

CHAMBER CHAT

MAY 2026

Oh, What a Night!

Our recent Award Dinner celebrated the achievements of our members, honorees whose exceptional contributions stand out. They all demonstrate how business success and community involvement support each other. As does our sponsor for the evening, Draper Valley Farms, whose support we greatly appreciate.

Ambassador of the Year, Silvia Alvarez of Triumph Teen Life Center, is the definition of a Chamber connector. Her energy and authenticity show up everywhere. Silvia doesn't just participate; she builds relationships, mentors others, and creates a genuine sense of belonging that strengthens the entire business community.

The **Resilience Award** went to Tri Dee Arts. Summer and Travis Houlihan didn't just keep a business alive; they reinvented it. By transforming a traditional retail shop into a vibrant, community-centered "third place," they outmaneuvered big-box competition and navigated the pandemic with creativity and determination.

Rising Star, All Colors Painting LLC, is setting a new bar quickly. In just a few years, they've built a multi-county presence known for high-end craftsmanship, innovative techniques, and strong community ties—clear signals of a business built for long-term success.

Making a Difference honoree Community Action of Skagit County continues to lead with purpose, bringing together partners across sectors to tackle poverty and expand opportunity. Their impact is both immediate and lasting.

Business Person of the Year, Mark Hagen of Express Employment Professionals, has helped generate thousands of jobs while building a culture of integrity, longevity, and service that stands out in the market. His leadership in local organizations is exemplary.

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SKAGIT VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

LEGACY MEMBERS

GOLD



SILVER



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

Calendar of Events

Speaking of Women Coffee Chat

Wednesday, May 13

9 a.m.

Golden Hour Café

127 E Fairhaven Ave

Burlington

[Register here](#)



Skagit Chamber Alliance Multi-Chamber After Hours at Foss Heating & Cooling

Thursday, May 14

4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

4101 Old Hwy 99 S Rd

Mount Vernon

Business E.D.G.E. - Getting Employees to Take Ownership of Their Work

Tuesday, May 19

2 p.m.

Via Zoom

[Register here](#)

Latino Business Leaders

Wednesday, May 20

6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Skagit Valley College



Chamber Membership Luncheon - Skagit County Housing Update

Wednesday, May 27

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

Mount Vernon Library Commons

208 W Kincaid St

Mount Vernon

[Register here](#)

Oh, What a Night!

Continued from page 1.

Our **Legacy Award** recipient, Robert Desmarais of Sound Cedar Lumber, represents decades of steady leadership, growth, and deep community investment—truly part of the backbone of our regional economy. He has embraced the community, and the community has embraced him.

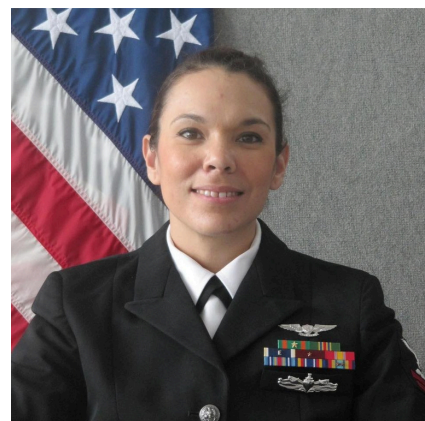
And **Business of the Year**, Global Credit Union, continues to scale its impact—combining growth, financial education, and meaningful community investment across Washington. Their outstanding local leadership is the key to their success.

These honorees reflect what's possible when success is paired with purpose, examples for us all.

Andrew T. Mayer
President/CEO

GET TO KNOW Marla & Company

Marla began her military career in Norfolk, Virginia, Feb 2006, aboard the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69), where she served five years and completed three deployments, including support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. She later received orders to NAS Pensacola, where she spent two years earning her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration while welcoming her first child. Her final duty station was NAS Whidbey Island. As a growing mother of two, with one on the way, Marla made the decision to conclude her military service and focus on raising her family.



Throughout her Navy career, Marla earned four Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals, was recognized as Sailor of the Quarter, and achieved both Air and Surface Warfare qualifications. Among her most memorable experiences was participating in a swim call off the “Mighty Ike” on her birthday, March 26, 2010—a moment she still cherishes today.

“The Navy was one of the most challenging and rewarding chapters of my life,” said Marla. “The camaraderie, the discipline, and the opportunity to serve alongside incredible people shaped who I am today.”

A longtime member of the Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce, Marla has built her real estate business around the same principles that guided her military career: commitment, integrity, and service to others.

Today, she serves as a local affiliate Realtor with Homes for Heroes, a national program established after 9/11 that provides meaningful savings to military members, veterans, first responders, healthcare professionals, and educators when buying or selling a home.

“Service doesn’t stop when you take off the uniform,” Marla shared. “I’ve always felt a responsibility to give back to the people who show up for our communities every day. They are the backbone of everything we do, and they deserve to be recognized in real, tangible ways.”

That commitment is especially visible during the first week of May through Keller Williams’ “May Maynia” initiative. Each year, Marla adds her own personal touch by hand-delivering appreciation gifts and program information to local educators and first responders throughout Skagit Valley.

“It’s a small gesture, but it’s personal,” she added. “I want people to feel seen and appreciated—not just acknowledged online, but genuinely valued for the work they do in our communities.”

To date, Marla has given back nearly \$600,000 of her commissions to hero clients through the Homes for Heroes program.

Beyond her real estate work, Marla remains deeply involved in the community. She has co-emceed the annual Veterans Day Parade in Burlington, founded Skagit Social—an online platform supporting local businesses and community connection—hosts an annual Easter egg hunt for the Skagit Highlands neighborhood, and previously organized the Skagit Bigfoot Fest, a multi-year music festival that contributed to local economic activity and community engagement.

A mother of three and a full-time real estate professional, Marla continues to balance business and service with a clear mission: building stronger communities by supporting the people who serve them.

[Click here for more information about Marla & Company.](#)

Welcome New Members

C&W Fencing

Bri Walker
(360) 562-0201
17691 SR-536
Mount Vernon
www.candwfencing.com



We are a family-owned business founded by Tanner Walker and Matthew Caughron. Raised on Texas farms and ranches, fence building has been part of our life from the start.

Creative-Inspiration

Tammy Hill
(520) 470-7775
15955 McLean Rd
Mount Vernon
www.Creative-Inspiration.com



At Creative-Inspiration, we bring your ideas to life with customized apparel, gifts, and promotional products for any occasion. From tees, hoodies, and tote bags to tumblers and wood décor, every piece is designed with your unique vision in mind.

English for Life LLC

Jon Leachtenauer
(253) 981-2244
Bellingham
www.englishforlifetraining.com

English for Life provides customized, onsite English training that helps employees communicate clearly, work safely, and perform with confidence.

State Farm - Lorena Mendez

Lorena Mendez
(360) 770-8036
820 Township St
Sedro-Woolley
www.agentmendez.com



Everyone loves saving money. Customize a coverage plan that helps protect what's important to you – family, things and your bottom line. From safe driving rewards, bundling options and discounts*, Lorena Mendez can help you create a solution that's right for you.

Thank you Renewing Members

35+ Years

Woodcraft Wood Floors, Inc

25+ Years

Heritage Bank

15+ Years

Skagit Powder Coating

10+ Years

BrandQuery LLC
The Grand Willow Inn Event Venue and B & B

5+ Years

Chinn GYN, LLC
Eden Home Health
Marathon Petroleum Corporation
Sherwood Community Services

Less than 5 Years

Bloodworks Northwest
Immaculate Conception Regional School
Law Office of Hector Leal
LeMaster Graphics
Little Mountain Books & Botanica
Middle Way Acupuncture Institute
Rotary Club of Mount Vernon
Sabores Catering
Skagit Speedway

Riverwalk Summer Concert Series

Dust off your lawn chairs, put on your dancing shoes and come to Historic Downtown Mount Vernon for some memorable summer evenings! The Riverwalk Summer Concert Series is free thanks to community sponsors. From foot-tapping blues, to old-time rock and roll music, the Riverwalk Concerts are a great way to wind down your week or jump-start a fun-filled weekend. For information on sponsoring the series contact Jeremy Kindlund, Operations Director at (360) 428-8547 or Jeremy@SkagitValleyChamber.com. See the sponsorship details on pages 8/9 and reserve your spot today.



- 7/9/2026 Pacific Twang
- 7/16/2026 EDEN
- 7/23/2026 The ABBAgraphs
- 7/30/2026 Bluesfish
- 8/6/2026 Friends for the Ghost
- 8/13/2026 Baby Cakes
- 8/20/2026 The Chris Eger Band
- 8/27/2026 The Atlantics

Annual Award Winners



2026 ANNUAL AWARDS
Presented by Draper Valley Farms

THANK YOU



RISING STAR: All Colors Painting LLC

LEGACY AWARD: Robert Desmarais, Sound Cedar Lumber

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Community Action of Skagit County

BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR: Mark Hagen, Express Employment Professionals

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR : Global Credit Union

RESILIENCE AWARD: Tri Dee Arts

AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR: Silvia Alvarez, Triumph Teen Life Center

Partner Members

Anderson Podiatry, Aquarius Collective, Birch Equipment Co., Coastal Farm & Ranch, CPI Plumbing & Heating, Foothills Toyota, Global Credit Union, Haggen Food & Pharmacy, Hampton Inn & Suites, Kern Funeral Home, Law Office of Jeffrey R. Pollock, PLLC, Loving Farms, Mount Vernon School District, North Coast Credit Union, PogoZone, Port of Skagit, Puget Sound Energy, Skagit Public Utility District 1, Skagit Regional Health, Skagit Speedway, Skagit Valley Food Co-op, WECU, Williams & Nulle, PLLC, CPAs, Wingate by Wyndham

Board of Directors

Chair - Lance Calloway

Associated General Contractors of Washington

Past Chair - Flora Lucatero

Children of the Valley

Treasurer - Tammy Reim-Ledbetter

Global Credit Union

Matt Gill

Marathon Petroleum Corporation

Katie Hayton

La Conner Inn

Crystal King

Chinook Enterprises

Robert Knoll

Puget Sound Energy

Andrew Miller

United Way of Skagit County

Jon Ronngren

Mount Vernon School District

Leah Scates

Skagit Valley Food Co-op

Steve Sexton

City of Mount Vernon

Danny Vera

Skagit Regional Health

STAFF

Andy Mayer President/CEO

Silvia Reed Business Development and Foundation Director

Jeremy Kindlund Operations Director

Bob Johnson & Julie Newkirk

Visitor Information Services

Member Announcements

Skagit YMCA Awarded Rural Community Grant for Burlington Early Learning Center Project



The Skagit Valley Family YMCA is pleased to announce it has been awarded \$2,500 through AgWest Farm Credit's Rural Community Grant program to support much needed fencing and landscaping repair at the Skagit Valley Family YMCA's Burlington Early Learning Center (ELC).

Perla's Insurance Customer Appreciation Day

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

Send your announcements to Jeremy@SkagitValleyChamber.com

April in Pictures



**Latino Business Leaders
Spring Social**



**Speaking of Women
Coffee Chat**



**Multi-Chamber After Hours
at The La Conner Inn**



**Biz Buzz
Networking Luncheon**



**Ribbon Cutting at
Dream Hot Tubs and Spas**



**Ribbon Cutting for
Way Maker Personal Care
Transportation**

Ambassadors

- Chair - Ian Houben**
Skagit Habitat for Humanity
- 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

BRONZE LEGACY



**Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce Presents
RIVERWALK SUMMER CONCERT SERIES
July 9 through August 27, 2026
Thursdays, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.**



The Mount Vernon Riverwalk Concert Series consists of eight weekly concerts on the Mount Vernon Riverwalk Plaza. The concerts feature an eclectic lineup of outstanding bands from the area.

The concerts offer a free, family-friendly, fun atmosphere to encourage visitors and entertain residents. The venue is perfectly situated by the river and adjacent to downtown retail and restaurants. Based on last year's attendance, we expect to welcome 6,000+ people into the downtown area during the entire series.

2026 Lineup - 7/9 - Pacific Twang, 7/16 - EDEN, 7/23 The ABBAgraphs, 7/30 - Bluesfish, 8/6 - Friends for the Ghost, 8/13 - Baby Cakes, 8/20 - The Chris Eger Band, 8/27 - The Atlantics

The series will be heavily promoted through diverse media, including social media, radio, print, press releases, chamber website, member communications, and more. As a sponsor, you can expect to benefit from unprecedented brand exposure and stand above the competition through association with a much-loved, community-oriented event series.

Please join and support us in offering another wonderful community experience.

For more information on sponsorships, please contact Jeremy Kindlund at the Skagit Valley Chamber of Commerce, 360-428-8547 or Jeremy@SkagitValleyChamber.com.

2026 Riverwalk Summer Concert Series Sponsorship Opportunities

Presenting Sponsor: **Not Available**

Opportunity to speak or be recognized at every concert

Magnified and well-positioned company logo on poster

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including:

- Logo on Skagit Valley Herald display ads

- Branded advertising on SkagitValleyChamber.com

- Social Media Promotion on Chamber channels

- Mention in all press releases

Company Banner displayed on Riverwalk throughout series

Display table at all series concerts

Royal Sponsor: **\$2, 500 - limited**

Opportunity to speak or be recognized at three concerts

Company logo prominently displayed on promotional poster

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including:

- Logo on Skagit Valley Herald display ad

- Branded advertising on SkagitValleyChamber.com

- Social Media Promotion on Chamber channels

Company Banner displayed on Riverwalk throughout series

Display table at three concerts

Major Sponsor: **\$1,250**

Opportunity to speak or be recognized at one concert

Company logo on poster

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including:

- Logo on Skagit Valley Herald display ads

- Branded advertising on SkagitValleyChamber.com

- Social Media Promotion on Chamber channels

Company Banner displayed on Riverwalk throughout series

Display table at one concert

Supporting Sponsor: **\$550**

Company logo displayed on promotional poster

Company Banner displayed on Riverwalk throughout series

Company name on advertising, marketing materials, and social media including:

- SV Chamber website

- Chamber Facebook