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WorkingNews

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Cowlitz County launches BizNet

The spirit of entrepreneurship has expanded to Cowlitz County. On December 7, the Cowlitz Economic Development Council (CEDC) will present its first BizNet networking event. Co-presented by the SWWDC, the program plans to build on the success of Oregon Entrepreneurs Network's PubTalk™ which launched in Clark County last December.



"BizNet is part of the CEDC's new strategic plan to focus on growing existing businesses and promoting entrepreneurship," said Ted Sprague, CEDC president. "We are working on recruiting and retaining talent in the region and BizNet is the perfect casual format for people to get a taste of what we have to offer."

During the program entrepreneurs will learn about strategies for marketing themselves to lenders. Scheduled speakers are Susan Hoosier from SBDC; Dean Piotrowski from Columbia Bank; and Brian Magnuson, founder of Cascade Networks. Like PubTalk™, the event will begin and end with valuable networking.

Sponsored by Columbia Bank and Cowlitz County, the event will be held at the Longview Country Club from 5:15 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The cost is \$18 and includes a drink ticket and appetizers. Click here to [REGISTER](#) or for more information contact Mary Brown at (360) 423-9921 or brown@cowlitzedc.com.

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Intensive welding program delivers certificates to young low-income adults

With job orders for certified welders on the rise, Clark College, ESD 112, nConnect and Swwdc collaborated to deliver a newly designed fast-track welding training program that packs a punch. The normal program, which can take up to a year to complete, was condensed and offered in an intensive 5-week format at Clark College. It began with an introduction to welding principles and then focused on wire-core welding—a high demand skill in the welding industry.



“Enrolling in a local welding training program is virtually impossible because all the slots are full. We were able to get Clark College to wedge a condensed session between their summer and fall terms when the facilities would normally be vacant,” said Nelson Kee, program manager at Swwdc.

The final result—all nine students achieved AWS 3G certification and eight of the nine achieved 4G certifications. With these industry-recognized American Welding Society (AWS) certifications in hand, participants will be well positioned for employment.

“These students (between the ages of 18 and 21) took the exact same certification that industry employees take,” said Patrick Gonzalez, department head of Welding Technology at Clark College. “They have great attitudes and a strong work ethic. They will be great employees.”

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Kelso Chamber of Commerce CEO Rick Winsman participates in skills gap discussion with White House officials



On November 16–17, the National Skills Coalition (NSC) brought a delegation of 17 employers in manufacturing, health care, construction, and clean energy together in Washington D.C. to meet with top policymakers regarding the impact of the skills gap on our economy.

The group, which included SW Washington's Rick Winsman, CEO of the Kelso Chamber of Commerce and Swwdc board member, met with White House officials from the Domestic Policy Council and Office of Management and Budget. On Capitol Hill, the group met with Senator Sherrod Brown's office (lead sponsor of the SECTORS Act) as well as Senate HELP Committee staff. The group also met with Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary of DOL's Employment and Training Administration, where they were welcomed by Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis.

The meeting objective was to discuss skill gaps in their industries, how sector partnerships can help fill those gaps, and why the SECTORS Act is important bipartisan legislation. Sector partnerships will bring employers together across an industry to figure out their common skill needs and work with education providers, labor, and community organizations to shape training accordingly.

In July, the House of Representatives passed—with bipartisan, unanimous support—the SECTORS Act, which would dedicate federal funding to the creation of sector partnerships. The Senate has yet to pass the Act.

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OIP and STEM bring internships/scholarships to 100 low income youth

Two Department of Labor grants have been interwoven to offer 100 low income youth a package deal in an effort to build the pipeline of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) workers in the region. The Opportunity Internship Program (OIP), operated by nConnect and ESD112, provides 90-hour internships for high school students who are interested in STEM careers.

"The Opportunity Internships model is changing lives," said Tim Probst, director of strategic initiatives for the Washington Workforce Association. "Students complete internships with local companies, receive assistance going to college, and are guaranteed a job interview with a local employer once they complete their college or job training. Parents all across the state have told me that it changed their children's lives."



nConnect's OIP participant Chelsea Dole, a graduate from Legacy High School in Vancouver, was awarded a scholarship from the Young Professionals of Vancouver. Chelsea completed a 90-hour internship through the OIP at Sigma Design, a product design and development company that provides services to high-tech companies in the Pacific Northwest. Chelsea intends to complete a transfer degree from Clark College and then transfer to Washington State University (Vancouver) to complete her bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

"After all the work I did in my Pre-Engineering class at the Clark County Skills Center and my internship experience at Sigma Design, I am confident that this is the career that I want to pursue," commented Chelsea.

The SW Washington OIP is administered by Swwdc in partnership with nConnect, Educational Service District 112, and local school districts. The program was won by the Washington Workforce Association with strong support from the Washington State Labor Council, the Association of Washington Business, and Senator Patty Murray.

Additional funds for student support and stipends are provided by the Workforce Investment Act and Department of Labor's (STEM) grant, both of which are administered by the Swwdc.

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ARRA helps skill-up hundreds of SW Washington residents



The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) \$2.7 million dollar Adult and Dislocated worker contracts allowed for over 200 people in Clark County and nearly 100 in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties to receive short-term training. To date 139 of the participants have found jobs. Some students are continuing their education while others are receiving intensive job search counseling at WorkSource. Many students made Dean's or President's List which will further position them for possible placement as the economy turns.

The intent of ARRA was to use the economic downturn as an opportunity to enhance skills. "While we are aware that jobs for our program graduates may not be immediately available, ARRA funding provided many local residents with opportunities to add new skills so they will be more employable as the economy recovers," says Lisa Nisenfeld, executive director for SWWDC.

The opportunity for Tracey Farr came at the perfect time. She was unexpectedly laid-off, having difficulty finding work and facing the likelihood that her unemployment insurance would run out. Through ARRA, Farr enrolled in ophthalmic medical assistant training and in January she began a 170-hour course at Clark College, designed specifically for ARRA. "The opportunity was a life-saver. I was falling behind on bills and didn't know what I was going to do," shares Farr. "It gave me a sense of hope when hope was quickly fading." As her training neared completion, Farr found employment and is thankful to be back-on-track. .



Clark College, Lower Columbia College, WorkSource, SWWDC and a handful of additional eligible training providers worked intensively together over the past year to deliver ARRA trainings. Recruitment for additional ARRA trainings is currently underway at WorkSource.

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Upcoming Events and Announcements

SWWDC prepares RFP for WIA Adult and Dislocated Worker services

The SWWDC will be soliciting proposals from qualified organizations to provide Adult, Dislocated Worker, and One-Stop Operator services under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) for the program year beginning July 1, 2011, with an option for renewal for up to three years (through June 30, 2014).

The RFP will be posted to the SWWDC website on December 15, 2010, with proposals due by 5:00 p.m. January 28, 2011. A Bidders' Conference will be held on Friday, December 17. Additional information regarding the RFP process will be updated frequently on the [SWWDC web site](#).

SWWDC congratulates Mike Karnofski

SWWDC board member Mike Karnofski has been appointed as new Cowlitz County Commissioner to replace Kathleen Johnson who retired at the end of August. Karnofski represents District 1 on the commission, which covers the southeast portion of the county including Kelso, Kalama and Woodland.

Mike is a 1967 graduate of Kelso High School and wore many hats during his 30+ career at Weyerhaeuser, including his latest position as regional services manager. His key goal as commissioner, he said, is to work on economic development, saying a strong workforce and tax base is key to a strong county. He has been a member of the SWWDC board since and will continue to serve as a county commissioner. Mike also serves as chair on the Cowlitz Economic Development Council.

SWWDC thanks retiring board members

SWWDC thanks Kathleen Johnson for her years of service and wishes her well in retirement. SWWDC also thanks retiring members Chuck Anderson, Rainy Atkins, Debbie Iverson and Kathy Kniep for their valuable contributions serving on the SWWDC Board of Directors.

Help shape the future of manufacturing in SW Washington

Don't miss out on an opportunity to learn about the state of manufacturing in Washington and where it's headed. Impact Washington contracted an independent pollster to conduct a statewide poll of 410 manufacturers—12% surveyed were based in Clark and Cowlitz counties. Come hear the results and discuss ways in which partners can work together to foster manufacturing innovation in SW Washington.

WHY ATTEND?

- Hear statewide 2010 inaugural survey results and analysis;
- Network with fellow manufacturing peers in SW WA;
- Share input in small focus groups for next steps in SW WA;
- Get information about available low-cost business resources; and
- Receive a copy of the State of Manufacturing in Washington 2010 Report.

WHEN: Thursday, December 16, 2010 from 9:00 to 12:00 p.m.

WHERE: WSU Vancouver (Room VADM 129), 14204 NE Salmon Creek Ave., Vancouver, WA

REGISTER FOR FREE: [Click here](#) or call 425-438-1146 x107

Presented by Impact Washington President John Vickland and in partnership with CREDC, CEDC and SWWDC.

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REDpoint takes its SW Washington PubTalk™ success straight to the bank



When REDpoint first approached SW Washington PubTalk™ committee members for help early this year, it was ripe for success; but like most start-ups, it was in need of more capital and assistance in formulating its financial plan. The Vancouver based medical device company has developed a line of infusion securement medical devices primarily directed at the hospital and patient-care markets.

PubTalk™ committee chairs, Kathy Sego and Richard Biggs (both active entrepreneurs), were quickly impressed and took REDpoint under their wings. "The products are good, inventive products that are being embraced by the market and the timing for bringing these products to the market doesn't hurt," said Sego.



After about 20 hours of initial pro-bono consultation, REDpoint had a polished Executive Summary, review of its go to market strategy, and coaching for their PubTalk™ presentation. The presentation was well received by the over 100 people in the audience and the solidly-delivered Q&A session left REDpoint shining. After the presentation, numerous executives approached the company and offered assistance—from marketing to tax preparation. REDpoint embraced this assistance and the

advice it received.

Since its debut at the PubTalk™ event, REDpoint received a complete overhaul to its financial statements, a polished business plan and has been able to add a number of seasoned executives to its management team. Kathy Sego was so impressed with the opportunity that she has joined the company as its Chief Financial Officer and has taken the lead in assisting the company in securing funding. Through her network, Sego was able to draw 46 potential investors, doctors, rotary club members and the like to her home for what she jokingly calls a soiree. "I was eager to introduce REDpoint to my colleagues. REDpoint offers investors the opportunity of investing in a well vetted company where a majority of the risks associated with startup companies have been mitigated. I have years of experience with startups and I knew this one has what it takes," continues Sego. Sego's instinct was right on the mark. In just a few weeks REDpoint is close to solidifying up to \$1 million in new capital.

As for next steps, "A lot of hard work is paying off," says Chuck Nokes, REDpoint CEO. "It's an unbelievable journey that began with three founders, me, Valerie Vance and Ron Ames, and we are overjoyed that we will likely become an international operation soon. We're currently working with offshore distribution partners to expand beyond the U.S.," continues Nokes.

The Swwdc initiated PubTalk™ a year ago in partnership with the Oregon Entrepreneurs Network and the Columbia River Economic Development Council soon joined the mix. Program content is based on attendee demand, for which business pitches are a favorite. Ideal start-ups are businesses that past the proof on concept stage with capacity to grow into substantial enterprises. Business interested in participating, or sponsoring, a PubTalk™ should contact Shelley Parker at 360-567-3176 or sparker@swwdc.org. The next PubTalk event in Vancouver will be January 19. More information can be found at www.swwdc.org.

Past sponsors have included: Bullivant, Houser Bailey PC; Blind Onion; Landerholm, Memovich, Lansverk & Whitesides; Eric Fuller & Associates, Inc.; JH Kelly; WSUV and Schwabe, Williamson and Wyatt.

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