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# Public memorial service for Everett Police Officer Rocha at Angel of the Winds Arena

By MARIO LOTMORE

**EVERETT, Wash.** – The memorial service for Everett Police Officer Dan Rocha will be held on 1:00 p.m. Monday, April 4th at Angel of the Winds Arena located at 2000 Hewitt Ave in Everett. The service will be open to the public.

Officer Rocha, 41, was shot and killed following gunfire in the Starbucks parking lot across the street from the Everett Community College campus that occurred Friday, March 25, 2022.

According to an eyewitness, gunshots were heard at around 2:15pm. The witness then saw a uniformed officer on the ground in the parking lot of the Starbucks as the gunman sped away, running over the officer's body.

The primary suspect, Richard James Rotter, was arrested for the murder of Officer Rocha. Rotter has a long criminal history and is currently charged with unlawful possession of a firearm, 1st and 2nd degree murder.

On March 27, Officer Rocha's body was

transported privately in a movement with honors by the Everett Police Honor Guard to a private funeral home for the family.

According to MyEverettNews.com, an Everett news outlet, a candlelight vigil is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Sunday, April 3rd in front of the Everett Police North Precinct located at 3002 Wetmore Ave. The vigil is organized by Cruzin' to Colby.

## STATEMENT FROM EVERETT MAYOR CASSIE FRANKLIN

"I am devastated by the loss of our Officer Dan Rocha, a valued member of our Everett Police Department who was killed today in the line of duty.

"My heart goes out to his family and loved ones, as well as our entire Everett Police Department grieving this senseless loss. Our officers bravely put themselves in harm's way to keep every one of us safe. When one of our heroes falls, it causes a ripple of grief felt by our entire community.

"We are heartbroken, and honor Officer

Rocha's memory, legacy, and ultimate sacrifice in service to our city."

## STATEMENT FROM EVERETT POLICE CHIEF TEMPLEMAN

"Yesterday our community lost a hero. Everett Police Officer Dan Rocha #1470 was fatally shot while doing his job – protecting and serving the community he loved. Officer Rocha was honored to wear the badge and proud to be a police officer in Everett. He was well-liked, highly respected by his co-workers and truly loved serving our residents.

"There are no words to make sense of this tragedy or to ease the pain for Officer Rocha's grieving family.

"Officer Rocha was a loving husband and father and a role model for his two sons. They should be very proud of their dad, as he gave the ultimate sacrifice protecting our community.

"I ask that you keep Officer Rocha's family and the men and women of the Everett Police Department in your thoughts and prayers as we all process

this horrible tragedy. Officer Rocha will be missed, but not forgotten..."

## OFFICIAL DAN ROCHA MEMORIAL FUND

The City of Everett is covering as much of the memorial cost as legally possible, however, certain costs government entities are not allowed to spend with public funds. Private sector donations will directly support Officer Rocha's family as well as cover a portion of the memorial the City is not legally able to fund.

Officer Rocha was born in Santa Barbara, Calif. and grew up in Los Angeles. He has served with the Everett Police Department since 2017 and lived in Everett for over a decade. He joined as a parking enforcement officer and in 2018 became a fully commissioned law enforcement officer. Officer Rocha is survived by his wife and two sons.

To donate, visit <https://www.everettwa.gov/2847/Remembering-Officer-Rocha>.

# \$5 million bail set for alleged Everett cop killer

By MARIO LOTMORE



**EVERETT, Wash.** – Everett District Court Judge Tam Bui set bail at \$5 million for alleged cop killer, Richard

James Rotter, on Monday, March 28, for the murder of Everett Police Officer Dan Rocha. Rotter is facing a life sentence for the charges of unlawful possession of a firearm, 1st degree premeditated murder and 2nd degree murder –all felony charges. Capital punishment in the State of Washington was abolished on October 11, 2018.

The Snohomish County Prosecutor's Office formally filed charges against Rotter in Everett District Court on Tuesday, March 29th. The county's deadline to re-file the case in Superior Court is April 15th. The Superior Court has authority over all crimes and most often handles major felony cases.

Rotter was on probation and had outstanding warrants as of last Friday, March 25th when Officer Rocha stopped him in the parking lot of Starbucks near 10th and Broadway across from the Everett Community College campus. An altercation ensued and Rotter shot Officer Rocha several times then ran over his body with a blue mini cooper.

Rotter led a two-and-a-half-mile chase hitting multiple vehicles to elude police. He was eventually apprehended at 35th and Rucker in Everett just minutes following the brutal slaying of Officer Rocha.

Rotter has a long criminal history. Below are some of Rotter's extensive crimes dating back to at least 2004:

- Driving with suspended license 3rd Degree, 2004, Yakima
- False statement to public servant, 2004, Benton
- Marijuana possession, 2007, Ritzville
- Malicious Mischief-3, 2008, Benton
- Violation of court order, 2009, Benton

- Domestic Violence Assault, 2009, Benton
- Bail Jumping, 2009, Benton
- Reckless Driving, 2009, Benton
- False Reporting 2nd Degree, 2010, Benton
- Resisting Arrest, 2010, Benton
- DUI, 2010, Benton
- Obstructing Public Servant, 2010, Benton
- Driving with suspended license 3rd Degree, 2010, Benton
- Reckless Driving, 2010, Benton
- Possession of Control Substance, 2010, Benton
- Possession of Control Substance, 2012, Franklin
- Driving with suspended license

- 1st Degree, 2012, Benton
- Possession of Control Substance, 2012, Benton
- Bail Jumping, 2013, Benton
- Attempt to Elude Police Vehicle, 2013, Franklin
- Hit and Run Attended Vehicle, 2019, Benton
- Driving with suspended license 1st Degree, 2019, Benton

According to a Facebook page with the same name and picture of Richard James Rotter, it states that he got married in March of 2021 and has links to various substance recovery groups and pages.

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# LYNNWOOD TIMES

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## Breaking News

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# Edmonds Police Officer Tyler Steffins fatally stabbed on a Las Vegas bridge

By LYNNWOOD TIMES STAFF

**EDMONDS, Wash.** – The Edmonds Police Department announced the loss of Officer Tyler Steffins, 33, who died on Saturday, March 26, 2022. Officer Steffins was off-duty in Las Vegas, NV when he was attacked by a person unknown to him who was armed with a knife. Officer Steffins was transported to an area hospital but did not survive his injuries. A suspect, Freddy Allen, 58, was taken into custody, and the Las Vegas Metro Police Department has launched a homicide investigation.

## LVMPD INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENT LEADING TO OFFICER STEFFINS' DEATH

On March 26, 2022, at approximately 9:39 p.m., Las Vegas Metro PD patrol officers were advised of a stabbing that had occurred on a pedestrian between MGM Grand and New York-New York. As the officers arrived in the area they noticed a male, later identified as 58-year-old Freddy Allen, holding a knife. Allen attempted to run from officers but was apprehended. Medical personnel located and transported the victim, Edmonds Police Officer Tyler Steffins, to UMC Trauma where he was pronounced deceased.

The investigation by the LVMPD Homicide Section indicates that Officer Steffins and Allen had been involved in a verbal altercation over an interaction with a dog the night before. The day of the incident, Allen and the Steffins got into another verbal altercation. As words were being exchanged, Allen stabbed the Officer Steffins one time and fled the area.

Allen then threw the knife into a fountain in front of the Statue of Liberty before being apprehended by patrol officers. The 6-inch blade hunting knife was retrieved by officers.

Allen was transported to the Clark County Detention Center where he was booked for open murder with a deadly weapon. In Nevada, the open murder charge means that a judge or jury will have to decide whether the killing was committed in the first or second degree. In first-degree murder cases for Nevada, courts may impose the death penalty when the aggravating circumstances outweigh all the mitigating circumstances.

Allen is currently being held without bail and a court appearance is scheduled for APRIL 13, 2022.

## EDMONDS POLICE OFFICER TYLER STEFFINS

Officer Steffins started with the Edmonds Police in August of 2018. He was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps (Corporal, 2007-2011) with recognition for his service during Operation Enduring Freedom. Officer Steffins graduated from the police academy in March of 2019 and was #1 overall in his class. Upon completion of field training, Officer Steffins has served the community as a patrol officer for both day and night shifts.

Tyler is survived by his wife, mother, father, brothers, sister, two young children, friends, and loved ones. Edmonds PD will work closely with the family to provide assistance and support during this difficult time.

“This is a tragic loss for our agency when our staff and the entire region is already in a state of mourning for other fallen officers. While we grieve with heavy hearts, our peer support program members are actively engaging with our staff. Tyler was a valued member of our police family whose infectious smile and contagious laugh endeared him to his peers. We will miss him terribly but cherish the times we had with him. We



Edmonds Police Officer Tyler Steffins. Photo courtesy of the Edmonds Police Department.

remain committed to providing quality service to our community even during the most trying of times.” Chief Michelle Bennett.

## STATEMENT FROM SNOHOMISH COUNTY EXECUTIVE DAVE SOMERS

“One of Edmonds finest was taken from our community much too soon. Our prayers and deepest condolences go out to Officer Tyler Steffins family, his colleagues in the Edmonds Police Department, and all who are impacted by this unimaginable tragedy. Our region has seen too much loss of life over the last few weeks, and we must never lose sight of these profound sacrifices. Police officers choose a career in law enforcement because they want to serve the community, even though that service comes with extreme risk. We offer any support Edmonds needs in this time of mourning.”

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# Our gratitude knows no bounds.

Today we thank doctors everywhere. And, their loved ones who support all they do.

There are a lot of people to thank during Doctors' Day. Many of whom aren't doctors at all. Every doctor has someone who has helped them get to where they are today. People who never stop caring and always offer encouragement. So here's to the family, friends, parents, children, coworkers, and furry companions who support our physicians. And, to the doctors who give so much of themselves to care for our communities—thank you, thank you, thank you, for all that you do.

## Happy Doctors' Day!

Hello humankindness®





# Snohomish County Prosecutor working through a two-year pandemic backlog on criminal cases



By KIENAN BRISCOE

**SNOHOMISH CO, Wash.** – Although the Snohomish County Council approved approximately \$3 million in ARPA funds last October to address the county's backlog of criminal cases, Prosecuting Attorney Adam Cornell says it could still take "at least a couple years" to get caught up.

Since judges in Snohomish and King counties ordered the suspension of jury trials in March 2020, Snohomish County District Prosecuting Attorneys (DPAs) working in the violent crimes unit saw a 56% increase in cases awaiting review and a 58% increase in cases awaiting trial.

At that time, the county had 84 uncharged cases awaiting DPA review and 50 charged cases pending trial. The majority of in-custody defendants awaiting trial are being held on violent, sexual assault, and domestic violence crimes. Constitutional protections concerning time-for-trial compel prosecutors to prioritize these cases to minimize the possibility of cases being dismissed for speedy trial violations, Cornell said.

The backlog was even more pronounced when it came to nonviolent

property and drug cases pending, swelling from 3,764 on February 2, 2020, to 6,400 in the summer of 2021 – an increase of 70%.

Cornell's office presented this data to the county's Law and Justice and Human Services Committee last July and sent a follow-up memorandum to Snohomish County Council on August 4, 2021, requesting the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to address prosecutor staffing shortages.

Thanks to the ARPA fund allocation approved by the council, the county's prosecuting office is back to 62 criminal deputy prosecuting attorneys with 8 vacant positions, but Cornell informed the Lynnwood Times the backlog of cases still exists.

"We continue to get out from under the pandemic, [but] the backlog is going to exist for quite some time," Cornell told the Lynnwood Times. "I'm very grateful to the county council for providing the funding for the deputy prosecutors that we got through ARPA; it has and it will make a difference."

Adam Cornell has been in the prosecuting office for almost 20 years and has never seen such an unprecedented caseload. Before he was an elected prosecutor, Cornell was a Deputy Prosecutor for 16 years, working all types of cases, including prosecuting the gunman in the Mukilteo mass shooting tragedy.

Cornell added that his office is doing the best they can with the resources at hand. For most cases, the county has three years to make a charge due to the statute of limitations.

When it comes to newer cases, the county's prosecutors usually prioritize domestic violence, sexual assault, and other violent crimes.

Not every law enforcement referral leads to a criminal charge, but in the

case of a violent crime, a sexual assault, and other serious offense referrals involving a victim, virtually every referral leads to the assignment of an attorney and the use of staffing resources, such as a victim advocate. This reality significantly impacts staffing resources, Cornell wrote to the council in his memo.

The memo used the example of the special assault unit – a unit that handles sexual assault cases, of which approximately 50% of cases are never charged due to insufficient evidence or lack of victim cooperation. Nevertheless, each referral requires a thorough case review by an attorney, the assignment of a victim advocate, the drafting of a comprehensive declination memorandum setting forth the basis for the decline decision, and often a meeting with the victim or family member. A similar practice exists for violent and domestic violence offenses throughout the office.

Because these cases are never filed, they typically do not affect other criminal justice stakeholders (i.e. courts and public defenders) but still require significant time and attention from DPAs and staff.

Not all defendants are appointed counsel at the public's expense, meaning that the number of charged and post-conviction matters pending in Cornell's office is always going to be higher than the number of cases pending in the Public Defender's Association and the Office of Public Defense. For example, back on August 3, 2021, 23% of the active cases in Cornell's office involved defendants represented by private counsel.

The number of defendants represented by private counsel, Cornell said, highlights the fact that collectively the volume of charged cases handled by DPAs is nearly 125% of that managed by public defenders.

To properly mitigate the effects of the pandemic backlog on Cornell's attorneys and staff, he temporarily modified charging and disposition standards to

encourage timely and fair dispositions of cases and to expand eligibility for participation in his alternative programs.

While Cornell is currently hiring prosecutors on a "rolling basis," he says it doesn't stop there; there is also a shortage of judges in the county. He also questioned if there were enough courtrooms in the county even if the prosecutor and judge positions were fully staffed.

There are currently three vacant seats for judges in Snohomish County, following the sudden passing of Judge Cassandra Lopez-Shaw at the beginning of this month. A new bill, SB-5575, introduced this legislative session and signed by Gov. Inslee on Friday, March 11, will also add two new superior court judges to the county beginning this summer.

As far as courtrooms, the Snohomish County Courthouse remodel – a \$74.8 million project completed last July – added a courtroom as well as a 30,000 square-foot entry tower (five stories plus partial basement) but may not be enough to keep up.

The County is currently hiring deputy prosecuting attorneys. They welcome people who want to do this very important work in the community that Prosecuting Attorney Adam Cornell says is "immensely gratifying for the people that do it."

All of the deputy prosecutors in Cornell's office are appointed by him in the same way that a sheriff hires deputy sheriffs. At the very minimum, an applicant must be a member of the Washington State bar.

"We want someone who has high caliber ethics and professionalism and is interested in seeking justice," Cornell told the Lynnwood Times.

More information on the open positions, including salary and benefits, can be viewed and applied at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/snohomish>

## Cascade Symphony presents Chamber Music Concert April 9 at Maple Park Lutheran Church



Cascade Percussion Ensemble, featuring Mackenzie Alvarez (sitting), and (L-R) Curt Cheever, Ryan Templin and Ian Alvarez. Photo: Norma Dermond.

**EDMONDS** – Musicians of the Cascade Symphony Orchestra will present their Chamber Music concert – a

series of small instrumental ensembles – beginning at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, at Maple Lutheran Church, 17620 60th Ave. West, in Lynnwood. The ensemble concert will feature the Cascade Percussion Ensemble, as well as a sax clarinet duo, flute/cello sonata, violin/cello duo, string trio and a piano 4-hands performance.

Tickets are available online at [www.EC4ARTS.org](http://www.EC4ARTS.org), by calling (425) 275-9595, or at the door on April 9. Ticket prices for the concert are \$15 for adults and \$5 for youngsters 12 and younger.

The Cascade Symphony Orchestra will complete its 2021-2022 season when it returns to its regular venue, Edmonds Center for the Arts, to perform its "Tchaikovsky's Fifth" concert on Monday, May 2, at 7:30 p.m.

Additional information about the Cascade Symphony is available at [www.cascadesymphony.org](http://www.cascadesymphony.org).



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# Lynnwood terminates mayor's emergency proclamation and abandons city fair idea

By KIENAN BRISCOE

LYNNWOOD, Wash. – The Lynnwood City Council terminated the mayor's emergency proclamation, established a Youth Task Force for a youth council, and recognized City Attorney Rosemary Larsen for her time served at its Business Meeting Monday, March 29. All members were in attendance except Council President George Hurst.

The meeting commenced with a moment of silence honoring the deaths of fallen Everett Police Officer Dan Rocha and Edmonds Officer Tyler Steffens who were both killed in the past week.

Proclamation honoring City Attorney Rosemary Larsen

Council's business meeting began by passing a proclamation recognizing the professional services provided by Inslee, Best, Doezie, and Ryder, P.S. recognizing Rosemary Larsen for her years of service as City Attorney for Lynnwood.

"I'm so happy to have had the opportunity to work collaboratively with everyone here at Lynnwood; there's so many dedicated people here. I just can't say enough good things about City staff. Everyone on staff has always been so welcoming it's just made it so easy to do my job and have a good time doing here – for that I have a big thank you," Rosemary Larsen said.

Larsen has been practicing law for more than 29 years and has served as City Attorney for Lynnwood from June 28, 2010 until March 31, 2022, providing



Lynnwood City Council. Pictured from left to right: Council Vice President Jim Smith, Shirley Sutton, Shannon Sessions, Josh Binda, Council President George Hurst, Julieta Altamirano-Crosby, and Patrick Decker.

superior and professional legal counsel to the City which has protected it from potentially-adverse conditions. This proclamation proclaims the City's recognition of Larsen's services and other members of Inslee Best.

Termination of Mayor's emergency proclamation

Mayor Christine Frizzell terminated the emergency proclamation issued on February 14, 2022, confirmed by council through resolution 2022-04, establishing:

"As a public emergency, the response by city staff may require emergency purchases and the waiver of the public procurement process may be utilized where the competition is not practical (LMC 2.92, RCW 38.52.070, and RCW 39.04.280), and City service may require waiver of water service discontinuation (LMC 13.34.070A)"

The effective termination date of the Mayor's emergency proclamation was Monday, March 28.

"It is my determination that the circumstances that threatened the health of the public in January has abated to a level that permits the termination of the emergency proclamation and that the staff may return to normal operations in regards to the applicable waved statutes," Mayor Frizzell said.

The Mayor has the authority to proclaim emergencies under state law and city code and may also terminate such emergencies when the threat to the safety and health of the city's community and property is abated.

### APPOINTMENT OF YOUTH TASK FORCE

Mayor Frizzell, through word of the

absent Council President George Hurst, appointed Councilwoman Julieta Altamirano-Crosby as chair, alongside council members Shannon Sessions and Josh Binda as members, to study and report on creating a youth council.

This task group will report to council no later than June 14, 2022.

### CONSENT AGENDA

As part of the council's unanimous consent agenda, a memorandum of understanding was established between the city of Lynnwood and Teamsters Local 763 which amends the current collective bargaining agreement to include cost of living adjustments for 2022 and 2023 and recognizes Juneteenth as a paid holiday for Teamster members. All other terms

Continued **PAGE 09** >>

## Lynnwood man wins \$2.4 million jackpot at Tulalip Casino Resort



Jose Lopez Photo courtesy of Tulalip Resort Casino.

TULALIP, Wash. – A Lynnwood man scored big at the Tulalip Resort Casino with its largest-ever jackpot of \$2,369,748.95 shortly after midnight on March 20, easily eclipsing the resort casino's previous jackpot record of \$1,101,976.12. The new \$2.4 million

jackpot record is the largest known slot machine win at any casino in state history.

The winner of the massive payout, Jose Lopez, is a resident of Lynnwood. On

Continued **PAGE 12** >>

## Xtreme Couture Motorcycle Poker Run

Special Guest: Randy Couture

June 25th 2022

Pre Register

<http://poker-run-2022.NWGIFoundation.org>

Ride For Our Troops Ride with UFC Legend, Actor and Veteran Randy Couture

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### Details

- Rider: \$30/Passenger \$10
- Ghost Rider \$30
- BBQ \$10 Riders/\$35 Non Riders
- Start Time: 11AM
- Registration 9AM -11 AM
- After Party with live band
- Sponsorships Available



# Stories from Esther's Place: A Snohomish County women's refuge



From left to right: Sandra Stringham, Judy Hoff, Lisa Leonard. Photo: Bo Brusco (03/27/2022)

By BO JOHN BRUSCO

EVERETT, Wash., March 28, 2022

— Esther's Place is a resource center for women and children in Snohomish County where individuals in need can connect to resources ranging from rehabilitation programs to life skills classes. Whether it be homelessness, addiction, mental illness, or all of the above, the resource center embraces women whatever their situation may be and enables them to overcome their internal struggles.

"Esther's place is a safe oasis for women in Snohomish County who are experiencing homelessness," says Snohomish County Councilwoman Megan Dunn. "As we celebrate Women's History Month and the accomplishments of so many amazing women across the globe, I'm grateful for places like Esther's Place who help unsheltered women get back on their feet so that they too can tap into their full potential."

Since 2014, Esther's Place has served over 64,000 meals and helped over 9,640 women.

"That's only 9,640 recorded," says Judy Hoff, Founder of Esther's Place and its parent organization, the Hoff Foundation. "[There's] probably more as they come and go."

## HOW ESTHER'S PLACE BEGAN

Hoff felt compelled to create a resource center after she witnessed a woman crawl into a dumpster for warmth one night in Everett years ago.

"It was a cold winter, dark night, and I'm going out to the alleyway to get to my car, and there was a woman getting into one of those big garbage cans," she recalls.

Hoff knew this individual's name as she worked with women through various ministries before founding Esther's Place.

"Marry, what are you doing?" And she said, 'I gotta get out of the weather. I'm getting into the garbage can to sleep,'" Hoff said, recounting the conversation. "So I got Marry in the car and got her to a place where she could bed down and be safe that night."

The experience was profound and affected Hoff deeply. "I went home, and I cried, and I prayed, 'how can I help these women I see all over the place

that do not have a home—a place to lay their head without prostituting? How can I help them become who they are made to be—created to be?" She remembers asking herself. "How can I help them?"

After making a call to a local pastor, Hoff found a space in the First Presbyterian Church's basement in Everett, where she could shelter and feed women in need, and it became Esther's Place.

The resource center operated out of that church for roughly seven years, but in August 2021, Esther's Place moved into a small home just a few blocks away at 3705 Broadway in Everett, Washington.

## WHY THE NAME "ESTHER?"

Hoff named the center after a biblical character. "Esther was homeless, and she changed a nation by following God's vision for her, and she was able to help many, many people," Hoff explains.

The idea behind this namesake is that every woman at Esther's Place becomes an Esther. "You're an Esther because you're changing your heart, you're changing your clothes, you're changing your mind," says Hoff.

"It's about transformation and believing in yourself—believing that there is hope for you—that you can have a future; that you're not stuck because you used to do this or that. You can have a fresh start—and that's what Esther provided a country, was a fresh start."

## ESTHER'S PLACE IS MORE THAN SHELTER

Esther's Place facilitates the fresh start Hoff mentioned by connecting women to an array of services and resources.

The little house on Broadway is equipped to meet the immediate needs of houseless women. Its small kitchen serves two meals daily, and Esthers can shower and receive clean clothes upon arrival. There is even a space for children on the second floor, complete with books, toys, and crafts.

The center also enables women to make phone calls, set up email accounts, and establish mailing addresses.

Two recent developments on the property are a community garden and a shed out back that Hoff plans on organizing into a clothing distribution cen-

ter, where incoming Esthers can find new garments.

After meeting the basic physiological needs, the center connects women with doctors, mental health professionals, rehabilitation programs, job preparation services, and even a housing program.

New Creations Communities Housing Lodging for Esther's is provided via New Creation Communities, another non-profit that falls under the Hoff Foundation umbrella. Through New Creation Communities, the Hoff Foundation operates "two homes in Snohomish County that provide comprehensive wrap-around support services for 22 women who are escaping homelessness or are at a significant risk of homelessness."

Hoff, when talking about this state-certified housing program and its services, said, "We partner with the social workers, the police departments in all of Snohomish County, and it's a program [...] that actually offers life skills classes [and] a recovery coach."

Women need to be clean and sober to enroll in the New Creation Communities program.

Hoff elaborated on resources and partnerships, saying, "We are a partner with every other community resource. So for those community resources that may not have a place to go find the people they want to help, we are that place."

One such community resource Esther's Place partners with is Mercy Watch, an Everett-based homeless outreach ministry that provides "basic street medical care, emotional and spiritual support, and needed supplies (socks, blankets,

sleeping bags, etc.) to homeless men, women and children surviving in the area."

## ESTHERS' STORIES

The true value of Esther's Place is found in the lives it has changed. Two Esthers shared their stories with the Lynnwood Times: Lisa Leonard, 40, from Smokey Point, and Sandra Stringham, 47, who calls Everett home.

## OVERCOMING ACTIVE ADDICTION

Before arriving at Esther's Place, Lisa Leonard struggled with addiction. She grew up using with her family, and between 2019 and 2020, she lost both her parents. "My parents [...] were in addiction as well, and I lost them—that was my darkest place," said Leonard.

The tragic loss of her loved ones exacerbated Leonard's addiction, and she ended up being without a home. "I was homeless, living in a tent, and a lot of nights I had nowhere to go—not even a tent, and I'd have to walk around just to stay warm," she recalled.

It was during this time that Leonard felt she was at her lowest. "I was in a dark hole, and I didn't really even want to see the next day, you know?"

In 2019, Leonard concluded a brief stay at the County's Diversion Center (another partner of Esther's Place) and was welcomed at Esther's Place, where she could connect with treatment and housing.

When she first arrived, Leonard was admittedly apprehensive. "I was ner-

Continued PAGE 11 >>

The Lynnwood Police Department is hosting an inclusive "meet & greet" designed exclusively for our neuro-diverse children, family members, and supporters.

You'll reserve an hour block of time to interact with officers, our equipment, and learn about safety initiatives designed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in mind.

LPD is working with licensed professionals and experts to make this the best experience for your family as possible!





# Lynnwood baker shares her talent for Easter delights



By LYNNWOOD TIMES STAFF

**Lynnwood, Wash., (March 25, 2021)** – The lost art of the sugar Easter egg with a spring scene in the hollowed out inside has many names: panoramic, scenic, and peek-a-boo. While its origin is unknown, its popularity dates back to the 19th and 20th centuries, with the remembrance of the artistry now reliant on the few individuals who still craft them.

Panoramic eggs have been part of Lynnwood resident Darla Aiken’s Easter celebrations for the past 45 years. As a child, she used to frequent a Flea-Mart in Portland, Oregon, where she was first introduced to the eggs while browsing through various vendor stands. Now, with baking and cake decorating experience under her belt, she’s utilized her love of the panorama eggs, making thousands of them for her community

for the last 30 years.

Since the sugar Easter eggs are made from a sugar-water mixture, they can be enjoyed as an edible treat, yet Aiken says most customers hold onto them for decades, becoming a treasured part of families’ Easter traditions.

“As a cake decorator I enjoy bringing a smile to somebody else’s face,” Aiken told the Lynnwood Times. “Flowers and small Chickadees and rabbits and candies always puts a smile on someone’s face.”

While the details in the eggs seem to be the most intricate part of the process, decorating is only a small part of creating the eggs, Aiken says. First, she melts and colors the sugar, molding them into eggs, allowing it to dry overnight. Then, she gets to decorating.

The shells of the eggs are dyed a solid pastel hue, where accent icing in another color is piped around the diameter, topped with decorative flowers, chickens, or eggs. Inside of a window cutout

at the front of the egg, a nature world is crafted, with scenes of meadows, lakes, bunnies, and chicks.

Known as username TheEGGladByDarla on Etsy, an e-commerce website concentrated on handmade items, Aiken’s sells the decorated eggs in three sizes — 2½ (small), 5 (medium) and 8 inches (large).



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## Accepting artwork for the 2022 Congressional Art Competition

**EVERETT, WA** — Rep. Rick Larsen (WA-02) is inviting high school-aged students who live or attend school in Washington’s Second Congressional District to showcase their artistic talents in the 2022 Congressional Art Competition. Art submissions and forms are due to Larsen’s office by Monday, May 2, at 5:00 p.m. PDT.

“I am encouraging the many gifted young artists in Northwest Washington to submit their artwork to the 2022 Congressional Art Competition,” said Larsen. “I am excited to see this year’s submissions and to highlight the talent Washington’s Second District has to offer.”

The U.S. House of Representatives holds the annual high school visual art competition to encourage and recognize artistic talent in each congressional district. The competition is open to all high school students (grades 9-12) who live or attend school in the Second District; students can check whether they are Second District residents or attend school in the district here. All art entries must be original in concept, design and execution. Interested students can find details and a full list of contest rules on Larsen’s website.

The winning entry will be displayed for one year in the U.S. Capitol. The winning student artist and one guardian will also be flown to Washington, D.C. to be recognized at an award ceremony at a date to be determined. Last year, Susanna Lee from Lynnwood High School won the districtwide competition with her piece, “You and Your Future.” Since 1982, more than 650,000 students have participated in the nationwide Congressional Art Competition.

Entry forms must be signed by the student, a parent or guardian, and a school faculty member. Entry forms and artwork submissions are due to the Everett office by Monday, May 2, at 5:00 p.m. PDT. Students needing assistance in delivering their artwork to Larsen’s office can call Kevin Phan at 425-252-3188.

Signed forms can also be mailed or delivered with artwork to Larsen’s Everett office:

Office of Rep. Rick Larsen – Everett  
Re: 2022 Congressional Art Competition  
Wall Street Building  
2930 Wetmore Avenue, Suite 9F  
Everett, WA 98201

For more information on this year’s competition, visit <https://larsen.house.gov/helping-you/art-competition-zip.htm>.



Lynnwood’s Susanna Lee’s piece titled, “You and Your Future,” the winner of the Second District’s 2021 Congressional Art Competition.



# Snohomish County residents brace for 0.1% sales tax increase

By MARIO LOTMORE

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY., Wash.** – With just days until Snohomish County raises its local sales and use tax to fund affordable housing and behavioral health programs, is now the right time for an increase while the nation is experiencing a 40-year high consumer inflation?

Beginning April 1, one tenth of one percent – or one cent for every \$10 spent – will be added to local sales and use tax resulting in the highest sales tax rate in Washington state at 10.6% for unincorporated areas of Snohomish County, and the cities of Lynnwood, Mill Creek and Mukilteo. While it may seem small, this fraction of a penny equates to annual projected revenues of \$23 million a year for the county.

The tax was approved on December 15, 2021, when the Snohomish County Council voted 3-2 in favor of Ordinance 21-098. The two no votes came from county council members Nate Nehring and Sam Low.

“I am fully supportive of delaying the countywide sales tax increase,” Councilman Nehring wrote to the Lynnwood Times when asked if the county were considering delaying the implementation of the sales tax increase. “I voted against the sales tax increase to begin with as I don’t believe a tax increase is appropriate while our Snohomish County families and businesses are burdened with record inflation and economic hardship.

“In my opinion, the best course of action would be to repeal the tax increase altogether or to send it to the ballot for a vote of the people, but absent those actions I think a delay is a good idea.”

## HOMELESS IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY

The number of homeless individuals has steadily increased over the years. The 2020 PIT identified a total of 1,132 individuals experiencing homelessness with a significant increase of unsheltered homeless from 378 in 2018 to 673 in 2020, a 78% increase. When compared to 2019, there was a 12% increase in unsheltered persons within Snohomish County.

There are currently 646 year-round and

88 seasonal shelter beds in Snohomish County, including hotels/motels. The difference between the number of year-round shelter beds and the number of people experiencing homelessness is 486.

Snohomish County executives reported to the Everett City Council November of last year that the county has an estimated rental vacancy rate of 1.9 percent and the supply for housing is not in keeping with the current population growth. For no households to spend more than 30 percent of income toward housing, the county would need 127,215 additional affordable housing units by 2040. Additionally, 67.1 percent of Snohomish County residents are homeowners, and 32.9 percent of county residents are renters.

In the last five years, Snohomish County contributed resources to the construction of 222 units of affordable housing and anticipates an additional 200 new units coming online within the next five years.

## CONSUMER INFLATION PROJECTIONS

On March 10, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that for the month of February, national consumer inflation is at a 40-year high of 7.9% and regional inflation is at 8.1%. Food, gasoline, and rent are the key drivers to this increase. To read the full 37-page report, click here.

The February report does not include the impact of Russian sanctions – spike in oil, food (Russia is the number one supplier of fertilizer), wheat, and natural gas – which will be in the March report. According to CNBC, inflation is expected to rise to 9.0% for the month of March and U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen stated on CNBC that, “We’re likely to see another year in which 12-month inflation numbers remain very uncomfortably high.”

The Federal Reserve last week announced an increase to the lending rate by 0.25 basis points. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said Monday that the Federal Reserve would raise its benchmark short-term interest rate faster than expected. Fed officials forecast that they would raise rates six more times this year.



According to the latest average weekly salary for employees in Washington state by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington employees saw a 6.6% increase in earnings when compared to a year before – September 2021 vs September 2020. Reconciling this against current 8.1% regional consumer inflation, would equate to a net loss of 1.5% in a consumer’s purchasing power.

## HOUSING HOPE CEO FRED SAFSTROM

Housing Hope CEO Fred Safstrom believes that any notion of delaying the county’s 0.1% tax increase ought not to be considered as it is needed for those most vulnerable in our community managing increasing costs.

“At present the county has about a million and a half of federal funds that they are able to invest in affordable housing but this additional money will allow us to double our rate of housing creation over and above where we are now,” Safstrom told the Lynnwood Times. “It’s going to make a very significant difference in addressing a full range of housing needs.”

The current 9% low income housing tax credit program is the primary funding mechanism for Housing Hope. Safstrom believes that the county sales tax increase will be best used with the 4% low income tax credit program paired with the tax exempt bond to essentially double what they and other providers are able to do now at present while serving a broader range of households.

Housing Hope owns and operates 541 affordable units at 23 locations throughout Snohomish County and has helped 301 households attain homeownership through their sweat equity Team HomeBuilding program.

## SNOHOMISH COUNTY COUNCIL CHAIR MEGAN DUNN

Snohomish County Council Chair Megan Dunn told the Lynnwood Times that both housing and support services continue to be an immediate priority and are the best solutions to addressing the county’s homeless and housing crisis.

“The biggest concern I hear from residents of Snohomish County is the immediate need for more housing options and services for our homeless neighbors,” Councilwoman Dunn told the Lynnwood Times.

“The revenue from the 1/10 of 1% sales tax will go directly to housing veterans, domestic violence survivors, people with mental health and substance abuse issues and our homeless residents. Sales tax is not applied to rent, [most] food or gas which are the types of purchases experiencing the largest increase in inflation.”



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# Pickleball becomes official Washington state sport

**Bainbridge Island, Wash.** – Pickleball was signed into law as Washington state’s official state sport Monday after prime sponsor of SB-5615, Sen. John Lovick (D-Mill Creek), rallied cries to codify the beloved paddle ball styled game.

“For many of us, this has been a difficult couple of years. As we dust ourselves off from the pandemic, we need something to give us hope and something to remind us to have fun. Pickleball does just that,” said Lovick. “Inspired by a dear neighbor of mine, I decided to make pickleball my freshman bill in the Senate.”

Lovick said that upon his recent transition from the Washington State House

of Representatives to the Washington State Senate, he sought to identify a “good bill that would underscore principles of unity and togetherness.”

“From youngsters and college students to the senior sporting community, people from all walks of life can play pickleball—and they do!” said Lovick. “When I first introduced this bill through to passage, from the very beginning until today, I have met just about everyone you could think of on the pickleball courts. Pickleball is for everyone.”

Joined at the inaugural pickleball bill signing by Gov. Jay Inslee were community members and pickleball stakeholders from across the nation, some

of which went to great lengths to attend the historic event, including USA Pickleball CEO Stu Upson, who flew in from Florida.

“On behalf of USA Pickleball, and our members, we want to congratulate and thank Gov. Inslee, Sen. Lovick and the local Bainbridge Island pickleball community for bringing this bill forward to make pickleball the official state sport of Washington,” said Upson.

“It was an honor to participate in this monumental day and be able to pay tribute to the original founders, Joel Pritchard, Barney McCallum and Bill Bell, in the presence of their family members and say thank you for introducing us to the sport of pickleball.

The game has truly been life-changing for so many people and we look forward to continuing the momentum as we head into April, which is National Pickleball Month.”

Paddles were signed and many donated to museums and other historic points of convergence meaningful to pickleball aficionados.

“Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports today, and Washingtonians are appropriately proud in its origins right here in the Evergreen State,” said Inslee. “The first serve in pickleball is always made from the northwest corner of the court to honor the game’s roots, and this legislation plants those roots even deeper.”



# Housing Hope south Edmonds project to begin construction this year



Housing Hope CEO Fred Safstrom. Pictured: A depiction of the planned 52-unit low-income Housing Hope project.

By KIENAN BRISCOE

**EDMONDS, Wash.** – Construction for Everett-based Housing Hope’s new 52-unit low-income housing project in South Edmonds begins later this year through a partnership with Edmonds Lutheran Church.

Located at 236th Street SW, near Highway 99, the new building will hold six one-bedroom, 34 two-bedroom, and 12 three-bedroom low-income units to address the region’s affordable housing crises.

The introduction to Edmonds Lutheran Church came from Duane Leonard, Executive Director of HASCO, who Housing Hope CEO Fred Safstrom said he is “indebted to” for the introduction.

This introduction led to a memorandum with the church in November 2020 allowing Housing Hope acquisition land for its housing project.

Currently, 22% of Snohomish County’s rental households are paying more than 50% of their income for rent and utilities and one third of Snohomish County residents are renters, Safstrom included.

“Affordable housing is complicated. It cannot be done by private industry. It takes a very specialized ability to access the funding and to provide the services for affordable housing and in particular to households who have experienced homelessness, and we have a long and successful history doing that,” Safstrom said.

In addition to working with churches with “excessive land,” Housing Hope “collaborates extensively” with Volunteers of America, to complement the services VOA offers to the community.

Housing Hope is currently discussing with Verdant Health Commission in adding a health center room to their Edmonds location to provide basic health care services for residents and their children, as well as with Community Health Center.

## HOUSING HOPE AND SOUTH COUNTY

Housing Hope owns and operates 541 affordable units at 23 locations throughout Snohomish County and has helped 301 households attain home ownership through their sweat equity Team HomeBuilding program.

“We have been very intentional about helping various communities in the county to address their own issues of homelessness and affordable housing,” Safstrom told the Lynnwood Times. “We have regional boards, in north county, east county, and now in south county, that keep us well connected with those communities.”

In Housing Hope’s first decade, their focus was in and around Everett. In its second and third decades, the focus shifted to north and east counties, and now, in its fourth decade, the strategic focus has been in south county led by President Louise Stanton-Masten.

After completing their current project

in Edmonds, Housing Hope’s next project will be in Lynnwood at Scriber Field. Later this year they will begin gathering finances and hopefully break ground by late 2023 or early 2024.

According to Safstrom, each region differs in the needs of their residents. South county, for example, has a much larger population of non-native English speakers due to its higher rate of international immigrants.

About a third of the population that benefit from Housing Hope are single adults without children, Safstrom told the Lynnwood Times. In Edmonds, for example, 50% of those helped have experienced homelessness and 50% have an area median income of 50% or less – certainly “cost burdened in our high marketplace,” Safstrom stated, but have not experienced homelessness.

“We’re pretty new to south county, but we’re listening carefully to residents down there in understanding what their needs and desires are,” Safstrom told the Lynnwood Times.

“We view ourselves as a tool communities can use to address those issues that they can’t do on their own.”

## HOUSING HOPE CEO FRED SAFSTROM

Fred Safstrom, who has been a part of the staff for 15 years and on the board nine years prior, got involved with Housing Hope through his career in banking. As a community banker known for community involvement, Safstrom selected Housing Hope as an agency which he wanted to volunteer.

Born-and-raised in Everett, Safstrom became Executive Director of the Everett Public Facilities District after his 24 years in banking. Completing his work with the Everett Public Facilities, he became a staff member of Housing Hope, and was impressed by its leadership and the organization’s commitment to the community.

“I think the households we serve, seeing the transformations that take place when they have a stable place

to live, and they’re able to go on and get job training and get livable wage paying jobs, to see there is nothing greater that we can do to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness than that; that is enormously rewarding,” Safstrom shared.

Safstrom believes there are a lot of factors to increasing residential rental rates in Snohomish County.

For one, he notes Snohomish County’s appealing economic stability, moderate climate and sound employment base, all of which create a demand for housing. Although the county is attractive to many, it has “not kept up” with the increase population growth he told The Times.

Safstrom also shared that the influence of “for-profit housing developers” targeting higher wealth groups also contribute to an unbalanced housing market.

“More and more of our residents are literally, the proverbial one paycheck away from homelessness,” Safstrom said. “There are often barriers people face that prevent them from earning enough income to afford housing. It could be a lack of secondary education, it could be history of mental illness or substance addictions, it could be post traumatic conditions from domestic violence, it could be their upbringing, or a physical disability.

“There are a lot of different barriers that people face in earning adequate income to afford housing and what our service’s program does is [that] it helps our residents recognize those barriers and take steps to remove them.”

from page 03 STEFFINS

## STATEMENT FROM EDMONDS MAYOR MIKE NELSON

“We are deeply saddened by the unexpected tragic death of Officer Steffins. My heart goes out to Tyler’s family, his loved ones and our Edmonds Police Department staff who are mourning this tremendous loss.”

## BODY WORN VIDEO DISCLOSURE ACTUAL COST

In January of 2022 the Lynnwood PD implemented a Body Worn Camera (BWC) program. Officers within the Bureau of Field Operations, as well as members of the city’s Community Health and Safety Section, wear body cameras and capture recordings that are public records and subject to the Washington State Public Records Act (PRA), Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 42.56.

As explained by the Chief of Police during a presentation to council on March 15, the cost and work involved in reviewing and redacting audio and/or video can be substantive, and the Lynnwood Police Department is proposing the imposition of a fee for certain requestors for the reasonable costs of redacting audio/video footage prior to disclosure to support this work.

There were no public comments or council question. Adoption will be considered by council at their next business meeting on April 11.

from page 5 LYNNWOOD CC

and conditions of the current collective bargaining agreement are extended to December 31, 2023.

In addition, council unanimously authorized the award of a construction contract with Award Construction Inc. for the rebuild of two separate traffic signals on 196th Street SW at 76th Avenue West and 68th Avenue West.

## COUNCIL RULES FOR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

Council President Hurst, through Council Vice President Jim Smith, has asked the council to postpone approving council virtual attendance rules until April 11, seconded by Councilwoman Altamirano-Crosby and passed unanimously by council.

Council previously discussed an amendment to council rules that would allow, yet limit, council members to attend meetings virtually up to three times a year, excluding executive sessions. The number of allowed

virtual attendances has been debated but will, at President Hurst’s request, be discussed and approved at council’s next business meeting.

## COMMUNITY FAIR

Council Vice President Smith returned to his community fair ideas, introduced at a council summit on January 29, when the council discuss having a business community fair celebrating the end of lockdown. However, he pronounced the project “dead” following the lack of council support demonstrated at past meetings.

The concept of the fair, “Meet me at the Heart,” would have offered booths, live music, games, K9 units, fire trucks, and more in an effort to both celebrate the reopening of the city and support local businesses.

Smith hoped to utilize \$20,000 of ARPA funds to recognize this idea, which falls under the “Assistance to Business” category of acceptable funding options, striving for a July 30-31 date.

While many council members agreed that Smith’s vision would be a great outing for Lynnwood residents, Councilwoman Shannon Sessions questioned whether the project was moving too fast, requiring much more time for permits, budgeting, and planning to get right.

In the last work session, Council President George Hurst echoed many of the concerns Sessions brought to the table, adding that he would like to gauge the amount of volunteer support the event could get before voting in favor of it

“This community event that would have provided additional entertainment and sense of community to our residents, as well as our small businesses given a platform to connect with our community,” Council Vice President Smith said. “The bottom line is for this to work we can’t be having roadblocks from the city. We can’t be having roadblocks from council members. My thoughts are, to me, I think this is just dead.”



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# Chinese Yuan at the precipice to becoming an alternative Global Reserve Currency



From right to left: Russian President Vladimir Putin, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, and Chinese President Xi Jinping. Source: Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

By **MARIO LOTMORE**

Russian banks are issuing credit cards using China's UnionPay system after Visa and Mastercard moved to suspend operations in Russia over Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine. UnionPay is now the second-largest and fastest-growing global credit card network. Major Russian lenders Sberbank, Alfa Bank, Rosbank, Tinkoff Bank, and the Credit Bank of Moscow (MKB) have confirmed that they are immediately working on rolling out UnionPay cards.

## LYNNWOOD TIMES POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND BRICS NATIONS

As the conflict progresses, one cannot help but notice that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is becoming more of a banking war between Euro-centric financial institutions of the West and Russia. Also take note that none of the other BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are participating in economic sanctions against Russia.

Russia is a member of the BRICS group of nations, a term coined by Jim O'Neill, Goldman Sachs' head of economic research, in 2001. BRICS nations are those developing countries expected to be the dominant suppliers of manufactured goods and raw materials by 2050.

The original four-member group, called BRIC, held its first summit in Yekaterinburg, Russia on 16 June 2009. South Africa joined the BRICS group in 2010.

South Africa was among 16 of Africa's

54 nations that, like China and India, abstained from voting on a United Nations resolution condemning Russia on March 2, 2022. Many may not know that Russia was a key ally in the ruling African National Congress's fight in South Africa against both apartheid that ended in 1991 and White-minority rule that ended in 1994.

China's CIPS system is the alternative to the Euro-centric SWIFT banking system – a messaging network that financial institutions across the globe use to securely transmit information for monetary transactions.

The announcement of Russian banks issuing millions of credit cards able to transact under China's UnionPay global credit card network, the second largest in the world, further erodes the Euro-centric western control of the world's central banking system.

What we could be witnessing in real-time is the "excuse" by the BRICS nations to move away from the US dollar as the Global Reserve Currency that went into effect in 1944 as a result of the Bretton Woods Agreement.

In 1944, a delegation from 44 allied countries in World War 2 decided that the world's currencies would no longer be linked to gold but instead be pegged to the U.S. dollar. This was because the U.S. had the world's largest reserves of gold as a result of allied countries only paying for their war efforts to the U.S. in gold.

According to BRICS 2021 Economic Bulletin, BRICS nations account for 41% of global population, 24% of global GDP, and 16% of global trade. BRICS nations signed a Contingent Reserve Arrangement to meet short-

term liquidity needs of its fellow members. This financial safety net is now front and center as Euro-centric western banks are threatening the economic stability of Russia, a BRICS member, with economic sanctions.

As of the end of 2021, BRICS nations hold a total of 5,259 tons of gold reserve compared to the United States 8,133 tons according to the World Gold Council.

However, because of runaway spending by the U.S. Federal government since 2020, the national debt in the United States in relation to its gross domestic product (GDP) skyrocketed to slightly over 133%. For the BRICS nations, this ratio is only approximately 70%.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicted before U.S. President Joe Biden's budget proposal was released that the 2021 deficit would be \$2.3 trillion. It later revised the 2021 deficit figure to \$3 trillion as a result of the American Rescue Plan. The CBO also projected a cumulative deficit for 2022-2031 at \$12.1 trillion, or an average of \$1.2 trillion a year.

Between 2020 to Feb 2022, the Money Supply M1 in the United States quintupled from just about four trillion to over 20 trillion dollars. This is a significant contributor to rising historic inflation.

M1 money is the on-hand currency and is used by economists to reference how much money is in circulation in a country.

## POTENTIAL ECONOMIC FALLOUT TO THE RUSSO- UKRAINIAN FALLOUT

As Russian banks move to integrate their financial systems with alternative non-Western and non-Eurocentric banking systems, fellow BRICS nations may follow. If this occurs, BRICS countries could then re-monetized gold for trade in goods, creating a new gold standard under a Chinese Yuan.

The risk of Russia and China leading BRICS nations to transition from the U.S. dollar is a real threat to the U.S. as the economic war by Western powers against Russia intensifies. If this occurs, this could lead to the end of the U.S. dollar as the Global Reserve Currency. The impact of such a geopolitical move would be devastating for the U.S. economy as it may lead to a further devaluation of the U.S. dollar and increased inflation that will threaten the economic prosperity we as Americans have enjoyed since World War 2.

Only time will tell what the geopolitical fallout will be when the Russo-Ukrainian conflict comes to an end. But this is apparent: China is at the precipice to be a benefactor in a bitter economic war between the West and Russia.

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from page 6 **ESTHER'S PLACE**

vous, I didn't know what to expect, or any of that 'cause I had never been to treatment, let alone moving in, you know, around a bunch of girls," she explained.

For Leonard, it was "definitely a process" becoming more comfortable and open at Esther's and New Creation Communities, but now she says that everyone is "truly like family."

"It's just nice to be able to talk to these other women when you've had similar struggles," she continued, "and when you're going through certain things, they can kind of talk you off a ledge or, you know, make you feel better, and that like someone truly understands—that's been there where you are, and like they truly care about your best interest. It's a good feeling."

The acceptance, love, and support Leonard received have helped her make tremendous improvements in her life. Today, she is sober and continues to reside at one of the Hoff Foundation's housing locations while she works on herself and is even volunteering at Esther's Place to give back to other women when she can.

In contrast to how she felt years ago, Leonard told the Times, "My life now is so good. I'm happy. I love waking up in the morning. I found God. I mean, my life has been transformed."

From house arrest to managing houses Sandra Stringham led a quintessential life as a mother of three, in a happy marriage, and with a successful job. But her life quickly turned when it came to light that the man she had married suffered from an acute case of mental illness.

"I had three kids by a gentleman that ended up being really sick, and he wasn't okay in his head," Stringham explained. "And I wanted to do the best I could for him and the kids, and he was using drugs and stuff like that."

After seven years of trying to keep her family together, her husband's mental state had deteriorated to the point that he was unable to recognize his own children. "So then, that ended, obviously," Stringham said. "I told him me and my kids would like him to leave, and that was kind of the last of that—it's been several years."

According to Stringham, she became embittered with the situation surrounding her former husband and the lack of financial support for her three kids. "So I got angry, and then I got money-hungry, and I ended up doing some white-collar crimes," she recalled.

When the law caught up with her, Stringham was put on house arrest for nine months. Feeling isolated in her confinement, she turned to drugs. "I went on house arrest, and I started using," she recounted.

"[It] started out with pain killers. That was tough. I didn't feel like I could function, but when I took drugs, it was literally [so] that I could cook and clean and dance and do all these things. And my kids, you know, they just thought I was fun, and they would dance with me or whatever. And it was easy to get everything done."

In addition to her addiction, Stringham began to suffer from severe social anx-

ety as a result of her sentencing. "[T]hat house arrest put me into isolation, and by the time I got [out] of that, I didn't know how to talk to people," she said. "I was terrified of the world."

Her struggles continued to cascade as the threat of foreclosure loomed over her home. "I was going to lose my house [...] 'cause nine months of house arrest, you can't work that much. So I decided to start working, you know, I did the best I could."

Desperate and scared, Stringham reached out to her probationary officer. "I went to my officer and told her, you know, I need to do something. I have foreclosure notices—it's going bad."

"And she said, 'well, I have this place called Esther's Place.' [...] I said, 'I think I can deal with that.'" Through WorkFirst, Stringham began a 9-month work program at Esther's Place wherein she prepared food and eventually became a resource expert for other women.

When she first arrived at Esther's Place, Stringham was terrified. "I had a big baseball cap and headphones, and I had sunglasses—I mean, I just didn't want nobody to talk to me," she said. "Nobody. Just leave me alone."

During that time, Stringham would frequently hide in the pantry and have to talk herself into coming out and socializing with the other ladies.

"And then I started to, eventually, coming out," she said. "Eventually talking."

By the end of her nine-month program, she had overcome her social anxieties thanks to the sense of belonging she felt at Esther's Place. "[B]y the end of it I was literally just like hugging anybody that walked in the door—and the love and all of that and just—it was amazing. It was amazing-amazing."

Just as Stringham was about to leave Esther's Place for a job she had lined up elsewhere, Judy Hoff approached her and informed Stringham that she had received several letters from other Esthers who expressed what a loss it would be for Stringham to leave.

"And so she offered me a job my very last day there," Stringham recalled.

She has been managing three of the Hoff Foundation's facilities for three years now, including Esther's Place and the two sober-living houses. Through it all, she managed to keep her home and says she's giving her children the childhood she always hoped to be able to give them now.

Stringham says her time at Esther's "definitely changed" her as a person. "I learned a lot of things. I learned how to hold my head up and not judge people, that's for sure," she said.

**The "Soft Heart" of Judy Hoff**

A motif among the women who have been through Esther's Place is the unwavering love and compassion of Judy Hoff. In Leonard's case, for example, her trajectory from a homeless addict to a sober volunteer was not without its peaks and valleys. But no matter how high or low she was on her journey to recovery, Hoff never left her side.

"I mean, anyone else would have given up on me a long time ago, and she's really, truly stuck by me when she probably should have, you know, been like

'you gotta go,' but she didn't, and I thank her for that," said Leonard. "She has a soft heart."

When asked what it was about Esther's Place that helped her grow as a person, Leonard said, "The love from Judy, the love that she gives us. She truly cares about us—every one of us."

Stringham echoed a similar sentiment when recounting her experience at Esther's. "Judy Hoff has been a huge, huge part of my life," she said.

Even as they were interviewed by the Lynnwood Times, Hoff offered quiet off-camera support for Leonard and Stringham as they shared the most sensitive challenges of their lives.

For Hoff, love must be paramount at Esther's Place. "It's love that lives here," she says. "We love and accept people at wherever they are, and sometimes it's real tough because they're having a hard day from what happened to them out there. But we understand that too, so we love them more."

Hoff seems to have an intuition for healing broken hearts, and that's apparent in how she views trauma as the problem behind symptoms like homelessness and addiction.

"Trauma is really the reason they are where they are," she said when elaborating on what happened to women 'out there' before they came to Esther's.

"It's not drug addiction—it's trauma. So the trauma of life has brought them to drug addiction, and then mental illness, and then homelessness, and then here they are, right? But you can reverse that cycle, and they can have a good life. That's the hope I have for them."

In 2021, Judy Hoff received the Transformation Leadership Award by the Snohomish County Human Rights

Commission for the many lives she and Esther's Place have rebuilt.

**Who Esther's Place is for and how to get involved**

When asked who Esther's Place is for, Stringham, who has been managing the center for years, said, "It's for the community. It's a resource. It's for [when] people don't know where to go; they can come here. And there's no judgment; there's just love when you walk in the door. And there's warm food and coffee, and good times. We play games. We hang out. I just got a Karaoke machine—I just need some CDs," she laughed.

"But you know, we make it fun, so you can come here you can get resources and meals, and it doesn't matter if you're homeless or if you have a place, or I mean, if you live in a mansion, it doesn't matter. We'll take you in, and we'll treat you just the same."

Esther's Place is funded entirely by donations from individuals and companies. To donate, visit [hofffoundation.org](http://hofffoundation.org). Hoff also emphasized how helpful food donations are and said that food drop-offs are accepted Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. Esther's Place is located at 3705 Broadway in Everett, WA.

The center is also in need of women's clothes. Those interested in donating clothing can email Stringham at [sandra@hofffoundation.org](mailto:sandra@hofffoundation.org). Anyone looking to donate, volunteer, or get involved in any capacity can email Stringham or call the center's office at (425) 512-0749.

"Every person has the ability to help somebody else," says Hoff, "and that's my message about all of this work: It's in the giving that we receive the peace."

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



### SEND LETTERS TO

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### LETTERS POLICY

The Lynnwood Times welcomes letters to the editor of no more than 400 words. Letters will be printed as promptly as possible, as space allows.

To be considered for publication, letters must include a *first and last name*, *address* and *phone number* for verification purposes. We also reserve the right to edit letters as necessary for brevity, grammar and decorum.

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### from page 5 LOTTERY

a whim and urged by his girlfriend, the self-employed painter played the Golden Charms progressive slot machine, but neither ever really believed they would take home the big jackpot.

Million-dollar luck has struck twice at the Puget Sound area's premier gaming destination, as both the \$2.4 and \$1.1 million jackpots were won while playing a Golden Charms progressive slots machine. Golden Charms is one of the hottest and most entertaining machines inspired by historical events, famous characters, and episodes from ancient Chinese myths. The 3'x5' layout has a staggering 50-payline setup, giving players ample winning possibilities.

A regular guest, this is not Lopez's first big win at Tulalip Resort Casino;

he scored a \$20,000 jackpot in the past, but on a different machine. Lopez typically plays Triple Fortune and Buffalo Gold.

Spanning more than 200,000 square-feet, Tulalip Resort Casino's Vegas-style casino features 2,400 of the newest multi-dimensional slots, offering the largest selection and variety in the Seattle area.

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For more information about Tulalip Resort Casino visit [www.tulalipcasino.com](http://www.tulalipcasino.com).

### from page 3 ROTTER

Back in 2016, Rotter led Kennewick police on a wild and dangerous vehicle chase just after midnight the morning of Friday, February 26. He sped southbound on Washington street without using his headlights. Rotter was wanted for several outstanding warrants at the time.

On March 17, 2019, Rotter was apprehended by a Franklin County

Deputy after attempting to elude the officer. During his arrest, the officer discovered that Rotter was wanted by the Washington State Department of Corrections and the US Marshal Pacific Northwest Violent Offender Task Force for an escape warrant from Community Custody for the possession of controlled substances. During his initial arrest attempt a week earlier, he struck the vehicle driven by one of the Task Force members.

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

The Lynnwood Times wants to know what issues you would like us to ask the candidates on your behalf. Email your issues in a form of a question to [editorial@lynnwoodtimes.com](mailto:editorial@lynnwoodtimes.com) or call 425-308-8371.

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