



WALLY WEBSTER II

LYNNWOOD TIMES PERSON OF THE YEAR FOR 2025

Wally Webster II named Lynnwood Times Person of the Year for 2025

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—It with absolute pleasure that the Lynnwood Times editorial board has named Wally Webster II, Founder of the ACCESS Project, as Person of the Year for 2025, for his tireless commitment to community service, social justice, and commitment to tackling youth violence and, ultimately, paving the road for our next generation of leaders.

Webster (nicknamed the ‘Great Wally Webster’ by some) is a retired bank employee of 33 years, a U.S. military vet, and a community servant, in addition to his work with the ACCESS Project.

Webster’s call to community service has been a component of his life for as long as he could remember. As a child he recalled his late father telling him “you want to leave this world a better place than you found it,” though Webster didn’t truly understand what that meant until much later, when he began getting more involved in community activities.

Webster was born in, what he calls, the “swamps of” Alabama (or colloquially called the Bayou) under Jim Crow and the segregated laws of the South. After Emmett Till was killed in 1955 – lynched by a mob of White men who insisted the 14-year-old kid whistled at a White woman – Webster remembers his father giving him and his siblings a “lecture on how to survive in the South” as a Black man. At that point Webster decided he would leave the South as fast as he could.

As soon as Webster graduated high school he moved to Pasco, Washington, to live with an uncle who he had never met. He soon found that in Pasco, it was just as segregated as Alabama, with approximately 95% of its Black population living on the east side.

Seeing this, Webster created the first chapter of the Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE) when he was just a teen. Through his work he led the closure of a school which was de facto segregated.

“That’s the first time I really became community active,” said Webster.

Not too long after the closure of the segregated school, Webster joined the military fighting for our country’s rights and liberties. When he returned to Pasco, following his military career, he was hired on the spot as Executive



On May 14, 2025, the Snohomish County Council unanimously passes a resolution recognizing the Cops versus Youth Basketball Games led by the Access Project and its founder, Wally Webster II. (L-R) Snohomish County Council members Megan Dunn and Strom Peterson, Lynnwood Municipal Court Judge Valerie Bouffou, ACCESS Project founder and CEO Wally Webster II, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office Deputy Marquies Moses, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office Bureau Chief Mike Martin, and Snohomish County Council members Jared Mead, Sam Low, and Nate Nehring. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

Director of the Benton Franklin Community Action Committee in April 1969. He maintained this position until 1973.

As Executive Director Webster continued to fight for racial equality. One of his most proud accomplishments was establishing the, still existing, Martin Luther King Community Center in Pasco.

“I advocated for that, got \$400,000 from the federal government, the central labor council donated property that was the matching grant – because it was a block grant and it required matching funds – and built that community center,” said Webster.

In 1978, Webster moved to Western Washington to accept a position at Rainier Bank – the bank’s first Affirmative Action Director. At this time Rainier Bank was battling a lawsuit, filed by a group of women, which was ultimately settled by way of a consent decree. A requirement of that consent decree was to enact certain policies that would prevent any future acts of alleged “discrimination” – which resulted in the founding of Webster’s position.

Webster worked for 33 years in the

banking industry and retired in 2009. It was after his retirement when he grew more active in his community.

Today, Webster serves on the Board of Trustees for Edmonds College, sits on the Board of the Lynnwood Public Facilities District, and is a civilian mem-

ber of the SMART team (Snohomish County Multiple Agency Response Team), which investigates any time there is a use of force incident involving law enforcement and a community member.

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In Honor of Jim Smith: A Dedicated Servant

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—It is with great sadness we report that former Lynnwood Councilman Jim Smith, 75, passed away at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, January 15, his wife, Sherry informed the Lynnwood Times.

Jim Smith, born in Seattle, had been a steadfast figure in Lynnwood's civic life, embodying a commitment to public service that spanned more than a quarter-century. As a long-time resident of Lynnwood since at least 1968, Smith had consistently prioritized public safety, fiscal responsibility, and the well-being of Lynnwood residents. His tenure on the Lynnwood City Council reflected a hands-on approach to governance, marked by advocacy for law enforcement, tax relief, and practical solutions to local challenges.

Smith graduated from Edmonds-Woodway High School and attended Central Washington University, where he earned a double bachelor's degree in business administration and law and justice. He and his wife, Sherry, raised their four daughters in Lynnwood, instilling family values that extended into his public life.

Lynnwood City Council candidate and lead vocalist for the band GenRASun, Jim Smith, providing entertainment at the car show.

Professionally, Smith had a notable career in the music and entertainment industry as the owner, CEO, and COO of UNICAM Entertainment. For decades,



Jim Smith with his wife Sherry and their two grandchildren. Source: Jim Smith.

he booked and managed musical entertainment groups, produced concerts and events, and represented cover bands that performed at high schools and college dances across the region. He also played in local bands during his earlier years, with his latest called "GenRASun." His music career focused on covers from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and beyond, bringing music to senior centers throughout the Puget Sound.

Smith's journey in public office began with his election to the Lynnwood City Council, where he served multiple terms, accumulating over 25 years of experience. He was re-elected to the Council in 2019, where he held Position

4.

During his time on the council, Smith took on key leadership roles, including serving as Council Vice President. His liaison responsibilities included the Disability Board, among others, where he worked to address community needs in areas like accessibility and public facilities.

Smith has also served on the Snohomish County Board of Health for over a decade, was Chairman of the Board, and served on the LEOFF-1 Disability Board for over 12 years. He is the founder and past president of the Lynnwood Chamber as well as State Presi-

dent of the Washington Pilot's Association. He championed events such as the Lynnwood Christmas Tree Lighting and Celebration and the Lynnwood 4th of July Celebration. He was also chairman of Lynnwood's Festival for four years.

Throughout his political career, Smith emphasized public safety as the council's paramount duty. He was a vocal supporter of the Lynnwood Police Department, highlighting his long-standing respect and involvement with law enforcement.

"My support, involvement and respect for our Lynnwood Police goes back decades," he stated during his campaigns.

Smith was also known for his fiscal conservatism and efforts to alleviate financial burdens on residents. In October 2021, he played a pivotal role in a 4-3 council vote to eliminate the \$40 vehicle license fee; which was later vetoed by former Mayor Nicola Smith.

Supporters praised him as a "known quantity" with "proven experience" and a "steady hand," particularly for his emphasis on reducing taxes and keeping Lynnwood affordable for all residents.

In 2021, Smith sought higher office by running for mayor of Lynnwood with a platform centered on experienced leadership and community-oriented governance.

In 2022, he was investigated by Haggard & Ganson LLP into allegations

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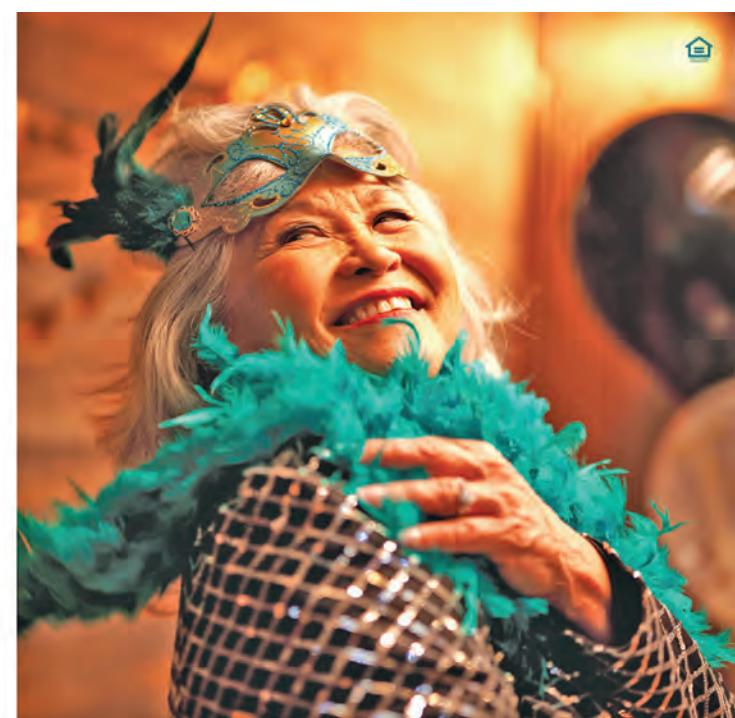
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Ferguson, aviation leaders launch Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Accelerator initiative

By MARIO LOTMORE

MUKILTEO—Washington State Governor Bob Ferguson, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, Senator Marko Lias, other law makers, and leaders in aviation technology research and sustainability launched the Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Accelerator (CSAA) today – a new initiative designed to accelerate Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) production deployment and adoption across the Pacific Northwest.

“Clean fuels are a priority for Washington State. It’s good for jobs, it’s good for the economy, it’s good for the environment. And I think we can all agree that sustainable aviation fuel is literally the future of this industry,” said Gov. Ferguson. “The good news is that Washington is uniquely situated to be the leader in this massive fuel industry for decades, and generations, to come.”

In partnership with the Washington State Department of Commerce, CSAA is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the renewable fuels industry in the Pacific Northwest.

The announcement came at Boeing’s Future of Flight Aviation Center in Mukilteo on Thursday, January 8. The event consisted of remarks by government, and industry leaders and partners, followed by a panel discussion with CSAA Board vice chair and Managing Director, Earth Finance Tim Zenk,



Government and industry leaders at Thursday’s event. Those pictured include: Senator Marko Lias, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, Snohomish County Councilperson Megan Dunn, Mukilteo Mayor Joe Marine, Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin, Representative Mary Fosse, Mukilteo City Council President Jason Moon, and many more. Photo: Kieran Briscoe, Lynnwood Times

Amazon executive Guy Palumbo, SkyNRG executive and former State Sen. Andy Billig, Port of Seattle Executive Director Steve Metruck, and Machinists Union, District 751, Jon Holden. The topic of the panel discussion was focused on investment innovation and workforce development.

“Today we’re launching the next chapter in our state’s history, as a global, environmental, economic, and technology leader,” said Senator Lias. “In the last couple of years, I’ve been proud to champion for investments in the state

legislature, most recently \$10 million from WA State, met with a \$10 million philanthropic match. So we’re sitting on a \$20 million investment on catalyzing on this industry and that is so exciting.”

Lias thanked the Boeing Company, Alaska Airlines, Snohomish County, Microsoft, the Port of Seattle, Washington State University, Amazon, and the Washington State Department of Commerce for their continual support and partnership.

Gov. Ferguson, who followed Senator

Lias in remarks, first deemed Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers as the “Washingtonian of the Day” for being the one person who has been forefront in the State’s initiative of bringing sustainable aviation fuel to, not only to Snohomish County, but to the state at large.

In 2023, the County, under Somers’ leadership, opened the world’s very first SAF Research and Development facility at the Snohomish County-operated Paine Field Airport. While the site is currently temporary, the county has plans to open a permanent facility at a later date – yet to be determined, according to Snohomish County Communications Director Kari Bray.

Well before, and even after, the opening of Paine Field’s SAF R&D facility, Somers has continued to be a champion for sustainable aviation fuel in Snohomish County and beyond, Ferguson said Thursday.

“We have the resources, we have the will, we have the leadership, and we have the partnership who are all here today. In other words, we all have pieces to play to ensure this once in a generation economic opportunity is realized,” said Gov. Ferguson.

Ferguson also thanked Washington State University for the continued research on SAF.

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City of Mukilteo to hold first ever Lunar New Year celebration at Rosehill Community Center Feb 12

By MARIO LOTMORE

MUKILTEO—The City of Mukilteo will be holding its, first-ever, Lunar New Year celebration this year, on February 12, at Rosehill Community Center. The event – which will run from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. – is completely free, open to the public, and will feature delicious food, jaw-dropping performances, and the opportunity for cultural exchanges and learning, the city says.

“Every city’s celebration has its own character, and Mukilteo’s reflects who we are as a community. Mukilteo has one of the highest concentrations of Asian American residents in Snohomish County, and this event has received strong support not only from Asian community members, but also from residents across the city,” said Simon Bai, with Mukilteo’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission.

All elementary and middle school PTAs and PTOs within Mukilteo city limits were invited to participate — and each one were accepted, Bai added, which, he feels, “speaks volumes about community buy-in”.

Organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, and others have also shown strong support.

“That level of collaboration really reflects how welcoming Mukilteo is and how much our residents value cultural diversity,” said Bai.

Guests can expect a variety of Asian cuisines, including Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and more. Much of the food will come from Mukilteo-based restaurants, to highlight the city’s local businesses. Food and refreshments will be free to the public, made possible through support from the City of Mukilteo and the Korean Community Service Center.

City leadership, including the Mukilteo City Council and Mayor Joe Marine, have been supporting bringing a Lunar New Year celebration to the city for some time. According to Bai, their continued support of the DEI Commission’s budget over the years has made it possible to host events like this. Looking ahead, the DEI Commission hopes to make this event more

financially self-sustaining so it can continue to grow in future years.

Mukilteo’s Lunar New Year celebration will be hosted by Edmonds-based Korean Community Service Center, which has been serving the community for over 40 years, helping individuals and families facing a wide range of challenges, in addition to supporting initiatives that align with their mission of community well-being.

“When it became clear that the scale of this event was more than the DEI Commission could manage alone, Executive Director Joomi Kim generously offered KCSC’s support. That support includes financial assistance and promotion through their community network,” said Bai. Bai continued that the upcoming Lunar New Year celebration is just the beginning for the DEI Commission, and cultural events in Mukilteo in general. The Commission regularly discusses future cultural programming, especially during its annual planning meetings, he said encouraging members of the public to also offer their own suggestions for cultural events.

Lynnwood Neighborhood Center actualizes 30-year vision with ribbon cutting: An investment for 'generational twinkles'

By KIENAN BRISCOE

LYNNWOOD—Volunteers of America Western Washington (VOAWW), travel writer guru Rick Steves, multiple stakeholders and investors, and community supporters finally cut the ribbon on Lynnwood's brand-new, highly anticipated, Lynnwood Neighborhood Center (LNC) near Trinity Lutheran Church and Schools on Friday, January 9.

"The Lynnwood Neighborhood Center is a long-awaited dream and it's about to open its doors to the public and become a reality," said Rick Steves. "When this center is full, when the tenants' doors are open, and people start to take advantage of its services it will breathe life into this building. To me it's like an organism, filled, and fueled by us – an energizing metabolism of people coming, people going, needing, sharing, laughing, playing...the result is the fabric of our community will be stronger and those who need these services will benefit people in ways that we can hardly imagine."

The LNC is Lynnwood's new 40,000 square-foot facility, which will serve over 20,000 community members annually, from the most vulnerable needing support to at-risk children and youth.

Through various non-profit and organizational partnerships, the LNC will act as a one-stop shop for those seeking, or in need of, community resources, medical, dental and behavioral health clinics, an early childcare education and assistance program (ECEAP) preschool, a Boys & Girls club, technology lab, adult day programs, community events and gatherings, culturally specific programs, refugee and immigrant assistance, a commercial kitchen and café, and classes, trainings and workshops serving the areas of South Snohomish County and beyond.

VOAWW President and CEO Brian Smith, who has been with VOAA for over a decade and has worked on the LNC, in some capacity, from concept through completion, reflected on the history of our nation since this project had first landed on VOA's desk about 15-years ago, from Blockbuster Video filing its first bankruptcy, to Apple releasing the first iPad, to President Barack Obama's first year in Presidency.

"Just as our nation has undergone so many changes in that amount of time, so has this project. The services and design have shifted, and morphed, into



VOAWW President and CEO Brian Smith cutting the ribbon of the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center on January 9, 2026. The Center officially opens January 24, 2025. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

something that will a spectacular asset for this region for years to come," said Smith. "We engaged in community listening sessions, we researched community needs assessments, and we really just took a lot of time to reassess the needs of our community in a post-COVID world. We have been able to create something that will provide targeted, and relevant, services to people of all walks of life."

But this "shifting" and "morphing" doesn't stop with its opening later this month. Rick Steves, who has personally contributed the land, and approximately \$5 million (including a \$1 million match) to the project's \$26.6 million price tag, said the very design of the LNC was strategically intended to "morph" with the community's shifting needs.

The building was also designed, and constructed, with environmental stewardship in mind – certified Gold in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for utilizing solar energy for power (with solar panels installed on the roof – any surplus of which can be transferred back to the grid), an all-electric community kitchen, and even offering shore power in the parking lot to support an array of food trucks during community events.

Led by GLY Construction, Tyler Tonkin, Executive Vice President, told the Lynnwood Times the most exciting thing about working on the project thus far is knowing the tremendous benefit it will serve for the community.

"The systems are optimized to be highly

efficient and clean within the building, the material choices within the building also helped in getting the LEED certification as well as the systems in place," said Tonkin.

The building's design, on the other hand, was handled by ARC Architects. Emily Wheeler, with the architecture firm, informed the Lynnwood Times the design was a collaborative process with the many nonprofits who will be setting up shop inside – from interviewing them on their various needs, to implementing it in form and practice.

"One of our primary goals was the make the space welcoming for everybody and I think we're getting there," said Wheeler.

National VOA President Mike King applauded VOAWW, specifically President/CEO Smith for his instinctual, "special" gift of, not only getting things done, but moving along the conversation.

"This is just incredible, a phenomenal achievement, how [VOAWW] stayed with it," said King. "It would have been so easy to throw in the towel, at any step in the way – like many projects do. But the difference is [VOAWW] had the common bond of faith, and commitment, and desire, and love for those who will be benefiting in this. That held [them] together and kept [them] from throwing in that towel. It kept [them] together, and kept [them] moving, and now look at what we have."

King added that the LNC will become a "national model" for similar resource centers across the country – a much-needed asset in a "time when we're surrounded by conflict."

"We're surrounded by conflict but here you show what love, and trust, and collaboration can do for the human race," said King.

Trinity Lutheran Church and Schools Lead Pastor Hector Garfias chalked the LNC's success up to the countless community partners and stakeholders to come together under the shared vision of love for all.

"We are able to do these things when we work together and when we see each other as members of a larger body with a specific call, to be the presence, the catalyst, of healing, transformation and holiness in the community," said Garfias. "Trinity Lutheran Church and

Schools, together with Volunteers of America, I believe have responded to the call to join God's mission as one, to serve, to nurture, and to love all people and for that I thank God for being a part of the opportunity."

Background of the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center

The idea for the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center all began in 1996 when travel writer Rick Steves – who, for the first time in his career, found himself having "extra cash on hand" – purchased some property near Trinity Lutheran Church and Schools with the intention of building something community-oriented. At that time, he was considering building affordable housing but decided to "raise the bar," so to speak.

Not knowing which direction to take it, Steves donated the land to nearby Trinity Lutheran Church, who believed in Steves' vision but lacked the resources to actualize its ambitious end goal. That's when they turned towards Volunteers of America Western Washington who, under the leadership of President Smith, transformed an empty plot of land into a much-needed facility that will lead to "generations of twinkles," Steves said – a phrase he used to describe the "twinkle" in his father's eye when he attended one of his choir concerts as a kid.

"We're just so excited. Everyone from the state to four municipalities have given money to this project so everyone can be proud of this gem that we have, the first of its kind in South Snohomish County," Steering Committee member and Lynnwood City Councilwoman Derica Escamilla told the Lynnwood Times. "This is it, this is what we've been waiting for, for forever."

Other steering committee members included Lynnwood Times Person of the Year for 2025 Wally Webster II who told the Lynnwood Times he's believed this "was the most impactful building in the City of Lynnwood, and South County, because it brings together all the services for people who need them."

Though the LNC is 97% funded, including \$4.6 million from Snohomish County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, as well as federal contributions, state contributions, and municipal contributions from Lynnwood, Edmonds, and Mountlake Terrace, there is still about \$200,000 left to go for the LNC to open debt-free.

"When Rick spoke to local law makers he spoke to our hearts with his stories. I think what made it possible is the hope, and inspiration, that everybody brought to the table made that possible," said Representative Cindy Ryu. "This is a demonstration of the partnerships, and talents, from church, to government, to organizations and individuals. It's a great demonstration how we can absolutely get things done and do it well with a few twinkles in our eyes and so that we can love one another."

In honor of Rick Steves work on the LNC, his acquisition of a nearby apartment complex reworked to be low-barrier, low-income, housing, and his acquisition of the Lynnwood Hygiene Center, Snohomish County Deputy Executive Kent Patton, speaking on behalf

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Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin outlines 2026 priorities

By MARIO LOTMORE

EVERETT—Leading into 2026, the Lynnwood Times sat down with Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin — who just won another term last November with a, nearly, 11-point win — to share with you what the City of Everett has in store for the coming years.

Ahead of the 2025 General Election, Mayor Franklin shared her priorities and platform, which centered on human services, housing, and public safety. Franklin shared that residents could expect to see a lot of “building on the successes we’ve had over the last eight years in those areas” during this next term.

“Public safety has been our top priority since day one and it remains a top priority as an administration and I look forward to work, in close partnership, with all of our teams and other partners to continue to work on public safety and reduce crime,” said Mayor Franklin.

Franklin highlighted some of the successes the city has seen under her leadership, from forming one of the best-staffed police departments in the region (and highest per capita), just shy of being 100% staffed.

This term, Franklin wants to hone in on youth safety, she shared, which she plans to work closely with the city’s Youth Advisory Board to address.

“Just one crime involving a juvenile, or juvenile victim, is one too many,” said Franklin.

In addition to youth safety, Mayor Franklin consistently heard from residents that traffic safety is a number one priority of theirs so she also wants to continue work on implementing Everett’s ‘Vision Zero Plan’ and do everything she can to improve traffic safety, human trafficking, and overall illicit activity.

“What you can also expect is our city to embrace technology. The tools that we’re using are working and we have good safeguards in place to protect residents, and protect data, but also reduce criminal activity,” said Franklin adding that she also plans to continue leveraging the city’s Alternative Response Team as part of the public safety network.

Transitioning into economics, Mayor Franklin’s ultimate vision for the City of Everett is to be “the best city to do business” and feels Everett is “close to getting there.”

“We have worked really aggressively to improve our permitting processes and working closely with the development community, with the port and other key partners, to ensure we are better at serving the community,” said Franklin. “The quicker we can move those permits through, it’s better for the city, it’s a better quality of life, and we can get new housing, get new restaurants. We have a housing crisis and you can only address that if you’re able to build and build affordably. Part of that is not adding more red tape for developers.”



Mayor-elect George Hurst, wife and family at Monday, December 8, 2025, City Council meeting shortly after being sworn-in. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

One specific development project Mayor Franklin is particularly excited about is the city’s upcoming Outdoor Event Center which is currently at 60% design. The Everett City Council just passed a resolution last week that highlighted some of their values, and the City has already begun the bidding process on the properties.

“I’m excited for the transformation nature of it. It’s a part of our city that is so ripe for redevelopment, it’s the end station for light rail, our transit center is there, and it will really add to the quality of life,” said Franklin. “If you’re not a baseball fan that’s okay, it’s also USL soccer, and concerts, festivals, and events.”

Franklin pointed to the Angel of the Winds arena which, over the course of the last 20 years, just got up to 100 events last year. The upcoming Outdoor Event Center (the new home of the Everett Aquasox) will hold more than 100 events right out of the gate. The event center is scheduled to open in 2027, which is a target set by Major League Baseball.

Minor League Baseball generates approximately \$12 million for the city, Mayor Franklin added. With the current Everett Aquasox home of Funko Field being leased out by the Everett School District, this will increase revenue for the city exponentially, which can then be reinvested into parks, public safety, and key services the community relies on and wants their city to provide.

With the FIFA World Cup 2026 coming to Seattle next year, and the City of Everett being named an official Fan City, Mayor Franklin said she is looking forward to “showcasing Everett and everything that is gorgeous, and amazing, about the city on a global stage.” But with that responsibility, Franklin, added comes strategic readiness.

“That means putting on our best face forward, making sure we are investing and really highlighting Everett in a positive way, working in partnership with the Port. I think our fan zone is going to be the best in the state,” said Franklin.

Franklin added the city will be making investments on public safety and beauti-

fication as well. Regarding public safety efforts, the City is in works with its federal partners for grant money which could be used to bolster emergency services, and police services, to create a “great fan experience for everyone coming.”

With Sound Transit planning to expand Link light rail to Everett (by 2037), but also reporting a \$20 billion shortfall, Mayor Franklin, as a Board Member on Sound Transit, as asked what needs to be done to ensure that project remains on schedule.

“The entire system has to be approached with value engineering and it’s important that, as we do that, we don’t use the lever of delaying because that ends up costing us exponentially more,” said Franklin. “It’s not fair to our Everett taxpayers who have been paying into this system for years and don’t, yet, have light rail in this community.”

Mayor Franklin added that she will continue to advocate for Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers, and whoever the newly appointed third Snohomish County board member will be, to ensure Sound Transit prioritizes the Everett link – as an important job center for the region with Boeing alone having 35,000 employees.

“This is not just about getting our residents to Seattle, this is about getting folks in other parts of King County and beyond into Everett and taking care of the nightmare that is I-5. Getting the system built quickly will help with some of that congestion,” said Franklin.

With housing continuing to be a top priority for Mayor Franklin, regarding EMOTE (Emergency Mobile Opioid Treatment Everett), and low barrier housing for those suffering from housing insecurity as a result of substance abuse or behavioral health issues, Mayor Franklin said the city needs to expand its services outside of the city, working with other Mayors to create pathways for those seeking treatment. She will also continue to champion for funding, in addition to working with non-profit, and faith-based, partners.

The federal government recently announced they could potentially reduce

Continuation of Care (COC) amounts for these programs, which Mayor Franklin said could pose a risk for the entire region, particularly those non-profits who provide shelter, housing, and case management to populations who need it.

EMOTE, however, is funded separately from the COC so it wouldn’t be affected directly from these reductions, but if the programs who do rely on COC were to have reduced resources it could impact EMOTE’s pool of referrals.

Going into a third term, and being one of the region’s more experienced Mayors, Mayor Franklin was lastly asked what goes on “behind the scenes” of being Everett’s Chief Officer, and how she’s able to get so much accomplished.

“It’s a lot of work but we have a great team here, at the city, and I’m really honored and proud to work with them. This job is 24/7 and we have a team of dedicated public servants who are really passionate about their areas of work,” said Franklin. “When we want to build a new bridge, start a program, build a shelter, it’s all hands-on deck going the same direction. We work together across different departments, we work across different communities, different cities, we advocate to the state, to the county. I go to D.C. twice a year, sometimes more, to advocate to different departments...this is all the behind the scenes work to get all the resources aligned and the teams aligned, to start moving forward on important projects for the community.”

Mayor Franklin added that she’s grateful for talented, dedicated, staff to make that all happen continuing that her background in nonprofits helps on these fronts.

In closing, Mayor Franklin added that she wants to focus more on community engagement this term. When she first assumed office, she feels that many residents felt the city was focused more on North Everett, for example, leaving South Everett behind.

Over the course of her tenure, she has worked hard to bring in more diverse voices into her teams and commissions. As the City Council moved to Districts a few years ago, Mayor Franklin feels there’s an opportunity there to work more closely with the council to really focus on district engagement.

“I really want Everett to be the best city in the Pacific Northwest, to raise a family, pursue an education, start a career, retire and just enjoy a high quality of life. And that takes all of us. This is really a beautiful city, with rich, cultural diversity, and beautiful parks. When you’re campaigning you’re door knocking and speaking to all of these members of the community, and I can’t tell you the number of times I encouraged someone to join a commission because they’re voices matter and we really want to make sure the work we’re doing is representing them and serving them long into the future,” said Mayor Franklin.



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A Year of 'Recovery and Renewal': Mayor George Hurst on Lynnwood's future under new leadership

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—Longtime Lynnwood City Councilman, and community servant, George Hurst was promoted to Mayor by voters in that last General Election under the platform of housing affordability, fiscal responsibility, and public safety. Lynnwood Times Senior Reporter sat down with Hurst to hear how this vision will work in practice, over the next four years, and what Lynnwood residents can expect in the coming months.

Hurst first spoke on housing affordability first, noting that he has some ideas for policy reform that would reduce the cost of construction on new homes.

"Unfortunately, last November the council passed some things that do increase the cost of constructing a new home, but I think they did that with sincere hope, and they really were pressured to come up with new revenues," said Hurst. "I'd like to step back a little bit and ask them to reconsider some of those because the fewer costs the city imposes on new construction, the lower the costs for home ownership."

Another big priority of Hurst's is city employee retention, especially given the number of tenured executive leadership positions who left under the previous Mayor's administration. Positions including Sarah Olsen, Deputy Parks Director, Art Ceniza, City Administrator,



Mayor-elect George Hurst, wife and family at Monday, December 8, 2025, City Council meeting shortly after being sworn-in. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

Lynn Sordel, Parks Director (who was always scheduled to retire but was still unsatisfied with the former Mayor's dismissal of his recommendation for his successor), former Lynnwood City Councilwoman Shirley Sutton (who cited her lack of faith with city leadership as her reasoning) and so on.

Hurst suspects these departures were due to a "culture" in City Hall where the Mayor's Office was "not very open to suggestions or ideas."

"I will do everything I can to encourage all employees to bring forward ideas, because we are still facing a deficit," said Hurst adding that, as it pertains to the City's \$4 to \$5 million deficit going in to 2026, he intends to bring forward a Blue Ribbon panel in his first 30 days.

Hurst continued that, while looking at new revenues is definitely on the forefront of his mind, the City may have to look at some "hard decisions" as it pertains to expenditures but "Lynnwood will be better for it when we do that."

Despite a recent U.S. GDP report observing an upward trend in consumer spending (and approximately 40% of Lynnwood's revenue coming from sales tax), Hurst still plans to keep conservative as it comes to projected revenue and the City's existing financial forecast using a zero growth projection. He said the city can always make adjustments when the city puts together its new biennium for 2027-2028, with forecasts in growth in mind.

"But right now I really want to be conservative. That's what didn't happen before in this budget and I just think we need to be careful," said Hurst.

Hurst was asked about his transition team, who he said has been meeting with him for the last six weeks leading up into our interview. Hurst did not mention any specific names but explained that this team is more of an advisory team, to assist him as he transitions into Mayor without leading to any immediate staffing changes.

"We are going to assess what's going on in the executive office, but I don't think there will be any wholesale changes. The transition team I'm talking about are former city employees, they know the city, and it's more just helping me ease me into the office and we'll just see how things go from there," said Hurst.

Regarding inclusivity, with Lynnwood's motto being 'All Are Welcome' after all, Hurst was then asked how he intends to live true to this commitment – with specific reference to a recent controversy where the LGBTQIA+ community felt they were not being accepted over controversies revolving around raising of a pride flag at Wilcox Park.

Wilcox Park, colloquially known as Lynnwood's 'Flag Park,' was erected during the City's bicentennial. A large part of

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A conversation with the new mayor of Mountlake Terrace

By MARIO LOTMORE

MOUNTLAKE TERRACE—Dr Steve Woodard was unanimously voted, by the council, to serve as the Mayor of Mountlake Terrace – a privilege he said he is extremely "humbled" by. As such, his ultimate vision for the city, he added, is one shared by the council at large – a vision that has been a collaboration between all council members over the last six years he's served.

Fiscal sustainability remains at the forefront of this vision, along with "sacrifice," and maintaining Mountlake Terrace as a "destination city."

"We've made a concerted effort to make sure our residents know how to look in and get the information they want, but more importantly how to get that information out," said Dr. Woodard. "If we can get a community ambassador program that would be outstanding – it's just a different way of getting our community engaged."

As for maintaining Mountlake Terrace as a "destination city," Dr. Woodard added that the Link light rail extension to Lynnwood (with stops in Mountlake Terrace) has really opened the city up to visitors, and residents alike, coming to and from. With FIFA World Cup 2026 taking place in Seattle this year, it only adds to Mountlake Terrace's appeal as "the gateway into Snohomish County."

"It's our opportunity to really show how beautiful Snohomish County really is because we're a wonderful blend of nature and built environment," said Dr.



Dr. Steve Woodard, Mountlake Terrace City Councilman and President of Community Engagement at Volunteers of America, was awarded the Stems Award at the Red and White Banquet on April 29, 2023. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

Woodard. "As visitors come in, I hope they don't just get stuck in downtown Seattle. I hope they come north."

The City of Mountlake Terrace is unique in that it uses a Council-Mayor model, in conjunction with a professional City Administrator staff member, unlike most cities where the Mayor serves as an executive decision-maker. Other cities in Snohomish County that use this model include Mill Creek, Granite Falls, and Bothell.

What's also unique is that Mountlake Terrace is one of the few cities in Snohomish County (the county, itself, included) that is not diving into 2026 with a budget deficit. Mountlake Terrace is still projecting a \$4.2 million shortfall

through 2030 (due to expenditure rates increasing nearly 4% annually while revenues are only increasing 0.8%), but it has a stockpile of reserves ready to offset that blow and has been proactive in preparing for that shortfall well ahead of its arrival, through its Fiscal Sustainability Taskforce and community-led Town Halls, for example.

Dr. Woodard spoke on this approach to city operations as the City Administrator being the "head" and the City Council and Mayor forming the "heart" of its operations. As an elected Mayor, to Dr. Woodard, "you have to be both of those things."

"You won't find many cities the size of Mountlake Terrace that are full-service

cities. It's a very complex operation," said Dr. Woodard. "That said, I'm very happy with our approach. We're four square miles and I don't think I would get into politics if it was a bigger city. In just four square miles you feel connected to it. What got me involved is recognizing I'm putting in money and I can see it a block away, whether it's in front of my house or a block away."

One of Dr. Woodard's favorite thing about being in politics, he added, is he's "always thinking in decades, he's not just thinking about tomorrow." He applauded the city's Events Coordinator for all the great work they do making sure the community "remains a community."

With Mountlake Terrace being largely a "bedroom community," and a large part of its tax revenue coming from property tax, Dr. Woodard said that the topic of maintaining the city's affordability is on the forefront of the entire council's mind, using the example of its rezoning of Town Center six years ago as an example of densifying controlled parts of the city which allows more suburban areas untouched, as far as developments go.

This, Dr. Woodard added, is what he means by "sacrifice." One of the first "big votes" – in terms of how it felt on his heart – was voting "himself out of his home," when he voted in favor to rezone the area where he lives.

"We are a model for the state in how

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Lynnwood actor Jon Meggison begins directorial debut

By MARIO LOTMORE

LYNNWOOD—Lynnwood-based actor/director/screenwriter Jon Meggison began filming his feature directorial debut last week — an upcoming film entitled ‘Where the Road Ends’ which he also wrote and stars in.

Where the Road Ends is an extension of a short film Meggison wrote called ‘Battle of Love’ which won him two awards at the IndieFest Film festival 2025 (Best First-Time Director and Best Lead Actor). The short film premiered during a private viewing in Bellevue last January.

The story is based on Meggison’s own lived experiences, through relationships and hardships, following a couple (Michelle and Jeff) as they are forced to confront the choices that brought them together—and the roads that may ultimately pull them apart.

The Feature film Where the Road Ends is an extension of Michelle and Jeff’s story as they navigate a defining moment in their lives—one shaped by love, loyalty, and the weight of unfinished business. Surrounded by friends, obstacles, and personal truths, their journey becomes a powerful reflection on commitment, growth, and what it means to keep moving forward when the path ahead is unclear.

Where the Road Ends stars Amanda Hoang — reclaiming her role as Michelle in Battle of Love, Mia Mosley as Anna, Grace Madland as Mia, Neal Cabanos as Kobe, Saman Hassan as Jessica, Christopher Clark as Tommy, Lexy Greenwood as the therapist, Zoe Callista as Zoe, and Mike Rodriguez as Rodney.

“This added cast brings more light and really helps bring the story together. These are really familiar characters that people can relate to,” Meggison told the Lynnwood Times. “This full feature film is [based on] experiences and things I went through and is a real story of what I experienced. It’s a story for millennials and what dating is like in today’s time. This will be my first time directing, acting and producing a film on my own.”

The themes of Meggison’s character-driven romantic drama include personal crossroads and life-changing decisions, relationships under pressure, loyalty, growth and self-discovery, and the emotional weight of choosing a future, he said.

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Actor/Director/Writer Jon Meggison with Hollywood actor Robert Lasardo on the set of Jason Vorhees: Origins. Photo: Jon Meggison

To set the tone of a “grounded, character-driven story” the film has naturalistic dialogue, and emotionally honest performances.

Filming is taking place in the Seattle area, and the current release date is set for 2027. It will be available to watch on most streaming platforms.

About Jon Meggison’s career in film

Lynnwood born-and-raised actor Jon Meggison hit the ground running when he began his acting career in January 2020, working through the challenges of the pandemic, self-promoting, and quickly landing roles in films alongside big names like Eric Roberts and Stephen Sorrentino. Within his first year, he acted in 10 films and four commercials, winning the Best Lead Actor award for his performance in the indie film It Takes Talent, which also won Best Drama at the Paris Film Festival.

When the country shut down at the beginning of 2020, Meggison, in an attempt to keep busy, decided he would try his luck with modeling. He reached out to the Seattle Talent agency, doing several commercial print projects for outlet stores such as Macy’s and H&M. While modeling, his agency asked him if he had any interest in acting. At first, he told them no. A few months went by and the agency kept asking, so Meggison caved and decided he would give it a shot.

“It seemed like during COVID a lot of people weren’t trying to find work. To

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“When I stepped on set with him [LaSardo] it was the coolest thing. He pushed me and gave me a lot of good advice. It’s crazy because I remember watching in on TV as a kid and now I got to work with him,” said Meggison.

Jason Vorhees Nightmare will be released in March, 2026. It’s directed/written by Aaron Carlson from CCC entertainment.

Meggison owes his creative process, when developing a role, to his three sons. Despite working constantly on one project after another, Meggison informed the Lynnwood Times his work load never affects the development of any of his characters, focusing, and perfecting, on one at a time.

from page 7 WOODARD

we rezoned our Town Center,” said Dr. Woodard. “All of this is to ensure we don’t lose Mountlake Terrace, especially for those who grew up here. But at the end of the day the region is changing, and we need to keep up with that. With that, though, is we have a wonderful use of funds where we’re doing everything we can to bring the community in and ask what’s important to them, to make sure we give our residents the chance to input instead of leaving the decisions to the council because they elected us.”

Regarding public safety, Mountlake Terrace’s crime rates (specifically violent crime) is relatively low compared to other Snohomish County cities but crimes against property remains an ongoing issue.

To Dr. Woodard, supporting law enforcement means different things to different cities but to him partnerships remain paramount to a healthy public safety sector, especially

SCBHC celebrates the life, and legacy, of MLK, Jr

By KIENAN BRISCOE

EVERETT—Following a Sunday celebration, in honor of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Snohomish County Black Heritage Committee continued its festivities through Martin Luther King Day proper on January 19 with a march, rally, and community gathering at Volunteer's of America Western Washington's (VOAWW) Carl Gibson Center in downtown Everett.

The Carl Gibson Center (owned by the City of Everett but stewarded by the VOA) is named after longtime Everett Carl Gibson, former NAACP President and first African American elected in the City of Everett.

The morning began with a march and rally, traveling from Everett Memorial Stadium to the Carl Gibson Center by way of Colby Avenue and Lombard. Hundreds joined the march sporting Black Lives Matter signs, vouching for freedom and equality, and singing "We Will Overcome."

The community gathering portion was emceed by Larry JJ Frank, with Bible Way Church and YMCA, alongside De-Lon R. Lewis with Everett Community College, featuring guest speakers, a resource fair, 2026 Essay and Art Contest winner announcements, dancing, music, and more.

First to speak was Dr. Steven Woodard, VP of Community Engagement for VOA and Mountlake Terrace's newest (and first Black) Mayor sharing the unfortunate history of Mountlake Terrace's redlining, having been developed as a settlement for White veterans returning from war.

Not only is Dr. Woodard Mountlake Terrace's first Black Mayor, but it is also the first time the Mountlake Terrace City Council has been a majority BIPOC council (along with council members William Paige and Same Doyle, as well as former Mayor Kyoko Matsumoto-Wright, who still sits on council).

"How does a brother go from not the best childhood to Mayor? A six-prong framework I offer all to you: First one is get involved, number two is there's always a reason to keep your head up and if you get involved you will see that. Next one comes from our President of the Black Heritage Committee and that's teamwork makes the dream work. That said, dream bigger. The last one is protect your joy," said Dr. Woodard. "Those six prongs don't mean nothing without telling someone else so get a mic but you yourself are a microphone every day."

Following Dr. Woodard the Black National anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing, was performed by the MLK Ensemble choir before the next speaker, Mr. Fredrick T. Bletson, Jr., SCBHC Executive Board Member, took the stage.

"It's cold outside today. It reminds me of the 70's when we were marching in the rain, and the snow, and the sleet, all with the purpose of togetherness, oneness. We didn't care what your ethnicity was, what your gender was, it wasn't about any of that. It was about there being a fire and us needing to pool our buckets of water together to put that fire out," said Bletson. "We still have fires today. We've made progress but we have a lot

more work to do. Walking in the cold just reminds us of that work so keep on keeping on."

"I'm honored here to stand with you, as we gather to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," said Mayor Franklin. "Doctor King's dream was never just a vision of what could be, it was a call to action; a reminder that true belonging is possible when we choose to stand with one another, especially when it's hard."

Mayor Franklin continued that many people are carrying grief, fear, and uncertainty lately with many of us witnessing "hatred and division in our institutions and sometimes even in our backyards."

"In times like this leading with love is not easy but it is exactly what Dr. King called on us to do," said Mayor Franklin. "He taught us that dreams only become real when people are willing to do the work and willing to show up."

Mayor Franklin also thanked DanVonique Reed, President of the SCBHC, for her work which, Franklin continued, reminds us that "community doesn't just happen, it's built with intention, care, and love."

On the national level, Congressman Rick Larsen (WA-02) spoke on how Dr. King's words, and vision for a more equitable future, are more important than ever but those in attendance are a living example of that dream and that work.

"Today you are not alone. It's been a day on, not a day off. It's been a day of service all weekend. Happenings like this are happening all across the Pacific Northwest, and across the country – you are not alone at all," said Larsen. "As Doctor King said, 'now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.' Now, more than ever, that call to action is incredibly important. In a moment right now, where a lot of our neighbors are afraid of what's going on with our country, Doctor King's words to call us to band together as a community and to speak out against what's happening to our neighbors."

Earlier that morning Rep. Larsen paid a visit to the City of Lynnwood to plant trees along its Mesika Trail.

Other speakers included Mike "The Mayor" Thomas, Owner of the Everett Royals Football franchise, and Kim Toskey, President and CEO for Homes and Hope Community and Land Trust who read a poem.

Closing remarks and prayer was led by Pastor Doris Cope, with Bailey AME Church in Everett.

Performances included a dance performance by the Everett Dance School, and music by Cai Brown, Ms. Karen Shepard, and Noah Jackson.

In addition to the speakers and entertainment there were approximately 12 organizational resource booths offering their services and information. These included: the Snohomish County Health Department, Compass Health, League of Women Voters, Providence Health, Dance School of the Arts, and Homes and Hope Community and Land Trust.



Ms. Karen Casey Shepard sings 'The Drum Major Instrument' with the MLK Ensemble Choir at SCBHC's MLK celebration Monday, January 19, at the Carl Gibson Center in Everett. Photo: Kienan Briscoe, Lynnwood Times



(TOP) Rep. Larsen shakes hands with Larry JJ Frank. (BTM) Mike "The Mayor" Thomas, Owner of the Everett Royals Football franchise. Photo: Kienan Briscoe, Lynnwood Times



from page 3 JIM SMITH

of discrimination by the former Mayor Nicola Smith's Executive Assistant and a few members of the DEI Commission. The law firm's report substantiated some claims but found others, like creating a hostile work environment, unsubstantiated. Smith responded by calling the report "misleading," "distorts the evidence," heavily "subjective," and "lacking in facts and evidence." He was never allowed to cross-examine nor formally contest any of the report's findings prior to its release.

The council opted for sensitivity training workshops in response, but no formal penalties were imposed. Smith was in the process of preparing a lawsuit against the City of Lynnwood related to what he called, a "sham investigation" prior to his passing.

Undeterred, Smith announced his re-election bid for the council in May

2023 at Moonshine Barbecue, rallying under the slogan "Don't Seattle our Lynnwood." Despite his efforts, he did not secure re-election. In December 2023, as he prepared to leave office, Smith departed in what was described as a "blaze of glory," successfully pushing forward four motions for the incoming council during his final meeting, one that included an audit of the City's finances.

Jim Smith's legacy in Lynnwood is one of enduring dedication. Through his advocacy for safer streets, lower taxes, and responsive governance, he left an indelible mark on Lynnwood, the city he called home for decades.

Smith, who was battling ALS (Lou Gerig's disease), survived by his wife Sherry of 25 years, his four daughters, two grandchildren and his beloved Shih Tzu, Lulu. He recently celebrated his 75th birthday on December 30, surrounded by friends and family.

PAWS rescues cats in Buckley animal welfare investigation

By KIENAN BRISCOE

BUCKLEY—Lynnwood-based Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) rescued 10 cats from an animal welfare investigation involving a Buckley home where its owner had more than 100 cats living in unsafe, and unsanitary, living conditions.

The Buckley Police Department followed up on a news tip last week of “dozens of cats” living in a home with three adults – of which the safety and sanitation status was questioned. During their subsequent investigation into the matter the Police Department found not only the condition of the home to be unfit for hundreds of cats, but humans alike.

According to the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office, cat litter was spread all over the house and the litter boxes that were visible were filled to the brim with feces. Food and water were present, however,

indicating the cats were being cared for.

A total of 126 cats were rescued from the home – under a warrant approved by a judge – and were immediately documented and assessed for health issues. While some, surprisingly, seemed to be in relatively good health, many suffered from various health issues (such as respiratory problems) requiring immediate treatment conducted by nearby Auburn Valley Humane Society.

Animals ranged in age from newly born kittens to senior-aged cats needing more assistance and care.

The small animal shelter was eager to help, taking in 30 of the cats (including five pregnant cats and mother who had just given birth to a litter of kittens), but, seeing as their capacity is capped at 50 animals in total, reached out to animal shelters across the area for assistance.

According to the Auburn Valley Hu-

mane Society, taking in 125 cats at one time, at one location, would overburden the shelter’s daily operations and limit accepting surrenders and other emergency situations.

At Lynnwood’s PAWS, for example, the local animal shelter has already been working passed capacity with a rise of animal surrenders – driven by skyrocketing cost of living in the area. PAWS has the capacity to hold a total of 60 cats at any given time.

Since welcoming the 10 cats into PAWS’ care, four have already been adopted into loving homes, and two more are currently pending adoption, the animal shelter said. The remaining four cats are either ready or will be ready for adoption soon, following continued medical care and observation. PAWS is also preparing to receive five additional cats from this group later this weekend.

“This response reflects the strength of

collaboration among animal welfare organizations and the compassion of the surrounding community. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has opened their homes and hearts to these cats and supported the rescue effort,” said a PAWS spokesperson. “Thank you to our community partners, adopters, and supporters for helping give these animals the second chance they deserve.”

According to Sara Gomez Taylor, Associate Director of PAWS, all the cats the Lynnwood animal shelter took in were found to be in relatively good health, despite being covered in urine.

As for the Buckley home, and its residents, the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office is currently investigating the matter before officially filing charges. This investigation, the Department said, could potentially take weeks to complete.

from page 7 HURST

that controversy, Hurst explained, was that Lynnwood did not have existing policies regarding flags and what could, or could not be flown, and where.

Hurst said he wants to consult with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission to hear the city could bring new policies to address this and will rely on their suggestions to know how to move forward.

Hurst was also asked about fair labor practices, especially given that the ENSO project (just a block down from where our interview took place at the Lynnwood Event Center) was found to be using subcontractors that were not adhering to state and federal labor laws.

Hurst wants to bring forward a Wage Theft Ordinance and possibly a Community Workforce Agreements, in addition to promoting Project Labor Agreements. All of these things, Hurst said, not only protect workers on a job but will also draw on the residents of Lynnwood which benefits the local economy.

“All of those I want to act on pretty quickly, within the first quarter of the year,” said Hurst. “The council had heard about it, and in fact heard from some labor unions, so I think we can move pretty fast on that.”

With FIFA 2026 coming to Seattle this year, and Lynnwood being the current end of the line for Link light rail, Hurst was asked how he intends to attract visitors to Lynnwood as a ‘premier’ lodging and viewing destination.

Hurst plans to promote Lynnwood’s hotels in an effort to advertise the city as a launching off point for those traveling into Seattle for games, in addition to potentially partnering with nearby Fan Zone city Everett.

“We are the starting point for light rail, and I think it’s natural for people to want to stay up here,” said Hurst.

Hurst added that the FIFA World Cup will also fall on the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence so hopes to leverage both momentous occasions as an opportunity to celebrate our nation’s history, paired with a global spectacle.

In meeting with Hurst, ahead of last November’s General Elections, he noted that public safety is a huge priority of his, yet the City of Lynnwood is still suffering from spikes in youth violence and gang activity.

Hurst specifically spotlighted Wally Webster II’s (who was named the Lynnwood Times Person of the Year for 2025) ACCESS project as an important partnership the city could leverage.

Hurst speculates that the spike in youth crime stems from the pressures of having gone through a pandemic, persisting social media pressures, and pressures at home influenced by larger causes such as housing unaffordability, food insecurity, and cost of living.

One way he plans to address this, he continued, is raising the household income of families in Lynnwood which cycles back to the Community Workforce Agreements he previously mentioned.

“It’s really tough when you have a single parent working a minimum wage job, or several minimum wage jobs, they’re not home, they’re living the kids

there. We need to be able to address that and I think by raising the household income, creating more stable housing, that’s getting towards the root problems that are affecting our youth,” said Hurst.

In wrapping up our conversation, Hurst is considering 2026 as a year of ‘Recovery and Renewal.’ The recovery portion pertains to bouncing back from the budget’s deficit, but renewal refers to looking back at the city’s strategic plan which has priorities he believes have not been a focus at the city government.

“Part of that is financial stability, we want to be a safe city, we want to be a welcoming city. Those things have been lost over the last four years. We’re now focusing on the economic crises but there’s other things we need to be focusing on to and that’s the renewal I want,” said Hurst. “Let’s solve this deficit but let’s move forward and ensure people feel safe, are welcome, and feel proud to live here.”

Ultimately Hurst, in closing, is looking forward to the year of 2026 as the “year of change,” he added.

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from page 5 LYNNWOOD

of Executive Dave Somers, read a proclamation recognizing January 9, 2026, as "Rick Steves Day."

"It's the fastest growing county in the state, the fastest region in the county. This is a region that needs a facility like this, it has for a long time. As a father of four, to think about a space like this to bring them to, I'm really excited to be a part of it," said County Councilman Jared Mead.

On the state perspective, Washington State Representative Lauren Davis, told the Lynnwood Times the LNC will be the "Fred Meyer of social services," or in other words – a one stop shop.

"Things are just so challenging for families that are experiencing all sorts of crises, crises of poverty, of domestic violence, food insecurity. But to be able to come to one location and address a multiplicity of needs is really outstanding," said Rep. Lauren Davis.

Speaking on the municipal level, new Mayor George Hurst told the Lynnwood Times that South County has always been a "desert" for these types of services but will now have a centralized hub where people can go. Hurst was a member of the Lynnwood City Council when it allocated \$1 toward the LNC.

from page 4 SAF

The 'Washingtonian of the Day' himself, and Chair of the CSAA, Executive Dave Somers, was next to speak beginning with a joke: "Sustainable jet fuel is great; same jet lag, but with a cleaner conscious."

Somers was proud of Snohomish County's role in Washington State's economic footprint, being the home of the Boeing company who employees approximately 130,000 Washingtonians and contributes roughly \$60 billion to the state annually.

"For all of these reasons, Snohomish County is really the perfect place to house the Cascadia Institute," said Executive Somers. "The County has four keyholes for the future of research and development. First, we'll bridge the gap between academia and history by partnering with Washington State University and eventually other national, and international institutions. The second is to lead the world in development, distribution, and adoption of new technologies to reduce the carbon-based footprint. The third is to address the skill shortage and to continue our efforts to create a gold standard in workforce development by connecting local youth to high-quality jobs in the field. Fourth is to attract international investment to our innovation, economy, and create jobs."

In Snohomish County, aviation is estimated to have accounted for 5% of Snohomish County's total community-wide greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, which represents a 23% increase from 2015 levels, according to the county.

The state allocated \$6.5 million for the SAF Center in the 2023-25 Transportation Budget and hopes to be receiving an FAA FAST-SAF grant of approximately \$35 million. The grant is critical to commence construction of the facility that will be located on eight acres just behind Tapped Mukilteo. Congressional delegation members Representatives Suzan DelBene (WA-01), Rick Larsen (WA-02), and Kim Shrier (WA-08),

"I can't be more pleased is going to be responsible for running this building, but I'm really looking forward to this place being a place of gathering. It's really exciting, it really is," said Mayor Hurst.

Snohomish County PUD Commissioner Dr. Julieta Altamirano-Crosby, who was also in attendance, told the Lynnwood Times that she is looking forward to the LNC opening and everything it will bring to South Snohomish County.

"As a Steering Committee member, I'm excited to see the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center open and begin serving South Snohomish County," Altamirano-Crosby said. "This center represents connection, access, and a strong investment in community well-being."

A tour of what's inside

The LNC will have an early learning center, where up to 80 children (ages 3-5) can receive much-needed care in a region struggling to keep up with affordable, accessible, childcare services.

Nearby, a gymnasium will holds a half-court basketball court, and storage space for various sporting equipment. Outside, a full-sized playground offers children the physical outlet to burn off excess energy. This playground was largely supported by the Rotary Club of

Lynnwood and its generous donation of \$24,000.

Further in you'll find the senior services rooms which can serve up to 250 seniors and their needs, as well as host workshops and cooking classes.

In the community gathering place (or what Rick Steves calls 'the Piazza') a full-sized industrial community kitchen is fully equipped with everything needed to supply hearty and healthy meals, three times a day, to children enrolled in the early education programs. It's here where a café will also be selling coffee and breakfasts for service providers, or parents dropping their children off at childcare, needing a pick-me-up.

Up the stairs from the piazza is where the offices of multiple community-driven nonprofits will set up shop, offering 600 individuals healthcare through Medical Teams International, 3,500 parents, infants, and young children with basic needs through Child Strive, 2,500 Korean Americans with wraparound support, 1,500 Hispanic residents with workforce training and education via the Latino Educational Training Institute, 2,160 people with mental healthcare and therapy through Center for Human Services, 3,000 families with young people facing homelessness through Cocoon House, 225 children with afterschool programs through the

Boys and Girls Club, and more.

Volunteers of America will also have offices on-site offering 10,000 low-income families wraparound support and 50 adults with intellectual disabilities. VOA will also be running the early learning center and senior services center.

Lastly, the LNC's has a massive community room which has the capacity to fit 500 people at a time, not including outdoor patio seating in warmer weather – separated by a large glass door. This space can be rented out for weddings, conferences, parties, or whatever the community desires. It's in this community room where Friday's ribbon cutting took place.

Located at 6330 195th Street Southwest in Lynnwood, the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center will also serve as a vibrant hub where neighbors can meet, learn, and serve, building, and sustaining, safe, stable, and healthy communities for generations to come.

The Lynnwood Neighborhood Center officially opens to the public on January 24. Its grand opening ceremony, which will run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., will feature food trucks, entertainment, and more.

and Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Washington) are advocating in D.C. for the grant on behalf of Snohomish County residents.

A huge benefit to SAFs than alternative green aviation solutions such as electric- and hydrogen- powered aircraft fleets is the minimal disruption to implement into existing infrastructure. It is cost beneficial to ensure that manufacturers do not have to redesign engines nor aircraft, and that fuel suppliers and airports do not have to build new fuel delivery systems.

Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) is the most viable pathway today to significantly reduce aviation emissions. Cascadia has the natural resources, research expertise, policy environment, infrastructure, workforce and industry leadership needed to become a global leader in SAF production.

The launch of CSAA marks a major step toward aligning public policy, private investment, research and community support to secure long-term economic and environmental benefits for our region. The launch is made possible by \$10 million in state funding and a \$10 million private gift.

The Cascadia region has been a trailblazer in aerospace innovation for over a century, and today it is uniquely positioned as a global center of aviation innovation, with an opportunity to unlock the next generation of sustainable fuel. With access to local, low carbon feedstocks, affordable clean energy, established infrastructure and a skilled workforce, the region has all the elements necessary to support production of up to one billion gallons of sustainable aviation fuel by 2035. Scaling production at this level would drive economic prosperity and development, strengthen regional energy security and independence, support state and regional climate initiatives and build on Cascadia's long legacy as an aviation innovator.

The global aviation industry, which generates some \$4.1 trillion in economic activity and supports 86.5 million

jobs, currently accounts for approximately 2-3% of global carbon dioxide emissions, in addition to other environmental impacts. SAF is a safe, effective drop-in solution projected to be used for the next 70-plus years that can reduce emissions by 80% compared to fossil-based fuels and the transition to a thriving circular economy through locally produced SAF.

"For the last six decades in Snohomish County, Boeing has relied on strong community partnerships to turn ambitious ideas into reality," said Bill McSherry, Boeing vice president of Government Operations. "Cascadia is a concrete example of that collaboration toward meaningful progress on a Sustainable Aviation Fuel ecosystem right here at home."

Other speakers included Washington State Department of Commerce Director Joe Nguyen, Washington State University President Elizabeth Cantwell, Hawaiian Airlines President and CEO Diana Birkett Rakow, and Boeing Vice President of State and Local Government Operations Bill McSherry. State, tribal, and community leaders were also in attendance to show their support.

What is Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)?

SAFs are a biofuel with similar properties and safety requirements as conventional jet fuel used in aircraft but with a smaller carbon footprint. Unlike traditional jet fuel, SAF is formulated from sustainable feedstocks, like crop seed oil, agricultural and forestry waste.

These certified "Jet-A1" fuels are made by blending conventional kerosene (fossil-based) with renewable hydrocarbon. Currently, SAFs are used as a "drop-in" replacement to conventional petroleum-based jet fuel that when combined called a blend. The minimal acceptance blend is 10% SAF to a high of 50%. The goal is a certified 100% replacement blend of SAF to conventional jet fuel.

A huge benefit to SAFs than alternative green aviation solutions such as electric

and hydrogen powered aircraft fleets is the minimal disruption to implement into existing infrastructure. It is cost beneficial to ensure that manufacturers do not have to redesign engines nor aircraft, and that fuel suppliers and airports do not have to build new fuel delivery systems.

SkyNRG Secures Key Environmental Approvals to Advance Sustainable Aviation Fuel in Eastern Washington

Following Thursday's remarks and panel discussion, SkyNRG announced a key milestone for Project Wigeon, a planned sustainable aviation fuel facility in Eastern Washington, after securing environmental approvals from the Washington State Department of Ecology and Walla Walla County.

The approvals confirm that the project meets state and local environmental standards, including requirements related to land use, water protection, and fuel transportation. Project Wigeon will be among North America's first commercial-scale SAF projects producing jet fuel from renewable natural gas (RNG).

"Aviation is one of the hardest sectors to reduce harmful emissions, which is why SkyNRG is building SAF facilities such as Project Wigeon around the world," said John Plaza, Chief Executive Officer of SkyNRG Americas. "The Department of Ecology's environmental review and Walla Walla County's approval demonstrate our commitment to building this facility the right way – using industry-leading technology and conducting robust analysis of environmental impacts. This milestone allows SkyNRG to continue delivering clean fuel to major airports, building economic opportunity in Eastern Washington, and protecting natural resources and community health for years to come."

SkyNRG's new facility will support a fast-expanding global demand, which is projected to reach five billion gallons by 2030 and more than 12 billion gallons by 2035.

from page 2 WEBSTER II

Webster also sat on the Steering Committee of the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center, though that position is coming to a close as the LNC prepares to open in January 2026.

THE ACCESS PROJECT

Wally Webster II founded the ACCESS Project as a response to six youths, and one adult caught in crossfire, being killed in his home city of Lynnwood in 2022.

In March of 2023, the City of Lynnwood put together an event called 'Let's Talk About Safety' consisting of a panel of experts discussing how the City, and community, could tackle its public safety issues.

During this meeting, Webster stood up towards the end and said:

"Tonight, I've listened to a number of questions and there's been a lot of nouns used. What are you doing, what are they doing, what are our partners doing. I'd like to change that to say what am I doing? If you look at each one of us in this room there's enough expertise, there's enough people in this room to make a difference in terms of safety in this community. If we take 40,000 people in this city, and we're all doing something, this would be the safest place in the world to live. How many people are going up to the Boys & Girls Club and asking what can I do to help? How many of us are going up to the YMCA and asking what can I do to help?"

"So change that to what are you doing, and what your budget is doing to what am I doing to make a difference? If we can do that, then we can solve the problems that we came to talk about tonight."

He went home that night but was unable to sleep, still frustrated with how the event went and deeply concerned about the problem of youth violence his city was facing. He got up in the middle of the night and wrote down about 20 names.

The next morning, he called each of those 20 names and about 14 of them agreed to show up for an emergency, 4 p.m., meeting the next day at Lynnwood City Hall. These names included Lynnwood Mayor Christine Frizzell, Mountlake Terrace Mayor Kyoko Matsumoto Wright, Municipal Court Judge Valerie Bouffieu, local pastors, and other communities. The result of these discussions was the ACCESS Project.

The consensus of the group was that Webster should be the one to run the project, seeing as he was the one who facilitated the meetings to begin with. He enthusiastically agreed.

"What was I going to do? Turn it down? No way," said Webster.

The ACCESS Project was officially certified as a 501(c)(3) that year, in 2023.

At the heart of the nonprofit is three components. The first component is reaching the youth who are having mental health and behavioral challenges, getting them in front of ACCESS project employees to have conversations, and getting to the root of those challenges.

"When they come to see us we call that the assessment phase of the proj-



Wallace "Wally" Webster II being recognized at the Black men in Action event on Wednesday, February 26, 2025, who exemplify Black Excellence. Lynnwood Times | Mario Lotmore.

ect," said Webster. "It may take three, four, five sessions for them to open up and tell us exactly what's causing their problem."

The next component is leveraging the ACCESS Project's 35-40 community partners – from professional counseling to communities of belonging like the Boys and Girls Club and others.

"I look at the ACCESS Project as a navigation hub. We navigate those youths to those resources out in the community," said Webster.

In May 2025, Webster was recognized by the Snohomish County Council – by way of a resolution – and all of the good work he has done through the ACCESS Project, particularly his Cops vs. Youth Basketball character building events.

"The intent of these games isn't to play basketball – that's an enabler, as I call it. The intent is to develop trust, develop resource in the community, and relationships with someone who can help them if they're having difficulties," said Webster. "And that's paid off. We've had several youths who have called a police officer and said I need your opinion and I need your help."

The ACCESS Project also utilizes, what it calls, "peer to peer mediators" in local school districts. These trained mediators are trained to deal with conflicts among their peers. This program has been such a success that the Edmonds School District has asked the ACCESS Project if they could provide peer mediator services to all seven of their high schools and all four of their middle schools.

To keep up with the volume spike, the ACCESS Project employed the services of the Volunteers of America Western Washington's Dispute Resolution Center, who agreed to do the training of youths to become certified peer to peer mediators.

The ACCESS Project has also formed a working relationship with local law enforcement agencies – beginning with the Everett PD – where police officers, who encounter a youth they feel can benefit from the ACCESS Project's services, can fill out a form and the ACCESS Project will reach out within 24-hours.

step is just to get involved, ask what you can do, and reach out.

When the Lynnwood Times reached out to Mr. Webster II, notifying him he was being recognized as the Lynnwood Times Person of the Year for 2025, he shared the following remarks.

"When you told me I was under consideration, it brought tears to my eyes. You don't do it for the recognition, you do it for the good of the community you serve, but you're still human like everyone else," said Webster. "When you're recognized for something like this you can't help but have it touch your soul. I have been doing this, and giving of this time, for years and to be recognized in this community for the services I'm trying to provide, and am providing, it gives me confirmation that what I'm doing is making a difference."

WORDS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

"Wally Webster is a timely choice for Person of the Year. After decades of dedicated civic engagement, he remains innovative in his care for our community. Successes include founding and growing the ACCESS Project, investing his resources and networks as a member of the Lynnwood Neighborhood Center Steering Committee, and cofounding and sustaining the African American Leaders and Professional Network. That he calls me his brother remains one of my highest honors," said Dr. Steve Woodard, Mountlake Terrace City Councilman and Volunteers of America VP of Community Engagement.

"Wally Webster is a true servant leader. He demonstrates this by serving on numerous boards and committees in our region. But I believe his greatest achievement is the Access Project which he founded in 2022. It is an organization that provides youth the access to mentorship and support services. The Access Project is a lifeline to the youth of our community that have been impacted by the pressures of social media, the isolation of the Covid pandemic and the recruitment of gangs. The need is great, and the Access Project is so important for the welfare of our youth. Barrack Obama, one said, "the best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something." Wally Webster is an example of doing something. We are all better for having Wally Webster as a member of our community," said Lynnwood Mayor George Hurst.

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