

FRIDAY WITH *Friends*

MEETING NOTES

Experience Chehalis

November 8, 2024 | 8:30 a.m.

Attendees: Brian Wilkins, David James, Jessica Kinney, Michael Ervin, Tony Ketchum, Stacy Denham, Shawna Herriford, Naomi Robb, Bill Deutscher, Mitch Moberg, Mary Kay Nelson, Tony Baker, Kate McDougall, Annalee Tobey, Annie Oien, Susan Delaire, Lindsey Senter

Partner Updates

Naomi Robb – Kiddin' Around / Business Week

Kiddin' Around is in its third year supporting the Business Week program that has existed for many years in Lewis County. Over 500 juniors from W.F. West and Centralia High School attend this four-day event held at Centralia College. 32 classrooms are occupied during this event.

Kiddin' Around is seeking 30+ volunteers to serve as “company advisors” for the event, December 16-19. The responsibilities of the advisors include nominating a team CEO, facilitate discussions as outlined in the provided curriculum, and support the students through the process. Past volunteers have enjoyed a very rewarding and inspiring experience watching the students engage in the process and get excited about the program.

The Washington Business Week program raised its prices from \$5,000 to \$17,000. Kiddin' Around has therefore decided to create their own, more adapted software working with Brent Dickinson at Vulcan Creative. The new program includes moral dilemmas and emergency management situations for the students to navigate.

Promotion Committee – David James

- Coupon books have been produced for the second year, thanks to the support and work from Jessica who coordinated design and business outreach. Books were launched during the Harvest Hop event earlier this month and will be distributed to the public via local businesses and attractions.
- The Santa letters project is back, now in its third year. Beginning next week, Santa mailboxes will be out at Book 'N' Brush, Totally Pawsome, and Market Street Ace. Children can drop off their letters and receive a handwritten response from the elves of Experience Chehalis. Those interested in joining the team elves can reach out to Annalee or Jessica.
- Holiday Bingo will also launch next week. Guests downtown can pick up BINGO flyers at local businesses. Those who complete a BINGO can turn in the card to participating drop off locations and entered into a drawing for \$100.

- Experience Chehalis is launching its first windows decorating contest. Businesses can confirm participation by December 1 and the contest and voting will kick off on the day of the Santa Parade on December 7. The public can vote using QR codes on flyers of participating businesses. The winner will be announced December 18 and will receive prizes including marketing opportunities and the Holly Jolly window decorations trophy!
- This will be the second year for the Holiday Façade Grant program available to downtown businesses. Businesses can apply for a grant of 75% up to \$350 for decorations to the façade of their building.
- We are developing sets of holiday cards featuring artwork of Ted Dorn who was born and raised in the area.
- In placing the QR code plaques accompanying the historic plaques, we discovered many buildings don't have a historic plaque. We are working with Awards west to discuss creating plaques that might be interested in the plaques at this time.

Executive Director Report - Annalee Tobey

- Experience Chehalis was one of four Main Street communities to pilot a Belonging Barometer survey to measure how connected people feel about their downtowns. This statewide main street initiative hopes to share our strength in creating spaces of connection and belonging. The survey was the first step in a year-long process of research.
- A Harvest Hop was held November 2nd, spearheaded by Be-You-Tiful Boutique to continue with a fall downtown shopping event, as ladies night was skipped this year due to time constraints for our event organizer who opened her own business downtown this fall. It was a successful day for our businesses and we noticed many out-of-town visitors as we chatted with guests at the Experience Chehalis table. Ladies Night will return in the spring.
- The annual Trick of Treating event downtown was successful. Annalee and Jessica handed out stickers, candy and glow sticks.
- M & K Town Store has officially closed. The owners of Be-You-Tiful Boutique will be opening a men's clothing store, called Hutch Menswear. They will be using November to prepare the space and hope to open by Small Business Saturday at the end of the month.
- The improvements to the wall at the former Star Tavern building are complete. When the weather improves, we will move forward applying the long-awaited mural to the building.

Good of the Order

Mary Kay Nelson – Chehalis Centralia Railroad

The first Polar Express ride of the season was last night. It was a "test run" for friends and family to work out any kinks and have a practice run before rides begin on Saturday. She thanked Twin Cities Rotary for donating 140-hours of volunteer labor to build a new loading platform – a huge improvement! Thanks to another donation by Sterling Breen Crushing, gravel was donated to double the size of the parking lot.