

# Flea market marks beginning of tourist season

*Five hikes a delightful way to ring in the spring conditions*

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Memorial Weekend signals the beginning of the tourist season, with the Packwood Flea Market leading the way through this Monday.

Established in the 1970s, Packwood is the most popular flea market in the Northwest with thousands of visitors.

Tourism is a major mover for economic dollars, with draws of people coming through on their way to and from Mount Rainier, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, Mount St. Helens, our towns and the many bodies of water such as Mayfield Lake and the Cowlitz River dispersed throughout Lewis County.

According to Discover Lewis County (statistics from 2023):

- Lewis County welcomed over 5.6 million trips, a 5.8% increase from 2022. The average length of visitor stay was 1.7 days.
- Lewis County hosted diverse visitors from all over the country. 55% of visitors were in-state, while 45% were out-of-state visitors.
- The three most popular months for visitation were June, July, and August.
- The three most visited points of interest were Mount Rainier (30%), Centralia shopping districts (29%) and Chehalis shopping districts (21%).

Visitor-generated spending supports critical city services throughout our county and lowers the average tax burden on local households. Tourism supports thousands of local jobs in hospitality-related industries.

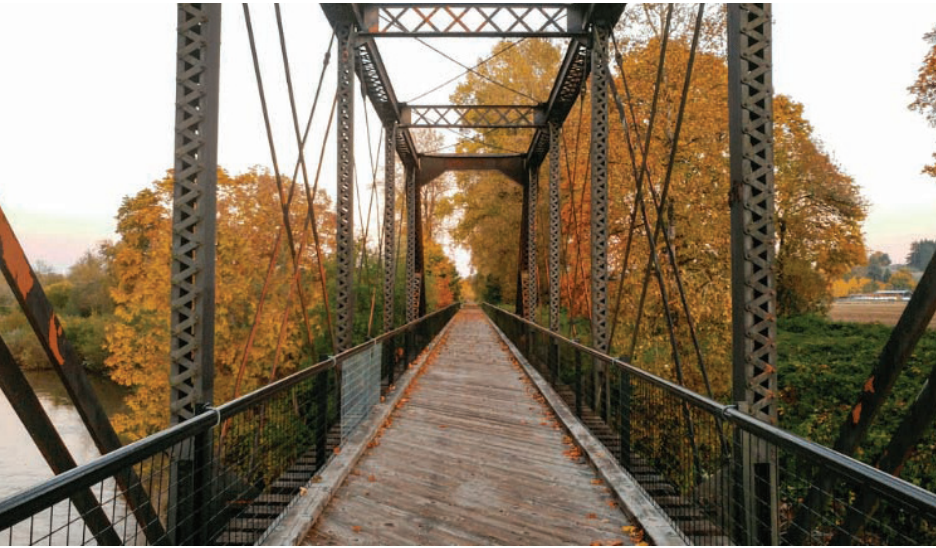
“(This is a time) to acknowledge the role that travel plays in our community,” said Todd Chaput, Initiatives Program Manager at the Economic Alliance of Lewis County. “Tourism fuels our economy, benefits local businesses, and improves the quality of life for our citizens. We’re grateful for the opportunity to acknowledge its impact in Lewis County.”

Tourists put heads in beds (filling hotels, motels and AirBnBs) and into



The Packwood Flea Market

*The Chronicle*



Willapa Hills Trail – Chehalis to Adna

*Courtesy Photo*

the scrumptious restaurants dotted throughout Lewis County.

For a deep look at all Lewis County has to offer, go to — [discoverlewiscounty.com](https://discoverlewiscounty.com), which is managed and developed by the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

## Early season walks and hikes in Lewis County

As the snow melts and wildflowers begin to bloom, Lewis County offers an incredible variety of early-season hikes perfect for families and casual

adventurers. From riverside walks to forested trails with sweeping views, this corner of the Pacific Northwest is a springtime paradise just waiting to be explored.

With May about to be behind us, tourists and locals alike can start out the spring season exploring Lewis County with these five hikes. On the way to and from, take in the fabulous variety of shops and restaurants and add your dollars to support local businesses.

■ SEE **SEASON**, PAGE B3

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S CORNER

# Tourism, Gary Stamper, Women in Business and the Alliance Open Tournament all in play

BY RICHARD DEBOLT

*Executive Director — Economic Alliance of Lewis County*

It’s a glorious Memorial Day Weekend which signals the beginning of the tourism season in Lewis County.

Tourism is one of the leading economic contributors in Lewis County, attracting thousands of people to our area which has some of the most attractive reasons to come to our part of Southwest Washington.



As the story to the left of this column starts, it states the Packwood Flea Market is underway through this Monday. If you’ve ever driven through Packwood up to the mountains during the market, you understand all the traffic that blocks the road. And that’s a good thing.

The restaurants fill up, people fill up their tanks at the gas station and hotels and AirBnBs book up. It’s an economic shot in the arm, and Lewis County is fortunate to have so many tourists drawn to our area. Mount Rainier, for example, which has on average about 2 million tourists coming to visit, comes to mind.

For us locals, we can also take part in the spring season by taking one of the hikes detailed in the article.

## Gary Stamper

On a more personal note, the bottom of this page one reports on a dedication plaque for former Lewis County Commissioner Gary Stamper, who died from COVID complications a few years ago.

When I type his name in for this column, images of the man flood my memories. What I see is a big bear of a man with his arms open and a huge grin.

He was an extremely effective leader for Lewis County, and for that I appreciate him. More so, I miss his warm, friendly way. He is missed, but never forgotten.

One way we remember him is through a scholarship in his name. This year once again it goes to a Mossyrock High School student. Read to the end of the story to get the details of this talented and giving young woman. I believe Gary would be proud of our choice and she is so worthy of the \$1,500 scholarship.

## Women in Business

We share three photos on page two from our Women in Business seminar we hosted earlier this month.

The level of sophistication, wisdom and caring from our panel of women was outstanding, as was moderator Dolly Tardiff from the Alliance, who did the heavy lifting on putting on this event.

## Alliance Open

On page three, we run an announcement of our annual Lewis County Alliance Open Golf Tournament.

The Open is set for Friday, Sept. 12 at Riverside Golf Course in Chehalis. The course, clubhouse and restaurant are all top notch and know how to host an event.

The Alliance Open sells out year after year, and is one of the most enjoyable gatherings of the year in Lewis County. You’ll want to make your reservation early by calling 360-748-0114.

## Inflation

On a national note, it is a sign of a healing economy that consumer prices have slowed to the lowest increase in 51 months, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Now, egg prices are still up a whopping 49 percent over the past year, but the prices of late are drawing down. An important drop is gasoline prices fell 11.8 percent over this past 12-month span, with fuel oil prices dropping 9.6 percent.

Sadly, our new governor, led by Democrats in the state Legislature, just passed the biggest increase in the budget — wait for it — ever, including a rise in the gas tax.

I’m not here to tell you who to vote for, but your vote does make a difference on the national, state, county and local level.

Just make sure you are registered and make your voice heard. We have important Primary elections coming up followed by the national mid-year elections.

That’s all, but get out and enjoy this spring and take a hike.

# The Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook ceremony is June 4

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

The Lewis County Board of County Commissioners announced the upcoming dedication of the Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook, located along U.S. Highway 12 just east of Mossyrock.

The dedication ceremony will take place at noon June 4.

Named in honor of the late Commissioner Gary Stamper, the scenic viewpoint offers travelers a panoramic view of Riffe Lake, the surrounding timbered hills and the Cascade mountain range — a vista that Commissioner Stamper himself helped make more accessible. During his time in office, Stamper worked closely with property owners to clear obstructive trees, opening the breathtaking view now enjoyed by thousands each year.

“Gary wasn’t just a commissioner — he was a friend, a leader and a passionate advocate for the people of Lewis County,” said Lewis County Commissioner Lindsey Pollock. “This overlook reflects the values he championed: access to the outdoors, appreciation for our rural beauty and service to community.”

Commissioner Stamper, who died Sept. 29, 2021, after a courageous battle with COVID-19, represented District 3 on the county’s east end. A former teacher, principal and girls’ basketball coach, Stamper brought the same dedication to his public service that he did to the classroom and gymnasium.

He served on the Lewis County Board of County Commissioner from 2015 until his passing and was especially known for his work on timber, transportation, rural economic development and outdoor recreation initiatives.

The Washington State Transportation Commission approved the naming of the overlook in 2023 following a petition from the Lewis County Board of County Commissioner, county staff and others. County employees, elected officials and others raised nearly \$3,000 to cover the cost of the 28-inch by 22-inch, graffiti-proof laminate panel, which is mounted to aluminum posts.

The community is invited to gather



*Courtesy Photo*

The scenic viewpoint offers travelers a panoramic view of Riffe Lake. This is the view from where the Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook plaque will be placed.

at the overlook for the official unveiling and dedication ceremony. Parking likely will be limited, so carpooling is encouraged.

## The inscription:

This overlook is dedicated to Gary Stamper, a lifelong advocate for Lewis County. As a County Commissioner, principal, teacher and coach, Gary devoted himself to improving the lives of others through his generosity, humor, leadership and selfless acts of kindness.

Gary stood firm in supporting the timber industry, advancing outdoor recreation and ensuring his community’s voice was heard. His passion for his work was rivaled only by his love for his family and friends.

With a keen focus on timber and transportation, Gary proved instrumental in the success of many key projects, such as widening Interstate 5, paving the way for local WATV use and enhancing the view from this very spot — which overlooks the now-submerged town of Riffe, where Gary spent the earliest years of his life.

Gary’s commitment to his community made a lasting impact. His legacy of



Gary Stamper

service and his dedication to preserving the rural way of life in Lewis County will be remembered here for generations.

## The Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship

Alicia Castrejon, a senior at Mossyrock High School, has been awarded the Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship, worth \$1,500.

■ SEE **STAMPER**, PAGE B2





Women in Business had 91 guests in attendance earlier this month, featured uplifting messages including how to take risks, the importance of leaning on a core group of friends, how to authentic and connected, being true to yourself, building up a network and taking charge.

# Women in Business seminar

By The Economic Alliance of Lewis County

The Economic Alliance of Lewis County hosted its third annual Women in Business seminar “Surround yourself with people who want to see you succeed” earlier this month.

The seminar was sponsored by The

Silver Agency, The Chronicle, Providence Swedish, Puget Sound Energy, Clarity Consulting and Edward Jones — Julia Gaul.

A shout out goes to Stephanie and Rick at the Loft for the great venue and delicious appetizers.



Courtesy Photo

Women in Business speakers, from left: Kelly Smith-Johnston, mayor of Centralia and owner of Clarity Consulting; Stephanie Vonmoos, owner/agent at Vonmoos Insurance Group; Paula Burrows Managing Broker of Exp Realty; Jennifer Brown, owner and Medical Director of Evexia NW; Jenny Collins, director at The Chehalis Foundation; and Dolly Tardiff, Program Manager at The Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

# Egg prices increased 49.3 percent from April 2024 to April 2025.

## Consumer prices up 2.3%, lowest increase since February 2021

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers increased 2.3 percent for the 12 months ending April 2025, after rising 2.4 percent over the same period in March.

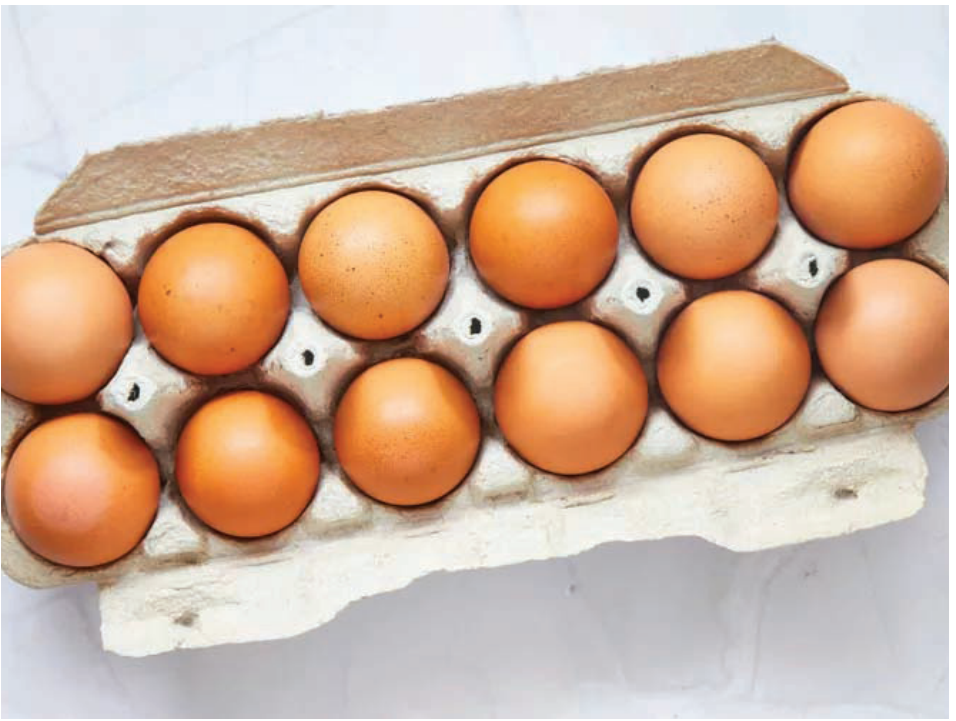
The April change was the smallest 12-month increase in the all items index since February 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The all items less food and energy index rose 2.8 percent over the 12 months ending in April. Food prices increased 2.8 percent, while energy

prices decreased 3.7 percent.

Food at home prices were 2.0 percent higher than a year earlier. Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs prices rose 7.0 percent over the last 12 months as egg prices increased 49.3 percent. Prices for nonalcoholic beverages increased 3.2 percent, and prices for dairy and related products were up 1.6 percent. Prices for fruits and vegetables decreased 0.9 percent over the year. Food away from home prices were 3.9 percent higher than in April 2024.

Gasoline prices fell 11.8 percent over this 12-month span and fuel oil prices fell 9.6 percent. In contrast, electricity prices increased 3.6 percent over the last 12 months and natural gas prices rose 15.7 percent.



Courtesy Photo

## STAMPER:

Continued From Page B1

She plans to attend Centralia College.

Alicia is the salutatorian at Mossyrock High School, with a GPA of 3.92. She has been active in Yearbook, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Art Club and Future Business Leaders of America.

She recently came in third place at the state FBLA conference for computer problem solving, which qualifies her to compete at Nationals this summer. She wants to earn a degree in education.

She volunteered at the Mossyrock Grange to help low income and immigrant families with free tax preparations.

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

Gary was known for being a great leader, career educator, great mentor, soft-spoken, big-hearted, family man and had a passion for service.

He was beloved by everyone who he came in contact with, including his loved ones and family. Gary was a Mossyrock High School graduate and went on to be a teacher at his alma mater and served as a youth sport coach for years.

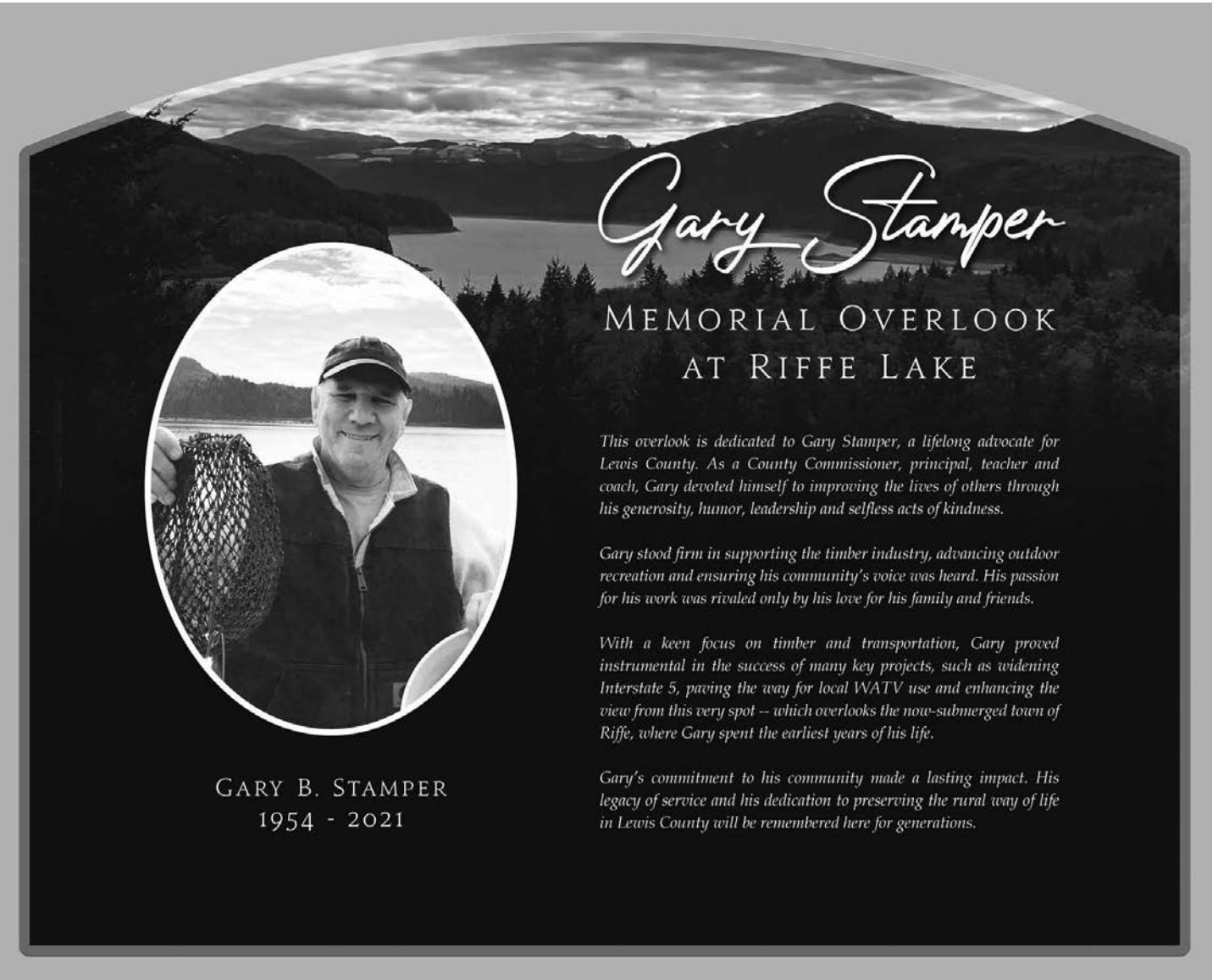
He was dedicated to his community and served as Principal for White Pass Junior/High School, Lewis County Commissioner for District 3 as well as Fire Commissioner for District 3.

This scholarship was made possible through generous contributions from family, friends, co-workers and local businesses. The scholarship is awarded in the amount of \$1,500 by the selected committee composed of the Stamper family, Economic Alliance of Lewis County executive director, and the Lewis County manager who have sole discretion on the recipient.

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

The Gary Stamper Memorial Scholarship will be awarded based on the following criteria. Applicants must be:

- Pursuing a career in education
- Graduating or graduated from Mossyrock High School or White Pass High School
- Must be enrolled or enrolling in a college, university or trade school
- No age limit
- Not GPA driven



Courtesy Photo

The Gary Stamper Memorial Overlook dedication plaque will be unveiled at a dedication ceremony at noon on June 4.



Courtesy Photo

Dolly Tardiff, Program Manager at The Economic Alliance of Lewis County, hands the Gary Stamper Scholarship in the amount of \$1,500 to Alicia Castrejon from Mossyrock High School





PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT - 151-153 Sturdevant Road, Chehalis • 23,250 square feet of Industrial Space Warehouse • 37,450 square feet, sitting on 1.9 acres and built in 1989



Take a look at this space in the Chehalis Industrial and Business Park available now for the first time in decades. This well-appointed space is just two miles from Interstate 5 and halfway between Portland and Seattle, has a loading dock, and direct rail access with service from both BNSF and Union Pacific.

For information on this property and others available throughout Lewis County (or to list your industrial/commercial property for sale or lease), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at 208.206.5407 or [eric@lewiscountyalliance.org](mailto:eric@lewiscountyalliance.org), or go to [lewisdc.com](http://lewisdc.com).

SEASON:

Continued From Page B1

Willapa Hills Trail – Chehalis to Adna

This converted rail trail is one of the most accessible walks in the county



and ideal for spring. The paved Chehalis Trailhead to Adna section features gentle terrain, beautiful farmland views, and the iconic wooden trestle bridge crossing the Chehalis River. Whether you're walking, biking, or pushing a stroller, this section of the Willapa Hills Trail is great for all ages and abilities.

Seminary Hill Natural Area – Centralia

Located just minutes from downtown Centralia, Seminary Hill is a hidden gem featuring a network of short trails that wind through old-growth forest, offering peaceful views of the surrounding valley. The trails are often the first to showcase early blooming wildflowers and moss-covered trees. Interpretive signs and loop options make this a favorite for casual hikers and nature lovers.

Rainbow Falls State Park – Pe Ell

Rainbow Falls State Park is a tranquil destination offering several easy trails that meander through lush forest and alongside the Chehalis River. The park's namesake waterfall is a highlight in spring, flowing strong with snowmelt. With picnic areas and campsites, this park makes a great base for a weekend of family-friendly outdoor fun.

Ike Kinswa State Park – Silver Creek

While better known for boating and fishing, Ike Kinswa also offers forested walking trails along Mayfield Lake that are ideal for early spring exploration. The fresh scent of evergreens, glimpses of the lake through the trees, and opportunities for birdwatching make this a peaceful

spot to shake off the winter blues.

Woods Creek Wildlife Area

The Woods Creek Wildlife Area, located near Randle, is a peaceful and lesser-known spot that offers quiet trails through wetlands and woodlands. In spring, the area comes alive with birds, blooming plants, and the sound of flowing water. Great for wildlife viewing and nature photography, Woods Creek is an ideal destination for those seeking a slower-paced, immersive experience in nature.

...

From riverside strolls to forest escapes, Lewis County's early-season hikes offer family-friendly options to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. With milder weather and fewer crowds, spring is the perfect time to explore these local trails before the busy summer season begins.

Thank you WOMEN IN BUSINESS SEMINAR Sponsors!

Economic Alliance of Lewis County

PSE PUGET SOUND ENERGY

Providence SWEDISH

The Chronicle

CLARITY CONSULTING

Edward Jones Julia Gaul

The Silver Agency



Ike Kinswa State Park – Silver Creek

Courtesy Photo



Seminary Hill Natural Area – Centralia

Courtesy Photo

ECONOMIC ALLIANCE BOARD & STAFF

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

