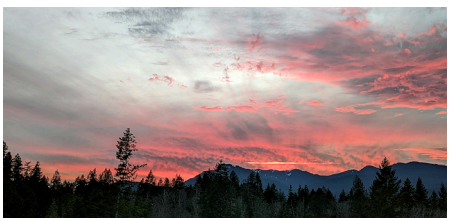


**The East County Journal  
Circulation Group II**

**PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION  
410 Color Sports Photo**

Feb. 23, 2022, page 1, top photo titled: Making faces

Reader submitted photo captures a dramatic sunset Page 3



Morton/White Pass boys basketball team nets second place in District, losing to Kalama 43-42, advances to state tournament Page 6



# The East County

# JOURNAL

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## Chamber introduces Langdon as manager

BY CATHY KANE  
East County Journal

Since operating mostly behind the scenes over the past two years due to COVID-19 circumstances, the East Lewis County Chamber of Commerce is resuming in-person meetings and events facilitated by new Chamber manager, Lenee Langdon.

Langdon brings to her new position a wealth of community and event experience as a board member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Olympic Peninsula, as well as a board member of the Sequim Irrigation Festival during the time she was manager of the Key Bank branch in Sequim.

Langdon described the Sequim Irrigation Festival as an annual community event started more than a century ago to celebrate the implementation of irrigation for farming in the area.

"It is a small carnival. It brings the community together. It is a lot of fun," she said, adding she enjoyed hosting the breakfast, where local businesses would "come in and do plays, skits and songs."

"I loved working with the community, meeting people and helping build up the community – finding ways to contribute and helping the people and businesses grow," Langdon said, which are her goals for the East Lewis County community as well.

After 15 years, Langdon moved to Buckley, where her customer service skills were honed working for an international cruise line.

After her husband, Brian, retired, the couple purchased a home on 10 acres of land just west of Morton last July, where they now live with their two dogs, a cat, one of four Mustang horses they rescued in Eastern Washington and two Rocky Mountain horses. The Rocky Mountain

See **Langdon** Page 2

## Housing forum touches on short-term rentals

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal

Eric Eisenberg, special projects deputy prosecuting attorney, and Mindy Brooks, senior long-range planner, hosted the second housing forum focused on short-term rentals (STR) on Thursday, Feb. 17 in Packwood. The in-person and Zoom attendance went beyond their expectations with 84 in-person and 38 Zoom attendees.

"Our goal tonight is to see the landscape and perspectives on the STR topic," Eisenberg told the group. Many in the crowd were

proponents of STRs and several others were opposed, but the vast majority were members of the community seeking a healthy balance of housing stock. Gretchen Fritsch, a member of the Packwood community said, "Tourism and community can co-exist in harmony. We can do the right thing for our local population and still welcome visitors to our town."

The group spent the first portion of the meeting figuring out the problems and benefits created by STRs. There were roughly 18 benefits and 19 problems identified. More information was coming in from the Zoom participants and everyone was invited to send

more ideas to Mindy outside of the night's forum.

Some benefits identified were that STRs prevent vacant homes from attracting crime, properties are maintained and they provide local employment. Some problems identified were that the current infrastructure wasn't designed to support a massive influx of people, there are few full-time residents to volunteer at places like the fire department and there are no long-term rentals available for local or seasonal workers.

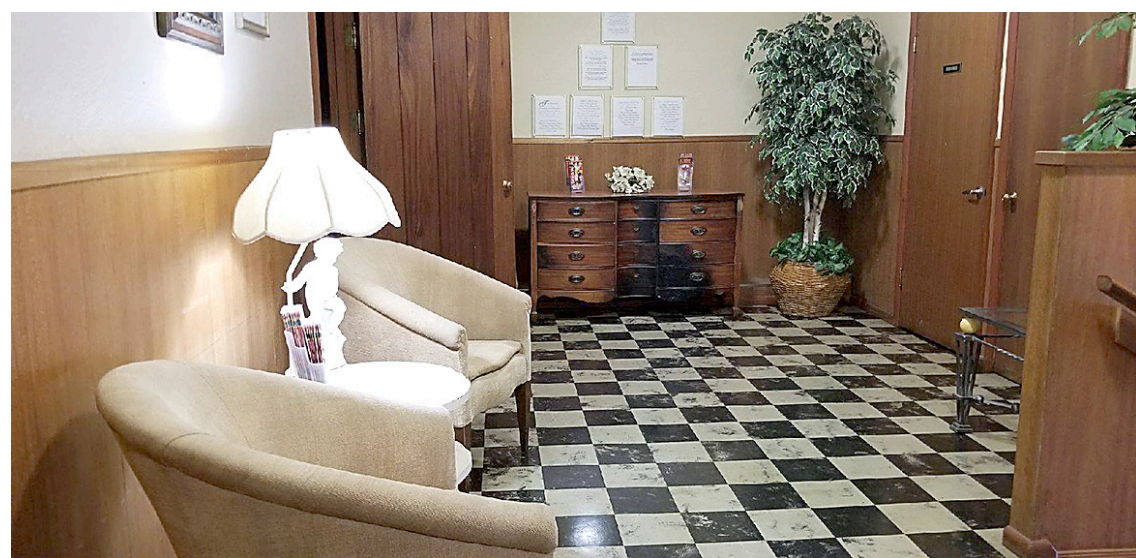
See **Housing** Page 2



Chris Johnson | East County Journal

### Making faces

Five-year-old Aubrie Mitchell gets instruction from her cousin, Payton Torrey, on how to recreate the face on the Fathead cutout of Torrey after Mossyrock's game against Taholah in Montesao on Saturday Afternoon. For a complete recap of the game, see page 8 of today's Journal.



Tiller Events Center courtesy photo | East County Journal

If an indoor venue is in the wedding plans, the Tiller Arts and Events Center in Morton offers all the amenities needed to host a memorable ceremony and reception.

## Wedding bells in the future? Local venues ready to meet the many needs

BY CATHY KANE  
East County Journal

Situated between three volcanoes – Mount St. Helen's, Mount Adams and Mount Rainier, with beautiful vistas in every direction along with the choice of almost perfect blue skies in the summer, colorful autumn leaves in the fall and snowy wonderland in the winter, East Lewis County (ELC) continues to be a popular, year-round wedding destination throughout Washington state and beyond.

Even before COVID-19 social distancing guidelines began, ELC outdoor wedding venues were wildly popular – lakeside, riverfront, mountaintop or in roomy, rustic, private barns, decked out shabby-chic or with classic ele-

### Wedding season

With spring on it's way and with COVID restrictions relaxing, many couples may be planning to tie the knot in fashion once again. See the Wedding Planner special section in today's Journal for ideas, suggestions and reminders of what's needed to make the special day a truly one-of-a-kind memory.

gance. And most clergy members around here have a story to tell about performing more than one ceremony while wearing boots or jeans in unique settings, including astride a horse.

That being said, for those who prefer a guaranteed warm, cozy, modern, rain-free and wind-free facility, Morton's Bob Lyle

Community Center and Tiller Arts and Events Center, Mossyrock's Community Center and Packwood's Community Hall are great choices. All four facilities have updated kitchen appliances, cozy corners for visiting, small and large rooms to rent and modern restroom facilities.

The Bob Lyle Community Center, at 750 Main Ave., adjoins Gust Backstrom Park with Tilton River access for swimming and fishing. A playground for children, tent and recreational vehicle sites are also featured with downtown Morton just a short walk away.

The Mossyrock Community Center, at 231 E. State St., which was built in 1987 and remodeled

See **Venues** Page 2

## Fritsch joins Planning Commission to serve as conduit to the community

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal

Packwood resident Gretchen Fritsch is one of the three new members on the Lewis County Planning Commission, which currently has six commissioners and one member at-large. She accepted the position at the beginning of February and is looking forward to the challenge of learning more about the planning commission. She feels this is a privileged position to be in and is looking forward to being a conduit of information for the community.

Fritsch spent most of her youth in the Packwood area. She attended the University of Washington and obtained a degree in geography with a specialization in society and environment. This degree helped with her early career in trail maintenance. However, she eventually felt mentally exhausted with having to jump from one seasonal job to the next.

This feeling was encouraged when she met her fiancé. Both her and her fiancé's family are based in East Lewis County, making it feel like home when they decided to settle and raise their child in Packwood. Fritsch managed Sweet Dirt Farms from 2012 to 2018. She also manages the Packwood Farmers Market that runs Saturdays throughout the summer each year.

Fritsch has felt that Packwood



Gretchen Fritsch

has changed in the last five years prompting her to become an active volunteer with the Packwood Subarea Plan and housing forums committees. When the opportunity opened up to be on the Lewis County Planning Commission, she weighed the pros and cons of being a part of the community discussion or being a part of a committee where decisions are made, and actions taken. Ultimately she felt she could be more effective as a member of the planning commission.

Fritsch feels her degree in land use issues will benefit the planning commission and Packwood. Fritsch said that her work at the Mountain Goat coffee shop, farmers market and White Pass Nordic Center has given her the customer service skills and abilities to be a beneficial fit with the commission.

"I feel like I have a familiar face and I want to be a voice for the people in Packwood and the greater East Lewis County area," Fritsch said. She strives to be a neutral voice to the county and wants anyone to feel that they can approach her about their concerns.

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