

Council working on ways to strengthen county's economy, retain jobs

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

The Mason County Economic Development Council is working hard behind the scenes to retain jobs in the county, while also building a foundation to recruit even more business to the area.

Lynn Longan, executive director of the EDC, shared ongoing projects that the council is working on to keep jobs in Mason County, and plans to recruit even more, at the North Mason Chamber of Commerce luncheon Oct. 22 in Belfair.

"There are a lot of things the EDC is working on," Longan said. "We're doing a lot of things we probably haven't done in the past."

Ongoing projects include work with Proglass, a company that creates products for utility companies, to expand their business from Gig Harbor to Shelton, bringing in 10 jobs at the start and potentially doubling that as the company moves forward.

The EDC is also work-

ing with the Port of Shelton on four active business cases, two of which are expansions at the port and two that will help retain jobs in the county, for a total of more than 250 full-time jobs and another 130 or so seasonal jobs.

The firm Hall Equities Group is still working on the Shelton Hills development, an 800-acre master-planned community that will be anchored with retail businesses, Longan said.

"People keep asking and asking about Hall Equities. They're ready to go," she said. "They are seeking out big-box retail, but there are no commitments yet."

Another ongoing case is with Ridge Motorsports Park in Shelton, a company that wants to expand, Longan added.

Beyond specific business cases, the EDC is working with students at Shelton High School and Olympic College on entrepreneurship opportunities, and Longan plans to visit North Mason at least once a month, at the Port of Allyn's offices, to be of ser-

vice to businesses in the area.

The board of the EDC also has formed a subcommittee to evaluate the regulatory and permitting environment in Mason County, which Longan has heard is more restrictive than neighboring counties.

"The city (of Shelton) and county commissioners have committed to sitting down with us after the subcommittee makes its evaluation," she said. "If there's nothing wrong, then we will talk about how to change the story."

Part of changing the story of Mason County to be one that is more inclusive and open to business involves developing a strong recruitment strategy and strategic plan, Longan said.

In November, the council will continue to hold community forums geared toward collecting input from the public about what type of businesses they'd like to see in Mason County.

The next meetings are 10 a.m. to noon on Nov. 7 at the Port of Allyn meeting



PHOTO BY ARLA SHEPHARD

Lynn Longan is the director of the Mason County Economic Development Council. Longan shared what's going on in Mason County at the North Mason Chamber of Commerce luncheon Oct. 22 in Belfair.

room, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Nov. 12 at a location to be determined in Matlock, and 10 a.m. to noon Nov. 19 at the Colonial House in Shelton. "We haven't had a strong

recruitment strategy in the last couple years since the recession, which is normal," Longan said. "But we want to do that now and figure how to change

our story."

For more information on the Economic Development Council of Mason County, visit www.masonedc.com. ■



\$1.00 OFF HOLIDAY GIFT & FOOD FAIR

November 21, 22 & 23, Kitsap Sun Pavilion
(Kitsap County Fairgrounds)

Friday & Saturday 10am - 6pm, Sunday 10am - 5pm

Present this coupon or "canned food" at the door and
receive \$1.00 off the \$5.00 Admission Price

177+ Professional NW Artists
"Toys for Tots" bring a new toy for "FREE" admission.

FOR ALL THREE DAYS!

FREE PARKING



CK FOOD BANK

Premier Media Sponsor

Kitsap Sun

SK HELP LINE

Seattle Children's
HOSPITAL • RESEARCH • FOUNDATION



"Happy Fall Y'all" Bazaar

Saturday, Nov. 8th • 9am-3pm

45 Private & Commercial Vendors

Bake Sale • Decorated Wreathes

Lunch for Purchase

Belfair Community Church

For info call 360-275-6031 • 23300 SR 3, Belfair