

CHAMBER NEWS



Downtown Walla Walla enveloped in fog.

February 2019

NEW CHAMBER CEO KYLE TARBET

— TAKES THE HELM FEBRUARY 19 —



Kyle Tarbet
President & CEO

I am so excited to be joining the team at the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce. This is an incredible opportunity for me to lead a chamber and be part of such a vibrant community. I would like to introduce

myself to you and speak to my vision for the chamber. I have been married to my wife, Kale, for fifteen years and we have three children; Tyler (10), Macy (7) and Quinn (1). Being a husband and father has been my greatest adventure in life and we enjoy traveling, cooking, learning, being outdoors together and playing and watching sports with our kids.

I grew up in Rupert, a rural town in south central Idaho. My father was a banker working mostly with agricultural customers and my mother was a home-maker/PTA all-star. I learned so much from parents including the value of hard work and education. After graduating from Minico High School in 2000, I attended one year of college at Idaho State

University and then served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Milan, Italy for two years. I returned to Idaho State University studying Political Science, History and Public Administration in 2003. In December 2003 I married my high school sweetheart, Kale Nix, who also attended Idaho State and studied Secondary Education and English.

My career has been in non-profit management. I worked 3 years for the American Cancer Society in government relations where my main focus was in volunteer management. I recruited, educated and trained cancer survivors and caretakers on public policy in the realm of health care. This allowed me to travel all over Idaho and meet incredible people. Gaining experience with volunteers, events and fundraising in non-profits led me to a job at the Twin Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. After my first year, I knew a career with membership organizations was right for me. I loved being able to network with passionate business owners and motivated members of the community. My role evolved greatly over my time with the chamber. I have worked on events, fundraising,

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AN EVENING WITH

THE THIEF

FINE WINE & BEER

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12
5:30PM TO 7PM

ENJOY DISCOUNTS ON WINE AND BEER BY THE BOTTLE
IN ADDITION TO GLASS POUR SPECIALS THROUGHOUT
THE EVENT. WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU THERE!

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Your personal brand isn't curated; it's uncovered.

— WOMEN IN BUSINESS RETURNS IN 2019 —
WITH KEYNOTE ALLISON CARNEY



Marissa Miller
Marketing/Communications

Join the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce for **"You Already Have a Personal Brand. Make it Even Better"** on Wednesday, February 27 from 11:30am-1:00pm at the Courtyard Marriott.

Keynote speaker Allison Carney will discuss how identifying the skills, talents, and values core to who you are can lead to uncovering your own personal brand and how you can start to build an authentic, consistent brand that rallies people to your cause.

Allison is a communications consultant who has spent her career working with local and national nonprofits, with over 20 clients in Washington state. She develops communications strategies for organizations—from planning wide-reaching campaigns to coaching staff on best practices in social media. She frequently gives trainings and speaks at events on how nonprofits can effectively and realistically improve their communications. Previously, she led communications departments, created and implemented communications strategies, and launched an online community for foundations. She has her master's degree from Georgetown University in public relations and her bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College.

Tickets for the event are \$25 and include a buffet lunch. Register online today by visiting

www.wvchamber.com. Registration ends February 22.

Is your business interested in connecting women, developing leaders, and creating value? Show your support by continuing an existing Women in Business sponsorship commitment or reviewing our list of available sponsorship opportunities below.

In 2018, sponsorship of the Chamber's Women in Business initiative—designed to provide dynamic speakers along with a networking platform—allowed us to offer a total of four quarterly luncheon events in 2018 covering topics that ranged from 'Positive Thinking, Positive Impact' and 'Power of Connection' to 'Absolute Assertiveness' and finally 'Inspirational Leadership'.

We believe that we are stronger together, and that we can create significant change for ourselves, our workplace, and our community when we connect with other women in business, at all levels of our careers. Join us!

2019 Sponsorship Opportunities
Guiding Sponsor - \$2,000

Event:

- 4 Complimentary tickets to ALL meetings
- Opportunity to introduce your company during meetings (4 min / 4 mtgs)
- Company mentioned at podium
- Invitation to sit on a panel and/or introduce speaker for the day
- Pop-up banner at all meetings (72"x30")
- Opportunity to place promotional material on chairs

- Promotional table at event

Marketing:

- Inclusion on all event electronic promotions
- Inclusion on all print promotions
- Inclusion on website
- Items included in goodie bags

Contributing Sponsor - \$1,000

Event:

- 3 Complimentary tickets to ALL meetings
- Opportunity to introduce your company during meetings (3 min / 3 mtgs)
- Company mentioned at podium
- Invitation to sit on a panel and/or introduce speaker for the day
- Pop-up banner at all meetings (72"x30")
- Opportunity to place promotional material on chairs

Marketing:

- Inclusion on all event electronic promotions
- Inclusion on all print promotions
- Inclusion website
- Items included in goodie bags

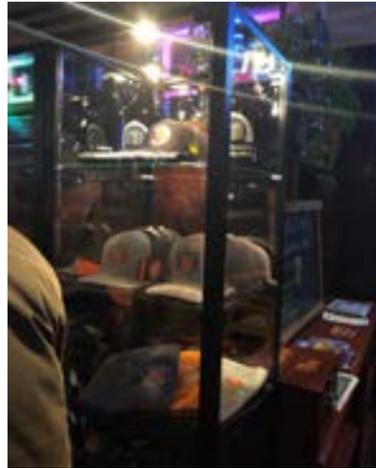
Encouraging Sponsor - \$500

Event:

- 2 Complimentary tickets to ALL meetings
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- Invitation to sit on a panel and/or introduce speaker for the day
- Pop-up banner at all meetings (72"x30")

Marketing:

- Inclusion on all event electronic promotions
- Inclusion on all print promotions
- Inclusion on website
- Items included in goodie bags



JANUARY BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

Business After Hours hosted by Big House Brew Pub on Jan. 8.



PHOTO GALLERY

PHOTOS FROM OUR RECENT EVENTS



Savor the evenings with Flights After Five - every Friday and Saturday from 5-8pm at Armstrong Family Winery.

— THREE IMPACT ITEMS TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON IN 2019



Keith Burghardt
Community Bank

As the WWVCOOC begins 2019, and a new chapter in its history, it is important to remember our primary mission; “To be the number one business advocate in the Walla Walla Valley”. Part of effective advocacy within a defined community is identifying challenges across industries, and socializing them in an effort to prepare each other for collective success. With that concept in mind, here are three impact items that we’re keeping a close eye on at Community Bank in 2019. You might consider keeping them on your radar too.

Minimum Wage Escalation

Initiative 1433, approved by Washington voters in 2016, included an increase of the minimum wage (MW) to \$12.00 per hour on 1/1/2019. A final bump to \$13.50 will occur on 1/1/2020. Beginning 2021, and each year thereafter, WA L&I is required to make a cost-of-living adjustment to the state based on the CPI. Oregon has passed similar legislation on a path to a \$13.50 MW, but its phase-in is slower, reaching \$13.50 in 2022.

Urban areas, including Seattle and Portland, are better prepared for this escalation, as starting wages have been at or above these levels for quite some time. However, in more rural areas, including Walla Walla, Columbia, and Umatilla Counties, the shock of MW hikes will continue to prove challenging. Particularly for businesses and non-profits that require large numbers of hands-on staff to run their daily

operation.

Businesses can adapt to this change by leveraging technology, modifying hours/prices and reviewing compensation structures – but the impact for every business will be different. Start by identifying and quantifying the estimated impact for your organization upon the bump to \$13.50 next year, then plan accordingly.

Interest Rates

Even though we are in the first rates up environment in a decade, for businesses needing to borrow, interest rates are still relatively low. However, you may have also noticed, deposit rates are also up – largely in the CD markets. This dynamic is the result of a flattening yield curve, in that the spread between short-term and long-term interest rates is very narrow. In fact, during 2018, the yield curve experienced an inversion, meaning at a point-in-time short-term rates were higher than long-term. History tells us that all recessions experience an inverted yield curve prior to occurring, but not all yield curve inversions result in a corresponding recession. At least for now, the economy is still growing. We can’t predict what interest rates and the economy will do in 2019 and beyond. Nevertheless, businesses and consumers should pay close attention to the actions of the Federal Reserve, as it has considerable influence on the direction of interest rates in the United States.

Cyber-Security

In 2019, almost all businesses regardless of size, are using repositories of data to help conduct daily operations. From digital marketing platforms and social media, to the automation

of processing recurring credit/debit card payments, and contact management systems, even the smallest businesses are leveraging data and technology to optimize efficiency and results.

That said, every system that stores information, requires the owner of that system to protect its contents. This concept is not only of moral importance, but it also protects the reputation of its owner.

Simply identifying and documenting the information your organization is collecting, and the means used protect it, is a good start towards clean “cyber-hygiene”. As part of this effort, try to determine information that’s being collected, but unused. If your organization is collecting data not used in practice, you might not want to collect it. The old saying “less is more” rings true. Collect what is necessary; nothing more.

Thanks To the Chamber Staff

In closing, the board of the WWVCOOC would like to commend the Chamber staff and our Ambassador core during the recent CEO transition. Tawnya Richards and Marissa Miller kept the Chamber offices running smoothly, and our Ambassador core kept our events organized and successful.

Finally, a special thanks to former interim CEO Steve Owens, who has started a new position at Columbia REA. Steve provided a tremendous level of support and leadership during his time as interim CEO, as well as his efforts as Member Services Director. On behalf of the Board - thank you Steve Owens. We appreciate you and best of luck in your new role.



Join DaMa Wines for Dinner with Friends February 15 at 6:30pm. Email lori@damawines.com to reserve your spot.

KYLE TARBET

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

marketing, advertising, communications and government relations. There have also been many special projects including the building of the Twin Falls Visitor Center, implementing a new dues structure, strategic planning, incorporating a young professionals group and restructuring the ambassador committee.

In 2015, I started attending the Institute of Organizational Management, a certification program offered by the US Chamber of Commerce. This was an eye-opening experience and I was exposed many new, innovative ideas being explored by chambers and trade associations across the country. The amount of information I learned in those classes and from other chamber professionals from across the

country was overwhelming. I wasn't sure where to start but it didn't take long for me to start evaluating each and every program, committee and event with which I was involved. There were complete overhauls, new committees, adjustments to programs and a lot of hard work. I learned to always consider the value we were providing for our members and what benefits they needed. I am very proud to have completed the IOM certification in January of 2018 and of the many accomplished of the Twin Falls Area Chamber of Commerce during my eight-and-a-half-year tenure there.

Learning from the best in the chamber industry helped me grow and develop in my leadership style. I value collaboration and

partnering with individuals and organizations who share similar goals and vision for the business community. Chambers have a powerful voice in advocating for business and fostering an environment where innovation and hard work are able to thrive. Acting as a forum for all industries and businesses of diverse size, chambers are uniquely positioned to bring them all together while working on solutions to all types of challenges.

I am thrilled at the opportunity to join this organization and work with an exceptional staff and board of directors. I anxiously wait for February 19 when I officially start and get to meet you, the members of the Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce.



Contact the Chamber at 509-525-0850 to learn more!

MEMBERS' NEWSFLASH

SYMPHONY SERIES: THE KING'S SINGERS – FEB. 5

Acclaimed for their life-affirming virtuosity and irresistible charm, The King's Singers are in global demand. Their work is synonymous with the best vocal ensemble performance and appeals to a vast international audience. Please note: This performance will feature The King's Singers only and does not include Symphony musicians. [Click here](#) to purchase tickets.

FOR THE LOVE OF THE ROCKS – FEB. 8, 9 & 10

It's that time again... join Saviah Cellars February 8, 9 & 10 (Friday thru Sunday), for a wine and chocolate experience that will captivate your senses like no other. Alexander's is the only Chocolate Maker (Bean to Bar to Bonbon) in all of Eastern Oregon and Washington. You will be entranced with the elegance of the chocolates dancing on your tongue with Saviah's finest wines. For more information, please [click here](#).

EVENING OF ELEGANCE – FEB. 9

Evening of Elegance is Walla Walla Community Hospice's largest fundraiser of the year. The event is held annually at the historic Marcus Whitman Hotel and Conference Center. Festivities include a silent auction, live auction, raffles, spin-the-bottle wine game, and photo booth. This year's theme is Viva la Vida (Live the Life). A brief, yet inspiring presentation will focus on examples of "living your best life" during hospice care. The theme is a very subtle nod to 60's era Vegas, so feel free to find your dashing and/or daring Rat Pack-style fashions or simply wear what makes you most comfortable. To help ensure a successful event, please consider inviting others to join you at a table for 8. Make the evening more enjoyable by sharing it with friends! To purchase tickets or to reserve a table, [click here](#).

LIVE CINEMA SERIES: THE QUEEN OF SPADES – FEB. 17

The 2019 Live Cinema Series continues at Gesa Power House Theatre with a screening of the current Royal Opera House production of The Queen of Spades on Sunday, February 17 at 2:00 p.m. This production is filmed live in London and rebroadcast internationally to select screens. This screening runs approximately 3 hours 30 minutes including an onscreen introduction and one intermission. The Queen of Spades is performed in Russian with English subtitles. Reserved seating tickets (\$15 Adults, \$10 Students) and are [available online](#) or by calling the box office at 509-529-6500. For group ticket sales, please call 509-876-1662.



**YOU ALREADY HAVE A PERSONAL BRAND.
MAKE IT EVEN BETTER.**

**27TH
FEBRUARY**

11:30AM-1:00PM

**WITH GUEST SPEAKER
ALLISON CARNEY**

Your personal brand isn't curated; it's uncovered. The process starts with identifying the skills, talents, and values core to who you are. By naming them, you can start to build an authentic, consistent brand that rallies people to your cause. This Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce Women in Business Luncheon will help you hone that brand, giving you the building blocks to stand for who you are.

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Tickets: \$25 Members & Non-Members

Register at: wwwchamber.com | Email: info@wwwchamber.com



ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

Allison Carney is a communications consultant who has spent her career working with local and national nonprofits, with over 20 clients in Washington state. She develops communications strategies for organizations--from planning wide-reaching campaigns to coaching staff on best practices in social media.



— REAL ESTATE —
MARKET UPDATE: DECEMBER

2018 finished 2nd best for home sales in the Walla Walla Valley.



Walla Walla Association of REALTORS

Despite a slowing 4th quarter, the Walla Walla MLS (WWMLS) reported 807 home sales in 2018 and took 'second-best year ever' honors from 2017. The most active home selling year in WWMLS's history remains to be 2016 with 838 sales. Although buyers experienced low inventory levels and slowly rising interest rates throughout the year, it did not dampen their demand to buy homes in the Walla Walla Valley.

At year's end, listings declined to the lowest number in over 13 years.

The year ended with just 219 active WWMLS listings, 3% fewer than year-end of last year. Throughout the year the Walla Walla Valley maintained approximately 2 months of inventory and ended with just 1.8 months of inventory for the cities of Walla Walla and College Place.

The median sales price experienced an annual gain of 9.6%.

Lower inventory levels continued to put upward pressure on prices in 2018. The median sales price increased to \$249,459, a 9.6% in-

crease over the previous year. The Walla Walla Valley experienced a seller's market, especially for homes below \$600,000.

Walla Walla Real Estate 2019 Forecast:

So what will 2019 bring? To help answer that question, here is a summary from Windermere's Chief Economist, Matthew Gardner:

Home Sales:

In 2019, Matthew expects sales to rise by 1.6% and prices by 4.4%. Home price growth will continue to slow, given that we've reached an affordability "ceiling", but this should open the door to more buyers. New construction should increase by about 6.6%. Builders are still struggling with the high cost of land, labor, and materials, which will continue to stunt this segment of the market.

Mortgage Rates:

Rates have been rising since September of 2017 and Matthew expects this to continue with the 30-year fixed rate landing around 5.5% by the fourth quarter of 2019. However, they will remain very competitive compared to historic levels and rates above 6% aren't likely until 2020.

Is there a Housing Bubble?

Matthew shares that there is no housing bubble yet. Credit quality for new mortgage holders remains very high and the median down pay-

ment is at its highest level since 2004. That is not to say that there aren't several markets around the country that are overpriced, but just because a market is overvalued does not mean that a bubble is in place. It simply means that forward price growth in these markets will be lower to allow income levels to rise sufficiently.

Conclusion:

We expect home sales to stay consistent with last year's levels in the Walla Walla Valley and that new construction will continue to provide much-needed inventory. Upward pressure on price should subside as inventory levels begin to grow; twenty-three counties in Washington State ended the year with higher year-over-year inventory levels. Although often lagging a few months behind, Walla Walla ordinarily ends up trending with the rest of the state. This means that while the seller's market should continue into the new year, our local market should begin moving back towards balance.





FOCUS ON: INQUISITOURS

15 QUESTIONS WITH GUY & ROBIN GLAESER, FOUNDERS OF INQUISITOURS

1. What is the name of your business?

InquisiTours

2. What is your role/title?

Guy and Robin Glaeser: Founders

3. When was your business founded/established?

December 2016

4. How many people are employed at your business?

Two full-time employees and several contract contributors. We are in the process of hiring seasonal tour guides for the 2019 summer season.

5. What is your business slogan or motto?

Complete Your Northwest Experience

6. How did your business get started? What inspired you to start your own business?

We knew we both wanted to start a business in the Travel and Hospitality industry for as long as we've known each other. The final piece of the puzzle was moving to Walla Walla in 2014. With careers in tourism in Alaska, Canada and the Northwest (on the "West Side") our exposure to the amazing natural beauty, rich cultural history (Guy operated American History tours on the East Coast for over a decade and instantly appreciated the role of this region as the gateway to Northwest history), lovely people and tremendous wine of Eastern Washington, gave us a complete view of the entire Northwest as world-class

destination. We needed to experience this side of the state to learn how well it complements the "other" side and moving to the Walla Walla Valley helped us accomplish that.

7. What is your business best known for? Why?

Guy: Our NW Wine, Rail & Tours. It combines Seattle and Portland with Leavenworth and Walla Walla while experiencing a couple scenic rail journeys to complete the experience.

Robin: The tours were mentioned in USA Today's "10 unique ways to explore the Northwest" and the Saturday Evening Post which generated considerable interest.

8. What makes your business different from other businesses like it?

Unlike the large, national tour corporations, we are based right here in the Northwest and we consider ourselves experts in this region.



This is where we were raised and where our kids are growing up! Additionally, the only other companies conducting tours of the entire Northwest (WA, OR, ID) skew toward the adventure or extreme-sport traveler or with a focus on the larger metropolitan areas where we prefer locales "off the beaten path". Lastly, with over 25 years in the cruise industry, we've intentionally created tour products that marry well with the cruise passenger experience in mind. That said, you don't need to be on a cruise to enjoy our tours!

9. What about your business are you the most passionate?

Guy: After a career in operating, building and promoting tours around the globe, I am finally able to sing the praises of this fantastic place we live!

Robin: So many of the great partners we work with are also friends and neighbors which is



so inspiring. I imagine many people want to succeed for themselves and his or her community, and we feel very fortunate to be working towards both!

10. If you were to tell a potential customer why they should come to your business, what would you say?

Our knowledge of the area and the ability to customize our tours day-to-day, and in some cases hour by hour, creates a unique guest experience. Our most frequent customer comments revolve around our flexibility and customer service. However, the most rewarding comment we receive is that our tours are much more than just wine, and this is by design!

11. What is something people in your industry/niche have to deal with that you want to fix?

Robin: We are advocates for the entire Northwest (WA, OR, & ID). We've always felt that if you're a traveler visiting this area you don't care about state borders, it's the Northwest Lifestyle you are seeking. We are always optimistically working to create collaborations among the region's destinations and organizations without being defined by county or state lines.

Guy: Similarly, we are trying to create a complete Northwest experience without being defined by wine. Some wineries are now beginning to see their role in the broader tourism marketplace - not just in the culinary and wine sector of tourism. Hundreds of thousands of people take river cruises or travel to wine country, and some of them know very little about the vineyards and varietals; they are just seeking a unique, educational and relaxing travel experience.

12. Biggest "win" in your business's history? Explain what it was, how it came about, and what it meant to your business.

Guy: One of our goals has been to create

Northwest itineraries to enhance the Alaska cruises out of Seattle. Working with Leavenworth, Yakima and Walla Walla we received a grant from the Port of Seattle's Tourism Marketing Program to host domestic and international tour operators and media. The idea is to showcase the entire region as an easy add-on to the Alaska cruise. To get the recognition from an entity such as the Port, which not only operates the cruise ship terminals but Sea-Tac Airport, really validated our place in the industry.

Robin: Developing the cruise side of the business has been quite exciting. In 2019, for Holland America Cruise Lines, InquisiTours will be operating Seattle and Wine Country tours.

13. What's the biggest risk your business ever took? Explain what it was, what could have happened if it had gone wrong, and the end result of the risk.

The biggest risk we took was last year. We promoted a tour for Holiday Barrel Tasting and the Parade of Lights weekend with flights from Seattle included. As the evening approached, so did the fog. We circled the airport many times without knowing our fate. Our guest's experience was at risk; the entire weekend would have been entirely different, having to drive over late on a Friday instead. Fortunately, the plane landed in Walla Walla and a good time was had by all.

14. What advice would you give someone who wants to start their own small business?

Guy & Robin: Hah, we're pretty sure we're not qualified to answer this question!

Robin: Take your original marketing budget and travel budget and triple it! While technology allows us access to so much, nothing beats an in-person interaction for relationship building especially in a services business such as ours. We understand that travel is not only an investment but also a personal experience.

Guy: Everyone wants to project confidence,

but be yourself. Sometimes this means revealing your vulnerability which allows people to offer guidance and helps create a real connection. Align yourself with diverse, talented and caring people then buckle up because it is a serious roller coaster.

15. If you had an extra \$100,000 in your business, what would you use it for?

The short answer is...TRAVEL! Travel to promote, develop and expose our products.

Travel to promote our products. Although social media may help to tell our story, meeting customers in person, like at our upcoming Slovenia and Croatia trip talk on February 13 from 5:30-7:00pm at Browne Family Vineyards. It has proven the best way to connect with people.

Travel to develop new products. From our experiences, we have so many great destinations that we know well, but we want to continue to explore new and unique regions attractions to share with our guests. We never want to take people anywhere we haven't already been, and you need to get on the road to do that. Colombia, Vietnam, and Portugal are a few of the places at the top of our list. Additionally we are thinking about fun Rose Parade/ Rose Bowl next New Year's.

Travel to expose our products. Hosting travel professionals and media from all over the world so they may experience the tours and in turn, feel comfortable promoting not only our trips but the Northwest as a larger travel destination!



THANK YOU

NEW MEMBERS

Alvy's Barber Studio
 Green Valley Gardens
 Chany Venturini Couture
 Primary Residential Mortgage Inc
 Dayton Historical Depot Society
 TruthTeller Winery

RENEWING MEMBERS

Arthur H. Griff ('93)	Dayton Historical Depot Society ('18)
Bekins Northwest ('16)	Gard Vintners ('17)
Bergevin Lane Vineyards ('03)	Goose Ridge Estate Winery ('16)
Blue Valley Meats LLC ('11)	M.T. Head Brewing Company ('18)
Clark Arias Physical Therapy ('00)	Regency at the Park ('13)
Coldwell Banker First Realtors ('75)	SS Equipment ('12)
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Columbia Basin Hearing Center ('12)	Vivio Technologies ('18)
Columbia Fresh Produce ('09)	

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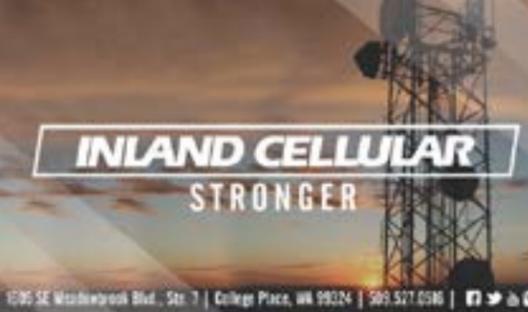
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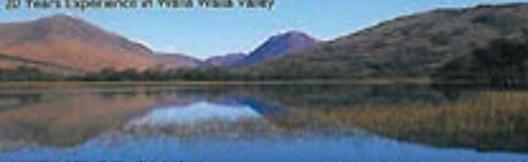


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- Cards/Gifts

FEBRUARY **EVENTS**

Check online for updates & to register for events

- 06** NEW MEMBER FAST TRACK @ the Chamber – 8:30am
- 07** AMALFI COAST PREVIEW NIGHT @ the Chamber – 5:30pm
- 12** BUSINESS AFTER HOURS @ The Thief Fine Wine & Beer - 5:30pm
- 21** RIBBON CUTTING @ Inland Cellular - 11:00am
- 27** WOMEN IN BUSINESS @ Courtyard Marriott - 11:30am

MARCH **EVENTS**

Check online for updates & to register for events

- 05** ALASKA PREVIEW NIGHT @ the Chamber – 5:30pm
- 06** NEW MEMBER FAST TRACK @ the Chamber – 8:30am
- 12** BUSINESS AFTER HOURS @ Holiday Inn Express - 5:30pm
- 17** RIBBON CUTTING @ Cherry Creek Mortgage - TBD