

KITSAP

April 2025

BUSINESS

News | Features | Nonprofits | People

Marketing Matters

The Social Media Trap

Filter Girls

Leads the Charge for Women in HVAC

Lotta's Laundry Takes the Load Off Bainbridge Island

Q & A with Kevin and Bittina Sheen

Away With Words bookstore and the Poulsbo Film Festival owners

kitsapbusiness.com



 GREATER
KITSAP
CHAMBER
Newsletter Inside



Spiva Cooking sources high quality ingredients from around the world and grinds them fresh daily at their Bremerton location. Owners, Sam and Heather Spiva believe every meal deserves fresh, vibrant flavor.

CONTENTS

April 2025

Vol. 1 / No. 2

Spiva Cooking Brings Bold Global Flavors To Kitsap

A former cruise industry chef transforms his passion for spices into a thriving business

When the pandemic docked Sam Spiva's decade-long career as a cruise industry corporate chef, he pivoted to selling freshly ground spice blends. What began as a "side hustle" has flourished into Spiva Cooking, a Bremerton-based business offering 35 distinct, preservative-free spice blends.

Filter Girls Leads The Charge For Women In HVAC

A family-run business in Silverdale is breaking industry norms and redefining success in a traditionally male-dominated trade

When Guy Littlefield started Filter Girls in 2014, he had one goal: create opportunities for his daughters in a trade with job security. Now CEO Zoe Littlefield, a licensed journeyman electrician, and her sister Morgan are taking the reins of this Silverdale-based HVAC company.

Lotta's Laundry Takes The Load Off Bainbridge Island

This pickup-and-delivery laundry service is bringing convenience, community, and a touch of nostalgia to busy families

Meet Liz and Beau Perra, entrepreneurs who transformed the mundane chore of laundry into a thriving business on Bainbridge Island. Learn how this husband-and-wife team's "bootstrapped" approach to business growth, playful branding, and community integration has resulted in monthly growth rates of 30-40%.

Cover photography: Leah Thompson of Scandia Studio

KITSAP BUSINESS, April 2025, Volume 1 - Issue 2 is published monthly by Ward Media, LLC., P.O. Box 241, Poulsbo, WA, 98370. The subscription rates are **\$30** for one year; **\$50** for two years. Editorial material and photographs are solicited and should be emailed to news@kitsapbusiness.com. Advertising rates will be furnished upon request. Telephone **(360) 328-1052**.

Communities of Creativity and Connection

For **WARD**
THINKING

Welcome to the April edition of Kitsap Business, where we continue our mission to highlight the entrepreneurial excellence that makes our region special.

As I review the inspiring stories featured in this month's issue, I'm struck by the common thread weaving through each narrative: the power of community connection. From Sam Spiva's transformation of a pandemic setback into a thriving spice business to the Littlefield family's journey building Filter Girls, these entrepreneurs demonstrate how deep community ties fuel business innovation and sustainability.

The Perras' Lotta's Laundry shows us that even the most mundane household chore can become a service that strengthens community bonds. Their creative approach to building a "bootstrapped" business reminds us that successful ventures don't always require massive upfront investments - sometimes they require patience, creativity, and listening closely to what your neighbors need.

Kevin and Bittina Sheen's story particularly resonates with me. Their dual ventures - Away With Words Bookshop and the Poulsbo Film Festival - exemplify how cultural entrepreneurship enriches our entire community. Their commitment to showcasing local authors and independent filmmakers creates ripples of opportunity that extend far beyond their businesses.

These stories collectively highlight an important truth: in Kitsap, business isn't just about transactions - it's about transformation, both personal and communal. Whether grinding fresh spices that bring global flavors to local tables, creating a women-led HVAC company in a traditionally male-dominated field, or establishing cultural institutions that celebrate storytelling in all its forms, our local entrepreneurs are weaving the fabric of a more vibrant, inclusive community.

I'd like to extend special thanks to Leah Thompson of Scandia Studio, whose



beautiful photography graces many of the pages in this month's edition. Through our partnership with Leah, we're able to visually capture the passion and dedication behind these remarkable businesses.

As we move further into 2025, Kitsap Business remains committed to telling the stories that showcase not just what our local businesses do, but why they matter. Because

when businesses are built on authentic community connections, they don't just survive—they thrive, and they help our entire region flourish.

Here's to the creative spirit and community-mindedness that defines Kitsap entrepreneurship. ■

Terry Ward
Publisher, Kitsap Business

OUR TEAM



Terry Ward

CEO & Publisher
terry@ward.media



Amy M. Yaley

COO & Co-Owner
amy@ward.media



Harmony Liebert

Multi-media Sales Manager
harmony@ward.media



Quinn Propst

Reporter
quinn@ward.media



Andrea Sanchez-Blanco

Administrative Assistant
andrea@ward.media

KITSAP **BUSINESS**

Ward Media, LLC Kitsap Business Magazine

PO Box 241
Poulsbo, WA 98370
(360) 328-1052
kitsapbusiness.com
© 2025 WARD MEDIA, LLC
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Our Business Divisions

Kitsap Business Magazine

Take advantage of advertising opportunities and reach readers across the region.

Ward Digital Marketing

Extend your marketing reach through extensive digital tactics.

Northwest Swag Works

Custom-branded merchandise, corporate gifts, promotional materials, and apparel that leave a lasting impression on your audience. Contact amy@northwestswag.com or (509) 731-3624 for more information.

Custom Publishing & Design Services

Create a magazine or custom project tailored to fit the needs of your business or organization.

Plaques & Reprints

Love one of the stories we published? Purchase a plaque or reprint to commemorate it.

Subscriptions

Subscribe online or contact Andrea Sanchez-Blanco at andrea@ward.media or (360) 328-1052 to receive or gift the peninsula's premier business magazine.

For more information on any of the services listed above, please contact one of our account executives.





Photos courtesy of Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

Sam Spiva worked as a corporate chef for the cruise industry until a pandemic induced layoff caused him to pivot and start what has become a thriving spice business in Bremerton.

Spiva Cooking Brings Bold Global Flavors to Kitsap

A former cruise industry chef transforms his passion for spices into a thriving business, delivering fresh, high-quality blends to home cooks and chefs alike.

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

When the global pandemic abruptly docked Sam Spiva's decade-long career as a cruise industry corporate chef, he turned crisis into opportunity by tapping into his most treasured culinary secret—the vibrant world of freshly ground spices. What began as a

"side hustle" selling homemade spice blends has flourished into Spiva Cooking, a thriving Bremerton-based business that's bringing restaurant-quality flavors to home kitchens across Kitsap County through 35 distinct, preservative-free spice blends that showcase Spiva's globe-spanning culinary expertise.



Spiva Cooking spice blends and merchandise are available at the brand's Bremerton store and in many other small businesses in Kitsap County.

"And so I started all sorts of side hustles to try to put food on the table for my family and figure out what was next," said Spiva, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America.

"I'd always wanted to start a business. Originally, I thought it'd be a restaurant or something like that, but I did a number of different side hustles. One of them was a meal delivery service to family and friends locally."

Sam made meal kits, sourcing fresh ingredients from local farms, for family and friends. One of the meals included a freshly ground dry rub for a barbecue pork shoulder sandwich.

He decided to put the leftover spice mix on social media to see if there was any interest and within two days he sold out of the 48 pounds of spice mix.

"We realized, there's a demand here," Sam said. "People are cooking at home a lot more during the COVID times, and they really want fresh, flavorful foods without all the junk, all the fillers, all the preservatives, a lot of spices are just full of salt, silicon dioxide, all sorts of other things."

The Spivas, drawing from their years as professional chefs and their passion for big, bold flavors, created Spiva Cooking to help home cooks elevate their meals to restaurant-level quality. They began working in a collaborative kitchen space, producing and testing more blends while working to become licensed by the FDA and WSDA. After several months of dedication, they moved to their current location on Lebo Blvd. in Bremerton in November 2021.

The Spiva's bring in whole spices from all over the world, grind fresh, and blend in small batches.

"We have about 35 different spice blends that we have created," he said. "They're all our own proprietary recipes. So they're inspired



Spiva Cooking offers 35 different spice blends for chefs and homecooks alike.

by all sorts of things, some by the ingredients, some by our world travels, some by our journey as chefs in the culinary industry for years."

After they procured the Bremerton location, the Spivas expanded into bulk spices, variety spice packs and other local products.

"And then about a year and a half ago, we started to make teas as well, organic teas that we blend here, all sorts of really delicious blends that do not have any artificial flavors, preservatives, fillers, like I said, all organic ingredients, and a lot of them really great for you, too, in terms of health benefits," he said.

Currently, Spiva Cooking has nine tea blends.

"We do have some single origin ones as well, but we have black teas, green teas, herbal teas, our approach on them holistically is that they should be again, like the spice is delicious, good to consume, but also good for you," he said. "So we don't add any natural or artificial flavors."

The distinction is that many products claim to not use artificial flavors but still include "natural flavors," which are often oils or flavorings designed to mimic specific tastes (like orange flavor that isn't actually from oranges). In contrast, artificial flavors, like blue raspberry, are entirely synthetic and don't occur naturally.

"We avoid both natural and artificial," he said. "The true ingredient should speak for themselves. So we do teas, and then we blend them with other unique ingredients, like

fruits or spices or herbs, with an eye on both the flavor and the health."

Sam and Heather met in culinary school—she specialized in baking and pastry while he focused on savory cooking. These days, she handles all the grinding and is responsible for blending the spices, as well as managing much of the operations and production.

"For us, we really love bold flavors," he said. "That's a big part of it, like, first and foremost, it has to be delicious for people to want to eat it, right? And so we started off by picking bold flavors."

"I grew up in Arizona," he said. "I really love chilies. I don't think people here, or the vast majority of people, like it really hot, and so when you say chilies, they're scared. But I found that if you can produce some really flavorful chili based spices, seasonings, rubs, people don't even know. They wouldn't equate that with being a chili."

They just think 'wow, this has great flavor,' he said.

"We started with a lot of the big bold flavors, you know, things like the chilies, garlic, herbs, peppers that we sourced," he said. "Stuff that was this year's harvest and just provided that really big, bold flavor that people would find delicious. And then a big thing for us as well was, you know, the international flavors."

The health benefits of fresh spices are another key focus for Spiva Cooking. Heather is currently studying to become a dietician to understand health benefits better.

"We bring a lot of that into our teas, but also into our spices, where we're not adding fillers, we're not adding artificial ingredients, preservatives, it's all just freshly ground," he said.

"And that was the other big thing," he said. "We wanted to grind fresh, because it's like coffee when you grind it fresh there in the coffee shop when you're waiting for your espresso, you get all the smells, all the oils, all the flavors. Once it's been ground sitting for a few months, you really lose all that."

Finding the right spice importers involved a lot of experimentation initially, as the industry is highly secretive. However, they have built relationships with suppliers who are more transparent, which is something Spiva values greatly.

"It's a lot of trial and error at the beginning to find the right importers because no one will really want to tell you where they're getting their spices from," he said. "It's all a big secret. If you ask them,

it's like you're opening yourself for all out war. They want to protect their secrets at all costs. But we have found some that are more transparent with their approach, which has been helpful."

The Spivas also ordered in spices and did their own testing to see how they compared to other ingredients. The flavor quality is readily apparent, he said.

"You know, as things sit for quite a while, they lose their potency in their flavor, and they also start to develop some weird nuances to them, moldy type things, or just off flavors," he said. We only work with about five trusted importers, and we get the majority of our stuff from them."

"If we're developing a new blend, we may go outside of that, but at this point, we found people we can trust and do a good job with that," he said.

Wholesale is the largest part of Spiva Cooking's business, with customers including specialty shops, grocery stores, and home goods retailers. Their biggest retail partner is Ace Hardware, where their products are featured in the barbecue section at over 30 locations.

Spiva Cooking is also tapping into the health-focused market, recognizing that people who meal prep—like those following fitness and nutrition plans—still want their food to taste great. Spiva and Silverdale fitness studio BC Fitness owner Brett Clark are collaborating on a meal service company to help busy people eat healthy, flavorful meals to meet their fitness goals.

"I started working with Brett as my personal trainer, lifting weights, and it's transformed a lot for me," Spiva said. "It's increased my business, increased my energy, and I've just found that it's been such a key part of my life the last year, and part of that is the food that you eat, right?"

"And that was always the thing for me, is I know that I need to be eating healthy," he said. "I know the things that it takes, but I'm busy running a business and I don't always have the time to put together these meals that are great for me."

A lot of Clark's clients are busy professionals or people who do not enjoy cooking, but they know they should be eating healthy meals to help them reach their fitness goals. Clark has meal plans for his clients but they often struggle to follow them for lack of time.

"We just started to understand this need in the community for prepared meals that

would be flavorful, delicious and help fuel your fitness goals," Spiva said.

Over the past six months, the two have focused on market research, testing pricing, refining recipes, and developing menus. Now, they are working through logistics, including finding a location and securing permits, with plans to launch later this year.

Spiva hopes that home cooks will experience the convenience factor of his spice blends.

"A big thing for us is that we want to make cooking and cooking at that high level more simple for people," he said. "All of our blends are chef-inspired. It's stuff I would use in my professional kitchen. I've worked in Michelin level restaurants, you know, great quality restaurants all around the globe."

"I want them to feel that when they're cooking with it it's like, 'Hey, this is something that I'm cooking that could be served at a top-tier restaurant,'" he said. "And it makes it simple, quick, easy, convenient because these spice blends really simplify the process of cooking quite a bit."

As Spiva looks to the future for his business he has a number of goals that involve a tiered approach to growth.

Spiva is focused on expanding distribution, starting with a major investment in their e-commerce presence, including a platform upgrade to strengthen online sales.

"We're going to be doing a lot more content, recipes, more engaging contests, all sorts of fun giveaways and just ways to communicate with our customers more online as well as doing events here in our storefront," he said. "So that's the first part of this year."

Then, Spiva plans to shift into focusing on distribution with the big goal of getting his products onto the shelves of markets that focus on quality, local products, he said.

Achieving that goal would require more warehouse space, bigger equipment, and more staff to produce at that capacity.

"Those are all the things on the horizon for us as we grow," he said. "I think within that, there's a lot of opportunity for this business. I think the meal service is probably the most concrete of plans right now. We're always dreaming up ways that we can bring other culinary type services here to the area."

Through starting and growing the business the biggest challenges Spiva faced were permitting delays and the logistics of starting a small business without a lot of capital.

"I think, in the get go, everything was bootstrapped," he said. "And so the delays have been a big challenge."

However, the Spivas weathered those initial storms and are now in the stage of business growth where they have to prioritize opportunities.

"We have more opportunities now, and it's trying to figure out which ones, and getting the staff on, and training them and being strategic about where we really want to head next," he said.

"I know I've already shared several ideas, and that's kind of how my mind works, is all these ideas, but you have to be strategic and invest resources appropriately," he said. "I think that's probably just my time. Time is the biggest constraint for me."

Spiva is looking forward to adding staff to help him gain time for other aspects of the business.

Spiva Cooking currently has six employees but plans to expand its staff in phases to support its growing business. In the short term, the company aims to add around 10 employees to focus on the expanding events side, including markets, festivals, shows, and barbecue events with Ace Hardware.

In phase two of expansion, as Spiva Cooking increases distribution to stores that prioritize quality local products, the team will likely grow to around 20 employees to support production. Further expansion is planned over the next year or two as the business continues to scale.

Spiva does sometimes miss the creativity of working as a chef but he appreciates the flexibility of owning a small business. It allows him more time with his family and he no longer has to work holidays plus he enjoys being a part of the community.

"I think probably my favorite part is just the opportunity to get out in the community," he said. "There's so many supportive business owners out there to collaborate with, especially here in Kitsap County, that I've just really enjoyed that process."

Spiva finds a lot of joy in spending time to understand the needs of local businesses and getting to know their owners.

"For example, people like Vibe Coworks, we provide the tea for them, and I really enjoy getting to know Alanna and seeing what they're doing in the community," he said.

"And Brett, over at BC fitness, we've come up with a line for him, and that whole process has been great, and I've entered into their worlds and understood what they're bringing to the business community," he said. "That's been a lot of fun, and other collaborations that have come out of that process."

"I think in addition to that, just the ability to be creative too and bring something unique to Kitsap has been a joy for me," he said. "Seeing people engage with our products and their lives being improved by what we have to offer here is always just exhilarating, whether it be that convenience factor, or whether it be like, hey, my meals turned out really great."

"At the crux of it, we just have a passion for our community and for our products, and we're excited about using our skills to really impact the community in a positive way," he said. "As we move forward, I think we're looking at a lot of different fun and exciting partnerships, and we love really creative ideas that can be brought to life through the collaboration of the small business community here in Kitsap." ■



Spiva measures one of freshly ground spice blends.



YOUR BUSINESS DESERVES MORE THAN A TEMPLATE

Get Custom Website Design That Captures Your Brand & Converts Customers With Scandia Studio

@scandia studios
scandia studio.com



Ready to elevate
your brand?

SCAN HERE

Feature



Zoe, Morgan and Guy Littlefield are the FilterGirls, a female led HVAC company that serves Kitsap County and the surrounding area.

Photos courtesy of Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

Filter Girls Leads the Charge for Women in HVAC

A family-run business in Silverdale is breaking industry norms, empowering women, and redefining success in a traditionally male-dominated trade.

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Guy Littlefield started his HVAC company Filter Girls to empower his daughters in a field traditionally dominated by men. He chose the name Filter Girls to highlight and support women at work.

Filter Girls is based out of Silverdale and serves Kitsap County and the surrounding area. They offer a number of services beyond just HVAC, including ventilation, gas fireplace maintenance, kitchen range installs, conversions to propane, outdoor gas lighting and more.

At the time, Guy looked at the way the world was going and worried about what opportunities his daughters would have.

"Being a tradesperson, I've never been on unemployment in 30 years, pretty much," he said. "I took two months off and had unemployment for that time. But that was voluntary. I just took a break."

"I thought they could have that too, where they don't have to worry about governments doing crazy things," he said. "People will always want to be warm when they get home."

"It's like healthcare," he said. "It's not going away. Everybody's still gonna need it. So that was why I thought it was a good thing."

His daughters Morgan and Zoe were 13 and 14 when he started the business in 2014. Originally, the girls sold filters with Guy at kiosks in the mall and, for a while, went door to door with their filters in a cart they pulled along.

But now Morgan and Zoe have far surpassed selling filters. Now, they are women and highly skilled in their field.

Zoe is a licensed journeyman electrician and is now the CEO of Filter Girls. Morgan is currently studying for her electrical administrator license.

HVAC remains a male-dominated field, and customers are often surprised to see Zoe arrive for a job. Many assume she and Morgan are too young or inexperienced.

"Most of the time, if it's like, me and dad will go out and we'll, go diagnose someone's heater, and then I come back, just me with the part, and they look at me and they're like, where's Guy? 'Just me today. Just me. I have the part. I'm ready to install it.' And they're like, you're gonna do that? Yeah, and I just have

Feature

to be super nice, and I have to smile," Zoe said.

Zoe and Morgan do not deal with rude customers. That is one of the rules Guy established with the company.

"We don't deal with rude customers," she said. "If you're mean, I won't be mean back to you. I will just simply say, have a wonderful day. I will pack up my things and I will leave nicely. But if you're mean, I will not be staying."

Her advice for other women in male-dominated fields is to keep an open mind.

"Keep an open mind with your customers, because most of them will be judgmental at first," she said. "Some of my best customers right now that I really like, they're my clients. They, at first had no idea why I was at their house."

"But now they're honestly my biggest clients, and I really like them, and we have a great relationship, and they're the best tipplers," she said.

Morgan echoed that sentiment, encouraging women to push past the negativity.

"Don't let the men in this field discourage you from anything," Morgan said. "I mean, they can sit there and talk a lot of big stuff about, you know, you're a girl, you can't lift this, or, you know, you're too pretty to be

here. You should be sitting at a desk, and, you know, a lot of things like that."

"Just don't let them get to you, because, I mean, you're gonna show up and go to work and do your job probably better than those men are, you know, so just don't let it get to you," she said.

The Littlefields are a blended family, and open communication has always been key.

"We're pretty open, but we've always been, because of our family dynamic," Guy said. "It was her daughter, my daughter, our adopted daughter, our son. But everybody gets treated exactly the same."

Unlike many father-son businesses in the industry, where tensions run high, the Littlefields prioritize calm and professional communication.

"We're a service provider trade, so we're not very emotional," Guy said. "You have to be very relaxed and calm all the time. You have to seem like you aren't worried—yes, even if it's a worrisome thing."

"These two do a great job of being calm on the outside for the most part, because people worry when they have gas leaks and have these things and it is dangerous," Guy said.

"But we're educated," he said. "We spend a lot of time self educating."

Education is a cornerstone of

Filter Girls' success. Every Friday is dedicated to learning—whether it's self-education, state-mandated coursework, or hands-on training.

Guy involved his children in the business when they were young, teaching them and letting them experience the job.

"We all had to go and work at least once on a job site, and we all went under a house or in an attic to see if we would like it," Zoe said.

Morgan, who prefers to avoid crawlspaces, found her niche on the business and electrical side. She excels at scheduling, customer service, and understanding the technical side of repairs.

Before Morgan joined full-time, the business relied on customers to book their own appointments online—something that worked well for younger clients but left others wanting a personal touch.

"The younger generations don't want to call me," Guy said. "They want to do it at midnight from their phone and just book the appointment. So we really took the time to make appointments (accessible)."

"The rest of them are really glad that Morgan is there to talk to them as a human because I think that matters, too," he said.

Filter Girls is classified as a specialty construction contractor rather than a general contractor or dedicated HVAC contractor. This designation allows them to focus on HVAC and refrigeration while also hiring specialists like electricians or tile installers as needed—one at a time—rather than managing large teams.

Because electricians are hard to find but essential to their work they plan to hire an electrician as soon as Morgan is finished with her studies and passes her state exams.

"Then Morgan will be in charge of saying he worked this many hours, he gets this much credit on his electrical license," Guy said. "Zoe worked with him that day. She gets X amount of credit on her electrical license. I'm not really boosting any of my licenses. I'm on the other path, the path out, right?"

Through the years, Filter Girls has evolved to include more services to meet area service demands.

Guy Littlefield (left) started Filter Girls in 2014 for his girls. He was worried about their futures and job security so he created a space for them in a traditionally male-dominated trade where he knew there would always be work. Morgan Littlefield (middle) handles the administration side of the business and is studying to earn her electrical administrator license. Zoe Littlefield (right) is the CEO of Filter Girls and a journeyman level electrician.





"I never thought we would fix fireplaces or anything other than heat pumps," he said.

But there are not many businesses that fix fireplaces in the area. There is one service person who is constantly booked out six months who recommends Filter Girls all the time, Guy said.

"So we fixed some fireplaces, and then we fixed hundreds of thousands of fireplaces and we don't even have a brand, like we're brandless when it comes to fireplaces.

"So that evolved, and then it was the generators and things," he said. "Zoe and I went to generator school, just to improve our electric knowledge, not really to sell generators, and then we had said it out loud by accident. And then the next thing you know, we're going around doing maintenance on generators."

As a kid, Morgan enjoyed learning the paperwork side of the business.

"I'd sit with my dad for hours and learn to do paperwork, because at that point it was all physical paper," she said. "So just kind of learning, like how to run the business on that side."

Morgan excels at that side of running a business. However, Zoe is not a fan of paperwork. She prefers to be outside and working with her hands.

"I just want to get out in the field," she said. "I've always been outside. I don't want to be inside. I don't want to do paperwork. I was always outside with dad in the garage, sort of building like this go kart or whatever. We build something cool, and it's just now I just want to do that.

"We build a lot of things for fun," Guy said. "We built an arcade last summer"

When the girls were young Guy involved them in many different projects. They renovated a school bus, built Go Karts and learned many hands-on skills. Even now that the girls are adults they often craft, build and gather as a family.

Family time and quality of life are important things to the Littlefield family so they structured their business to honor those aspects. They do not do emergency calls like other bigger companies with more staff. And unlike many others in their field they do have plans for retirement.

The industry is small and tightly knit, with limited supply stores where everyone—competitors, apprentices, and seasoned workers—cross paths daily. Many workers stay in the trade for decades, often until their 80s, because there aren't enough new people to replace them.

But Guy feels good about retiring since he has two

successors to take his place.

When Guy retires Zoe and Morgan plan to continue building the company with their vision.

"If we have children and we want our children to do it, and if our children want to do it, yeah, we can incorporate them," Zoe said. "If they don't want to, and we want to hire outside people,

we can also do that. Or if we're just tired of it, we can all come together and we can just sell the company."

"Eventually, maybe we'll sell our company away and retire somewhere," Guy said. "We've already gotten offers, but we don't want to sell yet. It's our way of life, not just our company." ■

Kitsap and Beyond

Homes for Sale

Tom Earnest
Real Estate Broker

Port Orchard, WA

tomearnest@johnlscott.com
tomearnest.johnlscott.com/home
360-535-4743

DIGITAL MARKETING



DIGITAL MARKETING *Services*

Transforming Visions
into Digital Realities with
Our Marketing Services!

- ✓ Targeted Advertising
- ✓ Enhanced Brand Visibility
- ✓ Measurable Results
- ✓ Personalized Engagement
- ✓ Cost-Effective Solutions
- ✓ Agile Adaptation
- ✓ Comprehensive Approach



KITSAP

BUSINESS

CONTACT US NOW FOR A FREE MARKET ANALYSIS



Harmony Liebert at 360-460-5795



harmony@ward.media

BUSINESS

Briefs

Washington Employers More Optimistic Despite Tax, Regulation Concerns

Washington employers are showing increased economic optimism but still cite taxes and regulations as major challenges, according to an Association of Washington Business survey.

The Winter 2025 survey of 441 employers found just 17% expect a recession next year, down from 25% a year ago. Over half anticipate business growth in the next six months.

Government regulations (58%), tax burden (54%), and inflation (52%) remain top concerns. Most businesses (77%) report rising energy costs over the past two years, and 54% of manufacturers and agricultural producers worry about tariff impacts.

The survey also reveals growing AI interest, with 40% of businesses exploring potential uses, up from 35% last year.

The complete report can be found at ncw.social/wintersurvey

Kitsap County Unemployment Rate Exceeds State Average in January

Washington state's unemployment rate decreased slightly to 4.3% in January, while Kitsap County reported a higher jobless rate of 4.8%, according to figures released by the Employment Security Department.

Kitsap County had a civilian labor force of 121,822 in January, with 115,991 residents employed and 5,831 unemployed.

Statewide, Washington lost an estimated 1,100 jobs in January despite the slight improvement in the unemployment rate, which

has been declining gradually over the past six months.

"Washington's labor market is still relatively strong, but growth has slowed over the past several months," said Anneliese Vance-Sherman, Chief Labor Economist at the Employment Security Department.

Officials noted that recently announced Boeing layoffs and federal job cuts won't be reflected in employment figures until February or March reports.

While Kitsap County data shows unemployment above the state average, construction and leisure/hospitality were the strongest sectors statewide in January, adding 4,000 and 2,900 jobs, respectively.

Seattle Area Consumer Prices Rise 1.1% Over Two Months, Up 2.5% From Last Year

Consumer prices in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area increased 1.1 percent from December 2024 to February 2025, with annual inflation reaching 2.5 percent, according to data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The energy index showed the largest bi-monthly increase at 4.7 percent, including a 3.5 percent rise in gasoline prices. The core index, which excludes food and energy, rose 1.0 percent.

Food prices increased modestly, up 0.3 percent over the two-month period. Grocery store purchases (food at home) rose 0.5 percent while restaurant and other food away from home increased 0.2 percent.

Medical care costs saw the highest category increase during the period, jumping 2.6 percent, while shelter costs increased by 0.7 percent. Some categories



showed price decreases, including alcoholic beverages (-1.6 percent) and recreation (-0.1 percent).

Year-over-year, energy costs have risen 7.4 percent, followed by a 4.5 percent increase in shelter costs. Apparel prices dropped significantly over the past year, down 10.1 percent.

The Seattle area's 2.5 percent annual inflation rate continues a moderating trend from previous

years, down from 4.3 percent reported in February 2024.

Washington Workplace Fatalities Decline in 2023

Fatal work injuries in Washington state decreased to 97 in 2023, down from the previous year, according to data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in March 2025.

Exposure to harmful substances or environments

Olympic Game Farm

Experience Wildlife Up Close & Personal



See animals and experience their world through education and observation. The majority of our animals are wildlife native to the Northwest region. We also have a gift shop, seasonal walking hours and seasonal concessions. Come spend the whole day with us at our farm in Sequim whether it's by yourself or with family or friends. We are dedicated to the welfare and well-being of all animals and ensure that they receive the highest standard of care while they are with us. You can also feed them right from your vehicle.



Open Daily at nine a.m., closing is season dependent, check our website for current closing times. Seasonal walking area.

360-683-4295 • 800-778-4295
1423 Ward Rd, Sequim, WA 98382

BUSINESS *Briefs*

was the leading cause of workplace deaths, accounting for 25 percent (24 fatalities) of the total. Falls, slips, and trips caused 22 percent (21 fatalities) of work-related deaths, followed by transportation incidents at 21 percent (20 fatalities).

The transportation and warehousing sector recorded the highest number of fatalities with 17, including 10 in the truck transportation subsector. Construction ranked second with 16 fatalities, followed by agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting with 15.

Among occupations, transportation and material moving workers suffered the most fatalities (24), with motor vehicle operators accounting for 15 of these deaths. Construction and extraction occupations recorded 15 fatalities.

Men accounted for 88 percent of the work-related deaths in Washington. Workers aged 25-54 represented 63 percent of

victims, while those 55 and older accounted for 35 percent.

By race and ethnicity, white non-Hispanics comprised 61 percent of workplace fatalities, followed by Hispanic or Latino workers at 18 percent.

Historically, fatal occupational injuries in Washington have ranged from a high of 128 in 1996 to a low of 56 in 2013. Nationwide, workplace fatalities decreased 3.7 percent in 2023, with 5,283 deaths recorded.

Washington's Labor Underutilization Rate Exceeds National Average in 2024

Washington state's broadest measure of labor underutilization was significantly higher than the national average in 2024, according to data released in March by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The state's U-6 rate, which includes unemployed workers, those employed part-time for economic reasons, and people marginally attached to the labor force, stood at 9.0 percent, compared to the national rate of 7.5 percent.

Washington's official unemployment rate (U-3) was 4.7 percent, significantly higher than

the 4.0 percent national rate. The state had 186,400 unemployed residents in 2024, along with 137,000 workers employed part-time for economic reasons and 39,000 individuals marginally attached to the labor force.

Regional Commissioner Chris Rosenlund noted that five of the six alternative measures of labor underutilization in Washington were not significantly different from rates recorded a year ago, while nationally all six measures showed significant increases over the year.

Among all states, Washington had the second-largest gap (3.4 percentage points) between its U-5 and U-6 rates, indicating a high incidence of involuntary part-time employment. Only California had a larger gap at 3.8 percentage points.

The data also identified 11,600 discouraged workers in Washington who had stopped looking for work because they believed no jobs were available to them, representing 30 percent of those marginally attached to the labor force.

Nationwide, 12 states had rates significantly lower than the U.S. average for all six measures of labor underutilization, while three states, including Washington, had higher rates across all measures. ■



NORTHWEST SWAG WORKS

APPAREL & PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS

Your Brand Their Hands

Make your brand a part of their everyday life with premium promotional products.

Let's create something memorable.



Call us today! **509-731-3624** NorthwestSwag.com



Military Appreciation Day



Military Appreciation Day (MAD) is an annual interactive event held at the Kitsap County Pavilion, celebrating the community's strong support for our local military members, including Active Duty, National Guard Reservists, Retirees, and their families. As the largest event of its kind in Kitsap County, MAD brings together businesses, nonprofits, and community leaders to honor and connect with those who serve.

At this year's event, County Commissioners Christine Rolfes and Katie Walters, along with Bremerton Mayor Greg Wheeler,

welcomed 1,200 attendees. Guests explored over 75 information booths featuring many of Kitsap's outstanding businesses and nonprofit organizations with deep ties to the military community. Families enjoyed a dedicated fun zone, while attendees sampled delicious offerings from local food favorites, including hot dogs, BBQ, chowder, and authentic shave ice.

Thank you to our sponsors and community partners for their participation and generosity in making this community event possible and such a success every year! ■

INFORMATION FAIR & FAMILY FUN
KITSAP COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
Military APPRECIATION DAY
SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!
Thank you to our generous Sponsors!

Five-Star ★★★★★

Four-Star ★★★★

Three-Star ★★★

Community Partners

Alzheimer's Association, American Legion Post 109, Anytime Fitness, BC Fitness, Brennan Jacobson - Ameriprise Financial, Belfair Pop, Bud Communications, Camp BowWow, Caption Call, Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue, Central Kitsap Food Bank/STEP Program, Cross The Divide, CYP, Daughters of the American Revolution, His Ohana Shave Ice, Home Instead, Illuminate Me Holistic Health & Aesthetics, Jersey Mike's Subs - Silverdale, Kettle Fish, Kitsap Aircraft Radio Control Society, Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, Kitsap County Veterans, Board, Kitsap Tennis & Athletic Center, Looking Glass Chiropractic, Marine Corp League, McCloud's Grill House, MWR, Navy Federal Credit Union, Navy League Bremerton-Olympic Peninsula, Navy Region NW Housing, Navy Region NW HR, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, NBK Fleet & Family Support Center, Permission To Start Dreaming Foundation, Pillar and Post Home Inspection, Puget Sound Navy Museum Foundation, Road to Achieve Children's Literacy, Reliable Storage, Salvation Army, SERVPRO of Kitsap County, Silverdale Senior Center, Sons of the American Revolution, Stand Up for Kids, Sub-Zero Freezers Dried Candy, Tessera, The Resort at Port Ludlow, Trimlight Kitsap/Liberty Bay Electric, Unique Experience Custom Embroidery, United Moving & Storage, US Submarine Veterans Inc. Bremerton, valueGlass, Veterans of Foreign Wars District 4, Washington Ambassador for Women in Military for America, West Sound Workforce, Western Washington University the Peninsula, West Sound Youth for Christ, Wicked Home Theater, YMCA of Pierce & Kitsap Counties

LEARN MORE AT GREATERKITSAPCHAMBER.COM

February Member of the Month: Away with Words Bookshop, Poulsbo

A Haven for Book Lovers and Community Connection.

Nestled in the heart of Historic Downtown Poulsbo, Away with Words Bookshop is more than just a place to buy books—it's a sanctuary for readers, writers, and dreamers alike. With a thoughtfully curated selection of titles, a welcoming atmosphere, and a deep commitment to fostering literary love in the community, this independent bookshop has become a cherished destination for bibliophiles of all ages.

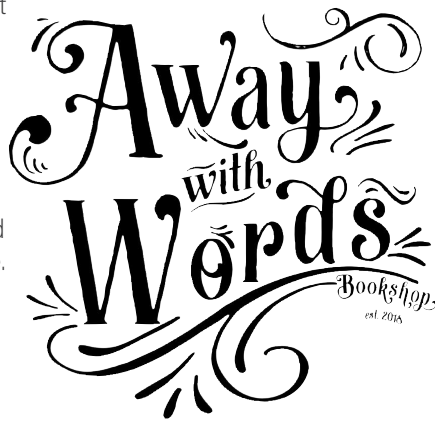
The journey of Away with Words Bookshop began with a simple yet profound love for books and the connections they create. Established with the goal of offering a diverse and inclusive selection, this independent bookstore is

dedicated to ensuring that every reader can find a story that speaks to them. Whether it's a timeless classic, an exciting new release, or a hidden gem from an indie author, the shop prides itself on providing a collection that caters to all interests and backgrounds.

Beyond selling books, Away with Words Bookshop is a space

where literature thrives in a warm, welcoming environment. From book signings to reading groups, the shop actively fosters a community of readers who share their passion for storytelling and meaningful discussions.

Relatively new members of the Greater Kitsap Chamber since January of 2024, owners Bittina and Kevin Sheen have jumped into Chamber activity showing their love for local businesses and nonprofits alike. ■



KITSAP CREDIT UNION
— 78TH ANNUAL —
Armed Forces Day
★ **FESTIVAL** ★
SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2025

*Parade Starts at 10am
in Downtown Bremerton!*

GREATER KITSAP
CHAMBER & VISITOR CENTER
GREATERKITSAPCHAMBER.COM

SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PARADE FOR FREE!



NEW in 2025!

DEEP-DIVE BUSINESS SERIES

**Cultivating Customers:
Building Business-to-Business Relationships**

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025, 2:00PM - 3:30PM
KITSAP REGIONAL LIBRARY SYLVAN BRANCH

Brought to you by the Greater Kitsap Chamber's Business & Professional Development Committee

Deep-Dive Business Series



The Greater Kitsap Chamber is expanding its Business & Professional Development offerings in 2025, bringing you even more opportunities to grow and thrive. Is this the year you take your business and professional skills to the next level?

You can—with our 4-part development series designed for those ready to go beyond the basics and dive deeper into the strategies that drive long-term success.

This series is not just another workshop—it's a deeper focused supplement to the Chamber's existing business training programs. Each session is designed to go below the surface of business development, equipping you with the insights and tools needed to sustain and scale your success.

WHAT MAKES THIS SERIES DIFFERENT?

- **In-Depth Exploration** – We'll go beyond surface-level advice to tackle the real challenges and opportunities in business growth.
- **Learn from Experience** – You'll hear from speakers that are business owners who've "done it" and will share what has worked, what hasn't, and what they've learned.
- **Real-World Application** – It's not just talk! You'll

get insights and ideas that you can implement in your business.

- **Interactive Learning** – Engage in discussions and exercises tailored to business and professional development.

CONTINUING OUR DEEP DIVE

- **Session 2 (June)** – Cultivating Customers: Building Business to Customer Relationships
Dive into how to find and attract your ideal customers, turn them into loyal brand ambassadors, and craft a compelling business story that people can't wait to share!
- **Session 3 (August)** – Thriving Locally: Strategies for Brick & Mortar Success
Discuss challenges of a brick-and-mortar business, brainstorm how to overcome those challenges, and how to seize opportunities for long-term success.
- **Session 4 (October)** – Diverse & Dynamic: Thriving as a Minority-Owned Business
Explore the realities of minority business ownership—overcoming challenges, capitalizing on opportunities, leveraging programs, and building networks for lasting success!
Events are free of charge, and open to Chamber members only. ■





New and Renewal Members for February

Growth

Best Western Plus Silverdale Beach Hotel (2019)
Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort (2001)

Main Street

Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue (2001)
Kitsap County Commissioner - Katie Walters (2023)
Olympic Village Apartments (2014)
Port Gamble - Raydient (2011)
Port Madison Enterprises (2001)
Swire Coca-Cola (2006)
The Roof Doctor (2011)

Business

American Legion John D "Bud" Hawk Post 109 (2021)
Anytime Fitness Silverdale (2025)

BECU - Silverdale (2004)
Blu Berry Frozen Yogurt (2014)
Bryant Bookkeeping (2025)
Cavalon Aesthetics at the Doctors Clinic (2005)
Congresswomen Emily Randall - Washington 6th Congressional District (2025)
Corliss Painting Inc. (2008)
Details Property Management, CRMC (2014)
Down to Earth Oracle (2023)
Edward Jones - Joseph Kochera (2017)
Fire Watch Solutions (2022)
Geico Local Office (1990)
Home Instead (2016)
Jeff Reed Insurance Agency Inc. State Farm Insurance Co. (1994)
JWJ Group (2022)
Kitsap Art Center (2022)
Kitsap County Veterans Advisory

Board (2022)
Kitsap Family Pancake House Management (1991)
Kitsap Public Facilities District (2016)
Kitsap Public Health District (2014)
Kitsap Regional Library Foundation (2021)
Kitsap WWU Small Business Development Center (2021)
Kuresman Insurance (1973)
Lost Barn Event Rentals (2025)
Lyons Painting & Design (2008)
Our GEMS (Our Girls Empowered through Mentoring and Service) (2023)
Patriot Roofing (2024)

Peninsula Community Health Services (1994)
Puget Sound Genealogical Society (2025)
Puget Sound Kidney Center (1981)
Shelton Mason County Chamber of Commerce (2004)
Shur Kleen Carwash (2015)
Silverdale Eyecare Center (1973)
Silverdale Technology (2020)
The Coffee Oasis (2001)
The Ridge an Encore Community (2024)
valueGLASS (2024)
Western Washington University on the Peninsulas (2005)
Whaling Days Festival (2004) ■

Thank you for your continuous support of the Chamber's Mission!



Discover the Charm of the French Riviera

Join Us in October 2025!

BOOK NOW FOR EXCLUSIVE GROUP SAVINGS!

- › 7 Nights at a 4-Star Hotel in Cannes
- › Explore Monaco, Monte Carlo, St. Tropez, and More
- › Early Bird Special: Only \$3,699 if deposited by March 30, 2025

this could be you!

GREATER KITSAP CHAMBER & VISITOR CENTER

CHAMBER OFF the Clock

JOIN US FOR OUR MONTHLY EVENT:

TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025 @ 5:05 PM

LOCATION: OXFORD SUITES SILVERDALE



By Kevin Campbell | Wealth Advisor & Founder of Peaks Financial
Host of Kitsap Matters Podcast

Ah, tax season. That special time of year when you either feel like a financial genius or a government donor. Most people see April 15th as a deadline, but the real winners think ahead. Paying taxes is inevitable, but overpaying? That's optional.

SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM TAX PLANNING

Many investors focus on the now, forgetting that small tax decisions today add up over time. Take capital gains, for example. Sell an investment too soon (less than a year), and you could be taxed at rates as high as 37%. Hold it longer (over a year), and you might cut that rate nearly in half.

But this isn't just about capital gains. Retirement brings its own tax curveballs. Many assume their tax rate will drop once they stop working, but Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) can push retirees into higher tax brackets. The government lets you defer taxes in a traditional IRA or 401(k), but eventually, Uncle Sam wants his cut. The key? Plan ahead.

ROTH CONVERSIONS: A LONG-TERM TAX PLAY

This is where Roth IRAs step in. Pay taxes now, and in exchange, future withdrawals are tax-free.

But how do you decide between traditional and Roth? It's about your future tax rate. If you believe taxes will be lower in retirement, a traditional IRA or 401(k) may make sense. If you expect a higher future tax rate—due to rising income or changes in tax laws—Roth contributions or conversions may be worth considering.

Not everyone is eligible to contribute directly to a Roth IRA. Contributions are subject to income limits, meaning some high earners may not qualify. Additionally, Roth IRA earnings can only be withdrawn tax-free if the account has been open for at least five years and the account holder is over age 59½. These rules make it essential to evaluate whether a Roth strategy fits within your financial plan.

Tax rates have fluctuated significantly. In the 1970s, the top federal tax rate was 70%. While no one can predict future tax policy, understanding historical trends can help. Since tax implications vary, consulting a tax professional is recommended.

Tax-Loss Harvesting: Turning Market Lemons into Lemonade

Market downturns can create tax-saving opportunities. Selling investments at a loss allows you to offset taxable gains elsewhere. Investors may also deduct up to \$3,000 per year against ordinary income.



But beware of the wash-sale rule. Buying back the same investment too soon disallows the tax benefit if the same (or substantially identical) security is repurchased within 30 days. Tax-loss harvesting should be evaluated as part of a broader financial plan.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS

Not all accounts are created equal. Where you hold investments can be just as important as what you invest in.

- **Traditional IRAs and 401(k)s:** Tax break now, taxes later.
- **Roth IRAs:** No tax break now, but tax-free withdrawals later.
- **Taxable accounts:** No upfront tax benefits, but careful tax management can keep Uncle Sam's cut to a minimum.

A smart approach? Hold growth-oriented investments in a Roth IRA, keep tax-inefficient assets (like bonds) in tax-deferred accounts, and use taxable accounts for assets benefiting from lower capital gains rates. The goal isn't just to invest well—it's to invest well and keep more of your profits.

Thinking Beyond April 15

Most people focus on taxes once a year. The financially savvy think about them year-round. In the long run, proactive planning—whether through Roth conversions, tax-efficient investing, or strategic withdrawals—can mean the difference between a comfortable retirement and an unexpected tax bill.

If all of this feels overwhelming, don't stress. Tax planning isn't about making perfect decisions—it's about making better ones. A little foresight today can mean thousands saved down the road. Consulting a financial or tax professional can help ensure your plan aligns with your goals. ■

Kevin Campbell is an Investment Advisor Representative of, and advisory services are offered through USA Financial Securities, A Registered Investment Advisor located at 6020 E. Fulton St., Ada, MI 49301. Peaks Financial is not affiliated with USA Financial Securities.

Feature

Lotta's Laundry

Takes the Load Off Bainbridge Island

This pickup-and-delivery laundry service is bringing convenience, community, and a touch of nostalgia to busy families and professionals.

By Quinn Propst

Ward Media Staff Reporter

Your laundry's worst nightmare has arrived on Bainbridge Island. Lotta's Laundry, a laundry pickup and delivery service on the island, may be your laundry's worst nightmare but she's also your weekend's best friend.

As busy professionals and parents, Lotta's founders Liz and Beau Perra know what it's like to feel buried by the endless cycle of laundry. In 2024, they launched Lotta's to give families and professionals a convenient, time-saving solution—so they can spend less time on laundry and more time on what matters most. Their pickup-and-delivery-only service is simple and seamless: customers schedule their pickup and delivery times, then leave their laundry at a designated spot. Lotta's does the rest.

The Perras continue to be amazed at how fast the company is growing. From July to February the couple has washed more than 15,000 lbs. of laundry. In February alone, they folded over 3,000 lbs. Each month they are seeing a growth rate of about 30-40%, Beau said.

As entrepreneurs and graphic designers, Liz and Beau have a keen eye for spotting business opportunities.



Husband and wife duo Liz and Beau Perra started Lotta's Laundry, a laundry pickup and delivery service on Bainbridge Island, in 2024.

"As entrepreneurs, we've been entrepreneurs for seven years, so we're always looking at different industries and businesses that are up and coming, that have a lot of potential with the economy," Liz said. "Laundry has just always been one of those things that stuck around. So with all of our business ideas, it was one that felt like a really good one to bring to Bainbridge and with our kids and with our family."

Bainbridge Island does not have a laundry mat, and while the couple thought about opening one, they decided that what they really wanted was a business that was rooted in the community that they could be a part of.

"This is our fifth business that we've opened," Beau said. "Some that have done really well. Some that have crashed or fell into space and through all that we've learned a lot that has accumulated to this business specifically."

Before starting Lotta's the Perras worked predominantly in social media management and online business coaching.

"We still do a little bit of that," he said. "We help businesses and people build their business online, build their personal brand, tell their story. At the heart of all the content is storytelling. So we're bringing people along this journey, and I think that that's a new wave."

Starting Lotta's on an island, however, came with some unexpected challenges, particularly in finding the right space with proper water and electrical access. The couple is currently considering a location that needs some TLC to become Lotta's new home.

As a bootstrapped business, Liz and Beau have been strategic about growth, avoiding unnecessary expenses and loans. Instead of taking a traditional approach, they've relied on creative problem-solving and community relationships to find solutions.

"We took a totally different approach of spending as we go, and not over extending, taking it kind of step by step," Beau said. "One of our friends had the analogy of an illuminated staircase, you take a step and when the next staircase lights up then we're like, okay, figure out what's on that staircase, and if we're gonna take another step."

"I think a big tendency with business owners is to build this big thing first," Liz said. "Once you throw \$20- \$30,000 into a business, which is pretty low end for what some restaurant costs, or some

other businesses costs, it's this immediate pressure."

"You have this immediate pressure of, like, the second your doors open, you need to make those sales, you need to make that money back and to profit and pay yourself," she said.

So with Lotta's, the couple has taken a different approach and promised each other to "bootstrap" a laundry business. They were able to take initial profits and invest in a commercial washer and dryer.

From the beginning, Liz and Beau wanted Lotta's to be more than just a laundry service—they wanted it to be part of the community.

Through their Instagram account the couple are bringing their customers and fans

along on the journey while they "bootstrap" together a laundry service business on the island.

THEY ALSO PUT A LOT OF THOUGHT INTO LOTTA'S IDENTITY.

As designers, Beau and Liz thought a lot about Lotta and her story while they were creating their business and brand. Lotta's is like your grandmother or mom who did your laundry the right way but with eco-friendly detergent, energy efficient machines and reusable bags.

Liz and Beau envisioned Lotta's as a trusted, old-school staple in the community, much like the neighborhood plumber or milkman who always showed up, did the job right, and knew everyone by name.



The Perras did a chalk campaign in local parks to help parents learn about their new laundry service on the island.

Feature

They wanted Lotta's to have a mom-and-pop feel, with their uniforms inspired by the 1960s milkman uniform.

The punchy pink of their brand is a nod to the classic laundry mishap of the red sock in the whites. But also an homage to what Lotta embodies - a no-nonsense, witty, and loveable grandma who tells it like it is.

The couple's playful, cheeky approach carries over into their social media, where they engage customers with humor and personality—while still delivering reliable service.

But at its core, Lotta's is about meeting a fundamental need: clean clothes and linens. Surprisingly, the couple has come to find laundry fun, which people think sounds crazy, Liz said.

"People are like, how is laundry fun? It's a chore that most people find annoying and time consuming, and it is," she said. "But like Beau is saying there's this weird, like the relief that we're giving people, it makes me love the job."

"The way that people are just like, 'Oh god, thank you so much,' like the sigh that they breathe," Liz said. "It sounds so cheesy, so cliché, but that's okay, truly. I mean, it's that tiny satisfaction that you don't always get in every business."

Liz and Beau prioritize the customer experience, adding thoughtful touches that make a difference. They include handwritten notes, have a seamless system for customer feedback, and even hand out treats for dogs—ensuring every member of the family feels welcome.

"At the end of the day, laundry is a very intimate thing," Beau said. "So, how do we break down the walls of understanding, like, you can give us all your laundry, even your dirty underwear."

They want people to find that trust in Lotta's, to trust them with all of their laundry.

BOTH PASSIONATE ABOUT BUILDING BUSINESSES AND HELPING PEOPLE.

Lotta's has been able to support customers during unexpected life events, such as injuries, home renovations, or surgery recovery. While some clients use their services regularly, others rely on them during times of need, which makes the Parras happy to step in and help.

Lotta's also has a donation program where customers can send in their donation items with

their laundry order and Lotta's will donate the items to Helpline House or other locally owned thrift stores.

Liz credits Lotta's fast success to strong community support. She and Beau have made it a priority to integrate into the community, joining the chamber and organizing initiatives like their chalk campaign in local parks. Seeing families engage and share their experiences has reinforced their commitment to a "community-first" business approach.

"We feel so lucky for the support we've received so early on," Liz said.

As Lotta's continues to grow, one thing remains clear: it's not just about laundry—it's about building connections, making life easier for customers, and having a little fun along the way. ■



Planning to **BUY** or **SELL** your house?

Text **"KEY"** to 360-620-6444
to open the door to your next home!



Sarah Baric

(360) 620-6444

John L. Scott Real Estate
Broker/Realtor®

John L. Scott
REAL ESTATE

SarahBaric@johnlscott.com
www.SarahBaric.johnlscott.com



Liz and Beau Perra pick up laundry for their Bainbridge Island laundry pickup and delivery service.



Only
\$750 / month

KITSAP
BUSINESS

+ **THOUGHT** +
LEADERSHIP
PROGRAM

Kitsap Business Magazine's Thought Leadership program provides your firm with a unique opportunity to create and share content with our print and digital audience of senior-level business executives from throughout Kitsap County.

A message in your words, highlighting your areas of expertise will help define you as a leading expert by sharing your knowledge and professional advice. By associating your content with a trusted, independent news source gives you added credibility as well as control of your marketing message to a group of senior executives that include both clients and qualified prospects.

Monthly article – Your thought leadership article published in Kitsap Business Magazine print edition.

E-Newsletter – Headline promoting your thought leadership article with a link to the full article appearing once a week (4x) for one month.

DIGITAL



Harmony Liebert at 360-460-5795



harmony@ward.media

Website Industry Page

Your content will be posted for one month on the "industry tab" of your choice at www.kitsapbusiness.com

Website Insights Tab

Your SEO friendly thought leadership article will appear in our "Biz Marketplace" section for a full year.

Custom PDF

You will receive a print formatted PDF of your article for your company use and promotion.

Q & A

Executive

Kevin and Bittina Sheen founded the Poulsbo Film Festival in 2022. This year, the PFF will transition into an official nonprofit organization.



Photos Courtesy of the Sheen Family

Kevin and Bittina Sheen

Meet Kevin and Bittina Sheen, the husband-and-wife team behind Away With Words bookstore and the Poulsbo Film Festival.

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Their journey together began in high school, where they shared a love for storytelling through film and theater. Years later, the two reconnected and were able to combine their backgrounds—Kevin in performing arts and film, and Bittina in journalism and communications—to create opportunities that bring people together through books, film, and community engagement.

Away With Words features books by local authors, artisan goods, and handmade bath and body products. But it is more than just a book and bath shop, it's a space that celebrates creativity and storytelling.

The Poulsbo Film Festival, which they launched in 2022, has quickly become a key event in the local arts scene. Showcasing independent films from around the world, the festival transforms Poulsbo businesses into screening venues, supporting the local economy while celebrating storytelling. As they prepare for their fourth season in 2025 and transition the festival into a nonprofit, Kevin and Bittina remain dedicated to fostering creativity and community connections through both film and literature.

Please tell our readers a little bit about yourselves.

Hi! We are Bittina and Kevin Sheen. Husband and wife business duo. So - crazy story... in the year 2022, we founded/had the idea to create the Poulsbo Film Festival, got engaged, got married, produced our first festival, and then bought a bookstore. But, going back, like WAY back, we met in high school and went to senior prom together. We actually made movies with Kevin's best friend way back then, and worked backstage on theater productions together. Our love for the arts started young and runs deep. We went our separate ways in 2004 and reconnected in 2020. During that time apart, Kevin got a degree in performing arts from The Evergreen State College, and Bittina got hers in Print Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State University. Kevin has worked a lot in film (acting and production) and Bittina worked in a wide variety of industries from bus sales to hospital administration and a lot of hospitality mixed in there as well. But, in all of these life adventures, nothing compares to the unique experience of being a "Poulsbo

person." There is really something to be said for being able to bump into multiple people you know at any establishment on any given day. On top of our businesses, we also both work as marketing consultants, and are members of Crossroads Rotary. We've got two kids, and have somehow fit volunteer coaching one season of soccer, little league, and basketball into our schedules. We consider ourselves very lucky that we love what we do and that we get to spend every day working on this dream together. Sometimes after we lock up the shop at the end of the day and walk down the street to grab dinner we look around, taking in the view, and say to each other "this is our town, where we own a freaking store, right on Front Street!"

Please tell our readers about Away With Words and the Poulsbo Film Festival.

At Away With Words we try to focus on small brands and artisans who make high-quality, sustainable goods. We love having a space to offer our customers some of our favorite things while celebrating storytelling and using the space to bring others up and create conversation around stories and pop culture! In our shop you'll find a wide assortment of books written by local authors (also signed) as well as incredible smells from soaps, lotions, scrubs, bath bombs, and shower

steamers. We tend to tell our customers to go right ahead and treat yo' self!

The Poulsbo Film Festival was started in March of 2022 when both Kevin and Bittina had confidence that a film festival could not only survive but thrive in our community. Obviously when you start something like this there is no guarantee, given the amount of layers an event like this has, but we are incredibly passionate about film, stories, artists, and our community. Three years later we've now screened over 100 independent films from all over the world in Poulsbo and we're looking forward to our 4th season which will take place October 10-12, 2025.

What inspired you to purchase Away With Words, and how has it evolved under your ownership?

Through the film festival and Bittina's volunteer work in Poulsbo, we gained so many amazing connections in the downtown area and got to know a lot of the business owners. The co-founder of Away With Words, Elise, was a friend of ours, and actually, a bridesmaid in our wedding. Around the time of the first PFF, she started talking about wanting to sell the business. Originally, it was out of reach for us, and wasn't totally on our radar, although we knew that whoever did buy it would be inheriting such a great shop (and location) - fast forward a few months and we found out that she was lowering the price. It was literally a few days before Christmas 2022 (and she was headed to Mexico a few days later) so we had to make a quick decision. We took a shot in the dark, not knowing anything about owning a bookstore - because of how deeply we believe in the business community of Downtown Poulsbo. We had great support (and still do) from both of our families, and honestly could not have made it this far without the support and love from our customers and business neighbors. We now have two solid years under our belts, and feel great about the evolution of the shop into what feels like more "our own" vibe. We are proud to carry ceramics made by Kevin's parents - who have been selling at Pike Place Market since the 1970s, and have really shifted more into our own interests while keeping the main theme of the shop the same.

How do you curate the selection of books and goods you offer in the store?

We get this question a lot. Which totally makes sense and is one of the most fun

parts of our jobs. A lot of it comes down to our own interests. Kevin tends to lurk in the dark corners with his interest in horror, the macabre, whodunnits, and general spookiness. While Bittina often keeps up with the light hearted romance and comedies, as well as contemporary dramas and the occasional non-fiction or celebrity memoir. We try to complement each other and offer a variety of titles that speak to the "something for everyone" methodology at the shop. We also pride ourselves on a fun and diverse kids section. Because we have two kids and often read to them at home, we are constantly searching for the next best kids books.

In terms of our sideline products, we lean heavily into bath and body products that often align with the book-centric tones of our shop. The edit apothecary line of lotions, bath bombs, soap, and scrubs have our book-themed names and it circles back to the treat yo' self vibe we aim for. We also happen to make all of our sugar scrubs and body lotions in house, which customers love because they get to speak with the maker of the product and support local artisans!

Local authors are overwhelmingly popular at our shop! So we always try to keep our shelves stocked with names like Julie Farley, Rachel Linden, D.D. Black, Eve Casey, Gregg Olsen, Edna Cowell Martin, Steve Sieberson, Kendare Blake, Emily Rath, Kristin Hannah, and many more.



Kevin and Bittina Sheen are pictured in front of their Poulsbo bookstore Away With Words with Bittina's brothers, and bookstore staff members, Eric and John Larson.

Other big sellers at the shop include stickers, rubber ducks, earrings, ceramics, hair clips, and pins!

What inspired you to create the Poulsbo Film Festival and how has it grown since its inception?

We saw what we thought to be a void in the Poulsbo arts scene, and wanted to bring something new and interesting to our town. Kevin ran a film festival in Shoreline for 6 years when he was working for the Shorelake Arts Council. It was such a great program of short films all made in Washington, and Bittina volunteered to help out for the last couple of years that he was doing that festival - including the pandemic year that brought a drive-in film festival which was a really unique workaround. After being out in Kitsap for a while and the Shoreline job shifting back to more in-person work, Kevin started looking for work in Poulsbo. His very last day working in Shoreline was actually the 2022 Short Short Film Festival. On the ferry back we were talking about how much we would miss doing a film festival because of all of the great memories. A couple days later, we were online filling out paperwork to start the Poulsbo Film Festival. The first year, we did everything ourselves and we were on a VERY small budget (thank you to those amazing sponsors who believed in our concept!) Since then, we have received grant money from the City of Poulsbo through lodging tax funds, which has helped tremendously. We have had a lot of sponsors come back year after year, happy with what their sponsorships help make possible.

What kind of impact do you hope the festival has on Poulsbo and the arts community?

One of our favorite parts of producing the festival in Poulsbo is being able to put money back into other local businesses. Not having a movie theater downtown, we create pop-up venues within other businesses - and we couldn't be happier seeing the festival attendees eating and drinking and supporting our neighbors and friends. We coined the phrase "storytelling in all spaces" and have had screenings in a brewery, wine bar, art gallery, and aquarium. Organizers from the West Sound Film Festival in Bremerton and Bainbridge Island Film Festival have attended the festival (and we have gone to theirs as well) - and it is

Executive Q & A

just such a fabulous community to be a part of. We have recently gotten more connected with the Olympic College Film Program, and look forward to more collaborations and opportunities there too.

Can you share a favorite moment or standout film from past festivals?

Being able to bring filmmakers who have never seen Poulsbo before- whether from New York, or California, or Connecticut, and seeing their genuine reaction to how charming our town is. Getting to share our favorite place with these folks, and see them watch their film alongside our community is priceless. We have had filmmakers say that their Poulsbo screening was their favorite to date... and these are folks who have traveled all over the US or Internationally with their films- that says a lot. 2024 was the biggest year of firsts for us. We were invited to North Bend for Austrian-American day and got to meet the filmmakers and both the Austrian and Seattle Mountain Rescue Teams that were featured in the film "The Volunteers - Mountain Rescue Brings Us Home." We also got to promote the festival on a King 5 morning news segment (which included a 3:30 AM wake up time for us!) Sadly, we recently learned of the tragic death of Seattle filmmaker Della Chen, who directed the documentary "She Marches In Chinatown" about the Seattle Chinese Community Girls Drill Team. Della attended the 2024 festival and was so inspiring. We feel so fortunate to have had the chance to screen her film and have her attend our festival.

Both of your businesses play a vital role in enriching Poulsbo's arts and culture scene. What drives your passion for fostering creativity and community through your work?

We hold the power of independent, diverse storytelling in the highest regard. Filmmaking is a form of expression that is often everlasting, something that will stick with you for a very long time. Especially if you're given the immediate opportunity to speak or listen to the filmmakers. The nice thing too is that it teaches us a wide variety of ways to be empathetic through endless characters and stories. Which we



Kevin and Bitinna Sheen, along with local author Rachel Linden, display Linden's books at Away With Words in Poulsbo.

feel is as important as ever. Not only is the festival a chance for the local community to experience this important form of art, but it gives us an opportunity to showcase our town to visitors and filmmakers from all over the country. We love how our bookshop is another avenue to celebrate storytelling - and also the opportunity that we have to sell the wares of other local artists and creatives. We pride ourselves in that 10/10 of our 2024 best selling books were written by local authors. The relationships we have created with these authors is probably one of our favorite parts of what we do. They are always so excited when we ask to order more books or host them for events- and that is really what we are about - celebrating and uplifting artists.

What advice would you give to other entrepreneurs looking to start or acquire a business in the arts and culture space?

One surprising thing that we have learned along this journey is that similar businesses are not necessarily your competition - they are a valuable resource and there are potential collaborations. We have made friends with other bookstore owners and film festival organizers and there has been nothing but great work that has come from these relationships. Also, be prepared that you will most certainly work crazy/odd hours, and you might need to keep a side gig or other job to pay the bills while you work on your passion. Meet your potential neighbors, and really plant your roots in the community you want to serve, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

What are the key lessons you've learned about running a business in a small town like Poulsbo?

Running a brick and mortar shop in Poulsbo is definitely heavily reliant on tourists. We

love seeing locals and have wonderful regulars who stop in all the time. April to September (and beyond) it is amazing to see people from literally all over the world. We have definitely learned what random things people love to buy (funny hair clips, quirky earrings, and rubber ducks being near the top of that list) One of the biggest lessons we have learned is about surviving the slow season - or as we dubbed it this year "the hustle harder season" - where we have implemented pop-ups or events to help supplement or boost the slower sales.

What's next for both Away With Words and the Poulsbo Film Festival?

For Away With Words, we are looking forward to Independent Bookstore Day on April 26th - this is a national "bookstore holiday" that is our busiest shopping day of the year and just an all around celebration of indie bookstores. We are going to be on the Seattle Indie Bookstore Day passport so we expect to see lots of folks from the other side of the water, and we will have a few authors in the shop signing books as well. We are also looking forward to some more collaborations with the amazing folks at BARN Bainbridge for some local author events they have coming up. Big news for Poulsbo Film Festival, we are almost done with the process of converting to a 501c3 non-profit - which will be the Poulsbo Film Festival Foundation (this has been a JOURNEY) and we are so excited for all that will open up for us for the potential of growth with more arts and culture grants, and being able to do more fundraising and offer greater support to student filmmakers and those just starting out. We are just wrapping up our inaugural 47.7 Hour Film Challenge project - which welcomed 9 teams of filmmakers to Poulsbo to create a short film in just 47.7 hours. It was amazing to see them all over town that weekend making their films, and we love how they all turned out.

If you could go back and give yourself one piece of advice before starting this journey, what would it be?

(Through the good and hard times) Remember to have fun and enjoy the people you meet along the way, and don't doubt yourself. Also, don't wait 10 months before categorizing all of your transactions in quickbooks. It is MUCH easier to do it as you go. ■

Changing Faces Changing Places

The following announcements highlight staff changes, changes of ownership or location, honors, awards, new board member listings, promotions, donations, and certifications. To submit information, email news@kitsapbusiness.com.

Promotions



Samantha Steining

Kitsap Bank has promoted **Samantha Steining** to Assistant Vice President, Senior Human Resources Generalist, continuing her

professional growth since joining the Port Orchard-based institution in 2020. Initially hired as a Human Resources Specialist, Steining has established herself as a valuable asset to the bank's HR team, particularly in employee relations, talent development, and operational excellence.

In her elevated position, Steining will continue leveraging her expertise in human resources management and workplace culture enhancement. Marilyn Hoppen, SVP and Human Resources Director, commended the promotion, highlighting Steining's "expertise, professionalism, and commitment to employee success" that have made her "a trusted resource within the Bank."

Steining brings strong credentials to her role, including a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Washington Tacoma and the prestigious SHRM-CP certification from the Society for Human Resources Management, validating her proficiency in contemporary HR practices and effective people management strategies.



Lillian Xie

Kitsap Community Foundation has appointed **Lillian Xie** as Director, Grants & Special Initiatives, adding a new chapter

to her professional journey with the organization.

In her role, Xie oversees multiple key areas of the Foundation's

operations, including serving KCF fundholders in their philanthropic support of local nonprofit organizations. Her responsibilities extend to producing the annual Kitsap Great Give fundraising event, which connects donors with community causes.

Additionally, Xie manages both the Foundation's annual grant selection process and scholarship programs, ensuring effective distribution of resources throughout the community. Her appointment reinforces KCF's commitment to strengthening the connection between donors and the nonprofit sector in Kitsap County.



Linda Pawson

Poulsbo Historical Society has appointed **Linda Pawson** as its first Executive Director, marking a key development for the 501(c)3

non-profit organization.

With an MBA from the University of Washington's Foster School of Business, Pawson brings a wealth of experience from her work at Microsoft, leadership roles in area museums, and consulting for businesses and nonprofits. As a Keyport native and 1980 North Kitsap High School graduate, she offers valuable local perspective to her new leadership position.

Made possible through funding from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, Pawson's role will focus on deepening community outreach, expanding museum staff development, and establishing pathways for economic growth.

Board President Patty Henderson described the appointment as "a sea change for PHS," which has traditionally operated with volunteers and now gains enhanced capacity to serve the community through its three museums, including the Maritime

Museum and Heritage Museum on Front Street.



Bentley Simpson

Kitsap Bank has elevated **Bentley Simpson** to Senior Vice President, Controller, building on his impactful seven-year tenure with the Port Orchard-based

financial institution. Since joining in 2018, Simpson has established himself as a vital leader in the bank's finance department, bringing valuable expertise from his previous role as a CPA/Audit Manager.

In his expanded position, Simpson will continue guiding the bank's financial strategy and operations. Alan Crain, EVP and Chief Financial Officer, praised Simpson's promotion, describing him as "a highly skilled financial leader with a deep understanding of the banking industry" whose "expertise and leadership have been invaluable to Kitsap Bank."

Simpson brings impressive credentials to his role, including certification as a Public Accountant, a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from the University of Washington Tacoma, and specialized banking education through the Washington Bankers Association's Executive Development Program. Most recently, he completed the prestigious Pacific Coast Banking School program at the University of Washington, further enhancing his qualifications as a banking industry leader.

On Top

Red Banner Team has achieved the #3 ranking among individual teams in the Keller Williams Northwest Region for 2024, marking a notable milestone for the organization founded and led by **Peter Bradrick**. This recognition spans four states—Washington,

Oregon, Idaho, and Alaska—and acknowledges the team's outstanding performance in both units closed and volume closed throughout the year. Bradrick expressed profound gratitude for this accomplishment, crediting the trust of valued clients and the dedication of his team members for the firm's continued success. This achievement stands out within Keller Williams Realty, which maintains its position as the world's largest residential real estate company, highlighting the impact of Red Banner Team's regional standing in this competitive industry.



KettleFish has captured the "Best Chowder" award at the recent Green Gig Chowder Social in Gig Harbor, showcasing the restaurant's commitment to small-batch craftsmanship at its Silverdale location.

The February event served dual purposes as both a culinary competition and community fundraiser, with proceeds benefiting the Curious by Nature School operated by the Greater Gig Harbor Foundation. These funds directly support nature-based early childhood education through the Stewards Scholarship Fund, providing tuition assistance to local families.

Owner Dave Montoure expressed gratitude to event participants and voters while highlighting KettleFish's dedication to fresh, local ingredients and sustainable practices. The restaurant views this

recognition as an opportunity to further its community involvement while maintaining its commitment to culinary excellence, reinforcing its connection to both the Silverdale and Gig Harbor communities.

2024 *Heart of Quality* Winner

United Moving & Storage has earned the distinguished Heart of Quality Award through the exceptional service of move coordinator Ashley Altenbern, recognizing excellence among a network of over 500 United Van Lines agencies.

This honor acknowledges move coordinators who achieve above-average scores in customer satisfaction while maintaining continuous employment for at least 10 months of the calendar year and receiving either a minimum of 30 returned surveys or a 20% response rate based on shipments handled.

The award evaluation weighs several critical performance metrics: 50% for overall coordination rating, 25% for availability during moves, 20% for keeping customers informed with timely follow-ups, and 5% for detail coordination.

Created to celebrate excellence among move coordinators who serve as key customer contacts, this recognition highlights the critical role these professionals play in informing, advocating for, and consulting with clients throughout the relocation process.

Altenbern's achievement reinforces United Moving & Storage's mission of providing stress-free, reliable moving solutions while creating emotional connections with customers during challenging transitions, ultimately fostering increased satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations.

Northwoods Lodge has earned the distinction of becoming the first skilled nursing facility in Kitsap County to receive heart failure

certification from the American Heart Failure Association.

The 57-bed skilled nursing facility, which serves as a premier rehabilitation center in the region, completed a rigorous yearlong certification process that included comprehensive data collection, clinical system improvements, peer-reviewed data evaluation, and a board presentation to secure this national recognition.

This certification establishes a framework for facility assessment based on the American Heart Association's scientific guidelines for heart failure care, validating Northwoods Lodge's adherence to industry standards with a particular focus on program management, patient education, care coordination, and clinical management protocols.

The achievement reinforces the facility's commitment to providing elevated care that prioritizes improved patient outcomes and facilitates smooth transitions from facility to community, ultimately enabling Northwoods Lodge to serve Kitsap residents according to the highest industry standards.



United Moving & Storage has received the prestigious Centers of Excellence Award from United Van Lines, earning a five-star rating in all evaluation criteria among a network of 600 eligible agents.

The recognition, determined by "Total Stars Awarded" on the Centers Metrics and Transport Solutions Results scorecard, acknowledges the company's superior performance in container shipment services and customer satisfaction metrics. This distinction measures

excellence across multiple service dimensions including customer willingness to recommend, adequate communication, on-time arrival and delivery, and cargo claims frequency.

The award reflects the daily commitment of every team member who ensures quality service on each job, showcasing the company's dedication to providing stress-free, reliable moving solutions. By delivering exceptional service with professionalism and integrity, United Moving & Storage creates strong emotional connections with customers during stressful relocations, fostering increased satisfaction, loyalty, and word-of-mouth recommendations.

This customer-focused approach aligns perfectly with the company's mission of handling belongings with the utmost safety and respect while enabling clients to focus on beginning their next chapter.

Local Briefs

Kitsap Bank has launched a new Interactive Teller Service (ITS) machine in downtown Poulsbo, strategically positioned next to the Marina Market on Front Street. This latest addition to the Port Orchard-based financial institution's service network advances their commitment to providing flexible banking solutions

throughout Western Washington.

The state-of-the-art ITS technology combines traditional ATM functionality with live video access to Kitsap Bank tellers, enabling customers to conduct complex transactions and receive personalized assistance beyond standard banking hours. Charles Robertson, EVP and Chief Retail Officer, emphasized that this innovation aligns with the bank's mission to deliver "innovative and accessible banking solutions that meet the evolving needs of our clients," allowing customers to "bank on their own schedule while still receiving the personal service they expect."

In addition to expanding their banking footprint, Kitsap Bank has demonstrated community commitment by installing a publicly accessible Automated External Defibrillator (AED) at the new ITS location. This life-saving device, provided through collaboration with the Poulsbo Rotary Club, enhances public safety infrastructure in the downtown area.

Olympic College has introduced a new "Electrical Theory: Direct Current Basics" course through its Continuing Education program, developed in partnership with Kitsap Transit. The 10-week curriculum delivers essential



knowledge of direct current electricity fundamentals, particularly relevant for individuals pursuing careers in electric vehicle maintenance and related technical fields.

Classes will be held at Kitsap Transit's facility, creating a practical learning environment for students. The program begins April 10, 2025, with a tuition cost of \$750, making specialized technical education accessible to community members.

Wendy Fox, Interim Dean of Workforce and Economic Development at Olympic College, highlighted the program's workforce development focus, noting it "provides crucial training for in-demand jobs in our community." This sentiment was echoed by Dennis Griffey, Maintenance Director at Kitsap Transit, who emphasized that "quality training" is essential to their service excellence, adding that the partnership "gives our employees world class instruction."

Graduates will gain comprehensive understanding of DC electrical

principles, positioning them for advanced training and potential employment opportunities at organizations like Kitsap Transit.

Violett has established their new office at Vibe Coworks, marking an exciting addition to the collaborative workspace community. The air quality technology company has relocated to Poulsbo from Gig Harbor. Led by Founder and CTO Branden Doyle alongside newly appointed CEO Michael Kurtzman, a Bainbridge Island resident, Violett brings their pioneering approach to creating healthier indoor environments.

In their new Vibe location, the Violett team will continue developing advanced solutions that address airborne pollutants in critical shared spaces including workplaces, healthcare settings, educational facilities, and other indoor environments. Their technology aims to set a new global benchmark for indoor air quality standards

Peaks Financial has reached the 15-year milestone in its journey of guiding individuals and families toward financial freedom through its distinctive "Sail FORMula" methodology.

Throughout its history, the firm has maintained unwavering focus on core service areas including wealth management, retirement income planning, tax minimization, and private market investment strategies, all designed to help clients navigate financial challenges with assurance.

The company has broadened its educational outreach through multiple channels, including the "Kitsap Matters" podcast and the forthcoming book "Fearless: Charting Your Course to Financial Freedom" authored by Kevin Campbell. This expansion reflects Peaks Financial's ongoing dedication to promoting financial literacy and client empowerment.

As the company commemorates this anniversary, it reaffirms its commitment to providing the expert guidance and tailored solutions that

enable clients to achieve lasting financial success.

Kitsap Executive Association has built a membership of 24 business leaders since its 2024 launch, establishing a distinctive model where each participant represents a unique business category.

This exclusive approach ensures members receive dedicated attention in their professional field without competing against fellow association participants, creating an environment where business opportunities flow directly to the sole representative of each industry classification.

By assembling executives from various sectors, KEA has created a platform that drives economic development throughout Kitsap County through relationship-based networking and mutual business support. The organization continues to strengthen the local business community through this carefully structured approach to professional collaboration and opportunity sharing. ■



The Latitude 48 Group

Ameriprise Private Wealth Advisory Practice

Let me help navigate you and your family through life's changing seas!



Now more than ever, you need sound advice and strong support to help keep your financial life on track. Ameriprise Financial has been working alongside clients to do just that for 130 years.

I'm here to guide you with developing market updates, investment recommendations and personalized advice to help keep you focused on what matters most to you.

Contact me for a complimentary consultation

www.TheLatitude48Group@ampf.com • (360) 297-4848

The Latitude 48 Group

A private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC

The initial consultation provides an overview of financial planning concepts. You will not receive written analysis and/or recommendations. The Compass is a trademark of Ameriprise Financial, Inc. Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Member FINRA and SIPC. © 2025 Ameriprise Financial, Inc. All rights reserved.



Discover a Vast Array of Styles!

ARNOLD'S
HOME FURNISHINGS

3520 Kitsap Way, Bremerton, WA 98312 • (360) 377-5582
www.arnoldshomefurnishings.com

The Social Media Trap

Why Your Business Needs More Than Just Followers.

By Amy Yaley | COO of Ward Media

Many small and medium-sized businesses believe that social media is the primary marketing tool they should focus on. The common misconception is that having a strong follower base means their posts will be seen by most of their audience. However, the reality is that platforms like Facebook and Instagram are designed to prioritize paid content over organic posts.

For brick-and-mortar businesses, this means that simply posting on social media isn't enough to drive foot traffic. Instead, businesses need to invest in a broader digital marketing strategy, including programmatic geofencing, which provides measurable results.

THE DECLINE OF ORGANIC REACH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms frequently update their algorithms, making it harder for businesses to reach their audience without paid promotions. Recent data shows just how limited organic reach has become:

- **Facebook:** According to Social Insider, as of 2024, the average organic reach for a Facebook post is approximately 2.6% of a page's followers.
- **Instagram:** The average organic reach rate on Instagram is now 4.0%, better than Facebook, but still reflecting a year-over-year decrease of 18%.

This means that even if a business has 10,000 followers, and an average organic reach of 1.37%, you could expect to reach 137 people for each post. For each 137 people, you can estimate an engagement rate of 0.2%. Math on that works out to 0.27 engagements per post. This means you will receive, on average, one engagement for every four posts. With these declining numbers, businesses that rely on organic

reach alone are missing out on potential customers and spending money on resources on creating content.

THE PAY-TO-PLAY REALITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms are now heavily monetized, meaning that businesses must invest in paid advertising to see significant results. Some of the challenges include:

- **Rising Costs:** The cost of Facebook and Instagram ads continues to increase, making it more expensive for small businesses to compete.
- **Unpredictable ROI:** Algorithm changes and audience behavior shifts make it difficult to guarantee ad performance.
- **Engagement doesn't equal Sales:** A post may receive likes and comments but may not necessarily translate into foot traffic or sales.

For brick-and-mortar businesses, engagement alone isn't enough (thumbs and hearts don't pay the bills). Marketing strategies that directly impact customer visits and purchases are needed.

THE POWER OF PROGRAMMATIC GEOFENCING FOR BRICK-AND-MORTAR BUSINESSES

One effective alternative to traditional social media marketing is programmatic geofencing, a digital advertising tactic that uses location-based data history to target potential customers.

WHAT IS GEOFENCING?

- Uses GPS and mobile location data, from our phones, to serve ads to potential customers in a specific geographic area, such as an event or other places of business.
- Tracks foot traffic, showing how many ad viewers actually visit a store.

WHY IT'S MORE EFFECTIVE THAN ORGANIC SOCIAL MEDIA?

- Targets **high-intent** customers (people who are nearby and likely to visit, people

who have visited your competitor or an event).

- Provides measurable results, tracking store visits instead of just clicks and impressions.
- Offers detailed analytics, allowing businesses to optimize their campaigns. Instead of hoping a social media post (or four) reaches the right audience, programmatic geofencing ensures that ads are placed in front of potential customers at the right time and place.

A SMARTER MARKETING STRATEGY: DIVERSIFICATION IS KEY

Relying solely on organic social media marketing is no longer a viable strategy. Businesses should diversify their efforts by incorporating:

- Programmatic geofencing ads to drive in-store visits.
- Email marketing to engage and retain customers.
- Print and digital advertising to increase brand credibility.
- Search engine marketing (SEM) to capture high-intent searches.

Social media can be a valuable tool, but it should not be the foundation of a business's marketing strategy. With organic reach shrinking and paid advertising becoming increasingly costly, businesses must explore other digital tactics that provide measurable results. Programmatic geofencing, combined with a diversified marketing approach, offers a more effective way to drive real-world traffic and sales.

The key to modern marketing success isn't about accumulating followers - it's about reaching the right customers through the right channels at the right time. By understanding this shift and adjusting your strategy accordingly, you can build a more effective and sustainable marketing approach for your business. ■

Amy Yaley is the COO of Ward Media and the co-owner of Northwest Swag Works. She can be reached at amy@ward.media.



INVEST IN YOUR *Business*


South Kitsap
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Join the South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce!



Promotion



Visibility



Credibility



Advocacy



Networking

Why join?

A Chamber membership is an affordable and high-impact way to strengthen your business, make connections, and influence the future of our local economy. With memberships starting at just \$229 per year, there's no better time to get involved.

When you join the South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce, you're not just signing up for a membership—you're becoming part of a dynamic business community that's dedicated to your success.

MEMBERSHIPS STARTING AT

\$229 / YEAR

**Chamber memberships are
designed to help your business
grow, connect, and thrive in
South Kitsap and beyond.**

To join call (360) 876-3505 or email Cody@PortOrchard.com



Growing Local Businesses for Over a Century

We're here for you! Our business banking team can help you find the right solutions to help you grow your business and make it easy for your customers to do business with you.

Family-Owned. As a multi-generational, women-owned family company, we understand the unique needs of independent and family-owned businesses.

Local Decisions. The Pacific Northwest has been our home for 116 years. Decisions are made locally by people who understand our region.

Here for the Long-Term. Safe, stable, secure - serving generations of Greater Puget Sound businesses.

Learn more at kitsapbank.com/business.



kitsapbank.com

