



Photo Courtesy KR Homes

KR Homes works on an area building site. KR Homes are developers of subdivisions, single family and multi family homes. They work in Winlock, Chehalis, Centralia, Vader, Napavine, Toledo, Onalaska, Kelso, Longview, Castle Rock and Mossyrock. KR Homes is a member of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Alliance

Keeping Busy as We Move Through 2023

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

*Economic Alliance of Lewis County
Executive Director*

It's summertime, and the living is easy, especially as we ease into the Fourth of July celebrations and look forward to the official start of the summer season, which began this past week with the summer solstice.

There's much play to be done, from boating, golfing, hanging out with friends, and for me, my daughter is having a baby and my son is getting married this summer.

But that doesn't mean your Economic Alliance of Lewis County is resting on its laurels. We have much in the works, busier than ever, thankfully with a crack staff that just keeps on working, on pushing economic development in Lewis County forward, and continuing with one of our missions in bringing people together, on building consensus.

Already this year — just last month — we hosted an Economic Summit featuring keynote Dr. Bill Conerly, with his Ph.D in economics, 30 years experience and chartered financial analyst designation. It was an entertaining and informative summit.

The month before we helped host the Inclusive Career Fair with the LC Autism Coalition. Also in April we hosted a valuable, helpful Manufactures Workshop with Impact Washington at Centralia College. That was preceded by a Women in Business Seminar in March.

The big event of the year was back in February, with our 40th Anniversary Banquet, with a keynote speech by none other than Brandi Kruse, the host of the popular unDivided podcast. The full house enjoyed their evening, that's for sure.

MOVING FORWARD

As detailed in a story at left, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County is hosting a Real Estate Forum on Oct. 18 at The Loft. I believe much of our economy revolves around the housing market.

Lewis County is struggling with a lack of housing inventory, the entire nation is suffering from high interest rates hitting up to 7%, and permitting and zoning continue to be issues hitting the market.

To whet your whistle, we interviewed three leading housing experts from Lewis County — Greg Lund with Century 21 Real Estate in Chehalis; Angie Brown, with business development at Lewis County Title Company; and Jacek Gillispie, the senior loan consultant with Summit Funding.

For fun, and to raise some money, we are getting ready for the Alliance Open Golf Tournament on Sept. 15 (with the Skills Competition Night the day before) at Riverside Golf Course. Finally, we are working on organizing a Hispanic Business Owner Forum likely in the fall.

So, do as the Alliance does: have fun, work hard and enjoy the best of Lewis County.



RICHARD DEBOLT
*Executive Director
Economic Alliance
of Lewis County*

Alliance Hosting Real Estate Forum Oct. 18

Topics to Include Housing Infrastructure, Housing Shortages, Short-Term Rentals, Purchase and Sales, and Renting Compared to Owning

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Housing drives the U.S. economy and is a major component in Lewis County fortunes.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County recognizes the importance of the housing market, and in response is hosting a Real Estate Forum Wednesday, Oct. 18 at The Loft in Chehalis.

The latest figures from brokers at Northwest Multiple Listing Service for Lewis County from May reveal 121 new listings, 180 total active listings, 111 pending sales, and 96 closed sales with an average price of \$418,000.

More important, the number of months a home is on the market for May is 1.88 months, compared to 1.60 in May of 2022. That signals an easing of housing inventory.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County reached out to three key real estate market experts to gauge their thoughts on our housing market.

**Greg Lund —
Century 21 Real Estate in Chehalis**

Lund firmly believes Lewis County government leaders could help the local real estate market. He said builders need relief from infrastructure requirements — extending utilities — which would increase the inventory of housing in the county.

"Historically (infrastructure costs) have been put on the backs of developers," Lund said.

He said most of the developable land in Lewis County already with easy access to water, sewer and internet "are gone."

Lund believes stronger public/private cooperation is needed, with the county, city and town governments helping to ease the high cost of putting in utility infrastructure and amenities such as gutters and sidewalks.



GREG LUND

"My mantra is to get help with infrastructure opportunities," he said. "We need some assistance from municipalities. ... We don't have enough housing and the cost of developing is high."

Lund said with the rise in interest rates, housing affordability declines.

"Yes it's more costly compared to a year ago with interest rates, but not dramatically higher than historical rates," Lund said.

He said sales continue to be strong in Lewis County, but the lack of inventory continues to hold prices up.

For the housing rental market, Lund said COVID caused a jump in rental prices.

"There was a definite increase in rental rates, with \$1,800 to \$1,900 rents for fairly new apartments, which is not that different from a house payment, so there's good reason to purchase and lock in your payment," Lund said. "Once you own it, it doesn't change. Rentals are at the whim of the market and landlords. And you don't have to be married to a rate. You can refinance when rates go down."

■ SEE FORUM, PAGE B3

Alliance Open Returns to Riverside Friday, Sept. 15

Skills Competition Night Open to Public on Thursday, Sept. 14

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Alliance Open, the annual golf tournament hosted by the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, is back, bigger and better.

The event is Friday, Sept. 15 at Riverside Golf Course in Chehalis, located at 1451 NW Airport Road. Registration starts at 8:30 a.m., with a shotgun start at 10 a.m. The tournament is a four-man scramble, with lunch included, great prizes and raffle tickets available for \$5 or five for \$20. A team of four costs \$1,000.

"We are excited to bring back the Alliance Open for year three," said Economic Alliance of Lewis County's External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg. "We have had tremendous community support and look forward to this year's tournament. Thank you to Riverside Golf Club for hosting us."

In addition to the four-man scramble on Friday, a Skills Competition Night starts at 5:30 p.m. the night before the tournament — Thursday, Sept. 14, also at Riverside



Economic Alliance of Lewis County Photo

Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Director Richard DeBolt swings away at last year's Alliance Open golf tournament at Riverside Golf Course.

Golf Course. The Skills Competition Night includes competitions for longest drive, chipping and putting.

The skills challenge is open to the public; you don't have to be a player in the Alliance Open to participate.

Cost is \$50 to enter all three competitions, or \$20 per category. Entry includes a drink ticket. The Thursday event includes music, appetizers and

two no host bars.

The Skills Competition Night has two divisions, with first place being a Riverside Golf Course membership under the competitive category, and a stay at McMenamins for first place in the non-competitive category.

To pre-register, call 360-748-0114. The Skills Competition Night is sponsored by Drybox.

SPONSORED CONTENT

THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

Washington is 'Union Strong.' Are you ready to join us?

BY THE WASHINGTON STATE LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

When workers join together in unions, they have more power to negotiate better wages and benefits. That's why union members earn nearly 20% more than their nonunion counterparts, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It's also why union members are more likely to have health care benefits, retirement security, and safer workplaces.

With more than 615,000 union members, Washington is the third most unionized state in the country (behind only New York and Hawaii). That's a source of pride for the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, an organization of 600-plus unions throughout the state.

Similarly, the Thurston-Lewis-Mason Central Labor Council is the coalition of unions in those counties that works together to maximize labor solidarity to lift up all working families.

"Washington is a strong union state," said WSLC President April Sims. "That's good news for union members because there's strength in numbers. But it's also good news for all working people in our state. Unions use their power to fight for working standards that benefit everyone. Higher minimum wages, paid sick leave, paid family leave, and access to overtime pay—all of these were fought for and won by Washington's labor movement. That's the power of collective action and joining together."

During the COVID pandemic, many have reassessed their jobs and working conditions, which has led to renewed interest in forming unions. In fact, 71% of Americans now approve of unions, according to Gallup polls. Unions are more popular today than they've been since 1965.

Are YOU interested in joining together with your co-workers to form a union? Visit www.wslc.org for more information or to get your questions answered by a union organizer.

...

Also, get the latest news about Washington's union movement at the WSLC's award-winning news service, The Stand: www.TheStand.org.



ALLIANCE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Juicebox Brings Food, Fun and Music to Downtown Centralia



Photo Courtesy Juicebox Public House

Live music is a key feature at the Juicebox Public House.

A few years ago, Sarah and Levi Althaus were looking for a nice, classy place where they could enjoy good beer and tasty food without having to leave their kids at home with a babysitter.

Their solution? They founded and run the Juicebox Public House, a family-friendly taproom and kitchen in downtown Centralia on Tower Avenue.

The fine dining includes pizza, salads, bratwursts, pretzels and scrumptious, well-crafted food. The entertainment runs the gamut from live bands, comedians, DJ's, open mic nights, beer bingo, yoga, swing dancing and board games. Open mic is every Tuesday, with bingo on Mondays. Live music is most weekends.

A rotating art gallery is located at the right side of the building, with four different artists featured every three months.

They also rent out their beer hall, with room for 230 guests (including a back patio, stage, sound system and pri-

vate back bar with eight taps, wine and spirits on deck) for both half and full days.

The Althausers have owned the Juicebox Public House building for more than three years, and opened the hall about two years ago.

"It's a great place, with great vibes, to just hang out with friends, just a really friendly place with choice food and all kinds of entertainment," said Economic Alliance of Lewis County Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

Levi is ramping up the local music scene via the Juicebox Public House.

"We do live music one or two times each weekend," Levi said. "We're trying to create more of the music scene in Centralia, as well as bringing in outside musicians."

...

The Juicebox Public House
216 South Tower Ave., Centralia
(360) 807-4367
<https://juiceboxpublichouse.com/>

Mossyrock's Payton Torrey Awarded Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship

She Plans to Follow in Stamper's Footsteps, Returning to Mossy to Teach and Coach Girls Basketball

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Gary Stamper would approve of the choice of Mossyrock's Payton Torrey as the 2023 awardee of the \$1,500 Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship.

Stamper, a county commissioner, teacher, principal and girls basketball coach who died in 2021, was an avid sports coach and deeply believed in the value of a high school education (see accompanying story).

Payton excelled for four years at high school sports and at school, and after earning her Associates of Arts degree from Centralia College via Running Start, is heading to Lower Columbia Community College.

"I will be able to go straight into the teaching program, and if everything goes as planned, I can graduate with my bachelor of arts in education in two years," Payton said.

Similar to Stamper, sports has had a strong impact on Payton's development.

"I have played basketball and volleyball all four years of high school and have been on some very successful teams," Payton said.

She played in three state championship games — two in volleyball and one in basketball.

"Although we never won one, it is still quite an accomplishment to be able to say I have played in three state championship games," she said. "I have also played in seven district championship games. We were district champions in all four years in volleyball. During my freshman year in basketball, we lost in the district championship game, but we won our district championship games during my sophomore and senior years."

In her high school sports career her teams won six district championships,



By Isabel Vander Stoep / Isabel@Chronline.com

Payton Torrey takes the stage during the Mossyrock High School class of 2023 graduation ceremony on Saturday, June 10. Torrey was one of just two Mossyrock students in her class, alongside Matt Cooper, to attend Running Start. Both graduate with diplomas and associate's degrees.

three state second place finishes, a state third place finish and a state sixth place finish. She enjoys hunting, fishing, camping, traveling and hanging out with friends and family.

Payton also coaches first and second grade girls basketball, officiates games and was even an elf with Santa at the train depot in Morton, helping kids get their pictures taken with Saint Nick.

She plans on returning to Mossyrock after getting her elementary teaching degree and certificate, to give back to her community.

"In 10 years I see myself teaching first or second grade at Mossyrock Elementary," she said. "I also see myself being a girls basketball coach. In 10 years I will probably have young children and I will be coaching their youth teams. Eventually I want to work my way up to becoming the high school varsity girls basketball coach. Sports have had a huge impact on my life and I have always wanted to become a coach."

After landing her dream job of teaching elementary school, she will continue her education pursuing a master's degree in education.

Alliance Executive Director Richard

DeBolt said Payton's selection for the Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship was extremely appropriate.

"Payton is everything that Gary lived — community minded, absorbed in sports and with a yearning to teach kids and coach," DeBolt said. "She is the perfect person for this scholarship."

Payton also received scholarships from the Grabenhorst Memorial Scholarship for \$500, the Mossyrock Garden Club for \$2,000 and a Viking Scholarship for \$5,000. Payton also was honored with an athletic scholarship to Lower Columbia Community College for \$2,150 per year for two years, where she will play basketball and volleyball.

"The scholarships take a lot of stress off me to help pay for expenses such as gas and meals while at college," Payton said, adding, "Mr. Stamper had a lot of success and was a big part of this community. It was an honor to get his scholarship."

2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Payton Torrey, 18
Mossyrock High School
Going to Lower Columbia
Community College

Centralia College Associates of Arts
via Running Start

High school accomplishments:
3.9 Grade Point Average

Freshman

Volleyball — Varsity,
second team honors
Basketball — Varsity, first team honors,
Chronicle All-Area Team,
WIAA Athlete of the Week
Softball — Varsity
(COVID, no postseason)
Academic awards — Honor Roll
Class vice president

Sophomore

Volleyball — Varsity, first team honors,
Chronicle All-Area Team
(COVID, no postseason)
Basketball — Varsity, first team honors,
Captain, first team honors,
Chronicle All-Area Team
(COVID, no postseason)
Softball — Varsity,
(COVID, no postseason)
Academic awards — Honor Roll
Class vice president

Junior

Volleyball — Varsity, Captain, League
MVP, First Team All-State,
Chronicle All-Area MVP,
CFAC Athlete of the Week
Basketball — Varsity, Captain,
League MVP, First Team All State,
Sportsmanship winner at state,
Chronicle All-Area Team,
WIAA Athlete of the Week
Academic awards — Centralia College
Dean's List, Centralia College's
President's List

Senior

Volleyball — Varsity, Captain,
League MVP, First Team All State,
Sportsmanship winner at state,
Chronicle All Area MVP,
CFAC Athlete of the Week
Basketball — Varsity, Captain, WIAA
Athlete of the Week, All State Team
Academic awards —
Centralia College Dean's List
Tacoma Power 2023 Powerful of
Example for athletics

Remembering Gary Stamper With A Memorial Scholarship

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County created the Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship after the passing of Commissioner Stamper in September of 2021 at the age of 67.

Stamper died after a five-week battle with COVID-19. He was vaccinated against the virus.

Gary was known for being a great leader, career educator, great mentor, soft-spoken, big-hearted, family man who had a passion for service. His death sent shockwaves through the community.

He was dedicated to his community and served as principal for White Pass Junior/High School, Lewis County Commissioner for District #3 as well as Fire Commissioner for District #3.

A renowned prep basketball coach, he was on the sidelines as the Mossyrock girls basketball team's head coach during its successful run in the 2000s. The run, and Gary's coaching career, culminated in a 2B state championship in 2007 when the Vikings defeated La Salle for the school's first hoops title.

"A former principal, teacher and coach, Stamper touched many lives throughout Lewis County and beyond even before joining the Board of County Commissioners in 2015," the county wrote in a news release following his passing.

He prided himself on "standing up for the little guy," protecting the area's timber interests and promoting economic growth while maintaining the area's rural feel.

In his personal life, Gary enjoyed traveling with his partner Bobbi Barnes, and spending time with family, especially his grandchildren, whom he called his "top priority."

A self-admitted softie when it came to animals, Gary also reveled in helping others. Whether it was delivering firewood to a struggling family, buying groceries for a perfect stranger or purchasing shoes for a student in need.

Gary, who grew up first in Riffe and then Mossyrock, graduated from Mossyrock High School before earning a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Central Washington University and a master's degree in



Photo Courtesy Bobbi Barnes

Lewis County Commissioner Gary Stamper smiles while walking in a parade in Centralia.

School Administration from Heritage University.

Stamper was buried at the Klickitat Cemetery in Mossyrock.

The Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship was made possible through generous contributions from family, friends, co-workers and local businesses.

The scholarship will be awarded in the amount of \$1,500 by the selection committee composed of the Stamper family, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County executive director and the Lewis County manager, who have sole discretion on the recipient.

One recipient will be chosen each year that is graduating or has graduated from Mossyrock High School or White Pass High School.

FORUM:

Continued From Page B1

Lund talked about a condo development south of Chehalis. He said a developer built six condos in three buildings, each three bedrooms with two baths, and at 1,500 square feet. They went for \$315,000 to \$320,000.

“We had people coming down from Olympia and Yelm to buy and it sold out in about two months,” Lund said. “That shows there is that demand, but it took forever to get permitted. They had to appease the county and city gods, and that can be daunting.”

**Angie Brown —
Business Development at
Lewis County Title Company**

“Some of the infrastructure that in the past has been sufficient is quickly being expanded and updated along with the ever growing development in the outlying areas in Lewis County, along with some of the larger land developers facilitating the water/sewer/roads to support their development and tying into the local facilities,” Brown said.

She believes there is a housing shortage impacting the county’s market, and county leadership could help ease the bottleneck.

“I believe we have a shortage, and from some of the boards/committees I sit on we have discovered some of the road blocks are developers/landowners not having clear guidelines of what the process is to move forward with their developments,” Brown said. “Different requirements within different municipalities are confusing. I think Lewis County could benefit from having a more streamlined process throughout. We also are growing rapidly and it takes time to develop housing options.”

Brown, similar to Lund, said a lack of housing inventory is a problem.

“We have a slowdown in the market, this is most likely due to lack of inventory,” she said. “Also interest rates ris-

ing plays a part. I think Lewis County needs more affordable housing options.”

Brown believes financially, owning is more advantageous than renting.

“I think owning over renting makes sense because you are building equity in your purchase,” Brown said. “You have something that is yours.”

She did state that for some, owning a house is not an open avenue.

“I think if we want to keep our youth in our area, rentals have to be an option; also for our elderly that need to rent over owning their home,” Brown said.

**Jacek Gillispie —
Senior Loan Consultant,
Summit Funding**

Gillispie is considered one of the top home loan consultants in Lewis County by area agents. He talks straight.

“We don’t have enough housing; we are low on inventory,” he said.

This causes prices to rise due to simple supply and demand market forces, and when combined with higher interest rates, it is chasing some potential home buyers away.

“And not just in Lewis County, but across the entire United States,” Gillispie said. “We definitely don’t have enough houses, and prices are still on the rise.”

He said the housing sales boom started in 2019, and that interest rates greased the market, with rates dropping below 3%.

“All of a sudden people were able to afford to move,” he said.

Gillispie said that was followed with a few years of strong sales, with a small slump last year for about six months before recovering.

He said 2023 “feels kind of like a normal year, after the 2020-2021 “ridiculous” years of sales.

“It feels like a down year (now), but that’s because we are coming off a hot market,” he said. “Three percent was never real. But it certainly juiced the market.”

Like Lund, Gillispie said state,



ANGIE BROWN



JACEK GILLISPIE

county and city regulations are keeping developers at bay. Perhaps the most damaging is state Growth Management Act requirements that only allow low density zoning for landowners in rural areas such as Lewis County from breaking up their 10- and 20-acre parcels. He pointed specifically to Adna and areas outside of Chehalis.

“So many places could make one- to two-acre lots, but can’t subdivide below five acres,” he said.

As far as renting vs. owning, Gillispie is firmly in the purchasing camp.

“If you are renting, you’re always paying someone else’s mortgage,” he said. “If you can afford to buy, you should buy. Houses will always appreciate over a long haul. Paying rent is like paying 100% of the interest of a loan.”

WASHINGTON STATE STATISTICS

Across Washington state, Northwest MLS brokers report improving inventory and year-to-date gains in sales and prices. Statewide inventory remains tight with only 1.44 months of supply.

Home buyers in Washington state found the largest selection of listings last month since December, with both pending sales and closed sales reaching their highest volume in months. Brokers at Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS) welcomed the uptick, but cautioned rising interest rates are crimping activity.

“Median prices have continued to decline year-over-year in the overall NWMLS service area,” said John Deely, executive vice president of operations at Coldwell Banker Bain. “Following a national trend, our market pricing peaked in April/May of 2022 with a steady decline through the end of the year. However, 2023 has seen slow and steady growth in median prices. ... Buyers waiting for prices to come down will be disappointed based on current trends.”

For real estate agents, the beginning of summer usually brings an increase in active home buyers. But brokers and economists believe rising interest rates are deterring some buyers.

“Mortgage rates jumped this week, as a buoyant economy has prompted

the market to price-in the likelihood of another Federal Reserve rate hike,” said Sam Khater, Freddie Mac’s chief economist. “Although there has been a steady flow of purchase demand around rates in the low to mid 6% range, that demand is likely to weaken as rates approach 7%.”

As rates approach the 7% benchmark, Nadia Evangelou, senior economist and director of real estate research for the National Association of Realtors, estimates 5.5 million households are priced out of the market compared to a year ago.

“Although there are fewer buyers, more than one-third of properties are sold above their list price due to limited inventory, especially of homes that first-time buyers can afford to buy,” Evangelou said.

**U.S. HOMES VALUED AT
\$45.3 TRILLION**

According to a report in the New York Times, in the United States, consumer spending makes up about 70% of the economy; changes in housing wealth can result in significant changes in economic growth. And Federal Reserve decisions affect the housing market through the cost of financing a home purchase.

IMPACT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

If house prices rise, then the effect on wealth is likely to cause an increase in consumer spending and a higher rate of economic growth.

In addition, residential real estate is the greatest source of wealth and savings for many Americans. Commercial real estate, which includes income producing properties such as apartment buildings, retail shopping centers, office buildings and manufacturing also creates jobs, according to a news release.

Housing loan rates remain between 6% and 7%. Rates reached 6.79% on June 1 — the highest they’ve been since November 2022 — before dipping down to 6.71% on June 8.

SEPT. 14TH
THURSDAY | 2023
5:30PM



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ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

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