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Message from Kim DeTrolio, Interim Executive Director

Happy new year, all, and welcome to our first newsletter of 2024. We would like to express our gratitude to Million Air for allowing us to use their stunning photo above as the header image for this edition. In this issue, we will be highlighting Million Air, one of our two Fixed Based Operations (FBO) services providers here at the Port. More on them and their caring business strategy below.

Last quarter, we were very pleased to learn that according to a **new economic report**, the unemployment rate in Grant County is at its lowest in three decades. This while Sila Nanotechnologies announced the build-out of their facility in Moses Lake, One D broke ground on their new plant, and REC Silicon announced the successful restart of their production facility. All fantastic news for our economy, be sure to read more on that below.



Kim DeTrolio, Interim Executive Director

We wanted to share an update on our search for a new Executive Director. We have extended our search to outside candidates and hope to make introductions by our next newsletter. In the meantime, I'll continue to serve as Interim Executive Director. We remain committed to finding the best candidate to lead our organization forward and are grateful for the hard work and dedication of our team who have stepped up to ensure that the Port continues to run smoothly. We extend our sincerest appreciation to them all for their continued efforts.

As workforce development remains a focal point for us here at the Port, in this newsletter, you'll learn more about Big Bend Community College's TRIO Upward Bound program. Among the oldest programs of its kind in the country, BBCC's Upward Bound has been providing continuing education opportunities for our area youth since 1967 and its success rate is impressive. We're fortunate to have Upward Bound among many workforce development initiatives driving meaningful change in our communities. Read on to discover more about this remarkable program.

Speaking of remarkable programs, don't miss the story on Genie Industries below. In December, they launched their youth apprenticeship program for area high school students. Providing opportunities for youth to learn valuable skills, students will also achieve graduation requirements while getting paid. A fantastic flagship program we're quite proud to see in our region.

Meanwhile, we are delighted to announce the launch of our new website, which will provide a more seamless experience for our stakeholders. The new website, available at our same domain of www.portofmoseslake.com, has been upgraded with a modern look and feel, and a comprehensive menu of information to help you find what you need more quickly and easily. Our thanks to everyone who worked to bring this project to fruition, as a great deal of deliberate thought went into its re-engineering. We invite you to check out the new website and experience the improved user interface for yourself.

Finally, we are also excited to announce that the Moses Lake Airshow is back and scheduled for Father's Day weekend on June 15th and 16th at Grant County International Airport. This is a highly anticipated event that draws aviation enthusiasts from all over the region and the event already has some of the best aerobatic performers scheduled. More on that below, too!

Thank you for tuning in to our newsletter. Until next time!

Million Air's Caring Business Strategy

By: POML Staff Writer

Believing that caring is a powerful business strategy, Million Air in Moses Lake is one of 36 locations across the United States and Canada servicing 1 million aircraft movements, 2.5 million passengers, as well as fueling 70 million gallons to business, general aviation, commercial and military aircraft each year. We sat down with the General Manager, Mark Bonaudi, to learn about Million Air's role at the Port of Moses Lake, and how being more than a Fixed Based Operator (FBO) service provider includes being our guests' best first and last impression at Grant County International Airport (GCIA).

“The commodity we sell is jet fuel, but our product is customer service. That is the difference that Million Air provides its customers and what is unique about the Million Air experience within the FBO industry. We’re ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.”

Mark Bonaudi
General Manager
Million Air, Moses Lake



According to Bonaudi, there is no second chance to make a good first impression. “That’s something we excel at, whether it’s a tourist flying in to attend a concert at the Gorge, a major stakeholder for one of our industries, or a Navy crew from Whidbey Island; our line service professionals, customer service professionals and our facilities are the very first and last impressions for the people flying into and out of the Grant County International Airport. That lends to the opinion guests form and have about our community.”

According to Million Air’s website, “Million Air was founded and built by people who sense the excitement in every takeoff and landing, whose ideal surroundings include the sights, sounds, and smells of aviation. The inspiration and driving force behind Million Air is in the genuine passion for aviation and all things related to it.”

Providing services to general aviation, military, large cargo, and charter jets; Million Air is all about looking for the “wow” moments in the experience they receive whether the customer is flying into GCIA or walking through the GCIA terminal door. “As the Million Air CEO says, our employees are equipped to provide outrageous customer service,” Bonaudi said, adding, “The commodity we sell is jet fuel, but our product is customer service. That is the difference that Million Air provides its customers and what is unique about the Million Air experience within the FBO industry. We’re ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen. The Million Air employees believe that genuinely caring about and providing exceptional service to their customers is their highest mission. We vow to provide the finest personal service and facilities so our customers will always enjoy a warm, relaxing, and distinguished ambiance. We also want the Million Air experience to enliven the senses. It should instill well-being and fulfill even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our customers.”

One of Million Air’s earliest goals was to provide a Five-Star service experience to corporate aircraft traveling into a smaller airport terminal. Recognizing a potential in partnering with other small-airport communities, Million Air



Million Air, at Grant County International Airport

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This year, Million Air will celebrate its 40th anniversary. Million Air was founded in 1984 in Dallas, Texas as a sole source provider on the field. One of Million Air’s earliest goals was to provide a Five-Star service experience to corporate aircraft traveling into a smaller airport terminal. Recognizing a potential in partnering with other small-airport communities, Million Air embarked on a mission to create “aviation oases” across the country.

In Moses Lake, the Five-Star Million Air experience started when the Freeman Holdings Group purchased the FBO from Air America and rebranded it as a Million Air. Freeman Holdings Group currently is the largest Million Air franchisee with 14 Million Air locations out of the 36 Million Air locations located from Hawaii to New York to Calgary to the Florida Keys.

GCIA is a unique location because of its sizeable footprint and lack of aircraft congestion. It is also conveniently located between multiple regional military bases as well as manufacturing production facilities in the Puget Sound region. Million Air also serves a diverse client base. Some of the customers Million Air serves are Boeing, Life Flight, and the United States military. Million Air at Moses Lake is one of the few civilian locations that is certified in hot refueling of United States military aircraft. Hot refueling allows the military customer to receive fuel without shutting down their engines. This enables them to maintain their tight timelines.

Between May and October of each year, Million Air also serves aerial firefighting aircraft based at Moses Lake during wildfire season.

The airport also has a United States Customs office that services the airport thereby allowing Million Air to serve as a convenient pass-through for planes from Canada and other locations abroad. This enables the growing tourism within the area to continue to grow at an exponential rate. There’s also Million Air’s Jetway Café at GCIA that is capable of providing meals for guests as well as catering for aircraft customers and local businesses.

As for the team at Million Air in Moses Lake, Bonaudi said, “It’s more than ensuring that we have enough high-quality jet fuel, it’s also about having the best trained staff providing the requested services from our customers. Our employee provided services include being successful ambassadors of Million Air as well as providing the safest and highest quality service to our customers.”



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Mark Bonaudi
General Manager
Million Air, Moses Lake

Million Air’s Moses Lake location employs more than 25 employees from the local area and nearly half are either current or former flight students of Big Bend Community College’s aviation program. Bonaudi, joined

Million Air after retiring from 20 years of service with the United States Army two years ago. Bonaudi said, "My dad was the president of Big Bend Community College for many years, so the Community College's flight program is very near and dear to my heart."

To this day, the relationship with Big Bend Community College remains close as Million Air continues to partner in workforce development initiatives in the Community College's flight and airframe and maintenance program. "It just makes sense that we continue to build that relationship more and more," Bonaudi said.

Million Air's scope of community involvement doesn't stop there. They also actively support the development of Moses Lake youth by keeping a close relationship with the Moses Lake High School Junior ROTC. Extending their care philosophy to the next generation military, Bonaudi said, "We've recently helped facilitate a tour of the airport, Boeing's, and Aerotech's airport operations. We were also able to provide leadership and professional development guidance to the cadets," he said.

A regular and generous sponsor of the annual Moses Lake Airshow, Million Air is stepping up their involvement even more with this year's event. Previously, Million Air provided performer hospitality and fuel in addition to financial backing. This year, Million Air looks forward to operating hot refueling pits for all aircraft on the event's flight line. Million Air also supports the Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation as they work very closely with Million Air's client, Life Flight. Bonaudi said, "There's a good, common tie there."

As for the future of Million Air in Moses Lake, Bonaudi said, "We will continue to grow and mature capabilities to support the growth in the Columbia Basin and seek burgeoning business opportunities and partnerships. Most important, however, is continuing to take every opportunity to demonstrate our passion for excellence by being the best first and last impression of our community."

Learn more about Million Air at: <https://www.millionair.com/>

BBCC's TRIO Upward Bound

By: POML Staff Writer

Broadening access to post-secondary education and increasing the number of eligible students graduating from high school, enrolling in college, and completing a postsecondary degree, are core goals of federally funded TRIO programs across the country. TRIO Upward Bound at Big Bend Community College (BBCC) is one of those programs and offers academic advising, career exploration and planning, and tutoring to high school students during the school year. During the summer, it also offers students a six-week, fully immersible college campus experience. It's still a great deal more than that and to understand the history, scope of services, and meaningful impacts BBCC's TRIO Upward Bound has for area students, we sat down with its Director, Anita De Leon, to learn more.

“Big Bend Community College received their first Upward Bound Grant in 1967 and it has been consistently funded every cycle since. We’re pretty proud of that because we are one of the oldest Upward Bound programs in the nation and the oldest in Washington State.”

Anita De Leon
TRIO Upward Bound Director
Big Bend Community College



2023 BBCC TRIO Upward Bound Summer Academy Students

Upward Bound, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, has its earliest origins dating back to 1964 when it targeted high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds. De Leon said, “Big Bend Community College received their first Upward Bound Grant in 1967 and it has been consistently funded every cycle since. We’re pretty proud of that because we are one of the oldest Upward Bound programs in the nation and the oldest in Washington State.”

Across the country, as the programs gained traction in popularity and success, newer program funding opportunities with different student targets became available. The name “TRIO,” not an acronym, got its name when there were three primary funding opportunities. Since then, it has evolved into student targets via eight programs under the umbrella of TRIO including Education Opportunity Centers, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement, Student Support Services, Talent Search, Training Program for Federal TRIO Program Staff, Upward Bound Math-Science, and Veterans Upward Bound.

BBCC’s TRIO Upward Bound serves students seeking a two-year or four-year degree after high school. The students range in age from high school freshman to seniors from Moses Lake, Othello, Royal City, and Warden. “Anyone who is low-income and/or first-generation who’s attending one of our target schools, is a U.S. Citizen or legal resident, and demonstrates a need for services, can join our program if spots are available,” De Leon said.

Serving 115 students during the school year and 45 students each summer is about keeping an optimal student to advisor ratio. “We want that low ratio between our advisors and the students so that they get the one-on-one support. It could be academic or personal advising and tutoring. And of course, once they are juniors and seniors, sitting down with them and their families and assisting with college applications and financial aid,” De Leon said.



“That workforce education piece, more than ever, is so important and we educate our students on what that looks like as it’s finding the right path that connects with personal and academic interests.”

Anita De Leon
TRIO Upward Bound Director
Big Bend Community College

Today, real-world benefits of careers that require less education yet promising trajectories are also advised. “That workforce education piece, more than ever, is so important and we educate our students on what that looks like as it’s finding the right path that connects with personal and academic interests. We need to start educating students at a younger age as they’re not always able to connect those dots fully, but they do understand someone in their family that has a workforce education type of degree, and they have a nice house or a car. Then it becomes believable and achievable,” De Leon said.

BBCC’s TRIO Upward Program is most well-known for its six-week summer academy. With 14 classes for the 45 students to choose from, all grade levels live on campus in dorms, with roommates, and attend daily classes as if they were in college. With staff supervising, tutoring, exposing them to different recreational, social, educational activities, students get a taste for campus life. “We’re teaching life skills, too. We’ve also implemented self-care and mental wellness breaks because that is so important. If that’s not in check, I can’t expect the students to achieve academically if they’re not taking care of themselves. We also advocate that they become the best version of themselves every day, whatever that looks like,” De Leon said, adding, “Yes, we are strict. Yes, we have high standards because we know they can achieve them, and I love that we have made this more than just an academic program. It’s a lifestyle kind of a program that really teaches above and beyond.”

While on a 5-year grant cycle, there are still annual performance reports covering six objectives that must be met including student GPA, percentage of graduates that took rigorous coursework, number of students passing English and math state assessments, high school retention or graduation, number of students enrolled in college, and number of students completing college. BBCC’s TRIO Upward Bound program is making meaningful impacts on students who may have thought post-secondary education was out of reach. According to an impact study conducted on data between 2017 and 2022, on average, 80% of the program’s participants were low-income and first-generation, 88% came from a Hispanic/Latino background, and 59% were female and 41% male. Of the 86% of students who enrolled in college after high school graduation, 62% attended a university and 38% a community college. The study also shows that high school students who participate in dual credit programs, such as Running Start, AP, and College while in high school, are more likely to attend college and complete a degree with 51% of BBCC’s TRIO Upward Bound students graduating with a high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously.



Graduation from BBCC's TRIO Upward Bound program is a big deal. Each summer, at the completion of the six-week summer program, graduating seniors are honored and celebrated. "To see what it does for the students, their parents, and families. I love to watch their faces full of radiance, pride, and hope. I have a board in my office with student grad pictures and that's what keeps me going because we have dentists, physical therapists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers. Pretty much every field you can imagine, and they came from low income and/or first-generation backgrounds nearby," said De Leon.

BBCC TRIO Upward Bound student college signing

Calling BBCC's TRIO Upward Bound a "program" seems an understatement. De Leon said, "It's so much deeper. It's a way of life for us and that's why I don't even like calling it a program because it doesn't give it justice."

Meanwhile, De Leon continues advocating. "Information is important. Access is important. I still believe that everybody should have a fair shot. For students, if you want to go to college and you are in 9th or 10th grade, now is the time to jump."

Anita De Leon can be reached at: anitad@bigbend.edu, phone (509) 793-2014, or go to: <https://www.bigbend.edu/academics/upward-bound/>

News From Around our Region

Apprenticeship program announces new class

Columbia Basin Herald

December 22, 2023: MOSES LAKE, WA — Six youths will receive training and eventual industry certification with the help of a program put together in partnership between Genie Industries, AJAC Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeships, SkillSource and North Central Education Service District 171.

[Read full story](#)



Photo courtesy: NORTH CENTRAL EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

Group 14 major equipment installation underway

Columbia Basin Herald

December 18, 2023: Moses Lake's Group 14 BAM-2 plant began installing equipment in its first module, topped out its second module, and is on track to ship its SCC55 silicon-carbon composite anode globally in 2024, according to a Dec. 18 announcement from the organization.

[Read full story](#)



Group 14's Moses Lake incoming plant BAM-2, pictured, began installing equipment in its first module, according to a Dec. 18 statement from Group 14. Photo courtesy GROUP 14 TECHNOLOGIES

A vehicle for learning: CB Tech gets fire engine for fire science class courtesy of MLFD

Columbia Basin Herald

December 13, 2023: There's a tradition in the fire service when a new piece of apparatus is added to the fleet, and students at Columbia Basin Technical Skills Center followed that tradition Wednesday morning.

[Read Full Story](#)



Columbia Basin Technical Skills Center fire science students follow a fire service tradition and push their fire engine into its new home. Photo courtesy MLFD

Supporting local: Grant County Tourism Commission works to bring visitors while supporting area businesses

Columbia Basin Herald

December 11, 2023: Grant County has a lot to offer travelers, whether they're passing through or coming for a show at The Gorge Amphitheatre or maybe spending a weekend at a bed and breakfast by the Columbia River — but it takes work to get the word out about the attractions in the county. That's what the Grant County Tourism Commission is for though.



[Read Full Story](#)

An A10 Warthog, green, and another aircraft fly over Moses Lake during a past Moses Lake Airshow. Columbia Basin Herald FILE PHOTO

Grant Co. October unemployment lowest in three decades

Columbia Basin Herald

December 9, 2023: MOSES LAKE — While the month-to-month figures go up and down, unemployment rates in Grant County in October were some of the lowest seen in more than 30 years, according to information from the Washington Department of Employment Security.



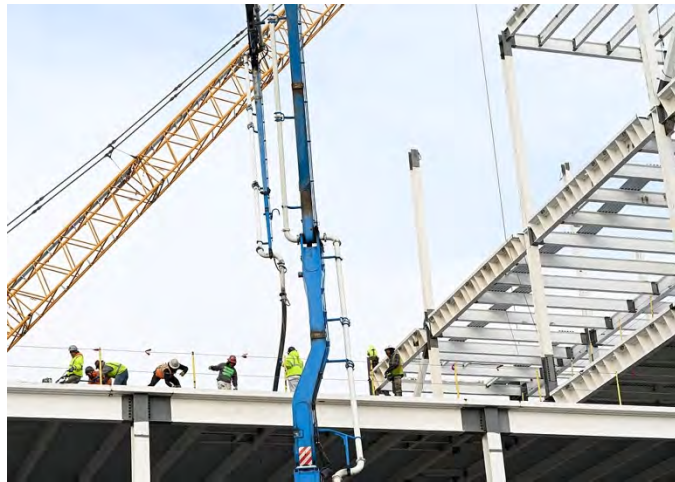
State and local government education in Grant County saw the biggest job growth between October 2022 and October 2023, according to the Washington Department of Employment Security. Warden High School is pictured. Columbia Basin Herald FILE PHOTO

[Read full story](#)

A calling followed: Kersey leaves Moses Lake port to head up Group14 plant

Columbia Basin Herald

November 14, 2023: Don Kersey said that, for him, the manufacturing sector holds an irresistible appeal. Kersey is the new manager of the Group14 Technologies facility under construction in Moses Lake.



Construction crews work on the new Group14 facility on Wheeler Road in Moses Lake. Photo courtesy GROUP14

[Read full story](#)

Sila Begins the Build-Out of its Moses Lake Plant for 2025 Production of Titan Silicon

Sila Nanotechnologies

November 29, 2023: Sila, a next-generation battery materials company, today announced it has begun building out its first, auto-scale manufacturing plant, Sila Moses Lake, located in Washington state. This construction milestone affirms a 2025 start for the first commercial production of its breakthrough Titan Silicon™ anode at the plant. Sila is also investing in workforce development through partnerships with local technical schools to ensure a strong talent base to support its manufacturing scale-up.

[Read full story](#)

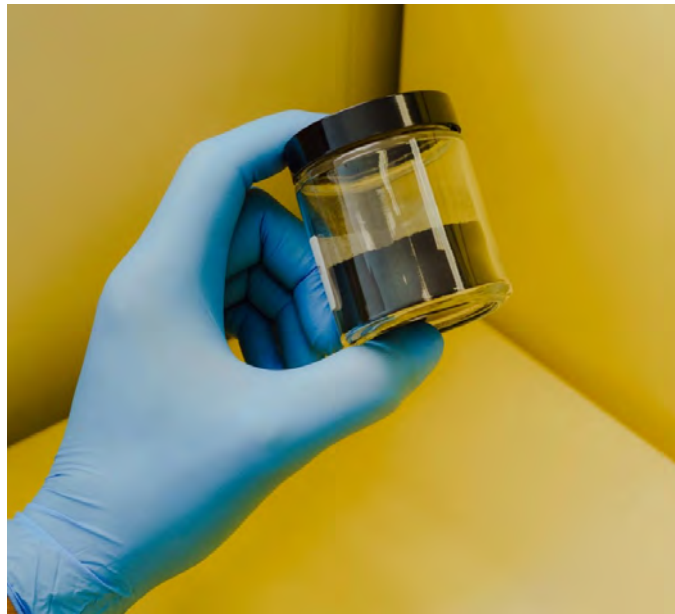


Photo courtesy Sila Nanotechnologies

Moses Lake chamber talks water, education with governor

Columbia Basin Herald

November 30, 2023: Washington Gov. Jay Inslee had an opportunity to hear about the challenges facing Moses Lake at a round table discussion at the Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday.

[Read full story](#)



Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, right, listens to Moses Lake community leaders at the Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce Wednesday. Photo courtesy Joel Martin/Columbia Basin Herald

REC Silicon – Restart of REC Silicon Moses Lake Update

REC Silicon

November 30, 2023: Moses Lake, Washington USA – November 30, 2023: REC Silicon ASA provides an update on the successful restart of the silane-based high-purity granular production facility in Moses Lake, Washington.

[Read full story](#)



Photo courtesy: REC Silicon

Local economic innovation key to success says Dept. of 888Commerce director

Columbia Basin Herald

October 18, 2023: Mike Fong, director of the Washington Department of Commerce, said economic innovation starts locally. “We want to strengthen communities and help communities build their own capacity and potential,” Fong said while he was in Moses Lake on Monday. “And we don’t want to dictate that. We really want to help that vision become reality. And that’s a local vision.”

[Read full story](#)



Gina Cutts, right, industrial systems technology instructor at Big Bend Community College, demonstrates a method for teaching three-phase electrical systems to Washington Department of Commerce Director Mike Fong, left. Photo courtesy CHERYL SCHWEIZER/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

Eviation announces aircraft sale

Columbia Basin Herald

October 17, 2023: Eviation Aircraft has announced the sale of 25 of its all-electric commuter aircraft to a German-based regional airline, FlyVBird. FlyVBird also took an option to buy 25 additional aircraft, according to a company press release.

[Read full story](#)



Eviation's Alice takes flight at Grant County International Airport
September. Photo courtesy: Eviation

One D charging up in Moses Lake

Columbia Basin Herald

October 10, 2023 – Dirt flies at the groundbreaking Monday for One D Battery Sciences' silane offloading station, part of the company's new Moses Lake facility. One D Battery Sciences uses silicon to increase battery efficiency and affordability for electric vehicles, according to company officials.

[Read full story](#)



Photo courtesy JOEL MARTIN/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

'Now let's go dig some dirt'

Columbia Basin Herald

October 9, 2023 – With the shovels in the ground, the hard hats ready and construction equipment on site, Samaritan Healthcare Chief Executive Officer Theresa Sullivan said there were times she wondered if the construction of a new Samaritan Hospital would get this far.

[Read full story](#)



Photo courtesy: CHERYL SCHWEIZER/COLUMBIA BASIN HERALD

Stoke Space Announces \$100 Million in New Investment

Stoke Space Technologies

October 5, 2023 – As we continue building the world’s most efficient fully and rapidly reusable rocket, today we are announcing \$100 million in new Series B investment to drive continued growth and innovation. This investment more than doubles the company’s total funding, which now sits at \$175 million.



Photo courtesy: Stoke Space Technologies

[Read full story](#)

Learning institutions working together to develop workforce in Grant County

Columbia Basin Herald

October 2, 2023 – Various organizations and partnerships across Grant County are working together to train as many people as possible to enter the workforce to meet high demand in the county and beyond.



Photo courtesy: Columbia Basin Herald

[Read full story](#)

EVENTS



Moses Lake Airshow 2024

Don't miss out on the excitement Father's Day weekend 2024 as the Moses Lake Airshow returns to Grant County International Airport! Tickets already on sale!

You can also stay tuned to developing news by signing up for Moses Lake Airshow's newsletter at moseslakeairshow.com. Be sure to follow them on [Facebook](#), [TikTok](#), and [Instagram](#), too!

Make this Father's Day Weekend one to remember!

Moses Lake Airshow - Scheduled for June 15th and 16th, 2024, at the Port of Moses Lake!

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