Lewis County
External Relations
Manager

UTILITIES:

- Electric — Lewis County PUD
- Telephone — Century Link
- 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), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at eric@lewiscountyalliance.org or 208-206-5407.

GRANT:

Continued From Page B1

Seattle, where the company was founded in 2018.

“The extensive knowledge and experience of the Centralia community, coupled with Washington state’s leadership on clean energy innovation, are key to the success of First Mode’s work,” said First Mode CEO Julian Soles. “We started with retrofitting a diesel engine with a clean energy powerplant in a single haul truck. We are now scaling our capabilities and deployments to move the mining industry another step closer to decarbonization.”

Gov. Jay Inslee said the grant is appropriate in light of the state’s efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

“No other U.S. region is better positioned to tackle the game-changing challenge of developing and commercializing technologies for decarbonizing heavy industry,” said Inslee. “Establishment of the First Mode Proving Grounds is an exciting next step for Washington state and the Pacific Northwest.”

Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Director Richard DeBolt called the announcement a harbinger of projects to come.

“This project is the beginning of understanding new technology,” said DeBolt. “It brings Lewis County into the future of the hydrogen valley and will create opportunity clusters for the future.”

At the First Mode Proving Grounds, the company will demonstrate performance and optimize the next generation of hybrid hydrogen and battery-powered haul trucks, as well as the associated infrastructure for recharging and refueling, that will be deployed at mines around the world.

The standard version of these trucks

“The extensive knowledge and experience of the Centralia community, coupled with Washington state’s leadership on clean energy innovation, are key to the success of First Mode’s work. We started with retrofitting a diesel engine with a clean energy powerplant in a single haul truck. We are now scaling our capabilities and deployments to move the mining industry another step closer to decarbonization.”

First Mode CEO Julian Soles

today consumes enormous amounts of diesel, emitting the equivalent pollutants of 700 passenger cars. First Mode’s pilot retrofit solution is estimated to save 960 metric tons of diesel fuel per truck each year.

State and Lewis County Economic Alliance officials are optimistic this project could lead to a significant supply chain and additional economic development in the region, as First Mode builds toward full scale commercialization and mass production of megawatt class FCEV powerplant modules.

“Support for robust public-private innovation clusters in prime industry sectors is central to our long-term strategy. We are developing regional hubs that will create and sustain new business opportunities and good jobs in communities throughout Washington state,” said Washington State Commerce Director Lisa Brown. “First Mode is an important member of our growing clean hydrogen ecosystem.”

Brown chairs the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Association (PNWH2) Board, a nonprofit public-private partnership that is preparing a proposal to the U.S. Department of Energy for a potential \$1 billion investment in a regional clean hydrogen hub in the Pacific Northwest.

DIRECTOR:

Continued From Page B1

exodus Engineering, Fortescue Future Industries, Sterling Breen Crushing, Security State Bank, ignite & rise, Benaroya and The Industrial Commission.

Thanks to the Alliance staff for an event well done, and for all who came to celebrate with us. It was a great banquet.

Women In Business

It’s fine to look back at the banquet, but we press on. Our next event is the March 15 Women In Business Seminar at The Vintage-Washington Hotel in Chehalis. The seminar will feature four women business leaders in Coralee Taylor of The Chronicle and Silver Agency, Amanda Singleton of Rainier Connect, Suzi Swope of Gurl Gone Green and

Samantha Magnuson of LC Coffee & Nomad Outfitters.

The seminar is a partnership between the Alliance, United Way of Lewis County and Women United.

Other upcoming Alliance events to put on your schedule include an Economic Summit May 17, and a Realtor Forum on Oct. 18. More forums are to come before the year is out, including a Hispanic Business Owner Forum, an

Inclusive Career Job Fair with LC Autism Coalition and a Local Manufacturers Workshop with Impact Washington.

It is going to be an interesting, busy 2023 for the Alliance and the Lewis County economy. I wish I could take a look into the future — not that far — just to next year’s Alliance banquet. I anticipate much to celebrate and honor at the 41st annual banquet.

Until then, it is back to work.



Photos by Heidi Marshall Photography

Keynote speaker Brandi Kruse speaks before a packed house.

2023 BANQUET
AWARD RECIPIENTS:

Gail & Carolyn Shaw Award —
Paul Ericson, Shelton Structures

Russ Mahoney Award —
Bob Russell,
retired community member

Community Commitment
Award — Coralee Taylor,
The Chronicle/Silver Agency

Staff Award— Rob Hill,
Centralia City Manager

40th Anniversary Banquet Was Enjoyed by a Full House

Keynote Brandi Kruse,
Annual Award Recipients
Highlight the Event

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The 40th Annual Economic Alliance of Lewis County was a sold-out event, packing host site Jester Auto Museum and Events Center in Chehalis on Friday, Feb. 3.

“Thank you to all award recipients for their dedication, generosity and excellence you give to our community,” said Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County was honored, and the audience was delighted, with keynote speaker Brandi Kruse.

“Thank you to Brandi for sharing your experience and passion with us all,” said Dolly Tardiff, Alliance Business Development Center/Program Manager.

“The Economic Alliance has the great privilege to work alongside many outstanding community members and we had the honor to thank some of them this weekend. We were thrilled to bestow the Gail and Carolyn Shaw award upon Paul Erickson, the Russ Mahoney Award upon Bob Russell, the Community Commitment Award upon Coralee Taylor, and we chose the incomparable Rob Hill to be the recipient of the Staff Award.

“Thank you to you all for your generosity, your excellence and your commitment to our community. You all make a huge impact on our businesses and our lives.”

A special thanks was given to “the amazing” Heidi Marshall Photography for capturing the evening so beautifully.

Former broadcast reporter and now political podcaster Kruse enjoyed the event as well.

“Thank you to the Economic Alliance of Lewis County for inviting me to Chehalis,” said Kruse. “Economic vitality goes hand in hand with quality of life — we must work to ensure our communities are vibrant places for business.”

Banquet Sponsors:

Exodus Engineering
Fortescue Future Industries
Sterling Breen Crushing
Security State Bank
ignite & rise
Benaroya
The Industrial Commission



Ever popular Centralia City Manager Rob Hill thanks the Alliance for its Staff Award.



Buck Hubbert of the Chehalis Industrial Commission, left, presents the Gail and Carolyn Shaw Industry Award to Paul Ericson, third from left, while Alliance Business Development Center/Program Manager Dolly Tardiff, and Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt, right, join in awarding the honor.



Coralee Taylor, left, CEO of The Chronicle and the Silver Agency, is awarded the Community Commitment Award from Alliance Business Development Center/Program Manager Dolly Tardiff, and Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
OF LEWIS COUNTY

WOMEN IN BUSINESS SEMINAR

MARCH 15TH, 2023
1PM-3PM

THE VINTAGE - WASHINGTON HOTEL
545 N. MARKET BLVD
CHEHALIS

Panel of local speakers

- Coralee Taylor - The Chronicle & Silver Agency
- Amanda Singleton - Rainier Connect
- Suzi Swope - Gurl Gone Green Professional Blogger
- Samantha Magnuson- LC Coffee & Nomad Outfitters

PRE-REGISTER BY CALLING
360-748-0114

\$10

United Way
United Way of Lewis County

In partnership with **Women UNITED**

Keynote Speaker- Invited
Christine Gregoire
FORMER GOVERNOR
WASHINGTON STATE

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE BOARD & STAFF

Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Board			STAFF		PARTNERS
CHAIR Luke Moerke Exodus Engineering			Richard DeBolt Executive Director		Lewis County
VICE CHAIR Stuart Cavness First Allied Securities Inc			Todd Chaput Infrastructure Initiatives Program Manager		City of Chehalis
TREASURER Cindy Sorenson Sorenson Transportation Inc.			Eric Sonnenberg External Relations Manager		City of Centralia
PAST CHAIR Ben Kostick Ben Kostick CPA Inc			Dolly Tardiff Business Development Center Program Manager		Port of Chehalis
AT LARGE MEMBER Scott Brummer County Commissioner			Michael Wagar Communications Strategist		Impact Washington
AT LARGE MEMBER Bob Guenther Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Central Labor Council			Shane Wood TwinStar Credit Union		The Benaroya Company
AT LARGE MEMBER Reggie Hamilton Hamilton Rock			Tyler McCallum McCallum Rock Drilling		The Industrial Group
AT LARGE MEMBER Kirk Vigre Dry Box			Mike Alexander Security State Bank		Fortescue Future Industries
Economic Alliance of Lewis County Boardmembers			Paul Ericson Shelton Lam & Deck		
Arnold Haberstroh Haberstroh Properties			Bob Spahr City of Chehalis		
Dr. Bob Mohrbacher Centralia College			Samantha Magnuson Lewis County Coffee, and Nomad Truck and SUV Outfitters		
Brandon Johnson SCJ Alliance			Shane Wood TwinStar Credit Union		
			Cameron McGee City of Centralia		
			Chad Taylor The Chronicle, The Silver Agency		
			Darin Goss Providence Swedish Puget Sound		
			Dale Merten Toledo Tel		
			Heidi Pehl Dealer Principal - 15 Toyota		
			Jereme Chapman KPFF Consulting Engineers		
			JT Mundi Kodenum, Inc.		
			Julie Shaffley Port of Centralia		

