

**Councilor Jeanne Stewart**  
**2015 State of the County**  
**March 12, 2015**

Thank you, Sheriff Atkins.

I have been at the county for just a few months, but I've already been impressed by you and your staff.

As I just mentioned, I am the new board member. The job is interesting, demanding and, in all honesty, difficult. It is not a part-time job.

I bring experience in both the public and private sectors, but it's my experience at the neighborhood level that really shaped who I am as an elected official and how I approach my position.

Years ago, I planned to return to work after our son was born, but I could not find affordable, responsible child care. So I decided to remain at home and raise our child.

One of my neighbors came to me and suggested we start a neighbor-to-neighbor program in our neighborhood. She even wanted me to be the unofficial executive director – it was a two-person board. I told her I didn't think I had time while caring for the baby. My neighbor replied, "He takes a nap, doesn't he?"

That was the start of what we called the 29<sup>th</sup> Street Association, named after our street in Vancouver's Carter Park neighborhood.

We would pitch in. We would provide meals or walk kids to school when mothers were ill. Someone else might need a little help with yard work or grocery shopping.

One senior could not get her dog to the groomer, so I agreed to give it a bath and trim using a large basin in my basement. It was not an easy task because her dog hated my dog and cats.

These types of small actions, to help people when they were in a crunch, went a long way. Our neighborhood started to blossom, with people fixing up their yards and their homes.

Neighborhood involvement led me to pay more attention to what was going on in city government. That led to my five-year appointment on the Vancouver Planning Commission, where I was instrumental in helping develop a groundwater protection ordinance to keep drinking water safe. With that service as a foundation, I later was elected to three four-year terms on the Vancouver City Council. And my time on the Clark County Solid Waste Advisory Commission even at that time gave me a regional perspective.

Today, I am a longtime county councilor representing the entire county, but my perspective remains shaped by my personal experience on one street in one tight-knit neighborhood where we owned a business and raised our son.

My experience has taught me that government needs to function on behalf of the people it serves. Government needs to provide what individual citizens cannot do on their own.

That includes public safety, which always has been and always will be an overriding consideration. Citizens need to feel safe. They need to feel safe before any other goals can be accomplished.

It also includes education, public infrastructure, effective transportation systems, and protecting existing neighborhoods. We cannot prevent change, but we must do whatever we can to mitigate the impacts of traffic, development and other forces.

We also need to continue to encourage job creation. Jobs provide the means to support our families. They provide a sense of purpose and self-worth.

Family-wage jobs keep families healthy and cohesive and our community strong and livable. Our board is working to create a community where businesses want to locate and expand and will gladly employ our local residents. Our citizens deserve nothing less from their elected officials.

As we move ahead as a community, we need to remember where we have been and what has contributed to our success.

Progress is when you build on what has made you successful. Preserving what has worked well is just as important as adding something new.

Clark County is today - and will be – the place of the future. We have enormous potential. We have all the right tools and assets. We are the most important developing county in the I-5 corridor and probably in the state of Washington.

Thank you for trusting me to work hard, serve the community, and contribute to progress we all can enjoy.

Be assured, I have what it takes to get the job done. I am capable, committed, informed and experienced.

Not only will I get the job done. I will do it well and YOU will SEE the results.

Now I want to introduce Tom Mielke, who has served on the county board since 2009 after representing the 18<sup>th</sup> legislative district for eight years in Olympia.