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From Silverdale to Burkina Faso, artist and business owner Lisa Stirrett is making waves far beyond the Pacific Northwest. Through her nonprofit Creative Warriors, Stirrett has helped over 300 women launch businesses, feed their communities, and discover their value through entrepreneurship and faith. Learn how one artist's studio became a hub for global change and local creativity.

Good Stuff, Great Purpose

Port Orchard Grocers Blend Local Flavor With Big-Hearted Values

How a chef and community developer are redefining the grocery experience in Port Orchard. Fresh-baked sourdough, bulk goods, and a warm welcome define the shopping experience at Good Stuff Grocery.

Breaking Bread, Building Belonging

Sandra Rocha Evanoff's Global Mission Starts in Kitsap

Poulsbo-based chef Sandra Rocha Evanoff is using Afro Brazilian cuisine to connect cultures, combat hunger, and reclaim heritage. Through her business, Brasil Comes to You, and global partnerships like the Social Gastronomy Movement, she's using the power of food to nourish both stomach and soul. From São Paulo to Kitsap County, this is a story of flavor, resilience, and community.

Cover photography: Leah Thompson of Scandia Studio

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Creating Impact Beyond Business

For **WARD**
THINKING

Welcome to the May edition of Kitsap Business, where we continue to celebrate the innovative entrepreneurs who make our region a hub of creativity, compassion, and connection.

This month's featured stories showcase a powerful theme: businesses built not just to succeed financially, but to create meaningful impact in their communities and beyond. From Silverdale to Port Orchard, from Bainbridge Island to Poulsbo, our local entrepreneurs are demonstrating that business can be a force for positive change.

Lisa Stirrett's journey from home-based artist to global changemaker exemplifies this spirit. Through her nonprofit Creative Warriors, she's helping women in Burkina Faso build businesses and transform their communities, proving that the entrepreneurial mindset knows no boundaries. Her story reminds us that sometimes our greatest business inspirations come when we ask, "What can I do for others?" rather than "What can I do for myself?"

In Port Orchard, Andreas Zellweger and Barb Alaina Burck have created more than just a grocery store. Good Stuff Grocery embodies their belief that quality food should be accessible to everyone, regardless of income level. Their commitment to building human connection in an increasingly disconnected retail world shows how business can nurture community one conversation at a time.

Drew Fiscus's Anchor Drink Systems demonstrates that innovation often springs from personal frustration. His magnetic beverage holders – born from a middle-of-the-night inspiration after one too many spilled drinks – shows how local inventors can turn everyday problems into elegant solutions, involving family in the creative process along the way.

Perhaps most inspiring is Sandra Rocha Evanoff's work with Brasil Comes to You.



Her journey from a remote Brazilian village to becoming a Poulsbo-based chef and advocate for food security illustrates how our personal stories can shape business missions that reach far beyond profit margins. By using food as a universal language, she's building bridges between cultures and fighting hunger locally and globally.

What strikes me about these stories is how each entrepreneur has found ways to infuse their business with deeper purpose. They're not just selling products or services – they're creating experiences, building relationships, and addressing real needs in

our community and beyond.

As we move further into 2025, Kitsap Business remains committed to highlighting these purpose-driven enterprises that show how business success and social impact can grow together. Because when businesses are built on authentic values and genuine connection, they create ripples that extend far beyond their balance sheets.

Here's to the entrepreneurs who are using business as a canvas for creating a better world, starting right here in Kitsap County. ■

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF LISA STIRRETT

Artist Lisa Stirrett at The House of Glass, her working studio and gallery in Silverdale.

Art. Faith. Impact.

Lisa Stirrett's Studio Powers a Movement Across Continents

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Artist and entrepreneur Lisa Stirrett has always felt a calling to empower others – a passion that grew with her own children and has since blossomed into a global mission.

Through her nonprofit, Creative Warriors, and her studio The House of Glass in Silverdale, she is helping women in Burkina Faso, West Africa, build businesses,

gain independence, and transform their communities.

The nonprofit Creative Warriors empowers women in Burkina Faso by providing no interest loans, business education and support. As each woman pays back her loan another woman is funded.

The heart of the nonprofit is to raise women up to be the warriors they are for their families

and their communities.

The average loan recipient has had limited access to education and often lives in a polygamous household with many children. She is typically responsible for providing her family with food, financial support, healthcare, and education.

Their culture considers them valueless but they have the weight of the world on their shoulders, Stirrett said.

Stirrett, who has a strong faith, wants to help them break those lies and build them up to know their true identity in Christ, she said.

Her desire to help empower people comes from her own experiences growing up and battling low self esteem. Through her life experiences and working on it Stirrett has learned how to tame those feelings and build up her self esteem. Though she knows it is something that requires continued work for everyone.

"I am more of a teacher type," she said. "If I learn something that is helpful, I want to teach somebody else. Then you see somebody else that might be going through the same thing, and you just kind of lock arms and help them through it."

Because the loans are paid back and passed on to the next woman, donations to Creative Warriors continue to generate impact long after they're given. So far, the organization has helped more than 300 women.

Each woman attends a four-day business training session. The nonprofit's local team helps the women develop a business plan, walks through every phase of their plan with them and continues to work with the women for two years after their loans are paid back. Creative Warriors has a 100 percent payback rate.

The nonprofit also runs a two-year, government-accredited tailoring program. During their schooling the women have an in-service program to make period pads for their community.

Graduates of the program can take a national test to run their own business, work for the government or provide tailoring services in their communities.

Creative Warriors has established a period pad program in five villages where they educate women on their bodies, health and the importance of their identity in Christ.

The nonprofit partners with Days for Girls to provide sex education, healthcare training, period pads, and underwear to women and girls who would otherwise not have access to

Feature

those resources.

Days for Girls is an international nonprofit dedicated to breaking the stigma around menstruation and improving access to menstrual health solutions. The organization works to ensure that women and girls can stay in school, work, and participate fully in their communities. So far, it has reached more than 3.5 million women and girls worldwide with its educational programs and sustainable hygiene kits.

"Your cycle is very shameful in those communities, they're shunned to their huts," she said. "By giving them the ability to either stay in school or keep working it changes things."

Creative Warriors has also established chicken farms, water pumps and gardens to help feed school children.

In her Silverdale Studio Stirrett also has a coffee shop, Holy Grounds, which is currently raising funds for a woman in Burkina Faso who wants to be a nurse. So far they have paid for her first year of schooling and are raising funds for her second year.

"A nurse over there is just like a doctor here," Stirrett said. "There's very few doctors, there's nurses that do everything in all the different villages"

But agriculture is where Stirrett feels they can have the biggest impact. Stirrett has partnered with ECHO, a nonprofit that works with hungry families to teach small-scale, sustainable farming techniques. ECHO and Creative Warriors are working together to provide natural farming training in Burkina Faso – specifically in the capital, Ouagadougou, where ECHO has an impact center.

After initial training sessions, local women have already begun changing their farming methods, which had previously not been as effective. The group



Participants in Creative Warriors' sewing school in Burkina Faso proudly display their handmade projects and colorful fabrics.

now oversees five plots of land, supplying fencing, water sources, and ongoing support through ECHO and local churches, which help manage the farms and assist the women.

Stirrett said the training is life changing.

"Our team, just from January, have switched over their planting, the way that they farm," she said. "Now they have small parcels, maybe next to their church or their home. We just got back,

and the food that they're growing right now, it's life changing. They'll have enough to feed themselves and others."

They will be able to sell the excess food and have money to buy meat and other needs that they may have, she said.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Stirrett began her journey as an artist when she found out that she was pregnant with her first child. Looking for a

way to work from home while raising her family, she started creating Gyotaku prints – a traditional Japanese art form that involves applying ink or paint to fish and pressing them onto paper to make detailed, natural impressions.

Stirrett began printing her fish on t-shirts and other textiles and selling them at festivals. Soon that evolved into selling her work at Nordstrom and eventually Epcott Center.

In 2000, while the Bremerton Ferry Terminal was under construction, a call went out for local artists to submit portfolios for consideration. Stirrett wanted to be part of the project, but at the time, she didn't have a formal portfolio. Determined, she got to work – creating a body of art using her signature techniques on nautical charts and handmade papers. She submitted her new collection, applied for the opportunity, and was awarded the commission.

That project marked the beginning of a long relationship with the terminal. Since then,



Creative Warriors offers a two-year, government-accredited tailoring program to help women start their own businesses or find work in tailoring services.

Stirrett has contributed to many other public art installations there, including murals, paintings, and even custom benches. It was the launchpad for her career in public art.

From that starting point, Stirrett then opened her first shop in Silverdale, which was her studio for six years.

Now her work can be found in both private and corporate collections and in public displays throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Stirrett found that her art career was a good fit with raising a family. It helped put her boys through school. One is now a doctor. When she didn't need to help support her boys she began working with nonprofits to have her artwork benefit them.

In 2012, she bought the building at her current location on Silverdale Way and though it took a lot of work to renovate the space she knew it was the right place for her. In the new location she began hosting art walks. Each month she would have artists set up their booths in her studio and invite the community in.

"I featured a new nonprofit every month because I always thought, you know, we've got

so many nonprofits, but a lot of people don't know about them, and I do think we are a very giving community," she said.

But Stirrett longed for something more. So, she prayed and asked if God had something specifically for her.

"Once I moved here, I literally was praying and I was like, 'okay, God, do you have something for me,'" she said.

At the time she was on her way to help build a healthcare center in Burkina Faso with another organization.

"(In Burkina Faso) a woman came out of the bush, and the interpreters said, 'there's women here to see you,'" she said. "And I'm like, 'me?', so it was kind of a hair-raising moment."

Stirrett asked the women what they needed.

"I came back from that trip and well the Lord gave me kind of a neat program where I could leverage the studio and the proceeds from the studio and relationships with the customers coming in, learning about these women and what their needs were," she said.

Within days of the first contact Stirrett had several women who wanted to start their own businesses. Some women



Stirrett has worked to provide water pumps in Burkina Faso through her nonprofit Creative Warriors.

needed tools for farming, some needed a grain grinder to help with meal preparation in their community.

Without a grain grinder the women use a mortar and pestle to grind grain for making bread or other things for meals. They had to chop down their grain and then grind it by hand in order to make dinner each night.

"So the grinder would really

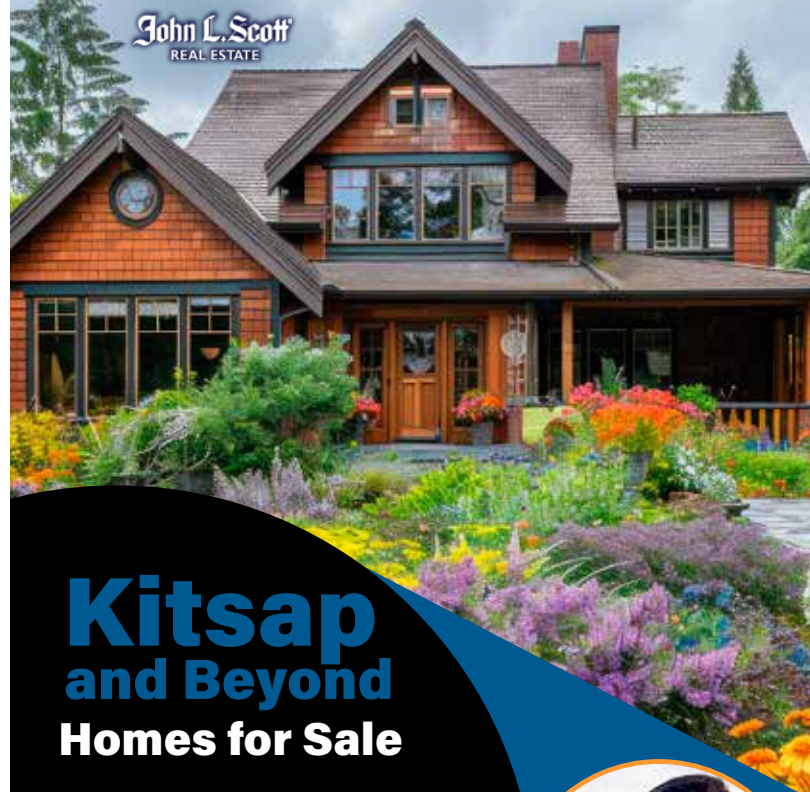
be a huge benefit to the community," she said.

Within three days she was able to fund those requests and that was the beginning of her nonprofit Creative Warriors.

"I went over there and I didn't expect that to happen," she said. "I came back and just really felt empowered myself to go help and empower these women and learn more about the culture." ■



Creative Warriors is partnering with ECHO, a nonprofit that teaches sustainable farming techniques to establish farms and best farming practices in rural villages in Burkina Faso.



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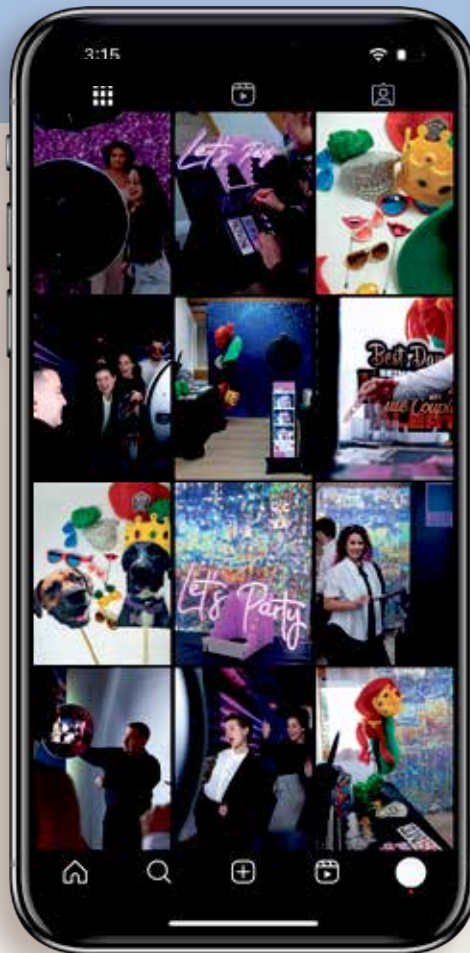
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOOD STUFF GROCERY

Good Stuff Grocery co-owners Andreas Zellweger (far left) and Barb Alaina Burck (second from left) along with their family members prepare for the ribbon cutting at the store's grand opening.

Good Stuff, Great Purpose

**Port Orchard Grocers Blend Local Flavor
With Big-Hearted Values**

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Good Stuff Grocery in downtown Port Orchard is exactly what the name implies – just the “good stuff.” Every item on the shelf is something owners Andreas Zellweger and Barb Alaina Burck stand behind.

There’s no high fructose corn syrup, and the focus is on organic, local, and

high-quality products. Zellweger, a chef by trade, bakes fresh sourdough bread and sourdough brownies daily, and those alone have drawn steady attention from the neighborhood.

Good Stuff Grocery makes the most of its cozy space, offering a thoughtfully curated selection that feels full but never cluttered.

In the kitchen, Zelleweger whips up fresh sourdough bread, sandwiches, pastries and other goodies daily.

You’ll find a wall of fresh spices, cheeses, and other picnic-ready bites, along with bamboo toothbrushes, natural supplements, eco-friendly laundry products, and all-natural moisturizers.

The drink selection includes sparkling water, kombucha, natural sodas, and protein shakes – only in the brands and flavors the owners personally enjoy. Rounding it out is a rotating lineup of Pacific Northwest wines and craft beers.

When the couple opened the store, they weren’t chasing a lifelong dream of owning a grocery store; they were simply responding to a need they saw in the community.

“They’ve really wanted this small community grocer for a long time and we’re just happy that we noticed that that was a need,” Zellweger said. “I’ve always

Feature

dreamed about having my own kitchen. So this is how we're contributing to the culinary culture."

Burck said the response from the community has been overwhelmingly positive. At the store's grand opening in April, Zellweger and Burck were both blown away by the amount of community support.

The store located inside the Port Orchard Public Market on Bay Street, is open Wed. through Sunday. But since running the business is a seven day a week commitment for the couple they are there most days working. Even when the store is closed people are constantly stopping by hoping to buy a fresh loaf of sourdough or some of the store's other delicious offerings.

The shop serves a wide range of customers: boaters, locals who live nearby, jurors from the nearby courthouse, downtown workers on their lunch breaks, and foodies looking for specialty items without having to travel to Tacoma or Seattle.

A well-curated bulk section was made possible through a bit of good fortune when Oregon-based Hummingbird Wholesale donated extra containers to help them get started.

The price of the containers would have made the bulk section cost prohibitive for the couple. A bulk section was something that was important to them because they want to be able to keep their prices reasonable and offer quality items.

"My number one thing that I love hearing is like, 'Oh, these are the same prices as Albertsons or Safeway,'" Burck said. "Because there's nothing more that I hate than going into a tiny cool store and it's like, I



Co owner Barb Alaina Burck works behind the counter during the store's grand opening.

can't buy anything."

Burck, who has a background in community development, is passionate about accessibility.

"We're hoping to get EBT soon too, because I really do think healthy stuff should be accessible for everybody," she said.

"My background is in community development," she said. "I served in the Peace Corps, and that is something that I'm really passionate about. So he has the food background, I've got the community background. And I'm like, we need something like this in Port Orchard, but I don't want it to be exclusive to

just people who are rich. I think that's crazy."

Everything about Good Stuff feels intentional – and deeply personal. The couple, along with a team of friends, painted the walls and laid the flooring themselves. Zellweger handcrafted the wooden counter and table inside the shop.

Their support system helped them make the shop a possibility. Their families, friends and neighboring business owners helped them in countless ways.

Fellow shop owners Lizzy Rolando who owns Salmonberry Books, Mallory

Jackson who owns Custom Picture Framing, and Anne Kelso who owns Twisted Beautiful Permanent Jewelry have formed a community of friendship and support with Burck and Zellweger.

"We did not get a single bank loan," Burck said. "All of our loans were private. Literally none of this would be possible without our support system."

"I believe, like when things are supposed to happen, they work out well, not always easily, but things just kind of align where they're supposed to," she said.

The store has even partnered with the Kitsap Food Bank



Burck hands a sourdough loaf to a customer.

and People's Exchange to donate unsold food each week, creating a closed-loop system with minimal waste.

"It's cool to offer something at a good price point that is also good for you and good for the community because that's often lacking, especially when you talk about the cycle of poverty and what is offered to people that aren't, you know, in the 1% or that can have more access to

things like that," Zellweger said. "Cheaper stuff is worse for you."

For Zellweger and Burck, Good Stuff is about more than groceries.

"We want to be a space that is open to everybody," Burck said. "It sounds weird for a grocery store, but I want people to feel safe and welcomed here."

In a world of self-checkout lines and online ordering, they're doubling down on human connection.

"When people walk in, they think they're just going to shop quietly. But Barb breaks down that wall," Zellweger said. "You're going to meet somebody. You're going to meet Barb if you haven't already. And that makes the difference."

"I grew up with a mom who always said, 'When you're with people, be with people,'" Burck said. "We don't just sit and be with people anymore. And I think that's the number one thing I want when people come

here. Even if they're in and out, I want them to have a moment of human interaction."

Zellweger found his niche in Port Orchard's food scene through sourdough – something that consistently sells out at local farmers markets.

"There was no place for bread lovers to get fresh, quality bread all year," he said. "That was the gap I could fill."

And while opening a grocery store wasn't the original dream, it's become the perfect medium for their message: food is joy, food is medicine, and food brings people together.

"Food is a precious part of life," Zellweger said. "It's one of the joys every human experiences on a daily basis."

"Food heals," Burck added. "That's why our country is so sick – because we eat a lot of crap food."

At the end of the day, they



Good Stuff Grocery store sources local, all-natural products including balms, lotions and more personal care items.

just want people to feel better when they leave than when they walked in.

"I want people to come in a bad mood and leave in a great mood," Burck said.

"And it happens all the time," Zellweger said. ■



Good Stuff Grocery store in Port Orchard stocks only the "good stuff" with quality products the owners can stand behind.



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PHOTOS COURTESY OF DREW FISCUS

Bainbridge Island dentist and avid sailor Drew Fiscus invented a magnetic drink holder designed to keep beverages secure during adventures on land and water.

Anchored by Innovation

How One Sailor's Frustration Sparked a Smarter Drink System

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Drew Fiscus, a Bainbridge Island dentist and avid sailor, did not intend to become an inventor, but a frustrating experience on the water led him to create a whole new system to keep drinks secure – no matter where adventure leads.

"I was out sailing and had one of those pendulum-style drink holders," he said. "I swiped my arm by it, broke the thing, and

scratched my arm."

Another drink holder he tried used velcro and was mounted to the front of the boat but it got mossy and gross. He knew there should be a simple solution.

"I wanted something really sleek that could be on your kayak or your boat or your tractor or your RV, and you can wipe it off, and it doesn't get all messy," he said.

Then inspiration struck in the middle of the night. The idea kept nagging at him and wouldn't let him get back to sleep

"I woke up in the middle of the night, and thought I've got to do something with magnets and started drawing all this stuff," he said. "It was kind of weird. I'd never really had an invention before, and then when I woke up I was like 'I think that'll work.'"

THE PRODUCT

That idea became Anchor® Drink Systems, a spill-proof, magnetic drink holder system designed for life in motion.

The system consists of a waterproof, magnetic coaster that adheres to almost any surface – boats, kayaks, paddleboards, RV countertops, and more. A silicone sleeve with a built-in magnetic disc secures bottles and cans to the coaster, while reusable containers can be fitted with connector discs to hold drinks firmly in place.

The system is built to withstand the elements. In fact, Fiscus, an avid kayaker, has



The Anchor® Drink Systems silicone sleeve features a built-in magnetic disc that securely attaches to a connector on the paddleboard, keeping drinks stable and within reach while paddling.

had a connector disc on his kayak for five years, and it's still holding strong.

While the packaging and product do have a nautical feel, the product has many applications beyond watercraft. It can be used anywhere you want to keep your drink secure like pickup tailgates, cooler lids or strollers.

THE PROCESS

Through friends Fiscus was introduced to a network of professionals who helped bring his idea to life. A Seattle-based engineer and designer helped him determine the product specifications and to find a manufacturer.

However, developing the product was just the beginning. Fiscus had to navigate the complexities of manufacturing, packaging, and distribution. The initial production run took longer than expected due to COVID-19-related delays, but persistence paid off.

Family and friends helped come up with ideas for the artwork and by brainstorming

The Anchor® Drink Systems beverage holder is magnetically anchored to prevent spills during even the bumpiest rides on the water.

names for the product.

Fiscus enjoyed the creative process of developing Anchor Drink Systems, from brainstorming names to collaborating with designers on artwork and packaging. He was adamant about avoiding plastic packaging and opted for a more eco-friendly approach.

He valued the experience of working with experienced professionals who guided him through branding, design, and bringing the product to market.

"It was really fun for me, because it's not dentistry, it's way more artsy," he said.

Fiscus's wife and children were deeply involved in the process and the creative aspect of bringing an idea to life generated a lot of creativity for his children.

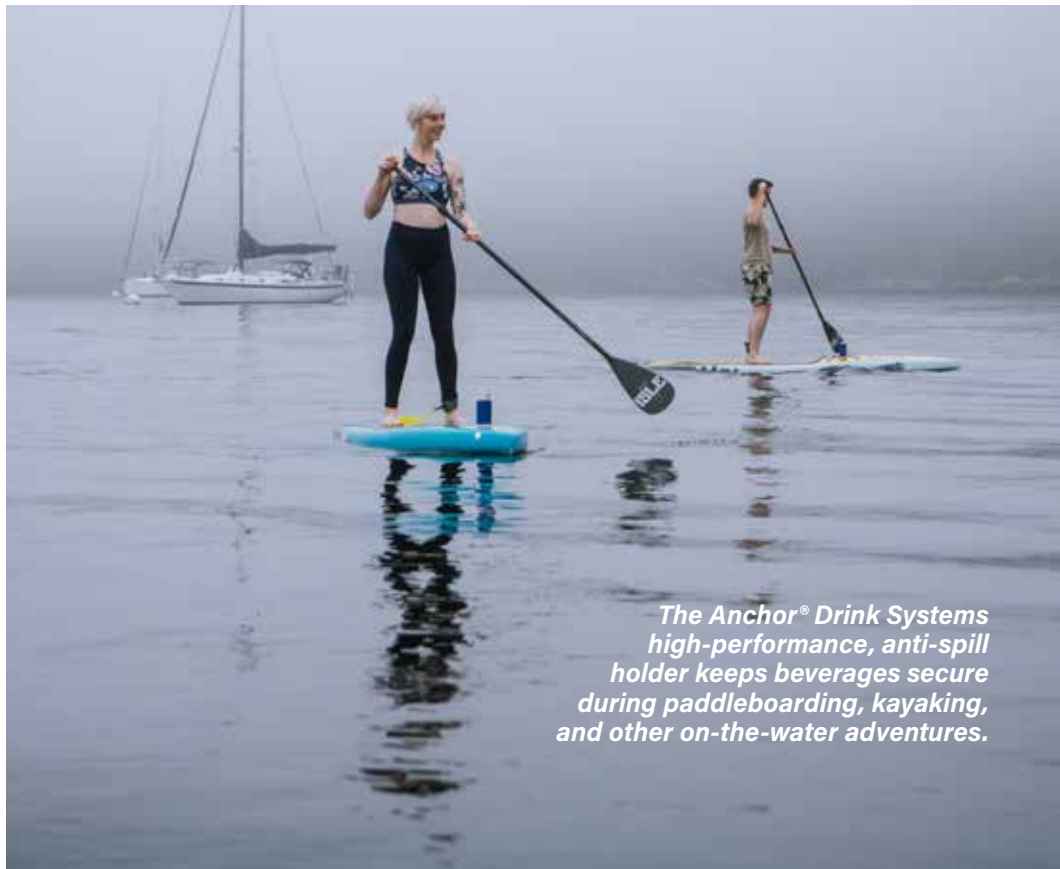
"The kids were totally in on the whole thing, looking at the pictures and designs," he said. "Then they'd say 'what about this, Dad' and still come up with inventions all the time, just because it sparked everybody and got everybody going."

For Fiscus, Anchor® Drink Systems wasn't just about launching a product – it was about taking a leap, learning something new, and proving that great ideas can come from anywhere.

"The whole time, we were like, if nothing else you're trying something, you're not sitting on your butt," he said. "You're gonna put some effort and time into something that's unique and learn a lot." ■



Connector discs attach to the bottom of reusable containers, allowing them to securely connect to the magnetic coaster.



The Anchor® Drink Systems high-performance, anti-spill holder keeps beverages secure during paddleboarding, kayaking, and other on-the-water adventures.



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Photos courtesy of Erinn J Hale Photography



Honoring Our Heroes: Kitsap County Celebrates Armed Forces Day

Home to three major military installations under Navy Region Northwest, Kitsap County is proud of its strong military presence. With more than 50,000 military family members living, working, and thriving in our region, the military community plays a vital role in both the culture and economy of the area.

Each May, the Greater Kitsap Chamber honors this unique and valued population with the Armed Forces Day Parade – an annual tradition that celebrates our deep military roots and enduring spirit of service.

The origins of this celebration date back to 1948, when the Bremerton Chamber of Commerce organized a parade to honor hometown hero John “Bud” Hawk, who had just received the Medal of Honor for his bravery in World War II. One year later, in 1949, Armed Forces Day was officially recognized as a national holiday to celebrate all branches of the military. Since then, the Bremerton Armed Forces Day Parade has continued every year, becoming the largest and longest-running Armed Forces Day Parade west of the Mississippi River.

This year marks the 78th celebration, drawing more than

20,000 attendees to downtown Bremerton. “We’re extremely proud to carry on the tradition of bringing Bremerton and the West Sound Region this incredible event honoring our military,” says Irene Moyer, President & CEO of the Greater Kitsap Chamber. “It’s been an honor over the years to help preserve this tradition and celebrate the men and women who serve or have served in our Armed Forces.”

The festivities extend beyond the parade itself. The Bremerton Central Lions Club will host a pancake breakfast fundraiser, and visitors can also enjoy the Heroes Barbecue and Information Fair at the Kitsap Bank parking lot. Additionally, the Navy League of Bremerton – Olympic Peninsula Council, and the East Bremerton Rotary Club are proud to sponsor the annual Ambassador Scholarship program, encouraging high school and college students to submit essays exploring the meaning of freedom.

Behind the scenes, the event is made possible by the dedicated efforts of Chamber staff and volunteers. The Bremerton Kiwanis Club has proudly served as parade marshals for over 40 years, coordinating parade

participants on event day. Dozens of other community members also step up to help, showing their appreciation for our military and ensuring the day is memorable for all.

The Armed Forces Day

Festival is free and open to the public – join us on Saturday, May 17th to welcome visitors to Bremerton and come together as a community to show support for the heroes who protect and serve. ■



BREMERTON'S ANNUAL

Armed Forces Day

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| <p>GREATER KITSAP CHAMBER Tiffany Diamond, <i>Events Coordinator</i> Irene Moyer, <i>President & CEO</i> David Emmons, <i>Vice President</i> Julie Hill, <i>Operations</i> Gretchen Ritter-Lopatowski, <i>Graphic Designer</i></p> | <p>KIWANIS CLUB OF BREMERTON Chris Funke, <i>Parade Coordinator</i> Liz Gross, <i>Admiral Theatre Foundation Board</i> Rob Schneider, <i>Parade Coordinator</i> Sunny Wheeler, <i>Parade Marshal</i></p> |
| <p>CITY OF BREMERTON Mike Barnett, <i>BKAT</i> Todd Byers, <i>Bremerton Police Department</i> Chris Dimmitt, <i>Public Works</i> Gunnar Fridriksson, <i>Managing Engineer</i> Garrett Jackson, <i>Senior Planner</i> Katie Ketterer, <i>Project Manager</i> Tom Knuckey, <i>Director</i> Kelli Lambert, <i>Senior Planner</i> Patrick McGanney, <i>Bremerton Fire Department</i> Ron Moore, <i>Street Operations Manager</i> John Payne, <i>Bremerton Fire Department</i> Dahle Roessel, <i>Bremerton Police Department</i> Justin Rowland, <i>Senior Planner</i> Brian Thompson, <i>Public Works</i> Tom Wolfe, <i>Bremerton Police Department</i></p> | <p>NAVAL RELATIONS Alan Beam, <i>Navy League Bremerton – Olympic Peninsula Council</i> Kevin Danford, <i>Navy Life PNW</i> Patty Lent, <i>Navy League Bremerton – Olympic Peninsula Council</i> Tom Zwolfer, <i>Chair – Navy League Gala</i></p> |
| <p>BREMERTON CENTRAL LIONS CLUB Joseph Kochera</p> | <p>COMMUNITY MEMBERS Cheryl Davis, <i>Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort</i> Joe Frank, <i>DJ Joe Frank</i> Michael Goodnow, <i>The Roxy Theatre</i> David Inglish, <i>Kitsap Credit Union</i> John Morrissey, <i>Chair – Greater Kitsap Chamber</i> Nate Murphy, <i>Admiral Theatre</i> Greg Wheeler, <i>Mayor – City of Bremerton</i> Ken Hulet, <i>Community Emergency Response Team</i></p> |


Thank You!

March Member of the Month: Arnold's Home Furnishings

In Bremerton, WA – where the Pacific Northwest spirit meets timeless style – **Arnold's Home Furnishings** is celebrating not one, but two major milestones in 2025: **74 years of continuous business** and an extraordinary **50 years of Chamber membership**. These achievements speak volumes about the family-owned company's commitment to its customers, its craft, and the community it calls home.

A LEGACY THAT BEGAN IN 1951

Arnold's Home Furnishings opened its doors in 1951, founded on a simple but powerful idea: provide quality home furnishings with exceptional service, all under one roof. Over the decades, the

business has grown from a small neighborhood furniture store into one of Kitsap County's most trusted names in home design and comfort. Still family-owned and operated, Arnold's success story is built on enduring relationships, both with loyal

customers and the greater Bremerton community.

As they celebrate their **74th year in business**, the team at Arnold's reflects on their journey with pride and looks to the future with excitement – continually evolving their offerings while staying rooted in the values that built the business.

YOUR HOME, YOUR STYLE: FURNISHINGS FOR LIFE

Arnold's isn't just a place to shop – it's a place to find inspiration for every room in your home. Their expansive **50,000-square-foot showroom** features a thoughtfully curated selection of furnishings ranging from cozy and classic to sleek and contemporary.

HALF A CENTURY OF CHAMBER PARTNERSHIP - AND COUNTING

Arnold's Home Furnishings has been a proud member of the then-Bremerton Chamber of Commerce and now the Greater

Kitsap Chamber for **50 years**, a milestone that underscores their long-standing commitment to civic engagement and local leadership. This half-century partnership reflects Arnold's dedication not just to business success, but to helping shape the economic and social well-being of the Bremerton area.

From sponsoring local events to supporting community programs, Arnold's continues to give back in meaningful ways – solidifying its place as both a business leader and a community cornerstone.

As **2025** marks both **74 years of business excellence** and **50 years of Chamber involvement**, Arnold's Home Furnishings stands as a shining example of what happens when dedication, quality, and community come together under one roof. Visit arnoldshomefurnishings.com or explore their **Facebook page** to discover what has made Arnold's a Bremerton institution for nearly three-quarters of a century. ■



Discover the Charm of the French Riviera

Join Us in October 2025!

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- Early Bird Special: Only \$3,699 if deposited by March 30, 2025

this could be you!

GREATER KITSAP CHAMBER & VISITOR CENTER

2nd Annual Kitsap Women's Summit

A Bold Gathering of Voices, Vision, and Leadership

In March 2025, the Kitsap Conference Center was the backdrop for a powerful gathering of change-makers, community leaders, and rising voices at the 2nd Annual Kitsap Women's Summit. Hosted through a strategic and inspiring partnership between the Greater Kitsap Chamber and the Leadership Kitsap Foundation, the event built upon the energy of its inaugural year to deliver an experience that was more expansive, more empowering, and more impactful than ever before.

A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EVENT ROOTED IN PURPOSE

The Kitsap Women's Summit was born from a shared vision between the Greater Kitsap Chamber and the Leadership Kitsap Foundation to create a dedicated space where women can gather to inspire and be inspired, to lead with confidence, and to navigate both professional and personal journeys with support.

In its second year, that vision came to life in full color. The event attracted professionals, entrepreneurs, educators, public servants, creatives, and community members – each

bringing unique perspectives and a common goal of fostering change and growth within their circles and communities.

A DAY OF LEARNING, CONNECTION, AND LEADERSHIP

From insightful talks to thoughtful panel discussions, the day offered practical tools and meaningful dialogue, leaving attendees energized and equipped for the next steps in their personal and professional journeys.

The lunchtime table-talk sessions fostered peer learning and mentoring, while networking opportunities throughout the day created lasting connections. Many participants expressed how impactful it was to share space with other women striving for personal growth and community progress.

ECHOES OF INSPIRATION: WHAT ATTENDEES HAD TO SAY

Feedback from this year's summit highlighted its value not just as a learning experience, but as a "deeply personal and transformative event." One participant shared, "I walked away feeling seen, supported, and more confident in my ability



Photos courtesy of Tiffany Diamond Photography

to lead – whether in my career, my community, or my own home."

Another remarked, "It was more than a conference – it was a recharge. I felt reconnected with my purpose and surrounded by women who genuinely want to lift each other up."

LOOKING AHEAD: A GROWING MOVEMENT

While the summit itself is a single-day event, the momentum it creates continues long after the final session ends. The

collaboration between the Greater Kitsap Chamber and Leadership Kitsap Foundation reflects a broader movement to invest in women's personal and professional development, and their visibility in the region –work that will continue throughout the year and into planning for next year's Summit.

The 2025 Kitsap Women's Summit stands as a bold reminder that when women come together, entire communities move forward. ■



A promotional graphic for the 'CHAMBER OFF the Clock' event. It features a stylized clock face with the text 'CHAMBER OFF the Clock' integrated into it. Below the clock, the text reads: 'JOIN US FOR OUR MONTHLY EVENT: TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025 @ 5:05 PM LOCATION: NORDIC HILL MANOR, POULSBORO'. The background of the graphic is a dark blue gradient with a photo of people networking.



New and Renewal Members for March

We appreciate your support of the Chamber's Mission!

Community Connector



Harris Family Businesses (2021)

Growth

EOS Implementer- Stacy

Luckensmeyer, (2023)
Kitsap Conference Center (2004)

Main Street

Gold Mountain Golf Club (2013)
Hwy 420 (2017)
Kitsap Sun (1950)
Navy Life PNW (2022)
SAFE Boats International (2011)

Business

Alexander's Golf Carts (2021)
Alzheimer's Association -
Washington State Chapter (2022)

Anytime Fitness Silverdale
(2025)

Ampure Electric (2025)
Bouchard Hauling & Removal
(2022)
Bremerton Foodline (2023)

**CMIT Solutions of Tacoma
and the West Sound** (2025)

Collins Historical Aircraft
Foundation (2024)
Dispute Resolution Center of
Kitsap County (2013)
Thomas Earnest, John L. Scott -
Real Estate Broker (2022)
Grocery Outlet - Bargain
Market (2016)
Brennan Jacobson - Ameriprise
Financial (2024)

Jolie Bean Coffee (2025)

Kitsap Art Center (2022)
Kitsap County Association of
Realtors (2021)
Kitsap Cyber Dojo (2025)
Kitsap Fair & Stampede

Association (2022)
The Kitsap Life at Skywren
Marketing (2019)
Krampus Bremerton (2024)
Live Well Kitsap! (2021)
North Mason Chamber & Visitor
Center (2007)
Nothing Bundt Cakes - Silverdale
(2021)
Olympic Workforce Development
Council (2019)
Pelican Plumbing (2025)
Puget Sound Navy Museum
(2014)
Rancho Storage Center -
Silverdale (2018)
RE/MAX Anchor (2023)
The Resort at Port Ludlow (2023)
St. Michael Medical Center
Foundation (2021)
Three Leaves Design (2021)
Traction Leadership (2024)
Unique Experience Custom
Embroidery, Inc (1995)
Westsound Company (2024) ■

Join the Greater Kitsap Chamber Today!

Your Connection to Kitsap's Business Community

CONVENER. CATALYST. CHAMPION.

As the largest Chamber in Kitsap County, we bring together professionals who believe business is better when we work together.

- ▶ Networking that builds real relationships
- ▶ Visibility that sets you apart
- ▶ Credibility that boosts your reputation
- ▶ Perks that save you money
- ▶ Advocacy that gives you a voice

Be part of something bigger.

GREATERKITSAPCHAMBER.ORG

SCAN TO
APPLY TODAY



Investing in Uncertain Times: Planning Beyond the Panic

Financial

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

We're living in strange times. Inflation's sticky, interest rates are punchy, and the markets can't seem to decide whether they're caffeinated or exhausted. One week we're up. The next we're wondering if someone pulled the plug.

For many investors, uncertainty feels like a signal to retreat—to hide out in cash, wait for “the bottom,” or make knee-jerk moves based on headlines. But as I often tell clients: volatility isn't a reason to panic. It's a reason to plan differently.

THE PROBLEM WITH “HOPE-BASED” INVESTING

Traditional investing wisdom often boils down to “buy low, hold tight, and hope for the best.” But in volatile markets, hope is not a strategy. Uncertainty demands something more thoughtful – something I call formulaic investing.

Formulaic investing is just what it sounds like: a rules-based approach that helps you make objective decisions, even when markets get emotional. It's like flying with instruments instead of guessing based on how it “feels” outside the cockpit.

WHY STRUCTURE HELPS WHEN EMOTIONS RUN HIGH

When markets drop, most people instinctively want to run from risk. But that

often leads to locking in losses or missing the rebound. A structured investment process helps keep your decisions aligned with your goals – not your gut.

At Peaks Financial, we use our SAIL FORMula to anchor portfolios across four key pillars: Safety, Access, Income, and Long-term Growth. That balance helps weather uncertainty without sacrificing opportunity.

Think of it like sailing (yes, pun intended). You don't abandon the boat when the wind changes. You trim the sails.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE UPSIDE WITHOUT EXCESSIVE DOWNSIDE?



One common misconception I hear is that you have to choose between safety and performance. Either you're “all in” on the market or you're hiding in cash and bonds. But today's investment landscape offers more nuance.

There are strategies designed to participate in growth while offering some form of downside protection. Formulaic Investing, Structured notes, buffered ETFs, and other strategies can offer a different path for risk-conscious investors.

Of course, not every strategy fits every investor, and these tools come with their own complexities. But the key takeaway is

this: you're not limited to the binary choice of fear or FOMO (fear of missing out).

LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS, TAKE NOTE

If you're a Kitsap-area business owner navigating uncertain times, the same rules apply. Just like diversifying your customer base or building up working capital buffers, diversified and risk-aware portfolios can stabilize your personal finances – even when your business is riding economic headwinds.

And if your retirement plan for employees feels outdated or overly exposed to market swings, now's a great time to explore more resilient plan designs.

DON'T LET TODAY'S VOLATILITY DERAIL TOMORROW'S GOALS

It's easy to lose sight of long-term goals when the short-term noise is loud. But successful investing often looks boring in the moment and brilliant in hindsight.

Rather than trying to outguess the market, build a thoughtful plan to stay aligned with your long term goals. Structure your investments. Build in flexibility. Focus on your timeline – not the news cycle.

A THOUGHTFUL COURSE FORWARD

If the current market rollercoaster has left you wondering whether your portfolio is working for you – or against you – this is the perfect time to revisit your plan. Is it built to withstand uncertainty? Does it give you confidence, not just hope?

If not, it may be time to think differently. ■

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

Breaking Bread, Building Belonging

Sandra Rocha Evanoff's Global Mission Starts in Kitsap

By Quinn Propst

Ward Media Staff Reporter

Poulsbo chef Sandra Rocha Evanoff is using Afro Brazilian cuisine to do more than feed people – she's building community, fighting food insecurity, and creating space for cultural connection.

From her business, Brasil Comes to You, to her work with global initiatives like the Social Gastronomy Movement, Evanoff blends storytelling, heritage, and advocacy with every meal she serves.

"I do believe that the magic of food connects people, inspires change and brings the community together," she said.

Evanoff also believes in food as a catalyst for social change.

"We all need to connect with each other around the table, and elevate each other as an individual, no matter if you are rich or poor," she said. "Food is the Universal Language."

Beyond her business Evanoff teaches cooking classes online and at BARN on Bainbridge Island, has developed a cooking



With her business Brasil Comes to You chef and owner Sandra Rocha Evanoff brings Brazilian culture into your home for an immersive dining experience.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SANDRA ROCHA EVANOFF

class and cookbook for immigrant children, volunteers for many organizations and serves on the Olympic College Community Foundation board of directors.

HISTORY

Evanoff was born in a remote village in Bahia, Brazil, where her mother raised seven children alone and ran a small bed and breakfast. Though the village lacked running water and electricity, it was rich in connection and fresh, homegrown food.

"We grew beans, corn, cassava, watermelon, almost everything," she said. "We didn't have land, but my uncle had lots of land, and he gave it to everybody in the family, like a community garden."

"So we grew up eating fresh food," she

said. "I never had processed food until I moved to Sao Paulo when I was 11 years old."

Evanoff began cooking at a young age, learning from her mother as she cooked for guests at their bed and breakfast. Her mother did not have the opportunity for an education but she dreamed of that for her children.

Evanoff, her mother, and sister moved from their close-knit village to São Paulo, initially intending to visit family but never returning home. Life in the city was difficult – they were separated at first, living with different relatives, and had to start from nothing. Eventually, they reunited in a small rented space while her mother worked many jobs to support them.

At 13 Evanoff went to work as a maid.

"So I've been working since I was 13," she said. "We grew up working, working, working."

It was a challenging time for Evanoff and her family. They did not go back home even to visit until Evanoff was 18. In the big city they lost their sense of belonging, she said.

"That's why, when I was creating the cooking class for the Latino and Syrian refugees, I felt myself in that situation," she said. "These kids, you know, who knows how they arrived here? I didn't have that experience, but had the experience to be in a place that was not mine."

That's why she let them choose the food they learned to cook. She wanted it to be a bridge for what they had to leave behind.

When Sandra's sister went to college, Sandra started her first food-to-go business to help cover the tuition. But when it was her turn, there was no one to support her financially, so she delayed college for ten years.

Still, she felt no resentment – only pride in her sister's success. Later, while working at Ernst & Young (EY), Evanoff was given the chance to attend college, studying international relations with a focus on politics. EY covered half of her tuition and gave her the opportunity to learn English. During that time, she continued her entrepreneurial spirit – baking cakes and making sandwiches at night to sell on the bus during her morning commute.

Evanoff never received formal chef training. She learned everything through her mother and from watching cooking shows, carefully replicating recipes at home as a teenager.

Evanoff shares her story to help others find hope.

"I want to show people even when you think that there is no hope, you will find your own hope, you will find your own sunshine, and be happy no matter what is the scenario," she said.

BRASIL COMES TO YOU

Brasil Comes to You is more than just a meal, it's an interactive dining experience that brings the heart of Brazil into your home. The experience features



When you book a private Brasil Comes to You event, chef and owner Sandra Rocha Evanoff brings food and festive touches to help create a warm, Brazilian-inspired dining experience right in your kitchen.

authentic Brazilian cuisine inspired by the country's rich Indigenous, Portuguese, and African influences.

African culture first arrived in Brazil in the 16th century with the forced arrival of enslaved Africans, primarily through the ports of Bahia. Over five million Africans were brought to Brazil – more than to any other country in the Americas – making Brazil home to the largest Black population in the region today. The state of Bahia,

Evanoff's home state, where much of this population resides, has had a profound and lasting impact on Brazil's culinary traditions.

However, Afro Brazilian food has been largely ignored in the American food scene and that is something Evanoff is working to combat.

During private dinner parties Evanoff prepares the food in your home while sharing about Brazilian culture, history and food. Brazilian food is beautiful, colorful and delicious but perhaps the biggest reward of the experience is Evanoff herself. Her warmth and generosity invites people in to share in the magic of food as a way to connect across cultures.

Brasil Comes to You was first an auction item for the Kitsap Medical Society's fundraiser for nursing scholarships in 2009. Evanoff's husband, a physician, encouraged her to offer the experience. Evanoff had to come up with a name for the auction item that would grab people's attention and that is how she landed on the name Brasil Comes to You.

"The idea was bringing my kitchen to your kitchen and that's what I



Poulsbo Chef Sandra Rocha Evanoff, Gastromotiva founder David Hertz and Sandra's husband George Evanoff show a meal prepared for a Gastromotiva event.

Feature

do," she said.

The auction item quickly became popular and soon many Kitsap nonprofits were asking Evanoff to donate the experience for their fundraisers. Because of its popularity Evanoff's husband suggested she turn it into a business and thus Brasil Comes to You was born.

SOCIAL IMPACT WORK

The Social Gastronomy Movement (SGM) is a global network that uses food to drive social change, combat inequality, and build more inclusive communities. It focuses on improving nutrition, addressing hunger, and empowering individuals to use their skills for the greater good. In response to global challenges like poverty, climate change, and food insecurity, SGM promotes food systems that support dignity, equity, and sustainability. By connecting people through food, the movement aims to create a more caring and just society – one meal, one community at a time.

The Universal Plate Campaign was born in 2020 as part of the Social Gastronomy Movement. The campaign is a six-week initiative to share fresh, nutritious food with those in need worldwide. It is both an act of advocacy and celebration of working towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of reaching Zero Hunger by 2030.

Food insecurity and hunger is on the rise with a projected 600 million people worldwide facing hunger in 2030, according to the UN.

Evanoff joined the movement in 2021



Chef Sandra Rocha Evanoff serves shrimp bobo, a traditional Brazilian stew.



Evanoff and Gastromotiva founder David Hertz work to fight food insecurity in Brazil.

to work to end hunger in Kitsap County. Initially she provided 60 meals. But by 2023 she worked to provide 1,300 meals locally through partnerships with local food banks and Olive Garden Restaurant.

In the spring of 2024, Evanoff was invited to attend the SGM Journey Learning Summit in Switzerland. The summit brought together chefs from around the world who work to fight hunger in their communities. At the summit they pledged to organize events using food as a universal language.

Upon returning home from the summit Evanoff received an email from the Kitsap Immigration Alliance Center (KIAC) asking her to develop a cooking class for young Latinos and Syrian refugees.

The opportunity to develop a cooking class for young immigrants aligned with her vision. It felt like fate, she said.

The classes not only taught cooking skills but also served as a vehicle to connect the children to their heritage through food. Evanoff worked to empower them with cultural pride and storytelling, hoping to give

them a piece of home they can carry with them throughout their lives.

In 2020 Evanoff began working with Gastromotiva, a Brazilian-based social impact organization that uses food as a tool for social change.

Founded in 2006 by Brazilian Chef David Hertz, Gastromotiva began with culinary training for youth in underserved communities and has grown into a global movement. The organization creates scalable models – such as community kitchens, education programs, and sustainable food systems – to promote dignity, inclusion, and development. By connecting chefs, entrepreneurs, and organizations, Gastromotiva works to address hunger, reduce food waste, and support local communities.

"Sandra embodies the spirit of Gastromotiva: generosity, purpose, and action," Hertz said. "Her work bridges cultures and communities, bringing people together around the table to share not only meals, but dignity, care, and opportunity." ■

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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.

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To join call (360) 876-3505.

Executive Q & A



COURTESY OF ST. MICHAEL MEDICAL CENTER

Melton has more than two decades of experience in healthcare administration.

Meet Chad Melton, President of St. Michael Medical Center

Melton brings more than 20 years of experience in healthcare administration to his role as President of St. Michael Medical Center in Silverdale.

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

Since joining the organization, he has helped lead the hospital through a period of growth and innovation, including facility expansions, new care models, and workforce development initiatives.

Originally from Texas, Melton was drawn to the opportunity to contribute to Virginia Mason Franciscan Health's regional strategy and to serve the Kitsap community.

Known for his commitment to culture, community, and long-term strategy, Melton has become a visible leader in Kitsap's healthcare landscape. Under his leadership, St. Michael is not only expanding access to care but also investing in the region's future workforce through partnerships like the \$2.5 million initiative with Olympic College.

Please tell our readers a little bit about yourself.

I'm a Texas native, born in Tyler and I spent most of my time growing up in Houston. I am an identical twin and have another brother who is just 18 months younger than us. I went to Texas State University for both my bachelor's and master's degrees. I'm now heading into my 21st year in health care administration, a path I was inspired to take by my uncle, who was the president of Triad Hospitals. I worked for him when I first started my career and he continued to be a constant mentor for me.

My wife and I have been married for 24 years, and we have a 13-year-old son. I've always been a sports fanatic, playing football, baseball, and running track growing

up. These days, I'm more into endurance sports – I've completed several Ironman events, lots of road races, and recently a 50-mile ultramarathon. Being active is really centered on my love of the outdoors. I also love backpacking, hiking, mountain biking, cycling, running – all the good stuff.

Tell us about your path to becoming President of St. Michael Medical Center. What drew you to this role and to Kitsap County?

I was attracted to this role as President of St. Michael Medical Center for several reasons. I was drawn to the Virginia Mason Franciscan Health system and its focus on strategy and growth to best meet the needs of our community. This role allowed me to contribute directly to our regional presence from the start. We opened the new St. Michael Medical Center location, and we recently opened the state's first hybrid emergency and urgent care facility with another location underway. Our hospital

tower expansion project will likely be completed by the end of the year. Having lived in big cities most of my life, I really appreciate the community feel and smaller size of Silverdale. I'm very involved in the community, and at St. Michael Medical Center, I enjoy the opportunity to get to know our more than 2,000 team members on both a personal and professional level.

What leadership principles guide your decision-making, especially in a complex and high-stakes industry like health care?

My leadership has always focused on culture development, specifically building a positive culture, fostering employee engagement, and implementing a clear, consistent communication strategy. As a team, we stay aligned around our balance scorecard, looking through the lens of quality, patient, provider and team member experience, growth, and finance. We must prioritize those areas first, and keep our patients at the center of everything that we do.

What's one lesson you've learned in your career that you think every executive should understand?

It's vitally important to focus on culture. If you don't set the cultural foundation, you're not going to get the results you intended.

What are your top strategic priorities for St. Michael Medical Center in 2025 and beyond?

Our top priorities are creating access and capacity for the communities we serve. It goes hand in hand with expanding our primary care, specialty care, and Family Medicine Residency program. The new VMFH Emergency and Urgent Care - Bremerton is a great example of creating access points for the community. Addressing the growing demand for bed capacity, driven by an aging population and increased utilization, is also a key priority. We are also actively investing in people development through recruitment, retention, and strategic partnerships, such as the one with Olympic College where we are investing \$2.5M to help train the next generation of care givers. Our ability to provide high quality services to the community relies on dedicated team members.

How is the medical center adapting to shifts in health care delivery,

such as telehealth and outpatient services?

We continue to focus on meeting the evolving needs of our community including primary and specialty care in the inpatient and outpatient settings. We are exploring the use of telemedicine and other solutions to meet growing patient demands for certain services that can be managed in this capacity. I think about things like tele-neurology, tele-stroke, and tele-psychiatry as examples. I also anticipate a greater adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the future, particularly in documentation. AI can help alleviate some of the burden on clinicians and other care team members who currently spend significant time documenting patient records and allow them to spend even more quality time caring for patients.

What differentiates St. Michael from other health care providers in the region?

A significant strength of our organization is that 90% of our team members live in Kitsap County, fostering a strong sense of community as they care for their neighbors. We are also uniquely able to care for patients with complex needs and offer specialized care that is not often available in a community our size. For example, our cardiology program is recognized among

the top three in all of Washington state and is ranked nationally for patient outcomes. Patients with complex needs across the board - from cardiology to neurology and spine, oncology, digestive health and more can count on us for exceptional care.

Health care systems everywhere are facing workforce challenges. How are you supporting staff recruitment, retention, and morale?

A focus on culture and culture development is a big one. Our partnership with Olympic College shows our successful collaboration with county and state elected officials to address community needs and create pathways for a skilled workforce today and into the future. We have an international nurses program that will bring in 25 nurses to our hospitals this year. We offer scholarship opportunities for our team members through Olympic College, where team members have their education paid for and can work in part-time or full-time capacity to advance their careers while earning a living.

When retention is strong, we see a direct correlation to better quality and patient experience. We have a patient engagement committee that develops monthly programs to support our team members, including recognition, military spouse support, and



Melton and staff enjoy the SMMC holiday party.

Executive Q & A

more. The committee is fully driven by our frontline team members and supported by management with an executive sponsor.

How does St. Michael's partner with the broader Kitsap community to address public health issues and health care equity?

Our Community Health Needs Assessment guides our team and our collaborations so we can ensure we are focusing on the most pressing needs of the community and stay aligned with our organizational mission. We consistently work alongside Kitsap Public Health District and an array of other community partners to help address these needs and support one another and patients so they are cared for inside the hospital and have support when they leave. Our Community Health Improvement Grants are a great example of how we directly support nonprofit organizations in Kitsap County with funds to support their work and drive sustainable community programs with a focus on access to care, behavioral health and chronic disease prevention. This year (2025), we have 13 grants totaling nearly \$850,000 invested in Kitsap community organizations.

Other examples of collaboration across the county include a medical respite program in partnership with Peninsula Community Health Services. We also collaborate with the Kitsap Public Health District through a grant to provide sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing in our emergency room. Our longstanding Family Medicine Residency program brings tremendous value back to the community, allowing us to serve more patients and bring more providers permanently into the community. The VMFH Family Medicine Clinic in Bremerton also provides space for UW/Harborview HIV clinics every Friday, as well as primary care for these patients at any time. Our hospital leadership team is actively involved in a community organization with more than 90% participation last year.

What innovations or investments are you most excited about at St. Michael in the next few years?

I am thrilled about the significant growth we have been able to accomplish to meet



Chad Melton President of St. Michael Medical Center has helped lead the medical center through growth and change.

community needs, including the addition of 74 beds in our new hospital tower that is nearing completion, the recent opening of the freestanding, hybrid VMFH Emergency and Urgent Care - Bremerton, and a second hybrid ED/urgent care location opening in Port Orchard later this year. We are very excited about the Olympic College Healthcare Expansion and our ongoing work together to grow our pipeline of people who are excited to enter the field of health care or advance their careers.

How is the hospital preparing for the future of health care – both in terms of technology and patient expectations?

We're always preparing for what the future will look like within our own organization and with our elected officials, organizations like the Washington State Hospital Association and other key stakeholders. Health care changes every day and it requires us to be agile. One area of certainty is that we have a growing aging population here in Kitsap County and we will continue to prepare to care for these

patients - with a special focus on primary care, internal medicine and specialty care to meet their needs. We will also continue to foster the retention of our amazing workforce while working to attract more passionate people to health care.

What keeps you up at night – and what gives you hope?

The financial pressures on our hospitals and health systems have been high for the last several years and continue to grow while we are experiencing increasing cost of labor and general operations. Recruiting amazing people to care for our community, especially physicians, is another area of great need that keeps me up.

However, I'm hopeful when I reflect on the remarkable progress St. Michael Medical Center has made in the last three years. The improvements we've seen in our quality outcomes and patient experience along with team member engagement is truly inspiring. We've done this while continuing to grow and expand to meet community needs. It's an exciting time for us. ■

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



Angela Forsythe

Kitsap Bank has promoted **Angela Forsythe** to Branch Manager of its Bremerton location, building on her successful eight-year tenure with the Port

Orchard-based financial institution. Since joining as a Financial Service Representative in 2017, Forsythe has steadily advanced her career, most recently serving as Assistant Branch Manager since June 2023 where she has distinguished herself as an emerging leader. With over two decades of diverse banking experience, Forsythe brings comprehensive industry knowledge and proven leadership capabilities

that have enhanced customer service and team development. Jennifer Ruckman, SVP and Regional Operations Manager, highlighted Forsythe's promotion, praising her "dedication to her customers, her team, and the community" that makes her "a valuable asset to the Bremerton Branch and Kitsap Bank team."

Kitsap Bank has appointed **Kevan**



Kevan Neill

Neill as AVP, Senior Human Resources Generalist/ Recruiter, leveraging his diverse experience within the Port Orchard-based financial institution.

Neill, who joined Kitsap Bank in 2020,

transitions from his previous role as AVP, Branch Manager of the Bremerton Branch, where he established a strong reputation for leadership and exceptional customer service. His background in branch management provides a valuable operational perspective to the Human Resources team, perfectly complementing his formal credentials that include a bachelor's degree from PLU, a Human Resources Management Certificate from Bellevue College, and SHRM-CP certification. Marilyn Hoppen, SVP, Human Resources Director, expressed enthusiasm for the appointment, noting Neill's "leadership skills, deep understanding of our bank's culture, and ability to connect with people" as key strengths he brings to recruiting top talent and supporting employee

development.

The Admiral Theatre Foundation

has appointed **Susan Veach** as Chief Financial Officer and **Jennifer Christine** as Finance Assistant, strengthening the financial leadership team at the performing arts organization. Veach brings significant financial expertise to her new executive role, where she will oversee all fiscal operations for the Foundation, while Christine's addition as Finance Assistant establishes a robust financial management structure. This strategic leadership expansion reflects the Foundation's commitment to sound financial stewardship as it continues to support the Admiral Theatre's cultural and artistic programming. The dual appointments position the organization to enhance its financial oversight and

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Changing Faces, Changing Places

reporting capabilities while supporting its ongoing mission in the community.

The Admiral Theatre Foundation

has elected **Tim Lavin** as President, **Kevin Cure** as Vice President, and Joan Hanten as Secretary, establishing a new leadership structure for its Board of Directors. This governance team brings diverse experience to guide the Foundation's strategic direction and oversight responsibilities as it supports the Admiral Theatre's cultural mission. The appointment of these key board officers reflects the organization's commitment to strong leadership as it continues to enhance the theatre's role as a performing arts center in the community. With this leadership transition, the Foundation is positioned to advance its fundraising initiatives and strengthen operational oversight while furthering its dedication to artistic excellence and cultural enrichment.

Local Briefs

Reprospace, LLC has unveiled a strategic expansion of its service

portfolio, adding sophisticated software development and artificial intelligence integration capabilities to its established design and print offerings. The Poulsbo-based company, owned by Ingemar Anderson, has built a reputation for high-quality graphic design, marketing materials, printing, and book design services throughout Kitsap County. Beginning spring 2025, this significant business evolution positions Repospace as a technology innovator in the local business ecosystem.

The company's new digital platform, officially available at reprospace.com, introduces a comprehensive suite of tools designed specifically for small and mid-sized enterprises seeking technological advantages without substantial investment in specialized staff or infrastructure. These solutions enable businesses to automate customer service responses, extract actionable insights from operational data, and dramatically enhance customer engagement through intuitive AI applications. This expansion represents a natural

progression that addresses the growing digital needs of Kitsap businesses. The platform's user-friendly interface makes advanced technology accessible even to organizations with limited technical expertise, allowing them to implement sophisticated digital solutions without navigating the typical complexities of AI adoption. Repospace is offering complimentary access to the platform through their promotional site www.reprospace.click, where interested businesses can experience the immediate benefits of workflow automation and enhanced customer interaction tools. This initiative reflects the company's commitment to supporting regional economic development by democratizing access to technologies typically reserved for larger enterprises.

Located at 1450 NW Finn Hill Road in Poulsbo, Repospace continues to serve as both a traditional design service and now as a digital transformation partner for the Kitsap business community. The company's evolution underscores the growing importance of AI integration

in maintaining competitive advantage, even for traditionally non-tech focused local enterprises.

Iglesia Cristiana Shekinah/Shekinah Christian Church celebrated its first anniversary on May 4, as Port Orchard's premier bilingual Spanish-English congregation. Founded by Pastor Frank Salcedo, a combat veteran, and his wife Carmen after relocating from Pennsylvania in 2023, the church emerged from Pastor Salcedo's ministry work at Kitsap County Jail. Despite starting with no attendees, the congregation has grown to twelve committed members through community networking and a partnership with Heritage Foursquare Church, which provides their worship space. The charismatic church emphasizes relationship-based spirituality and has established connections with Peninsula Credit Union, Better Together Foundation, and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue while hosting multicultural resource events to serve the region's Hispanic community. ■



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Staying Seen

Why Brand Consistency and Visibility Matter More in Uncertain Times

By Amy Yaley | COO of Ward Media

When the economy starts to wobble, the first instinct for many businesses is to scale back spending, and marketing is often one of the first things on the chopping block. But history and consumer behavior suggest that cutting visibility during uncertain times may be one of the costliest mistakes a business can make. Maintaining a consistent brand presence, even on a tighter budget, can not only preserve your customer base but it can also help you grow it.

CONSISTENCY BUILDS TRUST

Brand consistency is more than just using the same logo and colors. It's about delivering a unified message across every touchpoint — from your website and social media to email marketing and local ads in your market. This consistency creates a sense of reliability and professionalism, which becomes especially valuable when customers feel uncertain.

Your brand can be that familiar face in a crowded room. When everything else feels unpredictable, a steady, recognizable presence stands out and feels safe. That's why the brands that maintain consistent messaging — in tone, visuals, and values — are often the ones customers turn to again and again.

ADVERTISING IN A DOWNTURN: A LONG-TERM ADVANTAGE

History has shown us, businesses that continue to advertise during economic downturns often come out ahead. During the 2008 recession, brands that sustained their advertising efforts not only maintained customer loyalty but captured market share as competitors went dark.

A well-recognized example is when Netflix doubled down on its marketing efforts while Blockbuster reduced its footprint and cut costs in 2008. Netflix invested in marketing and technology, pivoting toward streaming, while keeping its brand messaging consistent around convenience and value. Their decision paid off in a big way, setting the stage for Netflix to become a household name and eventually dominate the entertainment landscape.

When others pull back, maintaining your marketing efforts allows you to stand out more. With less noise in the market, your message carries farther. It's also usually more cost-effective — advertising costs often drop when demand is low, giving you more value for your dollar.

THE HIGH COST OF GOING QUIET

While it may seem like a smart short-term cost cut, disappearing from your customers' view comes with consequences. Out of sight really does mean out of mind. When your business stops showing up, whether in search results, social feeds, inboxes, or local publications, you lose momentum. Customers don't stop needing products or services; they just look elsewhere.

Rebuilding awareness is expensive and time-consuming. It's much easier and more effective to maintain visibility than it is to start over.

HOW TO STAY PRESENT — WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK

Staying visible doesn't mean blowing your budget. Focus on being consistent and strategic. Evaluate the channels you already use, look at what works, look to where you could improve, look to where you can grow your target audience.

Here are a few ways to keep your brand strong during slow times:

- **Stick to your brand identity:** Make sure your colors, fonts, and messaging are the same across platforms.
- **Be clear and empathetic:** Let

customers know how you're supporting them during uncertain times, whether it's through flexible service, added value, or simply a reliable presence.

- **Maintain a rhythm:** A regular newsletter, scheduled social posts, and consistent print or digital ads can go a long way.
- **Think local and loyal:** Don't overlook the power of community-based advertising and existing customers. They are your most cost-effective audience.

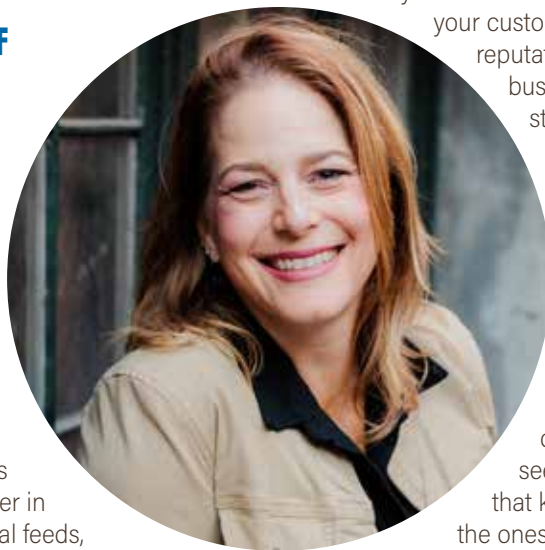
STAY THE COURSE

Uncertain times test everyone, and it's natural to want to tighten the belt. But visibility and consistency aren't luxuries.

They're essentials. They reassure your customers, uphold your reputation, and position your business to come out stronger on the other side.

So while others may choose to go quiet, let your brand be the steady voice that customers continue to hear. Show up, stay consistent, and stay seen. The businesses that keep showing up are the ones that get remembered and rewarded when the economy turns around. ■

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



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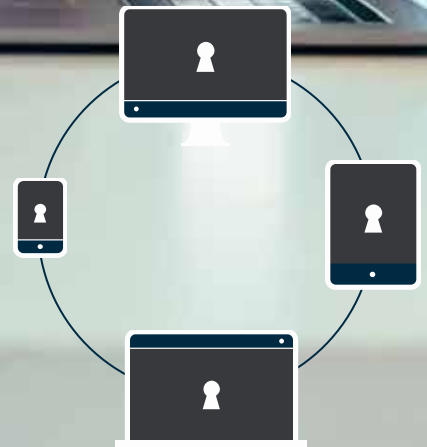


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