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From Columbia Market to Dan's Food Market: Celebrating 75 years of service

As chains continue to dominate the grocery business, Dan's Food Market in Leavenworth has remained a preferred destination for locals and tourists alike. After 75 years, the market is busier than ever.

By **TAYLOR CALDWELL** | Ward Media Staff Reporter

While the small market has a lot to offer – local produce and products, quality meats, sweets from Homefires Bakery, the deli's ready made meal deals – it's best known for the bond between its employees and the community.

"[It's a] great staff... Just really friendly. It's lot of people that worked here for a long time, and they know everybody in town, so it's got that small town, homey feel," said customer Mason Schuur.

Schuur has been shopping at Dan's Market since the 1990s. Nowadays, he regularly comes

in on his lunch break for a "Dan-wich," a custom-made sandwich accompanied by a bag of chips for \$6.99. According to Schuur, it's "fresh every time, well-made, a good price, and it's a healthy option."

"I think it's important and we will continue to offer a good quality, affordable lunch... I think it's one of my favorite items in the deli, the Dan-Wich, and to get a custom sandwich like that for that price, I think it's awesome," said co-owner Kat Koncz.

The deli and bakery, tucked behind the main market, have



COURTESY OF KAT KONCZ

The Koncz family became the new proprietors of Dan's in May 2023.

served as a reliable ritual for a number of groups over the years. Each morning, the deli has hot coffee and ready-made burritos and sandwiches for its reliable 5 a.m. crowd. Around 11:30 a.m., high school students congregate in and around the store for a quick and cheap off-campus lunch.

Before the pandemic, man-

ager Jeremy Radach fondly remembers a group of retired regulars routinely meeting at the checkerboard tables for morning coffee. To Radach, Dan's regulars are equally as important to the store's success as are its dedicated employees.

"To me, it makes it feel even

See **THE KONCZ** Page 16

Restaurant owner brings horseman's flair to new Pateros eatery



MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA

Adolfo Sahagun, astride his Cuafrisian horse during the annual Bridgeport Daze parade, pauses to speak with some equine admirers. **SEE STORY PAGE 7**

Federal cuts hit Wenatchee River Ranger District, threatening Leavenworth backcountry

Ten U.S. Forest Service employees have been fired at the Wenatchee River Ranger District Office amid agency wide cuts, with fears that more agency firings are on the way.

By **TAYLOR CALDWELL** | Ward Media Staff Reporter

"It feels like... We're kind of the canary in the coal mine... This is like the beginning of actions that are going to really start affecting everyday people, not just government employees," said Lead Wilderness Ranger Kyle Warden, who was included in the Wenatchee River Ranger District terminations.

The employees were among

3,400 Forest Service employees that were fired by Presidents Day as billionaire Elon Musk and President Donald Trump have taken swift actions to cut federal spending.

"These cuts to the Forest Service are devastating, in particular for my district, the eighth congressional district, just because

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WBJ OFFICES & CONTACT INFO**© WardMedia, LLC 2025**

The Wenatchee Business Journal is published on the first Monday of each month. Subscriptions are \$25 per year.

CIRCULATION

For circulation information or to sign up for a subscription, call 509-293-6780

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The Wenatchee Business Journal is published monthly
29 S. Wenatchee Ave., Suite A
Wenatchee, WA 98801

Local businesses show the value of legacy and adaptation

By **Terry Ward** | CEO and Publisher

This month's stories highlight how North Central Washington businesses are balancing cherished traditions with necessary adaptation, demonstrating the unique character that makes our region's economy resilient and vibrant. From multi-generational grocery stores to innovative new restaurants, we're seeing businesses that understand the power of community connections and authentic service.

Dan's Food Market's remarkable 75-year journey from Columbia Market to the beloved Leavenworth institution it is today exemplifies how local businesses can thrive even as corporate chains dominate the landscape.

The market's success through three ownership transitions shows that maintaining a focus on personalized service and community relationships creates lasting value.

As manager Jeremy Radach noted, watching customers' children grow

up over the years creates connections that go far beyond transactions.

The Koncz family's commitment to preserving this legacy while thoughtfully expanding offerings shows how successful ownership transitions can honor history while embracing the future.

Meanwhile, in Pateros, Adolfo Sahagun's transformation of the former River Restaurant into Cowboy River Restaurant demonstrates how personal passion and family involvement create distinctive local businesses.

Known regionally for his magnificent parade horses, Sahagun brings the same flair and attention to detail to his new American-style eatery.

Like the Koncz family at Dan's, Sahagun relies on family members to help run his businesses, with daughter Mili Arteaga juggling waitress duties and business administration.

These family enterprises create not just economic value but cultural anchors

for our communities.

The challenges facing the Wenatchee River Ranger District remind us that our region's economic vitality is deeply connected to our natural resources and public lands.

The loss of experienced rangers threatens not only backcountry management but potentially Leavenworth's tourism economy and water resources.

When former Lead Wilderness Ranger Kyle Warden warns that the Enchantments' human waste issue will be "immediate" without proper staffing, it underscores how public sector cutbacks can have cascading effects on our communities and businesses that rely on responsible recreation management.

As our region continues to grow and evolve, these stories highlight the importance of balancing progress with preservation.

The Dan's Food Market legacy demonstrates how businesses can maintain their core values through

From the Publisher



ownership changes.

Cowboy River Restaurant shows how cultural traditions – like Sahagun's horsemanship – can inform and enhance new business ventures. And the ranger district situation reminds us that sustainable economic development requires thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources.

Looking ahead, these examples suggest that North Central Washington's economic future lies not in becoming more like everywhere else, but in thoughtfully preserving what makes us unique.

Whether it's a grocery clerk who knows custom-

ers by name, a restaurateur who brings cultural flair to a riverside dining experience, or the rangers who protect the wilderness that draws visitors to our region, these connections and distinctive local characters create the foundation for sustainable prosperity.

Terry Ward is the CEO of Ward Media and the publisher of NCW News, Cashmere Valley Record, Lake Chelan Mirror, The Leavenworth Echo, Quad City Herald, and the Wenatchee Business Journal. He can be reached at terry@ward.media.

Investing in Digital Literacy as the Catalyst for Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth

New data reported by the Washington Workforce Board suggests that in Washington State, an astounding 91% of jobs now require digital skills.

By **Dr. Sue Kane, CEO** | NCW Tech Alliance
Sponsored by Microsoft

This necessity spans across diverse industries – 99% of positions in information technology, 95% in healthcare, 90% in arts and entertainment, and 86% in agriculture demand proficiency with technology.

These figures underscore a simple truth: to thrive in any sector, digital competence is no longer optional but essential.

Recognizing this, NCW Tech Alliance is working to empower local communities through community skilling programs, which aim to boost economic growth by enhancing digital competencies among

residents.

The regional need for these programs is significant. One in four residents across the region lacks access to high-speed internet, devices, or the digital skills required to participate fully in the modern economy. This digital divide is not just a technological gap but a barrier that keeps individuals from securing quality employment, advancing in their careers, or even accessing essential services.

The NCW Tech Alliance Community Skills Digital Literacy program was first launched in 2023. This initiative is designed to

provide participants with foundational digital skills within a supportive community setting. In-person classes are typically held in local schools, bringing together cohorts of 20 to 30 neighbors. Sessions are facilitated in Spanish or English, as deemed appropriate by the community, which ensures that language does not become a barrier to learning and participation.

At the outset of the program, each participant receives a new or refurbished laptop computer. Over the course of four weeks, meeting twice a week, they delve into essential topics



COURTESY OF NCW TECH ALLIANCE
NCW Tech Alliance Digital Skills Instructor, Juan Servin teaches a lesson in a Quincy Middle School classroom.

such as caring for their computers, understanding the basics of cybersecurity, navigating web browsers and email, and accessing portals for education, healthcare, and social services. Ownership of the devices allows learners to personalize their experience – saving bookmarks and customizing settings – which reinforces their new skills and enhances confidence.

The impact of this pro-

gram is promising. Last year, 193 students across the region completed the program.

The most recent cohort reflections offer insights about the participants' intentions for their new technology skills to enhance employment and entrepreneurship: 75% indicated that the skills they were learning would help them maintain

Finance

Beau Ruff

Contributor for Ward Media



Prenups Aren't the Buzzkill Marrying Couples Think

Couples are often wary to bring up the dreaded P word when discussing their nuptials. After all, who wants to ostensibly discuss a divorce when there is an impending marriage to consider.

Oftentimes the desire to avoid the topic is rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of the use and benefit of a prenuptial agreement.

These agreements are not only helpful in a divorce setting, but from a planning perspective, they can be essential to carry out an effective estate plan. While some see great value in having a prenuptial agreement for themselves, many often also find value in encouraging their children to have a prenuptial agreement.

What is a Prenuptial Agreement?

A couple can enter into an agreement concerning their property and related rights and obligations thereto. Sometimes these agreements are entered into prior to marriage

(prenups) and sometimes they are entered into after marriage (postnups). Either way, the form is similar: both parties to the agreement share information regarding their assets and liabilities and they together work to establish an agreement that appropriately captures their expectations for the ownership, character, and division of any property or rights related to property. Usually, both parties would be represented by independent attorneys.

What happens in the Absence of a Prenuptial Agreement?

A common misconception is that it's somehow more romantic for a couple to not enter into any prenuptial agreement. Though we don't know what our futures will hold, whether it is a lifelong marriage or sadly, divorce, having a plan in place is both practical and thoughtful. What happens when a couple does not have a prenup in place? As for divorce, under Washington law, a court will

make a "just and equitable" division of all property considering a host of facts and circumstances. See RCW 26.09.080. What this means is that a third party (the judge) will be deciding the fate of the couple and their assets. So, instead of asking "do you want a prenup" perhaps the more relevant question is: "would you rather have us decide what happens in the event of a divorce or would you rather have a third party make that binding determination for us?" As an example of the scope of a prenup, the prenuptial agreement could (for example) provide that all property owned by the couple simply be split equally upon divorce. This means that the prenup can be used to enforce the couple's romantic ideology again rather than allowing a third party to make a different determination. Accordingly, though the term "prenup" evokes thoughts of distrust, lack of love or sharing, it can prove to be arguably more generous than is otherwise provided by a judge in a dissolution case.

How Can a Prenuptial Agreement Assist in Estate Planning?

A prenuptial agreement can be very helpful in estate planning where: (1) there is any amount of separate property; and (2) the distribution plan gives some amount to anyone other than the surviving spouse. Imagine a second marriage where each spouse has his or her own kids and came into the marriage with some assets. Imagine further that one spouse's will says something like: "I give my spouse \$100k and I give all my other assets to my children." The difficult question is "what are all the other assets?" Oftentimes people think (read: assume) they know what assets they own. But, the issue is much more complex with community property laws. As a reminder, Washington is a community property state which simply means that all property acquired during marriage is owned one-half by each spouse (except for gifts or inheritance). Seems straightforward. But take my example above. Let's assume that the wife brought a home into the marriage and the home had a mortgage on it.

The home was considered separate property. But, now the wife is using income (acquired during marriage) to pay off the mortgage on the house. Now, when the wife dies, is the house (or a fraction of the house) included in



"all the other assets?" It's a question that leads to an answer that is not straightforward and clear. And, in planning, the preference is always for an answer that is straightforward and clear. In this case, the couple could simply provide the answer in a pre or postnuptial agreement: "we agree that the house is owned by wife and the total value of the house is wife's notwithstanding any community property contributions to pay off the mortgage." This is of course simplistic but helps to showcase the myriad property ownership issues that can be created when evaluating the implications of community property laws.

Must I have a Formal Agreement?

For any chance of the agreement being enforceable, the answer is a resounding YES. That being said, I think that any kind of writing might be helpful to a couple as it can more clearly articulate thoughts and expectations.

For example, in the scenario above, imagine the husband dies but has a clause in his will telling his executor "I have agreed with my surviving spouse that I have no interest in her house in spite of

the fact that some of the money used to pay the mortgage came from community property." While still not necessarily enforceable, the executor now has some indication of the testator's intent in creating the distribution plan.

Bottom Line

Sometimes planning requires difficult conversations concerning things no one wants to talk about, but in addressing all potential outcomes, you might avoid the headache and heartache that could result if those conversations did not occur.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual or entity. This information is not intended to be a substitute for specific individualized tax or legal advice. We suggest that you discuss your specific situation with a qualified tax or legal advisor.

Beau Ruff, a licensed attorney and certified financial planner, is the director of planning at Cornerstone Wealth Strategies in Kennewick, WA.

Digital skills

Continued from page 2

their current jobs; 61% hoped to expand their businesses; 63% believed that their new technology skills could enable them to hire new employees; and 57% indicated that their new skills will be used to launch new business ventures. These responses highlight a distinct correlation between digital literacy and economic development.

Participants are not only enhancing their own prospects but are also poised to contribute to job creation and business growth within the region.

This means that the Community Skills Digital Literacy program is more than an educational course – it's a catalyst for economic opportunity.

By equipping individuals with the tools and knowledge they need, the program empowers them to participate fully in the digital economy. This empowerment has a ripple effect. As more residents gain digital skills, busi-

nesses benefit from a more skilled workforce, entrepreneurship flourishes, and the overall economic resilience of North Central Washington is strengthened.

NCW Tech Alliance is also extending this local impact through the Community Skills Initiative hub (www.communityskill.org) in partnership with Microsoft and LinkedIn Learning.

The curated hub of free, online, bilingual resources allows any individual to begin skilling on their own through on-demand courses and training programs that have been vetted by industry experts to ensure that they align with current and in-demand digital skills.

The hub is free to access and users can choose training that matches their current experience level – from foundational knowledge to role-specific technical skills – enabling them to enhance their digital competencies, improve job prospects, and ensure they have the skills needed to stay competitive in

the current labor market. In 2024, local residents earned more than 2,600 professional certificates through the portal.

The significance of these community-based skill-building initiatives cannot be overstated.

By addressing these foundational skills gaps, NCW Tech Alliance is playing a pivotal role in workforce development alongside the local network of traditional workforce partners. These investments in digital skilling also have implications for economic growth.

As businesses in the region adopt more technology, the demand for digitally skilled employees increases. This creates a positive feedback loop – enhanced digital literacy leads to better job opportunities, which in turn encourages more individuals to acquire digital skills.

The overall effect is a more competitive and dynamic economy that can attract investment and support sustainable growth over the long term for the region.



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Finance

Business Owners: Are you taking advantage of these deductions?

Tyler Kert

Contributor for Ward Media



It's that time of year again - time to gather your tax documents. If you are an employee, your tax return might be relatively simple. If all you have is a form W-2, you aren't able to deduct additional business expenses.

In fact, many times individuals don't need to keep track of their itemized deductions either because the standard deduction is relatively high. But if you are a business owner, you have an obligation to track the income that you make and the expenses that you accrued over the past year.

Business owners must keep an eye on their financial situation so that they can work to minimize expenses and cut unnecessary costs.

Increased revenue is always a chief concern of business owners. But when it comes to reporting your income after the year

ends to the IRS, the goal switches.

Now, it's time to make sure that you recognize all of your expenses and minimize your income to ultimately minimize the tax you will owe.

Clearly, you can't go back and change the past. But through careful record keeping and tracking of expenses, you can optimize your presentation of what happened in the past.

Are you taking every tax deduction you have available to you? Here are a few deductions that you should consider if you haven't already.

Cell Phone

Cell phones have become such an integral part of our lives that it is almost hard to imagine life without them. If you are a business owner, the chance is extremely high that you are using your cell phone



STOCK PHOTO

for business purposes at least some of the time. That said, cell phones are also used extensively for personal use.

Most of the time, when an item is used partly for business and partly for personal use, it is appropriate to allocate the expense accordingly. However, cell phones are very difficult to split. Yes, you can calculate the percentage of calls and data that is used for business, but it can be argued that it is impossible to use half a cell phone for anything.

Therefore, if you are using your cell phone for business purposes and not deducting it as a business expense, you're missing out on tax savings.

Taking advantage of this deduction alone can keep more money in your pocket at the end of the year.

Business Use of Home:

Ever since the pandemic, working from home has become increasingly popular. COVID-19 forced many companies to adopt technology that allows

them to operate remotely. Do you have office space in your home that you use for your business? If you do, you can take a business use of home deduction on your tax return. I'm not going to get into the specifics of how this deduction works because it is unique to each specific situation. But this deduction can be significant depending on the size of your home office and the cost of your home utilities. Work with a CPA and educate yourself on how to take full advantage of this deduction.

Charitable Contributions vs Advertising:

It is important to categorize expenses correctly. Mislabeling expenses can cause you to lose those expenses altogether. For example, if you decide to sponsor a local youth soccer team by purchas-

ing their uniforms, you might label that expense as a donation to the soccer program even though your company logo is listed on the t-shirts. Donations to charitable organizations are not deductible by a pass-through entity like a partnership or S-corporation. Instead, these donations are passed through to the shareholder or owner of the company to be listed as charitable contributions on their personal return. If an owner or shareholder isn't itemizing their deductions, they will lose out on this tax deduction altogether. In the above example, this expense should be categorized as advertising because the company is receiving publicity from their sponsorship. Then, the deduction will be fully realized.

There are, however,

See TYLER KERT Page 12

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Cutting Waste, Boosting Efficiency & Saving Money

How to Estimate and Audit Your Restaurant's Food Waste

From Winton Manufacturing Compost Works

Food waste is a costly and persistent challenge in the restaurant industry.

From over-prepared dishes to expired inventory, wasted food cuts into profit margins and impacts our environment. Conducting a food waste audit helps restaurants identify inefficiencies, reduce costs, and operate more sustainably. Winton Manufacturing Compost Works provides expert guidance on implementing waste management solutions tailored to your business.

Why Food Waste Auditing Matters

Every year, millions of tons of food are wasted in commercial kitchens, translating to significant financial losses and environmental harm. By understanding where waste occurs, restaurants can adjust purchasing, preparation, and portioning practices to minimize losses. Here's

why tracking food waste is essential:

1. Financial Impact

Wasted food is wasted money. Whether it's excess inventory, unused prep ingredients, or uneaten customer meals (on average, diners leave 17% of their meals uneaten, every discarded item represents lost revenue.

2. Environmental Consequences

Food waste in landfills contributes to methane emissions, a powerful greenhouse gas. By reducing waste through better planning and composting, restaurants can minimize their environmental footprint. Food waste from restaurants makes up 15% of all the food that ends up in landfills.

3. Operational Benefits

A waste audit helps restaurants pinpoint in-

efficiencies. Are portion sizes too large? Are certain menu items frequently left uneaten? 40% of restaurant food ends up as waste. Identifying patterns allows businesses to optimize operations and improve overall efficiency.

How to Estimate Your Food Waste

Before conducting a formal audit, it's helpful to get a general sense of your restaurant's waste output. There are several ways to estimate food waste:

Visual Assessment

Start by observing waste trends. Note how much food is left on plates or discarded during prep. This simple method provides a rough estimate of problem areas.

Weight-Based Tracking

A more precise ap-

See FOOD WASTE Page 10

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Q & A



Meet Erin McCardle, Mayor of Chelan

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

For more than a decade, McCardle has been an active voice in shaping the future of Chelan. After serving on the Chelan City Council from 2010 to 2024, she stepped into the role of mayor just over a year ago.

During that time McCardle has focused on increasing transparency in local government, strengthening infrastructure, and working to ensure that both residents and visitors can continue to enjoy all that Chelan has to offer.

To keep Chelan's economy strong, McCardle plans to expand year-round tourism in thoughtful and innovative ways that allow growth without sacrificing the small town charm that everyone loves.

McCardle is focused on addressing housing affordability and managing the impact of seasonal crowds on the city's resources.

With a background in marketing and a passion for community engagement, she's working to bridge the gap between local government and the people it serves.

In this exclusive Q&A, she shares her vision for Chelan's future, the challenges the city faces, and what drives her to serve.

What makes Chelan unique, and how do you plan to leverage these qualities for the city's growth?

Lake Chelan is one of the most beautiful places in Washington – it's truly one of a kind!

The City of Chelan spans 7 square miles at the base of our 55-mile-long lake, serving as the "urban hub" for the larger Lake Chelan Valley within Chelan County. We all share a deep appreciation for nature, value strong community ties, and a love

for the rich agricultural heritage. Locally owned businesses – from Historic Downtown shops and restaurants to family farms and world-class wineries – are central to Chelan's character. With less than 5,000 full-time residents, we see anywhere from 20,000–40,000 daily during summer months, requiring infrastructure and services to support both locals and visitors. Our economy supports our nationally recognized school system, robust healthcare options, emergency services, and diverse businesses, but also presents challenges in traffic, crowding, housing stock, and affordability. By understanding our community priorities and working closely with Chelan County, we can work to see that growth preserves Chelan's charm and sense of home.

What specific sectors or industries do you believe hold the most promise for Chelan's economic future, and how do you plan to support their growth?

Chelan's economy is built on tourism, healthcare, education, and agriculture. To keep it strong, we need to think beyond just the summer months. Expanding year-round tourism with family-friendly and sports-based attractions – like an ice-skating rink (i.e. hockey

and figure skating tournaments in winter, pickleball and basketball in summer) or upgraded youth baseball, softball, and soccer fields – will bring in visitors during the slower seasons and give local families more to do close to home.

Keeping Chelan thriving isn't just about tourism – we also need to make sure the people who work here can afford to live in the region. That means tackling affordable, middle-income housing, which is a challenge we can't solve alone; regional partnerships and big-picture solutions will be key. To keep Chelan's economy strong, we will need to be open to fresh ideas, question the "it's always been done this way" mindset, and work together. With the right mix of innovation and collaboration, we can grow in a way that benefits everyone – without losing the small-town charm that makes Chelan special.

What motivated you to pursue a career in public service?

My husband and I moved to Chelan from Seattle in 2005 to raise our children in a more community-centered, outdoor-focused environment after my career at Microsoft.

I can't imagine a better place to raise a family and this is what inspired me to get involved in public service.

I want to ensure that the life our children enjoyed

remains available for future generations.

What's the most important lesson you've learned so far in your role as mayor?

I've learned that rapid growth, limited transparency, and a lack of community input has led to distrust in the decisions of local government. I know that needs to change and am committed to making the extra effort – investing in time, staff, and better technology – to improve communication and rebuild trust. After talking with many Lake Chelan residents in 2024, one thing is clear: no matter how long you've lived here, we all love the same things about our home and share the same concerns for its future. By focusing on transparency, real community engagement, and working from a foundation of common core values, we can work together to keep Chelan special while handling growth in a way that benefits all segments of our community.

What does a normal day look like as mayor?

Being mayor may be a part-time role on paper, but it rarely feels that way! My day starts early at The Barn Fitness Center, where I'm the managing partner, before heading into the office to connect with staff, community members and get through email and voicemails.

Since Chelan is a small city, making real progress requires collaboration with federal, state, and local partners. And that means meetings – lots of meetings! I'm also honored to serve as the Small Cities Representative on the Chelan Douglas Transportation Council, the Vice Chair on Link Transit Board, and the Nominating Committee for the Association of Washington Cities.

What is your favorite part of your job and why?

I get asked all the time how I like being mayor, and my honest answer is: this is my dream job! What excites me most is reaching out to previously unengaged segments of our population to get them involved in the conversation about the future of Chelan, turning that vision

into strategies and action plans, and bringing the right people together to solve problems in a way that benefits the whole community. With a background in marketing, I also love the challenge of making the complexities of government more accessible and help people understand the "what, why, how, and when" behind decisions. My hope is that by improving communication and transparency, we build more trust in the direction we are headed – and inspire more people to get involved.

What are the biggest challenges facing Chelan currently, and how do you plan to address them?

Chelan's biggest challenge is keeping the city livable for locals. And I recognize that this is not just a Chelan problem – I see it across Eastern Washington small cities and towns. When an area is in demand, it becomes more expensive. Increasing property values in North Central Washington, lack of local rental inventory,

See **MCCARDLE** Page 12

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Keeping Up with people

Stifel Financial Advisor Kristen Taylor named to Forbes' 2025 state rankings

Ward Media | Wenatchee Business Journal

Stifel Financial Corp. announced that Kristen Taylor, a managing director with nearly 45 years of financial advisory experience, has been named to Forbes' 2025 Best-in-State Women Wealth Advisors list.

Taylor, who works at Stifel's broker-dealer subsidiary Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated, was among approximately 1,700 advisors nationwide selected for the annual ranking. Advisors were researched, interviewed and ranked within their respective states.

Based in Wenatchee, Taylor serves as co-founder of both the Taylor/Franklin Investment Group and the Taylor/Bryant Investment Group. She holds both a Bachelor of Arts and an MBA from the University of Washington.

The recognition adds to Taylor's growing list of industry accolades. She was

previously named to Forbes' Best-in-State Women Wealth Advisors list from 2022 through 2024, Forbes' America's Top Women Wealth Advisors list in 2020 and 2021, Forbes' Best-in-State Wealth Advisors list from 2021 through 2024, and AdvisorHub's Advisors to Watch list from 2022 through 2024.

The rankings are based on 12-month evaluation periods and are compiled by SHOOK Research,



Kristen Taylor

LLC. According to Stifel, the rankings may not represent any individual client's experience or indicate future performance.

Mission Ridge Ski Resort names new general manager

Ward Media | Wenatchee Business Journal

Mission Ridge Ski & Board Resort announced in February the appointment of Matt Neubauer as its new General Manager, replacing Josh Jorgensen, who served in the role for 13 years.

Neubauer, who brings 16 years of ski industry

experience, will take the helm as the resort continues its planned expansion. Jorgensen will remain involved with the expansion efforts to ensure continuity in the resort's development plans.

A Washington state native, Neubauer's career

Bruce Williams steps down from Cascade Medical, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust boards

By TAYLOR CALDWELL | Ward Media Staff Reporter

After 12 years of service, Cascade Medical Board of Commissioners President and Chelan-Douglas Land Trust (CDLT) Board of Directors member Bruce Williams is stepping down.

"He lives and breathes community service, and we've been really fortunate to be the recipient of his thoughts and hard work and commitment," said Cascade Medical CEO Diane Blake.

When Williams and his wife Gro Buer moved to Leavenworth full-time in 2011, the small yet dedicated community inspired them to engage in a variety of community service efforts.



COURTESY OF BRUCE WILLIAMS

Bruce Williams (middle) with his wife Gro Buer, daughter Marina Darlington, son-in-law Mitch Darlington, and grandkids.

"There are so many people that have a lot of talent or skills or experience who are community minded, and they volunteer or support the community in so many ways," said Williams.

"It gives you a much stronger sort of sense of

community... I think it's a really great part of Leavenworth."

Over the years, Buer became involved with various organizations, such as Wenatchee River Institute,

See WILLIAMS Page 12



COURTESY OF MISSION RIDGE SKI & BOARD RESORT

Matt Neubauer, newly appointed General Manager of Mission Ridge Ski & Board Resort, enjoys outdoor time with his family.

See NEUBAUER Page 12



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Restaurant owner brings horseman's flair to new Pateros eatery

There is a new cowboy in town, and he is wasting no time stamping his brand on the former Rivers Restaurant.

By **MIKE MALTAIS** | Ward Media Staff Reporter

When new operator Adolfo Sahagun is not astride one of his show-stopping parade horses you can often find him running the show at Cowboy River Restaurant, the newest dining spot in the city known as the Gateway to Okanogan County.

The new eatery shares the building with the Chevron Station Super

Stop but offers diners its own warm and cozy atmosphere with large windows offering unobstructed south and west views of the confluence of the Columbia and Methow rivers. The American-style menu features full breakfast dishes until noon, an ample lunch choice, and full dinner selection until 8 p.m.

Sahagun has been a

business fixture in nearby Brewster just six-plus miles east on Highway 97, where he owns and operates Camperos, the Mexican Restaurant that has anchored the corner of Main and Third streets for more than two decades.

For many, Sahagun's business presence is overshadowed by his memorable appearances on magnificent dancing horses in parades and celebrations around the region.

Mounted on either his all-black Cuafriisian or white Azteca horse, Sahagun and a select group of fellow riders perform from Apple Blossom in Wenatchee to Apple Pie Jamboree in Pateros and points between and beyond.

Sahagun got his introduction to the restaurant business with his brother



Photos by MIKE MALTAIS/WARD MEDIA

Diners have unobstructed south and west views of the confluence of the Columbia and Methow rivers. In medallion: A slight modification to the existing River Restaurant sign announces its new occupant.

in the mid 1990's in Des Moines, Washington, before sinking roots in Brewster. Together with the good food and ample servings that are Sahagun's trademark, an invaluable asset is family involvement in both locations.

Daughter Mili Arteaga, 20, is among a half dozen family members who help run the businesses. With a new baby, online college courses, and work, efficiency is a requirement.

"We are really good at communicating," said Arteaga. "And we are really good at working with each other."

Together with waitress duties Arteaga functions as business secretary helping maintain paperwork and planning including the application for a liquor license the Cowboy River has in the works.

Cowboy River has been open barely three months since its Dec. 9 debut but

already the buzz on the street is promising. Patrons are commenting on favorite burgers and breakfasts that foretell return visits.

Cowboy River at 245-B Lakeshore Drive is open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week. Find them online at cowboyriver.org or call 509-923-9570.

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



Adolfo Sahagun welcomes diners to the new Cowboy River Restaurant in Pateros.



Sahagun's daughter, Mili Arteaga, serves as waitress and business secretary.



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MEMBER MESSENGER

"Driven to Promote and Protect Small Business"

MARCH 2025 ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PAGE 1

DANILLE MARTIN

CEO of BNCW



No Respect? No Problem! The Caddyshack-inspired golf bash is on this June!

The Building NCW Summer Golf Tournament on June 27, at Highlander Golf Course is more than just a day on the greens –

it's a Caddyshack-themed networking extravaganza!

Our amazing Golf Tournament wouldn't be possible without our main

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Expect laid-back, fun-

filled interactions with other Building NCW Members, all while channeling your inner Ty Webb or Al Czervik.

Whether you're making deals at the Tee Box, sharing laughs at the Clubhouse, or competing for the best Caddyshack-inspired outfit, this

event is the perfect mix of business and fun. So grab your best quirky golf gear, bring your A-game and one-liners, and get ready to network like a Bushwood Country Club VIP – watch out for gophers!

BUILDING NCW GOLF TOURNAMENT
Friday June 27th Highlander Golf Course

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HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!

MEMBER MESSENGER

“Driven to Promote and Protect Small Business”

MARCH 2025 ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PAGE 2



Building Success: Why Joining Building NCW is a Game-Changer for Your Business

For builders, local businesses, and businesses in the construction and home building industry, joining Building NCW can be a strategic move that offers numerous benefits.

Whether you're a builder, contractor, supplier, service provider, or local business becoming a Member of Building NCW can help you increase credibility, expand your network, and grow your business. Here's why you should consider joining.

Industry Credibility and Recognition

Membership with Building NCW demonstrates professionalism and commitment to industry standards.

Many homebuyers, developers, and clients prefer working with businesses affiliated with Building NCW because it signals

trustworthiness and quality workmanship. Additionally, Building NCW has strict Membership requirements, further reinforcing your credibility.

Networking and Business Growth

One of the biggest advantages of joining Building NCW is access to a vast network of industry professionals.

Members connect with builders, developers, suppliers, real estate professionals, and other key players. This opens up opportunities for partnerships, referrals, and new contracts. Local businesses supporting other local businesses is what makes us stronger together.

Education and Training

Building NCW offers quarterly seminars and ed-

ucational classes to keep Members up-to-date on the latest industry trends and best practices.

Staying informed about new technologies, sustainability practices, and safety regulations can give your business a competitive edge.

Advocacy and Association Affiliation

Building NCW works to protect the interests of their Members by advocating for favorable legislation, building codes, and policies at local, state, and national levels.

By joining, you contribute to a stronger collective voice that can influence regulations impacting your business.

Access to Exclusive Resources

Building NCW provides Members with valuable resources, such as:

- Discounted Home Show Booth(s)
- Marketing and advertising discounts and support
- Participation Opportunities in both Home Tours
- Discounts on Educational Classes
- Member-to-Member Benefits

These resources can help businesses save money, make informed decisions, and increase efficiency.

Community Involvement and Brand Exposure

Building NCW organizes fundraising and networking events like golf tournaments, an annual Home Show, and two Home Tours, providing Members with opportunities to showcase their

work and give back to the community. Participating in these initiatives boosts your business's visibility and reputation.

Joining Building NCW is a smart investment for any



local business. The benefits – ranging from increased credibility and networking opportunities to advocacy and cost savings – make it a valuable resource for professional growth.

If you want to stay competitive, expand your network, and gain industry support, becoming a Member of Building NCW is a step in the right direction.



Welcome

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 <p>Better Brix Distribution</p>	 <p>Black Diamond Construction</p>
 <p>Blu Water Homes</p>	 <p>Gesa Credit Union</p>
 <p>Hanson Homes</p>	 <p>Refine Design Architecture</p>
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Marketing Matters

AMY YALEY

COO of Ward Media



The Social Media Trap: Why Your Business Needs More Than Just Followers

Many small and medium-sized businesses believe that social media is the primary marketing tool they should focus on.

The common misconception is that having a strong follower base means their posts will be seen by most of their audience.

However, the reality is that platforms like Facebook and Instagram are designed to prioritize paid content over organic posts.

For brick-and-mortar businesses, this means that simply posting on social media isn't enough to drive foot traffic.

Instead, businesses need to invest in a broader digital marketing strategy, including programmatic geofencing, which provides measurable results.

The Decline of Organic Reach on Social Media

Social media platforms frequently update their algorithms, making it harder for businesses to reach their audience

without paid promotions. Recent data shows just how limited organic reach has become:

- **Facebook:** According to Social Insider, as of 2024, the average organic reach for a Facebook post is approximately 2.6% of a page's followers.

- **Instagram:** The average organic reach rate on Instagram is now 4.0%, better than Facebook, but still reflecting a year-over-year decrease of 18%.

This means that even if a business has 10,000 followers, and an average organic reach of 1.37%, you could expect to reach 137 people for each post.

For each 137 people, you can estimate an engagement rate of 0.2%.

Math on that works out to 0.27 engagements per post.

This mean you will receive, on average, one engagement for every four posts.

With these declining numbers, businesses that rely on organic reach alone are missing out on potential customers and spending money on

resources on creating content.

The Pay-to-Play Reality of Social Media

Social media platforms are now heavily monetized, meaning that businesses must invest in paid advertising to see significant results. Some of the challenges include:

- **Rising Costs:** The cost of Facebook and Instagram ads continues to increase, making it more expensive for small businesses to compete.

- **Unpredictable ROI:** Algorithm changes and audience behavior shifts make it difficult to guarantee ad performance.

- **Engagement doesn't equal Sales:** A post may receive likes and comments but may not necessarily translate into foot traffic or sales.

For brick-and-mortar businesses, engagement alone isn't enough (thumbs and hearts don't pay the bills).

Marketing strategies that directly impact customer visits and purchases are needed.

The Power of Programmatic Geofencing for Brick-and-Mortar Businesses

One effective alternative to traditional social media marketing is **programmatic geofencing**, a digital advertising tactic that uses location-based data history to target potential customers.

What is Geofencing?

- Uses GPS and mobile location data, from our phones, to serve ads to potential customers in a specific geographic area, such as an event or other places of business.

- Tracks foot traffic, showing how many ad viewers actually visit a store.

Why It's More Effective Than Organic Social Media?

- Targets **high-intent** customers (people who are nearby and likely to visit, people who have visited your competitor or an event).

- Provides measurable

results, tracking store visits instead of just clicks and impressions.

- Offers detailed analytics, allowing businesses to optimize their campaigns.

Instead of hoping a social media post (or four) reaches the right audience, programmatic geofencing ensures that ads are placed in front of potential customers at the right time and place.

A Smarter Marketing Strategy: Diversification is Key

Relying solely on organic social media marketing is no longer a viable strategy. Businesses should diversify their efforts by incorporating:

- **Programmatic geofencing ads** to drive in-store visits.

- **Email marketing** to engage and retain customers.

- **Print and digital advertising** to increase brand credibility.

- **Search engine marketing (SEM)** to capture high-intent searches.

Social media can be a

valuable tool, but it should not be the foundation of a business's marketing strategy.

With organic reach shrinking and paid advertising becoming increasingly costly, businesses must explore other digital tactics that provide measurable results.

Programmatic geofencing, combined with a diversified marketing approach, offers a more effective way to drive real-world traffic and sales.

The key to modern marketing success isn't about accumulating followers - it's about reaching the right customers through the right channels at the right time.

By understanding this shift and adjusting your strategy accordingly, you can build a more effective and sustainable marketing approach for your business.

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

Food waste

Continued from page 4

proach involves weighing food waste daily. Keep a scale near disposal bins and record weights over a set period to track patterns.

Cost Analysis

Convert food waste volume into dollar amounts by calculating the cost of wasted ingredients. This helps businesses see the direct financial impact of waste.

Conducting a Food Waste Audit

Once you have a general idea of waste levels, a formal audit will provide deeper insights. Follow these steps for an effective audit:

Step 1: Set a Timeframe

Choose a representative time period (such as one week) to track food waste. This will give you a clear picture of ongoing trends.

Step 2: Categorize Waste

Separate food waste into three categories:

- **Pre-Consumer Waste:** Includes spoiled ingredi-

ents, expired products, and over-prepped food.

- **Post-Consumer Waste:** Leftovers from customers' plates.

- **Packaging and Non-Food Waste:** Items like disposable utensils and wrappers that contribute to waste volume.

Step 3: Identify Key Sources

Determine where waste is most common. Is it from excessive portion sizes, improper storage, or inefficiencies in preparation? This step is crucial for developing solutions and saving money.

Step 4: Record and Analyze Data

Use waste tracking logs or digital tools to document trends. Analyze the data to identify the most significant waste contributors and prioritize areas for improvement.

Strategies to Reduce Food Waste

Once an audit identifies problem areas, restaurants can implement practical solutions to cut waste.

1. **Improve Inventory Management**

- Adopt a first-in, first-out (FIFO) system to en-



STOCK PHOTO

sure older ingredients are used first.

- Regularly check expiration dates and adjust purchasing accordingly.

2. **Adjust Portion Sizes**

- Review plate waste trends and adjust portion sizes to match customer consumption habits.

- Offer different portion sizes on the menu to reduce uneaten food. This is especially important considering that portion sizes have increased significantly over the past 30 years, often being two to eight times larger than USDA or Federal Drug Administration (FDA) standard servings.

3. **Repurpose Ingredients**

- Use food scraps creatively in soups, sauces, or staff meals.

- Donate excess food to local shelters or food banks when possible.

4. **Implement Composting Solutions**

- Instead of sending food waste to landfills, partner with Winton Manufacturing Compost Works to set up a composting system.

- Composting diverts organic waste, reduces landfill costs, and benefits local agriculture.

Long-Term Waste Reduction Practices

Reducing food waste isn't a one-time fix—it requires ongoing effort and monitoring. Here are some long-term strategies:

1. **Conduct Regular Waste Audits**

Revisit food waste track-

ing every few months to assess progress and refine waste reduction strategies.

2. **Train Staff on Waste Reduction**

Employees play a key role in minimizing waste. Provide training on proper food storage, prep techniques, and portioning.

3. **Utilize Technology for Waste Tracking**

Consider using inventory management software to track food usage and waste patterns automatically.

A well-executed food waste audit helps restaurants save money, improve efficiency, and reduce their environmental impact. Businesses can make meaningful changes by estimating waste levels, identifying problem areas, and implementing sustainable solutions.

Get Ahead of New Waste Management Regulations

In Chelan and Douglas counties, businesses producing more than 4 cubic yards of organic waste per week are now required to have an organics management plan. Businesses

most likely to be affected include:

- Grocery stores
- Hospitals and assisted living homes

- Schools

- Malls and business centers with multiple restaurants (e.g., Pybus Market, 5th Street Mall)

By 2026, all other businesses will need to have a waste management service or plan in place. This year presents a great opportunity to get ahead of the deadline and ensure compliance before civil penalties are enforced.

A well-executed food waste audit helps restaurants save money, improve efficiency, and reduce their environmental impact. Businesses can make meaningful changes by estimating waste levels, identifying problem areas, and implementing sustainable solutions.

Winton Manufacturing Compost Works is here to support your waste reduction efforts. Contact us today to learn how we can help your restaurant implement a smarter, more sustainable waste management system. (509) 763-0000

Real Estate

Top Properties Chelan County January 2025

Buyer	Seller	Sale Price	Address	City	Living Area	Year Built	Bed-rooms	Bath-rooms	Garage Area	Pool	Fire-place
DEEP RIVER INDUSTRIAL PARK LLC ETAL	DOVEX FRUIT COMPANY	5,500,000	1010 WALLA WALLA AVE	WENATCHEE	2501	1908	3	1.5	364	N	Y
MISSION RIDGE ROAD LLC	SAWYER INDUSTRIES LLC	2,495,000	UNASSIGNED	WENATCHEE	0	0			0	N	N
ASRI EAT LLC	ASRI LLC	2,338,000	8751 ICICLE RD	LEAVENWORTH	5428	1991	9	9.75	0	N	N
LORD ACRES FARM LLC	DOEDE FAMILY LLC	2,000,000	138 LORD ACRES RD	CHELAN	0	0			0	N	N
JOHNSON ROBERT K & NANCY J	ICICLE PROPERTIES LLC	1,300,000	12875 CEMETERY RD	LEAVENWORTH	1124	1964	3	1	374	N	Y
MAHLER JOHN & NATALIE	KORFIATIS KOREY R & FLICKA R	1,200,000	6 N GARFIELD AVE	WENATCHEE	2622	1938	4	3.75	0	N	Y
SCHOENWALD MICHAEL R & FRANCES	GALE LEE	1,030,000	3798 SEARLES RD	MALAGA	2250	2004	5	3.75	806	Y	Y
PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO 1	STOCKER LLC	935,000	825 S COLUMBIA ST	WENATCHEE	4600	1994			0	N	N
JONES TIMOTHY B & CARMEN	STEPHENS RALPH L & BEVERLY	930,000	114 LONG DR	CHELAN	2000	2000	5	2.75	440	N	Y
HARNISH CHAD E & MARY B	CARNEY CRAIG R & DAVIS AUBREY A	890,000	56 NOBLE LN	LAKE WENATCHEE	1595	1976	5	1.75	0	N	N
STRAHL JONATHAN A & KATIE E	MOORE STEVE & EDSTROM CINDY REV TRT	834,645	11536 RIVER BEND DR	LEAVENWORTH	1193	1975	2	2	253	N	N
HEADINGS DAVID & SNOW	GLUTH BOHAN MEGAN E & BOHAN PEGGYANN E	825,000	20785 CHIWAWA LOOP RD	LAKE WENATCHEE	1688	2022	3	2	456	N	Y
FORMO ALVIN C LIVING TRUST	A HOME DOCTOR INC	816,500	12 JUDGE WAY	MALAGA	0	0			0	N	N
MC KEE TY G ETAL	SMITH CHARLOTTE L & JEFFERY M	799,950	2105 SUNRISE CIR	WENATCHEE	1860	1975	4	4	1196	N	Y
PATTON STEVEN R & KELLY	STRUTZEL MIKE	748,000	15290 CEDAR BRAE RD	LAKE WENATCHEE	768	1930		1	0	N	Y
A & T MATHISON LLC	T & K GREEN PROPERTIES LLC	700,000	UNASSIGNED	MALAGA	0	0			0	N	N
DIDOMENICO BETH	PRUSIK INVESTMENTS LLC	675,000	117 STAFFORD ST	LEAVENWORTH	0	0			0	N	N
HOWELL CATHERINE & JASON	KOENIG BARBARA L	660,000	2127 W HIGH ST	CHELAN	1293	1962	2	2	0	N	Y
SPIRO ETHAN & RINDLAUB HANNAH	KELLER SCOTT L	645,000	2250 HALVORSON CANYON RD	WENATCHEE	1402	1971	2	1	0	N	Y
HILDEBRANDT NAOMI & MATERAZZI LUCIO	JOY LIVING TRUST	645,000	475 ALPINE PL	LEAVENWORTH	1024	0			0	N	N
SMITH REESE P	VALERI CYNTHIA	640,000	1918 HIDEAWAY PL	WENATCHEE	2164	1997	3	2	1144	N	N
ALLARD FORREST M & NANCY D	JAMESON JOSHUA D	635,000	9151 ICICLE RD	LEAVENWORTH	1450	0			0	N	N
REYNOLDS CLAYTON S & EMILY E	A & G BROTHERS CONSTRUCTION LLC	600,000	9971 SASKA WAY	ENTIAT	3294	2021	4	3	594	N	N
SCHMITTEN TYSON & HEGGE JESSICA	MAHLER JOHN & NATALIE	599,000	616 EASY ST	WENATCHEE	1376	1959	6	1.75	452	N	Y
MAIFELD KEVIN K & STEPHENSON SHAUN G	NESS STEVEN & SHEILA	596,500	535 VILLAGE DR	MANSON	1524	2018	3	2.5	540	N	N
HEATH GREGORY Q	EVENSON OLE GENERATION SKIPPING TRUST	592,700	17015 LUPINE DR	LAKE WENATCHEE	1656	2000	3	1.75	0	N	Y
VAN WEY AMY R	FISHER KAY G	588,000	608 OLYMPUS DR	WENATCHEE	1634	1995	3	2	480	N	Y
OTTO STEVENS & LAUREN	R & B INVESTMENTS UNLIMITED LLC	585,000	68 PORTER LN	PLAIN	720	2023	3	3	0	N	Y
PROUTY BRIAN & SUZANNE	COPELAND DAVID A & HEIDI M	575,000	40 ROSES LAKE LN	MANSON	0	0			0	N	N
HERMAN RHIANA & HERMAN GEORGE	BIR PHILIP & KRISTY	562,000	311 MICHAEL PL	WENATCHEE	1548	1986	6	2.5	552	N	Y
ATIA LESLIE	THREE SISTERS PROPERTIES LLC	544,000	22503 SADDLE ST	PLAIN	936	2012	2	1.5	0	N	Y
ESPINOZA LEONARDO & SANDOVAL LILIANA C	LEE CARA A	519,000	1200 9TH ST	WENATCHEE	1238	1951	4	1.75	400	N	N
SARTAIN EVAN	HARRIS DAVID A	518,305	907 WESTMORLAND DR	WENATCHEE	1390	1968	4	2.5	0	Y	Y
RUBIO CHRISTIAN & JENNIFER	SCHILE ARTHUR J & HOANG MARIE	509,500	16828 LAKEVIEW DR	LAKE WENATCHEE	988	1989	2	2	426	N	N
BRATTON ERRIN	COOPER CHASE	499,000	1712 WALNUT ST	WENATCHEE	1460	1960	3	2	520	N	Y
ROSS DAVID C & ABIGAIL M	RAPPE GERALD A	495,000	227 GROVER CT	WENATCHEE	2013	1975	3	2	576	N	Y
ROGERS JAMES N Q & ROGERS DE NAPOLI JO LYNNE	HINMAN LIVING TRUST	465,000	17684 RIVER RD	LEAVENWORTH	0	0			0	N	N
SIDERIUS RAD & JONI	WINTER RETREAT LLC	459,000	100 LAKE CHELAN SHORES DR	CHELAN	685	0			0	N	N
VILLAFUERTE MORA EMILIANO & BRITTONY	BALDWIN RICHARD L	455,000	5995 ENTIAT RIVER RD	ENTIAT	1040	2002			0	N	N
RIVERA PATRICIA	RINCON INVESTMENTS LLC	452,170	1232 MONTANA ST	WENATCHEE	1590	1952		1	0	N	N
REED AUSTIN A & ORVIK EMILEE M	CARLSON COLBY S & SAMANTHA K	447,000	2072 LASSO DR	WENATCHEE	1204	2010	3	2	528	N	N
100 E 9TH STREET LLC	SPADONI PETER A ETAL	440,000	98 E 9TH ST	WENATCHEE	3124	1952			0	N	N
INFANTE ALFARO VANESSA	RINCON INVESTMENTS LLC	439,000	1227 MONTANA ST	WENATCHEE	1506	1952	3	1	0	N	N
WATTEN FRESH LLC	RINCON INVESTMENTS LLC	439,000	1231 MONTANA ST	WENATCHEE	1590	1952	2	1	0	N	N
YAMAMOTO CAI & KEALANI	PATON NALINI	430,000	6454 PIONEER DR	CASHMERE	2403	1968	3	1.75	728	N	Y
DELLAVALLE VINCENT & JOANNE J	EIDER PROPERTIES LLC	408,000	1030 FINCH LN	WENATCHEE	0	0			0	N	N
TAYLOR ERIC M TRUST ETAL	TAYLOR MARK C & STEPHANIE R ETAL	400,000	311 BUTTE RD	CHELAN	2050	1994			0	N	N
MARTINEZ JESSIE P & CHARLOTTE R	FAGG LINDA KAYE	400,000	1107 WEDGEWOOD AVE	WENATCHEE	1126	1958	3	1.75	589	N	Y
COPELAND DAVID A & HEIDI M	NICHOLAS PAUL & SHERRIE	400,000	322 W WOODIN AVE	CHELAN	501	2010			0	N	N
2023 OLDSTATION LLC	BENOYD LLC	389,838	149 NOYD AVE	WENATCHEE	10080	2001			0	N	N
FLORES MENDEZ ALEJANDRO & FLORES NERYEM	MOLZAHN ROD E	385,000	1510 ORCHARD AVE	WENATCHEE	1788	0	4	1.5	0	N	N
BRATTON NATHAN R & BETH A	BRATTON ERRIN R	380,000	1405 WELCH AVE	WENATCHEE	1008	1959	2	1	336	N	N

Real Estate

Top Properties Chelan County January 2025

Buyer	Seller	Sale Price	Address	City	Living Area	Year Built	Bed-rooms	Bath-rooms	Garage Area	Pool	Fire-place
SOLARIO CENDEJAS GERARDO ETAL	VACA VICTORIA E	377,500	527 MALAGA AVE	WENATCHEE	1026	1920	4	3	0	N	Y
DOANE DAVID J & WENDY E	POH VENTURES LLC	360,000	102 LIBERTY LN	CASHMERE	0	0			0	N	N
MIKKELSEN CHRISTIAN D & MC DANIELS KIMBERLY	SAGE HOMES LLC	359,900	55 SALMON DR	WENATCHEE	1554	2024	3	2	720	N	Y
KNABE JOSH & KAREN	MALONE MONA	350,000	210 BOETZKES AVE	MANSON	992	1924	3	1	0	N	N

Tyler Kert

Continued from page 4

limitations to this strategy.

The IRS will not allow you to categorize donations to your church as advertising.

But when you are making a donation and receiving advertising benefits, you will benefit from a tax perspective to categorize that expense as advertising rather than charitable contributions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, cell phone expenses, business

use of home, and correctly categorizing your expenses are just a few examples of things to watch out for as you are finalizing your tax documents for 2024.

You can't go back and change the past, but you can review and make a plan for the future.

Because of the specific nature of taxation, I highly recommend reviewing your financials with a CPA to maximize your tax savings and opportunities for improvement.

Small improvements can make a significant difference in the long run.

This material is for informational purposes only and does not constitute financial, investment, or tax advice. Please consult your tax advisor or financial planner to discuss your specific circumstances before making any decisions.

Tyler Kert, a licensed financial advisor and CPA, provides financial planning and tax consulting services at Tamarack Wealth Management in Cashmere, WA.

Williams

Continued from page 6

Upper Valley MEND, and the Community Foundation of NCW, and created the Cascade and Chelan School Districts ELL (English-language learner) Scholarship.

Williams was recruited to the CDLT board and shortly after joined Cascade Medical Board of Commissioners, in addition to his involvement in other organizations.

While serving on CDLT's board, the organization completed significant conservation projects, including Spiva Butte, Chelan Coulees, the Nason Ridge campaign, and Douglas County working lands conservation easements.

Williams served a term as board president and "was a consistent advocate for organizational improvement," according to

CDLT Boardmember Cody Gillin.

"Bruce championed CDLT's engagement with regional Latine and Indigenous communities.

CDLT is grateful for his tireless efforts to conserve the natural lands and waters of North Central Washington," said Gillin in an email to Ward Media.

During his time with Cascade Medical, Williams focused on improving the board's governance and structure, such as implementing committee charters and self-evaluations, in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Drawing from previous board experience, Williams led with the mindset, 'good process sets the board free to focus on what's most important.'

"Bruce really brought all the knowledge and the desire to work collaboratively with the board

and with management to make those changes and improvements. And now, we have boards across the state who will reach out and say, 'Hey, how do you guys do this?'" said Blake.

In keeping with best practices, Williams made the decision to step down from each of the boards to allow for fresh perspectives and skillsets from new members.

However, Williams remains actively involved in local efforts, such as the Icicle Creek Watershed Council and Leavenworth Rotary.

"I look forward to seeing what the hospital and what the Land Trust do going forward. I expect they're going to continue doing great things, and it'll be fun to watch that," said Williams.

*Taylor Caldwell:
509-433-7276 or
taylor@ward.media*

McCardle

Continued from page 5

high cost of building materials and coveted land next to beautiful Lake Chelan all contribute to this issue.

At the same time, tourism – while essential to the economy – is putting a strain on our roads and public spaces, making it harder for residents to enjoy their own town.

To address these concerns, we are developing innovative policies that will address both missing middle housing as well as adding significant inventory to rental housing.

We are also honored to be participating in the Tourism Impact Study from the County and finally addressing overcrowding in our city parks. We have also recently passed a Transportation Benefit District sales tax increase to help fund transportation improvements.

What are the key goals you hope to achieve for Chelan in the near future?

Chelan is a special place, and my goal is to keep it thriving, safe, and welcoming while making sure we grow without losing

what makes it feel like home.

Right now, I'm focused on:

- Keeping our finances and staffing strong. I want to ensure we're planning for the long haul and improving how city departments work better together and improve efficiency.

- Investing in infrastructure. My big dream here is to secure funding to get started on the East Chelan Water Reservoir project which will provide clean drinking water security and increased fire protection for nearly half of our city.

- Expanding housing options in the city. I fully support new developments for market rate rentals and want to make it easier to build middle housing (duplexes, triplexes and cottage housing) so more people can afford to live here.

I am excited to be working with Chelan County on their Tourism Impact Study and have worked hard to create policies to better protect and maintain our parks.

At the end of the day, it's

about balancing growth with keeping Chelan the place we all love – somewhere people want to live, work, and raise their families.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by the incredible women leaders of North Central Washington – smart, strategic, and deeply committed to their communities. They lead with strength and heart, tackling challenges while lifting others up.

What stands out most is their collaborative spirit – they don't just lead, they mentor, support, and empower those around them.

Their ability to make bold decisions while leading with compassion has shaped my own leadership journey.

I feel lucky to be part of this powerful network, constantly learning from their wisdom, resilience, and dedication to making a real difference.

What do you like to do with your free time?

Family. Fitness. Friends! Any extra time I have is spent in a hot yoga or CrossFit class at The

Neubauer

Continued from page 6

position at Stevens Pass. His expertise centers on Food and Beverage operations.

Neubauer's connection to Wenatchee predates his professional career, having spent time there with his grandparents during his youth.

He relocated to the area in 2021 with his wife, who works in the local school district, and their two

Barn, in my garden and/or greenhouse, staying connected with our core tribe of friends (which seems harder once all our kids have gone off to college!) or driving to a Whitworth Baseball game to watch our son pitch.

Is there anything else you want our

sons.

"We are thrilled to welcome Matt to the Mission Ridge family," said Mission Ridge owner and President Larry Scrivanich.

"His extensive experience and commitment to fostering community align perfectly with our resort's mission. I look forward to working closely with him in the future."

Neubauer expressed his enthusiasm about joining Mission Ridge, stating, "This is truly a dream

come true. I'm honored to lead a resort that holds such a special place in our community and in my heart. Together, we will continue to create memorable experiences for our guests and uphold the values that make Mission Ridge unique."

Neubauer holds a degree in Mass Communications from Colorado State University Pueblo, where he played Division II soccer before entering the communications field.

readers to know?

Starting in March 2025, we will be rolling out 'Mondays With the Mayor.'

This is an opportunity for me to meet with various groups around the City to share more about our Strategic Plan and discuss topics that matter to them.

A structured schedule of

meeting dates and times will be available soon, but in the meantime, I invite anyone in the community who has a group I can meet with to reach out to mayor@cityofchelan.us to schedule a visit.

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Real Estate

Existing home sales decreased 4.9% in January

Ward Media | Wenatchee Business Journal

Existing-home sales declined 4.9% in January while marking the fourth consecutive month of year-over-year gains, according to data released by the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

Sales of previously owned homes fell to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.08 million units in January, down from December but up 2.0% compared to January 2024's rate of 4 million units.

The decline was geographically broad-based, with three major U.S. regions reporting lower sales while the Midwest remained stable.

The national median existing-home price reached \$396,900 in January, representing a 4.8% in-

crease from \$378,600 a year earlier. This marks the 19th straight month of year-over-year price appreciation across all four U.S. regions.

NAR Chief Economist Lawrence Yun pointed to persistent mortgage rates as a key factor affecting market dynamics. "Mortgage rates have refused to budge for several months despite multiple rounds of short-term interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve," said Yun. "When combined with elevated home prices, housing affordability remains a major challenge."

Housing inventory showed signs of improvement, expanding to 1.18 million units at January's end - a 3.5% increase from December and 16.8% higher than January 2024's 1.01

million units.

This translates to 3.5 months of supply at the current sales pace, up from 3.2 months in December and 3.0 months a year ago.

"More housing supply allows strongly qualified buyers to enter the market," Yun noted. "But for many consumers, both increased inventory and lower mortgage rates are necessary for them to purchase a different home or become first-time homeowners."

First-time buyers accounted for 28% of January transactions, down from December's 31% but matching January 2024's level. This follows NAR's 2024 Profile of Home Buyers and Sellers report from November, which recorded the lowest annual share of first-time buyers in the

Home prices rise in 89% of metro markets as housing wealth gap widens

Ward Media | Wenatchee Business Journal

The latest quarterly report from the National Association of REALTORS® reveals a continuing trend of home price increases across American metropolitan areas, with Washington state markets showing particularly robust growth amid national gains.

The report, released in February, shows that 201 out of 226 metro markets experienced home price increases during the fourth quarter of 2024, representing 89% of tracked areas.

This growth occurred as 30-year fixed mortgage rates fluctuated between 6.12% and 6.85%.

The national median single-family existing-home price reached \$410,100, marking a 4.8% increase from the previous year. This growth accelerates from the third quarter's 3.2% year-over-year increase.

Over a five-year span from 2019 to 2024, median home prices have surged by nearly 50%.

"Record-high home prices and the accompanying housing wealth gains are definitely good news for property owners," said NAR Chief Economist Lawrence

Yun. "However, renters who are looking to transition into homeownership face significant hurdles."

In Washington state, the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue region led price appreciation with median single-family home prices reaching \$785,300, marking a 7.3% increase from the previous year. The area's prices peaked in the second quarter at \$829,600 before moderating in the latter half of the year. The Spokane-Spokane Valley area recorded one of the state's strongest performances, with prices rising 8.1% year-over-year to \$429,800, while the Kennewick-Richland area saw more modest gains of 2.6% to \$433,800.

The Western region, which includes Washing-

ton state, saw an overall 4.0% price increase, while the Northeast led regional gains with a 10.6% rise, followed by the Midwest at 8.0%. The South, which accounted for the largest share of single-family existing-home sales at 45.1%, registered a 2.1% price appreciation.

Housing affordability showed marginal improvement in the fourth quarter. The typical monthly mortgage payment for an existing single-family home with a 20% down payment decreased to \$2,124, down 0.8% from the third quarter and 1.7% from the previous year. Families typically allocated 24.8% of their income to mortgage payments, an improvement from 25.2% in the previous quarter.

First-time buyers saw

Regional variations

January saw declining sales activity across most regions, with three of four major regions recording month-over-month decreases while the Midwest remained stable. The Midwest showed the strongest year-over-year improvement at 5.3%, while the South remained unchanged from last year. All regions experienced median price increases, with the Northeast leading at 9.5% year-over-year growth.

Northeast

Sales decreased 5.7% from December to an annual rate of 500,000, but rose 4.2% from January 2024. Median price: \$475,400, up 9.5% from last year.

Midwest

Sales held steady at an annual rate of 1 million, showing the strongest yearly gain at 5.3% above January 2024. Median price: \$290,400, up 7.2% from prior year.

South

Sales declined 6.2% from December to an annual rate of 1.83 million, unchanged from one year ago. Median price: \$356,300, up 3.5% from previous year.

West

Sales fell 7.4% to an annual rate of 750,000, but remained 1.4% above January 2024 levels. Median price: \$614,200, up 7.4% from last year.

survey's history at 24%.

Properties typically remained on the market for 41 days in January, representing longer selling times compared to both the previous month's 35 days and January 2024's 36 days.

Cash transactions made up 29% of January sales, slightly higher than December's 28% but below the 32% recorded in January 2024. Individual investors and second-home buyers,

who frequently make cash purchases, represented 17% of January home sales.

The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.85% as of February 20, according to Freddie Mac, showing a marginal decrease from 6.87% the previous week and 6.90% a year ago.

In the single-family segment, sales decreased 5.2% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.68 million units in January,

though remaining 2.2% above last year's pace. The median price for existing single-family homes rose 5.0% year-over-year to \$402,000.

Condominium and co-op sales declined 2.4% to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 400,000 units, matching the level from January 2024. The median existing condo price increased 2.9% from the previous year to \$349,500.

slight relief in affordability metrics. For a typical starter home valued at \$348,600 with a 10% down payment, the monthly mortgage payment decreased to \$2,083, representing a 0.9% reduction from the previous quarter.

"While recognizing many workers may not have the option to relocate, those who can or are willing to move may find more affordable conditions, especially given the wide variance in home prices nationwide,"

Yun noted.

The report indicates that 43.8% of markets now require a qualifying income of at least \$100,000 for a 10% down payment mortgage, up from 42.5% in the previous quarter. Only 2.2% of markets remain accessible to buyers with qualifying incomes below \$50,000.

California dominated the list of most expensive markets, claiming eight of the top ten spots, with the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara area leading at

\$1,920,000, representing a 9.7% increase from the previous year.

The data shows that while price declines occurred in some areas - 24 out of 226 markets - this represents an improvement from the third quarter when 13% of markets experienced decreases. All major Washington markets maintained positive price growth throughout the year, reflecting the region's strong economic fundamentals and sustained housing demand.



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Career & Workplace

Colleen Malmassari

Contributor for Ward Media



Washington State Employees: Interrupted Meal Breaks

A recent ruling in Washington State has sparked significant discussions about updated labor rights in our state: the *Androckitis vs. Virginia Mason Medical Center (2024)* case has established that employees are entitled to compensation for all interrupted meal breaks and may be entitled to more than one compensated break per shift.

The court held that if employees do not receive a rescheduled, uninterrupted 30-minute meal break, employers must pay employees an additional 30 minutes for each missed meal period. As this ruling takes effect, it's essential for both employees and employers to understand its implications.

The Details of the Ruling

Washington State law now mandates that non-exempt (hourly) employees receive a fully compensated 30-minute meal break if they work for any amount of time during their designated break period, and can be eligible for pay for more than one interrupted break per shift. In earlier interpretations of the meal and rest break period employees were compensated for the time worked during the break period. However, the *Androckitis* case has added a critical dimension to this regulation. In this case, the court ruled that when an employee's meal break is interrupted – they perform any kind of work – they are entitled to another 30 min-

utes of pay as a penalty in addition to the 30 minutes paid for working during their break time. This distinction is straightforward: if an employee cannot take an uninterrupted break, then that time should be compensated.

Why This Ruling Matters

As the workforce increasingly adapts to being more accessible through technology, it is more challenging to take meaningful, uninterrupted breaks. This new ruling counters that trend, reinforcing the right to a proper work-free meal period. Employers must understand that failure to comply with this ruling can expose them to legal liabilities. Employees whose rights have been violated – by not receiving paid time during interrupted meal breaks – can file complaints with the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I). This scenario can lead to investigations, legal fees, and potential fines. Not adhering to these guidelines may lead to nonexempt employees being entitled to as much as 120 minutes of compensation for a single missed 30-minute meal break. This includes 30 minutes for the time worked during the missed meal break, an additional 30 minutes as a penalty, and up to 60 minutes doubled for a willful failure to pay.

Implementation Framework

For businesses operating

in Washington State, this ruling compels immediate action to ensure compliance. Here are some steps employers should consider to adapt to this new legal requirement:

1. Review and Update Break Policies

Employers need to revise their break policies to reflect the new ruling. Clear communication regarding the entitlement to paid breaks and the procedures for meal breaks should be available in employee handbooks and training materials.

2. Train Supervisors and Managers

Implementing this ruling requires that supervisors and managers be adequately trained. They must understand the importance of respecting meal breaks and the implications of the ruling. Training should focus on the need to facilitate uninterrupted break times. Supervisors play a key role in managing workloads effectively to prevent interruptions during meal breaks.

3. Consider Waivers to Document Employee Election

Employers may implement a meal break waiver system that includes a written form documenting the employee's voluntary choice to waive their 30-minute meal break when working more than 5 consecutive hours, with both employee and supervisor signatures required and a clear pro-

cess for revocation through written notice. Management retains full authority to deny waiver requests or require employees to take their scheduled breaks based on operational needs, safety considerations, or compliance concerns, regardless of any existing waiver agreements.

Looking Forward

The recent ruling in the *Androckitis vs. Virginia Mason Medical Center* case marks a pivotal moment in Washington State by establishing that employees



STOCK PHOTO

must be compensated for all interrupted meal breaks, including all rescheduled ones. As the workforce continues to adapt to increased technological demands, ensuring that employees are taking uninterrupted breaks is more important than ever. It could be time to reassess break policies, provide adequate training

for supervisors, and ensure you're fostering a culture that prioritizes employee well-being.

Colleen Malmassari, a Society for Human Resource Management-Certified Professional, Professional in Human Resources, is the founder of Back40 Advisors LLC.

Man Shop to train new barbers through paid apprenticeships

Ward Media | Wenatchee Business Journal

The Man Shop is expanding its paid apprenticeship program to Wenatchee, marking a new approach to barber training in the region.

The program, launching in March in partnership with workforce development nonprofit Atarashii, will initially accept two apprentices who will receive paid training and mentorship from experienced barbers.

Traditional barber education can cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000 in tuition fees. The Man Shop's program aims to eliminate these costs while providing hands-on experience and direct employment opportunities.

"At The Man Shop, we

believe in investing in people," said Michael Howe, Managing Member of The Man Shop. "By expanding our paid apprentice program to Wenatchee, we're not only supporting the next wave of barbers but also strengthening the local workforce."

The apprenticeship program operates in collaboration with Atarashii, which provides structured curriculum and industry certifications. The nonprofit organization focuses on bridging the gap between education and employment through hands-on training programs.

The Man Shop, established in 2004, currently operates 13 locations across Washington, Idaho, and

Montana. The company is now accepting applications for the Wenatchee apprenticeship positions through their hiring manager.

Interested candidates are required to submit introduction emails detailing their background, previous experience, and qualifications for consideration.

The expansion represents a growing trend in alternative education models within the beauty and grooming industry, where traditional training programs often require significant upfront investment from students.

For more information about the apprenticeship program, contact Michael Howe at 509-325-5049 ext.302.



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Clearing the Clutter, One Pickup at a Time!

Federal cuts

Continued from page 1

we have vast expanses of national forest land,” Congresswoman Kim Schrier (D-District 8) told Ward Media. “The people who keep our forests safe and protected are critically important.”

A Shrinking Staff

The Wenatchee River Ranger District (WRRD), based in Leavenworth, has three field crews that oversee and maintain roughly 800 miles of trail and approximately 696,000 acres. This acreage contains large parts of three congressionally designated Wilderness areas: the Alpine Lakes Wilderness, Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, and Glacier Peak Wilderness.

In fall of 2024, the Forest Service already dealt a blow to WRRD’s size, announcing it would not hire temporary seasonal workers for the 2025 season due to a shrinking budget, cutting about 2,400 jobs agency wide.

The Leavenworth-based district lost all of its non-fire temporary seasonal employees, which accounted for three Wilderness crew members, one trail crew member, and three development and dispersed recreation crew members, according to former staff.

Now, the most recent firings, which targeted permanent seasonal employees in probationary periods, have gutted the district’s field operations.

All trail crew members were let go, which consisted of three permanent seasonal employees and a mule packer, who is responsible for 11 mules that are used to transport volunteers and heavy equipment into the backcountry. The mules were not only used by WRRD, but were also available for the Naches, Entiat, Cle Elum districts.

As of Feb. 19, only one permanent seasonal employee remained in each of the other two teams: the Wilderness crew, which lost three employees, and the development and dispersed recreation crew,

which lost one. Included in the terminations was the district’s volunteer coordinator, further complicating its workforce.

In addition to the eight field employees, the office lost its only two front desk employees that provided visitor information and services.

“Terminating your lowest paid employees who are making \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year is not the way to cut the budget. And really it’s the taxpayers who are going to see the negative consequences from these illegal terminations,” said National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) union steward Rachel Granberg.

Granberg told Ward Media that the union knows of 40 Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest employees that were included in the firings.

Probationary, but Experienced

While the terminated employees were in their first and second years of their probationary period, they had already dedicated a number of years to the district as temporary seasonal employees.

“It’s extremely common for people to have, you know, 20 years as a seasonal that just had the opportunity to either get a promotion or turn into a perm[anent employee],” said Warden.

Temporary seasonal employees are often referred to as “1039 employees,” as they are only allowed to work 1,039 hours in a season—one less hour required to be eligible for year round health benefits. It took Warden seven seasons as a temporary seasonal employee with WRRD before landing a permanent position.

Even as a temporary seasonal employee, Warden had field-specific skills such as terrain familiarity, medical and rescue capabilities, firefighting certifications, trail building knowledge, and physical strength to hike up 60 pounds of gear over 5,000 vertical feet.

“People think you can just throw any college intern in these jobs, and ev-



TAYLOR CALDWELL / WARD MEDIA

Owen Wickenheiser protests federal cuts on Presidents Day.

everything will be okay, but there’s a serious chance of injury out there on a day to day basis, so just having the people with the skill set to make those safe decisions is huge,” said Warden.

“A big slap in the face”

The district’s four Wilderness rangers were funded through the end of the 2025 season by a grant from Washington state’s Recreation Conservation Office, according to RCO grant details. Yet, three of them still received letters of termination, and for reasons Warden found perplexing.

“[The letter said] I’m being terminated, I’ve been deemed ‘not in the public interest’ or something... But it also says ‘due to performance,’ which is a big slap in the face to everybody,” said Warden.

After four seasons of positive evaluations from Warden, his direct superior, Wilderness Climbing Ranger Owen Wickenheiser received the same reason in his letter.

“All of the employees I’ve talked to who have been terminated have positive performance evaluations, but their termination documents say that they’re being let go due to poor performance,” said Granberg.

The NFFE Forest Service Council is currently gathering performance evaluations and other documents from employees for legal action, claiming that the basis of their termination was illegal.

“In order to let someone go due to poor performance, you have to first demonstrate that they indeed have poor perfor-

mance, and also give them a chance to improve. There’s an entire process that you have to go through to be able to do that. And they’ve completely bypassed all of that,” said Granberg.

Wilderness Areas at Risk

Going into the 2025 season, the former rangers fear irreversible damage will occur in the increasingly popular Wilderness areas, which are “designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition” under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

The Wilderness areas are not only intended to protect areas of solitude for recreationists, such as Pacific Crest Trail or Enchantments hikers, but they can also protect water resources for municipalities, or habitats for threatened species.

In 2024, WRRD saw nearly 175,000 visitors in its Wilderness areas, who left behind thousands of pounds of waste. Last year alone, the Wilderness rangers dug 14 wilderness toilets, buried 703 piles of human waste, removed 5,000 pounds of it via flight, and hiked out 635 pounds of trash, according to a 2024 WRRD wilderness report. However, Wickenheiser says the overall waste removed via flight actually amounts to about 10,000 pounds a year.

As a climbing ranger, Wickenheiser worked primarily in the Enchantments, located in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. Although the Enchantments only makes up 6.7 percent of the wilderness area, it receives the highest amount of traffic

in the entire district. In 2024, it saw over 120,000 visitors alone.

“We hear a lot like, ‘This trail looks excellent. I didn’t see any trash.’ But like, you step five feet off the trail and look behind a boulder, and there’s 10 piles of poop right on the creek side,” said Wickenheiser. “We find things like full abandoned coolers up there, full of broken glass...People pop holes in their rafts and decide they don’t want to carry them down.”

With the amount of trash and rogue feces piles that were found under Wickenheiser’s patrol, he only sees it getting worse in the absence of rangers. This could pose a problem for Leavenworth’s municipal water, which is sourced from the Alpine Lakes via Icicle Creek.

“The human waste issue is going to be immediate in the Enchantments. As soon as we open the gate, those toilets are going to be overflowing after a week of use,” said Warden.

A Threat to Public Safety

As more inexperienced hikers venture into the Enchantments, the Wilderness rangers have played a crucial role in public safety. Due to their backcountry presence, the rangers often become first responders, providing emergency medical assistance and coordinating extraction with the Chelan County Sheriff’s Office search and rescue (SAR) team.

“Sometimes we are the only people there, waiting for a helicopter for four hours, which can get really difficult when there is a situation like a fatality or serious injury,” said Warden.

The rangers also take preventative measures, including providing trail safety information, de-escalating potential SAR situations, and putting out campfires. Last year, Wickenheiser put out three campfires in undesignated areas, and extinguished more that were put out but still hot.

“There’s so much standing dead from beetle kill... Colchuck Lake is literally

a tinderbox... And that’s four, five miles from town [as the crow flies],” said Wickenheiser.

Although the recent cuts exempted firefighters, the loss of field employees presents a significant blow to firefighting resources. During fire seasons, the fire qualified WRRD staff were sent on fire assignments for support, working as a resource advisor, cleaning gear, managing radio operations, or managing base camp.

“There are so many critical roles to make fire camps run, and a lot of those were staffed by either [temporary] seasonals or permanent seasonals,” said Wickenheiser.

An Uncertain Future

A day after Wickenheiser was fired, the lottery opened for overnight permits in the Enchantments, even though the district no longer has the staff to enforce them. Warden also anticipates the district office will close without enough personnel, making it harder for recreationists to source information.

“People are paying for an experience that they’re not going to get. There’s also going to be just so much poaching of campsites that it’s going to be difficult to even probably find a campsite in certain times for those people that are legally going,” said Warden.

The agency has yet to announce any shutdowns to the lottery or trail closures. However, the nature of the terrain access makes it near impossible to close the area off entirely. Even if the district closed the Eight Mile Road gate, persistent recreationalists could still reach the Enchantments via Snow Lakes Trailhead.

“Maybe this might not be the year to like, do all your goals out in the [National] Forest or Parks... It’s going to be really hard, even if you are totally [practicing] ‘Leave No Trace,’ to not leave an impact in these times of no management,” said Warden.

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The Koncz

Continued from page 1

more family oriented than just with co-workers, you know, because that feels like family too. When you get customers that come in, because you know each other's name and there's that connection, I think that goes a long way," said Radach.

Over the years, Radach has witnessed the toddlers trailing their parents' shopping carts grow old enough to get ID'ed. A photo of him and his daughter's softball team hangs on the wall as one of the many Dan's-sponsored teams.

"Just having that unique relationship with your customers over time, it's special. It's really special," said manager Cindy Puckett.



Casey Honleysett makes cherry strudel for the Homefires Bakery.

For Puckett, her fondest memories have been helping an elderly woman shop for her groceries and carry them to her car, or dropping groceries off to her neighbor. Over time, Puckett's been able to pick up on who's deceased or move away, just by noticing which items aren't moving off the shelves.

"Tenureship I think really adds to just the store itself. It's a big part of what makes Dan's what it is, and part of the draw of having the community come here," said Koncz. "I haven't experienced anything like that coming from Bellingham, which is obviously a bigger town... It's really, I think, unique and special."

Dedicated staff has been a strength of the market since 1996, when Dan



Arturo Toribio sorts produce.

Firth took over and re-named it to Dan's Food Market, turning it into the local landmark it is today.

"My employees. They keep the customers coming back. They are the ones who sell the market," Firth told The Leavenworth Echo in 2011. "They are good people and greet most people by name. I would have to hand all the kudos to the employees."

The market that stands today originally opened in the 1950s as Columbia Market. But the market has shapeshifted over the years, taking on different names and housing additional businesses, such as a laundromat and dentist office. Nowadays, the different eras are concealed by the market's uneven flooring and additional walls.

"It housed a lot of different businesses back from the 60s to the 70s and then on. But it's always been a grocery store too, for as long as I can remember," said Puckett. "There's still some existing windows behind walls."

When Firth took ownership, town was slower and items didn't move off the shelves as quickly. Yet, even with Safeway down

the street, the market was still doing well, due to its emphasis on quality service.

By 2011, Firth sold the market to Eric Worthen, who built upon his predecessor's legacy. Under Worthen's leadership, the market underwent key interior improvements and saw expanded offerings, such as the deli and bakery. Yet, his focus remained on fostering a welcoming atmosphere where employees and customers felt valued.

Worthen took a hands-on approach, chatting with customers in the aisle or helping at the check stand, which made the grocer more accessible. Sports teams could ask for sponsorship, a local business owner could pitch their product, or a customer could request a specific item directly from Worthen.

When Jonathan and Kat Koncz took over in 2023, they embraced this philosophy, ensuring that Dan's remained as accessible and community-driven as ever.

"They're both out on the floor all the time, interacting with customers, interacting with employees, and just overall, it's to



Cindy Puckett, Nathan Hoffert, and Jeremy Radach pose behind the check-out counter.

me, a much fuller experience for everybody," said Radach.

Aside from minor building repairs, Dan's has remained primarily the same since 2023. The Konczs have focused on preserving the market's community-driven charm while also responding to customer requests for new products.

"It keeps improving. I mean, right now, I think we've been finding items

that people have wanted for a long time, that we've never been able to really get. It kind of opened a lot of doors, as far as items that we could bring in," said Radach.

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Photos by TAYLOR CALDWELL/WARD MEDIA



Rachel Oseguera prepares a 'Dan-Wich' in the deli of the market.

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