

KITSAP

August 2025

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*Named after Ross Eide's mother, Ardell Salsa blends simplicity and flavor, using just a few fresh, high-quality ingredients.*

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Running a small business can feel like walking on water—each step a test of balance, belief, and resilience. Based on Bainbridge Island, Pier 52 is more than a bookkeeping firm—it's a lifeline for small business owners navigating the tides of growth, taxes, payroll, and profit margins.

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# Purpose in Every Pour, Passion in Every Page

For **WARD**  
THINKING

**W**elcome to the August edition of *Kitsap Business*, where we spotlight the makers, movers, and mission-driven entrepreneurs who are shaping the character—and the future—of our region. This month's stories remind us that the best businesses aren't just profitable—they're personal. They're rooted in heritage, built with intention, and anchored in community.

You'll meet Jacob Motola of Wautauga Bay Roasters, a former tech professional whose journey from Silicon Valley to small-batch coffee is more than a career pivot—it's a love letter to quality, sustainability, and human connection. From the shaded slopes of the Peruvian rainforest to the mugs of Kitsap coffee lovers, his beans tell a story of rare flavors and respectful sourcing.

Then there's Ross Eide of Bainbridge Island, whose Ardell Salsa honors a bold family recipe—and the woman who created it. What started as a snack for preschoolers has become a full-fledged food business, driven by fresh ingredients, fiery innovation, and a whole lot of heart.

Tom and Yukie Huebner's DockStar Thrusters remind us that some of the best innovations come not from boardrooms but from the docks. Their smart, install-it-yourself marine thruster system is making boating safer and more accessible, proving that retirement can be a launchpad for world-changing ideas.

We also shine a light on Shannon Raymond-Becker of Pier 52 Bookkeeping, whose work is grounded in empathy and financial empowerment. Her team doesn't just reconcile accounts—they support entrepreneurs navigating the daily highs and lows of running a small business.

And we check in with the East Bremerton Rotary Club, where service and fellowship go hand-in-hand. Under the banner of "Unite for Good," they're doubling down on local impact, showing that collective effort still holds transformative power in today's world.



What ties all of these stories together is a simple but powerful thread: purpose. Whether it's in a cup of coffee, a jar of salsa, a docking maneuver, or a balance sheet, Kitsap's business owners are leading with authenticity and a commitment to craft. They remind us that business is at its best when it serves not just the bottom line, but the broader good.

As always, *Kitsap Business* is proud to share these stories with you. Because in every venture, every vision, and every voice, there's something worth celebrating. Here's to the builders—and the better world they're helping create. ■

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Publisher, Kitsap Business

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# KITSAP **BUSINESS**

## **Ward Media, LLC Kitsap Business Magazine**

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9 Locations to Serve You in Kitsap



Photos Courtesy of Wautauga Bay Roasters



## Fresh Beans, Deep Roots

How Wautauga Bay Roasters is Redefining Quality Coffee



*For Motola, coffee is personal. With roots in a Turkish household, it's been part of his life since childhood.*



*Jacob Motola, co-founder and CEO of Wautauga Bay Roasters, transitioned to coffee after a 30-year career in tech.*





*Ursula, one of Wautauga Bay's coffee producers in Peru, also works in medical distribution. She is pictured with medical care packages that are delivered into remote jungle communities.*



*Wautauga Bay's beans are sourced from micro-lots and harvested by hand to preserve quality and flavor.*

**By Quinn Propst |**  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

For many coffee drinkers, the ritual of brewing a morning cup is a familiar comfort. But for Jacob Motola, co-founder and CEO of Wautauga Bay Roasters, coffee is more than routine—it's a longstanding interest that's become a second career rooted in relationships, respect for the process, and an appreciation for rare, small-lot beans.

"Coffee has been a lifelong passion and sort of a consistent part of my life throughout," said Motola. "I like to think of it as a natural progression—going and doing something that I really care deeply about."

Wautauga Bay Roasters, based in Port Orchard is a small-batch coffee roasting company that focuses on rare beans grown in the Peruvian rainforest. Most of the beans are shade-grown and sourced from Indigenous farmers, specifically members of the Yanesha tribe, who cultivate coffee on small plots of land deep in the region's biodiverse rainforests.

Motola didn't set out to build a coffee business. For three decades, he worked in the tech sector. But when a remote position ended and the company required relocation to Denver, he opted instead to stay in the Pacific Northwest with his family and take time to consider what came next.

After about nine months of job searching, he chose to move in a different direction. Drawing on a lifelong connection to coffee that began in childhood, he decided to build a company that reflected his values and personal interests.

"I grew up with Turkish grandparents," Motola said. "Coffee was one of the first things I ever drank. I have a fundamental understanding of the plant, the bean, how it's processed, how it's grown."

He launched Wautauga Bay Roasters with a longtime friend—now in the military and raising a family—who shares his interest in high-quality coffee. Together, they built a business model that focuses on sourcing beans directly from micro-lot farms that are often too small to participate in national export systems.

"We know the people who grow our product. We know the people who harvest it. We know the people who import it," Motola said. "And we know ourselves well enough to know that what we have is relatively rare."





**Coffee grown for Wautauga Bay Roasters is cultivated on small, shade-grown farms deep in the Peruvian rainforest.**

Wautauga's sourcing process is built on a direct relationship with a trusted local partner in Peru—an EMT who married into a local indigenous tribe. Through this connection, Wautauga is able to work with farms that practice traditional growing methods and preserve native shade-grown agriculture. The beans are hand-harvested, and small harvests from different farms are combined and processed in ways that meet international standards without relying on large-scale exporters.

"What our beans provide is a level of exclusivity, but also a level of flavor that you're not going to find elsewhere," Motola said.

Motola believes that freshness is just as important as origin. Unlike many coffees sold in grocery stores, which may have been roasted months—or even years—after harvest, Wautauga Bay's beans are typically less than six months old when they arrive in customers' homes. The company sells only whole beans and roasts in small batches to maintain freshness and quality.

"Most of the coffee sold in stores is at least two years old," Motola said. "We're rebelling against stale coffee, rebelling against old coffee."

Wautauga Bay operates primarily through a subscription model, offering freshly roasted coffee delivered directly to customers. It's a deliberate approach, one that avoids the

compromises often required when scaling for retail distribution.

Motola describes the company as one that values relationships and craftsmanship more than growth for its own sake.

"We care about what we're doing," he said. "We care about the people providing us with our product. We're fascinated and in love with coffee and the process of roasting it and providing it to our friends and our family—and we want to extend that to a broader audience."

The name Wautauga Bay was inspired by a local geographic feature—Wautauga Point near Motola's home—but was intentionally adapted to create a brand identity that felt rooted without being tied to one place.

"We felt that Wautauga as a name would help us stimulate the imagination of the consumer, but not lock us into a specific geography," Motola said.

That balance between story and substance runs throughout the company's approach. Wautauga Bay isn't trying to be the flashiest roaster on the market, but instead focuses on delivering a consistent, high-quality product with transparency about where the beans come from and how they're handled.

Much of that comes down to doing the work by hand, in small quantities, with attention to detail. From selecting green coffee to perfecting roast profiles, Motola takes care in each step of the process.

"It's all hand harvested," he said. "Some things are worth doing slowly, by hand, with heart."

Though still a relatively new company, Wautauga Bay has begun to find its audience among people who are looking for more than a convenient cup. Subscribers appreciate the traceability, freshness, and the unique flavor profiles that come from working with single-origin beans grown in specific microclimates.

Motola is modest about what he hopes the company can become. He's not chasing a major retail presence or rapid expansion. Instead, he's focused on maintaining quality and honoring the relationships that make the business possible—from farmers to customers.

At its core, Wautauga Bay Roasters is a reflection of Motola's shift from one industry to another. It's a second act that blends his technical background with a more personal, hands-on craft.

"I like doing meaningful work," he said.

"Coffee is something I've always loved, and now I get to share that with others in a way that feels genuine."

There's no gimmick, no hype—just a commitment to good coffee, strong relationships, and doing things the right way. For Wautauga Bay Roasters, that's enough. ■



**A fresh harvest of hand-picked coffee beans, collected in a bucket at one of Wautauga Bay's partner farms.**



**Judith, a coffee farmer in Peru, displays freshly harvested beans destined for Wautauga Bay Roasters.**



# Technology

# Cybersecurity for Growing Businesses

By Jon Hoehne | CMIT Solutions

Running a business means managing countless visible risks daily. You can see when equipment needs maintenance, hear when something's not running right, and feel when workplace dynamics are off. Digital risks can often be out of sight and out of mind. While you can't stand over employees' shoulders, you can build IT security controls that protect your specific systems, accounts, and data.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR RISK FACTORS

The first step is understanding where you're vulnerable. What are your risk sources? Here are two that affect most businesses.

**Your Inbox is Ground Zero:** If your business uses email, it's a major source of scams and malware. Even with robust junk and spam protection, novel scam emails continue to reach inboxes.

Employees aren't looking for trouble when they use email, it just finds its way in. Email service providers work hard to filter threats, but malicious messages slip through. Attackers know there's always a small chance they will succeed. Phishing attacks lead to all sorts of problems, some of the worst being losing control of your account, info stealing malware, and ransomware.

**Your Data Usage:** If you lose access to your data for any reason, how long can your business operate? An hour? A day? A week? How long will it take to recover? Even if you don't consider your business to be high-tech, consider what your team needs to do each day. From creating invoices, ordering from suppliers, scheduling appointments, to providing service to customers you have

some need for digital information. The more dependent you are on your data, the greater the impact a disaster or ransomware attack will have on your business.

## TWO MUST HAVES

Start with these two critical controls that provide the most protection for the effort.

**Require Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) Everywhere:** Why everywhere?

Consider what's behind each login. Your online banking contains your financial data and your ability to easily perform online transactions. Your file sharing systems hold sensitive documents. Your email accounts contain years of business relationships and confidential communications.

If your usernames and passwords are stolen, often by malware sent to your email, MFA is designed to stop unauthorized use. Most systems now offer MFA by default and have no additional costs. For systems that don't, third-party tools can enforce MFA requirements across your organization. Yes, employees might grumble about the extra step, but it's a small inconvenience compared to a breach.

**Implement and Test Backups Regularly:**

Understanding how long you can operate without data helps you develop a realistic backup and recovery strategy. You don't need an overengineered solution designed for a Fortune 500 company, but you do need something that matches your actual business continuity needs. More importantly, you need to test it. Draw from your own experience to create simple, value-added test scenarios. For example, "Client X's data is corrupt, and their file won't load. Let's restore last night's backup."



## BUILDING YOUR SECURITY FOUNDATION

These are just two examples of common risks and IT security controls. The larger your business gets, the more potential cybersecurity risks will be introduced. One way to sustain growth without burdensome cost is to work with a Managed Service Provider. The role of a Managed Service Provider (MSP) is to deliver enterprise-class IT security that fits the goals, capabilities, and budget of the client.

## A GOOD MSP WILL:

- Conduct a risk assessment specific to your business
- Create a security roadmap that addresses the most critical risks first
- Provide the resources to manage and implement the security controls on that roadmap
- Provide ongoing monitoring and response capabilities as your business grows

Identifying your unique risk factors and implementing robust security measures like MFA and regular data backups will provide significant mitigation. Partnering with an MSP can further enhance your security without overwhelming your resources. As your business grows, remember that proactive cybersecurity is an investment in the resilience of your business. ■

## Fewer Ingredients, Bigger Flavor

*Ardell Salsa's mantra, "Fewer ingredients, higher quality," is reflected in its fresh lineup of tomatoes, peppers, onions, and herbs.*

*Photos By Leah Thompson / Scandia Studios*

### Ardell Salsa Brings a Family Recipe to Market

**By Quinn Propst** | Ward Media Staff Reporter

**B**ainbridge Island resident Ross Eide didn't originally plan to start a salsa business. But after years of sharing a family recipe—and watching people light up at the first bite—he launched Ardell Salsa, named in honor of his mother, the salsa's original creator.

The first time Eide tried his mom's salsa, it was a moment he'll never forget.

"It was such an explosion of flavor and taste to our usual palette," Eide said. "It was kind of like that scene in *The Wizard of Oz*, when Dorothy first lands in Oz, it's all in black and white, and then she opens up the door and it's all in color. That's kind of like what happened to my taste buds."

His mother, Ardell, was born in north central Minnesota to Norwegian immigrants, and her cooking reflected the simplicity of her upbringing.

"The spices of her childhood and her cooking were salt, and then maybe if something was special or someone got a little crazy, they'd have a little pepper, and that's kind of the food I grew up with," Eide said.

That changed in the 1990s, when Ardell was teaching in Arizona and surprised her family by whipping up a bold, flavorful salsa. It became a staple, passed down to her children.

"My mom, thankfully, taught it to us—to myself and my two sisters—and we, in turn, made it for our kids," Eide said.

Years later, when Eide was a stay-at-home dad, he brought his version of the salsa to his son's preschool as a snack. The kids loved it. One day, while standing in line at the door, another parent made a suggestion: You should sell this.

"And I thought, you know, maybe I should do that someday," he said.

Eventually, the idea stuck.

"Then one day, it just kind of clicked, and I went through the whole process of getting a commercial kitchen and getting a processing license and forming an LLC, and all the stuff that you need to get a salsa business started."

Eide officially began selling Ardell Salsa in February 2024. His first retail clients were



*Ardell Salsa is known for its bold, cilantro-forward flavor and quick turnaround—reaching store shelves within 24 hours.*





*One of Eide's biggest fans? His son Rooney, who happily digs into a chip loaded with the family's signature salsa.*



*Ardell Salsa founder Ross Eide prepares a fresh batch in the kitchen using the same family recipe his mother created decades ago.*

Bay Hay and Feed and the Rolling Bay Jiffy Mart on Bainbridge Island. The salsa is now available at a co-op in Tacoma, the Chimacum Corner Farmstand, and Eide is working with a distributor to expand into Town & Country Markets. He also sells direct to customers at the Bainbridge and Poulsbo farmers markets.

The company's mantra, "Fewer ingredients, higher quality," reflects the simplicity at the heart of the brand.

"We just use tomatoes, jalapeños, green onions, different peppers depending on the heat level that we want, and then salt, and then that's it," Eide said. "Because we use so few ingredients, we can really focus on the qualities of those ingredients."

The result is a salsa with a fresh, cilantro-forward flavor that arrives on store shelves within 24 hours of being made. Eide rents space in a commercial kitchen on Bainbridge and typically processes and delivers the product in quick succession.

Before starting the business, Eide worked as an attorney. That background, he said, came in handy.

"Reading minutiae and state statutes and processing the business license—it was helpful," he said.

Today, Ardell Salsa offers mild, medium, and hot varieties. The medium salsa is made with jalapeños; the hot version uses habaneros. Eide is continuing to experiment with new flavor and heat profiles.

"We've come up with a Serrano hot that we want to put on the market. We've also come up with a fire salsa, which uses ghost peppers, and that has a heat to it, but you can still taste the flavor."

And for those who insist nothing is ever spicy enough? Eide has an answer for them, too.

"Every single time I have a tasting or a farmers market or something like that, I always come across some dude, some guy, and he's always like, 'That's not hot enough, that's not hot enough.' I wanted to have a salsa that's so hot that it just shuts them up."

That salsa is called Shut Up Fire—made with Carolina Reapers.

"I will say that it is just heat," he said. "It will blind your taste buds. You're not getting a lot of flavor in the salsa, it's just heat, and it's just to shut these people up. I mean, at a certain point, real hot food gets to be like middle school dare candy, right? And, you know, I'm like, if you want to sacrifice flavor for just heat, I can do that."



*Rooney taste-tests the finished product, a family favorite turned small-batch business with growing regional reach.*

While Shut Up Fire is currently only available by special order, Eide plans to carry it as a specialty item and is working on branding and logo design. The business also plans to expand into non-salsa products with a new item called dip cream—a creamy Midwest-style dip for vegetables, chips, or potatoes.

"People really seem to like our dip cream that we tested when we had a tasting, and I think that'll be another popular item once we get that to market," he said.

Eide's proudest moment so far? Taking his mom to the store and showing her a jar of Ardell Salsa on the shelf.

"She really loves it. She has not contacted any sort of patent attorney yet to sue me for her ingredients, which is always nice," he joked. "Yeah, we don't have lawsuits in the family. But no, she's really proud of me."

She even likes it spicier now than she used to.

"For the longest time, you know, she's worried about me being a stay-at-home dad, and what about my career and all that stuff," he said.

Now, Eide jokes that the company gives him a leg up in the sibling rivalry department.

"It is the ultimate one up on my overachieving sisters, the siblings, you know, it's just like, 'Oh, did you start a company

and name it after mom?' So I can always say that," he said. "And then I'll just tell them I'm sure she loves you in her own way."

Looking to the future, Eide hopes to grow distribution into King County and the greater Seattle market. Ultimately, he dreams of opening a dedicated production facility with labeling and sorting equipment.

"At the core of it I know it's a good product," he said. "I watch people sample it at farmers markets or other places, and you can just see that click in their mind, and you're like, 'Oh, okay, yes, this is good,' you know, this is not just some average salsa."

Eide is confident that once people try it, they'll be hooked. His goal is to scale enough to bring down the price point, while still maintaining the salsa's premium quality.

"It's been very fortunate for me to start on Bainbridge Island, because people on Bainbridge really support their own," he said. "It's one of the really interesting quirks about Bainbridge that I love."

For Eide, though, success won't be measured only by profit or production scale. He's aiming for something more personal.

"I think I will feel like ultimate success if I just randomly run into someone in the wild that talks about my salsa," he said. "Like someone's like, 'Oh, you're from Bainbridge? Have you had this salsa?' or however it comes up." ■



*Eide slices habanero peppers—used in the salsa's hot variety—during prep at a commercial kitchen.*





# Kingston Member Spotlight



## Havencraft: A Sanctuary of Creativity in Kingston

**H**avencraft is a charming destination filled with lush plants, custom woodwork, local art, crafts, and jewelry—everything you need to create a personal sanctuary at home. Located in a renovated 100-year-old house at the corner of NE West Kingston Rd and Hwy 104 in Kingston, just two blocks from the ferry, Havencraft is both a retail space and a reflection of its creative owners, Anja and Matthew—and their friendly four-legged greeter, Darla.

Anja, who grew up in Washington and Hawaii,

has worn many hats: doula, baker, jewelry maker, musician, and now plant expert with certifications in horticulture. Matthew, originally from Bremerton, discovered woodworking after running a greenhouse and studying painting in Michigan. He later apprenticed as a carpenter, drawn to the creativity and independence the trade offers.

The couple met at a costume party in 2016 (he was an Amish man, she was Little Bo Peep), and their shared creative energy eventually sparked Havencraft's founding in 2023. Anja had been consulting on landscaping and garden design, while Matthew had long dreamed of a storefront to showcase his handcrafted woodwork. When their current location became available, it felt meant to be.

Havencraft provides something special: not only unique goods, but also expert guidance. Anja offers tailored advice to gardeners of all experience levels, helping

customers choose and care for plants suited to their spaces. Matthew's woodcraft, visible throughout the property, invites conversation and custom commissions. "I create pieces you can't find elsewhere," he says.

Living and working in Kingston, they cherish the town's small-community feel and natural beauty. "We love recognizing neighbors and meeting visitors," says Anja.

Fun facts: Matthew once walked over 3,000 miles back to Washington from Michigan, meeting kind strangers along the way. Anja studied abroad in Peru and Jordan while attending UW, experiences that expanded her cultural

awareness.

They credit the local Chamber of Commerce with helping them feel connected and supported as a small business.

**Visit Havencraft to explore thoughtfully curated items made by local hands—and to feel what it's like to step into a sanctuary. ■**



## Message from the Board

### A Farewell and Thank You to Kaili Roest

**I**t's with warm wishes and heartfelt gratitude that we announce the resignation of the Chamber Executive Director for the last 5 years; Kaili Roest. Kaili will be stepping down at the end of July to focus on her growing family and begin a new chapter closer to loved ones.

Please join us in wishing Kaili all the best as she embarks on this exciting new journey with her family.

You will be missed, Kaili—and always a part of the GKCC family! ■

— Kingston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

## Welcome New Member

Marina View Hair Studio



### Kingston's Concerts on the Cove

Free Live Music at Mike Wallace Waterfront Park  
Saturday Nights 6-8pm

- July 26<sup>th</sup> - Danny Vernon
- August 03 - Hippie & The Squids
- August 9<sup>th</sup> - The Fabulous Murphtones
- August 16<sup>th</sup> - Soul Siren
- August 23<sup>rd</sup> - Lone State
- August 30<sup>th</sup> - Silver City 6










## Simplifying the Dock

Kingston Startup Empowers Everyday Boaters with Smart Thruster Technology

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

When Tom and Yukie Huebner retired and moved to Kingston, they were excited to enjoy the region's natural beauty and vibrant boating community. They looked forward to days spent crabbing, fishing, and exploring the waters around Puget Sound. But they quickly realized something that many new boaters do: docking isn't easy.

"It's easy for boats to move forward, and back, but moving side to side, it can be more difficult," said Tom Huebner. "Kind of like a forklift on an ice rink, in a hurricane, some days—with different currents, wind, waves, things along those lines."

That challenge inspired the couple to develop a solution—one designed not just for seasoned boaters, but for people like them: everyday users who love being on the water but want more confidence and control when maneuvering in tight spaces.

The result was DockStar Thrusters, a Kingston-based company that creates compact bow and stern thrusters for small to mid-size boats. Unlike traditional systems, which are expensive, complex, and often only available for large vessels, DockStar's Smart Thruster can be installed in about an hour and doesn't require hauling the boat out of the water.

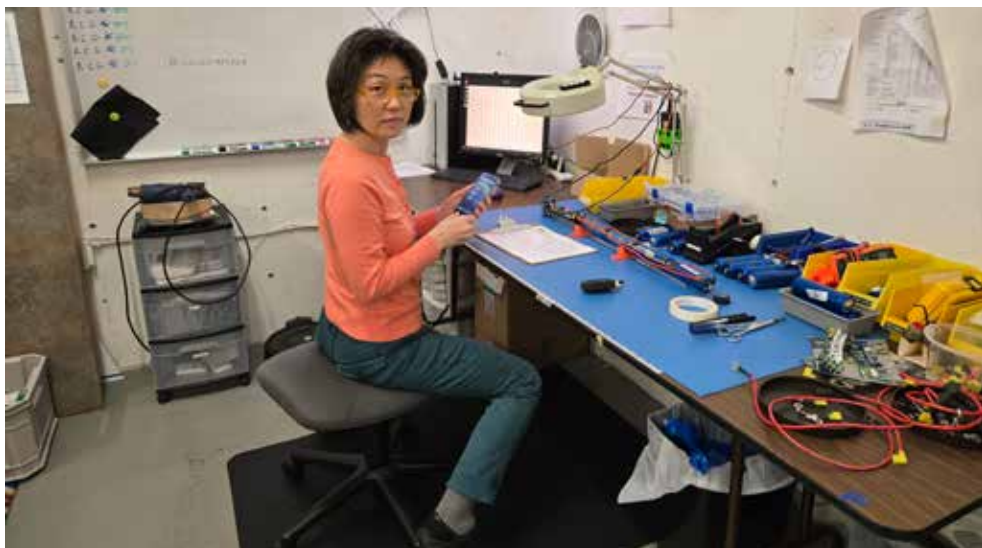
"Ours is unique in the fact that it can be installed by the average DIY-type person," Tom said. "If you can find your way around

*Yukie Huebner assembles a second-generation DockStar Smart Thruster, re-engineered for more power and reliability.*



Photos Courtesy of Dockstar Thrusters

*DockStar's compact, wireless thruster system helps sailboats dock with ease—even in tight slips and challenging conditions.*







Home Depot or Lowe's and not get totally lost, you can do it."

The system mounts externally, is chargeable, and can be remotely operated. That wireless functionality has made it attractive not only for recreational boaters, but also for salvage operations and other marine applications. It works on a wide range of vessels, including sailboats, powerboats, pontoon boats, and even small tour boats. The Huebners work directly with customers to determine the best mounting strategy for each vessel.

"Docking can be stressful and dangerous," Tom said. "There's a lot of reasons why a thruster is necessary."

DockStar's Smart Thruster was first released in 2017. Most of its early customers were in the Pacific Northwest, but demand has since expanded. "We have about 200 systems out in the wild right now, of our first generation," Tom said. "We have 470 people that are waiting for our second generation."

The next version, scheduled for release in September, has been re-engineered with more powerful motors, improved batteries, and updated manufacturing techniques.

"They operate exactly the same," Yukie said. "But beyond that, everything's been re-engineered."

In 2022, the couple faced a major hurdle when global supply chain issues disrupted

their overseas component sourcing. They responded by moving all sourcing and manufacturing to the U.S.—a decision that, according to Tom, has improved quality control and reliability.

Tom brings a background in naval submarine systems to the business, while Yukie draws from her experience in electronics, project management, and business operations. Together, they've built DockStar not only as a product company, but as a platform for innovation and education.

They've begun partnering with local institutions including Olympic College, Washington State University, and organizations like Matchstick Labs to support student learning and capstone projects. Their goal is to give the next generation of engineers, technicians, and entrepreneurs real-world experience using modern tools like SolidWorks, 3D printing, and rapid prototyping.

For the Huebners, though, the most rewarding part remains the response from customers.

"We've received good customer feedback," Yukie said. "Customers say they love our product and rely on it, and that it's working beautifully and helping them to dock safely."

Tom agreed: "That's where all the hard work that we've been putting in comes back

*Tom and Yukie Huebner participate in Matchstick Lab's micro business accelerator, helping grow DockStar Thrusters in Kitsap County.*



*DockStar Thrusters are versatile enough for use on small commercial vessels, like this floating pub.*





*Tom Huebner works hands-on with a customer to install a DockStar Smart Thruster on a recreational boat.*



*Tom Huebner helps a customer install a DockStar Smart Thruster, which mounts externally and requires no haul-out.*



*A DockStar Smart Thruster deployed on a Beneteau Oceanis 34 provides improved side-to-side maneuverability.*



*The Huebners show off one of their newly designed thruster units, now fully manufactured in the U.S.*

around—seeing people out on the water, people enjoying their boat, and then coming back to us and saying, ‘Why weren’t you here 20 years ago? Why weren’t you here 10 years ago? I could have used this when my grandfather was yelling at me to dock the boat.’”

During COVID, many people bought boats but didn’t actually use them—often because they lacked the skills, confidence, or comfort to dock safely. Fear of damaging their boat, hitting other vessels, or getting into stressful arguments kept them tied to the dock.

DockStar Thrusters aims to eliminate that barrier by making docking easier, more affordable, and less stressful. Their system lowers the entry point to boating by offering a simpler, \$4,000 solution with zero time out of the water—compared to \$20,000 alternatives that often require hauling the boat out of the water. The goal is to help more people feel confident on the water, encouraging a more active and welcoming boating community.

Whether it’s giving a sailor more confidence at the dock or giving a student their first taste of real-world engineering, Tom and Yukie Huebner are building something bigger than a thruster. They’re building opportunity—from the waterline up.

“This is our home,” Tom said. “This is where we want to make the biggest impact.” ■



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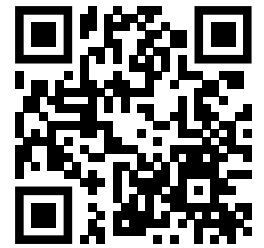


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## The Unsung Heroes of Caregiving

Why Caring for the Caregiver Matters

By Jessica Hull | Community Relations Director, Bay Pointe by Cogir

Caregivers are the backbone of our society, selflessly dedicating themselves to the well-being of loved ones. They often put others' needs ahead of themselves, sacrificing time, energy, and emotional resources. It's essential to recognize the importance of caregivers and the toll caregiving takes on their physical, emotional, and mental health. Caregivers need care too.

Their work is often invisible, yet invaluable. They manage medications, coordinate medical appointments, and provide emotional support. Despite the challenges, they persevere. Often driven by love and loyalty. However, they often put their own lives on hold, sacrificing personal goals, relationships, and even their own health.

### The Challenges of Caregiving

Caregiving can be a rewarding experience, but it's also one of the most overwhelming. Caregivers face emotional stress, burnout, and physical strain from performing various tasks, including Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as bathing, incontinence care, dressing, and grooming. These tasks can be complex and time-consuming, leading to social isolation, loss of personal time, and feelings of guilt. Many caregivers take on this responsibility out of love, obligation, or a sense of duty,

often without realizing the impact it can have on their own well-being.

### CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER MATTERS

When caregivers are supported, healthy, and prioritize their own self-care, they're better equipped to provide high-quality care for their loved ones. This is crucial to preventing burnout, reducing the risk of caregiver exhaustion and emotional depletion. By caring for the caregiver, we can ensure that they're able to continue providing care with compassion, patience, and dedication. This isn't just a moral imperative; it's also essential for the well-being of both the caregiver and their loved one.

### HOW TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS

Whether you're a caregiver yourself or know someone who is, there are many ways to prioritize self-care and seek support. Here are a few strategies:

- **Take breaks:** Know your limits and take breaks when needed. Respite care is not just for the resident, but also for the caregiver, promoting rest and recharge.
- **Join a support group:** Connect with others who understand the caregiving experience through support groups and online communities. –
- **Prioritize self-care:** Engage in activities

that bring joy and relaxation, whether it's exercise, hobbies, or meditation. –

- **Seek professional help:** Consult with therapists, counselors, or social workers who specialize in caregiver support. –
- **Utilize resources:** Take advantage of home health care, adult day programs, and caregiver support hotlines.

Caring for the caregiver is essential to ensuring the well-being of both the caregiver and their loved one. By recognizing the challenges of caregiving and providing support, we can help caregivers thrive and

continue to provide high-quality care. Prioritizing caregiver support and self-care is not a luxury, but a necessity. It's time to acknowledge the importance of caregivers and provide them with

the care and support they deserve. By doing so, we can build a more compassionate and sustainable caregiving system that benefits everyone involved. Caregivers are the unsung heroes of our society, and it's time we recognize their value and support their well-being. ■





# GKC Around the Community



Bremerton was humming with music at the grand opening festival of Quincy Square on July 12 and 13 in Downtown. The weekend-long celebration was coordinated by the Downtown Bremerton Association in partnership with the City of Bremerton, and featured a variety of performances, the Black Night Market, and even a silent disco sponsored by Kitsap Pride. The Greater Kitsap Chamber was proud to celebrate alongside the entire community with a ribbon cutting to kick off the festivities.

Photo credit: Michele Wasson



**august 30 & 31 - blackberry festival**

## PORT TO PORT POP-UP!



Pop on the foot ferry between Silverdale & Bremerton during **Blackberry Festival Weekend!**

Join us for a sail during Bremerton's Blackberry Festival! Catch the pop-up in Silverdale or Bremerton for a 1-hour sail along Dyes Inlet. Grab a bite to eat at one of Old Town Silverdale's amazing restaurants or check out the musical lineup and all things blackberry at the annual Blackberry Festival on the Bremerton Boardwalk. Reservations and ticketing coming soon!

**NEW in 2025!**



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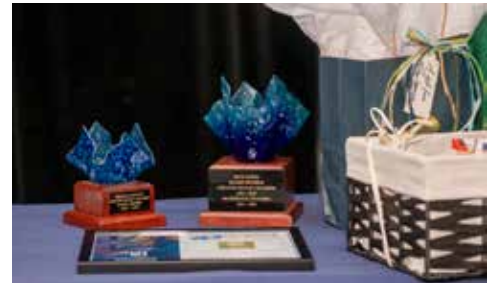
Brought to you by the Greater Kitsap Chamber's Business & Professional Development Committee



# GKC: June Luncheon and Annual Meeting



Board of Directors present for their annual swearing-in by Bremerton Mayor, Greg Wheeler. Pictured from front to back: Karen Bevers, Shauna Washburn, Jennifer Strong, Stacy Luckensmeyer, Ashley Oaksmith, Alysa Grimes, Paige Jarquin, April Onofre, Amy Zinkhon, Susan Larsen, Irene Moyer, and Mayor Greg Wheeler. Board members not pictured: Mike Columbus, Christine Cochran, Chad Melton, John Morrissey, Togasii Peko, Jason Ritter-Lopatowski, and Amy Yaley.







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NEW MEMBERSHIP  
OPPORTUNITY!

BUSINESS INFORMATION  
CORNER DISPLAY TABLE  
AT OUR MONTHLY  
CHAMBER LUNCHEONS

\*LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE\*  
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# June Member of the Month: Kitsap Community Foundation

*Photos courtesy of the Kitsap Community Foundation  
Photo Credit: Logan Westom*

The Greater Kitsap Chamber Board of Directors was pleased to honor the Kitsap Community Foundation as the June 2025 Member of the Month.

Founded in 1993 and members of the Chamber since 2013, the Kitsap Community Foundation has been a cornerstone of philanthropic impact throughout Kitsap County, Washington. Dedicated to strengthening the region through thoughtful giving and nonprofit support, the Foundation has become a trusted resource for donors, nonprofits, and community leaders alike.

At its heart, the Kitsap Community Foundation (KCF) is driven by a clear mission: to connect people who care with causes that matter. From Bainbridge Island to Bremerton, and Silverdale to Port Orchard, KCF channels resources to local organizations doing critical work across education, health, housing, the arts, environmental protection, and more.



## CHAMPIONING LOCAL NONPROFITS

What sets KCF apart is its strategic focus on nonprofit sustainability. Rather than simply issuing grants, the Foundation serves as a long-term partner to nonprofits, helping them grow capacity, improve leadership, and access vital funding. One of its flagship efforts is the Kitsap Great Give, an annual online giving campaign that has helped raise millions for local organizations. It's more than a fundraiser—it's a celebration of community generosity and collaboration.

KCF also manages donor-advised funds,

which allow individuals and families to create tailored philanthropic legacies. These funds not only simplify charitable giving but also ensure that community investments continue for generations to come. With more than \$20 million in assets under management and dozens of active funds, the Foundation ensures a lasting financial pipeline for regional progress.

## ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF PHILANTHROPY

Each year, KCF celebrates the very best in volunteerism and philanthropy with their annual Celebration of Philanthropy, held this year at the Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort. Honorees included local lawyer and long-time community volunteer, Kevin Cure; former Bremerton Mayor, Patty Lent; champion of the Illahee Forest Preserve, Jim Aho; and Rising Youth Honoree, Reyna Blackwood. The Foundation also recognized McCloud's Grill House with the 2025 Business Making a Difference Award.

## A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY

As Kitsap County continues to grow and evolve, the Kitsap Community Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to build a stronger, more resilient region through philanthropy. Whether you're a donor seeking to make a lasting impact or a nonprofit in need of support, KCF is a resource you can trust to turn vision into action. ■



*Andy Graham, McCloud's Grill House, 2025 Business Making a Difference Award*



*Kevin Cure, 2025 Partner in Philanthropy Honoree (pictured with David Nelson and Tina O'Brien)*



*Jim Aho, 2025 Exceptional Nonprofit Service Honoree (pictured with David Nelson and Tina O'Brien)*



*Photo Credit: Tiffany Diamond Photography*

*Pictured from L to R: GKC Board Secretary, Amy Zinkhon; Kitsap Community Foundation Board Chair, David Nelson; Kitsap Community Foundation Executive Director, Tina O'Brien; and GKC Board Chair, Susan Larsen.*

# New and Renewal Memberships for June



## Community Connector

B & B Auto Repair (2005)



Land Title Company of Kitsap County (1968)



## Growth

Episcopal Retirement Communities (1995)

Fairfield Inn & Suites

Bremerton (2025)

Fairfield Inn & Suites Poulsbo (2025)

Hampton Inn & Suites

Bremerton (2025)

Oxford Suites (2007)

## Main Street

1st Security Bank (2018)

Advantage Nissan/New & Used Car & Truck Center (1977)

LPL Financial at Kitsap Credit Union (2019)

Rice Fergus Miller Architecture (2011)

Sound Publishing (1989)

## Business

Active Vitality (2025)

Anew Insights (2025)

Arnold's Home Furnishings (1975)

Association of Washington Business (2021)

Bainbridge Island Downtown Association (2021)

Bigfoot Podiatry, PLLC (2025)

Blue Cedar Psychological Assessments (2025)

Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound (2013)

Bremerton Historic Ships Association (1997)

Bremerton Housing Authority (2021)

Bremerton Northern Model Railroad (2024)

Chelsey Newmyer (2025)

DaBella (2024)

DOCKSTAR (2025)

Joint Fitness (2025)

Kitsap County Commissioner

- Christine Rolfes (2023)

Kitsap Pride Network (2021)

Leadership Kitsap Foundation (2016)

Minder Meats (1986)

Not Your Wifey (2025)

Pacific Northwest Title (2010)

Pier 52 Bookkeeping (2025)

Realty Station (2016)

Rebuilding Hope the Sexual Assault Center (2024)

Sound Beats CPR (2025)

Southern Illinois University (2004)

St. Vincent de Paul, Bremerton (2011)

Thermion (2023)

Unity Fired Arts (2025)

Washington Festivals & Event Association (2021)

Washington Hospitality Association (2021)

Wautauga Bay Coffee Roaster (2025)

Western Association of Chamber Executives (2022)

WILD Applause (2021)

ZenBusiness (2025)

June New Members

*Thank you for your continued support of the Greater Kitsap Chamber through your membership. Your commitment to the Chamber plays a vital role in strengthening our business community and fostering growth, connection, and advocacy across the region.*



## CHECK OUT OUR NEW MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITY!

### BUSINESS INFORMATION CORNER DISPLAY TABLE (FOUR PER CHAMBER LUNCHEON)

Are you seeking an opportunity to showcase your business to local professionals and community leaders? The Greater Kitsap Chamber is excited to offer a new way for members to gain additional visibility at our **monthly luncheons** through the **Business Information Corner!**

**AS PART OF YOUR PURCHASE, YOU WILL RECEIVE:**

- ▶ A 6 ft display table to showcase your business to attendees.
- ▶ The opportunity to share marketing materials, brochures, and giveaways
- ▶ Direct engagement with attendees before and after the luncheon
- ▶ Complimentary registration for two to the luncheon
- ▶ Logo Recognition and appreciation in the luncheon slide show

This is an excellent opportunity to **increase brand awareness and connect with potential clients and partners.**

A BIC Display Table costs only \$250 and helps enhance GKC's membership luncheons while providing a great opportunity to showcase your business or organization.

**Limited Spots Available!**  
Only four businesses/organizations can participate each month

Each business/organization may participate up to **three times per calendar year**

This is **NOT** a luncheon sponsorship, but rather a new opportunity to showcase your business!

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LOCATION: PHOTONATIX PHOTO BOOTH RENTAL & BEYOND








## The Mid-Year Money Check-In



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

It's August in Kitsap County—aka the few glorious weeks when nobody asks about the weather and we all remember why we live here. But while you're savoring those sunny weekends (or pretending to enjoy yardwork), it's also a perfect time for a financial check-up. Think of it as your fiscal sunscreen: a little prevention now saves a lot of pain later.

### WHY A MID-YEAR REVIEW?

Just like annual wellness visits keep you out of the ER, a mid-year financial review can prevent year-end surprises. The reality is, financial plans aren't "set and forget." Life changes, markets shift, and tax rules get creative—sometimes faster than my lawn turns brown in July.

### THE SAIL FORMULA: FOUR ANCHORS OF FINANCIAL HEALTH

At Peaks Financial, we guide clients through the SAIL FORMula—think of it as the four pillars that keep your financial house afloat:

- **S: Strategy** (Investment, tax, and planning)
- **A: Asset Allocation** (How your investments are divided up)
- **I: Income** (What's coming in, and where it's going)
- **L: Legacy** (What you want to leave behind—values, assets, or both)

Let's chart your August money check-in using each step:

### 1. STRATEGY: ARE YOU STILL ON COURSE?

Maybe you set bold goals in January after too much holiday eggnog—paying off debt, maxing out retirement plans, or buying a

boat (which I hear is just a hole in the water you throw money into). Review those goals now. Are they still relevant? Have you had any life or business changes that require a strategy update—new hires, business growth, or a surprise tax bill? Adjust your strategy to fit your current reality, not last year's wish list.

### 2. ASSET ALLOCATION: ARE YOU BALANCED?

This is financial jargon for "don't put all your eggs in one basket." Has your portfolio drifted as markets bounced around? Are you still comfortable with your risk level, or did this year's volatility make you rethink things? Rebalancing isn't glamorous, but it's the difference between "smart investor" and "accidental gambler." Remember, chasing last quarter's hot stock rarely ends well.



### 3. INCOME: CASH FLOW AND TAX PLANNING

Check in on your income—both what's coming in and what's sneaking out. Are you making the most of employer plans, IRAs, or business owner deductions? For business owners, the IRS keeps tweaking rules around deductions and reporting—especially with 1099-K changes and R&D credit updates in the headlines this year. Make sure you're on top of estimated taxes and any local business tax quirks. On the personal side: adjust withholding if you had a big life event, and double-check your budget for "subscription creep" (that's not a Netflix documentary).

### 4. LEGACY: ARE YOU BUILDING—OR FORGETTING—YOUR LEGACY?

Estate plans aren't just for the ultra-wealthy. Has anything changed in your family or business this year? Review beneficiaries, wills, and business succession plans. In Kitsap, we're seeing more folks use trusts to manage privacy and probate issues, especially as property values rise. And yes, now is a good time to make sure your ex-brother-in-law is not still your life insurance beneficiary. (You'd be surprised.)

### LOCAL TRENDS AND TIMELY TIPS

Locally, Kitsap's business community is still growing, even as higher interest rates and inflation keep everyone on their toes. If you own commercial property or have business loans, review your interest rates and cash reserves. Don't let rising costs or labor shortages catch you flat-footed—plan ahead, even if it means revisiting contracts or supply agreements.

And for everyone: don't let headlines spook you into impulsive money moves. Markets will move, taxes will change, and someone on TV will always predict doom. Stick to your plan, adjust thoughtfully, and check in at least twice a year.

### FINAL THOUGHT

A mid-year check-in doesn't have to be a deep dive. Block out an hour, grab your statements, and walk through SAIL. Your future self—and maybe your CPA—will thank you. Enjoy the rest of the Kitsap summer. You've earned it. ■

*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

# Anchored in Empathy

Bainbridge Bookkeeper Guides Small Businesses to Solid Ground

By Quinn Propst |  
Ward Media Staff Reporter

Running a small business can feel like walking on water—each step a test of balance, belief, and resilience. For Shannon Raymond-Becker, founder of Pier 52 Bookkeeping, her mission is simple: be the pier that helps other entrepreneurs find solid footing.

Based on Bainbridge Island, Pier 52 is more than a bookkeeping firm—it's a lifeline for small business owners navigating the tides of growth, taxes, payroll, and profit margins. And at its core is Raymond-Becker, who brings a blend of practical financial knowledge, lived experience, and deep empathy to every client relationship.

"I run a bookkeeping firm, and we take care of the financials for businesses," she said. "We track their income and their expenses, and we run payroll and we do sales tax filings."

Pier 52 also offers 1099 filings and clean-up services, meaning Raymond-Becker and her team will get a business's books up to date.

But what sets Pier 52 apart isn't just the technical work—it's the human connection. Each client meets regularly with a member of Raymond-Becker's all-female team to review their financial reports. These meetings are where transformation happens.

"We show them their profit and loss and their balance sheet, and we discuss this is how your business is doing," she said. "Some businesses, they have a ton of income, and they think they're doing great, but they have more expenses than they have income, and



*Photos Courtesy of Pier 52 Bookkeeping*

they don't even realize. Or sometimes it's the opposite."

Those check-ins aren't just bookkeeping—they're mentorship, strategy sessions, and sometimes therapy.

"We end up getting to know them really well, which is one of my favorite parts—the relationship you build," Raymond-Becker said. "Owning a business or being an entrepreneur is really lonely. You have to make all these big decisions by yourself, and the weight of your entire business is on you."

For many of her clients, Pier 52 becomes

a trusted partner—someone who sees the full picture and helps turn challenges into choices.

"We have such a unique angle, because we see their finances in a way that nobody else does," she said.

## A BUSINESS BORN FROM NECESSITY

Raymond-Becker's journey to bookkeeping started not in a classroom, but in the chaos of tax season.

"My husband started a business, and he could not keep track of his expenses, and



# PIER 52 BOOKKEEPING



*Raymond-Becker with her family, who inspired her decision to launch a business that allowed her to be present at home and at work.*

tax time was terrible," she said. "We couldn't figure out what we were spending or what we were making in his business. So I decided to go to school and learn how to do bookkeeping."

She had originally planned to become a dental hygienist but changed paths after shadowing one and realizing it wasn't for her. Around the same time, her husband's business bookkeeping had become so tangled their CPA dropped them.

"So I was like, well, I already have the credits lined up for school," she said. "I just



*Shannon Raymond-Becker, founder of Pier 52 Bookkeeping, blends financial know-how with a passion for helping small businesses succeed.*

switched them all to business, taxation, accounting... it kind of was serendipitous how it all came together."

When her husband had to close his business due to unforeseen circumstances, Raymond-Becker became the family's sole provider. In September 2019, she launched Pier 52 Bookkeeping—just six months before giving birth to her son.

"One of the reasons I started this business is because I wanted to work for myself so that I could choose my hours and be there for my son," she said. "I wanted to show up to every T-ball game, every soccer game. I wanted to be there for all of it."

As her son grew more independent, so did her business. Today, Pier 52 is staffed by a close-knit team of women who handle clients in the Bainbridge area.

"I just got to take two weeks off, and they were able to handle it all and take care of things," she said. "I mean, they're just phenomenal."

## WHY "PIER 52"?

Originally named Seaside Bookkeeping, Raymond-Becker quickly found that her dream name wasn't so unique—five other businesses shared it, which would muddy her marketing efforts. So she rebranded, choosing a name with deep personal and regional meaning: Pier 52, the Seattle-side dock of the Bainbridge Island ferry.

"Pier 52 is such a monumental piece of the community," she said. "When you're making a leap from one place to the next, that's where you land. And I feel like bookkeeping is similar—when you're trying to make a leap in your business, you need help landing it with your finances."

"When you're running a business, it feels like you're walking on water, and it feels impossible at times, and you feel like you're sinking and drowning, and a pier is something that allows you to walk on water," she said.

Pier 52 is also important to Raymond-Becker because it is home.

"I grew up in a military family and never felt like I had a place that was my home," she said. "And then I moved to Bainbridge Island in 2013 and I never left. It's the first place in my life that has felt like home."





Shannon Raymond-Becker with her son, the reason behind her leap into entrepreneurship and the heart of her work-life mission.

### RELATIONSHIPS FIRST

Raymond-Becker lights up when talking about the relationships she's built through her work.

"I have some clients, and I want to get them a shirt that says 'my bookkeeper is my best friend,'" she laughed. "I had a client who sent me a text and said, 'Hey, I'm going to miss my monthly meeting—I'm in the hospital.' I was like, well, we can skip the meeting, but I am coming to the hospital."

That level of care and connection is foundational to Pier 52's approach.

"We just care about our clients so much," she said. "We form a relationship and care about their success. I feel like we put a lot of heart into what we do."

Her team also prides themselves on responsiveness—something she says clients notice immediately.

"We respond to people within one business day," she said. "That's a big thing."

Confidentiality is another pillar of their values.

"What happens with the bookkeeper stays with the bookkeeper," she added. "We don't tell anybody who our clients are. We don't share anyone's information."

### ADVICE TO FELLOW ENTREPRENEURS

Raymond-Becker's biggest piece of advice to other

entrepreneurs? Find your people.

"Seek a community of other entrepreneurs," she said. "The more people you have in your corner to share how difficult it is, the less alone you feel."

She has a group of friends that meet regularly to talk business—and sometimes vent.

"We talk about our 'burn-it-down' days," she said, "when you just want to walk away. It gets really challenging. But it's important to have people in your corner to remind you that there were days you didn't want to burn it down—and to show you how far you've come."

### LOOKING AHEAD

As Pier 52 continues to grow, Raymond-Becker is learning how to let go—slowly. More client meetings are being handed off to her team, though there are still a few she can't bring herself to give up.

"I just love the people that I work with," she said. "I love these relationships."

"I mean, they're just phenomenal," she said. And for the small business owners lucky enough to have Pier 52 on their side, the feeling is mutual.

"I think one of the most heartwarming things I hear is when our clients tell us that we feel like they're business partners," she said. "That we're in it with them. That has felt so good." ■



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# Brand vs. Demand

## Striking the Right Balance in Your Marketing Mix

By Amy Yaley | COO of Ward Media

When marketing budgets tighten, many businesses fall into an either/or mindset: Should we focus on building brand awareness or generating leads?

The answer isn't one or the other — it's both.

Think of brand marketing as laying the foundation of your house, while demand generation is turning on the open sign. One gives your business staying power. The other drives immediate action. Without a solid foundation, those quick wins don't last. And without activity, your brand sits unnoticed.

The most successful businesses strike a balance, investing in long-term visibility while also fueling near-term engagement.

### WHAT'S THE ROI OF BRAND AWARENESS?

Brand marketing can be harder to measure, but that doesn't make it less valuable. Awareness shapes perception, and perception drives decisions, especially in competitive markets.

Customers are more likely to engage with businesses they recognize. They're also more likely to trust those that show up consistently, through social media, print ads, newsletters, or content in local business publications.

When you build a recognizable brand:

- Your business is more memorable
- Trust and credibility increase
- Price sensitivity decreases
- Referrals improve

While brand-building rarely delivers an instant sale, it keeps you top-of-mind when a customer is ready to act.

### SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS

Short-term marketing — or demand generation — drives action now:

- PPC ads
- Social media boosts
- Limited-time offers
- Retargeting campaigns

- Lead magnets like discount coupons, events, or free resources

These tactics are trackable and fast-moving, but temporary. When the campaign stops, the momentum often does too.

Long-term marketing — or brand-building — focuses on recognition, relevance, and trust:

- Consistent print or digital brand ads
- Local sponsorships and community involvement
- Organic social content
- Educational content or thought leadership
- Promotional products or welcome kits

Demand captures leads. Brand ensures they know and trust you when they arrive.

### REAL-WORLD PERSPECTIVE

One client recently tried to roll brand and demand into a single tactic. When the return wasn't instantly measurable, he grew frustrated, feeling like it "wasn't working" even as reports showed rising awareness and engagement. His expectations were rooted in short-term ROI, even though the approach was meant to build long-term traction.

Another client, focused heavily on lead generation, is seeing strong results. But she also recognizes that as the economic and political climate shifts, she needs to invest in brand awareness to maintain trust and relevance in the months ahead.

Both are valid experiences — and great examples of why understanding the role of each strategy is so important.

### SAMPLE MARKETING MIXES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Maximize your budget:

- Use local print or digital ads to stay visible

- Send regular emails to connect with current and potential customers
- Run geo-targeted social or programmatic ads to attract leads
- Publish blog posts or thought leadership to build authority

If you're referral-based:

- Focus on credibility and visibility
- Run local awareness campaigns
- Nurture interest through email and retargeting

If you rely on a steady stream of new leads:

- Prioritize paid search and optimized landing pages
- Reinforce campaigns with brand-consistent messaging
- Present a polished and professional brand across channels

If you're a walk-in business:

- Use community publications and hyperlocal websites to promote new arrivals or events
- Keep your Google Business Profile updated with photos, hours, and promos
- Run geo-targeted, programmatic ads with time-sensitive messaging
- Use email to highlight what's new or on sale
- Leverage branded bags, signage, or postcards to stay top-of-mind

The key is integration. Demand tactics perform better when backed by a strong brand.

And brand-building becomes more powerful when it drives engagement.

Find Your Formula

There's no one-size-fits-all. But businesses that thrive over time don't chase only clicks or rely solely on reputation. They build both thoughtfully and consistently.

A strong brand gives you staying power. Demand gives you momentum. When you invest in both, you don't just earn attention, you earn trust, referrals, and long-term growth.

So don't pick sides. Find your balance. And remember: marketing isn't just about what works today — it's about building a business that works tomorrow. ■

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







# More Than a Membership

## A Connection to Community, Growth, and Opportunity

**A**t the South Kitsap Chamber of Commerce, our mission is clear: to support local businesses, strengthen our community, and create lasting opportunities for economic growth. Two of our top priorities in achieving that mission are growing our membership and

helping current members make the most of their benefits.

We believe that a strong Chamber is built on active participation and meaningful connections. That's why we focus not just on adding names to a list, but on inviting local businesses to truly

plug in. If you're already a member, let us help you get more involved. If you're not yet a member, we invite you to explore how the Chamber can work for you.

We are committed to ensuring that **membership is not just a title, it's a resource.** ■



## Looking to Grow Your Business, build partnerships, and make connections in South Kitsap?

### NETWORK WITH US - WHERE BUSINESS MEETS COMMUNITY

**J**oin the chamber and plug into a powerful network of local business owners, professionals, and community champions, all working together to support one another.

- Monthly GreenDrinks Events
- Monthly Luncheons
- South Kitsap Young Professionals
- Promotional Opportunities – "Showcase your brand"
- Connections that Matter – "Local leaders, innovators, changemakers"

Don't do it alone – When you become a member, you're not just joining an

organization, you're gaining access to an active, engaged network of other Chamber members who are ready to collaborate, refer, and help your business thrive.

Build your business, grow your influence and make meaningful connections in your community ■



## Welcome New Members

Legacy Self Service Garage LLC  
PawDoc Urgent Care  
Blue Goose Tavern & Dino's Pizzeria

## Cornhole Classic



**T**he 6th Annual Kitsap County Cornhole Classic returns **Saturday, August 16** at the South Kitsap Western Little League fields. Hosted by the South Kitsap Chamber in partnership with Kitsap Cornhole, this summer favorite features a double-elimination tournament, food trucks, a beverage garden, raffle prizes, and more.

**Register your team of two for \$30** – spots fill fast! Want to promote your business? **Sponsorships are available** with great visibility.

Don't miss the bags, the bragging rights, and the community fun!  
[www.skchamber.org/kcc](http://www.skchamber.org/kcc). ■

# Feature



Photos Courtesy of Alan Beam

*Every summer, East Bremerton Rotary members fire up the grill to serve lunch to kids at the Boys and Girls Club.*



*East Bremerton Rotary members support the Salvation Army's holiday efforts by volunteering as bell ringers each winter season.*



*Rotarians deliver personal dictionaries to Central Kitsap third graders as part of the club's ongoing commitment to youth education.*

## Unite for Good

East Bremerton Rotary Charts a Bold Course for Community Impact

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

The East Bremerton Rotary Club is gearing up for another impactful year with a renewed commitment to service, fellowship, and community engagement under the 2025-2026 theme: *Unite for Good*. As part of Rotary International—a global network dedicated to humanitarian efforts—the East Bremerton chapter continues to make a meaningful difference both locally and abroad.

Club President Jeff Rowe, said this year the club will focus on strengthening its local impact while maintaining its connection to international causes like disaster recovery,

clean water access, and polio eradication. In East Bremerton, the club provides scholarships, serves meals to youth at the Boys and Girls Club, volunteers at the Illahee Preserve, rings bells for the Salvation Army during the holidays, and participates in a variety of service-driven initiatives.

At the heart of the club's mission is Rotary's guiding principle: *Service Above Self*. It's a philosophy embraced by every member, emphasizing the importance of giving time and effort beyond personal interests to uplift others—whether that's helping one neighbor or transforming a community.

"It's about, what can I do, you know, and we put our money into what we do, but I think there's more joy when you put yourself into what you do," Rowe said. "We try to do as much as we can for youth in many different ways."

Looking ahead, Rowe has outlined a set of goals designed to inspire deeper engagement, broader visibility, and stronger community ties. First and foremost is the importance of having fun, Rowe said.

"There are four tenants that all Rotarians live by, but our motto, the fifth tenant, is to have fun, and that is really what drew me to this club, the membership being that way," Rowe said.

Rowe plans to expand social activities outside of regular Wednesday meetings—such as "fifth Wednesday" events, fireside gatherings, vocational nights, and casual get-togethers—to build camaraderie and foster lasting friendships among members.

Another key goal is to grow membership. By showcasing the club's positive impact and tailoring events to appeal to a range of age groups, the East Bremerton Rotary hopes to attract new members who bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Increasing awareness about Rotary's work—both online and in the broader community—will be crucial in that effort. Plans include boosting the club's digital presence and improving social media outreach to better reflect the energy and relevance of its service projects, he said.

Rowe also plans to implement an onboarding program to help new members get the most out of the group.

While global initiatives remain important, this year's strategy puts an emphasis on local impact. The belief is that building a stronger foundation at home will, in turn, help fuel broader efforts abroad. The club also intends to deepen collaborations with other local Rotary chapters, sharing resources and combining forces to expand fundraising and volunteer power. These joint initiatives—paired with support from members' networks of family, friends, and colleagues—can multiply the club's ability to serve and create lasting change.

With the *Unite for Good* banner in hand, the East Bremerton Rotary Club enters the new Rotary year with clarity, purpose, and optimism. As always, it remains committed to building a stronger community—one project, one partnership, and one act of service at a time. ■





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& Batuka*

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2025

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# Real Estate

## 10 Essential Tips for First-Time Home Buyers in Kitsap County

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

Kitsap County remains a bustling market in mid-2025, with the **median sale price near \$600,000** and homes selling within **11-30 days**. Buyers—especially first-timers—need strategic planning anchored in finance, market knowledge, and lender partnerships. Here are ten actionable tips to guide your dream-home journey.

### 1. BUILD A FINANCIAL FOUNDATION

Start by improving your **credit score**, reducing debt, and saving for down payments and closing costs. Lenders scrutinize these factors to qualify you for favorable rates.

### 2. EXPLORE FINANCING OPTIONS BY PROPERTY TYPE

- **Single-family homes:** Most buyers use **conventional, FHA, VA, or USDA** loans. Lenders often require 3-5% down (FHA) or 0% (VA), with competitive rates.
- **Manufactured homes:**
  - If affixed to owned land, you may use **conventional real-estate loans**—best rates, full protections.
  - If in a rented park or titled as personal property, you are limited to **chattel loans**, which carry **higher rates (8-14%)** and shorter terms.
  - **FHA Title I or Title II loans** are alternatives for HUD-built homes on owned land or in parks.
- **Multi-family homes:** Consider **Fannie Mae's 2-4-unit owner-occupant mortgages or commercial loans** if investment-focused. These require larger down payments (~15-25%) and stronger credit.
- **Vacant land:** Financing can be tricky. Options include **land loans** or

**construction loans** (convertible to mortgages after building). These demand 20-25% down, higher interest rates, and stricter credit checks.

### 3. GET PRE-QUALIFIED AND PRE-APPROVED!

Begin with a **pre-qualification** from lenders or brokers to understand your budget. Then pursue **pre-approval**—a written loan commitment that strengthens your offer and speeds up purchase timelines.

### 4. SHOP LENDERS BY SPECIALIZATION

Select lenders who specialize in your target property:

- **Manufactured-home lenders** like Sound Community Bank or Capital Home Mortgage offer tailored FHA and chattel programs.
- Conventional lenders (banks, credit unions) are best for **single-family or multi-unit homes**.
- For land or construction lending, work with lenders experienced in **land/construction-to-perm loans**.

### 5. COMPARING RATES, FEES, AND CLOSING COSTS

Do not just look at interest rates—ask lenders for full Loan Estimate forms to compare:

- **Interest rate**
- **Origination and appraisal fees**
- **Title, survey, and closing costs.**
- For manufactured homes: compare between **FHA, conventional, and chattel** options to find the best total cost.

### 6. UNDERSTAND THE CHATTEL LOAN CAVEAT

A manufactured home without owned land is personal property—not real estate—and may disqualify you from FHA, VA, or USDA

loans. A chattel loan is costlier and riskier. Always aim to buy land with the home whenever possible.

### 7. BUDGET FOR ALL COSTS

Plan beyond monthly mortgage payments:

- **Property tax, insurance, HOA fees, utilities**
- Maintenance, especially in multi-unit properties
- **Site preparation** and infrastructure for vacant land

### 8. PARTNER WITH A LOCAL REAL-ESTATE AGENT

An experienced Kitsap County agent:

- Knows local lenders familiar with unique loan types.
- Helps compare offers beyond interest rates (e.g., closing timeline, contingencies)
- Coordinates financing smoothly with inspections, appraisals, and timelines.

### 9. ACT QUICKLY IN COMPETITIVE MARKETS

With ~40% of homes selling at or above asking, and most under 30 days speed and preparedness matter. Having pre-approval and lender-selected ensures you are ready to close fast.

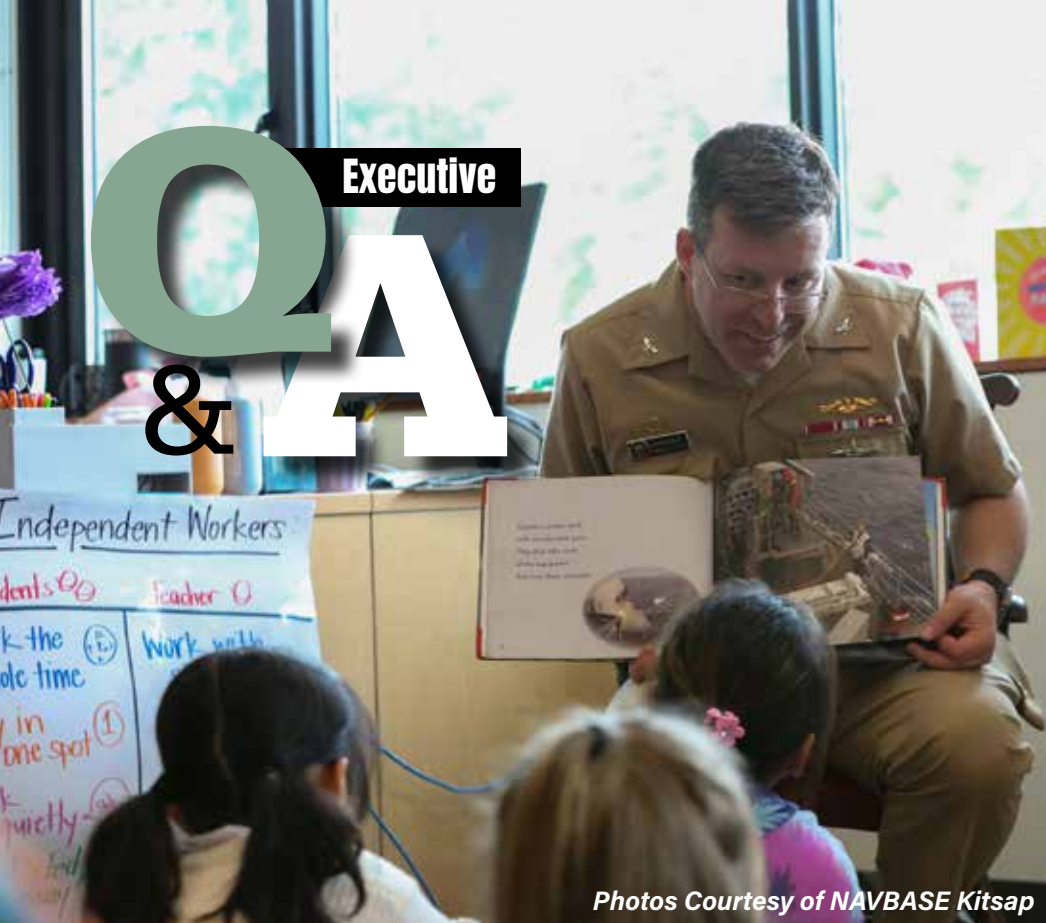
### 10. REVISIT AND REEVALUATE OFFERS

If your first offer is not accepted, do not be discouraged. A trusted lender can help improve your offer through **stronger earnest money, fewer contingencies**, or minor interest rate adjustments.

### BOTTOM LINE

First-time buyers in Kitsap County can confidently navigate the market—with a financial foundation, informed lender selection, and strategic preparation tailored to your property type. Whether you are buying a mobile home, single-family house, multi-unit, or vacant land, aligning with the right lender—and loan—can turn your dream into reality in Kitsap's evolving 2025 landscape. ■





Photos Courtesy of NAVBASE Kitsap

*Captain John Hale reads aloud to students during a classroom reading session, sharing stories about life in the Navy and encouraging literacy and curiosity among young learners.*

# Meet Captain John Hale, Commanding Officer Naval Base Kitsap

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

As Commanding Officer of one of the U.S. Navy's most strategically significant installations, Captain John Hale brings a rare blend of operational expertise, long-term vision, and community-minded leadership to Naval Base Kitsap (NBK). A career submariner who previously commanded both the USS Nevada and USS Kentucky from NBK's Bangor site, Hale stepped into his current role in February 2023. Now tasked with overseeing a base that supports more than 80 tenant commands—including aircraft carriers, ballistic missile submarines, and the Navy's largest fuel depot in the Pacific—he's focused on delivering mission-critical support while deepening ties

with the surrounding communities.

In this Q&A, Captain Hale reflects on his path from the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee to the Pacific Northwest, outlines his top priorities at NBK, and shares his vision for a base that's operationally ready, environmentally responsible, and rooted in regional partnership.

Please tell our readers a little bit about yourself.

I'm a northeast Tennessee native, where I grew up in the hills of the Appalachian Mountains. I left that area to attend the United States Naval Academy in 1994. After receiving my commission as a Naval Officer in 1998, I was trained in Submarine Warfare

and served on numerous submarines and related staff assignments over the span of twenty-five years, including tours as Executive Officer of USS Nevada (Blue Crew) and Commanding Officer of USS Kentucky (Blue Crew), both here at Naval Base Kitsap. I took command of Naval Base Kitsap in February 2023.

Today, I'm a western Washington transplant, as my wife and I have come to love this area, with its scenic beauty and a climate that we truly enjoy (even in the rainy months). We plan to remain in the area after I retire from the Navy.

## Please tell our readers about Naval Base Kitsap.

Naval Base Kitsap (NBK) as it exists today was formed in 2004, when Naval Station Bremerton and Naval Submarine Base Bangor were combined into a single installation. Although headquartered at Bremerton, NBK encompasses multiple sites and properties across Kitsap, Mason, and Jefferson Counties, including Manchester, Bremerton, Jackson Park, Camp McKean, Camp Wesley Harris, Keyport, and Bangor. The base spans over 11,000 acres and more than 170 miles of waterfront, making us uniquely positioned to support both surface and subsurface operations.

NBK is home to over 80 separate Navy commands, including:

- Navy Region Northwest, which provides oversight and support to Navy bases and activities across 11 states, from Alaska to Oregon and eastward to Minnesota and Iowa
- Eight ballistic missile submarines assigned under the command of Submarine Group Nine, a cornerstone of our nation's strategic deterrent, and other commands that specifically support those vessels
- Two aircraft carriers, USS Nimitz (CVN-68) and USS Ronald Reagan (CVN-76)
- Numerous fast-attack submarines, including the nation's only large-volume research and development submarine
- Puget Sound Naval Shipyard & Intermediate Maintenance Facility (PSNS & IMF), our region's premier maintenance and modernization facility
- Naval Undersea Warfare Development Center (NUWC) Division Keyport, which sustains current undersea warfare technology and explores new capabilities for the future





*Naval Base Kitsap Commanding Officer Capt. John Hale attended the retirement ceremony for outgoing Executive Officer Capt. Rafe Wysham, held at Kitsap Golf & Country Club.*

We're proud to support over 40,000 military personnel, civilian employees, and contractors that serve at the commands onboard NBK. This includes approximately 15,000 Sailors, one of the largest concentrations of U.S. Navy personnel on the West Coast.

**NBK has a significant impact on the Kitsap region—economically, socially, and environmentally. How would you describe the base's current relationship with surrounding communities, and where do you see room for improvement?**

Our relationship with Kitsap County's communities is fundamentally strong, built on mutual respect and shared prosperity, but success as a naval installation is inseparable from the health and prosperity of our surrounding communities. Our civilian employees and active-duty service members, and their families, are deeply integrated into local schools, volunteer organizations, and civic activities. Both the base itself as well as PSNS & IMF maintain active partnerships with local governments, school districts, and community organizations.

While our foundation is solid, any successful relationship requires continuous commitment and effort. There are a few areas where we can continue to strengthen this vital relationship:

- Infrastructure coordination, by working more closely with county and municipal planners on transportation and utility improvements to address growth impacts
- Workforce development, by expanding partnerships with local educational institutions to create pathways between military service and civilian careers in the region
- Environmental collaboration, by enhancing joint efforts on Puget Sound restoration and other initiatives
- Communication, through regular dialogue about base operations and potential impacts to the surrounding community

**What role does the base play in workforce development and opportunities for civilians in the area?**

Federal civilian employees serve in a wide array of roles across both NBK and the commands here, from skilled trades to program management to administrative support, all vital to our mission. Within the functions specific to the base, we offer a variety of comprehensive leadership and skills training to both our civilian and military team members throughout the year. Many of the larger commands at NBK, especially those with a predominantly civilian workforce, have their own programs geared toward the specific needs and skill sets of their employees. Because those commands best know their own needs, they tailor these programs to communicate employment opportunities and develop the necessary skills that enable a full and productive career in federal service. The base and these commands frequently participate in area job fairs or other hiring events to help advertise



*Captain John Hale listens intently as a student presents during a classroom visit at Cougar Valley Elementary. The visit was part of Hale's ongoing efforts to connect with local schools and support youth education.*

job opportunities and inform area residents of the benefits of federal service.

**How does NBK support sailors transitioning to civilian life, and what role do local employers play in that process?**

All service members that separate or retire from the service are required to attend the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). This program, conducted by NBK's Fleet and Family Support Center, provides vital workshops and resources to help prepare our service members for civilian life. This includes resume writing, interview skills, financial planning, navigating veteran's benefits, and exploring education and entrepreneurship paths. Local employers frequently participate in the TAP curriculum, in a "brown bag" lunch setting, to discuss how a military skillset transfers to employment opportunities within their businesses. Business participation in TAP rotates on a regular basis.

**Are there any standout partnerships or collaborations with Kitsap County institutions—such as schools, nonprofits, or businesses—that you're particularly proud of?**

We work hard to collaborate with local jurisdictions on critical planning initiatives to ensure compatible growth and shared success. One example is the Joint Land Use Study, a document jointly developed with local governments to ensure compatible land use activities around the installation, addressing key areas like transportation access, shared infrastructure coordination, and shoreline activities. Another good example is the Joint Compatibility Transportation Plan (JCTP), a recently completed effort by the City of Bremerton, funded by the Department of Defense, that was designed to strategically inform future growth decisions within the context of Navy mission readiness. These collaborative efforts underscore our dedication to being a good neighbor and ensuring the mutual success of the missions conducted at NBK and the surrounding communities.

**What are your top priorities during your tenure as Commanding Officer of NBK?**

My priorities have run along two separate lines: improving the quality and effectiveness

## Executive Q & A

of our day-to-day support activities, and ensuring that long-term infrastructure modernization efforts will continue to provide the capabilities necessary for the Navy to successfully accomplish the missions based here at NBK.

It will always be important to ensure that our products and services meet the needs of our active-duty Sailors as best we can, but those efforts must always be balanced against a limited pool of resources. Every dollar we spend needs to achieve maximum effect, so it is important to continually assess where we can improve the quality of what we provide, or re-target our efforts to where they will have a greater impact.

With the Navy's investment in NBK across a multitude of mission sets, the long-term plan for infrastructure improvements and modernization efforts must consider all stakeholders and ensure all needs are met. These plans must also achieve a proper level of environmental responsibility and stewardship. At NBK, these future plans can often be complex and involve numerous stakeholders, so our dedicated efforts today will pay dividends toward hard decisions in the future.

### **What are some of the major infrastructure or modernization projects currently underway or planned at NBK, and how do they align with the Navy's strategic goals?**

The biggest modernization project on the horizon is the Shipyard Infrastructure Optimization Program (SIOP). PSNS & IMF is one of only four public shipyards and a critical part of our Navy's strategic readiness. SIOP is a vital investment to address critical deficiencies in dry dock capability, capacity, and seismic survivability, ensuring the shipyard can continue its mission of supporting the newest classes of ships and submarines for decades to come.

The NBK-Manchester fuel storage tank replacement is another huge infrastructure project currently underway. The fuel depot at NBK-Manchester is the largest fuel depot in the Pacific. This construction project will replace 28 underground WWII-era fuel storage tanks with six modern above ground steel tanks. This fuel depot is a critical link in



providing the necessary fuels and lubricants to area ships, submarines, and aircraft.

There will also be a significant amount of modernization required at NBK-Bangor to support the arrival of a new class of ballistic missile submarine, ensuring a credible sea-based strategic deterrent well into the latter half of this century.

### **How has your leadership style evolved over the course of your Navy career, and how does it guide your approach at a complex installation like NBK?**

My leadership philosophy has been shaped by nearly three decades of naval service. Early in my career, leadership was about mastering technical competencies and leading small teams through clearly defined tasks and objectives. As I progressed through my career at sea - from department head to executive officer to commanding officer - I learned that effective leadership scales not through micromanagement, but through empowerment, clear communication, and building trust across increasingly complex organizations. Leading an organization as complex as NBK requires "360-degree leadership" - simultaneously managing upward to Navy leadership, across to area partners and federal agencies, downward to the workforce, and outward to our community stakeholders.

### **What message do you want the sailors and civilians under your command to hear most clearly from their leadership?**

NBK is a large and complex base, housing a diverse portfolio of Navy missions - nowhere else in the world do we combine all the missions conducted onboard NBK under the support of a single installation. As such, the efforts of NBK staff, both civilian and military,

play a critically important role in supporting the Navy's presence here in the Pacific Northwest. What they do every single day matters, and it makes a difference in the lives of active-duty service members and their families.

### **What motivates you every day in this role?**

The scope of responsibility in this assignment is significant and varied, and drastically different from my previous assignments within the Submarine Force. As such, each day tends to bring new challenges, and an opportunity to learn more about the underlying processes of facilities and infrastructure management. I find it truly rewarding to dive into these challenges, not just to better understand how we accomplish things, but to also provide the NBK staff a warfighter's perspective on why these services are important to the day-to-day missions accomplished on the base.

### **What are your long-term goals for NBK, and what legacy would you like to leave behind?**

I would like to ensure that NBK continues to provide the necessary support for the missions conducted here, while also serving as a model for sustainable military operations. Future generations should see this installation as proof that national security and environmental stewardship are not just compatible but mutually reinforcing. I want to be remembered as a commanding officer who strengthened NBK's foundation for the future - who enhanced our warfighting capability while deepening our community roots. Success means the commander who follows me inherits an installation that's operationally superior, environmentally exemplary, and integrated within the community. ■



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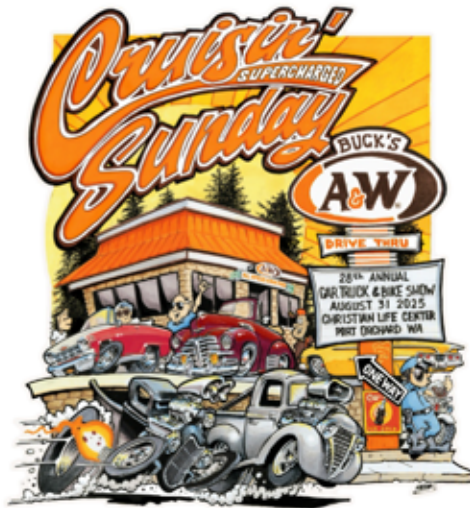
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## Changing Faces Changing Places

### New Hires

#### Land Title Company Welcomes Chris Marchand as SVP of Operations

Land Title Company has named Chris Marchand as its new Senior Vice President of Operations. Marchand brings more than 25 years of executive experience in the title and escrow industry, with a strong track record in strategic growth, operational efficiency, and financial leadership.

Recognized for his ability to drive results through technology-forward strategies and team development, Marchand is expected to play a key role in enhancing the company's competitive edge and service delivery across Kitsap and Mason counties.

"We are honored to welcome Chris Marchand to Land Title Company," said President Kris



Chris Marchand

Mihulka. "His depth of experience and dedication to operational excellence align seamlessly with our mission to serve clients with integrity, efficiency, and care."

Outside of work, Marchand enjoys golfing with his two sons and following college sports.

### Business Briefs

#### KPUD Shares Expertise at National Broadband Summit

Kitsap Public Utility District (KPUD) participated in the 2025 Broadband Communities Summit held in Texas this past June, with representatives speaking on two separate panels during the national event.

As part of a lineup featuring community and industry leaders from around the world, KPUD

contributed to discussions on broadband innovation, infrastructure, and public benefit strategies. The summit served as a platform for sharing insights and advancing the conversation around equitable internet access.

KPUD's involvement highlights its continued leadership in expanding public broadband initiatives across Washington and beyond.

#### KPUD Expands Countywide Broadband with 21 New Fiber Nodes

Kitsap Public Utility District (KPUD), in partnership with Kitsap County, is constructing 21 new fiber distribution nodes across the region as part of a major broadband infrastructure expansion. The project is fully funded by \$6.6 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars allocated for community investment.

Each node will enhance internet access for unserved communities, support speeds over 100 gigabits per second, and add critical redundancy to minimize service disruptions. The new infrastructure will increase capacity to serve between 1,920 and 7,680 homes per site, improving reliability and reducing connection costs for residents.

"These new nodes will enhance network reliability, strengthen our open access model, and support faster, more robust broadband for Kitsap County residents and businesses," said KPUD General Manager Angela Bennink.

The upgrades are expected to be completed in early 2026, bolstering KPUD's community-owned network, which already supports over 2,500 homes, 300 businesses, and six internet service providers offering speeds up to 10 Gbps. ■



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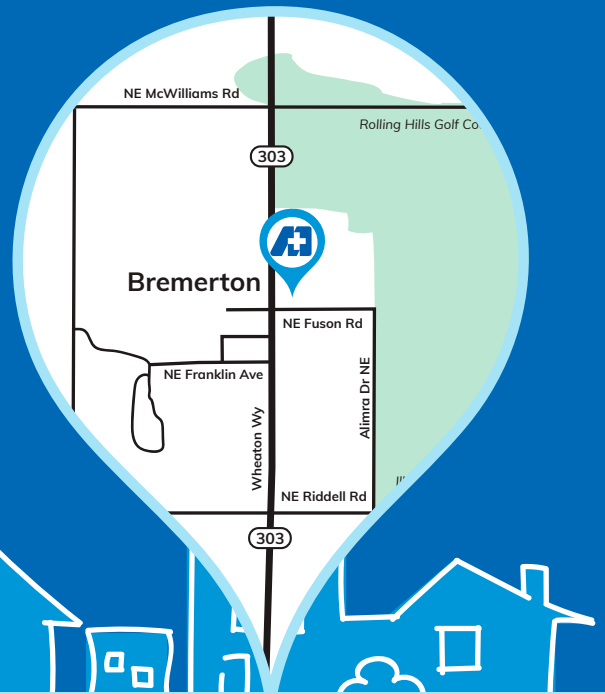


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