

Stuart Cavness takes gavel for Alliance chair

Well attended event hands out four awards at the annual banquet

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The annual Economic Alliance of Lewis County at Jester Auto Museum Event Center in Chehalis earlier this month was one of the highlights of the year, said Executive Director Richard DeBolt.

“It was actually a blast,” he said. The banquet was attended by 272 people, and featured 34 scrumptious desserts for the Dessert Frenzy fundraiser, 43 silent auction items and three live auction items. Speakers were Centralia City Manager Michael Thomas, Chehalis City Manager Stacy Denham and Lewis County Manager Ryan Barrett.

Outgoing Economic Alliance Chair Luke Moerke opened the banquet with the passing of the gavel to new Chair Stuart Cavness, praising the Alliance for bringing in new business and offering resources.

Cavness has been with the Alliance for eight years.

“To have Stewart at the helm, his background and financial management will be truly helpful leading our organization,” DeBolt said. “His enthusiasm toward economic development is unbridled.”

DeBolt also thanked Moerke for his time as chair, highlighting Moerke’s steady, moral leadership for the Alliance for the past few years.

Chair Stuart Cavness

Cavness has most recently served as vice chair for the Alliance.

He is a fifth generation Lewis County resident and enjoys giving back to his community. Professionally, he is a financial planner and in his free time he enjoys cruising and racing sailboats, reading extensively, and restoring his vintage automobiles.

He originally joined the Alliance because it “is full of community and business leaders that take an active approach to the growth of Lewis County; people that aren’t afraid to roll up their sleeves and make positive growth for our beautiful county. I couldn’t wait to get in the same room as those individuals and learn from them. It’s one of the best decisions I’ve made.”

He is a big advocate for Lewis County.

“I believe in Lewis County,” he said. “Plain and simple. I love the county that I grew up in, and what the future is looking like for the next generation.”

“The small business expansion and outreach has to be the most fulfilling for me,” Cavness said. “Large corporations



New Economic Alliance of Lewis County Chair Stuart Cavness addresses the crowd at the group’s annual banquet.

Photos by Dolly Tardiff



The Alliance annual banquet was well attended.

get a lot of glory when they choose our community, but I personally love seeing and hearing about a business expanding and choosing to stay in Lewis County.”

Cavness encourages businesses to join the Alliance.

“A tide lifts all ships,” he said. “That is correct even in a county that doesn’t touch salt water. Our commitment to recruiting new companies, retaining the unique talent in our county and helping expand existing businesses means that when one of us succeeds, we all succeed. I can’t think of a more cohesive organization that operates in everyone’s best interests.”

Professionally, he said the key to his success is “putting your client first. Every time. Plain and simple. I’ve found that being honest with people about what things cost will only bring more business. Don’t try to hide anything.”

Alliance awards

At the banquet, the Alliance handed out four awards.

The Gail and Carolyn Shaw Industry Award was awarded to Dale Merten, chief operations officer of ToledoTel.

The Community Commitment Award went to Angie Twining and Samantha and Spike Magnuson, owners of Lewis County Coffee Co.

The Buck Hubbard Staff Award was given to Lisa Goodman, marketing director of the Benaroya Company.

The Chronicle’s Russ Mohnhey Recreation Resource Stewardship Award, given each year to a community member for their exceptional commitment toward conservation, went to Jay Gordon, the policy director for the Washington State Dairy Federation, and a board member of the Office of Chehalis Basin and the William D. Ruckelshaus Center.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S CORNER

The Alliance welcomes Stuart Cavness as chair

Annual banquet was a success thanks to all our sponsors

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

Executive Director — Economic Alliance of Lewis County

First off, I want to thank former Chair Luke Moerke, who stepped down at our annual banquet earlier this month.

Luke commands a room, garnering instant respect. He was a steady hand when needed, always with his eye on what is right to do, and one not to be taken lightly. He offered timely and targeted keen advice.

We will continue to seek his counsel.

But with time, comes change, and it is now time for Stuart Cavness, a member of the Alliance for eight years, to build his mark. Stuart is an engaging person, quick to smile, and smart. He has wide hobbies, from sailing to vintage automobiles, making him a well-rounded person who is interesting to be around.

But it is his business acumen, specifically financial expertise, that the Alliance has relied upon for years, and will continue to serve our group well. As a fifth-generation Lewis Countyite (Is that even a word? Should it be Lewis Countonian?), Stuart is well familiar with our strengths and weaknesses.

And like Luke, Stuart has a moral compass. He said in an article in this report, the key success is “putting your client first. Every time. Plain and simple. I’ve found that being honest with people about what things cost will only bring more business. Don’t try to hide anything.”

Banquet

The Economic Alliance’s annual banquet was a success, and I do want to thank the sponsors for their extensive support. You can see a list of sponsors on page three of this report.

For those that provided cakes and pies and the like for the dessert dash fundraiser, I thank you and my taste buds thank you. I’m also appreciative for all those who donated auction items.

To close out the banquet thanks, I give a shout out to Minuteman Press, Lewis County Coffee Company, Jester Auto Museum and Event Center and The Crowded Kitchen Catering Co. for making our night come together with such panache.

Awards

At the banquet, the Alliance handed out awards named after leaders who are no longer with us, but left a lasting positive impact on Lewis County.

The Gail and Carolyn Shaw Industry Award, given to Dale Merten of ToledoTel, is named after an economic visionary and a delight of a man and his wife. One could sit around for hours and listen to Gail ruminate about the formation of an economic powerhouse in Lewis County.

Buck Hubbard’s staff award went to Benaroya’s Lisa Goodman, a respected and powerful leader in her own right. Buck was the nicest man ever, but also a shrewd businessman who was loved by all. Quite the combination.

Russ Mohnhey, the longtime outdoors writer for The Chronicle, always had a twinkle in his eye and a tall fish tale to tell, but like many mentioned above, had a moral compass always pointing to doing what is right. Jay Gordon with the Washington State Dairy Federation earned the right for the Mohnhey award.

If you have the time, look up the stories of these pathfinders. You’ll find positive direction and inspiration if you do.

Business development

The Alliance offers plenty of support for area businesses and those thinking of building a business.

I remind you of one of our vibrant examples, the Business Development Program, led by the Alliance’s most capable Dolly Tardiff.

She can help you plan a new business and get started. She can walk you through the needed processes. She can assist you during difficult times, with all sorts of resources at hand. If your business is stagnating, Dolly can help. You can contact her at 360-748-0114.

We also offer a slew of videos on our website to give you an edge in your business, from types of business to start, increasing success, small business planning and Beneficial Ownership Information mandatory reporting.

As we all start fresh with this new year, take advantage of the Alliance to strengthen your operations. That’s why we are here.

Discover the art of sound

Lewis County joins Call of Duty for an epic audio collaboration

BY LENEEL LANGDON

Tourism Alliance of Lewis County, Discover Lewis County

and White Pass Scenic Byway Program Coordinator

Here’s another exciting project Discover Lewis County has been working on — calling all Call of Duty fans, this one’s for you.

Behind every cinematic explosion, immersive firefight, and heart-pounding mission in your favorite Call of Duty games is a meticulously crafted soundscape. And now, Lewis County has officially become part of that creation process.

The Call of Duty franchise recently visited the historic mill property in Packwood to record incredible acoustics for the game’s 2027 release. With its unique structural features and sound-reflective surfaces, the mill provided the perfect setting for capturing authentic audio. Prop guns and cannons were used to create impressive sound reflections, transforming the site into an extraordinary recording space.

But the mill isn’t where it ends. The Call of Duty team is scouting additional locations in Lewis County, hunting for diverse spaces to capture the immersive, authentic sounds that make the game world feel so real. Whether it’s distant



Call of Duty

The video game Call of Duty is capturing sounds from Lewis County for its upcoming 2027 release.

cliff faces, mountainsides, canyons, tunnels, rural houses, factories, or even caves, Lewis County’s landscapes could play a vital role in shaping the next generation of Call of Duty games.

Kyle and his team were thrilled with their experience, describing the mill as their “favorite recording space of the year.” The success of this collaboration has sparked even greater interest in what Lewis County has to offer, and Discover Lewis County is continuing to work closely with the team to identify other potential sites.

So, here’s a Call to Action for all Call of Duty enthusiasts and Lewis County locals: help us uncover the hidden gems of our region. Do you know of a location that’s quiet, easily accessible, and fits the bill for this epic sound production? Whether it’s a sprawling open space, an eerie tunnel, or a picturesque canyon, your suggestion could shape the sound-

scape of the next blockbuster release.

This partnership with the Call of Duty franchise is yet another way Lewis County is showcasing its potential as a destination for innovative projects. From stunning visuals to groundbreaking sound design, we’re proving that Lewis County is more than a place to visit — it’s a place to create.

If you have suggestions for unique recording locations or just want to learn more about this project, don’t hesitate to reach out to Discover Lewis County at Lenee@Lewiscountyalliance.org. Together, we’re not only putting our area on the map — we’re putting it in the game.

Stay tuned for more updates, and who knows? The next time you’re playing Call of Duty, you might just hear the echoes of our own Lewis County in the background.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Photo Provided by The Chronicle

Veterans Memorial Museum’s Executive Director Chip Duncan.

Veterans Memorial Museum joins Economic Alliance

Popular museum is led by Executive Director Chip Duncan

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Veterans Memorial Museum is a treasure trove of memorabilia, perhaps the finest one of its kind in the state.

The Chehalis 22,000-square-foot facility is led by Executive Director Charles “Chip” Duncan, who was recently named The Chronicle’s 2024 Person of the year. The museum is dedicated to the men and women who have honorably served our nation in the Armed Forces, during peacetime and war, “so we might enjoy the freedoms we have today.” The museum just joined the Alliance.

The Veterans Memorial Museum’s mission is “They shall not be forgotten.” Duncan had the museum join with the Alliance just this year.

“I have been aware of the Alliance for years,” he said. “I appreciate all that they do. They make Lewis County’s economics better. I find it worthwhile and I wanted to join. I look forward to partnering with the Economic Alliance to see how we can benefit each other.”

The museum opened over two decades ago. The museum began with humble beginnings in 1997 at a storefront in Centralia. In 2005 they opened their new facility in Chehalis, which is visible from Interstate 5 just off of exit 77.

The museum features a 9,000-square-foot main gallery with 85 display cases filled with hundreds of displays honoring our veterans. The museum has a military history reference library with thousands of volumes. There is also a gift shop filled with patriotic items and a “USO” where you can have a cup of coffee while enjoying conversations with local or visiting veterans.

“What a privilege it is to hear first hand from veterans who stormed the beaches of Normandy, went ashore on Iwo Jima or survived the Bataan Death March,” their website states. “Perhaps you’ll hear stories from some who shivered in the winters of the Korean War era or the battles fought during the Vietnam conflict. How interesting it is to hear conversations between veterans from Pearl Harbor survivors to those current returnees from the Desert War conflicts.”

Duncan comes from a family with extensive ties to military service. He serves on the Lewis County Veterans Advisory Board.

The Veterans Memorial Museum houses the nonprofit Veterans Journey Forward, providing a place for veterans for personal growth, self-reflection, learning and bonding. Services include benefit navigation, mental health counseling, peer advocacy and recreational events.

Duncan enjoys his job, as “it requires me to be constantly thinking out of the box,” he said.

Duncan partners with other nonprofits in Lewis County. His outlook



Veterans Memorial Museum

The Veterans Memorial Museum features 85 display cases.



Veterans Memorial Museum

The museum, with its large grounds, hosts all sorts of community gatherings.

on outreach came about by the COVID pandemic.

“COVID changed the way I look at things,” he said. “There is so much more to the needs of our community, with our veterans and the rest of the community.”

The museum has extensive grounds that can host community events, as well as a convention room upstairs, used by many community groups.

“It’s just realizing we’re all in this together, and how do we make it work,”

Duncan said.

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*Veterans Memorial Museum hours
Tuesday through Saturday:
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed: Monday and Sunday*

*100 SW Veterans Way
Chehalis, WA 98532
Phone:360-740-8875
Email: info@veteransmuseum.org*



Discover Lewis County photos

The legendary Snow Castle will be ready to crawl on and through at the White Pass Winter Carnival this Saturday, March 21.

Get ready for the 2025 White Pass Winter Carnival

LENEE LANGDON
Project Coordinator - Tourism Alliance

If you love winter adventures, family-friendly fun and a little bit of magic, then mark your calendar for the 2025 White Pass Winter Carnival, which takes place Saturday, March 21.

This annual celebration of all things snow takes place at White Pass Ski Area each year, transforming the mountain into a winter wonderland packed with activities, entertainment, and unforgettable memories.

What to expect at Winter Carnival

Whether you’re a seasoned skier, a casual snow enthusiast, or just looking for a fun way to enjoy the great outdoors, Winter Carnival has something for everyone. Here’s what you won’t want to miss:

- The legendary Snow Castle — A massive, hand-sculpted snow fortress that looks like it’s straight out of a fairy tale. Tunnels, slides, and icy passage-

ways — it’s a favorite for kids and adults.

- Slopeside fun — Hit the slopes for some of the best skiing and snowboarding in Washington. The fresh powder and breathtaking mountain views make for an unforgettable ride.
- Live entertainment — From live music to fun performances, there’s plenty to keep you entertained while you warm up with a hot cocoa.
- Kid-friendly activities — Families will love the carnival games, face painting and kid-friendly ski areas, making this the perfect weekend getaway.
- Fireworks over the slopes — As night arrives, enjoy a spectacular fireworks display lighting up the snow-covered peaks — a great way to cap off a day of adventure.

Plan your winter escape

The White Pass Winter Carnival is a must-attend event for fans of all things snow and winter. Whether you’re skiing the slopes, exploring the



As the sun sets and falls, enjoy the fireworks show over the slopes.

snow castle or just soaking in the atmosphere, it’s the perfect way to celebrate winter in the Pacific Northwest.

Make sure to book your accommodations, as this popular event draws

visitors from all over. Grab your gear, bring your family and friends and get ready for a weekend of winter fun at White Pass Ski Area. See you on the mountain.

COMMERCIAL - PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT

R.E. Bennett School is available for \$2.75M • 233 S Market Boulevard, Chehalis • 1.73 Acres

LISTING AGENT:

Greg Lund
CENTURY 21 Lund, Realtors
360-748-8619

For information on properties 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.



ERIC SONNENBERG
Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager

LISTING AGENT NOTES:

Own a piece of Chehalis history. R.E. Bennett School is available. Follow the provided path to redevelopment into a mixed-use commercial/residential project. Engineering is being completed. The full gymnasium and the beautiful Rhoades Auditorium are ready for use. New paved parking lot and landscaping complete for off-street parking. The current plan is for apartments plus commercial and storage facilities. There are so many possible uses.



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We appreciate your support...

Special Thanks to:

Jesters Auto Museum & Event Center, Crowded Kitchen Catering, The Shire, and all of the Volunteers that made our event successful!!

Thank you Banquet Sponsors





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