

CHAMBER CHAT

APRIL 2021

I believe it is time for a conversation

By **Andy Mayer** | **President & CEO**

I am proud that the Chamber is one of the hosts of the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion series of programs, which begins on April 6. The first topic is “Unconscious Bias,” presented by John Sternlicht, CEO of EDASC.

I must admit, I’ve only been aware of the term unconscious bias for a relatively short period of time. It seems self-explanatory – a way one might think about someone or something, without really thinking about it. That’s pretty accurate, because according to University of California San Francisco, “unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.” I can imagine how such biases could play out in hiring, in the workplace and in life. And it seems like most of the potential impacts would be negative, unfair and hurtful, so I am eager to learn more.

Unconscious bias is the perfect topic to start the series because it is about examining things, or ways of thinking, that you may not have looked at before. So, please join me on the 6th for a program that is sure to be very interesting and could change how you think a bit. Or better yet, keeps you from making opinions or taking action based on things you haven’t thought about.

Whatever your experience or study on issues of justice, equity, diversity an inclusion, I hope you will participate in the series of programs. They will generate some conversations, as they should. I look forward to having them with you.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Motivation & Marketing Mastermind: Mastermind Session

Thursday, April 1

10-11 a.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Have a marketing headache? The Mastermind is here to help! Bring your marketing project, idea or headache to the group and we'll work on ways to help move your idea forward. Bring your thinking cap to help other group members problem solve.



J.E.D.I. Speaker Series: Unconscious Bias - Why it matters for your business and what you can do

Tuesday, April 6

1 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

The Skagit County Chambers of Commerce and EDASC present the monthly J.E.D.I. (Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) Speaker Series. Join us as keynote speaker EDASC CEO John Sternlicht presents on unconscious bias and how it affects us more than we know.

Whole-Self Health Fitness Classes

Tuesdays, April 6 & 20

via Zoom

12-12:30 p.m.

Move your body and clear your mind with Urban Fitness and Skagit Valley Family YMCA. These workouts are tailored to the office, so no need for workout gear, lots of space or special equipment.

Urban Fitness, April 6 [Register here](#)

YMCA, April 20 [Register here](#)



Chamber Connections

Tuesdays, April 13 & 27

9-10 a.m.

via Zoom

Be part of the Chamber's new referral group! Chamber Connections is designed as an open forum for Chamber members to build and deepen business relationships through networking opportunities and generate sales leads for group members. Participation is limited to one Chamber member per business category. Contact Silvia Reed for membership information: silvia@mountvernonchamber.com

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Knowledge NOW:

Seven Ways to Increase Your Grant Approval Rate

Wednesday, April 14

12-1 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Are you a staff or board member at small to mid-size nonprofit? Join Liz Theaker, Grants Manager at Camp Korey, to learn seven tips that will help you see a higher approval rate for your grant proposals.

Latino Business Leaders

Thursday, April 15

6-7:30 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Victor Vera from the Spokane SCORE office will present on preparing a business plan.

Program delivered in Spanish.

Sponsored by:



Membership Orientation

Tuesday, April 20

9:30 a.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Open to any active member as well as those businesses that may want to know more about the Chamber.

Virtual Biz Buzz

Wednesday, April 28

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

via Zoom

[Register here](#)

It's time for our speed-networking Biz Buzz!

Get your elevator speech ready as you connect with fellow Chamber members.

Sponsored by:



Drive-in Movie Night

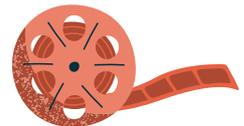
Friday, May 7

9 p.m.

Skagit Valley College

Free

Join us for the first summer movie night when we screen *Cars*.



Tune In
Chamber Chat
Wednesday Mornings

8:05 a.m.

8:20 a.m.

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Coming this summer: Drive-in movies

In partnership with the City of Mount Vernon and Skagit Valley College, the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the Mount Vernon Drive-In Movie Nights. These family-friendly movies will take place the first Friday of the month from May through September. Movies will play on a 40-foot tall screen at Skagit Valley College. The kick-off event is set for May 7 with *Cars* as the featured film.

A concessions area will be operated by the Lincoln Theatre, and we encourage participants to stop by local restaurants to dine-in before the movie or bring a take-out meal to enjoy from the comfort of their car while watching the movie.

We invite you to consider sponsoring this event. Please contact the Chamber's Operations Director Jeremy Kindlund for more information by Thursday, April 8: Jeremy@MountVernonChamber.com.

Royal Sponsor:

\$2,500

30 second video produced by the Chamber and played before and after the movie

Name and logo prominently displayed on screen before and after the movie

Company name and logo on promotional poster

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including: Skagit Valley Herald display ad; Branded advertising on MountVernonChamber.com; Social Media Promotion on all Chamber channels; Mention in all press releases

Major Sponsor:

\$1,500

Logo prominently displayed on screen before and after movie

Company logo on promotional poster

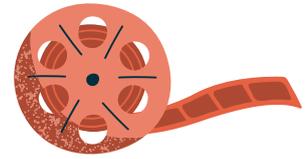
Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including: Skagit Valley Herald display ad; Branded advertising on MountVernonChamber.com; Social Media Promotion on all Chamber channels

Supporting Sponsor:

\$750

Company logo displayed on promotional poster

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including: Skagit Valley Herald display ad; Branded advertising on MountVernonChamber.com; Social Media Promotion on all Chamber channels



See you at the movies!

Movie Line-up

May 7

Cars

June 4

Jurassic Park

July 2

Independence Day

August 6

Coco

(in Spanish)

September 3

Wizard of Oz

LBL adds one-on-one business consulting in Spanish

The new cohort of Latino Business Leaders (LBL) began last month, ushering in a new facet to the mentorship program with one-on-one business advising consultations for interested participants.

SCORE and the Western Washington University Small Business Development Center will provide the advisors for these individual sessions. Like the classroom portion of LBL, sessions will be conducted in Spanish, using a translator when necessary.

The first session of the cohort presented by Victor Vera of SCORE's Spokane office covered the business fundamentals. Participants hailed from not only Skagit County but also Whatcom, Snohomish and Island counties. Nine businesses have signed up for business consultation in

industries ranging from agriculture to fashion.

SCORE is a national organization providing education and mentorship to entrepreneurs, with locations throughout Washington state, including Skagit County. WWU's Small Business Development Center is one of 27 SBDC offices throughout the state and is funded in part by the Small Business Administration.

Those interested in LBL can still join the group. LBL sessions take place the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. Next month's session takes place on Thursday, April 15, and will focus on business plan preparation. Contact Business Development and Foundation Director Silvia Reed (360) 395-2944 or Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com for more information.

Chamber Connections off to a successful start

The first meeting of Chamber Connections, the new networking referral group, took place last month with 14 members.

The group is designed to allow members to get to know each other and their businesses at a deeper level. In essence, group members become knowledgeable ambassadors for each other's businesses and are able to provide qualified referrals.

Hilary Parker of Storied Creative Services will serve as the group's chairperson. She has experience leading a similar referral group in Bellingham.

Membership in the group is limited to one person per business category. Categories are selected by the member based on the Chamber's membership directory. The group meets twice a month, on the second and fourth Tuesday, from 9-10 a.m. Meetings are currently taking place via Zoom.

Two more spots are available in Chamber Connections. After those spots are filled, interested individuals will be placed on a waiting list with the expectation that a second group may open up if there is enough interest.

To apply for Chamber Connections or for additional information, contact Business Development and Foundation Director Silvia Reed at 360-395-2944 or Silvia@MountVernonChamber.com.



Get to Know Txley

Txley is a facility supply company with local roots. Jay Chakravarty, Txley's chairman and CEO, bought out two local companies to start Txley in 2010. One of those companies was Valley Vacuum, which had been in business in Burlington since the 1950s. The other was S&W Warehouse, a small facilities-supply business operated out of the owner's garage.

Jay got to work building the business in 2010 and says business didn't really ramp up until 2015. Since that time, business has grown 150% or more year after year. Txley employs between 10 and 13, and is currently located on Fairhaven Avenue in Burlington.

Txley is part of what's known as the "JanSan" industry, which focuses on janitorial and cleaning supplies, but Txley is more than just janitorial supplies. It offers facilities supply for industries including hospitality, health care, government, schools and senior care. Need office supplies, paper plates for the lunchroom or PPE? Txley can help. And will deliver local orders of \$100 or more to your door.

Jay wants to help businesses rethink their janitorial and supply purchases. He says so often businesses are purchasing cleaning products on price alone without knowing much about how the product works. He wants to change that by educating customers.

While the big box stores and online giants offer competitive pricing, they don't provide the same value because of what they don't offer.

"The difference is what's missing," he says, "a lot of customer service, education and training."

As for pricing, Jay says about 50% of the time big box and online retailers have better pricing, but the other 50% of the time Txley comes out on top. Comparing pricing isn't always apples to apples, and he can help customers with "apples to oranges" comparisons. Txley will evaluate products used in a business, provide pricing and suggest products that can do the same job – or even work better – which saves money in the long run.

He says Txley regularly receives education and training from the companies who manufacture the cleaning products, so Txley can pass that information on to its customers. For instance, over the past year much has been learned about the efficacy of products use to sanitize surfaces potentially exposed to Covid-19. What works – what doesn't work – and what is safest for high-touch areas is some of the information Txley can provide to customers.

Jay wants to emphasize the importance of buying locally as a way to minimize our carbon footprint and to support our neighbors in business, and he hopes people will see Txley as part of that local solution.

To learn more about Txley or to place an order, visit [txley.com](https://www.txley.com).



Member reveals positive return on investment

It has been great to be a member of the Mount Vernon Chamber in the past, and especially this last year as the Chamber has created innovative programs adapting to the unprecedented times. The Marketing Mastermind has connected members knowledgeable in social media marketing to those who are less experienced in the field, which I look forward to each month. When members step up to help each other in times of uncertainty, it makes you feel a strong sense of community. The Mount Vernon Chamber has cultivated a network of mentorship and relationships between local small businesses. An example is the partnership with local gyms and trainers to create an exercise program to encourage a healthier lifestyle as our jobs have moved remote and more sedentary. I am grateful to continue to spread the word of Where The Heart Is through the Mount Vernon Chamber's monthly sponsorship program. I look forward to the monthly membership meetings and what creative ideas the Chamber will come up with next!



Kristie Minkoff

Kristie Minkoff, Marketing Director

Where The Heart Is Assisted Living & Memory Care Community

EWP presents business management career panel

In March, the Experience Work Project (EWP), a Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation Program, hosted a new career panel with a focus on students from their business management and office technology programs. Students from Skagit Valley College and Cascades Job Corps attended the virtual event.

Career panels are designed to allow students to take a proactive approach to their career development. Learning from industry professionals while in school is a great opportunity to get familiar with their field of interest and be better prepared to join workforce.

Panel members were Monica Craig of CPI Plumbing & Heating and Tammy Reim-Ledbetter of Alaska USA. Both panelists emphasized the need for soft skills including punctuality and time management, along with a desire to learn.



Panelists Tammy Reim-Ledbetter and Monica Craig

Craig suggested students actively participate in job shadow opportunities, internships and volunteer work to not only get experience but also to make sure they really enjoy the work in their chosen field. EWP helps match students to job shadow and internship opportunities in the community. Currently these opportunities are delivered virtually.

The Chamber Foundation's workforce development and Career Connect programs are funded by the Opportunity Grant Program/Northwest Workforce Council, Skagit Valley College and Shell Puget Sound Refinery.

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The Chamber hits the road



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I Love Skagit
Re-Feather Your Nest
Skagit Symphony
Skagit Valley Family YMCA
Urban Fitness & Health

5+ Years

Candlewood Suites an IHG Hotel
Cascade Facial Surgery and
Aesthetics
HomePlace Memory Care
Judd & Black Appliance
Ode To Learning

Less than 5 Years

Ashley's Design & Letterman
Jackets
Associated General Contractors
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Sports Rehabilitation, Inc P.S.
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Skagit Social

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NextHome Preview Properties

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Ector DeLeon

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Leslie Exner

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Camp Korey

Lee Thomas-Palmer

Logan Creek Retirement

Community

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Primerica

Clarissa Wong

Caliber Home Loans

Member Announcements

The Great Skagit Scavenger Hunt Benefits SWIB Scholarship Fund

The Great Skagit Scavenger Hunt takes place Friday, April 16, through Sunday, April 18, to benefit the Skagit Women in Business scholarship fund. The Great Skagit Scavenger Hunt allows individuals and teams to participate in COVID-safe activities and challenges, win prizes and donate money to scholarships for local women.

Challenges on the list of more than 100 possible activities range from something as simple as mailing a postcard to a family member in another state or buying a gift card from a local business, to something as challenging as choreographing a team dance to perform in public on a street corner. Each activity is awarded points and must be documented with photos. Top point-getters win prizes. Entry fees are \$30 for adults, \$15 for youths aged 5-17; 100% of entry fees go to the SWIB Scholarship Fund. Registration closes at midnight on April 15. For more information and to register for the event, go to SkagitWomenInBusiness.com.

Heritage Flight Museum Begins Expansion

After years of planning and preparation, the Heritage Flight Museum has broken ground on its much-anticipated expansion, adding more space for aviation exhibits, historical artifacts and maintenance facilities.

Heritage Flight Museum was founded in 1996 by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders and his wife Valerie and has been located at Skagit Regional Airport in Burlington since 2014. This expansion will add a 11,300-square-foot hangar to house a new maintenance facility, as well as two new historical exhibits: The '68 Experience and the Earthrise Gallery. The Earthrise Gallery will include the iconic photograph taken by Anders of the Earth and some of the Moon's surface taken from lunar orbit.

Familiar Faces Moving into Port of Skagit Restaurant

Spinach Bus Ventures, the team that owns Tulip Town, Skagit Acres and the Fairhaven Mill, is moving into the restaurant space at the Port of Skagit, bringing their love of the Skagit Valley to the dining table. The new restaurant, called Skagit Landing, will begin meal service on April 10 with "grab & go" style breakfast and lunch, and work up to full-service dining in the weeks to follow. Eventually, they will add catering services as a way of further connecting with some of the breweries and other businesses located at the Port and throughout the community.

Since 2010, the Port of Skagit has invested substantial resources in infrastructure, research and technology that supports value-added agriculture. Currently 18 businesses are located on Port property in the value-added agriculture sector.

Skagit Transit Launches New Features – Never Miss a Bus Again

Skagit Transit is introducing new features to make riding the bus more convenient. Riders now get real-time bus arrival information on all of Skagit Transit's bus routes. Riders can access bus tracking in several ways: using a smartphone app, via texting or by using a map on Skagit Transit's website and via an info kiosk at Skagit Station. Riders can go to www.SkagitTransit.org to explore using the "MAP" feature, click on the "Find your route" button (click on MAP in the upper right corner) to find their favorite route. The map shows all the bus stops on the route and where the bus is along the route. Also check out the trip planner that can provide step by step instructions for your route.

Upbeat Award Winner: Macklin Hamilton

Macklin Hamilton of Cascades Job Corps is the March Upbeat Award recipient, nominated by last month's recipient, Joel Pasek from SERVPRO of Skagit County.

Macklin is well known in the community. He has been instrumental in building strategic partnerships with the Mount Vernon Chamber Foundation, and sits on the board for the Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce and Helping Hands Food Bank. He was the 2018 Fair Stage of Honor award recipient for his excellence in giving back to the community through the Skagit County Fair.

He graduated from the recreational program at Western Washington University and is an outdoor enthusiast. Those who work with him describe



L-R: The Chamber's Silvia Reed and Macklin Hamilton and Darrel Lutton of Cascades Job Corps.

him as hard working, enthusiastic and the type of person who gets things done. Congratulations, Macklin.

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Join us as we kick off our Annual Art Auction during a live Facebook event Friday, May 7th at 7pm! This will be the official start time for our online auction featuring beautiful works of art from beloved local artists such as Ben Mann, Jennifer Bowman, and Maria Wickwire as well as from our very own COV students! Visit us on Facebook @ChildrenOfTheValleyMV to learn more!