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BUSINESS

News | Features | Nonprofits | People

Technology

Before Your Team Uses
(More) AI, Read This

More Than a Game

Pickleball Kingdom Turns
Play Into a New Model
for Community Wellness

Visit Kitsap

The Summer
Isn't Booked Yet


QA & A with Jay Burghart

Executive Director of The Doctors Clinic



**GREATER
KITSAP
CHAMBER**

Newsletter Inside



The Manette Clinic operates under a direct primary care model designed to simplify access and reduce barriers to care.

**Photos by Leah Thompson/
Scandia Studio**

CONTENTS

April 2026

Cover photography: Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

Vol. 2 / No. 2

A Different Kind of Doctor's Office

Inside The Manette Clinic's Community-Rooted Direct Primary Care Model

In a healthcare system often defined by rushed appointments, fragmented care, and layers of insurance bureaucracy, The Manette Clinic in Bremerton operates on a different promise: give patients time, access, and a direct relationship with their provider. At its core, the clinic's direct primary care model removes much of the traditional insurance structure in favor of something more personal, flexible, and transparent.

Finding Relief in a Tense World

Inside Blue Oasis Massage with Kelsi Anderson

For Kelsi Anderson, massage therapy is more than a profession. It is a responsibility she feels every time a client walks through the door. "Owning my own business makes me feel like these people, my clients, they're totally in my hands." That sense of responsibility shapes the experience at Blue Oasis Massage in Bremerton, where Anderson has spent nearly eight years helping clients manage pain, stress and the physical strain of everyday life.

A New Chapter for Care

How Tribal Ownership Is Reshaping the Future of Kitsap OBGYN and Women's Healthcare in Kitsap County

When the Suquamish Tribe acquired Kitsap OBGYN earlier this year, the immediate impact was clear: one of Kitsap County's primary providers of obstetric and gynecologic care would remain open. But the significance of the move extends well beyond preservation. It marks the beginning of a broader shift—one that could reshape how women's healthcare is delivered in a region long challenged by provider shortages, system strain, and growing demand.

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Health, Connection, and the Business of Well-Being

Forward 
THINKING

Welcome to the April edition of *Kitsap Business*. This month, we focus on health and wellness, not as a trend or a standalone industry, but as a defining force shaping how businesses operate, how communities grow, and how people experience daily life across Kitsap County.

What becomes clear in these pages is that health is no longer confined to exam rooms or fitness centers. It is being built into the fabric of our local economy, driven by leaders who understand that well-being is both a personal priority and a business imperative. Across Kitsap, we are seeing a shift toward more connected, more accessible, and more human-centered approaches to care. At The Doctors Clinic, Executive Director Jay Burghart is helping guide one of the region's most established healthcare organizations through a period of change. With a focus on preventive care, workforce development, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, the organization is working to expand access while improving the patient experience. It is a reminder that innovation in healthcare is often about strengthening what already works and making it more responsive to community needs.

In Bremerton, Blue Oasis Massage offers a different but equally important perspective on wellness. Owner Kelsi Anderson has built her practice around something simple and often overlooked, listening. Her work reflects a growing demand for services that address not just physical pain, but the cumulative stress of modern life. In a region where many people spend their days at desks or on the move, her approach highlights how small, consistent interventions can have a meaningful impact on overall health. That same emphasis on connection appears in Poulsbo, where Pickleball Kingdom is redefining what a wellness space can be. What might look like recreation on the surface is, in practice, something deeper, a

model built on accessibility, social interaction, and sustainable physical activity. It is a place where health is as much about belonging as it is about movement, and where community itself becomes part of the outcome. Meanwhile, The Manette Clinic in Bremerton is challenging traditional assumptions about how primary care should be delivered. By removing layers of complexity and prioritizing time between providers and patients, the clinic has created a model centered on relationships, prevention, and accessibility. It is a reminder that sometimes the most meaningful innovation comes from simplifying the experience of care. And at Kitsap OBGYN, a transition to tribal ownership is doing more than preserving a critical service. It is opening the door to a more coordinated, community-driven approach to women's healthcare. In a region facing real provider shortages, this kind of leadership underscores an important truth. Access to care is not just a healthcare issue, it is an economic one. A healthy community supports a resilient workforce and a stable local economy.

Taken together, these stories reflect a broader shift in how we define wellness. It is no longer limited to treating illness or maintaining fitness. It is about designing systems, whether in healthcare, business, or community spaces, that support people in living better, longer, and more connected lives.

For business leaders, that shift carries real implications. Employees are prioritizing balance and well-being. Customers are seeking out businesses that align with their values. And communities are increasingly shaped by the availability and quality of local care.

The organizations featured in this issue are not reacting to those changes. They are helping lead them. They are investing in prevention. They are building environments that foster connection. They are rethinking outdated models and returning to something more fundamental,



relationships, trust, and time. That is what stands out most in this month's stories. Not just innovation, but intention. Because in the end, the future of health and wellness in Kitsap County will not be defined by a single breakthrough or business model. It will be shaped by the steady, deliberate choices of people who understand that taking care of a community and building a strong economy go hand in hand.

As always, it is our privilege to share these stories with you.

They remind us that progress in health does not always arrive in dramatic ways. Sometimes it looks like a longer conversation in a clinic room, a familiar face on a massage table, a group of strangers becoming friends on a court, or a provider choosing to stay rooted in the place they call home. Those moments add up. Together, they are shaping a healthier Kitsap. ■

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9 Locations to Serve You in Kitsap

Feature

A Different Kind of Doctor's Office

Inside The Manette Clinic's Community-Rooted Direct Primary Care Model

By Quinn Propst

Ward Media Staff Reporter

In a healthcare system often defined by rushed appointments, fragmented care, and layers of insurance bureaucracy, The Manette Clinic in Bremerton operates on a different promise: give patients time, access, and a direct relationship with their provider. At its core, the clinic's direct primary care model removes much of the traditional insurance structure in favor of something more personal, flexible, and transparent.

That shift changes everything about how care is delivered. Instead of billing codes and visit quotas, patients pay a membership fee that allows them to communicate directly with their provider, schedule longer appointments, and receive care without the constraints that often come with insurance-driven medicine. The result is a practice that prioritizes relationships over volume, prevention over quick fixes, and accessibility over complexity.

For founder Tanya Spoon, DNP, ARNP, FNP-BC, it's not just a different way to run a clinic—it's a different way to practice medicine.

"We're not going to be millionaires," Spoon said. "But I don't hate my life. I love what I do, and I want to keep doing this as long as I can."

From Burnout to a Different Model

Spoon's path to The Manette Clinic grew out of her experience inside a traditional



Photos by Leah Thompson/
Scandia Studio

Tanya Spoon, owner and operator of The Manette Clinic, leads a practice built on relationships, transparency and community-focused care.

practice, where the pressure to see more patients in less time began to take a toll.

About 20 years ago, Spoon joined Dr. Minter in Silverdale in what she calls "old-fashioned family practice." "He was always on call. It was like old-fashioned family practice," she said. "When I first started, I was seeing four or five patients a day and he was seeing 20. By the time we were done, I was seeing 25 and he was seeing six."

"I was in it nine years with him and I felt tired," she said. "I was 49 and I want to work until I'm 70. How am I going to sustain this? It was impossible—physically and emotionally."

As hospital systems acquired small practices and reshaped local healthcare, Spoon saw a system moving further away from the kind of care she wanted to provide.

"I've lived here my whole life. Things were changing in my community," she said. "There



Inside The Manette Clinic, a membership-based model allows for longer appointments and a more relationship-driven patient experience.

were lots of promises that they weren't going to take over, but it ended up being kind of like a pirate ship coming in and taking over small practices. I didn't want to be in that group."

When an opportunity came to purchase the practice she worked in, she declined. Instead, she began searching for an alternative.

"There has got to be something different than this," she said.

That search led her to direct primary care (DPC), a model that replaces traditional insurance billing with membership-based access.

A Subscription Approach to Care

For Spoon, the distinction between direct primary care and concierge medicine is critical.

"The distinction between direct primary care and concierge is important," she said. "Concierge practices are very expensive. It's like your personal doctor who follows you to the hospital. Direct primary care is essentially membership-based medicine. Our patients can come see us whether they have insurance or not."

The model is intentionally designed to serve a broad community—including people who might otherwise delay or forgo care.

"I've lived in Manette for 30 years," Spoon said. "I asked myself, 'What could the waitress at the Boat Shed afford? What could the person who runs the Manette afford?' A lot of them don't have insurance. When they get sick, they go to urgent care and spend \$500. That's not sustainable."

To help understand and build the model, Spoon reached out to Dr. Garrison Bliss, a Seattle physician often credited as a pioneer of direct primary care.

"I started cold calling him," she said. "They weren't going to take my calls—silly little nurse practitioner wanting to start her own practice. Eventually, he took my call and carved out a couple of hours on a Saturday morning. I just asked him everything."

His advice was simple and direct.

"He said, 'You don't have anything like this in your community.' And I said, 'I don't.' He told me, 'Then you need to educate everybody.'"

Spoon took that advice to heart, speaking at Rotary clubs, community events, and health fairs to explain how the model worked and why it mattered.

What Care Looks Like

For patients, The Manette Clinic still looks like a traditional doctor's office—but the experience is different in key ways.

"It's like joining a gym," Spoon said. "You pay a membership fee to be able to come and see your provider. Everything's up front and transparent. You know how much you're going to pay every month, whether you use it or not—just like the gym."

That monthly fee covers nearly everything done within the clinic, including check-ups, sick visits, and direct access to a provider, without billing insurance. Services sent out—such as lab work or biopsies—carry an additional cost, and patients benefit from discounted prescriptions, labs, and other services.

The structure allows the clinic to operate without the time pressures common in traditional practices.

"Because we're a membership practice, our appointments are long," Spoon said. "Our minimum appointment is 30 minutes. That changes the relationship. Our providers don't have to run out the door in 12 minutes. We have the luxury of time."

That time is foundational to how care is delivered.

"We get to know our patients," she said. "I had a little girl in for an ear infection today and I asked, 'How's your mom? How's her new job?' I was actually her mom's school nurse way back when."

"Time builds relationship," she added.



Tanya Spoon talks with her front office manager Danielle Lopeman at The Manette Clinic, highlighting the clinic's collaborative, patient-first culture.



"Because we have time, we can focus on prevention and overall wellness, not just treating illness."

Access extends beyond the exam room. Patients can reach their provider through a dedicated text line monitored by the clinic, including weekends.

"Our patients have a line they can text us anytime," Spoon said. "There's always someone watching that, even on weekends."

That accessibility allows providers to address concerns in real time, even when patients are away from home.

"We get things like, 'My kid has this rash, what is this? We're in Hawaii,'" she said. "Or, 'I'm on a trip in Florida and I think I have a UTI.' We can take care of those things. That's a huge benefit for our patients."

At The Manette Clinic, Tanya Spoon prepares for a patient visit, reflecting the clinic's emphasis on accessibility and connection.

Balancing the Financial Equation

Spoon initially planned to operate a membership-only clinic without accepting Medicare, but patient feedback changed her approach.

"My patients were mad," she said. "They said, 'I'm on Medicare. What am I supposed to do?'"

Reluctantly, she added Medicare patients—and found it strengthened the model.

"Doing the combination of membership plus Medicare has been really beneficial," Spoon said. "In that deductible season from January through March, when everything goes to Medicare's deductible and we don't make as much money, our membership holds us up. When membership is low, Medicare holds us up."

Today, the clinic serves a wide range of patients, including those without insurance, those with high deductibles, Medicare recipients, and employees whose employers cover memberships instead of traditional health plans.

"Most people's insurance has such a large deductible it's almost like they're not insured," Spoon said. "Our fee is less than people's deductibles."

Growth Rooted in Community

When The Manette Clinic opened, Spoon wasn't sure how many people would embrace the idea.

"I think I had like 30 people that came over, and I was nervous that more wouldn't come," she said.

But interest quickly grew.



"Pretty soon I had to start phoning friends to help me," she said. "People were just coming out of the woodwork. Right now I have five providers."

Even as the clinic has expanded, it has remained grounded in the community it serves.

"When the shipyard wasn't getting paid, we held memberships," Spoon said. "People could call us and say, 'I'm having a hard time,' and we'd say, 'We'll still see you.'"

That flexibility reflects the clinic's commitment to accessibility—and its willingness to meet patients where they are.

Time as the Core Value

At the center of The Manette Clinic's model is time—both in and out of the exam room.

"Our Medicare wellness exams are 45 minutes to an hour," Spoon said. "We ask, 'Do you have a living will? Do you have a durable power of attorney?' We want people to be well cared for all the way to the end of life."

That level of attention would be difficult to sustain in a high-volume, insurance-driven practice, she said.

In contrast, The Manette Clinic avoids quotas tied to patient volume.

"The quota at one large system's specialty clinics right now is 100 people a week," Spoon said. "That's not sustainable."

Instead, providers at The Manette Clinic work full time at around 30 hours a week, with flexibility built into the schedule.

"There's nothing strict about this format," she said.

The clinic also incorporates complementary approaches alongside traditional medicine.

Spoon is certified in acupuncture, and the team offers functional and hormonal medicine services as part of their care.

"I felt like, What else can I give my patients without writing them another prescription?" she said.

A Practice Built on Relationships

For Spoon, the most meaningful measure of success isn't growth or revenue—it's connection.

Tanya Spoon reviews a patient chart at The Manette Clinic, where extended visits support a more personalized approach to care.



Dr. Mike Hall cares for patients at The Manette Clinic, part of a team prioritizing time and continuity in care delivery.

"I see five generations of families," she said. "I've seen them for 20 years."

That continuity allows her to care for patients across their lives—from childhood to aging.

"It's pretty cool," she said.

As healthcare continues to consolidate, Spoon knows practices like hers are becoming less common.

"We're losing something if we lose our local primary care offices," she said.

Still, she believes the model has a future—especially in communities like Kitsap County.

"In a community like ours, something like this is very appreciated," she said. "It's not easy—but it's worth it." ■

Before Your Team Uses (More) AI, Read This

By Jon Hoehne | CMIT Solutions

In a previous post, I laid out a crawl, walk, run framework for putting AI large language models to work in your business. The opportunity is real, and the tools are more accessible than ever for small and mid-sized businesses.



As you proceed down that path, consider this quote from noted quality expert and statistician W. Edwards Deming: "A bad system will beat a good person every time."

Most IT decisions are also process decisions. What role will AI play in fixing or improving your business processes? Does simply giving everyone a productivity tool solve all your problems? When's the last time you switched systems, and everything went perfectly? The fundamentals are still true. Process changes need to be managed so they don't create short-term chaos and long-term systemic problems. Here are a couple of things to watch out for.

Garbage In, Garbage Out - Faster

ChatGPT and similar tools use generative AI. Very simply put, it uses your input and its data to predict a good answer. The output will always look clean, professional, and confident even when it's wrong.

Incomplete or wrong information early in the process creates errors downstream. In a small business only one or two people might carry the critical data in their heads. Your institutional knowledge has quietly been doing the heavy lifting to get work done. Those gaps do not disappear when you add AI.

A realistic scenario: a team uses AI to generate client-facing summaries faster. The summaries look polished. But the inputs feeding the process were inconsistent to

begin with, and the AI has no way to flag that. The team produces more summaries, faster, with the same underlying gaps. The problem scales before anyone notices.

How to fix it:

Before you add AI to a process, map the process.

Identify where the real inputs, handoffs, and quality standards live. AI works best when it is given a well-defined job inside a well-understood process.

New Tool, New Failure Points

When you change the process, you might be creating new opportunities for mistakes.

The most common new failure point is over-trust. AI tools write well, summarize quickly, and sound authoritative. They generate plausible responses based on patterns in data. When the output is wrong, the only warning label is the ubiquitous footer at the bottom of the chat window. "LLMs may produce inaccurate information about people, places, and facts." That's a pretty broad disclaimer.

A realistic scenario: an employee uses AI to draft a response to a customer question. The output looks thorough and professional. They send it without checking. The answer is wrong. The customer notices before they do. Just put "ridiculous AI disaster" into your favorite search engine if you need more examples.

How to fix it:

Ensure the right verification exists in the workflow before you scale. Generative AI output is a first draft, not a final answer. Define explicitly where human review is required and make that expectation part of the process, not an afterthought.

Before You Scale AI Use: A Short Checklist

- **Do we understand the process AI is supporting?** If you cannot describe the steps clearly, you are not ready to automate any of them.
- **Have we defined what "good output" looks like?** Your team needs a standard to verify against, not just a prompt to copy.
- **Is there a verification step before AI output reaches a customer, partner, or decision maker?** If not, build one.
- **Do we know what data our team is putting into these tools?** Public AI tools are not the place for client data, financials, or sensitive internal information. If your team does not know the line, draw it.
- **Are we measuring whether AI is actually saving time?** Adoption is not the goal. Useful adoption is.

What This Means in Practice

AI is not going away, and the businesses that learn to use it well will have a real advantage. But "using it" and "using it well" are different things. The gap between the two is usually not the technology. It is the process, the training, and the guardrails around it. The businesses that navigate this well usually have someone in their corner who understands both the technology and the process it supports.

If your team is already using AI tools and you are not sure how, what for, or whether the output is being verified, that is worth a conversation with your IT partner before it becomes a problem. ■





POULSBO CHAMBER *Member Spotlights*



At Culinary Viking, we offer a handpicked selection of high-quality kitchen supplies, stylish home goods, and expert know-how - all under one roof. Whether you're grilling, baking, sautéing, or sipping, we've got what you need to conquer your culinary adventures.



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watson

Founded in the early 1960s by South African-born cabinetmaker Grahame Watson on Bainbridge Island, the company has grown steadily over the years. Leadership later passed to partners Bill Haggerty, Daniel Warn, and Clif McKenzie, who continued its tradition of care and stability. Today, based near Poulsbo, we carry on that vision-focused on quality craftsmanship, long-term strength, and supporting the team behind our work.

crabtree

KITCHEN + BAR

Crabtree Kitchen + Bar proudly sources the freshest ingredients available, working closely with local farmers to bring the very best of the Pacific Northwest to the table. Supporting our local community is at the heart of what we do, and every dish reflects our commitment to quality, sustainability, and regional flavor.



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How Healthy is Your Workplace Culture?



By Julie Piazza
SHRM-SCP, SPHR
Anew Insights

Imagine the start of a typical workday. The alarm goes off. Coffee brews. Emails wait. For many people, work begins with a quiet tension in the body and mind as thoughts race, shoulders tighten, and anxiety begins to flutter. By day's end, the energy feels spent, while the to-do list didn't shrink.

For a long time, work and health lived in separate worlds. You worked hard during the day and were expected to recharge at night or on weekends. Stress was considered part of the job. Long hours, lack of sleep, and overcommitting were worn like badges of honor. Over time, though, the costs became clear as talented employees quietly left.

A healthy workplace culture recognizes these issues and seeks to address stress before it results in loss. When you look at your employees, do they look inspired or worn? The first step is leaders noticing rising sick days, more miscommunication, and a lower sense of teamwork enthusiasm.

The next step usually comes with good intentions as a wellness initiative is announced. Maybe it is a step challenge or a mindfulness app. But these initiatives do not relieve the burden; they're actually adding just one more thing to do. The real test is not what is offered, but who leads the initiative and how.

This is where the culture cultivates. Wellness shifts from focusing on why it's missing to focusing on what leaders and teams can do to make it real.

Picture a manager who begins meetings by asking how the team is doing and truly

listening. A company that encourages lunch breaks instead of praising long hours. A leader who logs off on time and says so out loud.

These moments seem small, but they change the emotional tone of work. People start to breathe a little easier.

As awareness continues, mental health comes into focus. Stress and burnout are no longer whispered about. They are named and addressed. Employees are reminded that needing support is human, not weak. Clear expectations replace constant urgency. Workloads are adjusted when they become unrealistic.

Something important happens at this point as trust begins to grow. When people feel safe, they speak up, and problems are solved before they become crises. Teams feel less pressure to pretend everything is fine.

Now imagine how this feels on a normal Tuesday afternoon. Instead of pushing through exhaustion, an employee believes that it's okay to take a short walk to reset. Instead of working late out of fear, they trust that rest and family time is respected. Because ideas are encouraged, there is conversation where there used to be silence.

This culture also includes physical well-being. Not in a demanding way, but in a supportive one. Chairs fit bodies better. Screens are set at eye level. Meetings allow for movement. The workplace starts to feel like it was designed with humans in mind.

Rest becomes a shared value. Time off is encouraged and protected. When people return, they bring fresh energy with them. Creativity improves. Focus sharpens. Work

feels more welcoming and sustainable.

A healthy culture does not mean constant happiness. It means fairness, respect, and consistency. It means mistakes are treated as learning moments, not personal failures. It means recognition is real, specific, and regular.

Belonging plays a powerful role because when people feel included, stress levels drop and confidence grows. Collaboration feels easier, as wellness becomes something the whole workplace shares.

Leadership is the steward of this culture. Their participation and behavior set the direction, even more than policies do, as they model boundaries and talk openly about well-being.

Over time, the workplace begins to feel different. Not perfect, but healthier. Conversations feel more honest. Energy lasts longer throughout the day. People feel seen and heard. The work matters, and now so do the people doing it.

Workplace health and wellness is not a one-and-done. It is cultivated as needs change, people change, and the work changes. What stays constant is the intention: create a place where people can do meaningful work without sacrificing their health. To believe that success and well-being can exist together.

In the end, cultivating workplace wellness is deeply human. It starts with awareness, grows through action, and is sustained by trust. When organizations commit to this path, work becomes more than something people survive. It becomes a place where they can grow, contribute, and continue to feel well doing it. ■

Finding Relief in a Tense World



Inside Blue Oasis Massage with Kelsi Anderson

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

For Kelsi Anderson, massage therapy is more than a profession. It is a responsibility she feels every time a client walks through the door.

"My clients are my own," she said. "Owning my own business makes me feel like these people, my clients, they're totally in my hands."

That sense of responsibility shapes the experience at Blue Oasis Massage in Bremerton, where Anderson has spent nearly eight years helping clients manage pain, stress and the physical strain of everyday life. Many of the people who visit her practice have been doing so for years.

"I know so much about them. Some of them have been with me since the beginning. Most of them have been with me at least five years," Anderson said. "I have so many regulars, and it's really important to me that I listen to their needs, and that I act on that in the best way that I know how."

In a world where many people spend long hours at desks, hunched over smartphones or juggling demanding schedules, Anderson sees massage therapy as an important tool for maintaining physical and mental well-being.

"The majority of people are probably more

stressed out than we're meant to be," she said. "Having your body feel better and more relaxed, I believe, can lead to your mind feeling a lot better, too. One less thing you have to worry about is pain and tension."

Addressing Modern Tension

Over time, Anderson has noticed a clear pattern in the issues her clients bring to the table.

"I've been telling people for the last few years, about 90% of my clientele are people who come in with neck and shoulder tension," she said.

Many clients arrive feeling embarrassed or apologetic about their discomfort, believing their problem is unusual. Anderson quickly reassures them that it's not.

"A lot of them, they get all somber," she said. "They're like, I've been told I carry my stress on my shoulders, and I'm like, everybody does."

Modern lifestyles often play a major role. Hours spent working at computers, scrolling through phones and performing repetitive physical tasks can put continuous strain on the upper body.

"Most people are in flexion a lot of the time, and it's not good for us," she said.

Kelsi Anderson stands at the entrance of Blue Oasis Massage in Bremerton, where she has built a client-focused practice centered on pain relief and wellness.

Photos Courtesy of
Blue Oasis Massage



Those tense shoulders and tight neck muscles are exactly the kind of challenge Anderson enjoys addressing.

"Honestly, those are my favorite people," she said. "Because I love a good, tight pair of shoulders, and I just like to melt them like butter."

Alongside hands-on treatment, she often shares practical advice about posture and daily habits.

"Once you start to feel a twinge, straighten up, do your thing," she said. "You can't be on the ball 100% of the time but do what you can."

Supporting the Body's Natural Balance

Massage therapy works in several ways to support the body's overall health.

Tight muscles can restrict circulation and limit mobility. By loosening those areas, massage therapy helps restore movement and comfort.

"If you've got tight muscles, they're stagnated, all bunched together," she said. "I go in there and break up the fascia, kind of try to return the body back to homeostasis, where it's happy."

Many clients notice immediate improvements after a session, especially when it comes to rest and relaxation.

"Most of my clients tell me that they get some of the best sleep of their life right after they've had a massage," she said. "Because they're so relaxed."

Over time, regular massage can also help people manage chronic physical issues.

"I've had plenty of people tell me that even if they do kind of snap back to where they were after a couple days or so, they've told me that it helps in the long run," she said.

At the same time, Anderson is careful not to overstate what massage therapy can accomplish.

"Something that's really important is that massage does not fix, it only treats," she said. "But treatment can sometimes be just as good. It can be better than back surgery. If that's going to keep you away from the scalpel, then yes, definitely encourage that."

Beyond physical relief, many clients experience emotional benefits as well.

Pain and tension can affect a person's mood, energy levels and ability to focus. Reducing those burdens can improve overall quality of life.

For many of Anderson's clients—especially parents—massage appointments serve as a moment to reset.

"They say that it kind of helps," she said. "It gives them a reset, and they feel stronger to be able to go back to their crazy lives after."

Customized Care for Every Client

No two appointments at Blue Oasis Massage are exactly alike. Anderson tailors each session to the specific needs of the person on her table.

"Somebody might come in and tell me that they've got this and that going on," Anderson explains. "It's kind of a little bit of a puzzle sometimes where I have to just quickly think, how am I going to go about this?"

Clients may want focused work on particular areas while still enjoying the relaxation of a full-body massage.

"I absolutely will customize my massages just to make sure that I'm treating the areas that they need, but also giving them what they want, too," she said.



Kelsi Anderson performs a massage at Blue Oasis Massage, where she specializes in customized treatments tailored to each client's needs.

The massage room at Blue Oasis Massage is designed to provide a calm, relaxing environment for clients seeking relief from stress and tension.

If a session doesn't allow enough time to address everything, Anderson will be candid about it.

"I might even tell them after, we may want to just focus on these areas next time, or you may want a longer session," she said.

Her services include Swedish massage, deep tissue massage, prenatal massage, hot stone therapy and cupping.

She also offers intraoral therapy, a specialized technique focused on the muscles connected to the jaw.

"It is really good for migraines, people with TMJ disorder, people who clench their teeth," she said.

Shorter 30-minute sessions are also available for clients who want focused treatment or are trying massage for the first time.

"Those are really great for just trying me out, or if you just have some focus work that you want done and not a lot of money or time," she said.

More recently, Anderson added chair massage sessions for people who may feel nervous about traditional table massage. In these sessions, clients remain fully clothed while she focuses on areas like the neck and shoulders.

Growing Demand in Kitsap County

Over the past several years, Anderson has noticed a growing demand for massage therapy throughout Kitsap County.

She remembers hearing from a former coworker years ago who left the profession because there "just wasn't enough business." That hasn't been Anderson's experience.

"All of a sudden, it just boomed," she said. "I feel like, in this county, there is a shortage of massage therapists for the demand."

Her own schedule reflects that rising interest.

"I don't know how many more new people I can take," she said. "I might have to have a wait list."

She calls it a "good problem to have," but it also means carefully balancing time between new clients and the long-time regulars who helped build her practice.

A Path That Started Early

Long before opening Blue Oasis Massage, Anderson had a glimpse of the skills that would shape her career.

Her interest in massage began during high school when her mother came home from work with sore forearms after long days at the office.

"I remember working on her, and it felt like I knew exactly what she was feeling," Anderson recalls. "Like I knew where the tension was. And I just went straight to the problem area."

Her mother noticed the same thing.

"She said the exact same thing," Anderson said. "It's like you know exactly where it is."

"That kind of planted the seed in my head," she said.

At the time, Anderson expected to follow a more traditional academic path and initially enrolled in college with the goal of becoming a mental health therapist.

But she struggled to find the right direction.

"I worked for five years and then decided to go to massage school," she said.

The program was a nine-month night course that she attended while maintaining a full-time job during the day.

"It was rough," she said. "It was a rough year, working, going to school at the same time. But, well worth it."

Building a Business

After graduating, Anderson found work at a massage business but quickly realized the environment wasn't the right fit.

A conversation she overheard between coworkers helped push her toward starting her own practice.

"I overheard one of the gals that I worked with say to someone, you're never gonna make good money as a massage therapist if you're working for somebody else," Anderson said.

Another colleague was preparing to open her own business, and Anderson began to consider the possibility for herself.

Rather than taking a large financial risk, she looked for a way to start small.

With limited overhead and some savings for equipment, she opened Blue Oasis Massage while continuing to work at a massage franchise to maintain financial stability.

After about a year of gradually building her own client base, she decided to take the leap.



Balancing Care and Business

Running a wellness practice means balancing compassionate care with practical business realities.

One challenge Anderson faces is pricing.

"I don't like to raise my prices," she said.

Even after a recent increase, she says her rates remain lower than many other therapists in the region.

"That's still on the low end," she said. "I want to actually help people. This isn't just about making money for me."

For those who have never experienced massage therapy, Anderson encourages them to give it a try.

"If you've never had a massage before, it's never too late," she said.

For the many clients who do return—often month after month—her goal is simple.

"Obviously, pain relief," she said. "I want them to feel safe."

But she hopes they leave with more than just relaxed muscles.

"They get a lot more, I think, from me than they would from just some one-off," she said.

"Because they know that I care. It's my own business, and they're there specifically to see me."

In a fast-paced, often stressful world, Anderson sees her work as a way to help people slow down and reconnect with their bodies. At Blue Oasis Massage, relief isn't just about easing tension—it's about restoring balance, one client at a time. ■



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Sleep and Aging:

Why Rest Still Matters and How to Get It

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

As we age, our relationship with sleep naturally shifts. The nights becoming lighter, the interruptions more frequent, and the wake-up times earlier. The conception that seniors need less sleep is false. Despite age, experts recommend 7 to 9 hours of sleep to maintain optimal cognitive function, emotional balance, and physical health.

Poor sleep habits in the elderly population are not inevitable parts of aging. It is a significant health indicator that is often linked to chronic pain, medication side effects, or conditions such as sleep apnea. Properly addressing these issues is crucial. With chronic sleep deprivation, there are serious consequences, including an increased risk for falling, accelerated cognitive decline, memory issues, and a higher susceptibility to cardiovascular diseases.

It is important to prioritize sleep hygiene. Maintain a consistent sleep schedule. The environment in which you sleep is just as important as well. Optimizing this area by increasing daytime light exposure can help seniors achieve restorative rest and improve their quality of life.

According to a survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, 30-39% of older adults reported having difficulty sleeping. It's common to take longer to fall asleep and frequently awake during the night; however, it is important to note the quantity and quality of your sleep.

Aside from being sick or in pain, making it hard to sleep, there are other reasons that could contribute to poor sleep habits, such as certain medications or emotional experiences, i.e., losing a loved one. Take care to talk with your healthcare professional if you are experiencing poor sleep. For instance, excessive sleepiness during the daytime could be a sign of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), cognitive impairment, or cardiovascular issues.

With OSA, there could be a feeling of weight on the upper chest and neck that can contribute to blocking the flow of air. The most common complaints are drowsiness and snoring, but some older adults may notice gasping or waking up with a dry mouth or a headache in the morning. The prevalence of OSA does increase with age in adults and can lead to poor quality of life and/or an increased risk of motor vehicle accidents if they are still driving. In addition, OSA has been associated with obesity, leading to a vicious cycle between sleep deprivation, aggravating obesity, and vice versa.

Healthy eating habits can help alleviate and prevent sleep problems. Overeating and eating too much certain foods, such as meals low in fiber and high in added sugars and saturated fat, have been associated with interrupted sleep. How can we take better care of our sleep habits?

No matter what the reason may be for poor sleep, there are foundational steps that the experts from those surveys recommend implementing for a healthy lifestyle and improve your sleep. These steps include reserving your sleep space, make a sleep ritual or schedule, a plan for waking during the night, limiting certain foods and drinks, and physical activity.

Sleep Space

Your sleep space should be the temperature that is most comfortable for you. Keep out those devices that keep you up such as TVs, tablets, computers, etc. The goal is to associate this space with sleep. As much as possible, avoid eating or working in your sleep space.



Waking During the Night

It's okay to wake during the night. Keep in mind that if it takes more than 15 minutes to fall back asleep, get out of bed and try an activity to help you fall asleep. This could be reading or listening to soft music. Repeating your sleep ritual can help too.

Sleep Ritual

Keeping a consistent sleep schedule will help your body know when it's time to wind down for bed. Limiting light exposure helps. Light exposure could be from digital technology. Avoiding upsetting news coverage helps keep your ritual stress free and allowing the body to wind down.

Foods and Drinks

Try to avoid large and heavy meals before bed and stay away from caffeine in the afternoons which can stay in your system for as long as 10-12 hours. Depending on when you plan on falling asleep, this can also hinder your body from winding down allowing adequate rest. Alcohol and sleep aids are not good ideas as they are more likely to cause sleep disturbances and poor sleep rituals.

Physical Activities

When able, exercising early in the day can bolster your mood and help get the natural sunlight that's needed to signal your brain that it is daytime. This is a great way to establish a rhythm of your sleep and wake cycle.

As with developing any new habit, it is important to stick with it! Over time, you may notice improvements that can positively impact your health and well-being. A key token takeaway is to take note of the connection with poor sleep habits and your health. There is a big connection between poor sleep and unhealthy weight gain. Sleep helps regulate hormones that tell your body when you're hungry and full. It's important to eat right and be well-rested as much as possible for good health and to avoid falls risk and injury. Poor sleep can put you at risk for obesity and other chronic conditions; adopting a nighttime ritual can set the stage for a good night's sleep and improve your quality of life. ■



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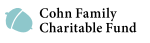
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Erin Phillips, general manager of Pickleball Kingdom in Poulsbo, and a coach spend time on the court at the indoor facility.

More Than a Game

Photos Courtesy of Pickleball Kingdom

Pickleball Kingdom Turns Play Into a New Model for Community Wellness

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

On a weekday afternoon in Poulsbo, the soundtrack at Pickleball Kingdom isn't the clank of weight machines or the steady rhythm of treadmills. Instead, it's the sharp pop of plastic balls meeting paddles, bursts of laughter between points and the easy chatter of people who greet each other by name.

For Erin Phillips, general manager of Pickleball Kingdom in Poulsbo, that sound represents something larger than recreation. It reflects a shift in how people think about health—one that blends physical activity with social connection and mental well-being.

"All my best friends play pickleball," Phillips said. "It's a place where you meet people as an adult, which is very hard to do."

Since opening March 31, 2025, the facility has quickly carved out a role in Kitsap County's wellness landscape. Still in its early stages, Pickleball Kingdom is emerging as more than a sports venue—it's becoming a gathering place where fitness, friendship and mental health intersect.

Filling a Gap in the Community

The idea behind Pickleball Kingdom started with a simple but significant problem: access.

"There's no indoor facility in Kitsap County," Phillips explains. "If you're a pickleball player, you can't play some years for two-thirds or three-quarters of the entire year—because of the rain, the cold, and the wind."

For a region known for its wet winters and unpredictable weather, outdoor courts often sit unused for months. Indoor alternatives—school gyms, community centers or multipurpose spaces—frequently fall short, with shared lines, limited availability and inconsistent playing conditions.

Poulsbo presented a rare opportunity. Large, vacant retail spaces allowed developers to reimagine what a dedicated

Players connect and socialize between games, highlighting the community aspect of pickleball.



indoor pickleball facility could look like. By combining a former OfficeMax/Office Depot building with an adjacent Big 5 Sporting Goods space, the Pickleball Kingdom team created a 12-court indoor complex designed specifically for the sport.

"It seemed like a no-brainer to bring one to Kitsap," Phillips said. "We finally found a space that would accommodate a legitimate indoor facility."

The location also carries symbolic weight. Pickleball was invented just nine miles away on Bainbridge Island, giving the Poulsbo facility a connection to the sport's origins that few others can claim.

A Sport Built for Accessibility

Pickleball's rapid growth across the country is no accident. At its core, the sport is designed to be accessible—physically, socially and financially.

Played on a smaller court than tennis, pickleball requires less running and places less strain on joints, making it approachable for people of all ages and fitness levels.

"You don't really have to move very far," Phillips said. "There's not a ton of lateral movement... you're not having to run around very much."

That accessibility makes it especially appealing to older adults, individuals returning to exercise and those who may feel intimidated by traditional gyms. It also aligns with broader healthcare trends emphasizing low-impact, sustainable forms of physical activity.

Even wearable technology has struggled to keep up with the sport's unique profile.

"Apple Watch at first didn't even register pickleball as exercise, because your heart rate doesn't, depending on what level you're playing, go up that much," Phillips said.

But for many players, that's part of the appeal. Pickleball offers movement without the pressure of intense workouts—an



Players of all ages take part in pickleball, a sport known for its accessibility and low-impact play.

approachable way to stay active without feeling overwhelmed.

The Mental Health Factor

While the physical benefits are clear, Phillips believes the true power of pickleball lies in its social nature.

"The wellbeing piece is physical, but the other huge piece is the mental health side," she said. "It's just a very social sport."

Games are short and constantly rotating, creating natural opportunities for interaction. Players move in and out of matches, talk between points and quickly form connections.

"It can really be a replacement for something that's not great in your life," Phillips explains. "And it can be a way of finding people that are in your same situation... giving you people that are experiencing the same thing, or need a community to help them out of sadness or depression."


She has seen that impact firsthand.

Some members have replaced time spent drinking with time on the court. Others have lost significant weight after becoming regular players. In one case, a woman struggling with grief after losing her husband found connection through a group of players in similar circumstances.

"She found pickleball, and then she found an older ladies' group who were kind of in the same scenario," Phillips said. "They started playing together regularly and became a support group for each other. They wouldn't have found each other unless they played pickleball."

For Phillips, the implications are deeply personal.


"A lot of seniors end up being pretty isolated if they don't choose to go into a home," she said. "My dad is the type of person who will not go into a home—but he will play pickleball. That gives me a lot of peace."



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Feature



Pickleball Kingdom in Poulsbo features 12 dedicated indoor courts, providing year-round access for players in Kitsap County.

Lowering Barriers to Entry

Unlike many fitness trends that come with high costs or steep learning curves, pickleball is intentionally simple to pick up.

Equipment is relatively inexpensive. Basic athletic shoes are sufficient, paddles range widely in price and balls are durable and affordable. At Pickleball Kingdom, the business model is designed to reflect that accessibility.

"It's like 100 bucks a month for a person to literally play as many times a day and as many days of the month as you want," Phillips said. "Which is a pretty good value."

The facility also offers discounted options for first responders, teachers, nurses and service members, along with targeted programs to make the sport more accessible to seniors and other groups.

On a recent weekend, the facility partnered with a national seniors organization to offer

free play for participants 50 and older—part of a broader effort to introduce the sport to those who might not otherwise try it.

From First Game to Community Regular

For newcomers, the biggest hurdle is often simply getting started. Pickleball Kingdom addresses that through structured, low-pressure programming.

Every day, the facility hosts free introductory classes for beginners.

"It's totally new players," Phillips said. "You probably have never picked up a ball and a paddle... We do basics—how you play, some rules, and an idea of what the facility is like."

From there, players can move into guided sessions designed to bridge the gap between learning the basics and joining open play.

"Jumping from 'I've done it for an hour' to going into open play is a pretty intimidating jump," Phillips said.

The facility's "Pathways for Beginners" program provides a

supported environment where players can build confidence while learning the flow of real games.

At the heart of the operation is open play—hours of daily court time where players rotate through games based on skill level.

"We have people that play once a week, and people that play twice a day," Phillips said. "It's what you want it to be. There's no judgment either way."

For many, what begins as curiosity quickly becomes routine. Phillips says one of the most rewarding parts of her job is watching that transformation.

"My favorite thing to watch is people I see who have taken Pickleball 101 and are now doing tournaments. It's amazing."

A Growing Community Hub

As it grows, Pickleball Kingdom is expanding beyond its role as a recreational facility into something closer to a community wellness hub.

The business is developing programs for a wide range of groups, including seniors, youth, veterans and individuals with physical or developmental challenges. Plans also include increased outreach to schools, homeschool networks and youth organizations.

"I'd love to host every school, every grade from all of the communities that we serve," Phillips said. "I just believe in the sport so much and how much it benefits everyone."

Partnerships are also central to the model. The facility regularly collaborates with nonprofits to host fundraising events, offering a new way for organizations to engage donors while promoting physical activity.

Local pickleball clubs across Kitsap and neighboring counties use the facility as a backup location when outdoor events are disrupted by weather. Meanwhile, partnerships with healthcare-adjacent businesses—such as chiropractic and physical therapy clinics—highlight the sport's alignment with broader wellness goals.

"We really believe in the potential for fundraising," Phillips said. "And we're trying to create more and more mutually beneficial partnerships."

Navigating the Startup Reality

Despite its early success, Pickleball Kingdom is still navigating the challenges of a new business.

"The growth hasn't been as fast as I thought it would be," Phillips said. "People are spread out, and our health as a business really depends on places that are 10 miles away or more."

Like many businesses in Kitsap County, geography plays a role. Distance between communities can make consistent participation more

difficult, and membership costs—while competitive—can still be a barrier for some.

To address those challenges, the team is working to reduce expenses, renegotiate its lease and expand offerings. Plans include additional social spaces and new amenities aimed at enhancing the overall experience.

The goal is to reach profitability by the end of the second year while continuing to grow its presence in the community.

A Different Approach to Wellness

As healthcare providers and wellness experts increasingly emphasize prevention, social connection and sustainable activity, Pickleball Kingdom reflects a broader shift in how people stay healthy.

It's not built around high-intensity workouts or strict routines. Instead, it offers something simpler: movement, connection and a sense of belonging.

For Phillips, that's the message she hopes resonates with anyone considering stepping onto the court for the first time.

"Just try it," she said. "It's an hour, it's free, we provide the equipment. It's very low pressure... and it could actually be a game changer. It can be a life changer."

In Kitsap County's evolving healthcare and wellness landscape, Pickleball Kingdom is making a compelling case—that sometimes, the most effective path to better health starts not with a prescription or a program, but with a paddle, a shared space and a simple invitation to play. ■



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Players prepare for a match during open play at Pickleball Kingdom in Poulsbo.



A young player learns the game at Pickleball Kingdom, which offers programming for all skill levels and ages.



Players take part in open play at Pickleball Kingdom, where games rotate throughout the day.

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Why Strategy, Technology, and Policy Must Evolve Together

By Doña Keating | President & CEO, Professional Options LLC; COO/SVP, Keating Consulting Service, Inc.; Managing Partner, K2 Strategic Solutions; Founder, West Sound CoderDojo; Co-Founding Member, West Sound Technology Association; Founding 40, Vibe Coworks



Every leader I work with wants the same thing: an organization that thrives no matter what comes next. Whether pursuing growth, recovering from setbacks, developing new capabilities, or building future-readiness, they all seek sustainable resilience that doesn't crack under pressure.

Yet most efforts at organizational development fail because they treat strategy, technology, and policy as separate undertakings instead of interconnected, co-evolving systems.

After three decades of consulting across Fortune 100 companies, government agencies, and emerging ventures, I've seen that lasting capability comes from the mutual adaptation of three core elements: strategic clarity, scalable technology, and regulatory awareness. These don't just need to align—they must unfold together, continuously, and interdependently.

Strategic Clarity: Empowering Distributed Decision-Making

Strategic clarity isn't about having every answer, but cultivating the organization's ability to ask the right questions at every level. The most resilient teams embed strategic thinking into their culture, building systems that empower individuals to act decisively in real time.

The critical question is not "What's our strategy?" but rather, "How do we ensure everyone makes decisions aligned with our vision, even when things move too fast for constant oversight?"

This is what I call strategic questioning capability. When it's built into the DNA of an organization, adaptability becomes second nature.

Technology Infrastructure: Systems That Evolve With You

Growth crushes fragile systems. I've watched too many promising ventures falter when their infrastructure couldn't scale, whether due to volume, complexity, or expansion.

But the real challenge isn't predicting what's next. It's designing systems built for continuous adaptation rather than periodic overhaul. That means more than servers and software. It includes training, processes, and organizational habits that foster resilience.

Instead of layering tech on top of strategy, design tech that co-evolves with

your priorities. Not just compatibility, but symbiosis.

Regulatory Awareness: Turning Policy Into Strategic Foresight

Many leaders treat regulation as a roadblock. The smartest ones see it as a map.

Compliance is the baseline. Strategic anticipation is the advantage. When leaders understand emerging policy trends, they can steer toward opportunity: make investments others hesitate to touch, enter markets competitors avoid, and form alliances that will matter tomorrow.

Where Co-Evolution Becomes Competitive Advantage

Organizational intelligence comes not from isolated wins, but from integrated development. Strategic clarity shapes your tech investments. Tech agility accelerates your policy response. Policy foresight drives your strategic pivot.

This isn't change management. It's natural development. Change that feels organic rather than imposed. Growth that's sustainable rather than disruptive. The goal isn't dependence on external consultants, but internal capacity to see around corners and self-adjust.

Leaders building ventures in and beyond Kitsap face this challenge constantly, whether in maritime innovation, defense tech, healthcare, or emerging sectors. The question isn't location-specific: Are your strategic, technological, and regulatory systems co-evolving, or managed in isolation?

If you're wondering whether your systems are evolving together, start with three questions:

- Can your team make strategic decisions without constant top-down input?
- Does your infrastructure enable change, or constrain it?
- Do you treat policy as a warning, or an advantage?

Your answers will tell you where true resilience begins. ■



Military Appreciation Day

Photo Credit: Tiffany Diamond Photography



We had a great time at Military Appreciation Day on March 14th! Thank you to everyone who joined us in celebrating our local service members, and to all the vendors who came out to connect with and support our military community. And a big thank you to our event sponsors whose generous support made the day possible.





February Membership Luncheon

At our February Membership Luncheon, we were honored to welcome Bremerton Mayor Greg Wheeler for his annual State of the City Address. Mayor Wheeler provided an informative look at the progress and challenges shaping Bremerton today, sharing updates on the city's healthcare capacity,

housing and development projects, education partnerships, community development, and ongoing transportation improvements.

Members also had the opportunity to engage directly with Mayor Wheeler during a Q&A session, discussing topics impacting local businesses and our broader community. ■

March Member of the Month

The Greater Kitsap Chamber is proud to recognize Details Property Management as our March Member of the Month. Locally owned and operated, Details Property Management has become a trusted resource for homeowners, renters, and investors across Kitsap County. Since joining the Chamber, Details Property Management has demonstrated outstanding engagement, strong community advocacy, and a consistent commitment to elevating the voice of local business.



Advocacy in Action

Details Property Management plays an active role in supporting and elevating the voice of small businesses in the region. Earlier this year, owner of Details Property Management, Heidi Hartman, participated in the Association of Washington Business (AWB) Hill Climb, helping represent Kitsap County in conversations with state leaders. Her involvement demonstrates a business-wide commitment to advocacy and to ensuring that the needs of local

employers, property owners, and community stakeholders are heard at the state level.

Active Partners in Community Connection

The team at Details Property Management continues to be a friendly and reliable presence at Chamber events, engaging with peers and contributing to the collaborative spirit that defines our business community. Their ongoing participation helps strengthen relationships, foster new partnerships, and support a thriving and connected Kitsap economy.

A Business Built on Trust and Stewardship

With a focus on responsive service, transparent communication, and excellent care for both property owners and tenants, Details Property Management consistently demonstrates what it means to be a dependable community partner. Their dedication to quality, professionalism, and local engagement makes them a valued member of the Chamber and a standout business in Kitsap County. ■



Kitsap Women's Summit

More than 200 women from across the region came together on March 19th for the 3rd Annual Kitsap Women's Summit, jointly hosted by the Greater Kitsap Chamber and the Leadership Kitsap Foundation. The 2026 Summit was themed "Breakthrough" with speakers covering a variety of topics from understanding differences to working through conflict. New to the summit this year was the introduction of breakout sessions, allowing for more speakers to participate. Next year's event will be held on Thursday, March 18, 2027.



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February Off the Clock



Thank you to everyone who came out for our Chamber: Off the Clock on February 17th! We had such an amazing time reconnecting with familiar faces and welcoming so many first-time attendees! A special thank you to SS Landscaping Services for being such an incredible host and highlighting the importance of investing in our local community.

New and Renewal Memberships for February

We appreciate your support of the Chamber's Mission!

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- Pin Seeker Indoor Golf (2024)

Main Street

- Central Kitsap Fire & Rescue (2001)
- Hwy 420 (2017)
- Independent Scentsy Consultant - Denise Steele (2017)
- Port Gamble - Raydient (2011)
- Port Madison Enterprises (2001)
- SAFE Boats International (2011)

Business

- Blu Berry Frozen Yogurt (2014)
- Bremerton Community Farmers Market (2024)
- Brennan Jacobson - The Latitude 48 Group @ Ameriprise Financial (2024)

- Commencement Bank** (2026)
- Details Property Management (2014)

- Eleven Winery** (2026)

Elikonas Corporation (2026)

- Evergreen Goodwill of Northwest Washington (2009)
- Go Mobile Auto Glass** (2026)
- Grocery Outlet of Bremerton (2021)
- Jersey Mike's Subs (2016)
- Kitsap Art Center (2022)
- Kitsap Chico Towing (2020)
- Lead Forward Co. (2023)
- Olympic Presort, Inc. (1997)
- Olympic Workforce Development Council (2019)
- Puget Sound Navy Museum (2014)
- Silverdale Technology LLC (2020)
- The Coffee Oasis (2001)
- The Resort at Port Ludlow (2023)
- Unique Experience Custom Embroidery, Inc (1995)
- valueGLASS (2024)
- Whitlock & Forster, LLC (1991)

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Why Consistency Is the Most Underrated Marketing Strategy

By Amy Yaley | COO of Ward Media

When business owners talk about marketing success, the conversation often centers around big ideas. A great campaign, a new platform, a creative promotion, or a larger budget is usually seen as the key to better results. While those elements can certainly play a role, there is one factor that regularly separates effective marketing from ineffective marketing, and it is often overlooked: consistency.

Consistency is not as exciting as a new campaign or as visible as a surge in engagement, but over time, it is one of the most powerful drivers of growth. Businesses that show up regularly, maintain a clear message, and stay present in front of their audience tend to outperform those that rely on sporadic or reactive efforts.

At its core, consistency simply means showing up in a reliable and repeatable way. It is not about doing everything at once or chasing every available channel. It is about choosing a direction, committing to it, and executing it over time. It's about staying top of mind with your customer.

One reason consistency matters so much is because of how customers make decisions. Very few purchasing decisions happen after a single interaction. Instead, people are exposed to a business multiple times before they feel comfortable taking the next step. They may see an advertisement, hear about a company from a neighbor, visit a website later, and only then decide to connect. Each touchpoint builds familiarity, and familiarity builds trust.

In smaller communities, this effect is even more pronounced. Businesses are often competing not just on price or services, but on recognition and reputation. When a name appears consistently in the same places, with the same message, it becomes easier to remember. When it appears sporadically, it is easier to forget.

Consistency also allows marketing efforts to compound. A single campaign may

generate limited results on its own, but when messages are reinforced over time, each effort builds on the last. Brand awareness grows gradually, and over time, the return on marketing investment becomes more noticeable. Without consistency, each campaign essentially starts from scratch.

A recent example illustrates this well. A client of mine is preparing to sponsor a major event in a local community where they do not currently have a strong presence. The sponsorship will provide valuable visibility and association within that community, but they recognize that the event itself is only one piece of the equation. So for the sponsorship to have its full impact, they are investing in a broader branding effort before and after the event.

By creating awareness ahead of time and continuing to reinforce their message afterward, they are ensuring that the audience does not just see their name once, but multiple times across different touchpoints. The sponsorship becomes more than a single moment of exposure. It becomes part of a consistent presence that builds familiarity over time. Without that follow-up, even a well-placed sponsorship can lose much of its potential value.

The opposite of consistency is inconsistency, and it comes at a cost. When marketing efforts start and stop frequently, messaging becomes fragmented. Audiences may see a business once and then not again for months. Campaigns lose momentum, and opportunities to reinforce the brand are missed. In these situations, even well-designed marketing can underperform simply because it does not have the chance to take hold.

There are several common ways businesses unintentionally lack consistency,

Some launch marketing initiatives with enthusiasm but discontinue them too quickly if immediate results are not seen. Others spread their efforts across too many channels without committing enough resources to any one of them. Social media may be updated irregularly, or advertising may run in short bursts without a long-term plan. In each case, the issue is not effort, but continuity.

Consistency does not require large budgets or complex strategies. What it does require is planning and discipline. Businesses that approach marketing with a clear structure, even a simple 90-day plan, are better equipped to maintain steady activity. By focusing on a manageable set of tactics and executing them regularly, it becomes easier to build momentum and evaluate results over time.

It is also important to recognize that consistency applies across both digital and traditional marketing. Whether a business is running digital ads, sending direct mail, sponsoring local events, or maintaining a presence in print publications, the principle remains the same. Repetition and visibility across multiple touchpoints strengthen recognition and reinforce messaging.

For many businesses, the challenge is not understanding that consistency matters, but maintaining it. Daily demands often pull attention in different directions, and marketing can become reactive rather than intentional. This is where a defined plan and a commitment to follow-through make a difference.

Ultimately, consistency is what allows marketing to work as intended. It creates familiarity, builds trust, and keeps a business present in the minds of its audience. While it may not produce immediate or dramatic results, it lays the groundwork for sustainable growth.

In the long run, businesses that commit to consistent marketing are not just doing more; they are building something that lasts. And in a competitive marketplace, that steady presence often becomes the advantage that sets them apart. ■

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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Ghost Jobs:

A Hiring Practice That's Haunting Your Brand

By **Monica Blackwood** | President & CEO West Sound Workforce

I'll admit it. I've done it. At one point, I thought it was smart and posted an "evergreen" job. The idea? Always be open to great talent. Keep the door open. See who's out there. So the job stayed on our careers page... indefinitely.

Turns out, that's not a best practice. It's one of the biggest frustrations for job seekers today, and it falls into a category known as "ghost jobs."

What are ghost jobs?

Simply put, they're job postings for roles that aren't actually being filled. Sometimes they were real at one point. Sometimes they never were. Either way, they linger - and candidates are left wondering what happened.

There are a few common reasons employers post them:

- **Building a future pipeline**
Some companies post roles early to "get ahead" of future hiring needs. The intention isn't bad. Being prepared is smart. But when candidates apply and hear nothing back, that early planning quickly turns into a poor experience. Timing matters. If you're not ready to engage, it's not the right time to post.
- **Required postings (with a candidate already in mind)**
In some cases, like certain visa processes, roles must be publicly posted even when a specific candidate is already identified.

Company internal promotion policies can create similar situations. While some of these are unavoidable, others are worth revisiting. If the outcome is already decided, is a public posting really serving its purpose?

- **Job board scraping**
Even when you do everything right, your jobs can take on a life of their own. Third-party job boards often scrape and repost openings, leaving them active long after you've filled the role. It's not intentional, but it still contributes to the problem.

And then there are the more questionable reasons:

- **Creating the illusion of growth**
Posting jobs to signal momentum to investors, competitors, or the public.
- **Appeasing an overworked team**
Making it look like help is on the way, even when hiring isn't actually planned.

These may seem harmless in the moment, but they raise an important question: *Does this align with your company's values?* Because candidates - and employees - are paying attention.

Here's the reality: job seekers invest real time and effort into applying. They tailor resumes, write thoughtful cover letters, and navigate lengthy application



systems. When that effort is met with silence, it doesn't just create frustration, it creates distrust.

And frustrated people talk. Loudly. On social media, in reviews, and within their networks. What starts as a simple posting can quickly become a reputational issue.

In fact, recent estimates suggest that as many as one-third of job postings may fall into the "ghost job" category. At the same time, employers are

voicing their own frustrations about candidates "ghosting" them. It's a two-way street - one we have the power to improve.

So what can employers do differently?

- Post jobs only when you're ready to actively engage with candidates
- Remove or pause postings once you've moved into interviews
- Regularly audit where your jobs are appearing online
 - Be transparent when a role is exploratory or future-focused

A simple shift in timing and intention can make a big difference.

At the end of the day, hiring is about relationships. And like any relationship, trust matters. If we want candidates to show up, engage, and follow through - we need to do the same.

Let's start by putting ghost jobs to rest. ■

Monica Blackwood is the President and CEO of West Sound Workforce, a locally owned staffing firm serving employers and job seekers throughout the Puget Sound region. West Sound Workforce provides temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct-hire staffing services with a focus on alignment, performance, and long-term success.



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Executive Q & A

Jay Burghart, Executive Director of The Doctors Clinic, has helped guide the organization through decades of growth and change in the healthcare industry.

Meet Jay Burghart

Executive Director of
The Doctors Clinic

By Quinn Propst

Ward Media Staff Reporter

For more than two decades, Jay Burghart has played a key role in shaping healthcare delivery in Kitsap County, helping guide The Doctors Clinic through growth, industry changes and an increasingly complex medical landscape. Now, as Executive Director, Burghart leads one of the region's longest-standing physician-owned medical groups, focused on expanding access to care while maintaining a strong commitment to patient-centered service.

With a background in finance and more than 25 years in leadership roles within the organization, Burghart brings a broad perspective to the challenges facing healthcare today—from workforce shortages to advancing technology and the growing demand for coordinated, preventive care. Under his leadership, The Doctors Clinic continues to evolve, strengthening partnerships, investing in innovation and working to meet the needs of a growing and aging population.

In this Executive Q&A, Burghart reflects on his path to leadership, the changing healthcare landscape in Kitsap County,



Photos by Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

and how strategic growth, technology and community-focused care are shaping the future of The Doctors Clinic.

Can you share a little about your background and what led you to your role as Executive Director of The Doctors Clinic?

I began my career as a CPA, working from 1986 to 1992 and building a strong financial foundation, particularly with healthcare clients. That early experience gave me an appreciation for the unique challenges and opportunities in healthcare.

For more than 30 years, my career has been focused primarily in Washington State. I joined The Doctors Clinic in 1999 as Chief Financial Officer, where I oversaw financial operations and strategic planning to help ensure the organization's long-term fiscal health. In 2008, I moved into the role of Chief Operating Officer, which allowed me to apply that financial and strategic background more directly to clinical operations, patient care, and administrative services.

Since 2015, I have served as Executive Director of The Doctors Clinic, leading the organization's overall strategy and operations. My focus has been on supporting high-quality, patient-centered care while strengthening our relationships within the Kitsap County community. Having served in financial, operational, and executive leadership roles, I bring a broad perspective to the challenges and opportunities facing healthcare today.

For readers who may not be familiar, how would you describe the mission and role of The Doctors Clinic in the Kitsap County healthcare system?

The Doctors Clinic is a long-standing, physician-owned, multispecialty medical group that has served Kitsap County since 1945. Our mission is to provide high-quality, compassionate care close to home.

Within the local healthcare system, we play an important role by offering both primary care and a wide range of specialty services in a coordinated setting. For many patients, we are their first point of contact for preventive care and everyday health needs, while also providing access to specialists and more advanced treatment when needed.

Because we are physician-owned, our focus remains on delivering care that is centered on patients, supports continuity

across services, and responds to the evolving needs of our community.

What are some of the biggest healthcare needs you see in Kitsap County today?

One of the biggest healthcare needs in Kitsap County today is the unavailability of healthcare support staff. To help meet those needs, we are focused on supporting physicians and care teams through better technology, more efficient workflows, and new approaches to care delivery. The goal is to ensure patients continue to receive high-quality, compassionate care close to home.

We also have a need to care for an aging population and to better support patients managing chronic conditions. That makes care coordination, preventive care, and timely access to services more important than ever.

Access to care is a growing concern across the country. How is The Doctors Clinic working to ensure patients in Kitsap County can receive timely care?

Ensuring timely access to care starts with having enough providers to meet the needs of the community. At The Doctors Clinic, one of the ways we are addressing that is through our unique practice model, which combines physician ownership with a partnership with Franciscan Medical Group. That structure has helped us attract physician talent in a highly competitive healthcare environment.

In fact, the last three years have been our most successful period of physician recruitment in the past 25 years. That success is helping us expand provider capacity and improve access to timely care for patients across Kitsap County.

Preventative care and wellness are becoming more central in healthcare. How is your organization encouraging patients to take a proactive approach to their health?

Our primary care team has placed a strong emphasis on preventive care and wellness over the past several years. We encourage patients to stay proactive through annual visits, screenings, vaccinations, and early attention to health concerns before they become more serious.

We also track wellness and quality measures every month, and we are proud to consistently exceed national benchmarks. For us, prevention is one of the most important ways we can help patients stay healthier and improve their quality of life over time.

Technology continues to reshape healthcare. What innovations or tools are helping improve the patient experience at your clinics?

Artificial intelligence is one of the most promising tools we are using to improve both physician efficiency and the patient experience. We are currently trialing AI tools



The Doctors Clinic is a long-standing physician-owned practice serving Kitsap County.



Jay Burghart, Executive Director of The Doctors Clinic, talks with staff at the clinic.

that help reduce the time physicians spend on routine administrative work, particularly documentation.

We believe these tools could save up to 20% of a physician's typical day while also improving the accuracy and completeness of clinical notes. That means physicians can spend more time focused on patients, have more meaningful interactions during visits, and reduce some of the administrative burden that contributes to burnout.

Ultimately, innovations like these help us improve access, strengthen quality, and create a better experience for both patients and care teams.

Recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals has been a challenge nationwide. How is The Doctors Clinic addressing workforce needs?

Recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals is a challenge across the country, but Kitsap County offers a unique advantage. This is an exceptional place to live and work, with a high quality of life, a strong sense of community, and the opportunity to build a rewarding medical practice.

At The Doctors Clinic, our recruitment approach is focused on finding physicians and providers whose professional goals

and personal values align with both our organization and the lifestyle this region offers. Just as important, we work hard to create an environment where providers feel supported, connected, and able to build long-term careers here.

What are some initiatives or improvements your team is currently working on that you're particularly excited about?

One of the initiatives we are currently working on is The Doctors Clinic's transition to the Epic practice management and electronic medical record system. It is a significant project and a major investment in the future of patient care and operational efficiency.

When the system goes live in May 2026, it will create stronger connectivity with St. Michael and much of the Virginia Mason Franciscan Health network across the Pacific Northwest. Just as important, patients will benefit from a more integrated portal experience across Virginia Mason Franciscan Health facilities, making it easier to access information and navigate their care.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for the future of The Doctors Clinic?

The Doctors Clinic is committed to meeting the healthcare needs of Kitsap County as

our community continues to grow. Looking ahead, our vision is to expand access to high-quality care while remaining a strong, trusted local healthcare provider for the patients and families we serve.

That growth will be supported and strengthened through our partnership with Franciscan Medical Group, which provides the resources and infrastructure needed to expand existing services, explore new specialties, and invest in innovative models of care. Together, these efforts will help ensure The Doctors Clinic remains a vital and enduring healthcare resource for Kitsap County for years to come.

What motivates you personally as you lead an organization dedicated to improving community health?

What motivates me most is the privilege of working every day with bright, dedicated individuals who truly care about improving the health of our community. That is incredibly rewarding.

Healthcare leadership is about bringing together that talent and commitment with the right strategy, resources, and support so our physicians and staff can do their best work for patients. Knowing that our efforts can make a real difference for both patients and providers is what makes this work so meaningful to me. ■



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Personal Development

Winning Leaves Clues

Lessons from the Seahawks, Part 2

By Dan Weedin | Consultant, Coach, and Head Dog Walker

The second of a two-part series on Leadership Lessons from the Seattle Seahawks' Super Bowl season.

Last month, we broke down three leadership lessons that helped propel the Seattle Seahawks to a Super Bowl championship: Process Over Results, Alignment, and "We Did Not Care."

In this second and final part, we're not running out the clock. We're diving into three more that matter just as much.

MOB Mentality

In 2013, the Seahawks defense was known as the "LOB" — the Legion of Boom — for their ferocity and style of play. In 2025, the Seahawks introduced a new team-wide creed: the MOB Mentality.

In this case, MOB stands for "Mission over BS." (I'm fairly certain the locker room version uses the R-rated translation.)

The concept is simple, yet often difficult to execute. There's no room for drama or selfishness. The mission, in this case a championship, is bigger than any individual goal.

As a Rotarian for over 30 years, I've seen this principle in action. Rotary's motto is "Service Above Self." Many service organizations share a similar ethos.

There's only so much leadership can do to promote this mindset. For it to truly take hold, it must be owned and modeled by the team itself. With the Seahawks, it was driven by the players. In Rotary, it's lived out at the club and member level. Before starting my solo practice, I worked for several companies and have been involved with both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. I've also coached student-athletes for over a decade. I've seen firsthand the consequences of not having a team-first mentality — and the powerful results when it's present.

What about your business or workplace? Do you feel a true MOB Mentality?

Championships don't tolerate ego, and neither should businesses and organizations. Confidence is great when it's part of a team and mission.

Understanding Motivation

We're all motivated differently.

In a podcast late in the season, one of quarterback Sam Darnold's coaches described him as "internally motivated." Quarterback guru and former NFL player Jordan Palmer, explained that's Sam's drive comes from within — a personal standard to improve — rather than from outside criticism or praise. That internal engine fuels resilience.

Jordan Palmer wasn't making a value judgment. He also pointed out that many athletes are externally motivated, like the type who hear, "You can't," and respond with, "Watch me." Think of former Seahawks legends like Richard Sherman or



Doug Baldwin, who thrived with a chip on their shoulder.

Neither is right or wrong. They just are.

The leadership key is understanding how the people around you are wired so you know how to lead, coach, and communicate effectively.

After hearing that interview, I did a bit of self-reflection. I believe I lean more toward external motivation. While I value

both, I recognize that much of my drive, whether in business, golf, leadership, or life, is influenced by what others say or think.

What about you?

Does your drive come from within, largely unaffected by outside noise? Or are you more like me, where external factors help push the needle?

Understanding yourself — and others — is a powerful advantage in leadership.

Chasing Edges

This is a phrase Head Coach Mike MacDonald has used often in interviews over his first two seasons. You can bet that his coaching staff hears it even more.

So, what does "chasing edges" mean?

While I'm not inside Coach MacDonald's head, I've heard him explain it enough to feel confident in this: it's the constant pursuit of small advantages that, over time, create meaningful separation.

It's not just about scheme or trick plays. For the Seahawks, it includes:

- Finding coaches and staff who challenge the norm and bring fresh ideas
- Prioritizing cultural fit over raw talent
- Investing in continuous development and growth
- Embracing change, even when it's uncomfortable

Are you and your organization truly chasing edges, or just saying you are?

It's easy to claim innovation. It's harder to prove it.

Championship teams don't rely on one breakthrough moment. They stack habits, mindsets, and small advantages over time. Process, alignment, focus, mission, motivation, and edges — none of these stand alone.

Together, they create something powerful. The clues are there. The only question is whether we're willing to follow them. ■



Serving Up Community: Pickleball Kingdom Poulsbo



One of the Greater Kingston Chamber's newest members, Pickleball Kingdom Poulsbo, hosted a February member social where members got to see their 12-court facility and learn the basics of a game that was invented right here in Kitsap County!

The group started with appetizers in the Event Room before taking the Pickleball 101 class, which goes over the basics of this growing sport. Knowledgeable coaches worked alongside each attendee to get everyone to practice 'volleying' and other basic shots of the game.

With a private event space and mezzanine level for mingling and spectating, Pickleball Kingdom Poulsbo makes the perfect setting for a post-work celebration or teambuilding event! For folks who get hooked, Pickleball Kingdom Poulsbo provides a variety of ways to stay engaged and even helps pair new players up with others at their skill level. The

coaches shared the numerous physical and mental health benefits of joining the pickleball community, where people find a real sense of community when they come to play. The courts were busy but there was still space to welcome more players into the club.

Check them out online at PickleballKingdomPoulsbo.com or on Facebook and Instagram (@pickleballkingdom.poulsbo). Drop by for a tour or the free introductory lesson every day at 12 and 5pm! ■



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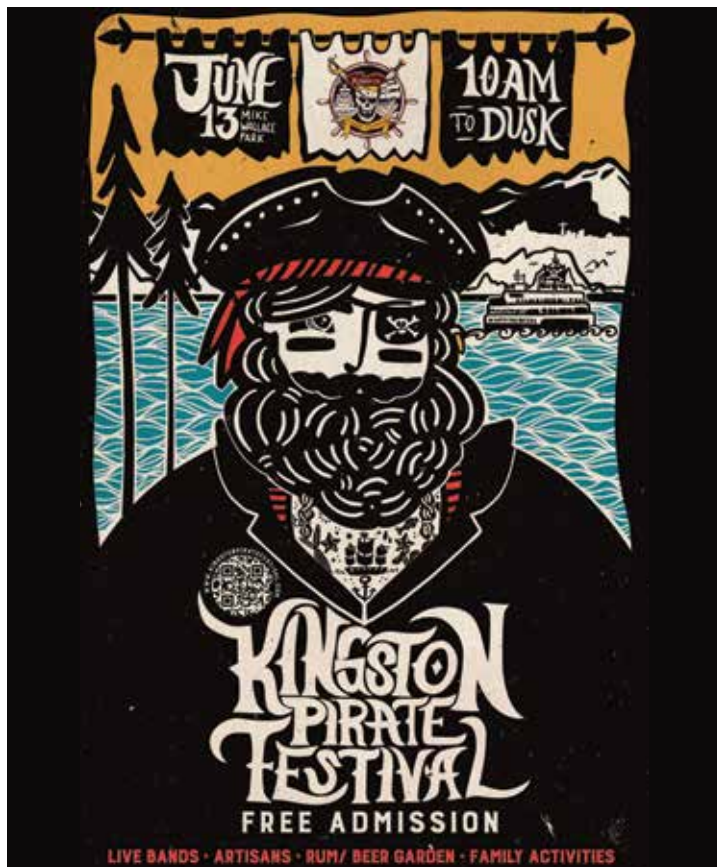
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- Big Wave Recruiting
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- Kitsap Physical Therapy
- Grub Hut
- Dreambird Candles
- Kitsap Building Association
- Kingston Youth Sports Association

News from board

We're excited for all the summer events we have planned for visitors! We will be sharing more info in each issue but you can always check ExploreKingstonWA.com/events for more!



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Health and Wellness

The Growing Influence on Real Estate in Kitsap County

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



Health and wellness are no longer trends limited to gyms and nutrition plans—they are becoming central to how people choose where and how they live. Across Kitsap County and Washington State, homebuyers are increasingly prioritizing properties and communities that support healthier lifestyles. From walkable neighborhoods to homes designed with cleaner air and natural light, wellness-focused real estate is shaping the way people think about their living environments.

For decades, buyers primarily focused on square footage, number of bedrooms, and proximity to work. Today, many are asking a diverse set of questions: Does the home promote a healthy lifestyle? Are there nearby parks, trails, and outdoor spaces? Is the indoor environment safe, comfortable, and energy efficient?

Kitsap County is uniquely positioned to meet these evolving priorities. Surrounded by the Puget Sound and rich in natural landscapes, the region offers abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Residents have easy access to hiking trails, waterfront parks, and community green spaces that encourage physical activity and relaxation. Areas such as Poulsbo, Silverdale, and Bainbridge Island have become especially attractive for buyers seeking a balance between natural beauty and convenient amenities.

Walkability is another principal factor for health-conscious buyers. Communities where residents can safely walk to local shops, restaurants, parks, and community services encourage daily movement and social connection. Studies consistently show that people who live in walkable neighborhoods tend to be more physically active and experience improved overall well-being.

Inside the home, wellness-driven features are also gaining attention. Natural lighting,

good ventilation, and non-toxic building materials are increasingly important to buyers. Homes with large windows, open layouts, and improved airflow not only feel more inviting but can also improve indoor air quality and mood.

Energy efficiency is another component of healthy living. Modern buyers are seeking homes with high-performance insulation, energy-efficient appliances, and smart thermostats that maintain comfortable temperatures while reducing environmental impact. These features not only lower utility costs but also create healthier, more sustainable living environments.

Another emerging trend is the demand for dedicated wellness spaces inside the home. Home gyms, yoga rooms, meditation areas, and flexible spaces for relaxation are becoming common requests. The shift toward remote work has also encouraged homeowners to design spaces that support both productivity and personal well-being.

Outdoor living spaces are equally important. Decks, patios, gardens, and outdoor seating areas allow homeowners to enjoy fresh air and connect with nature. In Kitsap County's mild coastal climate, these spaces can be used throughout much of the year, making them a valuable extension of the home.

Health and wellness in real estate also extends beyond physical design. Community design plays a critical role in quality of life. Neighborhoods that include walking trails, community gardens, waterfront access, and recreational facilities encourage residents to stay active and engaged with their surroundings.

For buyers relocating to Kitsap County, the region offers a rare combination of scenic beauty, active living opportunities, and a keen sense of community. These qualities contribute not only to property values but also to the long-term well-being of residents.

As the real estate market continues to evolve, the connection between health, lifestyle, and housing will only grow stronger. Buyers are recognizing that a home is more than a financial investment—it is the foundation for daily life, personal wellness, and lasting happiness.

In Kitsap County, the future of real estate is not just about where you live, but how well you live. ■





VISIT

The Summer Isn't Booked Yet

Why That's Good News for Kitsap Businesses

If you're a Kitsap business owner looking at your summer bookings and feeling uncertain, you're not alone.

Across the region, many hotels report little to no direct bookings tied to the FIFA World Cup in Seattle. In fact, 77.8% of Kitsap hotels are not yet seeing World Cup-related bookings. At the same time, overall visitation has softened. Kitsap saw approximately 417,000 trips in June and July of 2025, compared to the 500,000 to 600,000 range in prior years during that same timeframe.

On the surface, it may feel like demand isn't coming. But the data and traveler behavior tell a different story.

A Shift in How People Travel

Today's visitor isn't necessarily traveling less. They are just booking differently.

Short-term rental data shows more than 15,000 room nights already booked for June and over 18,000 for July across Kitsap, out of roughly 42,000 available nights. That is meaningful pacing, especially this far out.

What has changed is timing.

Booking windows are shrinking. Travelers are waiting longer to commit, prioritizing flexibility, and looking for value. This is especially true for World Cup visitors, who are often budget-conscious and experience-driven. They are not locking in months in advance. They are deciding closer to the moment.

Why May 1, 2026 Matters

Historically, major event-driven travel begins to accelerate around 30 to 45 days out. For the World Cup, that puts the inflection point right around May 1.

That is when we can expect:

- A lift in lodging searches and bookings
- Increased day trips and overnight extensions
- More last-minute decision-making from regional and domestic travelers

In other words, the demand may not be visible yet, but it is likely still coming.

Kitsap's Advantage

Kitsap is uniquely positioned for this type of traveler.

Close enough to Seattle to be convenient. Distinct enough to feel like a getaway. And often more affordable than staying in the city.

For visitors looking to balance cost, experience, and access to the games, Kitsap becomes an easy "yes," especially when the trip is planned quickly.

What Businesses Should Do Right Now

The businesses that benefit most this summer will not be the ones waiting for bookings to appear. They will be the ones ready when travelers start looking.

1. Be easy to find

Make sure your Google Business Profile is updated, hours are accurate, and photos reflect your current experience. Most decisions will happen on mobile. Maybe even consider downloading the locally developed app: City Bits app, or the SEA&Win app, developed by the Seattle International Soccer Local Organizing Committee, to discover local businesses in the Bremerton SeattleFWC26 Fan Zone.

2. Create simple, clear offers

Think in terms of one- to two-night stays, bundled experiences, or "while you're here" add-ons. Value does not mean discounting. It means clarity.

For example:

- A hotel offering a "Game Day Getaway" with a one- or two-night stay, late checkout, and a list of nearby places to watch matches
- A coffee shop promoting a "Match Morning Combo" with a drink and breakfast item at a set price
- A restaurant featuring a "Pre-Ferry Dinner Special" designed for travelers heading to or from Seattle

- A boutique creating a "Pack Light Kit" with locally made essentials or last-minute travel items
- A tour operator offering a 90-minute "quick experience" for visitors who only have part of a day
- A brewery highlighting a "Flights + Food Pairing" that is easy to order and share
- A spa or wellness business promoting a "Reset in 60 Minutes" treatment for travelers in between activities

The goal is to remove friction. When visitors can quickly understand what they are getting, how long it takes, and what it costs, they are far more likely to say yes.

3. Plan for spontaneity

Visitors may arrive without a detailed itinerary. Make it easy for them to say yes in the moment, whether that is signage, walk-in availability, grab-n-go meals, easy online ordering, or visible pricing. Most hotels have the VKP-created "Concierge Sheet" on their counters that display local attractions, upcoming events, and ideas for shopping and dining to support easy decision-making for guests.

4. Collaborate locally

Partner with nearby businesses to create a more complete experience. Travelers do not see individual businesses. They see destinations. A popular collaboration is the one between Ballast Book Co. and Cups Espresso, in downtown Bremerton, where customers receive a "Show this receipt" perk: Get a free beverage when you spend \$40 at Ballast Book Co.

A Different Kind of Summer

This may not be a summer defined by early bookings. It may be defined by late decisions.

And that is not a weakness. It is a shift.

The opportunity is not gone. It is simply arriving closer to the moment.

The question is: will your business be ready when it does? ■

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Next Month: Fitness Myth #2

Briefs

Gig Harbor announces 2026 Summer Sounds concert lineup

The Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce and Visit Gig Harbor have announced the lineup for the 2026 Summer Sounds concert series, returning to Skansie Brothers Park this summer.

The free, family-friendly concert series will be held Tuesday evenings beginning July 7 and continuing through August. Opening night will feature a special performance by the 133d Army Band in

celebration of America 250.

This year's schedule includes a mix of regional tribute acts and returning crowd favorites, with The Mixed Tape as the only act returning from last year's lineup.

Summer Sounds is presented with support from Virginia Mason Franciscan Health and the City of Gig Harbor, continuing a long-standing tradition of live music along the waterfront. ■

Paige Jarquin recognized in national feature highlighting women business owners

Paige Jarquin, co-owner of Pillar to Post Home Inspectors serving Kitsap County, has been recognized in a national article highlighting women business leaders for International Women's Day.

The feature, published by EIN Presswire, spotlights three standout franchise owners across the country working in the traditionally male-dominated home inspection industry. Jarquin, who has led operations for the company's Kitsap Peninsula-Seattle territory for the past five years, was recognized for her leadership, business growth and family-run approach.



Paige Jarquin

According to the article, Jarquin serves as general manager and oversees long-term planning and financial decisions, while her husband handles inspections and her son leads sales and marketing.

The business has expanded to include multiple employees and specialized services aimed at helping homeowners assess the health and readiness of their properties.

Jarquin's background in real estate, spanning nearly two decades, has helped shape the company's customer-focused approach, emphasizing guidance for homeowners navigating major purchasing decisions. ■

Convexus launches Bainbridge Island platform aimed at turning dialogue into action

A new civic technology platform launched in March aims to help communities move beyond online discussion and toward coordinated action.

Convexus, founded by Merrill Keating, is designed for governments, civic organizations and community groups seeking more structured ways to facilitate public dialogue and decision-making. The platform organizes conversations into a three-step process — Explore, Align, Act — guiding participants from sharing perspectives to identifying common ground and ultimately taking action.

The platform incorporates AI-assisted facilitation to identify areas of agreement, elevate constructive contributions

and support more productive conversations, while keeping human moderators in control of outcomes.

"Communities everywhere are facing increasingly complex challenges, yet the digital spaces where people gather to discuss them often amplify division rather than progress," Keating said. "Convexus was created to help communities rediscover something essential: the ability to listen, find common ground, and move forward together."

A live demonstration of the platform is now available, and the company is inviting a limited number of organizations to participate in pilot programs.

More information is available at convexus.us. ■

Purpose Boutique opens outlet store in Silverdale

Purpose Boutique has expanded its footprint with the opening of a new outlet store in Silverdale, offering shoppers access to premium clothing at discounted prices.

The outlet, located at 9853 Silverdale Way NW, operates Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The new location builds on the brand's existing retail presence,

creating an additional shopping option focused on value while maintaining the boutique's curated style.

The expansion reflects continued growth for the business and an effort to reach new customers in Kitsap County with accessible pricing on high-quality apparel.

More information is available at purposeboutique.com. ■

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Anthony Jones named CEO of Noo-Kayet Investments

Noo-Kayet Investments, the economic development arm of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, has named Anthony Jones as its new chief executive officer.



Anthony Jones

Jones, a tribal member, is the first Port Gamble S'Klallam citizen to lead the organization since it was formed in 2008. He officially began the role March 9, succeeding interim CEO Eric Croft, who will remain with the organization as chief operating officer.

Jones brings a background in Native American law and economic development, including nearly a decade as in-house counsel for the Tulalip Tribes. Most recently, he worked with the Native American law practice at Dorsey & Whitney LLP, an

international law firm. In 2024, he was named to the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development's "Native American 40 Under 40" list. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and earned his Juris Doctor from Washington University.

As CEO, Jones will oversee the Tribe's existing business assets and operations, including The Point Casino & Hotel, Gliding Eagle Market and High Point, as well as off-reservation investments such as Minder Meats, a Kitsap County butcher shop and meat processing facility acquired by the Tribe in 2025. He will also be responsible for executing projects outlined in the Tribe's master plan and

identifying new investment and acquisition opportunities aligned with the Tribe's values and long-term economic priorities.

Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal Chairwoman Amber Caldera said Jones' appointment reflects both his professional experience and his deep connection to the community.

"To see one of our own Tribal members step into the CEO role at Noo-Kayet is powerful," Caldera said. "Anthony's experience as an attorney strengthens our enterprises, and, just as importantly, he understands our history, our values, and our responsibility to our people."

Jones said he is focused on building on the Tribe's existing economic foundation while ensuring future growth reflects cultural values and community priorities.

"As a proud Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal member, I am honored to be able to serve my community as CEO of Noo-Kayet Investments," Jones said. "I look forward to building on that legacy by bringing the experience I've gained in the broader business world back home."

He emphasized the importance of creating pathways for tribal members to succeed professionally, noting that many gain their first work experience through the Tribe's enterprises. Expanding those opportunities, he said, will remain a key priority.

Noo-Kayet Investments provides strategic direction and management for the Tribe's business ventures, supporting economic development through operations oversight, feasibility studies and financing for new and existing enterprises. ■

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Business Briefs



A rendering shows the planned Clearwater Market development in Silverdale, which will include a convenience store, gas station and additional retail space.



Photos Courtesy Of Suquamish Tribe

A closer view of the proposed Clearwater Market building in Silverdale highlights the design of the Tribe's third location under the brand.

Suquamish Tribe breaks ground on new Clearwater Market in Silverdale

The Suquamish Tribe broke ground March 11 on a new Clearwater Market development in Silverdale, marking the third location under the Tribe's growing retail brand.

The project, located at the intersection of Clear Creek Road and NW Pete Ross Way, will include an 8,330-square-foot convenience store, a nine-pump gas station and an Agate Dreams cannabis retail store. Tribal leaders, elected officials and community members gathered for the ceremony, which featured a traditional Suquamish song and dance performance.

The Silverdale location follows the Tribe's expansion into

Bremerton and Poulsbo in 2024. Officials said the new market is expected to open by the end of 2026, with plans for additional retail development at the site in the future.

"We are so excited to continue providing services and economic opportunities to Silverdale and everyone throughout Kitsap County," said Chairman Leonard Forsman, noting the region's significance as Suquamish ancestral land.

Clearwater Market is operated by Port Madison Enterprises, the Tribe's economic development arm, which also manages the Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort, Kiana Lodge and White Horse Golf Club. Leaders said

the project reflects a broader strategy to expand the Tribe's retail footprint, create jobs and

strengthen the local economy while honoring cultural ties to the region. ■



Suquamish Tribal leaders, elected officials and community members participate in a ceremonial groundbreaking March 11 for the new Clearwater Market development in Silverdale.



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Feature

Kitsap OBGYN continues serving patients under new ownership, marking a new chapter for women's healthcare in Kitsap County.

A New Chapter for Care

Photos by Leah Thompson/Scandia Studio

How Tribal Ownership Is Reshaping the Future of Kitsap OBGYN and Women's Healthcare in Kitsap County

By Quinn Propst | Ward Media Staff Reporter

When the Suquamish Tribe acquired Kitsap OBGYN earlier this year, the immediate impact was clear: one of Kitsap County's primary providers of obstetric and gynecologic care would remain open.

But the significance of the move extends well beyond preservation. It marks the beginning of a broader shift—one that could reshape how women's healthcare is delivered in a region long challenged by provider shortages, system strain, and growing demand.

For tribal leaders, the decision was driven by urgency. For providers, it offers stability and renewed focus. For patients, it signals something more lasting: a future where access to care may no longer feel uncertain.

A System Under Strain

Kitsap County's challenges in women's healthcare are both well documented and deeply felt.

"We've known for a long time that Kitsap County has serious gaps in OB-GYN care,"

said Jeff Riggins, Community Health Program Manager for the Suquamish Tribe. "When you look at the data, this county is not trending in a good way around this care."

The numbers underscore that reality. Kitsap County has fewer than six OB-GYN providers per 100,000 residents—less than half the state average. Only 55% of expectant mothers receive adequate prenatal care, and for those on Medicaid, that number drops below half. About one in four women leaves the county to give birth, Riggins said.

"Those are pretty sad realities," he said. "People simply can't find providers here to care for them."

As one of the county's primary OB-GYN providers, Kitsap OBGYN has long operated at the center of that strain, balancing high demand with limited regional resources.

"We can provide a certain level of care at St. Michael, but we can't provide a higher level of care than that," said Dr. Amity E. Marriott. "Our specialists and higher-level

A patient checks in for care at Kitsap OBGYN, where demand for services remains high amid regional provider shortages.

care teams are outside the county, and that's normal—we're not a big urban center. But there's also a geographic pull over to Seattle and down into Tacoma."

From Ownership to Opportunity

For years, Kitsap OBGYN functioned as a physician-owned practice, with four doctors managing both patient care and the operational demands of running a business.

"I was one of the four owners, so I was very instrumental in making that decision," Dr. Marriott said. "All four of us met several times and worked on this together. It has been an incredibly positive experience."

That model required physicians to oversee staffing, payroll, and long-term planning. The transition to tribal ownership has shifted that balance.

"I don't have to worry about how I'm going to pay my staff or how I'm going to keep them at a living wage anymore," she said. "I can think about what the best practices are for our clinic in managing patients and managing concerns and how we can better serve this community. That is such a huge weight off our shoulders as physicians. Now we can do the things we're really here to do, which is provide care."

"For me, and I think for my colleagues as well, not having to worry and focus on running the business, but being able to really dig into how we can improve the way we provide care in this community so that it best serves the people that live here—that's amazing," she added.

The result is a clinic newly positioned to think beyond day-to-day survival and toward long-term improvement.

An Urgent Intervention

For the Suquamish Tribe, the acquisition was not part of a long-term expansion strategy—it was a response to an immediate need.

"We were working hard on getting used to having our own doctors and our own health services systems," said Leonard Forsman, Chairman of the Suquamish Tribe. "We weren't making plans for expansion into other health programs. So when this came up, it was not in our strategic plan. It was an opportunity."

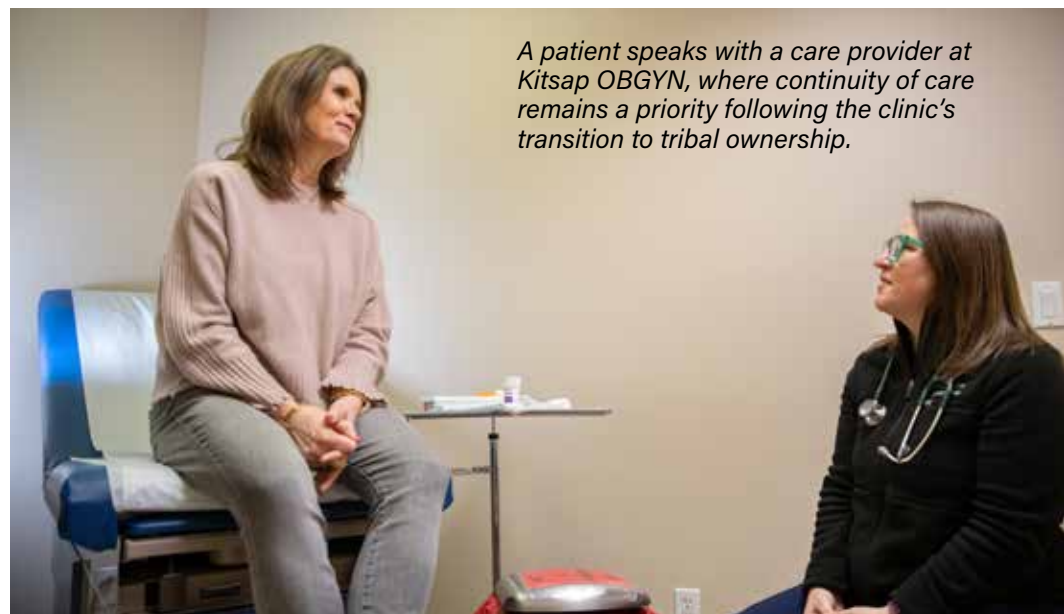
That opportunity came with significant stakes. Tribal leaders say the clinic was at risk of closing—an outcome that would have further strained an already fragile system.

"We heard what the emergency situation was," Forsman said. "People knew the

impacts that would have arisen if we hadn't stepped forward at a time when I don't think there was anybody else that could have. We felt we needed to step forward and invest in it—not only for us to grow our health system, but to provide that service to the whole county."

Riggins emphasized what that moment meant for the region.

"The fact that we were able to save women's maternal and child health—and to some extent women's reproductive rights—in this county is the most rewarding part of this," he said. "Without the tribe stepping up to the plate, this place would have closed down. So for us to think about that reality



established HR, IT, and accounting departments. That support relieves the clinic of administrative burdens and allows providers to focus more fully on care.

"We have the internal structure to manage a facility," Forsman said. "That has made the clinic more focused on providing services and less on the headaches of managing a health system and getting bills paid and all those things."

Riggins said that support enables both immediate problem-solving and long-term planning.

"We can offer them an entire HR department, an entire IT department. We have staff who do integrations with

A patient speaks with a care provider at Kitsap OBGYN, where continuity of care remains a priority following the clinic's transition to tribal ownership.

where we're already hurting—these clinics see 160-plus patients a day—that would be gone."

Stabilizing the Present

Since the acquisition became official in January, the tribe's first priority has been continuity.

"Our first priority is making sure we're not affecting the patient care that currently exists," Riggins said. "We don't want patients to be forced away to find other obstetric care somewhere else."

For patients, that stability is largely invisible. Providers and staff remain in place, insurance contracts continue, and care has not been disrupted.

Behind the scenes, however, the operational shift is significant.

The Suquamish Tribe brings a robust organizational infrastructure, including

electronic health record systems," he said. "We can throw people at some of the problems they were facing, but we can also provide systematic solutions and things that only a tribe, with this structure, can do."

Reframing Care for the Future

While stabilization is the immediate focus, the long-term vision for Kitsap OBGYN is broader—and more holistic.

"From my angle in health and wellness, we're trying to take care of mind, body, and spirit all together," Riggins said. "That's how we look at health."

"In the long term, my hope is that patients don't notice a huge change in their current care at first—except for the positive," he added. "But from a tribal view on health, I'd like to include a holistic view from a patient-centered seat where they come in and we

Feature

can address mind, spirit, and body as much as possible."

For providers, that vision aligns with long-standing needs across the region.

"I would love to see more providers," Dr. Marriott said.

"I would love to see more ancillary care—physical therapy, psychiatric care, better availability of all different kinds of practitioners, so that people can get in with the specialists they need."

"We need better availability of primary care doctors so that when people need to transition to primary care, they can do that without interruption," she said. "Just a more robust system across the board."

Building a Data-Driven System

Looking ahead, data will play a central role in shaping how care evolves.

"I'm working with some folks at the Department of Health right now, trying to

understand how we collect and utilize birth data in this county," Dr. Marriott said. "Once we get a better sense of what is happening in the county—locations of births and how many births are happening here versus elsewhere—then we can really start to understand what the needs are and try to design care around that."

That approach reflects a shift from reacting to demand toward proactively designing a system that better serves the community.

As Kitsap County's population grows, that kind of planning will be essential to addressing persistent gaps in care.

A Community-Based Model

For the Suquamish Tribe, the acquisition reflects a broader philosophy: healthcare as essential community infrastructure.

"Our community understands that when we bolster our healthcare footprint, that's sovereignty for our people," Riggins said. "They're able to

see us put our words into action with these types of acquisitions."

That approach extends beyond tribal members to the wider population.

"The tribe's number one goal, as far as I can see, is that they need to provide for their tribal members," Dr. Marriott said. "But they also see that there is a synergy with how the tribe is working and how the rest of the community is working. If they aren't supporting everyone, then they can't best support their own tribal members. That understanding—that no one is working in a vacuum—is so unique and yet so important."

Measured Growth Ahead

Despite the urgency that prompted the acquisition, leaders emphasize that change will be deliberate.

"Kitsap OBGYN has been doing their practice for 40-plus years," Riggins said. "This is our first year in this type of care. We don't want to come in with huge 10-year goals that might work against what the providers, patients, and community actually need. We want to listen first."

"There's nothing that I can talk about discreetly at this point," Dr. Marriott added. "We have a lot of ideas, but nothing that is firm enough to really talk about as a plan."

For now, the focus remains on maintaining access while building a stronger foundation for the future.

A Turning Point

For Kitsap County, the acquisition of Kitsap OBGYN represents both stability and possibility.

In the short term, it ensures that a critical provider remains open. In the long term, it creates the foundation for a more coordinated, community-centered approach to women's healthcare.

"It's paramount," Dr. Marriott said. "Women make up such an expansive population, and whether you're having babies or not, you need OB/GYN care. It's so important and so vital at every point in a woman's lifespan."

As the clinic enters this new chapter under tribal ownership, its future will be shaped by careful planning, community input, and a shared commitment to improving care.

For patients across Kitsap County, that work carries a simple promise: the care they rely on today will not only remain—but evolve to better meet their needs in the years ahead. ■



Exam rooms at Kitsap OBGYN reflect the clinic's essential role in providing obstetric and gynecologic care across the region.

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