

Connect

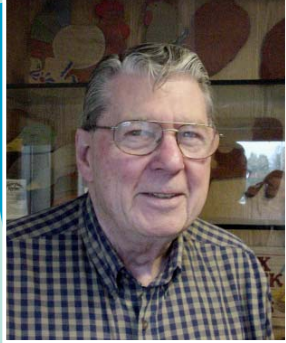


A Report to Skagit County from Chinook Enterprises

SPRING ISSUE 2005

360-428-0140

People Are Saying ...



"Working at Chinook is more than just a job, it is also a lot of fun."

Roy Batey
Chinook Enterprises
Woodshop Lead Technician
25 years



"The people I work with at Chinook Enterprises have enriched my life and made my job fun."

Jody Robideau
Chinook Enterprises
Lead Bonding Technician
13 Years



"Working at Chinook has been an adventure that has guided my career and my education. I am blessed to have such wonderful employers and to work with a tremendously gifted staff."

Debbie Maxwell
Chinook Enterprises
Job Developer/Marketing Coordinator
12 Years

A United Way Agency



United Way

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2026 LaVenture Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 428-0140

Email: chinook@chinookenterprises.org
Website: www.chinookenterprises.org

Chinook Enterprises Celebrates 25 Years

Twenty-five years ago, employers were just beginning to accept persons with disabilities as potential workers. The deinstitutionalization that happened in the late 60's and early 70's created a tremendous need for resources that would help the people who were entering our community from the institutions. Chinook humbly began with a lawn mowing service started by Executive Director Rob Martin, using his Ford Pinto to haul equipment and workers. (Not at the same time!) "I would first have to take all of the mowers and equipment to the job site, unload the car, then go and pick up the crew. When we were done, I would have to do it all over again in reverse," reminisced Martin. The Commercial Grounds Division continues to be the cornerstone of Chinook Enterprises, mowing many commercial and municipal properties throughout Skagit County.

To begin a program for talented people coming out of the Portal program at Northern State, Chinook began manufacturing Countrylake™ Cutting Boards. Martin recalls sitting at his first trade show speaking to a couple of sales people. "They told me that we should be prepared because these cutting boards were really going to take off. At the time we had a \$15,000 a month budget and frequently were on the verge of disaster. When the phone started ringing and we suddenly had \$6,000 worth of orders at a time, it was an ecstatic time," declared Martin.

As soon as things moved quickly in sales, the Countrylake line was "stolen" by a manufacturer who infringed on the copyright. Chinook faced the realities of the cost to take

the matter to court and opted to look for other opportunities. Longtime Employment Security Director Bert Langenhorst came to work for Chinook and was able to facilitate a contract with the Boeing Airplane Group as well as many

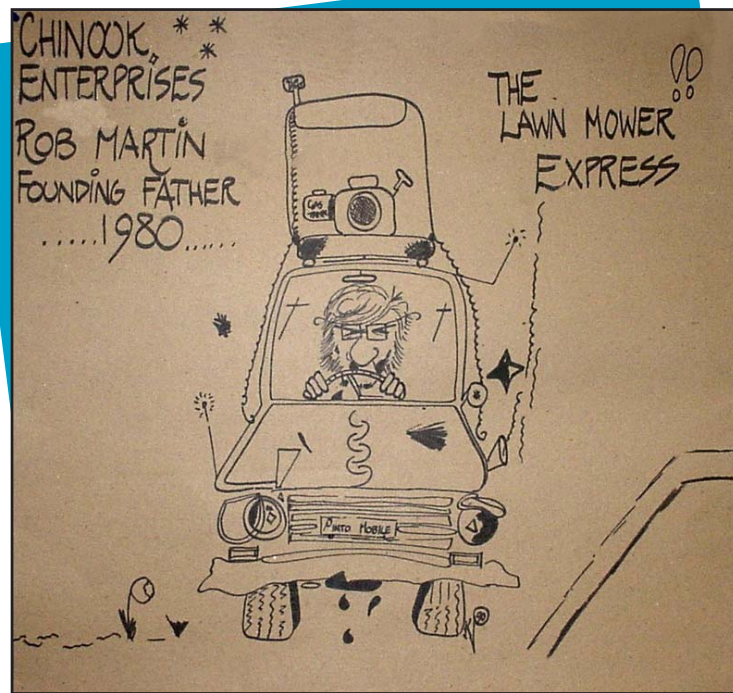
abilities. Once this change in perceptions took place, Chinook seemed to be instantly more successful with placing people in community jobs because we didn't use so many preconceived notions about what they "can't" do.

Other notable memories for Martin include a phone call received from the Jane Pauly show. Martin relates how the staff was in the middle of a meeting, when a representative from the show called to congratulate them on the articles in the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times. Martin took the phone call and thought at first that it was a hoax, because the caller exclaimed that it was "so impressive that you have people in wheelchairs directing airplanes out of the hangars at Boeing." Finally realizing that the caller

was legitimate, Martin and his staff piled into their cars and headed to every bookstore in the area to purchase all available copies of the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. Unfortunately, before Martin could appear on the show, it was cancelled.

Martin also fondly recalls a former Chinook Production Worker Richard Bugge giving a tour to some visitors. Overhead a Boeing aircraft flew. Richard looked up and told the visitors, "We made part of that airplane right here." The pride in Richard's voice as he made his statement was the capstone of all Martin had sought to accomplish. That people with disabilities can be productive, contributing members of our community, and that Chinook Enterprises helps people achieve that goal.

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What is the Problem?

I remember throughout my graduate school work, my faculty advisor would continually ask "what is the problem?" I got so sick of hearing that question. It wasn't until later that I realized he was trying to teach that there are many ways to look at an issue and that people routinely create solutions without really understanding the problem.

That has certainly been the case in the field of rehabilitation where, historically, society has defined disabled people's problems within a strict medical context. The person with a disability is often seen as "having" the problem, and the process for helping goes like this: diagnose, label, and then try to fix/cure the

problem. The doctor, psychologist, or some other expert is always in charge of this process. While this approach may work for treating disease, it has failed as a model for helping people with disabilities.

So, what is the problem? Is it that a person operates his wheelchair in the street, or is it a lack of accessible sidewalks? Is it that a person cannot read and write, or is it a corporation's rigid hiring practices? Certainly, how one views "the problem" will dictate the path for solutions. There are over 54 million Americans with disabilities, including nearly 1 million in Washington State. The problems that people with disabilities face, discrimination,

unemployment, and poverty, are not medical issues but social issues. Like other minority groups, the real problem often faced by people with disabilities is attitudinal and environmental.

Here in the Skagit Valley, employers and the community in general have done well in accepting and supporting people with disabilities. There is still a long way to go however, if we truly want people with disabilities to fully participate in community life. So the next time you think about a person with a disability and the issues he or she may be facing, ask yourself, "What is the problem?"

Jim Halpin - Assistant Director

Twenty-five Years and Beyond: A Legacy of Quality and Craftsmanship

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, it seems fitting to give special mention to our Woodworking Department, the first and oldest department in Chinook Enterprises' Production Services Division. The Woodworking Department came about in 1980 as part of Rob Martin's vision to provide vocational training for community job placement to individuals with disabilities and other barriers. And although that beginning was kind of rough as Rob recalls transporting participants to Georgia Pacific to repair broken down wooden pallets, the way soon opened to a series of woodworking endeavors that had its start in a hands-on training workshop program initially located in the old Mount Vernon Post Office before ultimately relocating to our current location on LaVenture Road. Managed by Roy Batey who unfailingly continues to run the department today, participants from Northern State Mental Health Facility's vocational skills program called Portal prepared for community-based woodworking jobs while learning to make such products as wooden toys, picnic tables and benches, and cedar planter boxes marketed at craft shows, and wooden medical back boards used to carry patients for emergency applications.

After four years of operation and with the help of an outside marketing rep firm, the department launched the Countrylake Kitchen line of cutting boards. Decoratively colored and designed in a variety of animal shapes, these handcrafted maple cutting boards soon became a bigger success than anyone had expected, selling thousands annually over the next three years. Even today, some 15 years later, many people remember Chinook as the place that made "those cute bread boards." To compliment our wood products, the department later developed another area of expertise using acrylic materials. From this a product line called Krilix was launched that has since produced a variety of items such as business card holders, brochure holders, office paper and folder organizers, and even a helicopter blade cover made for the Department of Defense.

As our production capabilities began to grow into other areas such as mechanical assembly and as vocational rehab services became more community based, the woodshop was asked to look at assistive technologies - solutions that aid persons with disabilities succeed in the workplace. Since that time, Roy and his department have developed and produced a multitude of custom accommodations made from wood and acrylic that have assisted workers in community employment as well as in-house to perform tasks that in many cases would be otherwise unachievable.

More currently, one of the most notable products to come out of the shop is



← Then: Countrylake cutting board production in 1983.

Now: Roy Batey and Larry Boffey display a custom brochure rack, part of the new product line for Chinook Enterprises. →



our beautifully crafted maple with acrylic integrations brochure rack that can be found in nearly every Peoples Bank in and around Skagit County.

And although a crowning example of the many accomplishments to come out of the Woodworking Department, past and present, there is so much more that could be told - certainly more than space will allow for this article. Moving forward and adding to the department's current expertise, Senior Technician Larry Boffey assists Roy with new projects coming through the door on a regular basis. Whether it is a prototype, custom one of a kind, larger volume, or repeat customer orders, the Woodworking Department continues to hold to the values that Rob Martin set in place from the very beginning. We will always be the best at providing our customers with the highest quality and superior craftsmanship possible. And that's exactly what Chinook Enterprises will continue to do for the next twenty-five years...and beyond.

Join these many fine companies and organizations who have made a connection with Chinook Enterprises

- Alf Christianson Seed Co.
- Anacortes Chocolate Factory
- **Anacortes Christian Church**
- Anacortes Senior Center
- Arbor-Pacific Forestry Services, Inc.
- Avon-Allen United Methodist Church
- Bates Abrasives
- Blockbuster, Anacortes
- The Boeing Company
- Burlington Chamber of Commerce
- Burlington Library
- Burton Care Center
- Carlson Formetec Inc.
- Cascade Pizza
- City of Anacortes
- City of Mount Vernon
- Clearsnap
- Community Action Agency
- Costco
- Country Time Alpacas
- Donatello
- DSHS Central Services Office
- EDASC
- EFF Health Care
- First Evangelical Lutheran Church
- Fisher & Son Construction
- Grocery Outlet
- Holiday Market
- **Home Depot**
- Home Place
- Jetpoint Technologies
- Jo-ann's Fabrics
- **John's Home Service**
- KLKI Radio
- La Conner Regional Library
- Lamar Technologies
- Ledgerline Accounting
- Lennox Hearth Products
- **Linens N Things**
- McDonalds, Anacortes
- McDonalds, Burlington
- McDonalds, Mount Vernon
- McDonalds, Sedro-Woolley
- Mount Vernon High School
- Mount Vernon Senior Center
- Nordic Tugs
- North Island Boat Company
- Northwest Hair Academy
- Outback Steak House
- Peoples Bank
- Pleasant Ridge Cemetery
- Port of Anacortes
- Port of Skagit County
- **Puget Sound Rope**
- River City Screen Printing
- Safeway, Anacortes
- San Juan Yachts
- Schell Design Group
- Sean's Yard Care in Shelter Bay
- Skagit County EMS
- Skagit County Human Services
- Skagit County Law Library
- Skagit County Parks and Recreation
- Skagit County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- Skagit County Public Works
- Skagit County Youth and Family Services
- Skagit Gardens
- Skagit Speedway
- Skagit Valley Children's Museum
- Skagit Valley College
- Skagit Valley Hospital
- Social Security Administration
- SPARC
- Sterling Lawn Services
- Stiles and Stiles Inc., P.S. Attorneys at Law
- Target Stores, Burlington
- Thrifty Foods, Burlington
- **Timberland Homes**
- United General Hospital
- United States Postal Service, Burlington
- United Way
- Upchurch Scientific Inc.
- **Upstage Boutique**
- Wal-Mart
- Washington State Division of Developmental Disabilities
- Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Washington State DSHS Children/Family Services
- Washington State Employment Security Department
- Whatcom Transit Authority
- Where the Heart Is

– ***Bold italicized businesses indicate new connection*** –

Accreditations

- Accredited by CARF: The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission
- Accredited by the U.S. Department of Labor

Affiliations

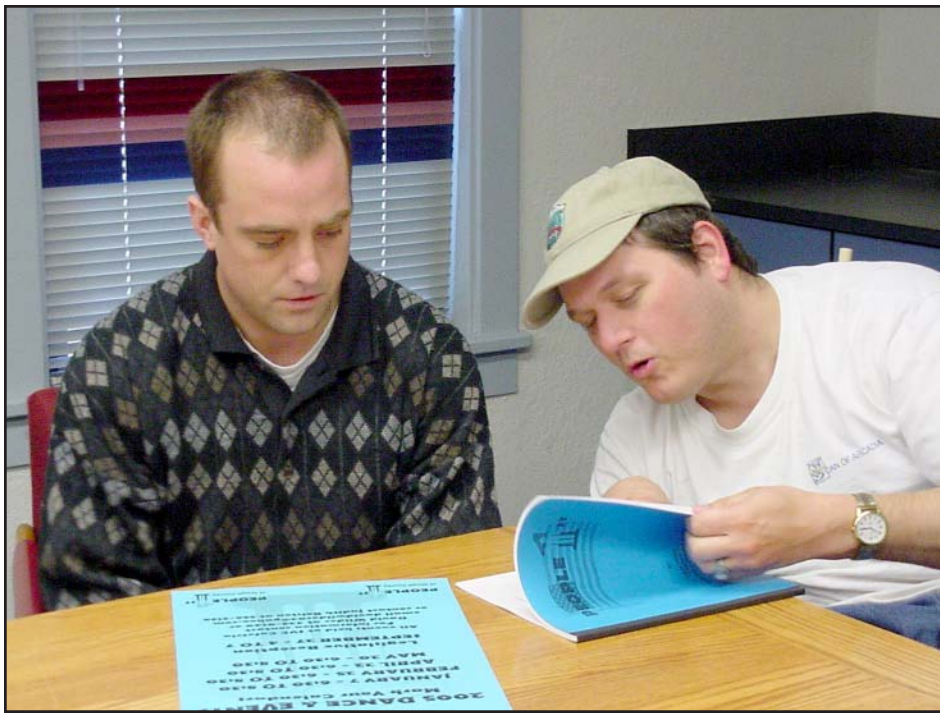
- United Way of Skagit County Agency
- Anacortes Chamber of Commerce Member
- Burlington Chamber of Commerce Member
- Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce Member
- Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce Member
- Economic Development Association of Skagit County

Certifications

- Certified Community Rehabilitation Facility, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation & Division of Developmental Disabilities
- ISO 9001:2000
- AS 9100

Connect Editor

- Debbie Maxwell



David Wilder (right) teaches volunteer Nick Bahrt (left) about the principle and advocacy goals of the People 1st organization.

David Wilder: Teaching Others Advocacy

For the past seven years, David Wilder has represented the local chapter of People 1st as president. People 1st is an organization created to provide advocacy for people with disabilities. It is the goal of this group to change the way our culture sees disabilities. David comments, "Our disabilities are second to who we are as people, and I want to help change that stigma." David wants our culture to know that he is more than just the guy in a wheelchair. He sees People 1st as his best way of communicating this message. As the name of the group implies, people come first.

To achieve his goal, the group also provides information on a variety of topics, from Social Security and healthcare to what is going on in the community. David says, "One of the big things (about People 1st) is to increase awareness to the community of all the services available." David has a strong desire to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in his community. Currently, People 1st sponsors dances open to the public

offering a variety of music, food, and fun. This provides an opportunity for people to socialize and get to know one another.

David sees transportation, accessible facilities, and community support as the three biggest challenges people with disabilities encounter in Skagit County. It is his hope that organizations within the county that assist people with disabilities would work with People 1st to help improve the quality of life for those who have disabilities. Currently, People 1st is working with the County Human Services Department, County Commissioners, Chinook Enterprises, Rehabco, and Skagit Valley College to find creative ways to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

David has his eyes set toward the future and hopes to increase membership. He also hopes to increase the organizations' presence within the Skagit County community. If you are interested in getting involved, contact David Wilder at davidwilder02@yahoo.com.

Why Self Employment?

Self-employment or working for yourself, although not for everyone, is another way in which persons with barriers to traditional employment can achieve success. Often, it is difficult to access regular paid positions in certain types of industries. The jobs are either filled by owner/operators, or they are larger operations, in which employer demands do not accommodate the worker needs. The challenges of finding a good job match for an individual looking for employment can be limited due to things such as the current job market, skills, and transportation.

One way to overcome these challenges is through self-employment. The advantages of self-employment over traditional employment are significant. Self-employment offers the individual choice in a career path. It allows the individual an avenue to find a job that fits his or her interests and abilities. It offers flexible work hours to fit around health needs, and lastly, it is a step towards achieving greater independence. Several individuals who are supported by Chinook have chosen to create their own businesses as an option to traditional employment.

Sean Matheson is a living example of successful self-employment. After working a seasonal job with La Conner Public Works, Matheson was looking to do something with animals or lawn care. When time passed and few local opportunities materialized, Matheson, with the help of family, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Chinook Enterprises, and Western Washington University, developed a business plan that eventually led to the creation of his own business. Now on any given day in the community of Shelter Bay in La Conner, you might see Sean Matheson, the owner of Sean's Lawn Care, driving his green "Gator" with his mower and edger, getting ready to provide yard maintenance to one of his customers.

Another La Conner resident, John Roald, is also benefiting from the creation of his own business. Roald was able to use his previous experience washing trucks to create a business that would incorporate his acquired skills. Roald, with help, started John's Home Service in 1998, which provides many services such as

window washing, gutter cleaning, pressure washing, hauling, lawn mowing, and weed-eating.

Self-employment is something that provides another avenue of opportunity for people with disabilities. It is something that takes much collaboration to achieve, and it breaks the confinements of some of the major conflicts with traditional employment. It offers a vast amount of independence and flexibility from which business owners like Matheson and Roald benefit.



John Roald, owner of John's Home Service, carefully weed eats around a customer's flower bed.

Are You Ready...

To make the connection with Chinook Enterprises?

If you or someone you know would benefit from our services call:

360-428-0140 for more information on how Chinook Enterprises vocational services can assist you.

You can also find us on the web at www.chinookenterprises.org

The View From Here...



An Address from Executive Director Rob Martin

As we move into our 25th year of service, I have been thinking about some of the changes between services over the years. Things were simpler to implement 25 years ago. Our systems were not as advanced then, so there was more room for trying things out to see what worked and what didn't. We still do a fair amount of that today. Our funding was not particularly good or plentiful in the early 80's. Now, we have many more cost centers, so one problem area doesn't spell disaster like it might have several years ago. The recession of the early 80's made it a real challenge to keep all the balls in the air, and more than once, we were only a few days away from disaster. We are much more stable now, and those early difficult periods made us stronger, all things considered.

Since our inception, we have stressed service quality and innovation as a way to conduct our affairs. There are many elements that go into a successful enterprise, but I think those two will lead to greater levels of overall success than any others. If we take care to do our tasks in the very best way we know how, we will please our customers. If we are always looking for new and better ways to provide our services, we will get new customers and keep the ones we have. I don't know what the next twenty-five years will bring, but I am confident that if we continue on a similar path we'll be fine.

Chinook Enterprises Recognizes Burton Care Center and Puget Sound Rope as Employers of the Quarter

Dedicated, committed employers are priceless to the management, staff, and customers of Chinook Enterprises. Because of this, each quarter we choose one exemplary employer to



Burton Care Center staff are awarded the 2004 4th Quarter Employer of the Quarter Award by Chinook Executive Director Rob Martin (top left). From left: Rob Martin, Carol Wikstrom, Kelli Cannon, Brandon Watson, and Crystal Darsch.

recognize for the outstanding support provided by the employer for their employee. It is our privilege to name Burton Care Center, 4th Quarter 2004, and Puget Sound Rope, 1st Quarter 2005, Employers of the Quarter.

Brandon Watson has been employed by Burton Care Center for the past year and a half as an Activities Assistant. Brandon states that "Burton's has been very helpful in working out solutions to challenges, supporting me by providing training and accommodation, and by treating me as a valuable member of the BCC Team." This sentiment was echoed by Chinook Enterprises Employment Specialist Marcia Mueller who says "The staff of Burton's has been consistently supportive and is excellent problem solvers, which has been crucial in maintaining Brandon's employment." Burton Care Center has provided a unique opportunity for Brandon, which helped him grow in a job that he loves.

Puget Sound Rope was the top choice for 1st Quarter 2005 Employer of the Quarter for several reasons. The first and foremost was the superior training and mentorship provided to Maintenance Mechanic Greg Higgins. Greg's mechanical abilities and skills, coupled with his love for mechanics, made an excellent vocational match to promote a career rather than a short term job. "From the first contact with



Chinook Enterprises Employment Specialist Doug Whipple presents the Employer of the Quarter Award for the 1st quarter of 2005 to Puget Sound Rope managers and staff. From left: Doug Whipple, PSR Operations Manager Stuart Jenke, PSR President Randy Longerich, PSR Maintenance Manager Randy Arendse, and PSR Mechanics Tony Trythall, Greg Higgins, Rick Weaver.

Stuart Jenke, to employment orientation with John Dumas, and mentorship with Randy Arendse, Greg has been treated as every other employee with excellent wages, training, work environment, benefits, and increased duties and responsibilities. He is mentored by his direct supervisor, who himself was an apprentice, and is trained and assisted by more experienced members of the

maintenance department. Greg is a true member of the team in all aspects from being part of the ISO system of constant improvement to having fun at lunch with fellow employees" reflected Employment Specialist Doug Whipple.

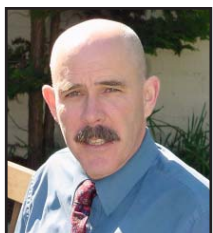
We are proud to be working with these excellent employers. Congratulations Burton Care Center and Puget Sound Rope.

Chinook Recognized 176 Years of Service

1st and 2nd Quarter Anniversaries



Rob Martin
25 years



Jim Halpin
24 years



Scott Holt
15 years



Lisa Fisher
14 years



Doug Whipple
11 years



Raul Santos
9 years



Bobbie Christensen
8 years



Stanley Beauprey
8 years



Percy Rodriguez
7 years



Clea Burke
6 years



Susan Hibma
6 years



Cheryl Kaufman
6 years



Angela Pratt
6 years



David Wilder
6 years



Matt Bounds
4 years



Steve Core
4 years



Kathy Thomson
4 years



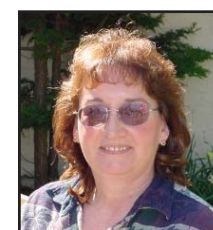
Janet Nielsen
4 years



David Fukuyama
3 years



Jim Petrisor
3 years



Marcia Mueller
2 years



Mike Hanes
1 year

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HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you have contacts with companies where our services might be needed, please let us know using the form below:

If you know of a job that one of our participants might be qualified for, please contact us.
If you would like information about making a tax deductible donation to Chinook Enterprises to help us continue to provide quality employment services for persons with barriers, please complete this short form and we will get right back with you.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ email: _____

Chinook Enterprises
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Visit our website at www.chinookenterprises.org

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