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June 2025

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Reading at the Red House members gather for a night of lively conversation, shared stories, and a thoughtfully prepared meal around the table.

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Cover Photo Credit: Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

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The Red House Chronicles

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Powered by Passion

How the Kitsap History Museum Innovates on a Shoestring

The Kitsap History Museum in downtown Bremerton is more than just a quiet archive of dusty artifacts. It's a place where the past is constantly being rediscovered and retold — especially the stories that haven't always been heard.

"We focus on local history," said Lisa Hope, Director of Marketing and Development. "Everything we preserve or collect must have a connection to Kitsap County."

But the museum's mission goes beyond preservation. It's about connecting people to their community through its stories.

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Legacy in Action

For **WARD**
THINKING

Welcome to the June edition of Kitsap Business, where we spotlight the power of purposeful leadership, the courage of community builders, and the quiet strength of those who choose to lead with intention, compassion, and conviction.

In this issue, you'll read about businesses and organizations whose success is measured not just in profits, but in the depth of their impact.

Start with the Marvin Williams Recreation Center in Bremerton, a place that stands as a living tribute to one man's vision and a community's resilience. What began as Bishop Lawrence Robertson's mission to restore a much-needed gathering place on the city's west side has become a beacon for health, youth programs, and cultural belonging. After his passing, Dr. Lillian Lockett Robertson took up the mantle—not just preserving his legacy but expanding it in ways that continue to shape lives every day.

We also bring you the story of Jessica Young and The Red House Chronicles, where the idea of disagreeing without division is not just possible—it's practiced. Through curated book clubs and dialogue-rich dinners, Young is helping foster the kind of community connection so often lost in today's polarized world. She's doing it one conversation, one meal, and one banned book at a time.

In Port Orchard, a pair of veterinary professionals saw a simple gap—pet owners unable to find the products their animals truly needed—and turned that into Willow Treats, a store grounded in wellness and trust. Their story is a reminder that great businesses often start with the question, "How can we help more people—(or in this case, pets)?"

And in Bremerton, the Kitsap History Museum continues to stretch every dollar—and every idea—to keep Kitsap's stories alive. From digitizing photo archives to highlighting underrepresented histories, their work reminds us that small institutions can



have powerful influence when guided by mission and fueled by passion.

Finally, we look to the future through the lens of succession at Watson Furniture Group in Poulsbo. Clif and CK McKenzie's father-son transition story isn't just about handing off a business—it's about stewarding values, principles, and people. Their 5-4-3-2-1 strategy offers a rare model of humility and responsibility that many in business leadership would do well to study.

Each of these stories reveals something essential about the businesses that thrive

here in Kitsap: they succeed because they are rooted in service. Service to neighbors, to culture, to history, and to the generations still to come.

Thank you for reading—and for being part of a business community that understands leadership isn't just about looking forward. It's also about honoring where we've been and choosing to leave something better behind. ■

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The Marvin Williams Recreation Center in West Bremerton serves as a vibrant community hub, offering programs, events, and resources for all ages.

The Business of Belonging

Bremerton's Marvin Williams Center Grows from Vision to Vital Institution

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

The Marvin Williams Recreation Center is more than just a community center – it's a living legacy of love, leadership, and cultural connection.

Built with the vision of the late Bishop Lawrence Robertson and sustained by his wife, Dr. Lillian Lockett Robertson, the center has become a vital “third place” for the Bremerton community—a space for gathering, learning, healing, and celebration.

Originally from Houston, Dr. Robertson, an OB-GYN who now practices in Tacoma, came to Washington in 2012 for a women's health and wellness retreat. It was there she met her husband, Bishop Robertson, a native

Texan who had moved to Bremerton for military service.

Bishop Robertson was a pastor at the Emanuel Apostolic in Bremerton and an influential community leader. He was also on the board of the Bremerton Housing Authority. About 20 years ago the Bremerton Community Center was torn down much to Bishop Robertson's disappointment. He voted against its demolition but the city ended up tearing it down because they felt like they could build another one but it never happened.

“He just felt like it was his assignment to build one because he had a large congregation, was a leader in the



Dr. Lillian Lockett Robertson stands beside a portrait of her late husband, Bishop Lawrence Robertson, whose vision and leadership inspired the creation of the Marvin Williams Recreation Center.



This spring the center hosted local school children for a field trip to learn about health careers.

community, and just knew that the community needed the place to grow and thrive and gather," she said.

In 2018, that vision came to life with the opening of the Marvin Williams Recreation Center, named for Bremerton High School basketball standout Marvin Williams. Williams went on to win an NCAA Championship with the University of North Carolina and enjoyed a 17-year NBA career. As a child, Williams struggled to find local courts to play on in the summer—often having to travel to Bainbridge Island or Poulsbo.

So the two teamed up to help make the center a reality.

"The purpose of the center was to be a third place, not to be home, not school, not work, not church, but that place where the community comes together to grow," she said.

It was important to Bishop Robertson to build the center in West Bremerton because there was not a gathering place there after the community center was demolished.

"The Puget Sound shipyard is there, but there's no place for people to gather and learn and grow and participate in programs and services for folks that are in need, people

who are at risk and need those opportunities to feel like they're part of the community," she said.

"Our goal is to be a hub for wellness, for education, with our after school programs, with our STEM Academy, a place for kids to come and play basketball, do their homework, and be mentored," she said. "That's why the center was necessary."

"We needed a hub," she said. "We need a gathering space for people to connect and really grow together and be a community together."

Sadly, Bishop Robertson died just 18 months after the center opened. In the wake of his passing, the board and community encouraged Dr. Robertson to take the helm and carry on her husband's dream. So she stepped up and has been running the facility ever since, continuing the mission they believed in for the community.

Today, the Marvin Williams Center is thriving. They host an annual fundraising gala every August and take part in Kitsap Great Give. She handles much of the grant writing and has built partnerships with groups like Delta Dental, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, the Northwest Family Medicine Residency Program, Kitsap

Strong, and more. She also serves on the Olympic College Foundation board to stay connected locally.

"We serve the historically marginalized community that may not be able to get to the YMCA," Dr. Robertson said. "They don't have a membership at a country club, but would come to the center to do arts and crafts, participate in STEM programs, play basketball and participate in mentorship programs."

Adults, meanwhile, can take advantage of free classes on diabetes and hypertension management, cooking and nutrition, and general wellness. The center has also trained community health workers to run support groups and help residents make lasting lifestyle changes.

"We're working on building a healthier community, healing the community through support groups, through education about hypertension, diabetes, through exercise, line dancing, chair volleyball, and cooking classes," she said.

For Robertson, one of the most rewarding parts of running the center is seeing young people thrive. The center's STEM Academy, which is led by a

bioengineering major from the University of North Carolina, recently took 12 students to a regional STEM competition. Last year, the team competed for the first time and took first place in underwater robotics.

Another thing that excites Robertson is seeing people take control of their health. She finds it incredibly rewarding when community members lower their blood pressure, understand their medications better, and learn to advocate for themselves. Moments like someone realizing they need to stay healthy to be around for their grandkids—those "lightbulb" moments—bring her real joy and make the work feel truly worthwhile.

In April, the center hosted about 250 local students on a field trip, giving them a hands-on look at careers in healthcare. Through stations on pharmacy tech, physical therapy, nursing, EMT, surgical tech, and more, students learned about job opportunities in the medical field. The event was in partnership with Olympic College and Virginia Mason Franciscan Health.

During COVID, the center hosted vaccine clinics with



The center offers a plethora of youth classes and activities, including learning to sew.



Kids get creative with clay during an arts and crafts activity at the Marvin Williams Recreation Center.



The center offers a variety of adult classes, including nutrition education, chronic disease management, and group exercise programs.

a focus on reaching people who were hesitant or didn't trust the vaccine. They created a welcoming space where community members could hear from physicians who looked like them, ask questions, and feel comfortable. Nursing students from Olympic College gave the shots, Kitsap Public Health provided the vaccines, and there were Q&As and even entertainment to help ease fears. The effort was a success, thanks to partnerships with Olympic College, United Way, Kitsap Community Foundation, and others.

"It's a way to bring the community together," she said. "It's a way for everybody to feel like they belong and have a place where their cultures can be expressed unashamedly and their cultures can be expressed where they live and work and play. And so it's just a great opportunity."

Some of the future goals Robertson has for the center are to add more programming for seniors and to help them feel like a part of the community as well.

In addition to its programs, the center serves as a community event space, hosting everything from weddings and birthday parties to comedy shows, wrestling matches, the Bremerton Symphony, and more. It's become a true hub for the

community—and that's the work they continue every day.

The center offers custom event experiences thanks to an in-house designer who can decorate for birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, and more. Unlike traditional venues, the center allows people to bring in their own food and use the industrial kitchen—something especially meaningful for people who want to have the traditional dishes from their culture.

"Their music, their foods that they love, their celebration matters to them because they can express themselves in this community center," she said. "Their cultural expression is allowed there and I think that's a beautiful thing."

Robertson hopes that everyone who walks through the doors of the Marvin Williams Recreation Center feels a sense of calm, peace, and belonging. That welcoming atmosphere, she believes, is a reflection of her late husband's vision and values.

"He had such a passion and heart for the community, and he was so influential," she said. "He was a pastor for about 45 years locally in the community, and his spirit and his concern for the wellbeing of the community is really what I think people feel when they come into the building. It was just his passion, his heartbeat, his desire for



people to grow, learn, the betterment of people was so palpable, and that's the spirit that has caught on into the center."

She believes that sense of welcome also comes through in the way the staff shows up for the community.

"It remains in us through the customer service we provide, and that's how we embody that,"

she said. "It is people having a great experience when they come great customer service, we try to be very accommodating to folks with special needs, special needs for decorating, weddings, special needs for birthday parties, special needs for their banquets, and that spirit of unity and community comes through through our customer service." ■

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Feature

The Red House Chronicles

How Jessica Young Turned Her Passion for Dialogue into a Purpose-Driven Venture

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Near Poulsbo at the Red House, nestled among the trees and lush gardens cultivated over two decades, Jessica Young is bringing people together around the table one meal, one book and one discussion at a time.

Her venture, The Red House Chronicles, is not your typical business. It's a carefully crafted space where literature becomes a bridge between people of different backgrounds, beliefs, and perspectives.

Young and her husband, who also run a local plumbing business, purchased the Red House property in 2003 when they were expecting their first child. At the time, it was densely wooded, undeveloped land. Over the years, with help from friends and family, they cleared space, planted gardens, and built first a garage apartment, then the home they live in today.

After more than two decades of care, the property has become a warm and welcoming haven—an extension of Young's mission to create space for reflection, connection, and meaningful dialogue.

Young launched Reading at the Red House about two years ago, after completing an eight-year journey toward a master's degree in Theology.



Jessica Young started the Red House Chronicles in 2023 as a way to connect people through literature and food.



"As I came to the end (of the program), I was thinking about how am I going to use this, what am I going to do with this," she said. "I started to just think about who I am and what I want to do."

She brainstormed with friends and worked with a coach to think about her life priorities and goals.

What came up was her love of community and discussions that can bring people together who might not see the world in the same way.

"I started to realize what some of my life priorities and goals are," she said. "A couple of those are community and the ideas of round table discussions and bringing people together from different avenues and different religious backgrounds and political backgrounds and whatever, but to bring them all to the same table to talk about topics even when they disagree, and really fostering that idea of community around topics that we all disagree on."

Bringing people together who might disagree for discussions was one of the biggest takeaways from her masters program. The program brought together people from different denominations to learn together.

"There were many different denominations, and I loved that we could all sit in the same classroom, learning the same things, all coming from different backgrounds, and we could do it in a cordial, respectable way, and it almost made us respect each other more, learning where we come from and what we believe in," she said.

Young also loves literature and how it can bring people together to discuss topics and ideas that may be controversial or difficult.

"Using the book as the go between allows us to talk about things that two people who think very differently from one another may not just start talking about an issue together, but if they have a piece of literature or a book, kind of in between them, they can talk about it in reference of the book, and it allows them to break down certain ideas," she said.

Community is something that is very important to Young and when she began to think about creating the Red House Chronicles she thought about all the divisiveness that was going on at the time.

"There is so much divisiveness in our world, and people coming up with reasons



Young's book club Reading at the Red House kicks off every September with a garden party dinner where Young announces the books for the series.

why we can't talk to certain people, or we can't be involved in certain things, or we can't shop at certain stores, all this stuff that we can't do because somebody thinks differently than us," she said.

"There wasn't really anything saying, 'hey, what if we gather with people we disagree with,' she said. 'What if we commune and eat a meal around a table and talk with people that we disagree with?'"

Young hosts book clubs, retreats and events at her home near Poulsbo.



She noticed that everything was encouraging more separation, more animosity and disagreement.

"I just really wanted to do my little part to try and get rid of that and not encourage it," she said. "To me, community is how you do that, bringing people together around food and drink and music and books. I just want to be a piece of that, even though a small piece."

So in 2023 Young's membership book club Reading at the Red House was born.

Reading at the Red House offers a fresh and inviting take on the traditional book club experience. Designed as a membership-based series, it brings together a consistent group of women throughout the year for meaningful conversations, community building, and shared meals in a welcoming setting.

The season begins each September with a garden party dinner at host Jessica Young's home, where the year's curated book selections are announced. From October through early summer, members gather approximately every six weeks to discuss one of the six chosen books. The gatherings are more than just meetings—they're carefully crafted events featuring custom cocktails, seasonal appetizers, a three- to four-course meal, and dessert, all made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Many of the dinners take place outdoors in Young's thoughtfully cultivated gardens.

Membership includes all six books (which are mailed to each participant), the themed dinners, a swag bag, and special discounts through partnerships with local bookstores. The club pauses during the holiday season and summer months to respect members' busy schedules.

What makes Reading at the Red House unique is its focus on fostering authentic connection. Young intentionally creates a safe, inclusive space where women—many of whom may come from different backgrounds or perspectives—feel comfortable engaging in thoughtful, and sometimes difficult, conversations. The book serves as a starting point, allowing members to explore a range of topics through shared reading and respectful dialogue.

Due to the popularity of Reading at the Red House, spots fill quickly each year and often result in a waitlist. To offer a more accessible option, Young launched the Banned Books gathering—a monthly dinner and discussion group that doesn't require

a long-term membership. Like the original club, it includes a shared meal and drinks, but with added flexibility for those who want to participate without a season-long commitment.

Young has always been passionate about creating a space for people who think differently to come together, and she found that banned books aligned perfectly with that goal.

The Red House Chronicles also offers a Storyteller Retreat for women. The day-long retreat offers a relaxed space for participants to reflect on how stories connect to their own experiences. Using simple writing exercises, thoughtful discussion, and grounding activities, the retreat encourages deeper engagement with both the books being read and the personal stories participants bring with them.

It's a chance to enjoy quiet reflection, connect with others, and explore storytelling in a meaningful but approachable way.

In 2024 Young had the opportunity to work with Cider Press Lane to host a Freedom Dinner. The dinner is like a potluck in the sense that everything is donated by the community from the food to the decor. It is a lovely garden party dinner, Young said.

All the proceeds from the ticket sales go to support Atlas Free, which is a nonprofit organization that fights human trafficking.

The dinner was a huge success and Young plans to host one every year at the Red House.

"That follows my idea of bringing people together, all different kinds of people from all different places, building community with one another, all to the benefit of, this organization," she said. "But also just learning that we all have common desires, wants, hopes, wishes, you know, even though we're all very different people."

In September, Young is launching a new type of membership for a five event series that looks at the work of C.S. Lewis. The series will include a selection of the author's work and will be different from other book clubs that she hosts in that it will be open to men as well.

Young views the new group as another opportunity to build community.

"I really love the idea that we all have so much to learn from one another, and the more we subject ourselves to other people and people that grew up different than us, or live lives that are different than us, we just become more well rounded people." ■





Amanda Smith and Angela Williams used their decades of experience in veterinary medicine to create a space where pet owners can find trusted solutions for common issues.

Prescription for Success

How Two Veterinary Pros Launched a Purpose Driven Pet Store

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Colorful dog toys line the shelves at Willow Treats, where every item is carefully selected with pets' health, safety, and enrichment in mind.



Willow Treats, a pet store in Port Orchard, isn't your average pet shop – it's a health-first haven where every product is handpicked by a veterinarian with your pet's wellness in mind.

Opened in 2023 by veterinarian Dr. Amanda Smith and longtime animal hospital practice manager Angela Williams, Willow Treats was born out of a simple but persistent problem: the vet-recommended products they advised clients to use were often hard to find locally.

With decades of experience in veterinary medicine, Smith and Williams created a space where pet owners can find trusted solutions for common issues – from anxiety and mobility challenges to dietary needs and behavior support.

"Our main goal was to try and provide a resource for a

lot of the things that I found we were talking about with families in the exam room as potential solutions for whatever issues they were having, but (products that) weren't readily available," Smith said.

"We were finding that we were commonly sending people to various different websites, to try and look for things because they just weren't stocked in our community," she said.

They opened the store to offer those products they felt the community needed—everyday pet items like food and treats, but with a special focus on unique, vet-recommended products that help with specific issues like behavior or comfort.

An example of solution based products they carry are products that help with mobility challenges that aging dogs often struggle with. One such product

is called a help 'em up harness, which has a handle that owners can use to help their dog up. They also carry Dr. Busby's toe grips, which are a silicon band that you can put on the dog's nails to improve their traction.

"So as they're getting weaker, they may have a harder time on slick floors, but this helps them to kind of grip the floor a little bit better, so that they can move better on those floors," Smith said.

One common behavior issue they see in cats is inappropriate urination. To help address it, they offer a range of targeted products—like various litter box styles and litter attractants designed to encourage cats to start using the box again.

"I choose to put things into the store through the lens of, do I think that this is truly a healthy and safe option for this animal," Smith said.

There are products that Smith and Williams will not stock because they are not a safe or good choice for pets. People will still come in and ask for those items and they may choose to purchase them elsewhere, but they don't want to sell something and later have to treat a pet for an issue caused by that very product.

Smith and Williams have known each other for years. They first worked together as assistants at an emergency clinic in Poulsbo, then reconnected later after Smith returned from vet school and they ended up working at the same practice.

Smith opened her practice Willow Tree Animal Hospital in 2020, with Williams involved from the very beginning, helping plan and shape it from the ground up.

Willow Tree Animal Hospital is a fear free practice, which means that they consider the emotional wellbeing of an animal as equally important to their physical wellbeing.

"There are lots of things that we end up talking with folks about in terms of how to manage problem behaviors, or how to help their dog feel more comfortable in different situations, or manage anxiety concerns, because lots of dogs have anxiety concerns coming out of COVID where everybody was really home bound and they didn't maybe get as much socialization as they otherwise would have," Smith said.

The main motivation was to make helpful products—like supplements or calming tools—more accessible, since those options weren't easy to find locally.

Williams' favorite part of running the pet store is building deeper connections with clients. At the vet clinic, she usually sees pets when they're sick or in for routine care, but at the store, she gets to interact with them in a fun, low-stress environment. She loves playing with the animals, chatting with their owners, and helping them find solutions.

Smith also values the connections the store creates.

"It's connecting with people because my day at the vet clinic is really super scheduled," she said. "You just don't get the opportunity to talk to as many people as you would like. So it's so nice to see clients just popping into the pet store to say hello and to help people who are not our clients, too. It feels good to point them in a positive direction for their pet."

Both Williams and Smith enjoy being able to guide their clients toward products that will actually work for pets. They have seen many families—especially those on tight budgets—spend hundreds on items that didn't solve their pet's problem, only to end up at the clinic later.

The store offers a chance to steer people in the right direction from the start, whether that means recommending an effective product or advising them to see a vet instead. And if they're not clients at their clinic, they'll refer them to other trusted veterinarians in the community.

"Also, some of that is being able to educate on why we don't carry some products because they may be a negative reinforcement item, and so we don't want to inflict pain on that pet to make them stop behaviors," Williams said.

Angela Williams and Dr. Amanda Smith, co-owners of Willow Treats in Port Orchard, stand outside their pet wellness store, which offers veterinarian-approved products focused on health, behavior, and nutrition.



Every product at Willow Treats is handpicked with pet health in mind, from calming supplements to mobility aids and specialty diets.

"Instead we try to guide them in different directions to try and correct that behavior."

Because the store is veterinarian owned they are allowed to sell prescription diets for dogs and cats. Most people have to order special diet pet food online because veterinary offices often do not have the floor space to carry the big bags of food.

"Usually the way we do it in the vet world is we hand them a small bag and then write them a script to go online, but now we can sell those in Port Orchard," Williams said.

"Part of the problem that we were seeing in some in vet clinics was that we would put these dogs on a prescription diet for whatever their disease was, and then it got too cumbersome for owners to continue to order it, and so they would try and find a different food that wasn't

necessarily going to fit that disease process," Williams said. "So the health of the pet was not improving because they didn't stay on the proper diet. Now we can offer that. It's local, and then they can just run, pick it up."

Some of the pet food vendors they work with offer frequent buyer programs. For example, customers can buy six bags of refills and get one free. The vendor tracks everything, making it easy to manage and giving customers extra value through built-in incentives.

In the future, Williams and Smith hope to hold more after hours educational classes at the store. Topics may include behavior issues, pet health and even continuing education for local veterinary staff.

"We want to be a part of the community in whatever way that we feel like we can help serve the community," Smith said. ■



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Navigating Kitsap County's 2025 Real Estate Market:

Top Tips for Sellers and Buyers

By **Tom Earnest** | Real Estate Broker / Realtor, John L. Scott Real Estate

Kitsap County's real estate landscape in 2025 presents a nuanced picture. While the market remains favorable for sellers, buyers are finding increased opportunities, especially in mid-range properties. With median home prices hovering around \$540,000 and homes typically selling within 35 to 59 days, strategic planning is essential for both sellers and buyers.

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR SELLERS TO MAXIMIZE HOME APPEAL

- 1. Price Competitively**
Even in a seller's market, overpricing can deter potential buyers. Homes priced appropriately often sell faster and closer to the asking price.
- 2. Enhance Curb Appeal**
First impressions matter. Simple landscaping, fresh paint, and a tidy exterior can significantly boost buyer interest.
- 3. Stage for Success**
Decluttering and depersonalizing spaces allow buyers to envision themselves in the home. Professional staging can highlight the property's strengths.

4. Invest in Key Upgrades

Focus on improvements that offer high returns, such as kitchen updates or energy-efficient appliances. These enhancements can make your home stand out in listings.

5. Leverage Professional Photography

High-quality images are crucial in online listings. They capture attention and can lead to increased showings.

FIVE CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUYERS SEEKING THEIR DREAM HOME

- 1. Get Pre-Approved**
In a competitive market, having mortgage pre-approval demonstrates seriousness and can expedite the buying process.
- 2. Research Neighborhoods**
Explore areas that align with your lifestyle needs, considering factors like schools, commute times, and community amenities.
- 3. Be Ready to Act Quickly**
Desirable homes can sell swiftly. Being prepared to make prompt decisions can be advantageous.
- 4. Consider Future Growth**
Look into upcoming developments or

infrastructure projects in the area, as these can impact property values over time.

5. Work with a Local Real Estate Agent

An agent familiar with Kitsap County can provide valuable insights and assist in navigating the market effectively.

Whether selling or buying in Kitsap County's dynamic 2025 market, informed decisions and strategic actions are key to achieving your real estate goals. ■





April Member of the Month:

SAFE Boats International

PROTECTING THOSE WHO PROTECT US

Nestled in Bremerton, Washington, SAFE Boats International has built a global reputation for designing and manufacturing some of the most rugged, high-performance watercraft on the market. Since its inception, SAFE Boats has been dedicated to a singular mission: building boats that protect those who protect us. From military and law enforcement agencies to fire and rescue teams, SAFE Boats provides vessels that ensure safety, durability, and unmatched performance in the most challenging conditions.

A LEGACY OF INNOVATION AND CRAFTSMANSHIP

Founded in 1997, SAFE Boats International has grown from a small startup to an industry leader in maritime security and defense. The company's name—

SAFE—stands for “Secured Around Flotation Equipped,” reflecting its pioneering use of foam flotation collars that make its vessels nearly unsinkable.

Over the years, SAFE Boats has expanded its product lines and capabilities, delivering cutting-edge vessels to agencies worldwide, including the U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, law enforcement agencies, and international defense forces. With a commitment to American manufacturing, every SAFE Boat is built in Washington State, maintaining the highest standards of quality and performance.

A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY AND SERVICE

Beyond its role in supplying world-class vessels, SAFE Boats International is deeply committed to its employees, community, and the industries it serves. The company supports numerous initiatives for veterans,



first responders, and maritime professionals, recognizing the importance of those who dedicate their lives to safety and service.

SAFE Boats also plays a role in the Bremerton economy, providing skilled jobs and contributing to the region's reputation as a hub for advanced maritime manufacturing. By investing in local talent and

maintaining a 100% U.S.-based production, SAFE Boats strengthens both national security and the local workforce.

CONNECT WITH SAFE BOATS INTERNATIONAL

To learn more about their industry-leading vessels or to discuss custom maritime solutions, visit safeboats.com or follow them on Facebook. ■



Armed Forces



BREMERTON'S 78TH ANNUAL

Armed Forces Day PARADE

CONGRATULATIONS!



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★ Kai Joseph



★ Maya Moyer



★ Alexander Rempfer

to our 2025 Ambassador Scholarship Honorees

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 KAI JOSEPH, Central Kitsap High School & Olympic College
 MAYA MOYER, North Kitsap High School
 ALEXANDER REMPFER, Bremerton High School

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Day Parade



Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting for Peninsula Alliance's Bill Mahan Apartments



The Greater Kitsap Chamber was thrilled to host a ribbon cutting for Peninsula Alliance's Bill Mahan Apartments on Friday, May 16, 2025. The apartments serve a critical need in the greater Kitsap community for affordable housing with the additional feature of serving members of the intellectual and developmentally disabled community. Funded by an \$8.9M one-time grant award from the Washington State Department of Health and Human Services (DSHS), the Bill Mahan Apartments will provide 22 units of housing for individuals struggling to afford housing on their own, individuals that are

transitioning out of an institutional setting, and individuals that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, with the goal of providing safe and secure housing for this population.

Located in Downtown Bremerton, this important project was able to be completed with additional support from Kitsap County who provided grant funding in the amount of \$1.05M, as well as the Washington State Department of Commerce and the Bremerton Housing Authority. The Bill Mahan Apartments were named in honor of long-time Peninsula Alliance board member, Bill Mahan, who has championed

this project for many years.

For more information, contact Kim Bushnell, CEO of Peninsula Alliance at (360) 377-3473 ■



Deep-Dive Business Series

Ready to attract the right customers and turn them into loyal supporters?

This session is designed to help you go beyond general marketing and focus on what really works—understanding, targeting, and truly connecting with the people you serve.

Date: June 10, 2025

Time: 2:00pm - 4:00pm (with the last 30 minutes dedicated to networking)

Location: Kitsap Regional Library, Bremerton at 1301 Sylvan Way, Bremerton, WA 98310

TOPICS COVERED:

Defining Your Ideal Customer

– Learn how to create a clear customer persona to better understand who you're trying to reach and what they truly want.

Targeting with Local Tools

– Discover how to leverage a free local resource to identify, locate, and effectively market to your ideal customer base.

Crafting a Compelling Story – Explore how to tell your business/brand story in a way that builds connection, trust, and turns customers into loyal advocates.

WHY ATTEND?

Learn practical, actionable strategies for identifying and connecting with your ideal customers in meaningful ways.

Leave with a clear plan to refine your messaging, build trust through storytelling, and attract the right audience to grow your business.

Reserve your spot now and get ready to connect with your customers like never before!

Deep-Dive Business Series is for members of the Greater Kitsap Chamber, courtesy of the GKC Business & Professional Development Committee. ■

NEW in 2025!



DEEP-DIVE BUSINESS SERIES

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 2025, 2:00PM - 4:00PM
KITSAP REGIONAL LIBRARY SYLVAN BRANCH

Cultivating Customers:
Building Business to Customer Relationships



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

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TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2025 @ 5:05 PM
LOCATION: FIELDSTONE SILVERDALE AT CLEAR CREEK

Financial Road Trips:

Planning Your Journey,
Not Just the Destination

By Kevin Campbell | Wealth Advisor & Founder of Peaks Financial, Host of Kitsap Matters Podcast, Author of *Fearless: Charting Your Course to Financial Independence*

Summer's here—kind of. In the Pacific Northwest, June can be glorious, or it might look like January with a bad haircut, (AKA Juneuary) but that doesn't stop us from dreaming about road trips. Whether you're heading to the coast or just sitting in traffic on Highway 305, let's be real—no one hits the road without some kind of plan. Well, not twice, anyway.

Same goes for your finances.

PLOTTING THE ROUTE

Jumping into investing without a plan? It's like taking off for a long weekend without checking the gas tank or even knowing where you're going. You might get somewhere, but probably not where you wanted.

That's why I lean on something we call the SAIL FORMula: Safety, Access, Income, and Long-Term Growth. It's not a marketing gimmick—it's a framework that helps make real-life financial decisions feel a little less overwhelming.

- Safety is your financial first-aid kit—think cash reserves and risk management. It won't prevent every flat tire, but it'll keep you from being stranded.
- Access makes sure your money's

available when you need it—not locked in some account you forgot the password to.

- Income is your fuel. Ideally, it's structured and dependable, drawn from sources like dividends, interest, guaranteed income sources, and planned withdrawals.
- Long-Term Growth? That's the destination. The financial independence, the freedom, the bucket-list stuff.

DON'T JUST WING IT

Too many folks fixate on growth—and growth alone. That's like heading out on a cross-country drive with no snacks, no GPS, and a quarter tank of gas. Good luck with that.

A thoughtful plan doesn't just help you grow your wealth.

It helps you keep it—and stay sane during the messy middle.

MARKET VOLATILITY = BAD ROAD CONDITIONS

If recent headlines have made you want to park your portfolio and wait it out, I get it. Interest rates, inflation,

geopolitical drama—it's a lot. But like a foggy ferry ride or

endless I-5 construction, the answer isn't to stop. It's to slow down, take stock, maybe adjust the route.

I've seen people make their best moves—Roth conversions, strategic rebalancing,

smart tax moves—right in the middle of the mess. You just need a clear map and someone to help read it.

THE MAINTENANCE NOBODY LOVES

Most people only revisit their financial plan when something breaks. But like oil changes and tire rotations, check-ins are what prevent the breakdowns.

So if it's been a while since you looked under the hood—portfolio, insurance, cash flow—now's a good time to do it. Even just once a year can make a difference.

THE KITSAP TWIST

Living in Kitsap County means your financial plan might have a few extra considerations. Commutes, ferry schedules, small business opportunities, real estate quirks—this isn't a one-size-fits-all market. Make sure your plan reflects your reality, not someone else's.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO IT ALONE

Even the best road trips are better with a co-pilot. Someone to navigate, keep you from getting lost, or at least point out when you're about to miss the exit.

If the markets, the news cycle, or just life in general has made your financial plan feel foggy, it might be time to revisit the route. ■

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

Powered by Passion

How the Kitsap History Museum Innovates on a Shoestring

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

The Kitsap History Museum in downtown Bremerton is more than just a quiet archive of dusty artifacts. It's a place where the past is constantly being rediscovered and retold — especially the stories that haven't always been heard.

"We focus on local history," said Lisa Hope, the museum's Director of Marketing and Development. "Everything we preserve or collect must have a connection to Kitsap County."

But the museum's mission goes beyond preservation. It's about connecting people to their community through its stories.

"That is what we feel really brings the community together," Hope said. "When you learn more about your local history and the place that you live in, you care about it more. You care about the people more."

"Then you have a greater sense of community and involvement to where you are, and hopefully that makes you a better citizen and person and

a steward of the place that you happen to be inhabiting," she said.

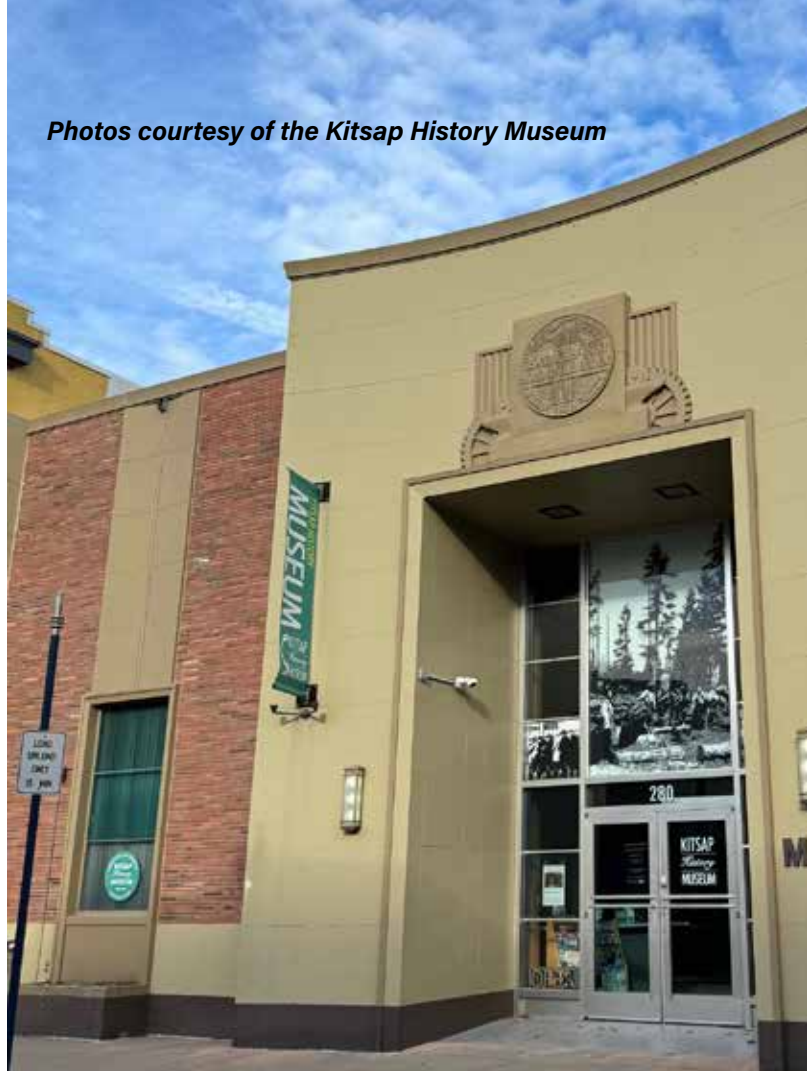
As the museum's only full-time employee, Hope wears many hats to keep the museum functioning. She handles everything from outreach and exhibit planning to fundraising and day-to-day operations. The museum's volunteer Executive Director, Jeff Coughlin, a part-time employee, a dedicated board and a core of longtime volunteers round out the small team that keeps the museum running on a shoestring budget.

Operating without a full-time curator and no current registrar, the museum relies heavily on volunteers and community partnerships. Hope herself has taken on curatorial duties in recent years, especially after the museum was forced to cut back staffing due to funding constraints.

"About a third of our income is from lodging tax," Hope said. "Every year we have to apply for that. Every year we don't know

The Main Street Exhibit recreates historic Kitsap storefronts—including a schoolhouse, medical office, and local shops—using authentic artifacts from real businesses in the region.

Photos courtesy of the Kitsap History Museum



The Kitsap History Museum is home to over 100,000 documents and photos and 40,000 local artifacts.





The museum's ferry exhibit showcases the region's reliance on the ferry system throughout the ages.

how much we're going to get as things change. It all depends on how well the city and the county are doing."

The museum also applies for grants, but most of those are for specific projects — not for basic operations like keeping the lights on or staffing the front desk.

Despite the financial challenges, the museum has found creative ways to move forward.

Thanks to a grant from the Washington State Historical Society, the museum was recently able to hire an intern as part of an initiative to promote diversity in local history. The intern is actively exploring the museum's archives to uncover and highlight stories that reflect the experiences and contributions of historically underrepresented communities.

A grant from the Secretary of State's office helped fund a project to digitize the extensive Harry Ward photo collection — thousands of images captured by the former Kitsap Sun photographer between the 1920s and 1960s.

The museum also is working to make its photographic archives publicly searchable, adding detailed descriptions and tags that better reflect the diversity of Kitsap County's past. For example, an image once simply labeled "shipyard, 1947" may now also identify the Filipino workers pictured — people whose stories might otherwise be overlooked.

Museum staff and volunteers are working hard to include the stories of people of color, but the reality is that many of those stories weren't preserved or told in the first place. That's why Hope and others are making a deliberate effort to reach out to those communities because their stories matter, she said.

"We work hard to include the stories of people of color," Hope said. "Many of those stories

weren't preserved or told to begin with, so we're actively trying to find them, highlight them, and give them the space they deserve."

The museum's current exhibits reflect that commitment to inclusion. On the main floor, "Trade: Indigenous Trade in the Northwest," was curated by the Jayhawk Institute, a group of Suquamish elders. The exhibit, originally displayed at the Suquamish Museum, explores the complex trade networks that Indigenous communities used long before European settlers arrived.

Upstairs, the "Women of Kitsap" exhibit is nearing the end of its run and will soon be replaced by a new project focused on Black voices in Kitsap County — timed to coincide with the completion of the city's Quincy Square project.

The upcoming exhibit will be community-curated, with three sections dedicated to history, art, and culture, each shaped by different local contributors.

While the museum works to preserve history inside its walls, it's also been grappling with a very real, very modern issue: the roof.

"It's been years and years of too many repairs and every winter we get new leaks," Hope said.

However, through a recent grant from the Washington State Historical Society, a contribution from the Lions Club, and a private donation, the museum is finally set to replace the roof this summer.

Beyond its walls, the museum connects with Kitsap residents through innovative and long-running programs like "Eat Your Way Through Kitsap History."



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This exhibit offers a glimpse into Kitsap County's agricultural roots, showcasing the region's farming history and rural heritage.

Now in its 23rd year, the program offers monthly, ticketed events through the spring, summer and into the fall held at historically significant sites across the county. Guests enjoy a meal while learning about the area's history from local experts.

"I've been doing it now for four years, and I've learned so much about the county," Hope said. "It's incredible."

Another popular event the museum hosts is a free monthly program called History Uncorked, held Thursday evenings with wine and snacks. Each session features a different topic, ranging from traditional local history to more unconventional subjects like UFOs, Bigfoot, bootlegging, and paranormal investigations. The program has been successful in drawing in new audiences and engaging the community in fun, accessible ways.

Recently the museum hosted a Kitsap History Trivia night fundraiser that was so popular it sold out. The event was hosted by Seattle Times writer and Bremerton history buff Josh Farley.

"That was all put together by our board," Hope said. "A board member said, 'let's do a trivia night,' and she went out and got sponsors. It was great. We really do rely on our board and our volunteers to do most everything."

The museum partnered with Leadership Kitsap to create a self guided downtown history walking tour, featuring green plaques on historic buildings. They launched the tour last summer with a guided group walk and plan to do it again this year, Coughlin said.

All of the QR codes on the plaques lead back to more information on the museum's website.

One of the museum's most popular exhibits is the Main Street Exhibit which is a recreation of actual shops and storefronts from Kitsap County. There is an old watch shop, clothing store, doctor's office and school house.

"It's so immersive," Coughlin said. "We get a lot of comments from visitors on how much they love the Main Street Exhibit."

With a background in physics and astronomy, Coughlin's favorite item in the museum's collection is a letter signed by Albert Einstein. The letter is from the late 1940s to early 50s, after the war when Einstein was working with a lot of the Los Alamos scientists on nuclear non proliferation. He was writing letters to raise funds to kick start that effort. Einstein wanted to raise a million dollars for the effort so he sent a letter to a local wealthy connection.

Hope's favorite museum piece is the Henry Ward photography collection.

"I personally love photography," she said. "So I just think that is such a treasure, because it is incredible photographs from someone with a great eye and from the whole area of different events and parades and shops and restaurants."

The Kitsap History Museum may be small, but it runs on passion. Longtime, dedicated volunteers are a key part of its success.

It's that kind of personal connection that sets the museum apart, Hope said.

Despite the challenges, the Kitsap History Museum remains a powerful force for connection — bridging generations, backgrounds, and neighborhoods one story at a time. ■



The exhibit "Trade: Indigenous Trade in the Northwest," was curated by the Jayhawk Institute, a group of Suquamish elders. The exhibit, originally displayed at the Suquamish Museum, explores the complex trade networks that Indigenous communities used long before European settlers arrived.

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Executive Q & A

Photos By Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

Meet Clif and CK McKenzie,

The father-son leadership team at Watson Furniture in Poulsbo

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

In a business world where succession is often an afterthought or a source of tension, Watson Furniture in Poulsbo, Washington, is setting a rare example of intentional leadership transition. After more than three decades at the helm, Clif McKenzie knew it wasn't enough to simply step aside—he had to create a plan that honored the company's values, secured its future, and empowered the next generation. That plan was a phased exit strategy Clif coined "5-4-3-2-1," a deliberate countdown to retirement that gave his successor, his son CK McKenzie, the time and space to lead with confidence, clarity, and continuity.

Their story is not just about passing the baton between

generations—it's about redefining what responsible leadership transition can look like, especially within a family-owned business. With a foundation rooted in shared values and mutual respect, the McKenzies have prioritized the people at the heart of Watson Furniture and the community it serves. In this candid Q&A, Clif and CK reflect on their paths to leadership, the company's evolution, and the vision guiding Watson's next chapter.

Please tell our readers a little bit about yourselves.

Clif: I'm a local kid. Born and raised in Bremerton. Attended East Bremerton High School (Go Knights!) while there was still an East Bremerton High School. I

was extraordinarily fortunate to have the parents and siblings I had. But also fortunate to be raised in a hard-working middle-class community. Both family and community shaped the leader I try to be. They also shaped the expectations I have of people (people, including myself, have a tendency to raise or lower themselves to the expectations of those surrounding them). Went to Seattle U, dropped out for a couple of years (worked at the Safeway on Callow Ave.), and then went back to the University of Washington, receiving a degree in accounting. I became a CPA and worked for a larger CPA firm until I stumbled across an opportunity that has shaped the last 40 years of my life. I formed a business with Bill Haggerty and Daniel Warn that continues through today. And...somewhere in the development of our business portfolio, we purchased a company on Bainbridge that made commercial furniture. That was in 1990. Then, in 1991, my partners asked me to accept the role of President of Watson Furniture Systems (now Watson Furniture Group)

CK: I was born in Seattle and moved to Bainbridge when Clif and his business partners bought Watson in '91 or so, which was about kindergarten for me. I went to high school all the way through at Bainbridge. Then I left and went to the Naval Academy, and went from there into the Marine Corps for about 10 years. I flew attack helicopters and deployed a couple of times. In 2019, I left the Marine Corps, and I got married to my wife, who was a Coast Guard pilot. She got out at the same time, and then we moved back here to the Northwest, and I started working at Watson.

I have a four and a half year old and a two and a half year old now as well, which is why I have

no hobbies other than mowing and keeping them alive. I'm still in the Marine Corps Reserves, and so for a weekend every month or two, I fly off to New Orleans to scare myself flying helicopters still.

Please tell our readers about Watson Furniture.

We make furniture for the commercial (office) console (911) markets. Our solutions are uncommonly creative, blending a European design influence with an attention to functionality that has received numerous design awards (check it out...). We make it all right here in Poulsbo and have an environmental ethos that was recently recognized with BIFMA Level One certification.

CLIF MCKENZIE

You've been at the helm of Watson Furniture since 1991. When you look back, what are you most proud of?

We have 5 Guiding Principles:

- Financial Stability
- Uncommonly Creative Product
- Build it Here...Right Here
- The Dignity of the Working Woman and Man
- Return this Place Better than we Found it

We've not strayed from those principles for 30+ years and I'm damn proud of that.

How did you know it was time to begin transitioning leadership to the next generation? What makes your succession plan unique?

Ten years ago, I received a loud and clear message: heart attack. A few pieces of conduit later, and I'm doing fine, but I realized my responsibility to this company was for longer than my time on earth. I was 60 then, and channeling my inner accountant created a 5-4-3-2-1 transition strategy (at 65 I'd work 5 days a

week, 66 four days a week, and so on). That strategy forced me to plan for transition now...right now. I don't know if our strategy is unique, but it worked for me. Seems like transition in smaller companies often goes one of three ways:

- Sell the Company
- Transition to a family member but stay on to criticize, undermine, get in the way, hinder change, etc.
- Ignore the issue and leave a mess behind for the family to clean up

5-4-3-2-1 is essentially the second with my forced exit. The forced exit is my choice, but it's hard. Is there a better, more responsible way? Not that I've come across.

What made CK the right choice to step into the role of President?

He was the last man standing. Look...he's a Marine. In 2010, I attended his graduation from something called TBS (The Basic School...how's that for simplicity). At that graduation, I learned about the 5 horizontal themes of Marine Corps Leadership (level 10 Servant Leadership). It was a powerful and somewhat magical experience for me. I was so proud of CK, but that pride paled in comparison to the immense gratitude I had for the institution of the Marine Corps. I knew then that, given the chance, I'd be honored to work with my son someday.

How has your leadership style evolved over the years, and how do you see it complementing CK's style moving forward?

Hell, I don't know. Has it evolved? Probably. But perhaps it's simply that experience and perspective have simply softened the hurricane I once was (and some might say, still are).



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What does Watson's purpose mean to you personally?

I wrote the words, so I guess it should mean more than it probably does. In the end, they're just an abbreviated version of our Guiding Principles and I've already written about them.

What advice would you give to other business leaders preparing to pass the torch — especially within a family?

Remember, it's not just about you and your family, it's about the men and women on your company's front lines who have given you the chance to even think about a torch. You owe it to them to give it the thought it deserves.

CK MCKENZIE

You grew up around Watson. What are some early memories that shaped your connection to the company?

I grew up around Watson, but only tangentially so. I knew where the Quarters were in Clif's office so that I could get a Dad's Root Beer from the vending machine in the breakroom. I knew we built things, but I was so extremely uninterested in

office furniture that I didn't care to learn much more. I knew I wanted to be a Marine as early as I can remember and naively assumed that path would pull me away from any familial responsibility for Watson. Short of washing the truck fleet for a few bucks over the weekends in high school, I remained intentionally unaware of how anything worked at the factory. I imagine deep down I was scared that paying attention would somehow trap me in the small town, a la George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

After serving in the Marine Corps, what brought you back to Watson, and how did that experience shape your approach to leadership?

I came back to Watson out of a deep sense of duty to my family—especially after Clif's heart attack. I wanted to help shoulder the responsibility of running the company and ensure its future. My time in the Marine Corps gave me the space to grow into my own identity, outside the shadow of Watson and my father. It taught me how to lead diverse teams united by a shared mission, and instilled in me a leadership style grounded in humility, authenticity,



competence, coupled with a strong bias for action. I was a helicopter Pilot, tasked with leading Marines in a vast array of jobs. They couldn't do my job, and I couldn't do theirs. That reality forces one to lead with a great deal of trust and helps illustrate the importance of surrounding yourself with competent people in whom you can place that trust.

How would you describe your leadership style, and how does it align with the values your father built into the company?

My leadership style is fairly straightforward: Show up, be humble, listen, and then remove as many obstacles as possible to allow your team to succeed.

What does Watson's purpose mean to you personally?

I take immense pride in fostering career development. Assisting individuals in recognizing their skills and capabilities and guiding them on how to effectively work together to achieve remarkable outcomes is highly gratifying. The most rewarding aspect is witnessing the growth in their careers,

eventually reaching a stage where they are mentoring others, enhancing processes, and achieving far more than they initially believed possible. They take that personal growth back home with them and spread our lessons on teamwork, work ethic, and responsibility into the community.

As the new President, what are your immediate priorities? What are your long-term goals for Watson?

I view my role here as one of a Steward, here to guide the company for this phase of its journey until it's time for the next generation. To that end, my immediate priorities are really no different than my long-term goals, we will continue to grow the business in a manner that enables us to create more careers in Kitsap County and serve as a foundation in our community.

What have been the biggest lessons you've learned from your father as a business leader?

Lead with empathy, but don't be paralyzed by it. When in doubt: take action. Patience is a virtue, but can all too easily become the excuse for inaction. ■



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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

Reliable Storage has appointed **Kathleen Frazer** as District Manager, overseeing operations at its seven Kitsap County locations. A locally owned company since 1981, Reliable Storage offers self-storage solutions with a focus on community support and customer care.

Frazer brings a strong background in leadership, marketing, and customer service, along with deep local ties. She currently serves on the board of the Kitsap Builders Association, is a 2022 graduate of Leadership Kitsap, and was recognized as a 2023 20 Under 40 Leadership Kitsap award recipient.

In her new role, Frazer will manage a team of 12 employees across locations in Port Orchard, Bremerton, Silverdale, Kingston, Poulsbo, and Bainbridge Island. Andrew Sherrard, Managing Partner, praised Frazer's appointment, stating her leadership "aligns perfectly" with the company's mission of supporting customers through life transitions while remaining locally owned and community-minded.

"We are thrilled to welcome Kathleen to the Reliable Storage team," Sherrard said. "Her experience, leadership, and deep ties to Kitsap County make her an excellent addition to our organization and the communities we serve."

Awards

Kitsap Bank has named **Tonia Johnson**, Consumer Loan Underwriter/Collector, as its Employee of the First Quarter of 2025. Johnson, who joined the Port Orchard-based bank in 2006, was selected by her peers for her professionalism, work ethic, and nearly two decades of dedicated service.

In her role, Johnson has taken on new responsibilities related to



Tonia Johnson

Consumer Portfolio Real Estate Loans and Lines, approaching the challenge with what colleagues describe as a positive, solutions-driven mindset.

"Tonia consistently brings enthusiasm and an eagerness to take initiative in everything she does," said Robert Banks, SVP, Credit Administrator. "Her ability to adapt, grow, and support our lending team has made a tremendous impact."

The Employee of the Quarter award recognizes Kitsap Bank staff for exceptional contributions to operational excellence.

Local Briefs

Live Well Kitsap will host **KitsapFest**, a free outdoor community event, on Saturday, June 21, at Silverdale Waterfront Park. The family-friendly celebration is designed to bring the community together for a day of music, food, and wellness resources.

The event will feature live music, a DJ, karaoke, food trucks, kids' entertainment, and booths highlighting local organizations and businesses dedicated to supporting healthy living in Kitsap County.

Hosted by Live Well Kitsap—an online platform promoting community well-being through free education and events—KitsapFest reflects the organization's mission to help both people and businesses thrive. In addition to spotlighting community resources, the event provides local businesses an opportunity to showcase their services, particularly those in the health and wellness space.

For more information or to apply, visit livewellkitsap.com/kitsapfest. ■

SAVE THE DATE

Pride Picnic

June 8, 2025

Comedy Night

June 14, 2025

Movie Night

June 22, 2025

Festival

July 19, 2025

KITSAP FAIRGROUNDS

Kickoff Party

July 18, 2025

Pride Brunch

July 20, 2025



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Why Reliable Visibility Builds Long-Term Business Relationships

In today's evolving business environment, B2B buyers are more cautious, more informed, and more selective than ever before.

By Amy Yaley | COO of Ward Media

With longer sales cycles and increased scrutiny of every dollar spent, the role of trust in the buying process has never been more critical. For businesses looking to grow or even maintain market share, the brands that show up consistently — and with clarity — are the ones winning attention and closing deals.

TRUST STARTS WITH FAMILIARITY

B2B relationships don't happen overnight. They're built through repeated, reliable exposure. This is where consistency becomes the greatest marketing asset. Whether it's a LinkedIn post, a display ad, an email, or a branded product, each customer interaction should reinforce the brand and what it stands for.

Inconsistency, on the other hand, creates friction. If the messaging changes drastically between channels or the visual branding lacks cohesion, it can confuse or even erode confidence in the company. In uncertain times, buyers naturally gravitate toward the vendors that feel stable, professional, and dependable. Consistency sends that message without saying a word.

MARKETING TACTICS THAT BUILD B2B TRUST

Consistency becomes powerful when paired with the right strategy. Businesses can turn

steady visibility into real results by using a multi-pronged marketing approach. The following tactics are designed not only to increase exposure but also to build credibility and trust with B2B decision-makers.

1. BRANDED CONTENT

Publishing insightful, solution-oriented content in trusted local and industry publications positions a brand as an expert. When a potential client sees a company providing real value and not just a sales pitch, they build credibility. Whether it's a branded column in a business magazine or a digital article on a regional news site, consistent thought leadership plants seeds that grow over time.

2. STRATEGIC EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

B2B buyers spend time researching. A well-planned email nurture campaign can keep a company top-of-mind during that research phase. Whether it's sending a monthly newsletter or a short educational series, the key is to maintain brand tone, visuals, and a steady rhythm. This consistency trains recipients to expect (and trust) the voice in their inbox.

3. TARGETED DIGITAL ADVERTISING

Through audience targeting and programmatic geofencing,

businesses can stay visible to key accounts and industries. Even when prospects aren't ready to convert, repeated exposure through well-designed digital ads reinforces brand presence and professionalism.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA AND LINKEDIN PRESENCE

In B2B, LinkedIn is often the first stop for decision-makers checking legitimacy. A



consistent stream of relevant, branded posts helps validate expertise. This doesn't require viral content — just a steady, smart presence that reflects the core messaging.

5. BRANDED PROMOTIONAL PRODUCTS AND PRINT MATERIALS

Even in a digital age, physical touchpoints matter — especially in B2B. A well-timed leave-behind, welcome kit, or

thank-you gift featuring useful, well-branded items keeps the brand on the desk (and in the mind) of the target audience. It also demonstrates a level of professionalism that signals, "We're here for the long haul."

VISIBILITY IS A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

When the economy feels unpredictable, some businesses go quiet. But history shows us that those who maintain visibility — even modestly — often come out ahead. Fewer competitors marketing means the message carries farther and stands out more. And when buyers are ready to make decisions, they remember the brands they saw consistently.

STAY IN FRONT OF YOUR BUYERS

Trust isn't built with one great campaign. It's built by showing up again and again, delivering value, and reinforcing the message across every touchpoint. For B2B companies, this is how they move from being considered to being chosen.

So, whether sending an email, running a digital campaign, or dropping off a printed piece, the key is to stay consistent. Future clients are watching, even when they're not yet ready to buy. ■

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

Feature



Photos courtesy of Kitsap Credit Union

Kitsap Credit Union staff members help at a food drive for Northwest Harvest, a nonprofit committed to fighting hunger.



Kitsap Credit Union values supporting the community in 2024 alone, the credit union and its KCUCares Foundation sponsored 147 community events and contributed \$734,000 in philanthropic donations.

People Helping People Since 1934

Inside Kitsap Credit Union's Member-First Business Model

Ward Media | Kitsap Business

Since its founding in 1934, Kitsap Credit Union has stood as a beacon of financial empowerment and community support across Western Washington. Born out of necessity during the Great Depression, the credit union was created by seven shipyard workers at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard who pooled just \$34 to start what was then called the Navy Yard Metal Trades Credit Union. Their vision was clear: to create a cooperative where working individuals and families could access fair, affordable financial services in a member-first environment.

"We were founded in 1934, during a time when many working individuals and families lacked access to fair, affordable financial services," said Shawn Gilfedder, President and Chief Executive Officer of Kitsap Credit Union. "Our mission was simple: serve those underserved by traditional financial institutions, guided by the principle of 'people helping people.'"

From its modest beginnings on the Navy base, Kitsap Credit Union has grown to serve more than 160,000 members and manage \$2.4 billion in assets across Western Washington. But while its size and services have expanded, its commitment to community remains at the heart of everything it does.

"Kitsap Credit Union was created to fill

a critical gap in access to affordable credit and secure savings," Gilfedder explained. "Traditional financial institutions often overlooked low-income workers who lived paycheck to paycheck. The credit union stepped in as a trusted, mission-driven partner."

That mission has evolved to meet the challenges of the modern era, including the need for digital banking. Today, more than half of the credit union's members actively engage with its digital platform, which provides secure, convenient, and personalized tools for managing finances.

"Whether it's applying for a loan, depositing a check, or getting financial guidance, our mobile and online services make banking easier and more accessible—while preserving the personal connection we're known for," Gilfedder said.

Kitsap Credit Union's

commitment to community impact is just as robust as its digital transformation. In 2024 alone, the credit union and its KCUCares Foundation sponsored 147 community events and contributed \$734,000 in philanthropic donations. Notable initiatives included a partnership with Home Team Harvest, which helped provide 24 million meals to families in need.

"For over 92 years, Kitsap Credit Union has been more than just a financial institution—We've been a committed community partner, actively working to improve the lives of those we serve," Gilfedder said. "Whether or not someone is a member, our presence benefits the broader community through initiatives focused on food security, housing needs, and financial wellness."

Education is also a major focus. In 2024, Kitsap Credit Union's online financial wellness resources reached more than 27,000 users, while its in-school programs educated over 7,000 students across four counties.

Looking ahead, Kitsap Credit Union plans to deepen member relationships, expand access to financial resources, and grow alongside the communities it serves.

"We're committed to helping our members succeed, strengthen the local economy, and providing reliable support to help people make the most of life's opportunities, both today and in the years to come," Gilfedder said. ■



Shawn Gilfedder (right), President and Chief Executive Officer of Kitsap Credit Union, is committed to continuing the credit union's ongoing fight against food insecurity through community partnerships.



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