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Alice Parker Thinks Grant County is the Best

When Alice Parker and her husband, Ike, left Colorado in 1965 for the Royal Slope, they came with very little. They had started dryland farming in 1954, but a couple of drought years convinced them to take a chance on coming to Grant County.

One of the first families to farm Royal Slope, they broke the ground from sagebrush and cheat grass, dug the irrigation ditches, even helped survey the land. "We came in on the ground floor," Parker says with a smile. They arrived in January and "there was a lot of snow that year." They had no place to live until they were able to buy a used trailer. They lived in that trailer with three children until they built their house. They had one tractor but it didn't have power steering so it was difficult to maneuver in small fields.

It was hard in the beginning. The water would "dissolve" the dirt and Parker and her husband would have to dig corrugations, the ditches between the rows of crops, every day, and sometimes twice a day. "It was a real challenge," she says. When they first planted, they had five different neighbors' equipment on the land helping them. "You start out with nothing," she adds, "no equipment or buildings or anything."

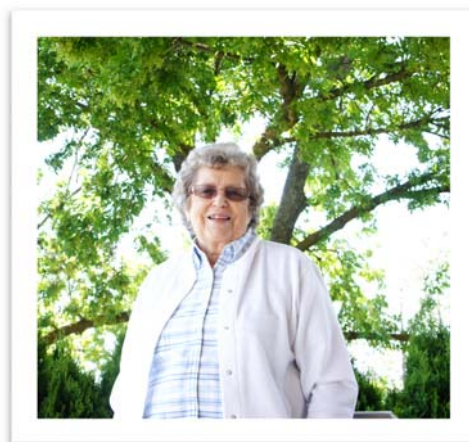
Ike and Alice grew "a little bit of everything," Parker says, including sugar beets for the plant in Moses Lake, corn, wheat, sweet pea, and dried beans. They had trouble growing hay because, Parker says, they couldn't get the dew.

Her husband died in 2002 and Parker is still involved in the financial side of the farm that a neighbor works. "It gets in your blood," she says, "and you can't get it out." She adds that "it's very, very important" to farm because farming is "the best profession you can be in." She asks what other profession "do you help so many people?" And she adds, "I think farming is a real honorable profession to be in."

Parker, who has been on the Grant County Economic Development Council Board of Directors since 2013, joined the

board at the encouragement of Dale Pomeroy to represent the concerns of agriculture. "When I see the changes since 1965, I keep reminding them that the reason they are able to bring in businesses is because of the water and the agriculture."

Parker has represented agriculture in Grant County in many ways over the years. She testified in front of the U.S. Senate. Senator Dale Bumpers of Arkansas questioned the need for more water in the Columbia Basin, and he asked why couldn't they just go out and get more land. Parker told him that with six inches of rain a year, that wasn't an option. She said Senator Jim McClure from Idaho was silently cheering her on as she told Bumpers about what it is like in the West. "Bumpers just didn't understand the West," Parker explains.



Parker was also involved with Women in Farm Economy (WIFE), an organization started in 1977. She was the national president of WIFE in 88-89. "I think back and think 'How did that happen?'" she says. But "nobody told me 'no'" she says, so she just did what needed to be done.

She has been involved with the Columbia Basin Development League since 1992 when she became its executive director. Parker was involved with 4-H when her children were in it, and she and her husband both were 4-H leaders. "I really have to give the 4-H kudos for what they taught me," including leadership.

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Connection Business with Training Opportunities

Addressing our local areas “skills gap” and increasing the opportunities for business training isn’t just a focus for our local Grant County Economic Development Council and its members. This is a statewide initiative that has become a focus for the Washington State Legislature as well, which has formally approved High Skills, High Wages – Washington’s 10-Year Strategic Plan for Workforce Development in 2014.

Approving this plan and acknowledging this issue is just the first step. Each year our state reviews, researches, and strategizes on plans for “Unlocking Washington’s Workforce Potential.”

“Talent and Prosperity for All: The Strategic Plan for Unlocking Washington’s Workforce Potential” (TAP Plan, 2/24/16) is a healthy, almost 600 page provisional document subject to further review, from the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. This document reviews the goals, the partners, and the strategies that our statewide collaborators will focus on in the upcoming years. TAP report can be accessed at: <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/Documents/TAPPlanStrategicandOperational2016.pdf>.

Key findings from a Workforce Board Employer Survey in 2013 “Skill Gap Analysis Identifies High Employer Demand Fields” (wtb.wa.gov - Workforce Board, 2016) cited that “of the estimated 60,000 Washington employers who hired in 2012, around 21 percent, or one in five experienced difficulty finding qualified applicants”. Each year, the Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board conducts an analysis that results in identifying mid-level high employer demand occupation groups. The list of high demand occupations helps guide the investments of workforce



development programs and services across our state.

The most recent report, updated Nov. 2013, listed Manufacturing/Production as the second highest demand occupation for the 2016 – 2021 years, but was also projected as the third highest occupation in undersupply. Locally, that impacts our ability to prosper as Agriculture, Food and Beverage Processing, Chemical, Mineral, and Metal Manufacturing are listed as the 1st, 2nd, and 4th cluster industries, respectfully, in our North Central Workforce Development Area. **Cluster areas are designated as areas industries concentrated with regional employment as compared to the nation’s share of the employment in the same industry (aka “high location quotients).*

So... we know workforce development is an issue and that it’s a priority in our state! We have plans in place through our Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board and the system it contributes to, but how do we (local employers and community members) access the tools and the support available to us?

“Supporting initiatives in an effort to build a strong regional economy for employers by offering training opportunities,” states Beth Laszlo, CBIS Director, “is a commitment that the Center for Business

and Industry Services (CBIS) through Big Bend Community College (BBCC) has made to our local service district”. Industry partnerships with CBIS assist with providing “skills gap” support for employers to seek out training and retraining opportunities in order to keep their competitive industry edge while providing transferrable skills or “upskilling” their own workforce.

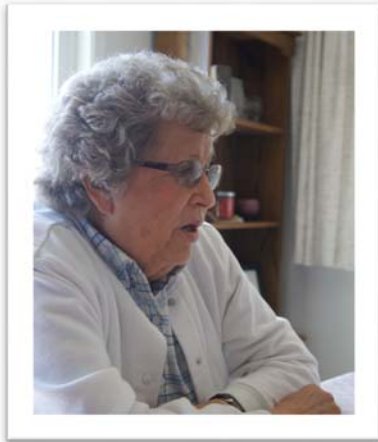
As a member of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), BBCC’s Center for Business and Industry Services has access to (tools), Employer training grants, loans and support: “Community and technical colleges play a key role in the state’s economic development with resources and incentives for businesses to partner with colleges to build strong regional economies,” states the SBCTC.

The tools that CBIS can offer include: 1) an extensive Network of Experts that can assist any industry in our area with expertise and customized workforce training, 2) access to state funding (almost \$2.8 million is available every year) through Job Skills and Customized Training grants (click on the links provided in Workforce Programs and Services insert), 3) onsite training can be provided or access to full service amenities located at BBCC ATEC Center

Continued on Page 3



Parker Cont.



And Parker is involved with the Royal City Methodist Church. While Parker was involved in various organizations, her husband would rather be plowing a field. "He loved to farm," Parker says, but "he was the force behind all I did."

"I support it because as farmers, we need other things: goods and services," Parker says of the EDC. "If we're diversified, it makes the economy more stable." And she adds of the companies

that come here, "their employees need to eat so that's a market for our commodities."

"One of the wisest things they did," Parker continues about the EDC, "was to go out and do the five year plan for steady income," referring to the Building Prosperity program. That way, she says, they aren't spending all their time trying to fundraise.

"One thing that's irritated me," Parker says, "is Royal City people saying the EDC doesn't do anything for Royal City. But that's not true. They help the whole county and the Columbia Basin."

The biggest change Parker has seen since coming to Grant County in 1965 is the growth. "It's unbelievable what's happened here," she says, for instance the growth in Moses Lake. And the growth of the grape growing for wine in the area, she adds. Parker would like to see more agricultural processing in Grant

County to serve the growers. Apples grown in the area are mostly shipped to Wenatchee or Yakima, she points out, and she'd like to see them processed locally. She'd also like to see more housing in Royal City "so we can entice people to come." Then she adds, "It just takes time to get that all done."

Parker's kids and grandkids keep her occupied these days. She has grandchildren in Spokane and she will go to their sporting events.

Parker enjoys the people of Grant County. "Most are so friendly and nice," she says. She says she can go to Quincy or Moses Lake and run into people she knows. With WIFE she has traveled around the country and has "absolutely not" found a better place than Grant County with the climate, the water, the inexpensive electricity "we have everything here we need. This is the best place to be."

Connecting Business Cont.

are available, and 4) referrals to other professional-technical programs through BBCC to support your industry's needs.

During the 2015-16 year, CBIS provided 65 separate training sessions to local industries in the BBCC service district. Almost 1600 employees received training in areas such as Effective Communications, Leadership, Microsoft Office, Project Training, and LEAN/Six Sigma. Employees received skill specific training from BBCC instructors in Welding, Basic Chemistry, and Electrical Energy Basics. Industry specific certificates included Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and Supervision Skills. Grant funding totaled over \$575,000 to support training in our area.

Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council and a

Workforce Board member states, "In today's economy, to get ahead, workers need the chance to learn at their job and get short term training that can be stacked together into an industry-recognized credential that helps them advance up the career ladder into higher-level, better paid positions."

The Center for Business and Industry Services is available to assist in our local industry's growth and to help you face your workforce training challenges proactively. CBIS can help you look at all your options and access the funding you may need to successfully implement an annual training plan to ensure you remain competitive in a global economy.

Center for Business and Industry Services - 509-793-2425 or email for more information at cbis@bigbend.edu.

WA State Workforce Programs and Services

[Aerospace](#)

[Apprenticeship](#)

[Basic Food, Employment and Training](#)

[Centers of Excellence](#)

[Customized Training](#)

[Hospital Employee Education and Training](#)

[Job Skills](#)

[Perkins](#)

[Tech Prep](#)

[Worker Retraining](#)

[WorkFirst](#)



A Note from Samaritan Healthcare Foundation: 2016 Project

Samaritan Healthcare Foundation has set a goal to raise \$207,000 this year for the purchase of a Philips EPIQ 7 Ultrasound System. This versatile machine will be able to serve a wide array of patients at Samaritan Healthcare.

Some of its functions include:

- Breast & Biopsy Ultrasound
- Vascular Ultrasound
- OB/GYN Ultrasound
- Pediatric Ultrasound
- General ultrasound

This state-of-the-art machine also has the capability to provide both 2-D and 3-D

imaging, as well as Color Flow and Pulsed Doppler.

Over the past 3 years, ultrasound utilization volumes have risen over 30%, and that trend is projected to continue.

With the purchase of this third machine, Samaritan patients will no longer have to wait two or more weeks for a procedure, increasing both access and quality of care to our patients.

We are excited about the Philips EPIQ 7 Ultrasound System coming to Samaritan Healthcare. Please join us as we move toward the future of healthcare with this ambitious project!

To know more about this project contact Gretchen Youngren, director of Development and Communications at 509-793-9647

gyoungren@samaritanhealthcare.com or you can mail your donation to 801 E. Wheeler Rd, Moses Lake, WA 98837.





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Columbia Basin Job Corp
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Bronze Division Continued

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Express Employment Professionals
Gary Mann Real Estate
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Inland Cellular
Inland Tarp & Liner, LLC
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Landau Associates, Inc.
LC Farms, Inc.
Lenroc Company
Linage Logistics
Live Nation-Gorge Amphitheatre
Mardon Resort
Martin Morris Agency
Million Air Moses Lake
Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce
Moses Lake Community Health Center
Moses Lake School District
National Frozen Foods
Northland Communications
Northwest Farm Credit Services
Pillar Rock Grill/Moses Lake Golf Club
Polhamus Heating & Air Conditioning
Port of Coulee City
Port of Hartline
Port of Royal Slope
Port of Warden
Quincy Farm Chemicals, Inc.
Quincy Foods
Rock Steel Structures
SGL Automotive Carbon Fibers
Skaug Brothers, Inc.
SkillSource
Skone & Conners
Tommer Constructions Co., Inc.
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