

Quad City Herald

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Brewster Chamber hears grant opportunity, previews spring events

By Mike Maltais
Ward Media Staff Reporter

BREWSTER – Mason Duke, Economic Development Specialist for the Economic Alliance, was the guest speaker at the Feb. 19 meeting of the Brewster Chamber of Commerce. Duke discussed the Okanogan Valley Fund Grant, a funding opportunity through the Community Foundation for North Central Washington (CFNCW) available to the Chamber and other 501(c)3 nonprofits in the county except for the Methow Valley. “The grant application opened on Feb. 1 and remains open through March 15,” said Duke. “The minimum award is \$2,000 and it is not a project-based grant.”

Duke explained that where many grant sources ask for a well-thought-out project as a prerequisite for consideration, the CFNCW grant is for organizational overhead and sustainment. “It is up to the Chamber how they would allocate those funds,” said Duke. “I would definitely recommend applying.” Vice President and Boys and Girls Club (BBGC) Director Elizabeth Shepard announced that the BBGC is accepting registrations for spring NFL Flag Football for ages five and up. Teams will be co-ed and by ages. Practice begins the week of March 24 with games on Saturday mornings from April 12 through May 17. Shepard also outlined upcoming

events from March through July 4, starting with the Easter Egg Hunt at the BBGC. Start time will be at 10 a.m., Saturday, April 19, with different starting points for age groups. The Easter Bunny will be on hand for pictures by donations. Shepard said she will need 5-10 volunteers to help fill the 10,000 eggs, hide them, and clean up following the event. Ideas are also under consideration to encourage greater interaction between city businesses and families. The ninth annual Boys and Girls Club Golf Tournament at Gamble Sands is scheduled for April 21. Shepard is seeking assistance and ideas for Mother’s Day in May. “I need to form a committee that

can help me come up with ideas and ways to make this benefit all of Brewster,” Shepard said. The Chamber does not host a Memorial Day event, but Shepard requested volunteers to help put up and take down American flags. “The Legion (Columbia Post 97) is always looking for help with that,” Shepard said. July 4 falls on a Friday this year “so we can make that a weekend event,” Shepard suggested. The remaining details to resolve include:

- Whether to route the morning parade down Seventh Avenue to Columbia Cove Park or down Main Street.



COURTESY OF ECONOMIC ALLIANCE
Economic Development Specialist
Mason Duke

See BREWSTER CHAMBER Page B2

Bridgeport council addresses fire vehicle replacements, ambulance financing

By Mike Maltais
Ward Media Staff Reporter

BRIDGEPORT -- Bridgeport’s fire department is facing the urgent need to replace two aging emergency vehicles, a key issue at the city council’s Feb. 19 meeting. Officials are weighing repair costs against replacement options, while also exploring funding for a new ambulance box through grants and low-interest loans. Fire and EMS Committee member Zeke Martinez reported that a brush truck, used for fighting fires in hard-to-reach areas, was found to have low cylinder compression, signaling engine failure. With a replacement engine costing over \$16,000, councilmembers will weigh the feasibility of repairs against purchasing a new vehicle, though funding is not currently budgeted. The department is also adjusting the 2025 budget to replace its 1998 command vehicle with a later model. The seller has offered the city \$2,000 for its current command vehicle. The city originally budgeted \$20,000 for a newer command vehicle. The city submitted bids to three dealerships to find one that came nearest the budget allowance. A test drive and inspection by city public works further narrowed the choice. The new amount will be nearly \$28,000 to include acquisition costs for the replacement.

Ambulance action

Councilmembers voted unanimously to proceed with a grant funding application to acquire a new box for the city’s ambulance chassis. Clerk/treasurer Judy Brown explained that she is working with



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
Douglas County Undersheriff Tyler Caille brought a District 5 ambulance to the December council meeting to demonstrate the latest upgrades in current ambulance boxes.

See AMBULANCE Page B2

Students volunteer to support Brewster-area Senior Center

By Mike Maltais
Ward Media Staff Reporter

BREWSTER – Students from the Bridgeport and Pateros school districts are volunteering their time and skills to support maintenance and improvement projects at the Brewster-Bridgeport-Pateros Senior Center. The initiative, announced at the center’s Feb. 26 meeting, includes painting, storage organization, and repair work. Center Treasurer Charlene Knox connected with Bridgeport students during the city council’s February meeting, where high school junior Luis Herrera-Sanchez, the council’s student representative, asked if the center needed assistance. Knox invited the students for a weekend project to paint one of the Center’s interior walls that has been on the maintenance to-do list since 2024. In January, Knox reached out to Pateros School Superintendent/Principal Scotti Wiltse about



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
From left, Building Committee Chair Mike Mauk, Treasurer Charlene Knox, Thrift Store Committee Co-Chair Rose Holder, and President Klair Lowrey stand in front of the new 10' x 16' storage shed on its alley site along the west side of the Senior Center.

See STUDENTS Page B2

OCCAC grant stalled as federal funding freeze continues

By Mike Maltais
Ward Media Staff Reporter

OKANOGAN – A federal funding freeze has stalled a \$20 million EPA grant intended for the Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC), with no updates more than a month after the halt was announced on Jan. 27. A fact sheet released during the last week of February by OCCAC said the EPA was working with the nonprofit for the funds when the freeze occurred. “OCCAC has not heard from the EPA since Jan. 24, when substantive communications with EPA staff stopped,” the fact sheet said. The \$20 million was part of a larger \$40 million federal package championed by Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, announced in



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
Rena Shawver is Executive Director of the Okanogan County Community Action Council.

See OCCAC Page B2

Pateros council discusses regional drug enforcement efforts



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
Mike Harding



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
Frank Herbert

By Mike Maltais
Ward Media Staff Reporter

PATEROS – At its Feb. 18 meeting, the Pateros City Council discussed regional drug enforcement efforts of the North Central Washington Narcotics Task Force (NCWNTF), including concerns over funding and staffing shortages. The discussion came just one day before a federal press release detailed the conviction of a major drug trafficking leader tied to an April 2023 raid in Oroville. According to the release, the

raids led to the seizure of more than 161,000 fentanyl-laced pills—including ‘Mexi-blues’ and rainbow-colored pills—along with 80 pounds of methamphetamine, six pounds of heroin, two pounds of cocaine, and a dozen firearms. On Feb. 18, Pateros Councilmembers Frank Herbert and Mike Harding updated the city council on their recent meeting with an NCWNTF representative, discussing the agency’s role, challenges, and funding needs. “To understand what their role is

within the area, their mission, and how that works within other law enforcement,” said Herbert. “Funding is a critical component for them.” Communities like Pateros contribute annually to the NCWNTF. The agency recently requested an increase from \$2,500 to \$5,000, adding to ongoing concerns about its funding and staffing shortages. Harding noted that NCWNTF relies on temporary volunteers from county and city law enforcement agencies, needs.

See PATEROS COUNCIL Page B2

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Legals:	Noon, Friday
Classified Ads:	Noon, Friday
Obituaries/Deaths	4 p.m., Friday

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Get your event in the spotlight with Ward Media!

If you have an exciting event to share, email Reporter Quinn Propst at **quinn@ward.media**. We'll showcase the five most captivating events of the week, giving your event the recognition it deserves. Even if your event isn't among the top five, it will still be added to our events calendar and featured online. Don't miss this chance to make your event shine!

Rails and Ales: Family Fun for everyone

Centennial Park will transform into a winter wonderland from 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. on March 8 with Family Snow Play Experiences, including ski and snowboard trials from Mission Ridge Ski & Board Resort and snowshoeing with Wenatchee River Institute. Enjoy craft beer from local breweries and food trucks throughout the day. Live music includes Pizza Party at 12 p.m., Bada Bings at 2:30 p.m., Inland Beaches at 5 p.m., and King Youngblood at 7:30 p.m. The highlight is the annual rail jam competition on Orondo Ave. starting at 4:30 p.m., featuring cash prizes up to \$1,000. The night concludes with an awards ceremony at 8 p.m. This year's zero-waste initiative, in partnership with Sustainable NCW and Wenatchee Valley Rotary, ensures proper waste sorting and composting at food vendors and breweries using certified compostable supplies.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.visitwenatchee.org/listing/rails-ales>

Arts and Crafts: Bring your Creativity

Get ready for a fun-filled, creative afternoon at the free Arts and Crafts event on March 5 from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Hosted by the American Dream Employment Network, this hands-on event invites you to unleash your creativity with activities like adult coloring, keychain making, and much more! Whether you're a seasoned crafter or just looking to try something new, this event is perfect for all skill levels and open to everyone. Don't miss out on this exciting, crafty experience!

For more details, visit *Omak Public Library*.

Blackjack Tournament, put your skills to the test.

Think you've got what it takes to be a Blackjack champion? Prove your skills at the thrilling Blackjack Tournament on March 6 at 7 p.m. at 12 Tribes Casino! With a \$20 buy-in, you'll compete against other players in a high-stakes showdown for a chance

to claim victory. Registration opens at 4 p.m., giving you plenty of time to prepare before the cards are dealt at 7 p.m. Don't miss your chance to test your luck and strategy at this exciting event!

For full tournament rules and details, visit *12 Tribes Casino*.

Cider Press at Manson Growers

Join us at the Cider Press on March 7 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for a fun and rewarding experience. Come press your own fresh cider and enjoy the satisfaction of creating your very own blend. As a special treat, you'll receive a FREE glass jug to fill with the cider you've crafted! It's a fantastic way to enjoy the process of making your own delicious beverage while soaking in the sights and flavors of Manson. Don't miss out on this fun, hands-on opportunity to take home a taste of your hard work! For more details, visit:



Manson Growers Cider Press or call: 509-423-5911.

Yoga and Wine. Stretch and unwind

Unwind and recharge with Yoga + Wine at Silver Bell Winery on March 8 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Enjoy a soothing 45-minute ALL-LEVELS Yoga class, led by a skilled instructor from Yoga Uncorked Chelan. This session is designed to help you flow, breathe, and stretch your way into relaxation, all while sipping on delicious wine! After your yoga practice, treat yourself to a wine tasting or flight, enjoy a glass of your

favorite selection, or share a bottle with friends. Tickets are limited, so be sure to sign up at least 24 hours in advance to secure your spot and ensure the winery can meet its minimum requirements. Bring your own yoga mat (BYOYM) and enjoy the class for just \$20 per person—wine is separate, but enjoy a 10% discount on all bottle purchases. **CANCELLATION POLICY:** No refunds. A minimum of 24 hours' notice is required to reschedule into another event.

For more information or to register, contact: yogauncorked@gmail.com or visit *Eventbrite Registration*.

Okanogan & Douglas County Sheriff, Brewster Police Dept Report

This report is compiled from records provided by the Okanogan & Douglas County Sheriff, Brewster Police Dept. The publisher cannot certify the complete accuracy of the information provided.

Douglas County

Feb 21

02:07:58 Alarm, 1300 Douglas Ave, Bridgeport
11:30:30 Domestic Disturbance, 440 11th St, Bridgeport
15:44:25 Domestic Disturbance, 1105 Douglas Ave, Bridgeport
16:02:11 Welfare Check, 305 S Central Ave, Waterville

Feb 22

12:43:05 Trespass, 1105 Douglas Ave, Bridgeport
17:11:51 Civil, 800blk Columbia Ave, Bridgeport
21:43:53 Weapons Violation, 2400blk Monroe Ave, Bridgeport
2:23:55 Domestic Disturbance, 1222 Fairview Ave# 6, Bridgeport

Feb 23

2:23:55 Domestic Disturbance, 1222 Fairview Ave# 6, Bridgeport
16:23:26 Noise, 1820 Raymond Ave, Bridgeport
18:13:06 Hazard, 2327 Rd A Nw, Mansfield
20:49:03 Alarm, 125 Fir Ave, Bridgeport

Feb 24

06:49:57 Assist Agency, Sr 173 Mp 7, Bridgeport

Feb 25

10:38:48 Cps/Aps Referral, 120 Pine St# 1, Bridgeport
11:21:13 Welfare Check, 120 Pine St# 1, Bridgeport

Feb 26

12:23:34 Court Order Violation, 929 Maple St# 135, Bridgeport
14:37:19 Scam, 106 Sunset Way, Waterville

Feb 27

08:12:54 Graffiti, 811 Jefferson Ave, Bridgeport
12:20:56 Harass/Threat, 384 Sr 173, Bridgeport
15:31:59 Cps/Aps Referral, 303 Eash St, Waterville
22:47:47 Parking/Abandon, 440 10th St, Bridgeport

Brewster Police Dept.

Feb 21

14:47:37 Harassment, Highway 97; Packing Station, Brewster, Comments: Male Drove Rp To Place Then Told Rp They Will Hire Her Because Of Him
19:54:31 Suspicious, S Bridge St; Alley, Brewster, Comments: Veh Parked In The Alley Behind The Res.

Feb 25

07:41:21 Assault, Highway 17;Area, Bridgeport
Comments: F Advd She Was Dragged By The M.

Feb 26

19:22:55 Abdominal, W Indian Av; Brewster, Comments: 62 Yom Abdominal Pain From Kidney Stones
19:23:47 Burglary, E Ester Av, Brewster, Comments: 30'S Yo W M Walked In To Aunt House, Took Phone And Left.

Okanogan Sheriff

Feb 21

14:38:23 Domestic Dispute, Glenwood Ave, Riverside, Comments: M At Loc, Wants Him Removed
14:45:01 Citizen Assist, North Star Rd, Brewster, Comments: Rp Req Civil Stand-By To



21:26:52 Burglary, Monse River Rd, Brewster, Comments: Someone Broke In To The Res, Did Not Take Anything, Damaged The Door, Cannot Close Door.

Feb 24

S25-00904 08:07:43 02/24/25 Civil Johnson Creek Rd, Riverside, Comments: Homeless M Is Living On The

Property In An Old Camper 17:55:13 Animal Vicious, Black Canyon Rd & Highway 153, Pateros Comments: 25 Yof Bit By A Dog On Upper Right Thigh.

Feb 25

07:41:21 Assault, Highway 17;Area, Bridgeport, Comments: F Advd She Was Dragged By The M.

Death Announcements

Sheryl Steelman

Sheryl Steelman, 84, of Brewster, Washington passed away on February 22, 2025. Barnes Chapel is handling the arrangements for the family.

Pamela J. Kipp

Pamela J. Kipp, 77, formerly of Winthrop, Washington passed away in Chelan Washington on February 24, 2025. Precht Rose Chapel is handling the arrangements for the family.

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Community Bulletin Board

Local, Regional Community News & Events

Any non-profit 501(c)-(3) group, person(s). Must provide: full name, city, phone number. Items pertaining to local events that are free or minimum charge. Garage and Yard Sale Ads are paid events, please email: classifieds@ward.media . To submit info call **509-548-5286** or email: ruth@ward.media

Meetings

Mondays

Okanogan County Fair Advisory Committee: Second Monday, 6 p.m. Meetings are open to the public. Okanogan County Commissioners’ hearing room, 123 N. Fifth Ave., Okanogan.

Family and friends Support Group: Third Monday, 7-8:30 p.m., Grace Lutheran Church, 1408 Washington Street, Wenatchee. Contact: 509-860-3620, website at: tcfwenatcheevalley.org

Tuesday

Okanogan County PUD: The commission meets the second and fourth Tuesday of the month a at 3 p.m. Information: okanoganpud.org

Douglas County PUD meetings: The commission meets the first and third Tuesday of the month at 1:30 p.m. in the East Wenatchee office. Information: douglaspud.org

Survivors of Suicide Loss

Support Group: Second Tuesday, 7-8:30 p.m., Grace Lutheran Church, 1408 Washington Street, Wenatchee. Contact: 509-860-3620, website at: tcfwenatcheevalley.org

Wednesday

American Legion Post #97: Current members meetings are on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the American Legion Post in Brewster. Information: Greg Wagg, 206-550-6474.

American Legion Auxiliary #97: Meets the first Wednesday of each month, at 5 p.m. at the American Legion Post in Brewster.

Brewster Chamber of Commerce: Meets the third Wednesday of each month at 12 p.m. at the Senior Center, 109 Bridge Street. Information email: brewsterwachamber@gmail.com

Death Cafe Chelan: Third Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Chelan Public Library, 216 N. Emerson Street; and 5:30-6:30 p.m., Chelan Senior

Center, 534 Trow Avenue, Chelan. Contact: Concie Luna at 509-630-2972 or Vita Monteleone at monte419@nwi.net.

TOPS® Chapter Paves the Way to Healthy Lifestyle: Weekly on Wednesdays, 10-11 a.m. TOPS® chapter (weight loss support group) meetings at Lake Chelan United Methodist Church, located at 206 N. Emerson St. in Chelan. Attendees should use the side entrance of the church between the Lake Chelan Health Express Care Clinic and the church. TOPS empowers people to stop dieting and start creating healthy, enjoyable lifestyle habits that will work for them over the long haul.

Thursdays

Brewster bus trips: OCTN takes Brewster area residents to Wenatchee, second Thursday of the month. The bus starts picking folks up at their homes at 7:30 a.m. Riders may request destination(s); medical appointments etc. On

the third Thursday of each month, riders will be taken to Omak for the day. Riders request their destination(s). Wenatchee: \$12/boarding for General Public, \$6 suggested donation/day for Seniors (60 plus). Omak: \$5.50/General Public, \$2.75 suggested donation Seniors (60 plus). (509) 826-4391 to reserve your seat.

Chelan Cancer Support Group: First Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Lake Chelan Health Hospital. Lunch (purchase from hospital cafe) meeting in Bragg Room. Meetings are open to anyone impacted by cancer. Including: patients, survivors, caregivers, family members and especially those who are recently diagnosed. It is also open to folks wanting to learn ways to support someone affected by cancer. It's a place where members can offer advice, share coping strategies, and build relationships along their journey. More info: Anne Brooks, 509-682-8718.

Family Caregivers/Support

Group: Third Thursday, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Lake Chelan Chamber of Commerce, Coldwell Banker Board Room, 216 E. Woodin Avenue, Chelan.

Other Events/meetings

Brewster Senior Meals: The Senior Center serves meals at noon on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Home delivered meals are delivered those same days. Call 509-689-2815 to reserve meals. For those over age 60 \$5. For those 60 and under \$12.

Senior Center Thrift Store: The Brewster- Pateros-Bridgeport Senior Center Thrift Store is open Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. They are also the Brewster Visitor Information Center and the Brewster Chamber of Commerce meeting room.

Brewster American Legion events: Bingo every Thursday night at 6 p.m. Open to the public. Friday Steak Dinner starts at 5 p.m.; Sunday 9 a.m.

to 12 p.m., order from the full breakfast menu. Daily lunch specials except for Mondays and Saturday when they are closed.

Chelan Valley Hope: Spring Is On The Horizon - As the cold weather slowly gives way to warmer, sunnier days, we are reminded that many individuals continue to face hardships, especially those without shelter. Even as the seasons change, the need for support remains constant. For those sleeping outside on chilly nights, every gesture of kindness makes a difference. Your donations of canned or prepackaged food, as well as essential items like diapers, baby wipes, and paper towels, can provide vital assistance to those in need. We invite you to make a positive impact in your community today by dropping off your contributions at our office located at 417 S. Bradley St. in Chelan. Together, we can help those who need it most—now and all year long. Info: chelanvalleyhope.org

Infant in King County identified as first Washington measles case of the year

By JACQUELYN JIMENEZ ROMERO

Washington State Standard

OLYMPIA - An infant in King County was identified as the first confirmed measles case in Washington in 2025, following increases in cases in other parts of the United States, county officials said.

There were three cases of measles in King County last year. The new case was confirmed on last Wednesday. The infant is suspected to have been exposed to measles during recent travel abroad.

The infant is known to have visited several public locations prior to being diagnosed: the Apple Store at Bellevue Square,

Seattle Children’s Hospital Emergency Department, Allegro Pediatrics in Bothell, and Northwest Asthma & Allergy Center in Redmond.

All three medical facilities are notifying patients who may have been exposed and providing information about the exposure date and possible symptoms. Symptoms for those exposed would be likely to appear between Feb. 27 to Mar. 18.

Measles is a highly contagious and potentially severe air-borne disease. Symptoms can include fever, rash, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. It can lead to ear infections, diarrhea, pneumonia, brain

inflammation, or death.

“If one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people nearby will become infected if they are not protected,” said Dr. Eric Chow, a communicable disease chief in King County.

The virus can remain in the air for up to two hours after someone with measles leaves the area. Symptoms can begin seven to 21 days after initial exposure and can spread among people even before someone shows the appearance of a rash.

Even healthy individuals can have complications from the disease, but high risk populations include children under the age of 5, adults over 20, pregnant people, and those

who are immunocompromised.

However, high rates of vaccinations have kept the risk to the general public low, though there have been a number of outbreaks in recent years. At least 120 people have been confirmed infected in an ongoing outbreak in west Texas. Officials there reported the first death from the outbreak, a school-aged child who had not been vaccinated, this week.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine are 97% effective at preventing measles and the protection can last a lifetime.

The best way to prevent

measles is by staying up to date with vaccinations, officials say.

Widespread immunity, known as “herd immunity,” prevents the rapid spread of diseases within a large population and requires around 95% of people to be vaccinated against measles. If vaccination rates are lower than that, it increases the risk of larger and more frequent outbreaks.

Parents are encouraged to get their infants their first vaccination around six to 11 months of age and to get their second dose at age 4, instead of waiting until the child is enrolled at school.

In King County, it is estimated that 87% of 2-year-

olds are up to date on their first vaccine and 72% ages of 4-to-6-year-olds have received both doses.

Those with a potential exposure should call a clinic and tell them you want to be checked for measles, limit your contact with others, and wear a well-fitting mask if you do need to go to a healthcare facility to avoid the spread of measles, officials say.

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From the courts to the mats,
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is proud to support our student athletes.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF COURTESY PATEROS ATHLETICS

Five Pateros players earn CW1B All-League honors

CW 05

CENTRAL WASHINGTON 1B ALL LEAGUE

BASKETBALL 1ST TEAM & ALL-DEFENSIVE TEAM

ADDISON HENTON

Addison Henton – All League First Team

CW 05

CENTRAL WASHINGTON 1B ALL LEAGUE

BASKETBALL 2ND TEAM

LANDON BRADLEY

Landon Bradley – All League Second Team

CW 05

CENTRAL WASHINGTON 1B ALL LEAGUE

BASKETBALL 1ST TEAM

STEVIE SIMMONS

Stevie Simmons – All League First Team and Defensive Team

CW 05

CENTRAL WASHINGTON 1B ALL LEAGUE

BASKETBALL 1ST TEAM

WRANDIE BOWEN

Wrandie Bowen - All League First Team

CW 05

CENTRAL WASHINGTON 1B ALL LEAGUE

BASKETBALL 2ND TEAM

ZAYNE RAVENSTEIN

Zayne Ravenstein – All League Second Team

Washington state launches Universal Online High School and Beyond Plan platform

NCW News
Ward Media

OLYMPIA — The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has announced the statewide transition to a universal online High School and Beyond Plan (HSBP) platform, a move aimed at standardizing career and postsecondary planning for Washington’s K–12 students.

The transition follows a directive from the 2023 Legislature, requested by State Superintendent Chris Reykdal, to streamline the planning process for students. The HSBP is a graduation requirement in Washington, beginning in 7th grade, and is designed to align students’ coursework with their career interests and future training or education plans.

Currently, school districts across the state use more than a dozen different HSBP platforms, which vary in available tools and resources. The inconsistencies have made it difficult for students to maintain continuity in their planning if they move between districts.

“The High School and



COURTESY OF OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

State Superintendent Chris Reykdal

Beyond Plan is a powerful platform that guides students to resources, course options, and other tools in support of their career and college exploration,” Reykdal said. “Every student needs a postsecondary plan for their success and the success of our state.”

Statewide rollout and platform features

In May 2024, following a

competitive selection process, OSPI chose SchoolLinks as the vendor for the universal online tool. Beginning in the 2025–26 school year, students in grades 7–12 will have annual access to SchoolLinks to help them plan for postsecondary pathways, including college, apprenticeships, industry certifications, military service, internships, and on-the-job training.

“Our goal for this project is to ensure all Washington students have access to a platform that offers the most comprehensive suite of tools and resources, and that provides real-time data and information to students, parents, guardians, and counselors,” Reykdal said.

The SchoolLinks platform offers customizable tools for setting and tracking goals, planning coursework, exploring careers, accessing financial aid information, and building résumés. It also provides secure access for families and educators while maintaining high standards of data privacy.

Implementation timeline

For the 2025–26 school year, 156 school districts, technical

By MIKE MALTAIS
Ward Media Staff Reporter

PATEROS – Five Pateros varsity basketball players have been named to the Central Washington 1B All-League teams for the 2024-25 season.

Juniors Stevie Simmons, Addison Henton, and Wrandie

Bowen were named to the Girls’ First Team, with Henton also earning All-Defensive Team honors. Freshman Zayne Ravenstein earned Girls’ Second Team honors, while senior Landon Bradley was named to the Boys’ Second Team.

The No. 8-seeded Nannies will face top-ranked Neah

Bay at 2 p.m. on March 1 at Mt. Tahoma High School. The winner will advance to the double-elimination round in Spokane on March 6, while the loser will enter single-elimination play on March 5.

Mike Maltais: 360-333-8483 or michael@ward.media

Quad City Church Guide

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colleges, state-tribal education compact schools, and charter schools have committed to implementing the SchoolLinks platform. These districts will join 45 that adopted SchoolLinks in the 2024–25 school year. The remaining districts will transition to the platform in the 2026–27 school year.

“I’m grateful for our pilot school districts’ participation in the initial launch, and for the Legislature’s investment in supporting our students’

postsecondary success in this way,” Reykdal said. “I’m looking forward to building a consistent statewide approach

to postsecondary planning. Our students and families will be well served by this innovation.”

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A ten-year-old’s big heart fuels Happy Letters Project

By **CAROLINE MENNA**
Ward Media Intern

CASHMERE - What began as a simple lesson in kindness in a Cashmere preschool a decade ago has blossomed into a movement touching lives across Washington state. Happy Letters, the brainchild of former preschool owner Traci Pierson, encourages and empowers children to spread joy and support “to people who could use a smile” through colorful, hand-drawn letters.

“I started Happy Letters in 2015... to teach kids the importance of giving back,” says Pierson. Since then, Happy Letters has become a 501c3 non-profit, partnering with over twenty schools and businesses in the Wenatchee Valley. Students of all ages create uplifting letters, filled with drawings and messages of hope. The letters are then sent to the likes of veterans, children’s hospitals, cancer treatment facilities, retirement homes, and anyone in need of some cheer.

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands: one for helping yourself, the other for helping others,” reads a quote from

Audrey Hepburn on the Happy Letters website, reflecting the organization’s ethos. And Happy Letters is more than just writing.

This year, inspired by 10-year-old Aviya Garcia, a young Cashmere girl with a passion for helping others, the organization is launching the Happy Letter Art Drive. This initiative will provide art supply packets to children in foster care, offering them a creative outlet and a sense of connection. Aviya’s interest in helping children in foster care began a few years ago when she explored the foster process through a Washington Department of Social and Health Services intake.

“Happy Letters to me means fun while helping my community and brings joy to other people,” says Aviya, who enjoys art, drawing, and cooking. “I just want to help foster kids. I want them to know that other people are thinking about them and care and love them.” She cites her grandfather as a source of inspiration, encouraging her artistic talents.

“Aviya has such a big heart,” says Pierson. “She came up

with the idea of making Happy Letter Art Packets for children in foster care, and we worked together to make it happen.”

The drive follows the success of last year’s effort led by 11-year-old Paelyn Lueondee of Cashmere, which resulted in well over a thousand Happy Letters and hundreds of book packets being donated to children’s hospitals in Seattle and Wenatchee.

The community has rallied behind Aviya’s initiative, with schools, businesses, and individuals eager to contribute. Donation drop-off locations for art supplies have been set up in Cashmere and Wenatchee.

Looking to the future, Pierson envisions Happy Letters expanding statewide and beyond. “We want to continue growing and spreading kindness wherever we can,” she shares. “Happy Letters is about connections. My hope is that no matter how big we grow, we always maintain that personal, heartfelt touch that makes each letter special.”

How to Get Involved:

- Make Happy Letters: Teachers and schools
- interested in participating can contact Traci Pierson at makehappyletters@gmail.com.
- Donate Art Supplies: Anyone can drop off new art supplies at designated locations in Cashmere: the library, That Pizza Place, and Weeds Cafe; in Wenatchee at Blue Spoon.
- Donate Funds: Visit makehappyletters.org to make a financial contribution or to view the organization’s Amazon Wishlist.
- Volunteer: Contact happyletters@gmail.com to join the Happy Letters volunteer team.

Happy Letters is a testament to the power of children’s empathy and the impact a simple act of kindness can have. Through their colorful creations and heartfelt messages, these young letter writers, like Aviya, are making the world a little brighter, one Happy Letter at a time.

Caroline Menna is an intern for Ward Media and a senior at Cascade High School, where she serves as Editor-in-Chief of the school’s Publications Group.

COURTESY OF KATYA GARCIA

Ten-year-old Aviya Garcia displays a completed Happy Letter. Garcia initiated and helped Happy Letters’ founder Traci Pierson develop a project encouraging local children to create artwork and messages of joy for children in foster care.

Ferguson proposes \$4B in cuts to Washington state budget

By **JAKE GOLDSTEIN-STREET**
AND BILL LUCIA
Washington State Standard

OLYMPIA - Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson has a plan for about \$7 billion in budget cuts, but he and Democrats in the Legislature have a ways to go before they solve a shortfall that may be more than double that size.

The governor presented \$4 billion in new reductions on Thursday and said he supports another \$3 billion in savings former Gov. Jay Inslee proposed in December. This scrub is Ferguson’s first step in addressing an operating budget deficit that Democratic lawmakers say is roughly \$12 billion over the next four years. Ferguson pegged the number higher, at \$15 billion.

That leaves a gap somewhere in the ballpark of \$5 billion to \$8 billion that would need to be closed with reductions, spending delays, or new tax collections. An updated state revenue forecast expected in March could either help or hurt that outlook.

Washington’s current two-year budget is around \$70 billion.

Ferguson outlined his blueprint in a press conference Thursday. It includes one furlough day per month for most state workers and eliminating about 1,000 full-time employees through cutting vacant or new positions, attrition and other means.

To what degree state lawmakers will embrace his proposals remains to be seen.

Lead Democrats in the Legislature have already indicated that they believe new taxes or tax increases will be necessary.

Ferguson has avoided saying what tax proposals he might support. And on Thursday he said it’s still too soon for that conversation. He noted the upcoming revenue forecast could affect those discussions.

“Our energy’s been focused entirely on this process, which is time-consuming and a lot of decisions being made to get that \$4 billion, to put it mildly,” he said.

He added: “We’re not going to tax our way out of this thing. Not going to happen.”

But the Senate’s lead budget writer, Sen. June Robinson, D-Everett, said cuts alone “will not allow us to sustain the services Washingtonians rely on.”

“Our job is to take a balanced approach — one that ensures critical services remain strong

and communities have the support they need,” she said in a statement after the press conference. “To truly meet the needs of the people we serve, we must make thoughtful reductions and consider progressive revenue options that ensure fairness and long-term stability.”

The governor downplayed the potential for any clash between him and lawmakers at this point.

“They’re doing their own work, right, just like they know we’re doing our own,” he said. “I think it’s too soon to say whether we’re lined up or opposed, or there’s daylight or there’s not daylight.”

“They know the reductions that we’re proposing, the dollar amounts, and there’s a lot of time ahead of us to come together,” he added.

If the Legislature is to wrap up its session as scheduled on April 27, that time would amount to about 59 days.

Ferguson said he was giving staff a 24-hour break, and then going back to work to find more savings. He said the budget-combing process so far has made him “feel more encouraged” that the Legislature will be able to wrap up the budget on time.

The cuts

Public education and public safety agencies, like the Department of Corrections and Washington State Patrol, are immune from Ferguson’s cuts, according to the governor’s office. He also said investments in homelessness and housing assistance would be maintained.

And he said he planned to honor pay hikes in collective bargaining agreements with the state’s public employees. But \$300 million in savings would come from the one-day-a-month furloughs for the next two years. Some employees, like state troopers and prison staff, would be exempt.

Ferguson’s plan triggered pushback from the Washington Federation of State Employees, which represents thousands of state workers.

“There is still time for our elected officials to do the right thing and reject harmful cuts, facility closures, and employee furloughs by asking the rich to pay their fair share,” the union’s president, Mike Yestramski, said in a statement.

The budget leader for the state Senate Republicans also expressed concern about the furloughs but for different reasons.

“This plan sends a message

to taxpayers: public servants will receive higher pay using \$4 billion more of your tax dollars, and in return, you will receive 12 fewer days of service from them each year for two years,” state Sen. Chris Gildon, R-Puyallup, said in a statement.

At the dawn of his administration, Ferguson asked most agencies to find 6% budget cuts in a scramble for \$4 billion in savings. He requested 3% cuts from four-year universities. Agencies had to submit these proposals by Feb. 6.

The cuts he rolled out on Thursday slice across state government.

They include \$90 million from temporarily closing unused wards at the Western State psychiatric hospital in Lakewood, \$4 million from shuttering a unit at the Special Commitment Center on McNeil Island for people convicted of sex offenses, and another \$4 million from ending a pandemic-era lease on an unused state Department of Health warehouse.

Ferguson is also calling for cutting agency spending by 50% on out-of-state travel, 25% on in-state travel and 10% on equipment and other purchases. In December, Inslee directed state agencies to freeze “most non-discretionary and non-essential” hiring, service contracts, purchasing and employee travel.

The Democratic governor has described further taxes to balance the budget as a last resort, and he has been especially dubious of the so-called wealth tax his predecessor recommended. Democrats in the Legislature have been much more open to new taxes.

In the first two months of the legislative session, Democrats have floated a variety of tax proposals, including taxes on cigarettes, storage units and gun and ammunition sales.

Lawmakers will also surely discuss the wealth tax on bonds, stocks and other assets. A version Inslee proposed — a 1% tax on an individual’s wealth above \$100 million — could generate about \$10 billion in the next four years. But it’s widely expected the tax would face legal challenges and it would take time for the state to set it up.

A payroll tax on big businesses, similar to Seattle’s JumpStart tax, is another option Democrats have floated.

Gildon said Republicans would be happy to help the governor find more cuts to stave off new taxes.

Converging tracks

Republicans blame Democrats’ spending for the state’s financial woes and say new taxes or tax hikes are unnecessary. Democrats have controlled both chambers of the Legislature and the governor’s office for about seven years.

“It’s really just a masquerade of their reckless spending and financial irresponsibility,” state Rep. Chris Corry, R-Yakima, told reporters Tuesday. “There’s no other way to put it. We’ve been warning them for years that you cannot continue to spend more money than you take in.”

House Majority Leader Joe Fitzgibbon, D-West Seattle, said in a statement Thursday that many of the governor’s recommendations overlap with Democratic legislators’ ideas, and that lawmakers will consider other new savings Ferguson might propose.

He acknowledged that lawmakers and the governor have been working in parallel on budget issues. “I think we’re about at the point where those tracks converge,” he said Wednesday.

Senate Majority Leader Jamie Pedersen, D-Seattle, emphasized that legislative Democrats have, separate from the governor, been going through the budget line-by-line

for three months. He reiterated that they are basing their work on the roughly \$12 billion shortfall estimate.

Pedersen noted that pay raises for state employees are a significant chunk of what’s contributing to that total. But he also said higher compensation for state workers is necessary to attract and retain them at a time when living costs are up.

On Thursday, the governor’s office shared figures showing that recently negotiated collective bargaining agreements with state employees, and related pay increases for non-union workers, contribute around \$3.7 billion to the state’s expected budget gap. The agreements include general

pay hikes of 5% over two years.

Ferguson’s budget director, K.D. Chapman-See, explained that around \$12 billion of the estimated shortfall is driven by “maintenance level” spending — what’s needed to keep existing programs and services going. Revenue isn’t growing fast enough to keep pace.

“It is really pretty across-the-board where we saw some pretty substantial increases,” she said.

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COURTESY OF BILL LUCIA/WASHINGTON STATE STANDARD

Gov. Bob Ferguson speaks to reporters at the state Capitol on Feb. 27, 2025 about his plans to cut state spending by about \$4 billion over four years.

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Senate passes Goehner bill to expand local housing options

NCW News
Ward Media

OLYMPIA — Sen. Keith Goehner's work to give counties more options for promoting affordable housing received a big boost last Wednesday when the Senate gave overwhelming bipartisan support to Senate Bill 5471.

The legislation would allow counties to authorize at least one “middle housing” unit on every parcel zoned for single-family homes within urban growth areas.

“Since the Growth

Management Act (GMA) was enacted decades ago, the state has typically gone too far in limiting local government's ability to authorize the construction of more homes,” said Goehner, R-Dryden. “We should be empowering the private sector to create housing solutions, because builders are ready to build—and this bill would give them the flexibility to do so.”

His legislation would expand local housing options by allowing duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and other types of “middle housing” in urban

growth areas, whether incorporated or not, where housing shortages are most pressing.

Goehner said his county-focused measure aligns with a 2023 law requiring cities to increase housing diversity in traditionally single-family neighborhoods.

“The GMA was originally designed to manage growth, but over time, it has imposed too many restrictions that have stifled housing development in high-demand areas,” Goehner added. “This bill would ease those barriers

while maintaining protections for rural communities.”

The bill, Goehner's first to pass since he became a senator this year, received a unanimous vote.

“When introducing legislation, we don't know which of our bills will end up being the first to reach the Senate floor. It's nice that the first bill of mine to get through the Senate could end up helping a family realize the American dream of home ownership,” Goehner said.

SB 5471 now moves to the House for further consideration.



COURTESY OF WASHINGTON STATE SENATE
Sen. Keith Goehner, R-Dryden

Legendary bands Three Dog Night, Little River Band to play Wenatchee

NCW News
Ward Media

WENATCHEE— Iconic rock bands Three Dog Night and Little River Band will bring decades of classic hits to Town Toyota Center in Wenatchee on June 12. The two groups, known for their enduring popularity and multi-generational appeal, have collectively scored 34 Top 40 hits.

Between 1969 and 1976, Three Dog Night became one of America's most successful bands, dominating the pop, rock, and R&B charts. The group produced 21 hit singles—including 11 Top 10 hits—and

earned 12 consecutive gold albums. By 1977, they had sold over 50 million records and helped define the rise of arena rock.

Founded by Danny Hutton, the band became known for its dynamic covers of songs by renowned artists like Elton John, Laura Nyro, Randy Newman, and Paul Williams. Their biggest hits include “One,” “Mama Told Me (Not to Come),” “Joy to the World,” and “Black and White.”

Still performing more than 75 concerts a year, Three Dog Night continues to draw enthusiastic audiences across generations. Their music remains a staple on radio,

TV, and streaming platforms, selling over a million copies in the past decade.

Little River Band, known for its smooth harmonies and melodic rock sound, found widespread success in the 1970s and 1980s. Eagles founding member Glenn Frey once called them “the best singing band in the world.”

The band is best known for timeless hits like “Reminiscing,” “Cool Change,” “Lonesome Loser,” and “Take It Easy on Me.” With more than 36 million records sold, they were the first band to achieve Top 10 hits for six consecutive years.

According to BMI, their

hit “Reminiscing” remains one of the most-played songs in American radio history, surpassing 6 million airplays, while “Lady” follows closely behind with 5 million plays. The band continues to tour extensively, performing 90 to 100 shows annually and attracting fans of all ages.

Tickets for the June 12 concert at Town Toyota Center go on sale March 7 at 10 a.m. Fans can purchase them online at www.towntoyotacenter.com or by calling 509-667-7847.

For more information on the bands, visit www.threedognight.com and www.littleriverband.com.

OCCAC

Continued from page A1

a Dec. 12, 2024, media release from Murray's office. The funds were to be shared between OCCAC and the Yakama Nation. However, on Jan. 24, substantive communications between OCCAC and the EPA stopped, and the freeze was announced days later.

Murray (D-WA) serves as Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and Cantwell (D-WA) heads the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The media release said the money is part of nearly \$40 million divided between the OCCAC and the Yakama Nation.

When contacted by The

Quad early last January about its largest-ever grant, OCCAC Executive Director Rena Shawver confirmed the media release from Murray's office. Then, with what proved later to be prescient caution, Shawver added that the actual funds had not yet been received by her nonprofit, so she deferred further comment until such time as that occurred. Later that month, the freeze was announced.

Without the grant, OCCAC warns that essential services—ranging from food assistance to affordable housing—could face severe setbacks. The nonprofit remains hopeful the funds will be restored but acknowledges the risk of losing critical community resources, including:

- Expanded services to develop affordable housing.
 - Three daycare classrooms for children.
 - Home repair, weatherization, and residential solar services.
 - Disaster relief for first responders and displaced residents.
 - Event and classroom space for job training, education, and community use.
 - Support for victims of domestic abuse, those without housing, veterans and their families, and other vulnerable residents.
- Between 2022 and 2025, OCCAC has provided \$9 million in emergency food assistance, \$3.5 million in housing aid, and \$3 million in veterans' services. Additional programs include

\$1.7 million for low-income energy assistance, \$1.5 million for home weatherization, and \$450,000 from the Community Service Block Grant.

Before it closed its doors last August, the Pateros Brewster Community Resource Center worked with OCCEC and provided it with south county office space where low-income families received food, rental, and utility assistance.

Okanogan County's poverty rate exceeds 20 percent—twice the state average—with 30 percent of households relying on OCCAC services. The funding freeze puts critical resources for these residents at risk.

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Pateros council

Continued from page A1

many of which are already short-staffed. “They have to borrow from other agencies that do not want to give up their people to begin with,” he said. “It's a tough job for them.”

Mayor Kelly Hook, who has served in law enforcement for 28 years in Okanogan County, noted that the NCWNTF has shrunk significantly due to funding cuts. “The task force used to have at least 10 officers,” Hook said. “Now they're down to three.”

“Our area has an overdose rate that is 30 percent higher than the state average,” said Herbert. “They (NCWNTF) are playing Wac-A-Mole trying to contain drug flow coming here from down south as a staging point to go to native

reservations of other states,” As Acting United States Attorney Richard R. Barker, one of the prosecutors in the case noted in the media release: “Many of these drugs were destined for Native American communities... between the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington to the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana.”

The NCWNTF worked alongside the Bureau of Indian Affairs Division of Drug Enforcement and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Additional support came from the U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Okanogan County Sheriff's Office, and the Colville and Kalispel Tribal Police Departments.

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Brewster Chamber

Continued from page A1

- A better PA system. Last year, spectators could not hear when the Legion stopped or the National Anthem.
- A parade entry fee for non-Chamber members to generate revenue and encourage membership.
- Coordinating food and craft vendors at the park.
- Tables and chairs for

diners, Apple bins for garbage.

- High school fundraiser dinners similar to the Pateros Apple Pie Jamboree.
- Partner with the school for an art walk.
- Color run, 3-on-3 basketball, corn hole tournament, and kids' games.
- Raffle, silent auction, or bake sale fundraisers.

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Students

Continued from page A1

involving woodshop students in volunteer projects at the center. After Wiltse approved the request, Knox began organizing schedules and materials.

Woodshop students will help organize the interior of the center's newly acquired 10' x 16' storage shed.

“We are looking at building a rack system for the storage building,” said Knox passing around a photo and explaining the design that will allow easy access to individual storage bins.

“If you want a bin on the bottom, you do not have to unload the other bins sitting on top of it,” said Knox. “It just

slides out.”

A fenced area next to the shed will be added to hold drop-off items.

A second older storage space attached to the main building needs attention as well. The metal roof has loose sections that allow rainwater to enter. The students will help clean the interior and seal the roof.

“It's a great opportunity for us to work with the schools to get some of the kids involved,” said Center President Klair Lowrey.

In other business:

- Discussions on new property lines for the parking area are progressing with the adjacent building owner.
- The center has secured annual donations from

- Brewster, Bridgeport, and Pateros.
- The board is still considering security door cameras.



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
The metal roof on the storage space attached to the south side of the Center building needs attention to stop water leaks.



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA
Proposed interior shelving for the new storage shed will make individual bins easily accessible.

- Members can submit suggestions for basic computer and smartphone skills classes.
- Signups are open for \$15,

15-minute massage chair sessions starting March 11.

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Ambulance

Continued from page A1

Hagerty Consulting on possible grant funding through USDA Rural Development. While a grant is not guaranteed, Hagerty also can provide a 4.25 percent low interest loan as an alternative.

A portion of city utility bills—\$3 to \$4 per customer—funds ambulance services.

With over \$80,000 expected in the fund by year's end, the city plans to use it as a down payment on the new ambulance box, with the remainder financed through either a grant or a low-interest loan.

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