

WORKING FROM HOME

WHEN RIDGEFIELD IS YOUR 'OFFICE'



Alex Johnson works from his home in Heron Ridge as a virtual employee of a California-based company. His cat, Mochi, keeps him company while he's working.

A brainstorming session at the port led to questions about the work-at-home environment in Ridgefield. Who is working from home? What do they do? What do people love about working from Ridgefield, and what are their challenges? For answers, we put it out on our social media feeds. What follows are interviews with a few of the people who responded.

ALEX JOHNSON: Virtual Company Employee

From Ridgefield's Heron Ridge neighborhood, Alex Johnson works for a healthcare consulting firm based in Southern California. The company has

no physical location, so Johnson works from home, as do all of the firm's employees. With five years of work-at-home experience, he finds it suits him in all ways, with one exception.

"The lack of social interaction is a challenge. I'm very happy when Friday evening rolls around and I can go out to a pub and meet up with people," Johnson said. "So, it would be nice if there were more restaurants and public gathering areas in Ridgefield."

Johnson and his wife purchased their home in Ridgefield about four years ago, prompted by his wife's job in Kalama. Choosing Ridgefield made sense to them, as it is about half-way between Kalama and downtown Portland, where they avail themselves of restaurants and entertainment activities. The couple kayak, too, so Ridgefield's Lake River is a plus.

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FROM THE COMMISSION

Joe Melroy
Comissioner



PORT APPLAUDS CLARK COLLEGE'S EXPLORATION OF ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CENTER

At a recent port commission meeting, I had the pleasure of hearing the outstanding presentation made by our invited speaker, Clark College's Vice President of Economic and Community Development, Kevin Witte.

Kevin told the story of the town of Sheffield, England, which is considered to be where the industrial revolution was born. With dependence on coal production and steel-making, it was doing great until the 1980s, when its mills and mines all shut down, and unemployment reached 90%. (See Thought Leadership, page 4).

But that's not the end of this story. What happened next is a blue print for any city looking to expand its living-wage jobs base. A few people in Sheffield came up with the idea of providing skills training through apprenticeships in businesses in what's called "advanced manufacturing." Advanced manufacturing jobs require smarts and human input.

Clark College is exploring the possibility of establishing an advanced manufacturing

center here in Ridgefield – with an associated apprenticeship program similar to that of Sheffield.

Let's face it – automation is going to displace jobs. And while things are going well now in the Discovery Corridor, we can't put our heads in the sand and pretend things will always be good. We need to pay attention to what's coming.

With my fellow port directors, I commend Clark College's forward-thinking and exploration of this important project. We also pledge to support the college's effort in any way we can. The survival of our community depends on keeping our citizens educated and gainfully employed. If the port can help Ridgefield do that in partnership with Clark College, then as your community port, we'll be doing our job.

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Community is a big draw

“We love where we live. There are always kids playing outside, and we know and like our neighbors,” Johnson said. “We were attracted to the schools, and we love the strong sense of community. It feels safe here.”

From a work perspective, Johnson feels his internet connection is generally adequate. “For what I do, the current speed works 97% of the time.”

Occasionally he needs to copy large files to his local computer. That’s when things can bog down.

“This is the only time I wish I had a better connection,” said Johnson. “I might be able to get faster service, but I’m already paying a significant amount.”

**GRANT GARLISCH
Account Manager**

Grant Garlich has spent the last 15 years living and working from his Ridgefield home in a variety of technology-related roles. In his current job, he feels Ridgefield is the perfect location from which to work from home. Garlich is an account manager for Aruba Networks, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, managing the technology needs of 25 large, Oregon-based clients in the higher education or healthcare business.

Garlich shares his present home near Tri-Mountain Golf course with his wife and children. A Vancouver native, he has long preferred Ridgefield as a base from which to work, with proximity to what matters to him and his family as the leading factor.

“Ridgefield offers rural living just a few minutes to I-5 and downtown Portland, and only 20 minutes door-to-door to PDX from where I can go anywhere, Garlich said. “By living in Ridgefield we get to experience the amenities of the big city without being stuck in the rat race.”

Garlich and his family also appreciate the very short jaunt to downtown Ridgefield and the river for recreation.

“I can be wheels to the water with my boat trailer in 10 minutes.”

More than just a great location

In addition to the location advantages, Garlich also prefers living and working in Washington because of a lower cost of living, including no income tax and lower property taxes.

“When I lived in Washington and worked in Oregon, the 9% income tax hit was painful.”

For Garlich, living without high-speed internet isn’t life-shattering now, but was problematic in prior work endeavors.



Grant Garlich is an account manager for large health care and education clients. He works from his home or in nearby café such as Seasons Coffee Shop in the Old Liberty Theater.

WORKING FROM HOME in Ridgefield

“I can be wheels to the water with my boat trailer in 10 minutes.”

GRANT GARLISCH, ACCOUNT MANAGER

“We love where we live... It feels safe here.”

ALEX JOHNSON, VIRTUAL COMPANY EMPLOYEE

“Now I feel like I’m working on dial-up.”

BARBARA PRATT BLACKHURST, JILL-OF-MANY-TRADES



Barbara Pratt Blackhurst works from her home in the Duluth neighborhood. She faces a \$4,700 bill to gain higher-speed internet and improved phone service.

“I used to sell video conferencing services, and it was tough to sell. The service worked, but not really well with the low bandwidth available here. “

**BARBARA PRATT BLACKHURST
Jill-Of-Many Trades**

Barbara Pratt Blackhurst moved to Ridgefield from Orchards, Wash., about three years ago. She has mixed emotions about working freelance from home here. Situated on seven acres in the Duluth area, she prizes the beautiful scenery and easy access to I-5, but slow internet speed and faulty phone lines hamper her two existing businesses, and caused her to drop two others.

“When people ask me how I work from home, I tell them ‘slowly,’” Blackhurst said.

Her work as a traveling notary became impossible in Ridgefield because her phone service and email often don’t work. And in the notary field, time is money.

“If I can’t answer the phone or get an email, the client will go on to the next notary.”

Blackhurst now works as an e-publisher, book cover designer and as a research assistant for a certified art appraiser. Searching the internet to look up art objects is time consuming, Blackhurst said, when download speeds are inadequate. She also has to break documents apart and send them in multiple emails, a process that reduces her productivity.

There’s no end in sight to her plight: Blackhurst lives on a private road with only five other households. Her service provider has quoted \$4,700 to bring service levels up, and her neighbors aren’t interested in helping with the cost.

Slow internet speed here is more painful because Blackhurst enjoyed much faster service in Orchards.

“Now I feel like I’m working on dial-up.”

Summary

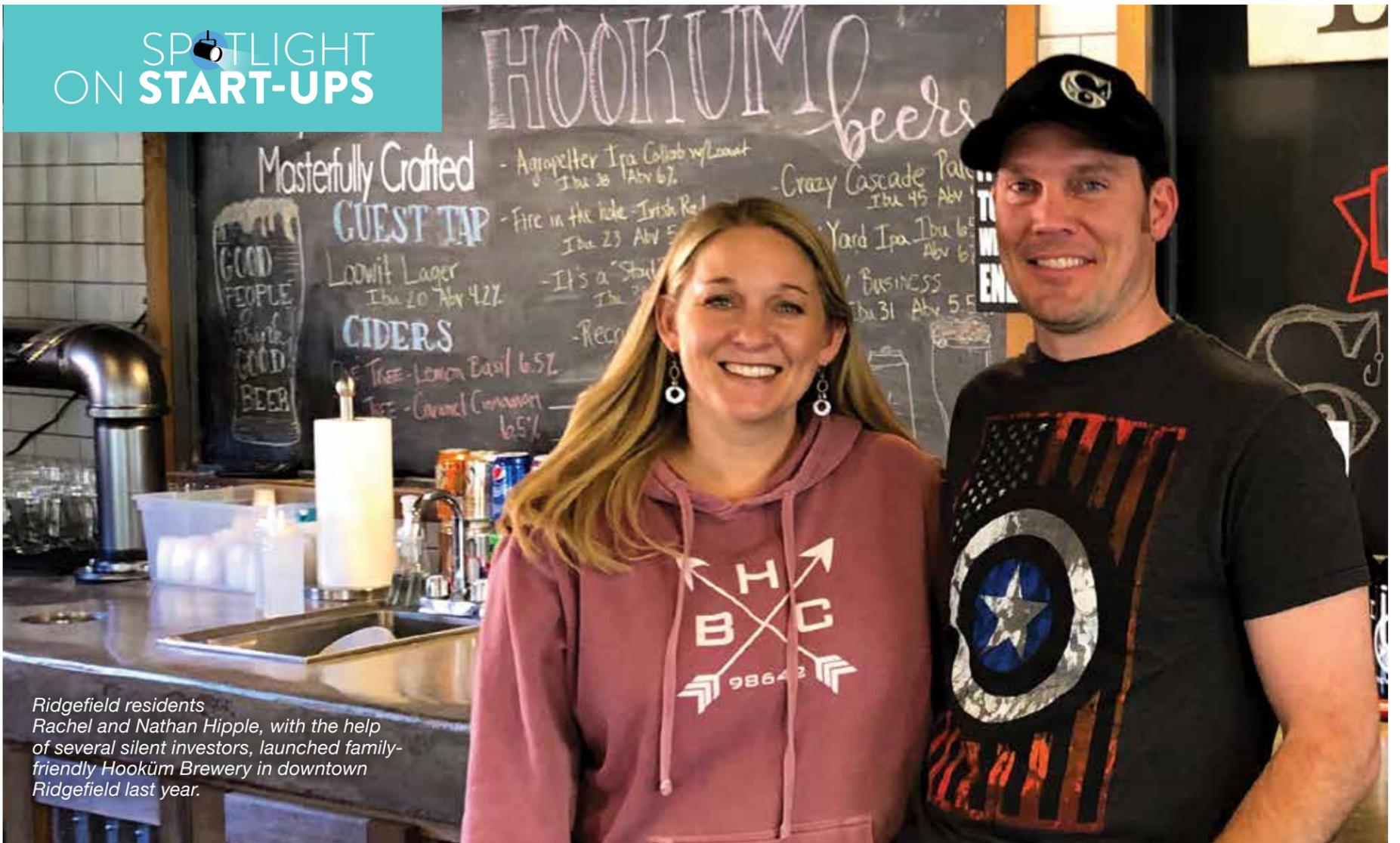
Because we’re partial to the Ridgefield and Discovery Corridor lifestyle, we’re pleased but not surprised by the references to the area’s location and livability advantages enjoyed by those we interviewed.

Sadly, we’re also not surprised by the irritation expressed over slow internet speeds. This frustration underscores the need for the port’s continued push to build a broadband infrastructure network in the area.

For more information about the port’s efforts to build broadband infrastructure in the Discovery Corridor, visit portridgefield.org.

Do you have a work-from-home story to share with us? If so, feel free to comment or message us on Facebook or email [Ethan Perry at EPerry@portridgefield.org](mailto:EPerry@portridgefield.org).

SPOTLIGHT ON START-UPS



Ridgefield residents Rachel and Nathan Hipple, with the help of several silent investors, launched family-friendly Hooküm Brewery in downtown Ridgefield last year.



HOOKÜM BREWS BEER, FOSTERS COMMUNITY

If the building's façade is unassuming in a single shade of soft-grey, stepping through the front door of Hooküm Brewing Company in downtown Ridgefield is an eye-pleasing experience.

Light streams in from a plethora of windows, and warm, natural wood finishes adorn the walls, ceilings, table tops and the polished plank bar. The welcoming ambiance is rounded out with modern overhead lighting, chalk-drawn menu boards, and shelves filled with colorful Hooküm t-shirts for purchase. Outside, a large gravel patio holds a bevy of tables and chairs, accessible in the fair weather via a large, roll-up glass door.

Much of the craftsmanship at Hooküm was provided by Ridgefield residents Rachel and Nathan Hipple. The couple are the managing partners of downtown Ridgefield's only microbrewery, which is on tap (pun intended!) to celebrate its first anniversary on July 3.

Why Hooküm?

The name Hooküm and its logo are an amalgam of things, including the "hooks and ladders" found in firefighting; fishing, for which the area is well-known, a nod to the region's Native Americans, and the umlaut (the little dots over the 'u' in Hooküm) brings in a German beer-loving, emphasis.

Nathan works as a Vancouver firefighter and paramedic, Rachel is an on-call nurse, and the couple is raising two teenage boys. Launching a business, however, doesn't seem to have slowed their strides. A recent sunny afternoon at their storefront found them exuding excitement when discussing the birth of Hooküm, and the choice of downtown Ridgefield as their brewery's location.

"We couldn't afford anything that cost a fortune because we didn't have a fortune," said Nathan. "And we wanted to stay in Ridgefield, so it worked out for us when this space came open."

Rachel serves as the scheduler and merchandiser for Hooküm, family and friends serve as part-time staff, and Nathan is the brewmaster. He started brewing in his garage about five years ago, motivated in advance of a Super Bowl party.

"I was 'hooked' from there on out," Nathan said.

About the beer and the atmosphere

Hooküm brews a variety of craft beers, including a popular Front Yard IPA, a stout, and much in between. Availability changes with the brewing cycles. A few hard ciders are offered, but Hooküms liquor license doesn't allow wine on the premises.

Children are allowed during all open hours, board games and cards are available, and fun is encouraged.

"We are about family, community and friendship," said Rachel. "Our customers tell us they feel Hooküm is a great place to come to see people they know."

What about the food?

In Hooküm's intimate space, a full kitchen isn't possible, so already -cooked snacks are on hand. Several local restaurants, however, stepped in to solve the dilemma for those who wish both a beer and a bigger bite. Customers can order food from El Rancho Viejo, Vinnie's Pizza and End of the Road Grill. All three restaurants deliver to the brewery.

Hooküm has several silent investment partners, one of whom is Rachel's dad, Bruce Wiseman, a Port of Ridgefield commissioner.

"Let's just say Bruce has developed a taste for craft beers," Nathan said with a smile.

For more information including special events call 360.727.2115 or find the brewery on Facebook or Instagram at hookumbrewingco. Hooküm is located at 120 N. Third Ave.



ROSAUERS MORE RETAIL MOVING FORWARD

Ridgefield resident Dean Maldonado, pictured at left, of FDM Inc., is the developer for the Rosauers grocery store under construction at 45th and Pioneer streets. He recently reported that although the project is a bit behind schedule due to weather and materials delivery, he's on track to hand the building over to Rosauers around September 1st.

"Once in their hands, they'll hire their own folks to do the inside improvements," said Maldonado. He expects the 53,000 square foot full-service, regional grocery store will open around mid-October this year.

In other news at the site, Maldonado said plans for eight new businesses comprising 20,000 square feet of retail space will go to the City of Ridgefield for review soon. He expects construction to start around mid-May, and anticipates a November move-in date for those businesses. Additionally, a restaurant and financial institution are also likely at the Discovery Ridge site, with the contractors for those companies potentially starting work around mid-June of this year.



“We haven’t seen a shift of this magnitude since the Great Depression.”

KEVIN WITTE,
VICE PRESIDENT OF
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT,
CLARK COLLEGE

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

CLARK COLLEGE

Preparing Community For A.I.-Induced Job Loss

At a regularly-scheduled commission meeting in February, port commissioners, staff and others in attendance heard a presentation in our Thought Leadership series by invited guest Kevin Witte. Witte is Clark College’s vice president of economic and community development, and his message was both frightening and promising.

Witte pointed to a 2017 study by the Portland Business Alliance, in which it reports that 49 percent of the job tasks currently done in the Greater Portland Metro Area are expected to be automated within 10 years. With artificial intelligence anticipated to create a massive disruption to our area’s economy and way of life, preparedness is critical, Witte explained.

“The internet age was much slower in changing our way of life. The advancement of A.I., however, is moving much more rapidly,” said Witte. “We haven’t seen a shift of this magnitude since the Great Depression.”

Witte noted that specific industries are at risk of shifting to automation. These include accommodations, retail trade, food services, and manufacturing. So the incumbent work force in those industries and others will need retraining to learn skills in jobs at low risk of replacement by automation. The good news is that Clark College is anticipating this, and has an idea that if it bears fruit, could be a boon to Ridgefield and Clark County.

The answer, Witte believes, is for Clark College to establish a program and facility in Ridgefield, modeled after Sheffield, England, a steel manufacturing and coal-producing town that saw unemployment of 90 percent in the 1980s.

“Sheffield was ground zero for the Industrial Revolution, but when all the mills closed, and the mines were shuttered, townspeople were frustrated, and peaceful protesters were beat up by the police. It was a challenging time for Sheffield,” said Witte.

In a story of success, Sheffield turned itself around by returning to its manufacturing roots, but with an emphasis on advanced manufacturing. These kinds of jobs require more knowledge and skills than simple line manufacturing, and are resistant to replacement through automation. Companies that have been attracted to the program in Sheffield offer apprenticeships as a means of educating their own workforces. Today, the large campus at Sheffield is a national hub for research and innovation with 500 researchers and technicians, and a 1,000 people-strong apprentice program.

Could something like this work in Ridgefield? Witte says Clark College leadership believes it can. The institution’s goal is to establish a program so Ridgefield becomes ground zero for advanced manufacturing and serves as an economic generator for the whole area.

“What’s coming in our digital world is that there will be people who serve machines, and people who develop machines,” Witte said. “You don’t want to be the person who serves the machine.”



RESEARCH SHOWCASE

Washington State University
Vancouver

Thurs, April 11
9am-5pm*

Firstenburg Student Commons & Dengerink Administration Building Auditorium

All events are free and open to the public.

Highlighting student research, scholarship, and artistic expression WSU Vancouver undergraduate and graduate students will display and discuss their work at the annual WSU Vancouver Research Showcase. Research projects will be presented in the form of posters and podium presentations.

*The Research Showcase starts at 9 a.m. at WSU’s Vancouver campus located at 14204 NE Salmon Creek Ave. For a full schedule of the day’s events, visit vancouver.wsu.edu/showcase/schedule.

FROM THE CEO

Brent Grening
CEO



LEGACY THINKING HOLDING US BACK

New technologies and digital automation require vast amounts of data. Employers of all types are facing this reality as the true impacts come to light. Experts predict that nearly 50 percent of today’s jobs will be automated within 10 years – a staggering thought.

Two aspects are concerning. First, there’s job displacement: How will impacted workers transition to new jobs, where will those jobs be located, and in what industries? Secondly, do we have the infrastructure needed to attract and grow replacement employers and jobs for the next economy?

The speed of technological innovation is outpacing our community’s ability to build broadband infrastructure. The port’s response has been to raise awareness with our legislators in Olympia and Washington DC so we can secure the capital necessary to fund a solution.

We’ve been arguing that we can’t build a 21st century economy on old infrastructure. The stakes are high: Other states and countries are far ahead of us, offering bandwidth, transmission speeds, and connection costs we can’t match.

Our competitors are prepared to attract the innovators, entrepreneurs and talent to build the new economy. This means they will produce the products, services, and businesses that will drive the 21st century. And if we don’t act, we’ll be relegated to being mere consumers.

To compete in the new economy, we must prepare. We can’t let legacy thinking hinder our efforts to build the modern infrastructure necessary to thrive and succeed. Our innovators, entrepreneurs and talent must be able to connect so we’re positioned to compete with anyone, anywhere.

Fast, efficient, reliable connectivity – both digital and also physical, i.e. our transportation system – are key. As your community port our number one job is to get infrastructure right. And that’s what we’re working on.

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