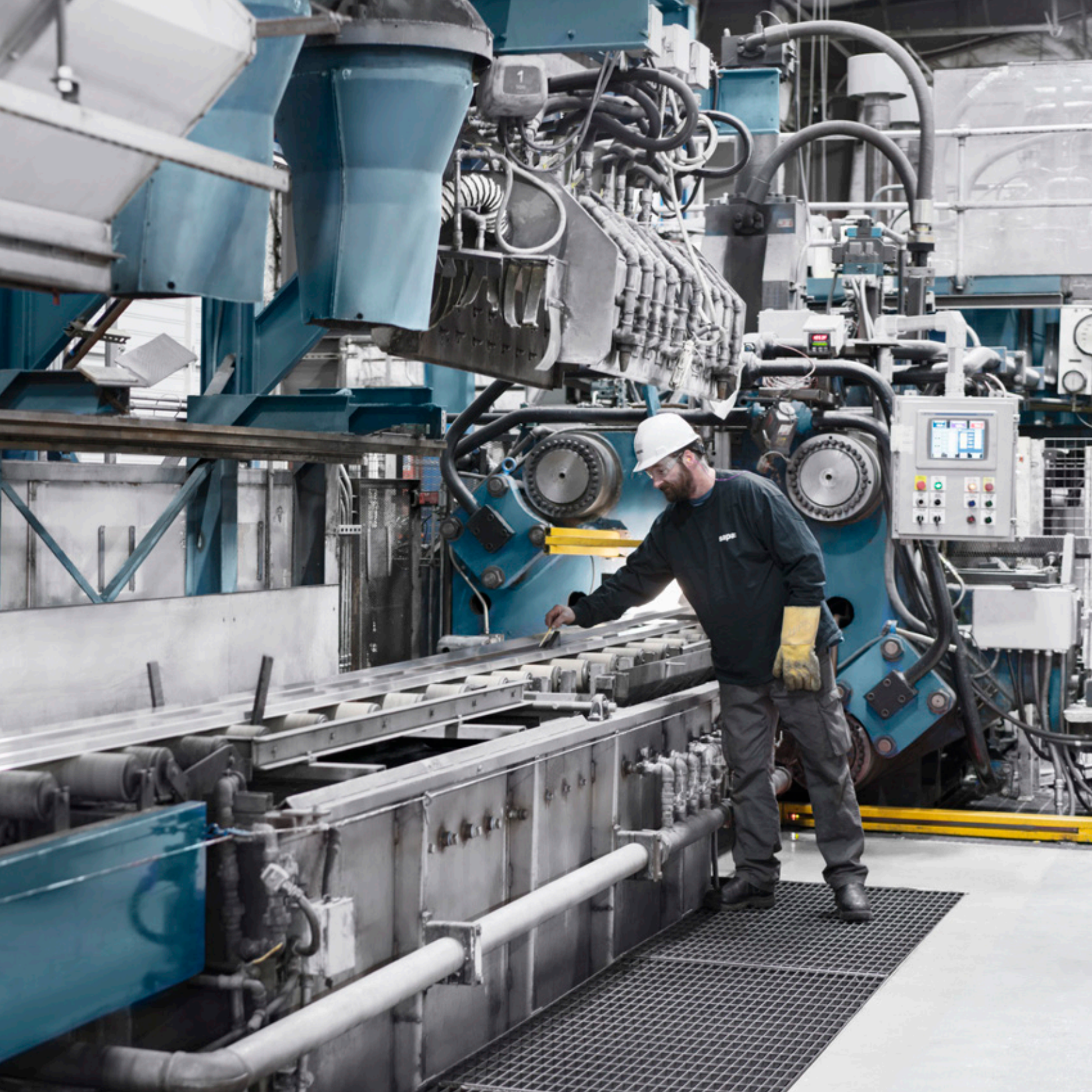




ANNUAL REPORT 2016



As county manager, my responsibilities under the Clark County Charter include preparing an annual report for the Board of County Councilors. It is with pleasure that I transmit it to you here.

In my 16 years in Clark County, I repeatedly have been impressed with the quality of the community I and all county employees have the privilege to serve.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Sapa Industries, Port of Vancouver. ABOVE: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics at WSU Vancouver. RIGHT: Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Front cover image: Paul Newman, Clark County GIS

We are a forward-looking community nestled on the West's greatest river, one with new educational buildings for science, technology, engineering and math. Our businesses provide services and produce goods, both for use in this county and for export to markets around the world. We welcome those who visit and settle here, providing fresh perspectives, growing diversity and vibrant energy.

We also are a community that values its past. Longtime families take pride knowing their ancestors helped shape this corner of the nation. Newcomers appreciate the hard work that put us on the map. Clark County partners with the Washington State

Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Clark County Historical Museum, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, Fort Vancouver National Trust, our own Historic Preservation Commission, Washington State University Extension Service, city of Vancouver and others to safeguard and promote our historical roots.

We honor our veterans and long military history with more than ceremonies and parades. The county's volunteer Veterans Advisory Board oversees the Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund, which in December received \$236,000 in added budget authority from the county council to provide emergency relief to eligible veterans in 2017 and 2018.

Veterans who run into trouble but want to turn their lives around can find support in District Court's Veterans Therapeutic Court.

We are a generous and compassionate community.

Last year, residents donated \$2.2 million to Share to provide food and shelter for the county's neediest people. To help feed the hungry, the Clark County Food Bank distributed 4.7 million pounds of donated food, including 40,000 pounds of carrots grown at the county's 78th Street Heritage Farm.

The community donated \$410,400 and 17,700 volunteer hours – valued at \$513,300 – to YWCA Clark County for services such as safe housing for battered women, support for victims of sexual assault and day care for homeless children with working parents.

In 2016, the Clark County Veterans Assistance Fund:

Supported
58 vets with
work-related
needs

Provided
food for
more than
400 vets

Obtained or
maintained housing
for 182 veterans, many
with families, including
19 homeless vets in
November and
December alone

Paid burial
expenses for
15 veterans



Beth Conyers

Clark County Food Bank distributed 4.7 million pounds of donated food, including 40,000 pounds of carrots grown at the county's 78th Street Heritage Farm.



LEFT: Farm to Fork Coordinator Kris Potter, at the 78th Street Heritage Farm. RIGHT: Clark County Veterans Assistance Center 2016 Stand Down event.



Beth Conyers



OPPOSITE PAGE: Volunteers of all ages help to eradicate invasive species from county parks.

During the holidays, Clark County employees and community partners provided gifts to approximately 4,500 children in more than 1,100 families through the Children's Sharing Project and Sheriff's Office Santa's Posse programs.

Firefighters collect coats for those who don't have them. A county employee collected blankets for a local homeless shelter. Places of worship open their doors to those in the cold. Teachers stay vigilant to children in need.

In a 24-hour period in September, the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington spearheaded a money-raising effort that amassed more than \$920,000 for 128 nonprofits in Clark, Skamania and Cowlitz counties, primarily in Clark County.

Last year, hundreds of volunteers spent more than 11,520 hours building and clearing our trails, beautifying our parks, picking up litter on our roadsides, and planting new trees. In May, the Parks Foundation of Clark County awarded \$125,000 in grants to maintain and enhance the city and county parks we enjoy.

And last year, Clark County residents donated 33 tons of feed for horses relinquished to Clark County Animal Protection and Control and more than \$1.6 million to the Humane Society for Southwest Washington.

Gandhi said a nation's greatness and its moral progress can be judged by how its animals are treated. If that applies at the county level, I think we are a model community.

DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Clark County government works to enhance the quality of life for all 467,000 residents. Sometimes that means one person at a time.

The county's vision for the community includes "prosperity and well-being for a diverse population," "inclusion and acceptance of all people" and "a population and environment prepared for current and future job opportunities." As a committed community partner, our organization made good strides toward this vision in 2016.

Years ago, Clark County became the second local government in the nation to hire people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Washington ranks first in the U.S. for employing people with developmental disabilities, and among the state's 39 counties, Clark County ranks near the top for supported employment.

In the past year, we doubled the number of county employees with intellectual or developmental disabilities. They and supported employees elsewhere across our county earned a total of \$1.5 million, putting their purchasing power into the local economy and saving taxpayers \$6,000-\$16,000 per employee annually.

As staunch advocates of hiring persons with developmental disabilities, Harold



The supported employment, developmentally disabled employment effort, is a program the county owns, and if we want others to exercise leadership, we have to demonstrate leadership ourselves.

RIGHT: Clark County supported employee Rory Banaszek divides his work week between the Treasurer's Office and Technology Services.

Rains, hiring manager for a supported employee in Clark County Community Services, Camas City Administrator Pete Capell, Hillsboro Parks and Recreation Director Dave Miletich and I took our message to the Pacific Northwest Public Employees Diversity Conference in October. In our presentation, Creating Equity Through an Untapped Workforce, we talked about ways to bring more people with developmental disabilities into the workplace and the many advantages of doing so.

To learn more about supported employment for persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, please watch the YouTube video at <https://tinyurl.com/kqf7tb3>.

AWARDS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I am proud that the county workforce contributes to such a distinguished community, nearly 90 percent as county residents and all as public servants. Here are examples of the caliber of employees, programs and services Clark County offered in 2016:

- In January, Paul Scarpelli, manager of Animal Protection and Control in Community Development, was named Horseman of the Year by the Clark County Executive Horse Council.
- In May, the Auditor's Office earned an Exemplary Knighton Award from the Association of Local Government Auditors for a 2015 performance audit of high-risk equipment and supplies in the Sheriff's Office.
- In May, the Parks Foundation of Clark County presented Parks Manager Bill Bjerke with its Tributary Award for exemplary contributions.
- That same month, Sheriff's Office Support Specialist Keely Warren received the office's Exemplary Performance Award for her act of care and compassion when she approached a child who turned out to be abandoned on the steps of the Clark County Courthouse and took the child to safety.
- In June, Matt Hermen, a planner with Community Planning, earned the advanced credential of Certified Transportation Planner from the American Institute of Certified Planners.
- Also in June, Bob Patterson, an environmental operations specialist with Public Works, was elected to the Vancouver Watersheds Alliance board of directors.
- In July, the Office of the Clark County Medical Examiner was accredited for the sixth year by the National Association of Medical Examiners.
- Also in July, Oliver Orjiako, director of Community Planning, and Pat Lee, Legacy Lands program manager in Public Works, were named Outstanding Clark County Employees by the Neighborhood Associations Council of Clark County.
- The same month, Juvenile Probation Counselor Jill McGinnis received a vote of confidence on her white board from the 8-year-old sister of a client. It read: "Keep it up. You are inspiring kids and people. You are a great person."
- And in July, Clark County Public Health was one of 19 local health departments nationwide to receive a Model Practice Award



ABOVE: Pat Lee, Legacy Lands program manager in Public Works, presented with Neighborhood Associations Council of Clark County Outstanding Employee Award by President Doug Ballou; BELOW: Public Health Team awarded a Model Practice Award. (l to r) Dr. Alan Melnick, Adiba Ali, Chris Goodwin and Roxanne Wolfe.

from the National Association of County and City Health Officials. Public Health was recognized for its Overdose Prevention Program, an effort that trains people to administer naloxone, a drug that reverses the effects of opioid overdose, which is the state's leading cause of accidental deaths. Less than 3 years old, the program has trained 746 people, distributed 1,983 naloxone kits, and reversed almost 440 opioid overdoses, no doubt saving lives. Nearly half of each of these totals was reached in 2016.

- In August, the Assessor's Office received a Gold Star Award from the Washington State Department of Revenue that acknowledged its website's easy access to information about property tax exemptions for seniors.
- In September, Community Development Director Marty Snell was named to the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board, a statewide agency that awards transportation construction and maintenance grants generated by 3 cents of the state's 49.4 cents per gallon gas tax.
- In October, the Washington State Department of Agriculture recognized Public Works Fleet Services for outstanding work maintaining state vehicles

during the 2016 trapping season for gypsy moths, which it calls the most damaging forest insect pest ever introduced into North America. The department recognized an extra level of service by county employees with a QUICK award – Quality Unity Innovation Courtesy Knowledge.

- Also in October, Vanessa Gaston, director of Community Services, was re-elected as second vice president of the Washington State Community Action Partnership Network, a group of 30 non-profits and three counties that delivers social services statewide.
- The same month, Public Health Program Manager Joe Laxson was named the 2016 Washington State Environmental Health Director of the Year, an honor that goes to someone who has demonstrated leadership at the local and state levels.
- In November, Deputy Treasurer Sara Lowe was elected vice president of the Southwest Washington chapter of the Washington Finance Officers Association.
- Also that month, the Washington State Department of Ecology presented the county-operated Salmon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant with an outstanding performance award for 100 percent environmental compliance in 2015.

- And for 2017, Fire Marshal Jon Dunaway will remain president of the Washington State Association of Fire Marshals and vice chair of the International Code Council's Western Regional Work Group representing the state on behalf of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Washington State Department of Agriculture recognized an extra level of service by Public Works Fleet Services. Team members are (seated l to r) Terry Ramsby, Ryan Smith, Vern Kaml; (back row) George Lackey, Billy Yaddof, John DeCarlo, Scott Rood, Craig Callaway, Shane Demonia, Peter Agar, Phil Nichols, Charley Keeler, Dean Korhonen; (not pictured) Daryn Coffman, Dwayne Jacox, Linda Kenney, Chris Walker, and Shawn Waterman.



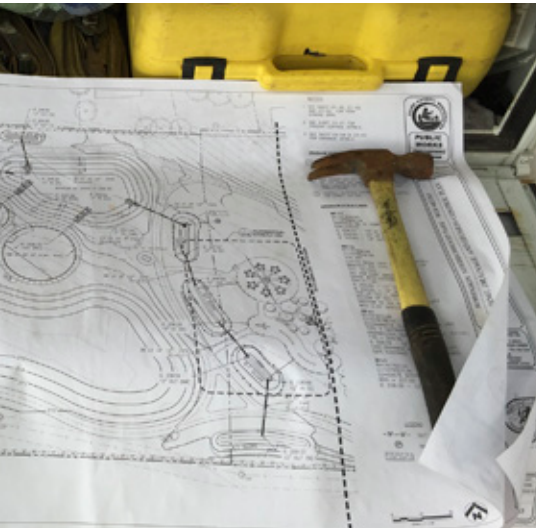
QUALITY OF LIFE

These accomplishments have two things in common: They reveal the dedication and talent of the county workforce, and they contribute to our high quality of life.

This is a community that values play just as much as work.

In 2016, Clark County built two parks – Sorenson Neighborhood Park in the Felida area and Tower Crest Neighborhood Park in the East Minnehaha area.

Sorenson was built on a 4.8-acre parcel, part of which the county has owned for nearly



ABOVE: Plans and construction of Sorenson Neighborhood Park in the Felida area.

30 years. Now, the park features two playgrounds, a basketball half court, two nature play areas that include boulders and logs, paved trails, picnic tables and benches.

Tower Crest was built on a 2.9-acre parcel and designed to emphasize the site's heavily forested character. Amenities include a playground, paved trails, a nature play area with boulders and logs, benches and a picnic table.

Both parks comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. And both were built as part of a \$935,000 construction contract awarded to Robertson and Olson Construction Inc. of Camas.



These parks provide additional recreational opportunities to families living within an easy five-minute walk.



ABOVE: Construction of Tower Crest Neighborhood Park in the East Minnehaha area.

Since voters created the Greater Clark Parks District 12 years ago, Clark County has built 30 parks in the unincorporated area outside Vancouver. Construction of four more neighborhood parks and two more community parks will fulfill its commitment to voters.

The Sorenson and Tower Crest parks contract was indicative of not only services the county provides, but the financial contributions it makes to the community. The parks contract was among the \$50 million in capital expenditures – roads, bridges, clean water facilities – the county infused into the local economy in 2016.

To operate, Clark County purchased another \$45 million in professional services and supplies – paper, paint, asphalt, gravel, gas, ammunition, vehicle parts, medical services to jail inmates – from area vendors. And with a \$200 million annual payroll, Clark County, through its employees' spending, contributes substantially to the region's economy.

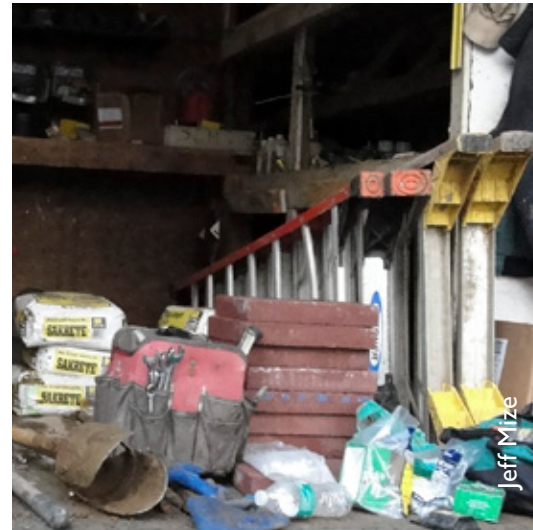
INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE

As I said in December when I presented the recommended 2017-2018 budget, the county workforce met procedural, financial and cultural challenges of the past year with determined professionalism. Employees steadfastly have adhered to their high standards and demonstrated strong commitment to their jobs and the community.

The new budget ushers in changes to be carried out by a new county council. In late December, we said goodbye to Councilor Tom Mielke, who served the county for eight years, and Councilor David Madore, who served four years.

On Dec. 29, John Blom was sworn in representing District 3, which covers the primarily urban area between Interstate 205 and Camas, and Eileen Quiring was sworn in representing District 4, which covers the largely rural areas of east and north county. I welcome both and look forward to a productive, collaborative year dedicated to serving the people of Clark County.

As the economy has picked up, we have, where needed, been rebuilding our workforce to meet demand. We closed 2016 with a few more employees than we did the previous year, even after losing scores of Baby Boomers to retirement and others for various reasons. We have been fortunate to add new employees who come with a desire to serve the public and a strong, steady work ethic.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Sorenson Neighborhood Park was completed in December 2016.





Strategic actions increase success, and when taken countywide, they make our government more efficient and effective for the long term. These strategic actions build on and amplify actions already in place. Our focus on strategic actions in 2016 included:

Community Relationships

- Increase community understanding of the services available to the public.
- Produce a continuous supply of timely, credible information, which may be positive or negative.
- Foster public participation that will build future community leaders and support current leaders.
- Understand the purpose of each partnership and its relationship to the work assignments.
- Support the public, as individuals and groups, in efforts to improve our community.
- Support county leadership’s participation in community groups, activities and events.
- Leverage partnerships to expand the capacity of the county to accomplish goals.

Customer Service

- Develop consistent, accountable, courteous, timely and predictable customer service.
- Develop clearly stated policies for customer service and accountability for implementing the policies.
- Understand our customers and their needs.
- Provide services in a culturally competent manner.
- Deliver products and services that work for internal and external consumers.

Finance

- Create a balanced budget and provide for appropriate reserves.
- Adopt and use policies that ensure long-term financial stability.
- Use strategic plans to focus the funding required to meet service and capital needs.
- Develop six-year programs for budget, capital, technology and other key areas, and understand the resources needed to fund those programs.
- Fund preservation and maintenance of existing assets before investing in new or expanded assets.
- Ensure that capital and project funding have operating support.
- Allow departments to create fund balances for future capital replacements.



ABOVE: (l to r) Margie Brown and Lorri Southerland, temporary Elections inspection board members RIGHT: County road project at Northwest Hillhurst and Carty roads.

I am grateful for another year side-by-side with the county’s outstanding staff, management team, elected officials and volunteers. I am proud of our collective effort, and I look forward to working with you all in 2017.

Sincerely,

Mark McCauley
County Manager



If more people stay in recovery, societal costs will decrease as fewer people end up in crisis.

Pathfinder to better health care

Clark County is a pioneer in state health care reform.

On April 1, 2016, Clark and Skamania counties together became the first in the state to merge mental health and substance abuse treatment with primary care in Washington's Medicaid system.

Our southwest region was the only one of nine regions to so boldly move toward state-mandated health care reform. The governor and Legislature, through the Washington Health Care Authority, had offered two paths. One provided financial benefits, technical support and plan choices to the region that most quickly incorporated behavioral health care with Medicaid's primary care programs. The other entailed multiple, more cautious redesigns over the years leading to the Jan. 1, 2020 reform deadline.

In May 2015, Clark and Skamania counties agreed to the first option. Our region became the state's only Early Adopter, and Clark County's Community Services director took the lead planning for systemic change that was only 11 months away.

What enabled us to meet the challenge, participants said, were the strong, well-established relationships among local mental health and drug and alcohol treatment providers, managed care organizations and the counties, which had been financially responsible for treating people with chronic and severe mental health issues.

What was a first step to reform elsewhere has been common practice in southwest Washington. As a result, Clark and Skamania counties were poised to lead the state in integrating treatment of behavioral health issues with treatment of everyday medical issues.

"In our region, we've always been innovative," said Vanessa Gaston, director of Community Services, which spearheaded the transition. "What works for us, we'll share with the next region coming online."

Most providers are truly supportive of treating the whole person.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Vanessa Gaston, director of Community Services, with Jared Sanford of Lifeline Connections.

STATE STRATEGY

In 2014, state lawmakers passed legislation aimed at improving communities' overall health, reducing health care costs, and helping more people with lower incomes have access to the right care at the right time. To do that, they wanted to integrate primary care with behavioral health care.

If Medicaid patients can get comprehensive health care – behavioral health treatment coordinated with primary care – more people will get the treatment they need to recover from drug and alcohol abuse and mental illness and the support services they need to help them stay in recovery.

“We just looked at what was going on in our jails and emergency departments, and we saw high numbers of people with behavioral health issues who were not getting treatment but were costing lots of money,” Gaston said.

Linking drug, alcohol and mental health treatment to physical health care will result in a more consistent, comprehensive system that helps more people get well and stay well, supporters said.

“Navigating our health care system is a challenge, especially for people who don't have a lot of resources or transportation or are working jobs where they can't take time off,” said Jared Sanford, chief executive officer of Lifeline Connections, a local provider of mental health and substance abuse treatment primarily for people with low incomes.

“Care coordination can help people access the system and help them along the way,” he said. “The old way of hoping the patient will follow-up is not very realistic.”

LOCAL STRATEGY

Southwest Washington was ready for the integration challenge.

“These providers work really well together,” said Gaston. “Yes, they're competitors, but this group really does coordinate well.”

In this small community, longtime professional relationships have eliminated turf wars. Behavioral health care providers for both children and adults know one another's strengths and honor them, instead of fighting over dollars, she said. Providers come to the table to solve problems systematically.



The community works so well, she noted, that the state Department of Social and Health Services and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration use Clark County's implementation of the federal Access to Recovery behavioral health program as a model nationwide.

Bound by professional respect and buoyed by technical support and coordination from the state and Community Services, the behavioral health treatment community was willing to risk leading the state's health care reform effort.

"Some individuals in our community – and Vanessa Gaston was one of them – felt our region already offers good integrated behavioral health care, and because of that, we were ready to try fully integrated managed care," Sanford said.

"We have progressive, visionary leaders who put stakeholders in a room, and they bought into the vision," he said. "Most providers are truly supportive of treating the whole person."

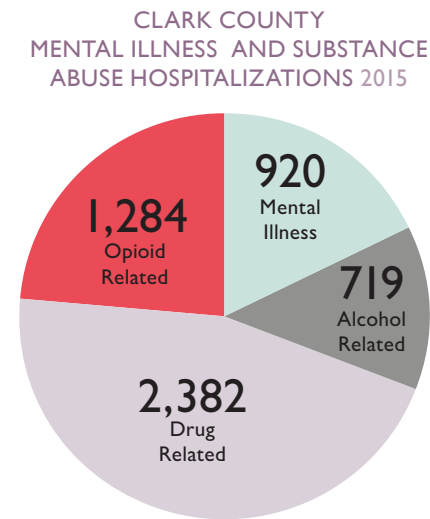
FIRST STEPS

For the first 12 months, one goal was to help behavioral health treatment providers adjust to a new system of billing, payment receipts, data collection and record-keeping. The provider

network is robust, and keeping it strong is crucial to offering services.

"Nonprofit providers operate on slim margins, so an interruption in billing is a concern," said Sanford.

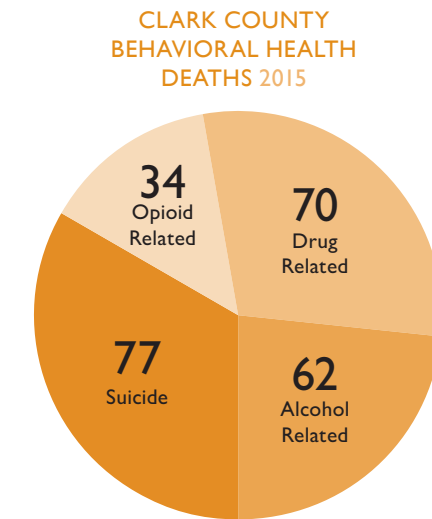
Previously, counties served as the health care plans for Medicaid clients who required treatment for severe



chronic mental health disorders. Providers billed Southwest Behavioral Health Regional Support Network, which was Clark and Skamania counties, and it sorted out which of three funds would pay the bill.

As the state's Early Adopter, our county budget is no longer at risk for in-patient mental health care.

Rather, the financial underpinnings of the disjointed, four-part Medicaid system in the Clark and Skamania region were rolled into one budget. Dollars were divided among the region's two managed care providers, Molina Healthcare of Washington and Community Health Plan of Washington. Beacon Health Options, the behavioral health administrative service organiza-



tion moving us toward a regional crisis system, also received money.

With integration, providers assumed management of their own budgets and billing. Some faced a steep learning curve.

"But the managed care organizations are extremely supportive of providers,"

With care being coordinated for the region's most compromised Medicaid patients, their health care is more comprehensive, holistic and appropriate.

Sanford said, noting the organizations even fronted providers cash to make the new system work.

"Most are billing correctly and getting paid on time," he said. "That is a success."

The result was not by chance.

The state and southwest Washington region formed a 14-member Early Warning System committee that identified and rapidly resolved systemic problems that arose during implementation.

Another group, the Behavioral Health Planning Council, remains focused on how to improve the continuum of care for people with low incomes and complex health care needs who face homelessness and other barriers.

And, providers formed an alliance that continues to meet monthly to understand the technical issues they encounter during the transition.

ENHANCED PATIENT CARE

Two other goals have been to:

- Ensure patients continue to receive ongoing services.
- Develop a new system by which more people with lower incomes can get the mental health and drug and alcohol treatment they need along with primary care.

Sanford of Lifeline Connections said services efficiently carried across the April 1, 2016 integration threshold. The community is working on the second goal, he said.

For example, Lifeline Connections has always done general health screenings for people seeking drug and alcohol or mental health treatment. But prior to April, it could not provide help or follow-up for patients found to also have diabetes or a bad back. Patients went home with a list of health care providers, but the barriers to getting care were many.

And culturally, primary care and behavioral health care have been separate worlds, he said.

But now, thanks to integration, every Medicaid patient with complex health care needs who is a frequent consumer of high-cost services is assigned a care coordi-

nator. That person considers all the patient's needs, from primary and behavioral health care to housing and transportation.

Managed care plans have been responsible for care coordination and providers talking to one another. With integration, some plans have pushed those functions to the provider level. Lifeline Connections now has two care coordinators and likely will hire a handful more in coming months.

Confidentiality is a major challenge across medical disciplines. Providers and the region are working on a solution. Sanford said the region has a good compliment of behavioral health providers, but needs more physicians who will accept Medicaid patients.

Ultimately, Medicaid patients with chronic, complex needs will be able to receive behavioral health treatment at the same location where they see a physician for pneumonia or a heart ailment. Some large behavioral health providers are working to bring primary care physicians into their buildings. Smaller providers may rely more on referrals and partnerships, but now the referrals are backed up with the local Medicaid provider network and coordinated by specialists.

For Medicaid patients with less complex needs, a plan's coordinator can

help them find the resources they need, whether it's a dentist or a pediatrician. Now, Clark and Skamania county Medicaid patients seeking mental health or drug and alcohol treatment can call their plan's 24-hour 800 number for assistance to find the right care at the right time.

EXTENDED CARE

Leading the state's health care reform has brought additional benefits. As the Early Adopter, our region has access to federal resources for technical support through the Washington Health Care Authority. We have received \$300,000 for training on electronic health records, negotiating contracts and other administrative functions needed to make clinical integration a success, and we are seeking an additional \$150,000.

A subgroup of the Behavioral Health Planning Council is asking Olympia for money to create a regional crisis stabilization center to divert people with behavioral health needs from emergency departments, county jails or Western State Hospital in Lakewood. The council's Early Adopter initiative is seeking \$18.7 million, and the project is now listed in Gov. Jay Inslee's proposed capital budget at \$15 million.

Being the Early Adopter also has prompted greater connections to

housing – and access to health care – for residents with behavioral health issues who are homeless.

Backed by \$1 million from the county's 1/10th of 1 percent sales tax fund dedicated to chemical dependency and mental health treatment, Columbia Nonprofit Housing, a Vancouver Housing Authority affiliate, will start construction of Meriwether Place in late 2017. Lifeline Connections and Community Services NorthWest, a nonprofit providing behavioral health treatment and services for the homeless, will offer treatment for residents of its 30 apartments.

And our region received \$1 million in state money to provide housing for people who are homeless and chronically mentally ill. Construction of Rhododendron Place apartments in the Hazel Dell area will start in early 2018, and Columbia River Mental Health Services will offer behavioral health treatment onsite.

Our region's partnerships and plans were in place, which made the Southwest Washington region the logical place to spend the money, Gaston said. "We were prepared."

In addition, Clark County and Beacon Health Options will pay for a behavioral health specialist at Lincoln

"No wrong door to any kind of treatment," said Sanford. "That's the goal."

RIGHT: Architectural rendering of Meriwether Place, a 30-unit apartment building for people with behavioral health needs.

Place, a Vancouver Housing Authority apartment building run by Share, a nonprofit that serves the homeless and hungry. A Community Services NorthWest specialist will provide behavioral health services.

Share clients are among the most vulnerable, said Amy Reynolds, the group's deputy director.

"Many of our clients haven't seen a physician for years or been on needed medication for years," she said. "It would make a significant difference if someone comes to you to help you stay in a home."



Roy Johnson, Vancouver Housing Authority's executive director, said coordinating behavioral health with primary care treatment and housing will yield great dividends. People who secure stable housing can start attending to behavioral health issues that have taken a back seat to survival on the streets.

"This is an opportunity to not have 'Where will I sleep tonight?' be the first thing they think about," Johnson said. "The benefit is certainly present."



Beth Conyers

Knowing our permitting system was nearing the end of its useful life, a broad committee of county employees began searching for a replacement in 2013.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Building inspectors Mark Hess and Mike De Roia.

The Great Recession is behind us, and building is booming in Clark County

To support this welcomed growth, Clark County hired more plans examiners and inspectors, increased Permit Center staff, realigned Permit Center business hours, and set aside certain weekdays for in-person appointments.

And we undertook a multiyear project that will provide long-term technology infrastructure for big and small developers alike, ensure consistency in the permit process, open more information to the public, and result in money-saving efficiencies.

Clark County is replacing its 18-year-old archaic, paper-driven permitting system that, lacking online capabilities, required residents seeking a wide variety of permits to come to the Public Service Center. Travel and waiting times cost applicants valuable work or family time, especially if multiple trips are required. Maintaining the system is not cheap, with costs approaching \$100,000 a year.

The county, public and development community need a system that is secure and reliable, said Marty Snell, director of Community Development.

“There are hundreds of millions of dollars tied to permits,” he said. “We need a system that will not go down and that will be supported by the vendor.”

The county signed a contract in late 2014 for a system called POSSE, short for Public One-Stop Service Engine. After months of discussions with the vendor about what features and configuration worked best for Clark County, the system began to take shape in 2016. It is being put into place in phases.

The first improvements applied to building permits for people wanting to construct single-family homes on a subdivision lot, whether it’s one house or 20. By late 2016, applicants could apply and pay online for residential building permits and those for plumbing or something mechanical, such as a furnace or gas line.

Today when a builder or remodeler's application for one of those permits is approved, they simply print it out at home or the office.

Now, all residential building permit applicants can apply online, whether a lot is in a subdivision or on rural property in unincorporated Clark County.

And homebuilders can apply for any of six residential fire-related permits online. For now, applicants need to bring in plans for approval and pick up the permit.

Online options will increase in 2017. By the end of the year, everything related to building permits should be able to be done online, including commercial permits. By late 2018, our goal is to offer a secure, reliable online system that will give residents and developers the flexibility to apply and pay for all development and land-use permits and schedule inspections at their convenience using a tablet, computer or smartphone.

"The whole idea is customer service," said Dianna Nutt, a program coordinator II with Public Works.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF CYBERSPACE

The new online system will mean greater convenience and accuracy.

With the cumbersome, paper-driven permit system, an application and supporting documents are handled by a number of county employees. Routing paperwork from one person to another can increase the possibility of human error. Similarly, applicants might inadvertently leave out pertinent information or forget to bring in a document, which can delay



approval or require another trip to the Public Service Center.

With an online system, the potential for errors drops dramatically for both county employees and applicants. County staff will no longer enter data. Updates are logged in real time and immediately available. As the project moves along, information will be con-

The online system will mean a shorter, more efficient and smooth permitting process.

sistent no matter who assists the developer or builder. Accuracy is improved. And there is no misplaced paperwork.

"We're almost trying to do away with our filing cabinet," said Nikki Olsen, a senior engineering technician with Public Works.

An online system is the ultimate in convenience. Because it is available around the clock, night owls, for example, can file for permits outside standard work hours, and applicants can check the status of their requests from anywhere their smartphone has service.

The online system will mean a more level playing field for developers, no matter their size or experience.

With the old permit system, large development firms could more easily absorb travel and Permit Center wait times and costs than a small office or single person. Filing online means a mom-and-pop operation can keep its doors open during business hours just as easily as a large firm can.

"Everybody should be treated the same and given the same opportunity to be successful," Olsen said.

When all capabilities of the system are in place, POSSE will:

- Alert applicants to approaching deadlines, which will help homeowners, builders and developers stay on schedule.
- Issue a "to-do list" for county staff to better track projects.
- Notify applicants when permits have been approved.
- Allow county inspectors in the field to email builders, architects or developers and immediately notify them of the inspection results, including specific details that need to be completed.
- Give inspectors a way to quickly determine whether construction complies with approved plans.
- Let plans inspectors send applicants specific information about their building plans, including an image on which the inspector can make notations. Under the old system, needed changes were simply listed in a letter. The new visual element will help clarify requirements.
- Enable plans examiners to lay different versions of plans over one another to see whether required changes were made.

Homeowners, engineers, architects, builders, developers and county staff all will be able to track a project each step of the way. All elements of a project will be integrated, and communication will be enhanced.

“It puts all of us, internally and externally, on the same platform,” said Greg Shafer, Public Works’ Development Engineering manager.

A bonus to replacing the permit system, Snell said, is that the county is reviewing its building permits as a whole. Perhaps some permits can be combined. Perhaps there are ways to make the process easier and cheaper.

“It’s an opportunity to look at what we’re doing and whether we can simplify and consolidate,” he said.

THE RESPONSIBLE CHOICE

Among the many reasons we selected POSSE was greater confidence that the system would remain intact if Clark County or the region suffers a natural or man-made disaster. Because POSSE is hosted on servers in Denver and backed up in Edmonton, Alberta, we are assured our community’s development records will be secure should a catastrophic event happen here.

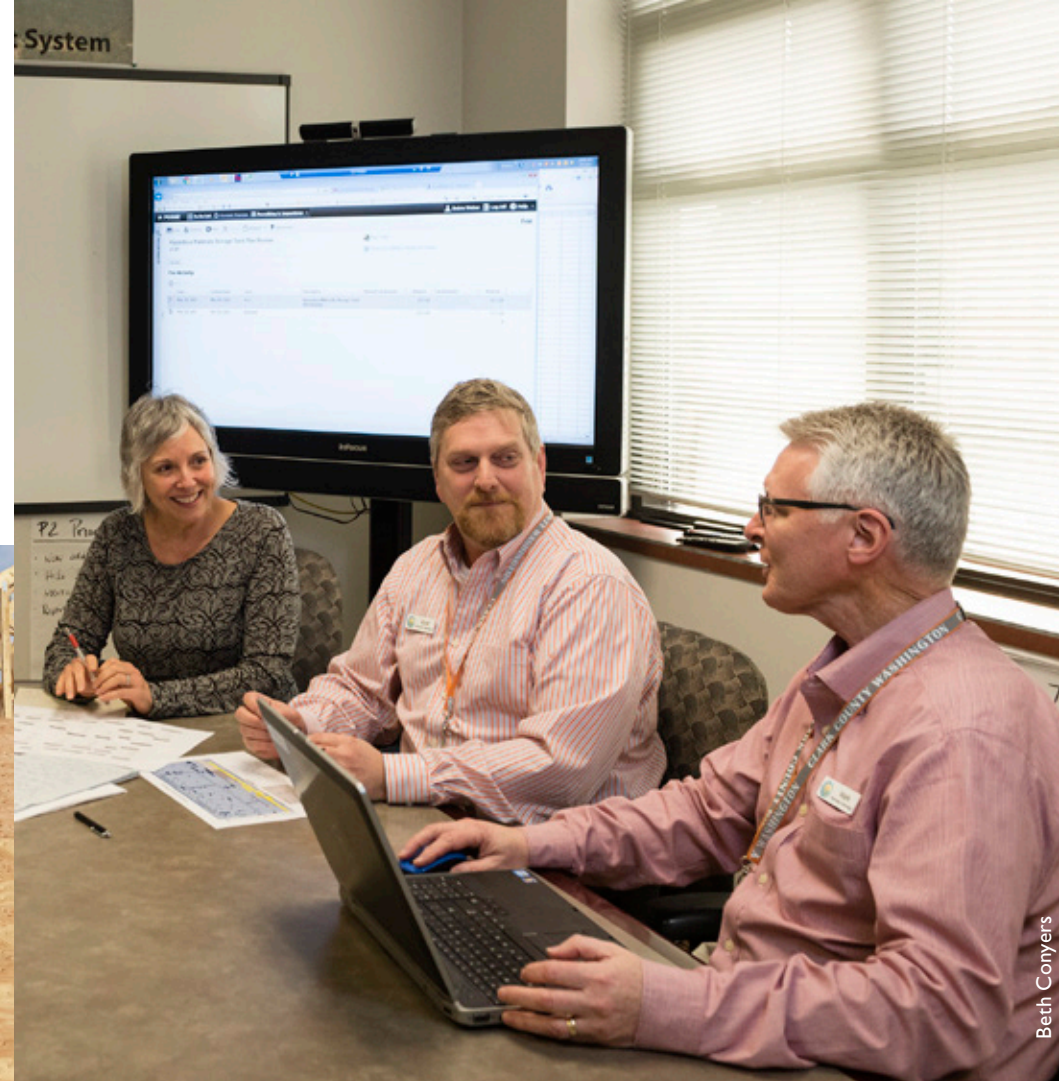
Host servers hundreds of miles away means cost savings. With POSSE, the county does not have to buy and maintain servers and back-up systems.

The county council approved purchasing the POSSE system in December 2014 at a cost, over five years, of \$4.8 million. That amount includes county employees’ time and a contingency fund.

Learning from the experiences of others, we are putting POSSE into place incrementally. That way, we can see what works and what doesn’t work, correct as we go, and apply what we learn at each subsequent step. Excitement grows with each success.

The bit-by-bit method also is more agile. If one of the many moving parts in the system fails, the failure has limited impact.

Two-thirds of new government computer systems fail when they are turned on



This approach is, simply, good stewardship of public dollars.

LEFT: POSSE team members (l to r) Carol Brown, Scott Arnett and Mark Elworthy. ABOVE: Inspectors Duane Marchand and Mike De Roia.

Even if some residents never apply for a permit, access to additional information is a benefit to the entire community. People can more easily research a property they are considering buying or learn what's happening on property down the road.

OPPOSITE PAGE: (l to r) Marty Snell, director of Community Development with Sam Kim, chief information officer.

with the flip of a switch or push of a button, said Sam Kim, the county's chief information officer. Moving slowly and testing as we go avoids that.

The new system should serve the county well for at least 15-20 years, Kim said. It is not a cutting-edge system; Clark County opted for a more conservative fiscal and practical approach. But it will enable us to keep up with the national trend toward online services, which the public wants and expects.

The system is flexible and able to meet changing needs or growing demand. Components can be added or upgraded. There is no need to replace the entire system if one element goes bad. And it's highly scalable.

"We can be a better regional center," Kim said. "Everything we're doing in Technology Services is to become a better regional service provider to the rest of Clark County."

Ultimately, the new system will mean more efficient government, enhanced communication among departments and greater access to data for employees and the public, said Carol Brown, a systems integration expert in Community Development who is the business project manager.

Computronix, POSSE's Denver-based vendor, has exceeded county expectations, Snell said. Computronix experts are patient, understanding, eager to share best practices, highly responsive and wise counselors.

Clark County's POSSE management team is supportive, flexible and open to change, but small, Brown said. Other employees have stepped up to fill in for those assigned to the project, a team that ranges from nine to 14 people who also keep the old permit system working.

"The work is intense," Brown said. "We need to get this system built as close to perfect as possible. There is a lot of attention to detail, to design and layout and workflow, the underpinnings, so it fits the needs of the business side at the counter."

Clark County's permitting system replacement is not the first systems integration project Brown has managed. She shepherded a similar project when employed for 17 years by a city in Washington County, Ore.

But, "I've never been around a more hard-working, dedicated, committed group of people as on this project," she said. "Clark County is definitely not the status quo in what the public perceives of as government employees."





Leigh Radford

Shifting the culture

In 2016, we strengthened efforts to create a workplace that empowers all employees to be their best, trains leaders for the future, and makes Clark County the regional employer of choice. As county manager, I want to retain our creative, talented workforce and provide opportunities for Clark County residents to find satisfying, gainful employment right here at home.

The county's senior leaders and I pledged ourselves to those goals when we saw results of our 2014 employee survey about the organization's culture. We clearly had work to do.

Employees are engaged, satisfied and committed to their jobs, the survey said. They are resilient, pull together to get work done, and are not likely to quit. A whopping 80 percent of employees completed the survey, and responses were consistent with two earlier surveys.

But ratings were lower. Employees perceived the county as an increasingly political organization where favoritism, cronyism and pressure to conform appeared to influence how policies and procedures could be implemented. Fairness regarding work, pay and promotion was a concern.

Minority employees reported experiencing harassment and adverse professional treatment. One in five employees said they were harassed about their age. More than 25 percent of non-heterosexual employees reported experiencing harassment. Trust was frayed. Morale was low.

We vowed to turn this around.

I am grateful to employees who stepped forward to find ways to improve our work environment. They formed three committees that made recommendations



about organizational climate and communication; equity, inclusion and support; and employee development.

I am pleased to report that all recommendations are either in place or in process. In 2016, we:

- Founded the Clark County Diversity & Inclusion Group.
- Offered free trainings about topics such as resolving conflict and jumpstarting your career.
- Started a job-shadow program for employees to learn about other roles they might want to pursue in the organization.
- Opened the doors to Leadership Essentials training for new or incoming managers.
- Introduced 158 managers and elected officials to Servant Leadership, a philosophy and set of practices used by Nordstrom, Starbucks, Whole Foods, REI, Southwest Airlines, Zappos and other top-rated companies.

The first steps to improving Clark County's work culture have proven helpful. They have forged familiarity among a large workforce, opened new possibilities to employees, and kept us focused on our mission "to enhance the quality of life in our diverse community by providing services with integrity, openness and accountability."

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

To boost our workplace culture and build a workforce that aligns with succession planning, staff development and training took a higher profile in 2016. With scores of Baby Boomers reaching retirement age, greater employment opportunities in an improved economy, and younger workers coming with more flexible work expectations, we had to work smarter.

We committed ourselves to providing paths for employee growth and leadership development. Research shows employees do not leave jobs; they leave managers. While our workplace improvement programs had something for everyone, our 2016 efforts focused primarily on growing our managers' capabilities.

They are learning hard skills to ensure a fair, consistent work environment and policies are followed. They are learning soft skills that can diffuse conflict, improve communication, build effective teams and navigate change.

Combining new ways of working with better management will, over time, give the community an even more motivated, engaged and high-performing workforce."

Here are some details:

Leadership Essentials: By the end of 2016, nearly 30 percent of the county's management and lead staff had taken the three-day Leadership Essentials course taught by Jan Dwyer Bang, president of Boundless Results, through the Washington State Department of Enterprise Services. She held four sessions and trained 121 employees. They gave the course a strong 6.2 rating on a scale where 7 was best.

All other county managers will attend one of four additional sessions scheduled in 2017, and newly hired or promoted managers now are required to take the training within six months. Next year, we plan to bring the training in-house and infuse it more deeply into our ranks.

Take Your Coworker To Work Job Shadow Program: Established to provide greater insight and hands-on experience for county workers, the job shadow program matches participants with a coach in another sector of the organization. Employees can explore career options and gain a wider understanding of county services. In 2016, 60 employees took part, and 85 percent of them rated it a 5 out of 5.

Free employee development opportunities: Employees stepped forward again, this time to share their expertise. For example, Permit Manager Chuck Crider offered a session on customer service. Dawniel Miller, office assistant in Assessment, and Linda Latto, chief deputy Assessor, joined forces for a session on team-based strategies.

Robert K. Greenleaf coined the phrase in 1970, although the concept is timeless. It is an others-centered philosophy and set of practices that calls for leaders to first be servants. It emphasizes serving others, whether employees, customers or the community. It enriches people's lives, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just, compassionate and caring world.



The Workplace Improvement Program Implementation Team promotes growth opportunities for Clark County employees.

Throughout the year, 110 employees attended the trainings - a best practice that will build greater internal capability.

Servant Leadership: Our most ambitious effort has been Servant Leadership. The program was the sole recommendation of the organizational climate and communication committee.

"It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first," Greenleaf wrote. "Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

The county engaged Chris Meade, president of Leadership Alive Inc., to bring the philosophy and practices to our organization. He earned a doctorate in adult and organizational

LEFT: WIP Implementation Team members (back row l to r) Amy Kennedy-Palma, Scot Brantley, Travis Moultrie, Deb Whitcomb, Laurie Foster, Fereidoon Safdari, David Bottamini; (middle row) Dawniel Miller, Denise Horne, Christina Monks, Susan Anderson, Lianne Martinez, Chuck Crider, Emily Zwetzig; (front row) Carla Simmons, Jill Blair, Annie Wentland, Roxanne Wolfe; (not pictured) Roni Battan, Pat Bourcier, Melissa Curtis, Gordy Euler, John Jokela, John Milne, Don Strick, Cori Wiessner, Linda Williams.

learning with a concentration in leadership at the University of Idaho. He is a knowledgeable, effective and inspirational speaker, and his weekly morning session became a draw for me after senior managers, elected officials and I completed his first session in the spring.

By the end of 2016, Meade put 158 of us through thoughtful exercises that will help us flip the top-down style of leadership to a bottom-up approach. This approach does not just want things from people; it wants things for people - employees and the public.

He helped us learn things about our personal styles of communicating and how we go about getting work done. It is concrete information to help us improve processes, avoid conflict and better support one another.

The Servant Leadership model is a strategy that will help us restore trust, focus on common goals, and provide the best services possible.

According to the “Harvard Business Review,” the benefits of Servant Leadership include:

- Greater cohesion among the workforce.
- High employee retention, fewer sick days.

- Greater productivity, creativity and engagement.
- Improved reputation with customers.
- Employee professional and personal growth.
- A shared sense of purpose and loyalty.

By the end of the year, 41 percent of



Holley Gilbert

Clark County has made a considerable investment to shift the organizational culture to one where employees feel appreciated, respected and supported. That, I believe, will attract the best people available, making Clark County the region’s employer of choice. A skilled servant workforce will better meet the community’s changing needs,

the county’s managers and 7 percent of lead staff had taken Servant Leadership training. Of them, 94 percent who rated the training ranked it “very good” or above.

Our plan is to reach the remaining managers and leads in two 2017 sessions and share the training with other colleagues in 2018.

deliver more efficient services, and foster greater engagement with the community.

ABOVE: County Manager Mark McCauley listens to Workplace Improvement Program Implementation Team members.



Beth Conyers

Leadership is at the heart of improving the culture and communications within an organization.
 – David Bottamini, Servant Leadership Committee member, engineer III, Public Works



LEFT: (l to r) Job Shadow participants Herfa Zimmerman of Auditor’s Office and Rebecca Tilton, Clerk to the Council. ABOVE: Facilitator Chris Meade leads a Servant Leadership training exercise.

BACK COVER: Kevin Rathje, a Clark County supported employee, working at the Salmon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.




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