

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

## CTE Program, Inclusive Career Fair, Both Empower Employees and Employers

*Alliance Proud to be a Part of Matching People with Promising Employment*

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

Executive Director  
Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Sometimes the Economic Alliance of Lewis County deals with massive projects for expanding and attracting businesses and development, sometimes we simply help build pathways for employment.

This issue of The Economic Report deals with the latter. We profile a Napavine High School Career and Technical Education (CTE) program that links young men and women still in high school ready to get a career underway with willing businesses. We also profile the upcoming Inclusive Career Fair that links people with disabilities or differences with employees and hoped-for jobs.

Both these efforts link up with our stated goals, which in part, are “to contribute to the economic vitality of the community by increasing the number of jobs and improving the local quality of life. To accomplish our goal we work to retain our local businesses and aid them in expanding as well as recruit new businesses to the area.”

We fulfill both those goals with these two efforts, the CTE and Inclusive Career Fair. First, we help build stronger businesses by assisting them in finding employees. Second, by both helping high school students land journeyman apprenticeship positions, and helping those with disabilities and differences find jobs, we certainly are “improving the local quality of life.”

With the Napavine CTE program and students eager to start their working lives, we are the connection to area businesses that will help nurture these young CTE students. These are good kids, looking to get an edge, a step up, and they are confident in their career path.

The students are required to put in 2,000 hours of work, mostly during summer, and then continue to work mornings and study in the afternoon and evenings during the school year. When they're done, they've earned a journeyman card as an Automation Technician.

Kudos to Economic Alliance of Lewis County's External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg, who leads by connecting the Napavine CTE program with businesses interested in apprenticeships. We offer an extensive network with Lewis County businesses willing to take

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RICHARD DEBOLT  
Director —  
Economic Alliance of Lewis County

# Napavine CTE Program Links Businesses with Students

*After Almost Two Years of Studying and Work, Students Earn a Wage and a Journeyman Card as an Automation Technician*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County is assisting the Napavine School Districts Career and Technical Education (CTE) program with linking up students with businesses for a hybrid school/work effort.

This youth apprenticeship program places students with businesses. The students earn money and school credits, and are required to complete 2,000 hours of work.

“That gets them their journeyman card as an Automation Technician,” said Dave Rutherford, who heads up the Napavine CTE program, adding most of the initial students interested come from the CTE welding program.

“I think it's pretty cool and gives them some experience,” Rutherford said. “This is for kids who are ready to start work, they're ready, some are ready earlier than other kids. I look at it as life changing for these students and making a good wage while going to school. It definitely fast tracks them into the trades.”

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County's External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg helped in the effort by connecting the Napavine CTE program with businesses interested in apprenticeships.

“I'm thrilled the Alliance could help



A Napavine CTE student works on a go-cart.

PHOTOS BY NAPA VINE FFA

in this outstanding program that gives young workers a boost to their career early on,” said Alliance Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

Rutherford had his first meeting with prospective students and their parents Wednesday night at the Napavine High School Ag Shop. Rutherford explained to the parents and students, that after a year of planning, the program is in its final stages of providing students with “a life changing opportunity” to apprentice at a Lewis County company.

So far, Rutherford has signed up with Braun Northwest, M&M Trucking and Walsh Trucking as “training agents.” To

begin, the businesses will provide three positions for students who will work full time (40 hours) over the summer, and a work/school hybrid during the school year.

The program has a \$40,000 commitment to pay the students during training. Students will be required to be at least 16 years old, have a driver's license and reliable transportation, a first aid/CPR card and completion of a OSHA 10 card which is 10 hours of online safety training provided by the school. Students will also put together a “perfect” resume and

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## Lewis County Issued BDO Zone ‘AA’ Rating

*Designation Unlocks Opportunities for Woody Biomass*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zones Initiative has issued a BDO Zone “AA” rating for Lewis County for 600,000 bone-dried tons per year of woody biomass, harnessing the output of the region's timber industry for green energy.

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County and Ecostrat are pleased to announce the issue of the Lewis County BDO Zone. The BDO Zone stretches across a 75-mile drive distance centered in Centralia, and stands as the first “AA” BDO Zone rating in the state for pulpwood, forest residues and sawmill residuals.

The Lewis County BDO Zone is rated “AA,” denoting “very high quality.” The region is recognized as a North American forest industry leader offering sustainability guarantees and stable lumber markets.

The BDO Zone has considerable experience with forest residue supply chains



BIOCYCLE.NET PHOTO

Lewis County lands a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity (BDO) Zones “AA” designation, which among its many uses includes this forest residue program.

and features at least 10 companies with dedicated pulpwood chipping capacity. Generating an impressive 600,000 bone-dried tons of woody biomass annually, the region's industrial infrastructure is ideal for large-scale bio-based projects.

“Lewis County is thrilled to announce its receipt of a ‘AA’ rating for woody biomass,” said Richard DeBolt, executive director of the Economic Alliance of

Lewis County. “This rating showcases our region's forest products leadership role and deep knowledge and expertise in Forest Management and Resource Utilization. Lewis County citizens and workers have the experience handling woody biomass, creating wood products and making energy woven throughout

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THURSTON-LEWIS-MASON CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

## OPPORTUNITIES

Many people recognize the value of apprenticeship, and the value the skilled trades bring to people seeking family wage jobs. Not everyone is suited for or wants to attend college and the trades can be an ideal avenue for those who like to build things and work with their hands. IBEW 76 and our training program, the Southwest Washington Electrical J.A.T.C. (swwaejatc.org), have strong ties to Lewis County. Our members who live and work in Lewis County not only provide a strong standard of living for their families, but they also provide top notch electrical services and are very invested in their communities.

Whether volunteering at their church, coaching Little League, Fastpitch and Wrestling programs or helping to build something in the community, there's a good chance IBEW 76 members can be found. Sometimes it's a larger project like the construction and electrification of Recreation Park in Chehalis, other times it's more individualized like fixing something in a concession stand or repairing some lights. Volunteering and donating to the Visiting Nurses Foundation and the Lewis County Forgotten Childrens Fund are other areas where IBEW 76 members can be found.

It's this same type of commitment to the contractors they work for that makes our Lewis County members some of the

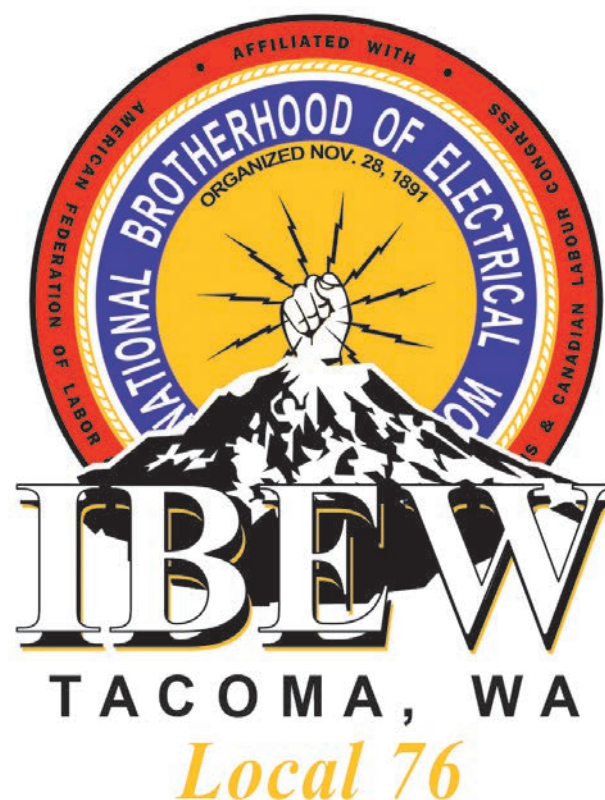
best electricians around. We're proud to see the Local School Districts recognizing the value apprenticeship brings to our youth and promoting it as an option alongside other pathways to success. To learn more about the contractors who work in partnership with IBEW 76, visit the local Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors website at [www.necaswv.org](http://www.necaswv.org).

Economic development is another area that IBEW 76 is heavily invested in. Working at the Local, State and Federal levels, we are always looking for ways to support the creation of new opportunities for family wage jobs. As important as the work at the State and Federal levels is, it's the local partnerships that can bring the best results. The Economic Alliance of Lewis County is an excellent example of Business and Labor working together for the betterment of our communities. Strong local economies and family wage jobs are what we all want and need to help our communities and families thrive.

Clint Bryson

Assistant Business Manager

IBEW 76





MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Saddle Bum Western Wear Gallops into the Country Void

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Lewis County, with its rural appeal, has many fans of Western wear, but not a lot of country clothing outlets.

Saddle Bum Western Wear in downtown Centralia, a new member of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, has rode its way into the void with a cowboy, cowgirl and cowkid variety of country-themed clothing.

“I love the Western fashion and downtown Centralia has been super welcoming,” said owner Jeannie Gluck. “There’s not a lot of clothing down here, and people come from all over to shop here.”

The clothing outlet opened in May of 2023 featuring Western-inspired family clothing. They also offer custom hat shaping and cleaning.

“There’s nobody else around here who does the hat shaping and cleaning,” Gluck said.

Gluck, who grew up in Chehalis and went to W.F. West High School, doesn’t call herself a country woman, but reality says different. Along with her husband they own a small “funny farm” in Winlock, raising horses, cows, goats and chickens. Her children, now young adults, were in 4-H, on equestrian teams and participated in rodeo.

She wasn’t always country. Her parents said “What?” when along with her husband they started raising cattle. Her husband operates the construction business Center Stage Construction. His company builds pole barns, horse arenas, shops and does concrete work. That sounds a little bit country. They also



Fancy, star-studded boots are among the many Western wear garments available at Saddle Bum Western Wear in Centralia.

have a custom wood mill and saw on their home property. That also sounds a little bit country.

Just last month Saddle Bum Western Wear joined as a member of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

“As a business in this community I want to be involved in as much as we can,” Gluck said.

**If You Want to Go:**

328 N. Tower Ave., Centralia  
Hours: Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Phone: 360-520-6407  
<https://saddlebumwesternstore.com>



Photos Provided by Saddle Bum Western Wear

Saddle Bum Western Wear owner Jeannie Gluck stands before her business located in downtown Centralia.

# Alliance Helps Host Inclusive Career Fair

*Event Aims to Link People with Disabilities or Differences with Employers*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

An Inclusive Career Fair is coming to Centralia on Thursday, April 25 at the TransAlta Commons on the campus of Centralia College.

The theme of the fair is “Empowering people with disabilities or differences.”

Featured employers that will be at the fair and hiring are the City of Lacey, WSECU, Lucky Eagle Casino, Starbucks, South Sound YMCA, the Washington State Department of Licensing and more.

Featured resources that will be on site include the Developmental Disabilities Administration, Centralia College Transitional Studies and more.

Sponsors include the Autism Coalition Lewis County, the Economic Alliance of Lewis County, Cultivating Inclusion Lewis County, Neurodiverse Connections and Lewis County.

Cultivating Inclusion Lewis County, a sister program to the Lewis County Autism Coalition, is partnering with The Economic Alliance of Lewis County and will be hosting their second annual Inclusive Career Fair.

The event starts with a Supported Employment Presentation at 11 a.m.,



Last year Braun Northwest was one of the featured employers.

followed by the fair from noon to 3 p.m.

The employment presentation will have businesses from multiple industries and trades on-site to meet with attendees and volunteers will be on hand offering resume advice.

This event is open to everyone but specifically geared towards people with disabilities and differences. Employers are attending with that knowledge in mind. They also welcome veterans, particularly disabled veterans, English as a second language citizens and individuals who may have struggled with the traditional hiring process.



Photos Provided

Last year’s Inclusive Fair packed the TransAlta Commons building at Centralia College.

**Benefits of business attending the fair include:**

- Connecting with a diverse talent pool
- Demonstrating your commitment to inclusivity
- Gaining insights into supported employment, local resources and inclusion
- Insights into supported employment and inclusion

Last year’s event was a huge success, and this year, they are striving to make it even better, reaching out to more individuals seeking employment and employment resources.

The event is free to attend, and light refreshments will be available.

For more information contact Dolly Tardiff with the Economic Alliance of Lewis County at [Dolly@lewiscountyalliance.org](mailto:Dolly@lewiscountyalliance.org). And 360-748-0114.

**About Lewis County Autism Coalition**

Formed in 2010, the Lewis County Autism Coalition is a partnership of human services agencies, educators, health professionals and adults on the spectrum. They grow and sustain resources for children and adults on the autism spectrum, their parents and families and the larger community. Their dynamic circle of partners works together to provide a regional hub of services, information and resources for families in and around Lewis County.

**BDO:**

*Continued From Page B1*

the region’s DNA. We look forward to showing industries how they could thrive in Lewis County.”

Jordan Solomon, Chairman of the BDO Zone Initiative added, “Lewis County’s industry leading forestry sector, combined with a substantial feedstock quantity exceeding half a million tons of biomass, and robust infrastructure primed for large-scale bio-based projects, functions as a bullseye for cutting-edge biobased investment opportunities worldwide. The esteemed ‘AA’ rating cements Lewis County’s position not only in the state but as a powerhouse in the global bioeconomy.”

**Why Lewis County?**

Lewis County offers an attractive environment for developers to conduct business due to its diverse demographics. The county boasts a mix of urban and rural areas, providing developers with a broad market to target.



ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY PHOTO

The BDO Zone Initiative has issued a BDO Zone ‘AA’ rating for Lewis County, Washington for 600,000 bone-dried tons per year of woody biomass.

Additionally, Lewis County features strategic industrial sites, facilitating the establishment of businesses with easy access to transportation and logistics. The educational landscape is robust, with institutions that provide a skilled workforce for the tech industry.

The county’s well-developed infrastructure, including reliable transportation networks, further enhances its appeal to developers. Beyond business, Lewis County’s high quality of life, characterized by natural beauty and recreational opportunities, makes it an appealing location for both work and residence.

**About The BDO Zone Initiative**

The BDO Zone Initiative is an economic development platform that enables local communities to deploy powerful economic development tools – BDO Zone Ratings – to drive, accelerate and catalyze biobased investment and commercial project development in BDO Zones.

A BDO Zone rating is a standards-based technical risk assessment of biomass feedstock, supply chain, and infrastructure attributes of a region with respect to the feasibility and development potential of new biofuel, renewable chemical, biogas,

bioproduct or clean hydrogen plants.

BDO Zone ratings help regions and communities attract new biobased project development and participate in the growing global bioeconomy by demonstrating the maturity of local biomass supply chains and whether or not they are developed enough to support biobased manufacturing without excessive risk.

**About Ecostrat**

Ecostrat is the North American Leader in supplying biomass due diligence for biofuels, renewable chemicals, biogas and bio-product project development and finance. Ecostrat led a project to develop the new investment Standards and Ratings for Biomass Supply Chain Risk which were subsequently used in the development of the biomass supply chain risk National Standard of Canada.

The Biomass Supply Group has 25 years of experience in sourcing and supplying more than 5 million tons of biomass feedstock for bioenergy, biofuel and biochemical projects across North America.





PHOTO BY NAPA VINE FFA

Students in the Napavine CTE program focus on a welding project.

**NAPAVINE:**

Continued From Page B1

provide a letter of recommendation from their shop teacher.

A “boot camp” prior to employment will give training on what to expect and how to deal with different situations that might arise.

Students will perform weekly checks-ins with Rutherford. Training will include machine operation, installation, maintenance, repair, inspection, troubleshooting equipment, customer service and bench work. The completion of the journeyman card typically occurs after high school graduation.

After the summer work, students will continue working in the mornings when the business opens and work until school lunch time. During the afternoon they will be taking a required English class, Civics/CWP class, and another class

needed for graduation.

One night a week during the school year students will be required to attend college classes hosted at Napavine High School in the shop. They will receive 15 credits free from Bates in Technical Drawings, Maintenance Welding, Mechanical and Fluid Power Systems.

This is an almost two-year commitment from the students who will be paid with benefits.

In a letter to parents, Rutherford said, “If we look at other programs around the state this has been a life changing program but is only available to a select few. I anticipate the program to expand next year and will include more companies and more schools.”

Rutherford has high hopes for the future of the program.

“We hope to expand and include other schools and make it bigger,” Rutherford said.

**DIRECTOR:**

Continued From Page B1

on these young, budding workers.

We do want to thank Napavine CTE Director Dave Rutherford for his stewardship of this program. He’s part of the extensive number of caring adults that, little by little, provide direction and opportunity for his students. He cares.

Likewise, the Inclusive Career Fair offers a lifestyle change by also hooking up employers with employees.

It makes our hearts lighter as we get to be a part of the process. But beyond our own delight, we mostly are encouraged by the openness of the business participating. Like the CTE program, it improves “the quality of life” around us. For businesses, the fair connects a company with a diverse talent pool and solidifies a commitment to inclusivity.



PHOTO BY NAPA VINE FFA

Welding students make up the bulk of students applying for a journeyman automation technician program.

Sometimes we are tempted to rest on the big projects, the big events. Today, it is refreshing to highlight a few programs that make Lewis County just a bit better place to live.

**Alliance Hosts Successful Women In Business Seminar**

Panelist Heidi Pehl of I-5 Cars addresses the audience at the Women In Business Seminar at The Loft in Chehalis on March 19. The event was hosted by the Economic Alliance of Lewis County. Keynote speaker was Cathy Hoover, the Washington state Legislature’s House Republican Caucus Senior Leadership Counsel. Other panelists featured were Joy Templeton of Once Upon a Thyme, Mary Ferris of Rainier Eye, Lisa Perry of Sierra Pacific, with the event master of ceremonies Centralia Mayor Kelly Johnston.



**PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT**

**3709 NORTHPARK DRIVE, CENTRALIA**



NAI Puget Sound Properties is pleased to offer the opportunity to lease Centralia Northpark One. Located just off of Interstate 5, it’s the perfect midpoint for your industrial warehouse needs.

- 107,125 square feet (demisable — 43,250 square feet)
- 4,000 square feet office
- 7 dock doors (potential to add more)
- 2 grade level doors (14 feet x 14 feet)
- 27-foot clear height
- Heavy power
- Additional trailer parking available
- Foreign Trade Zone designation
- Business friendly city
- Ideal midpoint between Seattle and Portland
- Zoning: Heavy industrial, allows for a wide range of uses



**ERIC SONNENBERG**  
Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager

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](mailto:eric@lewiscountyalliance.org) or 208-206-5407.

*Inclusive*  
**CAREER FAIR**

**04**  
APRIL

**25**  
25TH

**24**  
2024

**THURSDAY, APRIL 25TH | 12-3PM @  
TRANSALTA COMMONS | CENTRALIA COLLEGE**

**FEATURED EMPLOYERS:**

- CITY OF LACEY
  - WSECU
  - LUCKY EAGLE CASINO
  - STARBUCKS
  - SOUTH SOUND YMCA
  - WA STATE DEPT. OF LICENSING
- ... more to be announced!*

**FEATURED RESOURCES:**

**DDA-DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION**

**CENTRALIA COLLEGE  
TRANSITIONAL STUDIES**

*... more to be announced!*

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