

★★ 2021 ★★
**CLARK
COUNTY
ECONOMIC
FORECAST**

**DIS
RUPT
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★★ 2021 ★★ CLARK COUNTY ECONOMIC FORECAST DISRUPTION

Join our webcast live

VIRTUAL FORUM

Tuesday, February 2 @ 10 – 11 a.m.

The Columbian's 2021 Economic Forecast Virtual Forum will tackle the most disruptive year we can imagine. How will our economy recover from the pandemic? What will be the lasting effects on our local economy?

In years past, this has been the largest in-person economic forecast event in the Southwest Washington/Portland region, with 500 business and community leaders in attendance. Like many other in-person events, we are changing to a safe, complimentary virtual forum. The Columbian is operating in its 130th year, and we are proud to be adapting to a changing media landscape.

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PRESENTERS



Will Campbell
Moderator,
Columbian Assistant Metro Editor



Scott Bailey
Regional Economist,
Washington State
Employment Security Department



Pauline Fong
Program Director,
MJ Murdock Charitable Trust



Chris Green
Assistant Director,
Office of Economic Development
and Competitiveness,
Wash. State Dept. of Commerce

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After 2020 disruption, businesses finding new ways to work in 2021

By **SUSAN PARRISH**
for **The Columbian**

Main Street and our economy were ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying shutdown in 2020. In this Economic Forecast special section, business experts share what they learned while navigating through the disruption that was 2020. Below are highlights.

JENNIFER BAKER,
President, Columbia River
Economic Development Council:

“Here’s a question we’re all grappling with in 2021: How do we address myriad disruptions catalyzed or exacerbated by COVID-19?”

“Head-on, of course—and with a balance of near-term and long-range thinking on economic vitality. The presence of pandemic crosswinds invites even more alignment between community members, businesses, business-focused nonprofit organizations and public officials. The crucial task at hand: To recognize our shared vision for Clark County to be one of the most healthy, inclusive, amenity-rich communities in the country.”

CHRIS GREEN,
Assistant Director, Office of Economic
Development and Competitiveness,
Washington State Department of Commerce:

“Washington’s Department of Commerce is taking a two-pronged approach during the pandemic. First, we are focusing on relief for those businesses and communities most impacted by the pandemic. Second, Commerce is staying focused on the future economy, industrial transition and creating more long term, living wage jobs in high tech and advanced manufacturing.”

TIM SCHAUER,
MacKay Sposito, Board Chair
& Director of Land Development:

“Realistically, 2020 likely will be a force of disruptive change in our windshield for many miles (and years) ahead. If we want to thrive in the post-pandemic economy, we must adapt to a new normal that will be difficult to predict or plan for. There is no past road map. As we navigated the pandemic challenges, here’s

what I think we have learned: We are resilient and adaptable. The ways that people, government and our businesses have pivoted are nothing short of extraordinary.”

JULIANNA MARLER,
CEO, Port of Vancouver USA:

“Leadership at the Port of Vancouver has for many years focused on diversity of cargo as a strategy to provide stability during fluctuating market conditions. This positioned us to be ready for the realities of 2020. We specialize in bulk and break-bulk cargoes—think grains, soybeans, steel slabs and wind blades—items that don’t easily fit into cargo containers. Our expertise in moving these commodities allowed us to prosper when other ports struggled.”

JON HERSEN,
President, Legacy Salmon Creek
Medical Center:

“A positive development from COVID is increased coordination and collaboration in Clark County’s healthcare and public health community ... This collaboration will serve all of us in Clark County—today and tomorrow.”

HENRY SCHUCK,
ZoomInfo Founder and CEO:

“Despite what we’ve accomplished so far, I wake up every day focused on things we don’t do well enough, and on places in the business that are not best-in-class. These are different things today than they were six months ago or six months before that. If they remain beyond that, then I’ll know we’re not evolving, and we won’t find disruption.”

SHERRI MCMILLAN,
Founder and CEO,
NW Personal Training and WHY Racing:

“2020 was an excruciating year for small businesses. COVID is the biggest threat I have experienced in my 21 years as a business owner... In order to stay relevant to our clients through months of closures, we had to reinvent ourselves by offering virtual training and events.”

DR. KARIN EDWARDS,
President, Clark College:

“Launching on a new path, we moved all student services and more than 2,000

classes online so that our students could remain engaged and on track in their educational pursuits... I am inspired by the stories of our students’ remarkable strength and tenacity. Despite so many difficulties, our students are completing their studies at kitchen tables, often while helping their children with their own online classes. These resilient students are our community’s future. If you know them as I do, you will share my boundless hope for our future.”

PAULINE FONG,
Program Director,
M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust:

“Here are the harsh realities people in our communities are facing: Thousands of children and families need help; women and people of color are impacted disproportionately, and we are seeing a

surge of mental health issues across many demographics.

“In times such as these, a Chinese proverb rings true: ‘When the winds of change blow, some people build walls and others build windmills.’ Every day we see examples of our nonprofit community rallying to build windmills.”

SCOTT BAILEY,
Regional Economist, Washington
Employment Security Department:

“I believe the local labor market will see only a modest improvement at best (in 2021)... Some perspective: an employment growth rate of 3 percent would be a pretty good year... We’d have to see an 8 percent growth rate to get us back to pre-COVID employment levels—a rate which has never been attained in Clark County.”

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Post Pandemic Economic Disruption: Don't Look Away



Tim Schauer

MacKay Sposito
Board Chair & Director
of Land Development

By **TIM SCHAUER**

Describing 2020 as “disruptive” is an understatement of epic proportions. Let’s put 2020 in the rear-view mirror! However, just assuming that in 2021 everything will return to normal post-pandemic is a risky, and perhaps perilous posture for any business. Realistically, 2020 likely will be a force of disruptive change in our windshield for

many miles (and years) ahead.

If we want to thrive in the post-pandemic economy, we must adapt to a new normal that will be difficult to predict or plan for. There is no past road map. As we navigated the pandemic challenges, here’s what I think we have learned: We are resilient and adaptable. The ways that people, government and our businesses have pivoted are nothing short of extraordinary. Yes, these adaptations have been painful. Even unforgiving. We have been directed by some authority to change how or if we do our business. Having change forced upon us is hard—and even unfair. In business, we don’t have the option to be idealistic. Rather, we deal with the reality we face. I am hopeful you thrive in the years that follow this pandemic.

I believe three key changes could fundamentally disrupt our post-pandemic economy:

- 1) Some will work from home (WFH) permanently
- 2) Online shopping and forgoing brick-and-mortar stores permanently for some
- 3) New levels of social interactions including entertainment, hospitality, dining and travel

Before the pandemic, these factors slowly were developing disruptive societal and economic changes, but COVID-19 accelerated these waves of change in mid-March 2020—and we’ve been adapting at breakneck speed ever since. Slow change can be uncomfortable, but rapid change as we’ve experienced for nearly a year can be excruciating.

I offer that these changes could upend the historically reliable foundations of our society—including how we spend our time and money. If even a portion of our workforce can work from home successfully, they no longer need to live as close to their jobs. Going forward, many can choose where they live, which will influence where they build their lives (not their careers) and how and where they spend their money. For instance, post-pandemic, many consumers may forgo resuming returning to shopping inside grocery stores because they’ve discovered the convenience of curbside pickup or home delivery.

In the past, transportation and therefore geography,



has been a determining factor in what jobs people take and where they live. With a portion of people working from home permanently, traffic will have a smaller influence on their lives. Building and maintaining roads to manage traffic could no longer be our most significant infrastructure concern. People who choose to continue working from home and going to school remotely could drive some very attractive outcomes: Less time in a car, less reliance on a car, lower expenses, reduced fossil fuel consumption and increased free time. All these disruptions will change our economy. Change can be opportunity if you acknowledge it.

Expanding robust broadband access to every corner of our communities will be the foundational infrastructure of post-pandemic economic development. During the shutdown, the internet has been a lifeline connecting us remotely to our work, school and families. Moving forward, access to high-speed internet and cellular service will become the single most essential utility. The government’s role in broadband business also is likely to evolve as we embrace this fact: An equal opportunity education is grounded in equal access to the internet. Land development in Washington is governed by the Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires governments to plan for adequate infrastructure for developing areas. Moving forward, broadband internet access will be another essential, along with sewer, water,

stormwater and roads.

Social activities also will manifest differently in the post-pandemic economy. As we know, working from home these many months has been isolating. Most of us miss gathering with friends and family at a restaurant, brewery, concert, movie or ballgame. Aren’t we all planning the first vacation we’ll take when it’s safe to travel again? We are anticipating returning to our pre-pandemic social interactions. Sadly, entertainment, hospitality and travel have been pounded during the pandemic. Likely we will find fewer surviving places to enjoy ourselves as these businesses try to rebuild. Initially, increased demand and reduced capacity likely will drive prices up. However, once we have passed the recovery phase, those who work from home will experience increased free time and reduced expenses. I believe those who can work from home in the future will spend more time and money socially than they did pre-pandemic. They will need it and they will be able to afford it.

Even during this challenging global pandemic, I remain an optimist. Yes, I believe we can adapt and thrive in our post-pandemic lives. But I’m also enough of a realist to know the disruption is not going away. We must take a hard look at how our businesses can adapt successfully for our customers and our employees as we all continue to pivot and adapt in the new economy.

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COVID Challenges, Riverview Adapted and Delivered

By **Kim Capeloto,**
Riverview Community Bank
Executive Vice President

2020. What a year! Disruptive? Definitely. The truth is, while 2020 proved to be an incredibly challenging time, I am extremely proud of the way our staff has adapted to ever-changing rules, regulations, and stipulations.

When COVID hit, our IT team dove in headfirst and within days, mobilized over 100 employees to work from home—no small task for a financial institution that manages highly confidential information. We also immediately invested in and implemented

video conferencing so we could continue to meet with each other and clients safely and efficiently.

To protect the spread and comply with local orders, we shut down our lobbies but kept our drive-thrus open to serve our clients. We worked with our vendors to secure PPE supplies while the entire world was doing the same. It was tough in the beginning. Until supplies became more readily available, we were making our own sanitizer and cleaning solutions, bottling it up and distributing it across the company.

When the CARES Act passed that put the Paycheck

Protection Program in place, we immediately started making preparations, recruiting staff from departments far and wide to assist. Once we started taking applications, the days became longer. Weekends disappeared. We were all-in because we knew the money wouldn't last and our clients needed it to survive. By the end of the first round, we had processed nearly 800 paycheck protection loans to the tune of \$116 million—all of which was pumped back into our local economy and helped save over 12,000 local jobs. We invested in software to assist clients in applying for forgiveness

of their PPP loans, which greatly increased the workflow efficiency. It's not over. While we are still processing forgiveness applications, another round of PPP has been launched and we are working diligently to assist our clients as they navigate the process.

In the midst of all this, we moved our Camas branch to a brand-new building, only to have it flood during heavy rains just weeks after opening the doors. Remodeling a new building can take the wind out of your sails. We also opened a new branch in Cascade Park off Mill Plain, relocating all our staff from our

former 162nd branch.

2020? Disruptive to say the least! But we are still here, ready for any challenges that come our way. Ready to pull our bootstraps up again...and again, to do whatever it takes to keep our community strong and help it thrive. Disruptions are merely hurdles along the track of life, and Riverview Community Bank is just warming up for the race.

I want to thank you for your support and encourage you to look to Riverview when you need something. Help us continue to make our community a better and stronger place.



When the Winds Blow



Pauline Fong
Program Director,
M.J. Murdock
Charitable Trust

By **PAULINE FONG**

I grew up in Taiwan where jet streams led to beautiful weather, delicious seafood, abundant fruit and vegetables, but also triggered typhoons that disrupted everything in their path. I remember one incident where 100 mph winds hurled

broken billboard pieces through our home's windows. In many ways, 2020 has felt like a series of typhoons—between the wildfires, political divisiveness, continued experiences of injustice that sparked protests and increased feelings of division, and COVID-19—leaving no aspect of life untouched.

Nonprofits continue to face the impact of these winds. The need for their services has skyrocketed:

- **Demand has doubled and tripled for nonprofits serving the houseless and low-income individuals.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 12.4 million (1 in 6 adult renters), are behind on payments. According to the National Low-income Housing Coalition, 6 million households face potential eviction as 2021 begins. This does not account for those who already lost their homes or those at risk of financial collapse should they be exposed to COVID-19 and be forced to quarantine or have unexpected medical expenses.

- **Food insecurity is rampant.** Food banks report a 40-percent or more increase in clients. Researchers at Northwestern University found that food insecurity has more than doubled nationwide among households with children, from more than 5 million children in 2019, to more than 10 million children in 2020. Local nonprofits and faith-based groups are stepping up to serve this need by collecting and distributing food.

- **While some help is out there (food banks, unemployment funds and other government aid), not everyone has access to these resources.** Language, literacy and technology barriers persist—and prevent people from accessing available resources. Imagine having no internet access. How would you know what resources are available or what forms you need to fill out? What if you can't read or understand the language on forms? Federally funded relief programs like SNAP (also known as food stamps) provided an average of \$129 per month in 2019 (per person in need); however, it limits eligibility to U.S. citizens and documented non-citizens who have lived in the U.S. for at least 5 years (with a few exceptions). This prevents many from accessing food. If you are a documented immigrant or refugee who has been in the U.S.

for fewer than 5 years, or if you are in a mixed household of one documented parent and one undocumented, you cannot access this assistance to feed your children. Nonprofits share stories of immigrants who are afraid

to seek help from food banks because they fear drawing attention—even if they are documented.

Here are the harsh realities people in our communities are facing: Thousands of children and families need help; women and people of color are impacted disproportionately, and we are seeing a surge of mental health issues across many demographics.

In times such as these, a Chinese proverb rings true: “When the winds of change blow, some people build walls and others build windmills.” Every day we see examples of our nonprofit community rallying to build windmills:

- With social distancing making in-person therapy difficult, many mental health providers quickly converted individual and group therapy sessions to virtual.
- Blending art with technology, arts organizations are offering virtual tours, livestreaming, and integrating audience participation in their performances.
- Nonprofit staff serving low-income clients are using cell phones to serve those with little access to technology. For example, staff at one local health clinic phoned thousands of clients. Speaking in five languages, these clinic workers explained why people were stockpiling toilet paper and outlined basic COVID-19 safety practices, such as washing hands and wearing a mask.
- To help students conduct online learning in homes lacking internet access or enough devices for each child, nonprofits sought funds to purchase tablets and hotspot access. They shifted staff time to help qualifying families access internet assistance and provided tutors to help students bridge learning gaps.

As 2021 begins, we are grateful that many philanthropic funders and individuals gave generously in 2020 to help meet these unprecedented needs. We are grateful that our local nonprofits stepped up to serve the needs of our community in innovative ways. However, while some nonprofits have seen an increase in donations during the pandemic, others are experiencing deficits from the loss of earned revenue and donors' unemployment. Some are projecting a 10-to-40-percent decrease in contributions in 2021. As the need is growing, the financial ability to help those in need shrinks. Clearly, more help is needed.

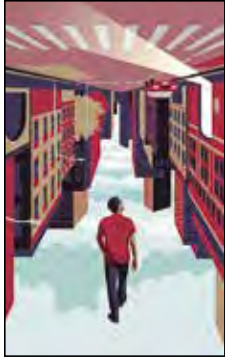
When that typhoon in Taiwan hurled debris through our windows, it was all hands on deck, sweeping glass, nailing panels, bailing water. Afterwards, neighbors helped one another sweep away mud and debris. More than ever, nonprofits need our partnership in clean-up and restoration work—and to continue building windmills. Perhaps consider volunteering your time or contributing resources of finances and expertise. Looking ahead to the challenges—and opportunities—of 2021, what nonprofit can you partner with to build some windmills?



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The Disruption Will Continue Into 2021

By Carmen Villarma, CPM PCAM
President, The Management Group, Inc.



For landlords and tenants in Washington and Oregon, the disruption of 2020 will continue into 2021. The number of laws and unclear regulations between the states and often the counties in each state make

it incredibly difficult to interpret and apply them. The changes to the laws and regulations happen often and the effective dates are often very short to implement. Click here for the most recent legal update: <https://tmgnorthwest.com/washington-landlord-tenant-law-update-december-2020/>

For tenants, the eviction moratorium

delays the process but does not eliminate the risk of eviction. That is stressful for many tenants who know they will not be able to pay their entire balance when the moratorium is lifted. There has been some success with the various rental assistance programs. Share and Council for the Homeless in Vancouver have been tasked with distributing rental assistance funds. Both tenants and landlords can agree that while this can be a benefit, the timeline and the process is slow, and communication can be spotty.

It is not only tenants who face great economic risk in this COVID-19 recession. Without rental income, a significant number of “smaller-noncorporate” landlords—who may be coping with their own unemployment—will also struggle to pay their mortgages, utilities bills, property taxes, maintenance costs and other property-related expenses. Relative to larger, corporate landlords, these landlords have fewer

resources to withstand long delays or significant reductions in rental income.

Most corporate landlords do have more financial resources, but the eviction moratorium has dragged on for so long and continues to be extended that even they are now experiencing shortfalls due to delinquent rent. This has affected “deals” in progress as lenders want to be assured there are available resources so to meet the debt coverage ratio going forward.

The cost of owning investment property also increased in 2020. Property taxes, insurance, utility costs, even parts and supplies are all trending upward. In addition to the delinquency issue, rents have flattened and in some cases are trending down—so landlords are taking a hit on all fronts.

What does this mean for the rental market in 2021? Occupancy is still trending upward. Home sale prices continue to escalate, and inventory is very limited so many buyers are priced out

of the market and will continue to rent. Some homeowners see the advantage of selling at higher prices, reducing their debt, and banking their cash, possibly in preparation for an uncertain financial situation. Those homeowners are becoming renters also.

We’ve seen a slight flattening of rents for the apartment market more significantly in the Portland metro area than Southwest Washington. Oregon overall is experiencing more vacancy and more delinquency than Washington. Single-family home rents are on the rise (except in the City of Portland) due to the lack of SFH available overall. Renters are moving out of urban areas, looking for a less crowded environment, larger living spaces and with a bonus of paying less rent in the suburbs.

While the overall financial hardships for landlords and tenants are very disturbing, the rental market remains strong even in these challenging times.

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Northwest Personal Training Reinvents Itself Amid Global Pandemic



Sherri McMillan

Founder and CEO,
NW Personal Training
and WHY Racing

By **SHERRI MCMILLAN**

2020 was an excruciating year for small businesses. COVID is the biggest threat I have experienced in my 21 years as a business owner. When we first had to close our doors last March, I asked myself: “Will our clients come back? Will the business I built two decades ago survive this?” My businesses are among the

lucky ones that survived 2020. The pandemic-related shutdowns were a death sentence to many health and fitness facilities.

When we had to close our doors temporarily, we told our clients, “See you in a couple weeks!” But the weeks turned into months. It was like signing up for a 5K, but the finish line was moved, and now you’re running a 10K, then a half-marathon, then a marathon—and before you know it, you’re running an ultra-marathon!

Early on, I realized that if my businesses were to survive, we had to focus on what sets us apart: one-on-one customized fitness and strength training—and building relationships with our clients and community.

In order to stay relevant to our clients through months of closures, we had to reinvent ourselves by offering virtual training and events. Before the pandemic, we had done this on a low level, but the shutdown forced us to become fluent in virtual training sessions. Along the way, we realized virtual personal training is a viable component of our business, not only during COVID, but into the future.

One week before WHY Racing’s first event in 2020, we were informed that we had to cancel it. Despite the pandemic, we wanted to give the athletes something to run for. Instead of no finish line, we opted for a virtual finish line. WHY launched new virtual events, upgraded SWAG and did wild and crazy things to encourage people to register for virtual events. (It’s challenging to get people to sign up and pay so they can race on their own.) Nearly 12,000 athletes participated in our virtual events in 2020. In addition to helping these community members stay healthy and strong, our events helped raise more than \$500,000 for various nonprofits and causes.

During shutdown, we renovated our facility, revamped our website, launched a virtual group session that we offered complimentary to essential workers to give back to those on the front lines and hosted several free virtual workouts and webinars for our community. We also applied for every possible grant to keep cash flow coming in.

Frequent communication with staff and clients is key to maintaining relationships and building trust and transparency. We had weekly virtual staff meetings to



check in, explain new safety protocols and motivate them to keep going. We communicated with clients via Facebook Live videos, Zoom presentations, emails, phone calls and online surveys. Our messages showed our facility renovations, demonstrated new COVID safety protocols and continued to provide critical health and nutrition tips to keep our clients motivated and help them cope through the challenging times.

In June NWPT reopened with hybrid private, group, indoors, outdoors and virtual training. We ramped up our marketing efforts and focused on our private, by-appointment, clean, safe facility.

After weeks of being closed again, we were allowed to reopen on January 11 for private, one-on-one training. We follow strict health and safety protocols and are doing everything we can to offer the safest option for indoor fitness and training. We also continue to offer personal and group training virtually and outdoors. Because we were proactive, we have avoided extreme layoff and bankruptcies common in the fitness industry during COVID.

Even during a global pandemic, we continue to accomplish our mission. We can host virtual events and virtual training. We can give people something to train for and look forward to as they achieve a sense of accomplishment, continue to focus on their physical strength, mental health, stress relief and immune

system. We can provide them a sense of community to counter the sense of isolation. We’re also providing something fun and positive—something we all need during these tough times.

Virtual training has opened doors for us and built partnerships around the world. I recently taught a group class with clients in three countries. On a single January day, I taught a live fitness class in Mexico, then taught a webinar with a number of fitness professionals in Ireland and finished with a Zoom meeting with fitness facility owners from across the state discussing how to petition for federal funding for struggling fitness facilities.

2020 was not what we expected. The lockdown derailed our plans and presented more challenges to our businesses than we’ve ever encountered. But here’s what 2020 taught us: To be flexible, resilient, to deal with disappointment—and to be creative in finding new ways to do business.

I knew we had succeeded when many clients emailed to tell me we were their silver lining of 2020. Many reported that they wouldn’t have made it through 2020 as strong and as well without the services we provided during this pandemic. We’ve been hustling like crazy to survive, take care of our clients and keep them safe. It made it all worthwhile when a client posted on my Facebook page: “NW Personal Training is doing so well! I feel safe and comfortable there!”

For the Port of Vancouver USA, Disruption Means Stability



Julianna Marler
CEO,
Port of Vancouver USA

By **JULIANNA MARLER**

In my mind, “disruption,” the theme of this year’s Clark County Economic Forecast, has many meanings. One meaning, of course, implies a negative understanding, such as an inconvenience or interruption. In today’s business world, disruption can also be a positive attribute, in the form of innovation and new ideas.

The mission of the Port of Vancouver USA is to provide economic benefit to our community by providing leadership and creating jobs in marine, industrial and waterfront development. The port delivers on this promise by employing nearly 4,000 people and generating \$3.8 billion annually in economic activity in Southwest Washington. When the pandemic took hold last year, it was imperative that the port, deemed as an essential business, remain steady and consistent.

Our customers, tenants and our community were depending on us. Many of the innovative and “disruptive” tactics employed by our dedicated port staff helped us weather the storm, leading to one of the most successful years in the port’s 108-year history.

DISRUPTIVE DIVERSIFICATION

We saw many of our sister ports across the country struggle because travel was impacted at airports and global supply chain disruptions affected port activity.

Leadership at the Port of Vancouver has for many years focused on diversity of cargo as a strategy to provide stability during fluctuating market conditions. This positioned us to be ready for the realities of 2020. We specialize in bulk and break-bulk cargoes—think grains, soybeans, steel slabs and wind blades—items that don’t easily fit into cargo containers. Our expertise in moving these commodities allowed us to prosper when other ports struggled.

Last year, the port moved a record number of commodities including 3 million metric tons of grain and more than 70,000 automobiles. Wind components also have made a significant impact. The port handled more than 3,000 components, more than any other West Coast port. Over the summer, the longest wind turbine blades ever to enter the West Coast of the U.S. came through the port. This year we anticipate more wind components and are forecasting another strong year.

DISRUPTIVE RESILIENCE

Like all businesses, we were dealt some challenges in 2020. Once the pandemic hit, we had to adjust—and this tested our agility and flexibility to manage through the crisis. Fortunately, the proactive groundwork we did in 2019—completing our Business Continuity and Resiliency Plan (BCRP) and closing gaps—better

prepared us to manage crises in 2020.

The BCRP allowed us to be proactive in adjusting our operations to keep our business up and running. Some of our actions, which we are continuing to implement, include remote working for the administrative staff along with modified schedules for operations and security staff. At our administration office, we installed sanitizing stations, temperature scanners and a system to track staff working in the building—a vital tool for COVID-19 contact tracing.

We quickly secured personal protective equipment (PPE) and established protocols to protect our operations, outside contractors and longshore workers. Commission meetings pivoted to Zoom, staff meetings are conducted virtually, and the port’s COVID-19 Response FAQ webpage is updated regularly.

Another aspect of our resiliency plan was to proactively support our tenants and customers. Assisting our more than 50 industrial tenants through this crisis continues to be of utmost importance to us. Our commercial and economic development teams conducted targeted outreach to our tenants and customers to understand potential impacts to their operations and business.

Early in the pandemic, auto dealerships struggled to move inventory. When Subaru needed to store excess autos arriving from Japan, we supported their need for additional property until the supply chain was flowing again. In October, we received the most Subarus on one ship—more than 3,300 vehicles—demonstrating that

the auto market was rebounding. We continue to engage with our tenants to help connect them with resources and to support them with any challenges they may still be encountering.

When pandemic restrictions cancelled our popular public tours and lecture series last spring and summer, we created a workaround: a virtual port presentation. This video includes a port overview similar to the one given at the beginning of each port tour. We invite you watch this video on our website to learn about the many interesting aspects of the port—all happening right here in Vancouver.

DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION

Although 2020 was a tale of disruption, we addressed disruption head on through innovation and preparation. As one of the bedrocks of our community, the Port of Vancouver USA provided steady jobs, development and growth for Clark County during one of the most challenging years in our lifetime.

We are approaching this year with cautious optimism. While we have a good story to tell about our success in 2020, we do not take it for granted. Last year’s achievements demonstrated that the port plays a critical role in providing economic stability for our community, especially during a time of uncertainty and turbulence. My wish for this new year is that this story brings you a sense of hope in knowing that we are working hard to help maintain economic strength, prosperity and possibilities in Vancouver and the region.



Pandemic-Caused Recession has Hit Small Businesses the Hardest

State's Department of Commerce offers grants, resources to support equitable recovery



Chris Green

Assistant Director,
Office of Economic
Development and
Competitiveness,
Washington State
Department of Commerce

By **CHRIS GREEN**

Last March, COVID-19 plunged us into a recession. Although all businesses in Washington have experienced some disruption, small businesses have been hit the hardest. Unlike our last recession of 2007-08, this recession disproportionately has affected small businesses, which represent a larger segment of disadvantaged populations.

On the other hand, our large industries—particularly some companies in life sciences, technology and clean energy—are thriving. Washington's diverse economy is

well positioned globally. Even amid the pandemic and recession, many of these businesses have experienced tremendous growth. An excellent example in Clark County is AbSci, a leading biotech company that recently raised an additional \$65 million to grow its platform.

Washington's Department of Commerce is taking a two-pronged approach during the pandemic. First, we are focusing on relief for those businesses and communities most impacted by the pandemic. Second, Commerce is staying focused on the future economy, industrial transition and creating more long term, living wage jobs in high tech and advanced manufacturing.

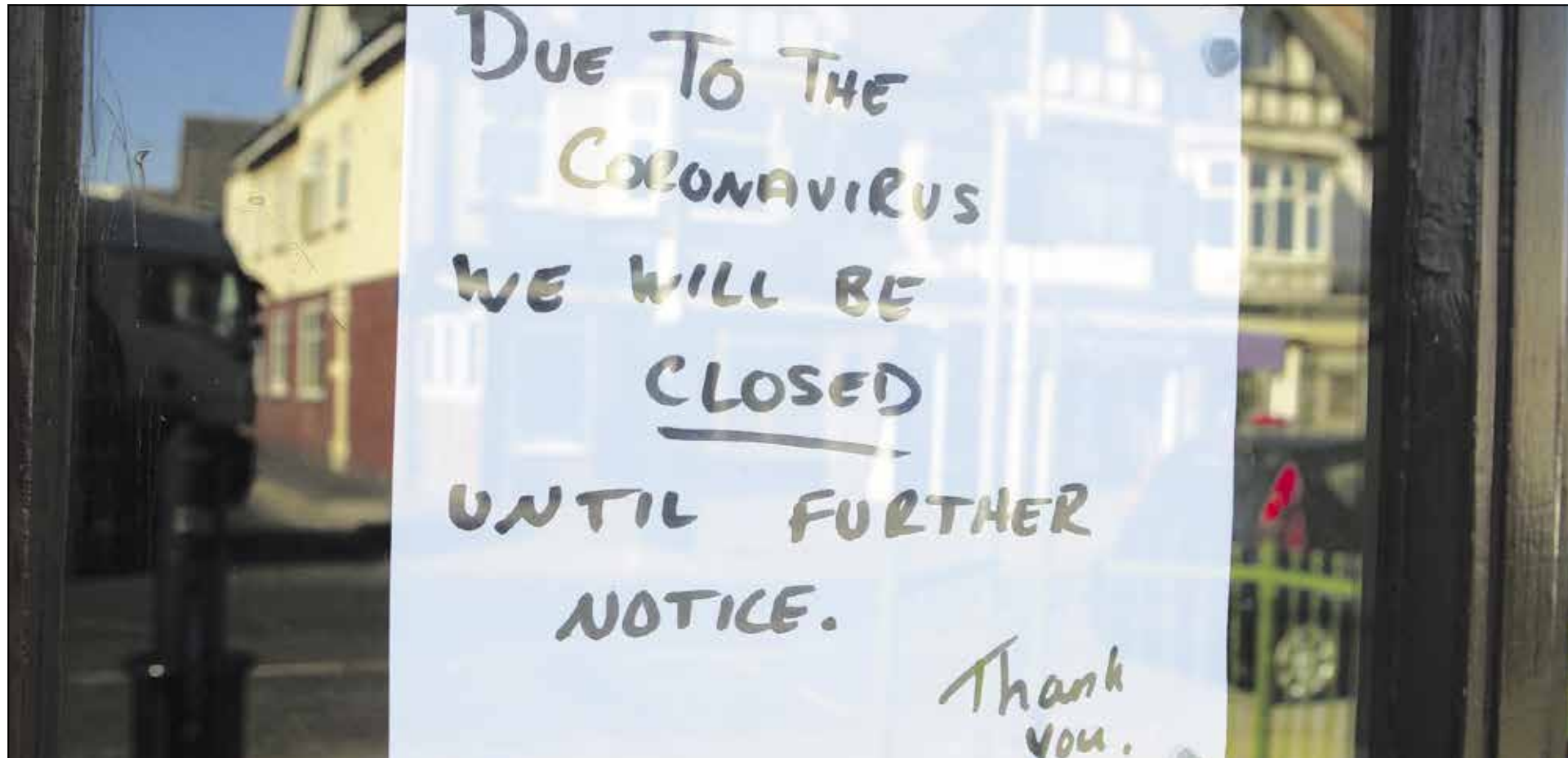
HELPING STRUGGLING BUSINESSES AND WORKING TOWARD EQUITY

In order to understand how the pandemic and recession are affecting our state's businesses and

workers, Commerce invested in an economic recovery dashboard accessible to all on our website. Through data points, we can look at the health of our state's economy and can break it down by industry, region and demographics. The data revealed that certain industries disproportionately have been impacted: tourism, leisure, restaurant and hospitality. Studying this data helps illuminate our next steps toward recovery.

Recognizing that small businesses needed cash to stay afloat, the governor and his budget office authorized more than \$200 million in state emergency and federal CARES Act funds for direct aid to highly impacted businesses and certain nonprofits. This allowed Commerce to administer several rounds of small business grants in 2020.

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Legacy Health Focuses on Being the Safest Place to Receive and Deliver Care



Jon Hersen
President,
Legacy Salmon Creek
Medical Center

By **JON HERSEN**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our primary strategic initiative was creating a culture of safety within the Legacy campuses: To make Legacy and Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center the safest place to receive and deliver care. We were on that multi-year journey to achieve that goal when the pandemic hit Southwest Washington.

Immediately we got to work on the issue at hand: COVID-19. We set up emergency operations centers, focused on infectious disease treatment and prevention, reviewed and adjusted hospital procedures and determined how to set up rapid and extensive COVID testing. We conducted numerous huddles with our staff to keep everyone informed of new information and policy changes. We looked at issues to be raised and solved. We examined infrastructure and assessed risks. Creating this framework helped us navigate the pandemic in the early days of March, April and May 2020.

As that first wave of COVID subsided in June, we thought about what we had learned during this time. We

discussed what new procedures, protocols or tasks we wanted to continue when the pandemic goes away. We kept in place some of the infrastructure we'd built in our operations centers—to work toward our goal of being the safest place to receive and deliver care.

Now all these months later, it's still challenging. We're seeing higher volumes of COVID-positive patients, even higher than we did in the spring. We're dealing with the perfect storm of high levels of COVID, flu season starting, and exhaustion of our front-line staff. Our capacity is constrained. None of this has been easy

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SPONSORED CONTENT

How Biggs Insurance Pivoted to Help Clients Navigate through COVID-19

By Tyson Fuehrer, Executive Vice President, Life & Health and Dave Anzellotti, Executive Vice President, Property & Casualty

Q: Describe your business during 2020.

Biggs: We had to answer the question: “What do we need to do (now) to help our clients be successful during and working out of the pandemic?” Something many businesses needed to overcome was supporting mental health for their employees and their families. Access to providers has been an issue for some time and with a spike in need, that got worse. Telehealth and expanded employee assistance programs (EAP) became a key solution.

Q: How have your clients fared during the pandemic?

Biggs: Everyone has been impacted by COVID. Some clients have done quite well from the consumer changes created by COVID, while others have been negatively impacted—and that seems to be continuing if they are not able to pivot.

Q: How has Biggs pivoted to assist clients through this disruption?

Biggs: During the pandemic lockdown was one of our busiest times ever—and not only because we were gaining new clients, but also because we were a key resource and advisor for our existing clients. In some ways, insurance has been a reactionary business: a



client’s business model grows or changes, and we deliver benefits and risk protection that supports them. However, we are also focused on being proactive—and even more so during COVID. Each client needs different things, and we are in the business of knowing what that is before they need it.

Q: How have you helped clients navigate COVID regulations and changes?

Biggs: COVID brought to light areas where employees and their families were not covered or protected. For example, quarantine was not a common “reason” for qualifying for leave. The government updated FMLA to allow for this reason to make coverage available. However, there were a lot of questions for each business in how it applied to them, what they should tell their employees, and more. We were relied upon in presenting the legislation to decision makers, developing the business strategy and providing the resources to execute the plan.

Q: How are you assisting the most affected industries

deal with so many changes and challenges?

Biggs: We are giving our clients options to help them navigate the new waters. For example, if a restaurant now offers delivery, but didn’t before COVID, what changes can we make in its policy to ensure they are covered? Providing “how to” guides and compliance webinars are just a couple of the ways we are there for our clients. But that doesn’t take the place of being present in their day-to-day needs.

Q: What have you learned during COVID that you’ll implement post-pandemic?

Biggs: Many of the challenges from COVID related to resiliency, flexibility and technology. Most importantly, we are proud of our employees. We knew they are great, and they excelled through the adversity. We continue trying new things and are looking forward to new opportunities.

Q: What is your game plan for going forward?

Biggs: In 2021 and beyond, we will take what we have learned and push that forward in new ways, such as expanding our remote workplace. We already had the technology and were working this way pre-pandemic, but not nearly as much as we are now. We see this continuing while still having a personal connection with our employees and clients.

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Our Vital Role in Creating Positive Change and Propelling Economic Recovery



Jennifer Baker

President,
Columbia River Economic
Development Council

There is no sugarcoating the reality of our ongoing pandemic experience. As a community, we ride the waves of heightened unemployment levels, see main street business owners wringing their hands and face chronic stresses emerging from ever-changing 'lights at the end of the tunnel.' Crisis indeed!

By **JENNIFER BAKER**

Not all crisis-driven changes are bad. American economist and Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman is credited for having said: "Only a crisis, actual or perceived, produces real change."

There is no sugarcoating the reality of our ongoing pandemic experience. As a community, we ride the waves of heightened

Here's a question we're all grappling with in 2021: How do we address myriad disruptions catalyzed or exacerbated by COVID-19?

Head-on, of course—and with a balance of near-term and long-range thinking on economic vitality. The presence of pandemic crosswinds invites even more alignment between community members, businesses, business-focused nonprofit organizations and public officials. The crucial task at hand: To recognize our shared vision for Clark County to be one of the most healthy, inclusive, amenity-rich communities in the country.

To (re)establish long-term economic strength, business executives from companies large, small and scaling must demonstrate resiliency, adaptability and quick-paced responsiveness. This year produced some highly visible business accomplishments from which we

can glean momentum and reflect: ZoomInfo's record-setting initial public offering, nLight and AbSci company expansions, prolific sales and earnings at Nautilus and the best sales day in Slumberkins' company history to date. Now that is a diverse 2020 collection of thriving businesses and milestones.

These successes and others are harbingers of Clark County's fertile environment for innovative business growth. On one hand, we celebrate prominent local brands garnering positive attention on the national and global stage; on the other, we laud the large fleet of small business heroes known exclusively at the local level—those who may have jumped into technology to grow online sales or curbside delivery for the first time.

BAKER, Page 18



Strive to Evolve, Innovate, Improve— and Find Disruption



Henry Schuck
ZoomInfo
Founder and CEO

By HENRY SCHUCK

Disruption, specifically in business, is the radical change to an existing industry or market due to technological innovation. However, the big secret about disruption is this: In reality, disruption doesn't happen radically. It happens incrementally.

When we think about disruptive technologies or inventions, we want to believe that Thomas Edison woke up one day with the idea of the light bulb and then—bam!—two weeks later, he built a functioning light bulb. But that's not actually how it worked.

Over the course of several years, Edison and his team of associates tirelessly worked to develop an efficient source of electric light. They spent countless hours working on at least 3,000 different theories across 6,000 different types of filaments. It was only by learning from those continued incremental improvements, along with endless persistence, that yielded the first functioning light bulb in 1879.

If you research search engines, social networks, or electric cars, you'll find the same thing. Iterative processes combined with a relentless focus lead to disruptive innovations.

It's that simple. It happens to be true in business as well. Want to build a great business? Simply wake up every day relentlessly focused on improving your business.

You might be asking, "Why doesn't every business do this?" Imagine getting up every day and focusing, relentlessly, on the areas of your personal life that you know could be improved, improving those areas, and then focusing on the next area that could use improvement, over and over again. Every single day.

Great businesses start each day by seeking to improve some part of their business that's not so great, not running optimally, not growing or not progressing. Then, with endless persistence, they focus on improving those areas. Every business doesn't do this because continual improvement is exhausting work.

ZoomInfo is a great business. We grow top line revenue 40+% a year. We do that efficiently, and as a result, profitably, and we provide our customers with an innovative, technology-first solution. That efficient, innovation-first model has equipped us to meaningfully impact the communities we work in, the employees we rely on, the shareholders who believe in us—all while re-inventing the future of sales and marketing.

But we didn't get here overnight.

Over the last 14 years, we've spent countless days, nights, and weekends contemplating innovative ways to help business-to-business sellers and marketers



find, engage, and close business with their next best customers. Early on, these solutions were as simple as manually compiling and delivering highly accurate contact information about professionals at certain companies. Years later, here's how ZoomInfo has innovated and developed: An evidence-based machine learning algorithm powers the ingestion of millions of unique data sources and publishes the most accurate insights on more than 15 million companies and 130 million professionals. Now that's improvement!

On top of those unique assets, our engineering teams have developed workflow software that re-imagines the way companies sell and market their products and services. The software leverages the insights our machine learning engines identify to automatically send out emails and queue up calls to exactly the right buyers, at exactly the right accounts, at exactly the right time. Today, more than 400,000 sales and marketing professionals use our platforms to accelerate their companies' growth.

I'm biased, but I think what we've built is significantly disruptive—and those 400,000 professionals likely would agree. But it wasn't disruptive in 2007, and it wasn't all that disruptive in 2008 or 2009 or even 2010. It took years of iterating on that manual data collection model. It took years of iterating the user experience, on our own

go-to-market model, on customer support and customer service. It took years of tweaking a little bit here and a little bit there and a little more here and a little more there to find disruption.

Disruption doesn't stop either. Sure, Edison found disruption with an incandescent light bulb, but that led to disruption with the compact fluorescent light bulb, which has led to disruption with LED bulbs. It could have stopped with just incandescent bulbs. But someone woke up every day relentlessly focused on making a better light bulb. Do that every day for long enough, and you'll find disruption.

Despite what we've accomplished so far, I wake up every day focused on things we don't do well enough, and on places in the business that are not best-in-class. These are different things today than they were six months ago or six months before that. If they remain beyond that, then I'll know we're not evolving, and we won't find disruption.

As I was writing this, a ZoomInfo sales manager sent me a message that included this line: "Have you had a chance to reflect on all the accomplishments you've had in 2020? Because so much of you presents as 'forward march.'"

Yup, that kind of sums it up: Despite the multitude of ways the global pandemic disrupted our lives in 2020, it's been a good year for the business. Let's march on.

Clark College Pivots and Adapts to Online Learning



Dr. Karin Edwards

President,
Clark College

By **DR. KARIN EDWARDS**

In mid-March 2020, Clark College abruptly pivoted in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Launching on a new path, we moved all student services and more than 2,000 classes online so that our students could remain engaged and on track in their educational pursuits.

Ten months into the pandemic, we can see how this disruption has tested our ability to adapt and innovate during a crisis.

Predominantly working from home, Clark's faculty and staff rapidly redesigned curriculum, created new processes, and implemented new strategies to deliver education and services to students virtually. Fueled by our belief that everyone deserves access to higher education, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that our students could continue progressing toward their goals, no matter what barriers they faced.

We created new options—from online mental-health counseling to Zoom tutoring sessions. To ensure our students could complete their degrees and enter the workforce, we designed ways to safely conduct required lab classes. Recognizing that all students do not have access at home to computers and high-speed internet, we helped level the playing field by distributing hundreds of laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots to our students.

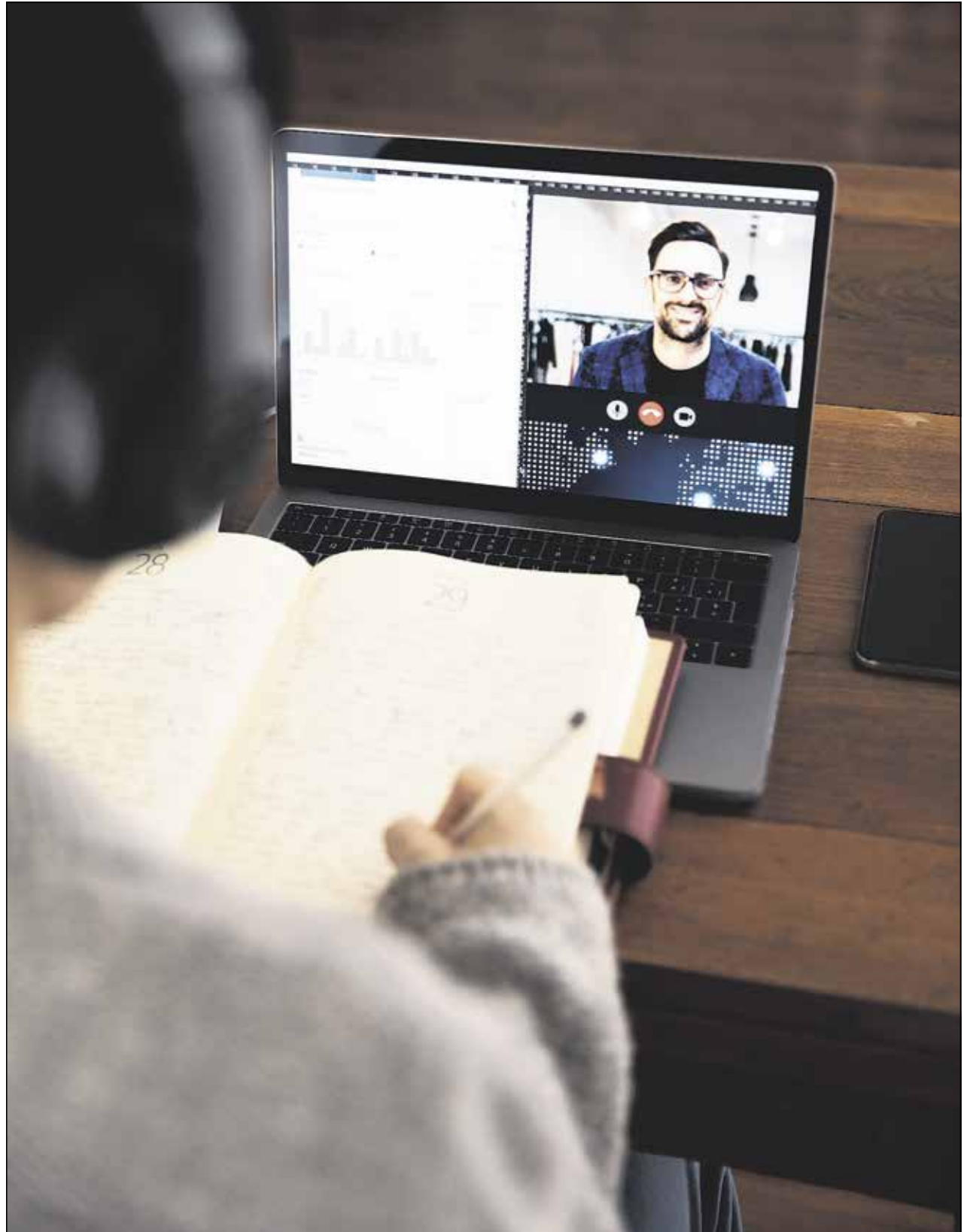
Clark College Foundation began a donation campaign to fund emergency grants to help our students experiencing financial hardship. Meanwhile, our staff worked to disburse federal CARES Act funding to hundreds of students. Our Penguin Pantry, with the help of our Cuisine and Professional Baking students and staff, distributed food boxes to 576 students.

The need is enormous. More than a third of our students are low income. In a typical year, these students struggle to maintain basic supports: housing, transportation, health care, childcare, and food.

The pandemic also has further highlighted the disparities that persist for BIPOC, low-income, and first-generation college student populations. These students have been affected disproportionately by the global pandemic and resulting economic crisis. They are more likely than the general population to have experienced job loss, childcare issues, and family disruption. Most distressing, they are more likely to contract and die from COVID-19.

Despite all we have done to support our students during the pandemic, I am heavyhearted that 15 percent of our students could not attend classes this fall due to their financial, family, and/or personal hardships.

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Green

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In the past nine months the State has sent funds to more than 13,000 small businesses - prioritizing those hardest hit by the pandemic. More funding

will be available to assist small businesses in 2021—and we will be sure to help get the word out about these opportunities. Commerce isn't the only small business program. Many counties, cities and private sector small business grant programs have been available during the pandemic.

Realizing that there are enormous equity gaps, we're continually evaluating how we think about equity and how we can assist disadvantaged small business owners. Creating an equitable recovery strategy starts by embracing values that position equity at the forefront.

We looked at how we can better partner with and support organizations around the state that are focused on supporting historically disadvantaged communities. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, we created the Commerce Resiliency Network, a group of primarily nonprofits, to build partnerships in organizations that are a trusted messenger to that community, and we've worked to grow that network over the last year. One such partner is Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber that supports the Latino community in Oregon and Southwest Washington.

While we continue to direct our efforts toward small business support in various ways, there are also other systemic challenges that need improving if everyone is

going to be able to have access to employment. Among the most challenging barriers facing many businesses and workers today is access to quality broadband and access to affordable childcare. The digital divide in Washington is wide, affecting both low income city dwellers and rural communities, and a lack of sufficient child care access is a continuing challenge for parents - especially women. Both of these are crucial legislative priorities for Commerce in the coming months.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Commerce continues looking toward next generation industries. It's imperative that while we focus on the important work of repairing the small business ecosystem we simultaneously focus on the next 40 years of economic development to build the economy of the future. With our clean, affordable energy and exceptional workforce, Washington is equipped to compete globally. As we look ahead at our robust tech industry and consider how we can compete in AI, quantum computing, or innovative clean energy products, the state has significant opportunity to produce products for which there is a high global demand.

Solar panel manufacturer Violet Power in Grant County has modeled how businesses can be more than manufacturers. By thinking creatively about new ways of doing business, they can be thought leaders, too. Commerce is working toward an industry cluster acceleration program, which would provide resources for co-location. Violet Power is the first company in the

nation that not only manufactures solar panels, but also will integrate the supply chain with manufacturing of solar cells and wafers required in the solar industry. There are more opportunities like this out there for Washington State if we can compete for them.

Even during this pandemic as we've experienced widespread economic disruption, we've seen business success stories of growth, expansion, opportunity and creating family-wage jobs. One case in point is the recent success of ZoomInfo, based in Clark County, having one of the most successful tech industry initial public offerings in the country last year.

Although 2020 brought enormous challenges and the reverberations of COVID-19 continue to present challenges for many small businesses, innovative businesses throughout Washington stepped up to find a new way to do business. Commerce will maintain the focus on recovery and resiliency as we look ahead to the next chapter of the state's economy.

RESOURCES

Business Resiliency Network:

<http://startup.choosewashingtonstate.com/small-business-resiliency-assistance/>

See a roundup of COVID-related assistance here:

<http://startup.choosewashingtonstate.com/links/crisis/covid-19-resources/>

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Clark County Economic Forecast for 2021



Scott Bailey
Regional Economist,
Washington State
Employment Security
Department

By **SCOTT BAILEY**

I boldly predict that 2021 will not be as bad as 2020. Yes, that's a low bar, but I believe the local labor market will see only a modest improvement at best.

First, a recap of 2020. COVID put the global economy into a steep dive last March. The recovery that began in May was just as steep, but only partial.

Here in Clark County, we lost

19,700 jobs in March and April, more than in the Great Recession of 2007-08. By November, only 7,200 jobs—just more than a third—had come back. That means more than 12,500 local workers were still unemployed eight months later. That same proportion held for

the Portland metro area. Some industry highlights regarding percentage of losses or gains: total jobs, -7 percent; health care, -2 percent; retail trade, -3 percent; manufacturing, -4 percent; construction employment, -8 percent; business services (like staffing services, janitorial, landscaping), -11 percent; food services, -17 percent; K-12 education, -21 percent; hotel/motel, -36 percent. A notable employment gain was in finance, which grew 1 percent.

Unemployment remains a big concern, as does underemployment—people still working but at greatly reduced hours—and therefore, income. In mid-December, even after seven months of recovery, here's the breakdown of county residents who filed unemployment claims: almost 2,500 food service workers, 1,800 managers, 1,300 office workers, 1,200 sales workers and 1,200 personal care workers. Claimants were predominantly women—54 percent,

despite only 46 percent of the workforce was female. Although a third of the county workforce hold a bachelor's degree or higher, only 18 percent of claimants had that much formal education. A preliminary analysis indicates that in Clark County, lower-wage workers were disproportionately unemployed—38 percent of claimants were paid less than \$18 per hour in the last quarter of 2019, versus 27 percent of all jobs paying in that range.

The pace of economic recovery depends largely on three factors: the purely health component (vaccine development, COVID mutation); people's behavior and federal policy. First off, the approval of vaccines is a huge positive. On the flip side, the discovery of new strains of the virus and its presence in the wild are worrying. Second, economic activity will not return to "normal" until we reach herd immunity, with (according

Hersen

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do their part, we will do our best to ensure we have enough healthcare capacity while limiting the spread of COVID.

Even though 2020 was challenging and difficult, as we've navigated through the pandemic, we have realized some positives. After navigating that first wave of COVID, we realized we have become very good at identifying, raising and solving problems very quickly. Challenges that previously took us weeks to identify and solve now are taking us hours and days. This ability to rapidly identify and solve issues is one of the biggest outcomes the pandemic will have on Legacy. We're now in a much better place.

Another positive development from the pandemic

for our healthcare workers. In the meantime, we continue to advise folks to persist with hand washing, masks, social distancing and limiting gatherings. If people

is that we've seen fewer people using the emergency room for non-emergency care. Some health issues are appropriate for ER visits, but others are better addressed via telehealth, urgent care or clinic visits. Better utilization of healthcare resources for the right problems is another good outcome of this pandemic. It increases access to care for everyone.

Yet another positive development from COVID is increased coordination and collaboration in Clark County's healthcare and public health community. We've had thoughtful, constructive conversations and collaborations between Legacy Health, PeaceHealth, The Vancouver Clinic and Clark County Public Health. Together, we're doing everything we can to support our community. In terms of relationships, we've built infrastructure to work collaboratively on public health issues.

Very early in the pandemic, as far back as March, we've been meeting almost weekly as a group to check in with each other to discuss these kinds of issues: What

are you seeing on the ground? What are your visitor policies? How are you testing? What are the providers seeing in the public? This gives us a good perspective. It's been invaluable to have that conversation.

Going forward, I see this group of community healthcare leaders continuing to meet to discuss ongoing and potential issues. This has been a great example on how we can work together on common challenges so we can all better serve our growing community. We will continue once COVID is finally behind us. This collaboration will serve all of us in Clark County—today and tomorrow.

In 2020, Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center learned invaluable lessons dealing with the pandemic. As difficult as 2020 was, I believe that 2021 will be brighter and the learnings from this past year will accelerate our journey towards our goal of being the safest place to receive and deliver care for our community.

Baker

From Page 13

workers, makers, coffeeshops, food carts, gyms, beauty salons, repair shops, retail stores, breweries, restaurants, wellness studios, wineries, childcare and

These people have been fighting to keep afloat our ecosystem of essential

other service providers. Together, both "hands" constitute the micro- and macro-symbiosis necessary in sustaining an economically healthy region.

You may wonder how one person (you) can get involved to make a positive economic impact. Brainstorm the list of businesses and organizations you want to see prosper through 2021 and beyond,

then direct your purchasing power to them. Be a patron, gift conscientiously and share your encouragement through social media. Then challenge your friends and neighbors to do the same. In economic development, we see time and again that a rising tide lifts all boats. For example, every \$1 invested in CREDC directly yields \$19 of new economic activity in Clark County. Having communicated with many small business grant relief seekers, we cannot understate the collective influence of community support for small businesses and industry in this moment.

Today's national workforce pipeline is experiencing significant near-term transformation. Childcare providers grapple to offer much-needed services, students experience wavering levels of motivation in remote learning environments (K-12 through higher education) and numerous unemployed individuals will find themselves reinventing their careers on the fly. The call to rally around the Support People pillar of economic development is now. CREDC is answering this call alongside a network of strategic partners. Colleagues at Workforce Southwest Washington are digging in swiftly to invest in equitable workforce recovery solutions and research. CREDC's Executive committee enthusiastically has committed to enhanced activation around mentorship and career path awareness opportunities that align with the work of partners at Career Connect Southwest, WSU Vancouver and Clark College. We know that Supporting People is the preeminent factor in our ability to attract and grow jobs in the region for years to come.

You ask: "Yes, but what can I do?" If

workforce development is not part of your day-to-day routine, perhaps you have the capacity to support opportunity for future generations by making a deposit at one of the local food banks? I hear firsthand from some very appreciative VanCoug and Penguins that basic food supplies are in high demand among our student populations. Or if your organization is in the position to activate, consider hosting an intern or apprentice this year through the Future Leaders Project.

Notwithstanding any number of COVID-19 related disruptions, strong levels of collegiality are palpable in the business community. CREDC is gearing up to continue our series of traded-sector industry innovation roundtables and GROW podcasts initiated in 2020. "Traded sector" refers to companies selling many of their goods and services outside of the region—which means new money landing here inside the region. The discussion of business stabilization and growth opportunities, and emergent industry synergies is striking, and more importantly, actionable. If you wonder how your company or industry can impact economic recovery positively, consider the value of joining a CREDC-hosted dialogue with like-companies and be a conduit for innovation, mentorship, supply chain reinforcement and modernization of your industry cluster.

Seizing the opportunity to listen and support industry strategically and as a community will be the distinguishing variable in Clark County's economic recovery. Already we see the extraordinary examples of sensitivity and generosity, volunteerism, competitiveness, rapid innovation, partnership and fresh entrepreneurial pursuits that will propel us to a more positive future.



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Edwards

From Page 15

At the same time, I am inspired by the stories of our students' remarkable strength and tenacity. Despite so many difficulties, our students are completing their studies at kitchen tables, often while helping their children with their own online classes. They are mastering Zoom and creating online study groups. These resilient students are our community's future. If you know them as I do, you will share my boundless hope for our future.

We have an obligation to be just as resilient and resourceful as our students.

Higher education has been irrevocably changed by the global pandemic. Moving forward, students will expect us to provide a wide range of teaching modalities that accommodate their schedules and needs. Now that they have become adept with online learning, many will want to continue this flexible option. Even students who opt for in-person classes may expect more access to learning through virtual reality and other digital tools.

We are ready to assist our students to be successful in their studies, their future careers, and their lives. Even before the pandemic, we mapped out fully online

degree pathways for many programs. Our nursing program has adopted new A.I. and virtual simulations to ensure students fulfilled their clinical hours during the pandemic when they could not go into our local clinics and hospitals. Online teaching accelerated our faculty's use of open educational resources (OER) instead of costly textbooks. These changes are here to stay—and they benefit our students.

Colleges will need creative solutions to bring students back to school. The U.S. Census Bureau survey in October 2020 found more than 40 percent of households nationwide report a prospective student had canceled plans to attend community college. A hopeful scenario is that, after the pandemic, students will return to community college in large numbers and enroll in more courses. A more worrisome possibility is that many of these students who opted out of completing community college will be lost permanently to higher education, with long-term economic consequences—both for them personally and for our nation at large. Students will need wrap-around supports and programs that lead to living-wage jobs and success in life.

Since our founding in 1933 during the Great Depression, Clark College has been at the center of our

community's economic recoveries. We are the trainers of tomorrow's workforce. This was true during the Great Depression, during our last recession in 2007-08, and it remains one of our vital roles today.

After all, education is not the only industry undergoing disruptive, fundamental, and permanent change. Every industry—including retail, distribution, manufacturing, and health care—will need to evolve to meet new customer expectations, new protocols, and a nationwide call for greater equity and inclusion.

Jim Collins, author of "Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck—Why Some Thrive Despite Them All," writes: "There will be no 'new normal.' There will only be a continuous series of 'not normal' times." In short, every industry must learn to adapt, to transform—and, most importantly, to create structures agile enough to allow them to transform again and again.

At Clark College, we understand our post-pandemic role in helping industry recover and transform. Our faculty already are discussing the COVID-caused changes in their respective fields. Clark College is excited about our role in providing the training that will help our community remain nimble and adaptive regardless of whatever challenges it faces.

Bailey

From Page 17

to Dr. Fauci) 90 percent of the population vaccinated. Current polling shows an improvement in public acceptance of the vaccine, but it is still well below that 90 percent level. Additionally, public health experts predict it will take many months to vaccinate that many people. Until then, in order to reduce infection rates, we must continue to mask up and be social distanced—probably through much of 2021. As a nation we haven't had a good track record at following basic public health guidelines. If unsafe behavior continues into the new year, it will hamstring any economic recovery.

Some perspective: an employment growth rate of 3 percent would be a pretty good year. That would get us back to 165,000 jobs—still more than 7,000 jobs short of last February. We'd have to see an 8 percent growth rate to get us back to pre-COVID employment levels—a rate which has never been attained in Clark County.

In terms of federal policy, the recent signing of the second CARES Act will bring welcome support to individuals and small businesses, but more assistance will be needed for state and local governments, including public schools, which have suffered enormous job losses due to the pandemic.

COVID is not the only economic issue in Clark County. The Board of Commissioners recently identified institutional racism as a public health crisis. Here are some examples of how institutional racism is evident in the county economy (all data pre-COVID). The average wage for African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx, Pacific Islander and multi-racial workers was 20 to 30 percent below the average for all workers—a condition that has persisted going back

to 1990 (when the dataset first became available). The median income for African American households was 68 percent of the median for all householders; for Latinx households, it was 75 percent. Only 34 percent of Latinx, 44 percent of African American, and 52 percent of Native American householders were homeowners, versus

66 percent for all households. We have no measures of other forms of wealth (chiefly, financial wealth), but these are undoubtedly skewed even worse. These measures have lasting significance. As a group, the next generation of white and Asian-American children start life and transition into adulthood with more resources and economic opportunity, enabling them on average to afford a college education and buy a home.

Of course, there are also large and growing disparities in income and wealth within racial groups as well. One source of these disparities has been the massive increase in CEO pay, made possible in part by the growing monopolization in key industries, and enhanced further by the opaqueness of our financial system. The recent lawsuits filed by states and the Department of Justice to hold some of the tech giants accountable is a welcome trend, as is the recent law passed by Congress to outlaw shell corporations. Even so, the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" has widened during the pandemic.

Finally, the biggest threat to our economy—climate change—continued to make itself known in 2020, with growing and obvious impacts on our lives. While carbon emissions dropped this past year due to the economic downturn, they have already risen to their previous dangerously high levels in China. Let's hope COVID will not distract us from taking decisive action going forward.

So, here's the call for 2021: a slow recovery that could accelerate in the latter half of the year, depending on virus distribution and acceptance; a recovery that, barring major policy changes, will perpetuate inequities and continue to send us towards a climate reckoning.





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