

SKAGIT VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CHAMBER CHAT

September 2026

Bridge Project Continues to Take a Toll on Local Businesses

As emphatically expressed by business owners at our August membership meeting, the one-way traffic restriction on the West Mount Vernon bridge continues to have a serious impact on businesses, particularly those in West Mount Vernon. Reduced traffic, difficult access, and changed driving patterns are translating into significant revenue losses for businesses and raise concerns about whether they can remain open through the duration of the project.

The Chamber has been surveying affected businesses to better understand the financial impact and how conditions are changing. Our latest report shows that this is not simply an inconvenience or traffic issue; it is an economic issue affecting local employers, employees, and the broader community. These businesses did not create this situation, yet they are forced to absorb the economic consequences of a major state transportation project.

To mitigate the damage to businesses and help them survive, we are working with state agencies, elected officials, and local leaders and organizations to find solutions.

[Read our latest Bridge Impact Survey Report here.](#)

Andy Mayer

President / CEO



GOLD



SILVER



Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce
(360) 428-8547
skagitvalleychamber.com

Calendar of Events

Shaping the Future of Business

A "Speaking of Women" Event

Presented by Katie Hayton, La Conner Inn

Wednesday, September 9

4:30 to 6:00 PM

Lang's Horse & Pony Farm

21219 Little Mountain Rd

Mount Vernon

Register here



Chamber Membership Luncheon - Candidates Forum

Wednesday, September 23

11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Mount Vernon Library Commons

208 W Kincaid St

Mount Vernon

Register here



Multi-Chamber After Hours

Thursday, September 10

4:30 to 6:00 PM

Stone Pros

401 E Sharon Ave

Burlington

Learn more

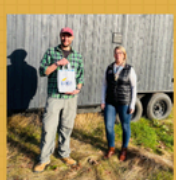


BE ONE OF THE FIRST ONES

TO INTRODUCE YOUR BUSINESS TO NEW CHAMBER MEMBERS

By providing your company
swag or special offer to be
included in every welcome bag

CONTACT:
Dalesmy@SkagitValleyChamber.com
(360) 395-2946


BRONZE LEGACY

**HOMEPLACE AT
BURLINGTON** by Coglin
SENIOR LIVING



Welcome New Members

Mel & Mia's

Rebecca Pennington

301 S 1st Street

Mount Vernon

www.melandmias.com

Mel & Mia's Tea House, Cafe & Pastries is a locally owned café and tea house offering specialty teas, coffee beverages, pastries, breakfast, lunch, desserts, and traditional tea service.



Mexico Cafe

Angela Rivas

1320 Memorial Hwy

Mount Vernon

mexico-cafe.com

Since 1965, family-run Mexico Cafe offers home-style Mexican cooking. Famous for mom's signature chile verde, enchiladas, unique Patty Tacos, Smothered Burritos, Chimichangas, and custom salsas



The Bartlett Group

Barry Bartlett

Mount Vernon

bartlettgrouppr.com

Providing senior-level talent and creative public relations resources - delivering successful outcomes for clients for more than 30 years.



DID YOU KNOW ?

As a Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce member, you have the opportunity to **showcase your brochures and business cards in our Chamber lobby**, where visitors can discover local businesses and find the products and services they need.

CALLING ALL LOCAL EXPERTS



We're looking for experts in ALL fields to contribute short educational pieces for our upcoming monthly newsletters.

THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO:

- Share your knowledge and skills
- Provide valuable information to fellow business owners
- Showcase your expertise
- Promote yourself and your business
- Get featured in front of our local business community

SUBMIT YOUR PIECE TO: DALESMY@SKAGITVALLEYCHAMBER.COM



PARTNER MEMBERS

Anderson Podiatry, Birch Equipment Co., Coastal Farm & Ranch, CPI Plumbing & Heating, Foothills Toyota, Global Credit Union, Hampton Inn & Suites, Johnson Electrical Services, Landed Gentry Homes & Communities, Mel & Mia's Law Office of Jeffrey R. Pollock, PLLC, Leslie Kasper, Travel Advisor with Be Our Guest Travel Company, Mount Vernon School District, North Coast Credit Union, PogoZone, Port of Skagit, Puget Sound Energy, Skagit Public Utility District 1, Skagit Valley Food Co-op, Skagit Regional Health, Skagit Speedway, Williams & Nulle, PLLC, CPAs, Wingate by Wyndham

Get to Know

Cocina Sabores and Catering

For Ricaelma Avila and Sandra Rosales Avila, food has always been about more than just a meal. It is about family, stories, tradition, and creating a connection to home. As the mother-and-daughter team behind Cocina Sabores and Catering, they have built a women-owned, family-owned business rooted in authentic Mexican flavors and a passion for sharing those traditions with the Skagit Valley community. Cocina Sabores and Catering began as a small catering company in 2018. After years of hard work and dedication, Ricaelma achieved a longtime dream of opening her own restaurant. Together, she and Sandra have created a welcoming space where customers are treated like family and every dish tells a story.

Between them, Ricaelma and Sandra bring more than 45 years of restaurant experience in Skagit Valley. Ricaelma has spent over 30 years in the industry, while Sandra has worked in local restaurants for nearly 15 years. Their goal has always been to share the authentic flavors of Mexico—flavors tied to cherished family experiences and cultural heritage.

Many of those stories begin in Mexico City. Ricaelma fondly remembers enjoying handmade masa quesadillas filled with mushrooms and epazote with her father, while the chilaquiles served at Cocina Sabores are inspired by the breakfasts her mother prepared for her growing up. Later, Ricaelma shared those same experiences with Sandra, enjoying fresh pambazos,

huaraches, and steaming bowls of menudo from local street vendors. Today, those traditions live on through the restaurant's menu. Customers often share that the flavors—or sabores—remind them of meals shared with loved ones.

From the beginning, Ricaelma wanted to create a restaurant that supported working people: a place where customers could find a comforting, homemade meal before heading to work or during a busy lunch break. That commitment continues today, which is why Cocina Sabores opens its doors at 6 a.m. during the week to serve breakfast and lunch to local residents and workers.

As the West Mount Vernon bridge project continues to impact local businesses, local support means more than ever. Every meal purchased helps support a family-owned business that has proudly served Skagit Valley for years. While guests are always welcome to stop by for breakfast or lunch, another great way to support Cocina Sabores is through catering. The team offers everything from traditional taco bars and meals to gourmet menu options for weddings, corporate events, team lunches, family celebrations, and special occasions of all sizes.

As Cocina Sabores and Catering continues to grow, Ricaelma, Sandra, and their family remain committed to serving others with the authentic flavors, hospitality, and traditions that inspired the business from the very beginning. For them, every meal is an opportunity to share a little piece of home.



Ricaelma Avila and Sandra Rosales Avila
Cocina Sabores and Catering
810 W Division St, Mount Vernon

Strengthening Chamber leadership across Washington State!

Our President/CEO, Andy Mayer, recently convened with colleagues from across the state for the Washington Chamber of Commerce Executives (WCCE) Board Retreat. Serving as the WCCE Board Chair, Andy is committed to fostering effective leadership and advancing the impact of chambers throughout our region.

We deeply appreciate his dedication and statewide leadership on behalf of our business community.

Thank you to the Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce for hosting an exceptional and productive session.



Andy Mayer
Washington Chamber of Commerce
Executives Board Retreat

Candidate Forum at September Membership Meeting



August 2026
Chamber Membership Luncheon

The program at our Luncheon on September 23 focuses on two Skagit County Races. Expected to participate are:

Skagit County Commissioner District 3:

Joe Burns and Keith Wagoner

Skagit County Auditor:

Mark Hulst and Jeremy Harrison-Smith

Join us to hear directly from the candidates about their priorities, perspectives, and plans for Skagit County, including the issues affecting our businesses, communities, and the county's future.

[Register here](#)

Introducing the Contractors Referral Mixer

Driven by member's feedback, the Chamber is proud to launch a new program the Contractors Referral Mixer. Running seasonally from October through March, the group will meet on the first Thursday of each month. This focused series brings together general contractors, specialty trades, sub-contractors, suppliers, and related field professionals for an open-category networking format.

What You Can Expect:

- **Mutual Referral Sharing:** Discover complementary professionals to pass qualified referrals back and forth connecting the full project lifecycle.
- **On-Site Problem Solving:** Tap into the collective brain trust to troubleshoot common job-site bottlenecks, code updates, permitting processes, and subcontractor availability.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Form lasting alliances that allow you to bid on larger commercial or residential projects with confidence.

Space is limited to keep conversations meaningful and connections real.

Advanced registration is required.

Partner with the Chamber:

- **Host a Monthly Mixer:** Showcase your facility, showroom, or workspace to a room of active builders, trades, and real estate professionals.
- **Become a Sponsor:** Gain direct visibility for your brand with prominent placement across all digital marketing, event promotions, and spoken recognition during each monthly session.

For more information, contact **Silvia Reed** | (360) 395-2944 | Silvia@SkagitValleyChamber.com

August in Pictures



**Summer Concert Series
Friends for the Ghost**



**Multi-Chamber After Hours
at NW Innovation Resource Center**



**Membership Luncheon
Investing in Our Future**



**Mel & Mia's
Ribbon Cutting**



**Durango Mexican Restaurant
Ribbon Cutting**



**Speaking of Women
Coffee Chat at Mel & Mia's**

Ambassadors

Chair - Ian Houben
Skagit Habitat for Humanity

Past Chair - Betsy Anorbe
Betsy Anorbe Real Estate

Silvia Alvarez
Triumph Teen Life Center

Clarissa De Vries
CrossCountry Mortgage, LLC

Dan Dewispelaere-Rusch
Global Credit Union

Morgan Elton
Country Financial -
The Elton Group

Alicia Evans
Guardian Northwest
Title & Escrow

Crystal King
Chinook Enterprises

Karla Nelson
U.S. Bank - Riverside Dr

Ruth Medina
All Colors Painting

Jessica Rodriguez
Children of the Valley After
School Program

Perla Vergara
Perla's Insurance Services

Thank you for Renewing your Membership

1 to 5 Year Anniversary

- Walton Injury Law

35 Year Anniversary

- Mount Vernon Carpet One Floor & Home

10 to 15 Year Anniversary

- J.C.'s Pawnshop Inc.
- Northwest Propane, LLC

Board of Directors

Chair - Lance Calloway

Associated General Contractors of Washington

Vice Chair - Danny Vera

Skagit Regional Health

Past Chair - Flora Lucatero

Children of the Valley

Treasurer - Katie Hayton

La Conner Inn

Matt Gill

Marathon Petroleum Corporation

Crystal King

Chinook Enterprises

Robert Knoll

Puget Sound Energy

Hector Leal

Law Office of Hector Leal

Andrew Miller

United Way of Skagit County

Jon Ronngren

Mount Vernon School District

Leah Scates

Skagit Valley Food Co-op

Adam Pearson

City of Mount Vernon

STAFF

Andy Mayer, President/CEO

Silvia Reed, Vice President & Foundation Director

Dalesmy Gonzalez, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Debi Sopher, Visitor Information Services

Member Announcements

Skagit Habitat for Humanity: Women Build Event on Caledonia Street in La Conner



JOIN THE BUILD!

- Help build an affordable home
- 4 hours of guided construction
- All experience levels welcome
- Safety training provided
- Up to 20 women/day
- Must be 18+
- \$35 covers shirt, hardhat, lunch

LEARN MORE OR REGISTER NOW

Friday, Sep 18
Saturday, Sep 19
Friday, Sep 25
Saturday, Sep 26

Caledonia Street
La Conner

www.SkagitHabitat.com resource@skagithabitat.com

Join Skagit Habitat for Humanity for a special Women Build Event on Caledonia Street in La Conner! Women Build brings women together to empower each other, build community, and help create safe, affordable housing for local families.

\$5 Community Meal at the Co-op, September 25



The Co-op is hosting a \$5 Community Meal on select 5% Friday dates and will donate all the \$5 meal proceeds to 5% Friday groups! Join us on Friday, September 25th from 5-7pm in the Co-op Deli for a delicious meal at a great price and feel good knowing your dollars are having an immediate impact in your community.



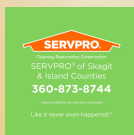
For more member announcements, visit
skagitvalleychamber.com/member-announcements

Send your announcements to
Dalesmy@SkagitValleyChamber.com



THANK YOU

TO OUR 2026 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES SPONSORS





UPCOMING EVENTS

All events are produced by the Celtic Arts Foundation and held at Littlefield Celtic Center in Mount Vernon unless otherwise noted.

**SEP
13**

THE WEEDS FAMILY CONCERT

HAILING FROM CARMEL, CALIFORNIA, THE WEEDS CONSIST OF FIDDLER JOHN WEED (MOLLY'S REVENGE/NEW STRING PROJECT) AND SONS, TYLER WEED (MANDOLIN, IRISH TENOR BANJO, GUITAR) AND EVAN WEED (CELTIC HARP, PIANO, MELODICA).

**SEP
14**

SAN MIGUEL FRASER CONCERT

SAN MIGUEL FRASER IS REDEFINING FOLK MUSIC WITH THEIR DYNAMIC FUSION OF CASTILIAN AND CELTIC TRADITIONS.

**SEP
20**

SCOTTISH FISH CONCERT

A FRESH TAKE ON TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH AND CAPE BRETON MUSIC ON FIDDLE, CELLO, AND PIANO.

**OCT
3**

STEEPLECHASE CONCERT

TRADITIONAL, TIMELESS, SONGS AND TUNES FROM IRELAND, SCOTLAND, AND BEYOND.

**OCT
25**

TANNAHILL WEAVERS CONCERT

THE TANNAHILL WEAVERS HAVE MADE AN INTERNATIONAL NAME FOR THEIR SPECIAL BRAND OF CELTIC MUSIC, BLENDING THE BEAUTY OF TRADITIONAL MELODIES WITH THE POWER OF MODERN RHYTHMS.

**NOV
4**

CAROLINE KEANE & TOM DELANY CONCERT

IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC ON CONCERTINA AND UILLEANN PIPES.

SPECIAL EVENTS & WORKSHOPS

**MONDAYS
IN SEPT**

**FIDDLE FOR THE ABSOLUTE
BEGINNER**
4-WEEK SERIES IN SEPTEMBER.

**OCT
24**

CEILI DANCING WORKSHOPS
WORKSHOPS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NEW TO IRISH CEILI (GROUP) DANCE.



**MONTHLY
EVENTS**

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCES, IRISH MUSIC SESSIONS,
SCOTTISH MUSIC SESSIONS, CAF MEMBER LIBRARY DAY,
AND MORE!



CHECK OUT WEBSITE FOR UPCOMING DATES AND TIMES.



the Washington Shakespearean Festival

—SKAGIT— presents the —VALLEY—

HALLOWEEN NAISANCE BALL

LIMITED TICKETS AVAILABLE

SKAGIT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

20 26

MASQUERADE
ATTIRE
RECOMMENDED

6–10 PM
OCT. 31ST



PURCHASE TICKETS AT



[BIT.LY/4X2JOGU](https://bit.ly/4x2jogu)



KATIE HAYTON
LA CONNER INN

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS

A "SPEAKING OF WOMEN" EVENT

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 9

4:30 to 6:00 PM

Lang's Horse & Pony Farm

21219 Little Mountain Rd, Mount Vernon



REGISTRATION

Chamber Members:	\$ 150.00
Non members:	\$ 200.00
Student Fee	\$ 75.00



Registration includes all Speaking of Women events:

- **Speaking of Women Coffee Chat**
Wednesday October 14 - 9:00 to 10:00 AM
Mel & Mia's
320 S 1st St, Mount Vernon
- **Speaking of Women Coffee Chat**
Wednesday November 18 - 9:00 to 10:00 AM
Skagit Table
225 S 1st St, Mount Vernon





CONTRACTORS REFERRAL MIXER

KICKOFF MEETING



OCTOBER 1, 2026
4:30 - 6:00 PM

Monthly meetings: 1st Thursday @ 4:30 PM
at rotating locations. October thru March

About Our Referral Group!

Join fellow contractors and industry professionals for an open-category group designed to share referrals, solve job-site challenges, and grow your business together. Space is limited—**advance registration required.**

Sponsor or Host

Consider hosting or sponsoring an upcoming Contractors Referral Mixer and gain valuable exposure while helping create opportunities for local businesses to connect and grow.

Benefits

- Build strong business relationships ◀
- Share best practices ◀
- Generate referrals ◀
- Support and promote fellow local businesses ◀

For information

Silvia Reed

360-395-2944 | 360-305-0895

Silvia@SkagitValleyChamber.com

Business Events

Sponsorship Opportunities



Gain premium visibility and position your business at the forefront of our community's growth.

■ Events



Membership Luncheon
(Monthly)



Morning Biz Buzz
(July - October)



Referral Program Social
(October)



For information



(360) 395-2944



Silvia@SkagitValleyChamber.com

Visit Our Website



www.SkagitValleyChamber.com