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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 15, 2017

Press Release

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COLUMBIA COUNTY BUSINESSES ATTEND BUSINESS SUMMIT

Dayton, WA – Two Columbia County businesses and the County’s Economic Development Coordinator Brad McMasters attended the [Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce’s fifth annual Business Summit](#) on Friday, May 12th at the Marcus Whitman Hotel. This all day event began with a 7:45 am breakfast and ended with a 5:30 pm wine reception. McMasters (Port of Columbia), Jonathan Betts (Manila Bay Café) and Kim Clark (Ski Bluewood) also experienced three keynote speakers and three breakout sessions geared toward global, regional and local business issues.

Lou Zacharilla, co-founder of the [Intelligent Community Forum](#) and a globally-recognized speaker and moderator, opened with his keynote, "OK, We’re “Smart.” Now What? The Next Wave in Community Growth."

Zacharilla was followed by [Kelley Moore](#), a multi-media expert whose clients include Lexus, Walmart, Macy’s, Microsoft and more. Moore, a recent transplant to Walla Walla, has appeared on shows such as Ellen and The View to share her design advice and innovative product branding guidelines. Her keynote "Break Through the Noise: Promoting Your Brand in the Age of Social Media" offered concrete advice on differentiating your business’s products or services from that of your competitors.

The lunch keynote was given by Joe Sprague, the Senior Vice President of External Relations for Alaska Airlines. Sprague spoke on "A View From the Cockpit! How Alaska Flies Above the Competition Using its Core Values." In addition to sharing the company’s superior and unique approach to customer service, Sprague addressed the relationship between Alaska Airlines and the Walla Walla Valley.

The breakout sessions, in which the Columbia County attendees split up to attend, included topics such as, building a culture of customer service, bulletproofing your business, succession planning, alternative vs. traditional financing, human resources issues and a roundtable of local entrepreneurs.

Clark took extensive notes, especially on topics related to common business issues discussed in the “Bulletproof Your Business” breakout such as the importance of having preplanning meetings before large financial transactions and understanding the difference between employees and independent contractors. Betts, who appreciated the Business Summit’s networking opportunities and content, specifically learned about alternative financing options for young businesses interested in capital improvements. McMasters, who has attended four of the five summits, takes a different approach when attending business trainings and workshops. “Though I’ve owned my own business and have worked in a number of different industries, I try to approach these events from the perspective of *all* Columbia County business. This summit especially reinforced the importance of collaboration and cooperation between businesses to be successful. It came up in nearly every keynote and breakout session.”

This is the second year in a row the Port of Columbia has offered scholarships to Columbia County businesses to attend the summit. Information for these and other scholarship opportunities are usually presented through social media, e-blasts or through collaboration with the Dayton Chamber of Commerce. To make certain you are informed of information and opportunities, McMasters and Port Manager Jennie Dickinson suggest that you “Like” the [Port of Columbia Facebook page](#) and ask to be added to the “Friends of the Port” email list by emailing brad@portofcolumbia.org.

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