

SUMMER 2024



# CO-OP CONNECTION

## WEATHER AND TIME MARCH ON

– Tom Boland, President & CEO



It was the middle of the first week in June, and I was on the phone with Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) Agronomy Manager Ryan Hill.

“If we get two dry weeks, I think we’ll finish up the planting” Ryan stated. “In two weeks, the days start getting shorter” was my reply.

It wouldn’t surprise anyone that people—especially farmers—watch the weather. We need the rain, yet we need it to be dry. We need the soil to warm up, but not too fast. Corn likes it hot, while berries like it cool. We don’t get to choose the weather, yet we can plan to work with what we get.

This spring proved to be typical as we worked the favorable weather window in April, and the several short windows in an otherwise rain-filled May to “finish the

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“We need the rain, yet we need it to be dry. We need the soil to warm up, but not too fast.”

planting.” You seldom know when it’s going to get done, but it does get done.

On June 12th, at their Our Valley Our Future breakfast, the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland honored me with their 2024 Innovation in Agriculture Award. I accepted the award on behalf of the board and employees of SFS. Our investment in technology and automation is a team effort. The hard work of eliminating inefficient or redundant processes is best done by those doing those processes.

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I also accepted on behalf of our SFS members. Many of you are aware and supportive of the innovative products and farming techniques our agronomy team brings to our educational conferences and grower meetings. Our investment in speed and delivery allows us to support you between the storms, while advances in seed technology and fertility practices help crops grow despite the vagaries of the weather. We'll continue to strive to gain efficiencies in support of our membership, and as a path toward a more sustainable business future.

Prior boards and management left us a diversified cooperative. The home heat business was down this winter. Retail sales are off slightly too. Our wholesale business out of AFCO is up. Sales to Hawaii are nearing record volumes as are our local agronomy sales. Business cycles can start and end as quickly as spring rains. Co-ops like SFS are built for the long run.

Kelly and I had the happy emotional experience of watching another of our children graduate high school in June. Our youngest daughter was president of the Metals Club and very involved with her class. She's taking her strong grades and positive attitude and joining her sister at college in Minnesota—very close to a lot of our family and friends. Our youngest is heading off to high school next fall, and time marches on.



*Rain in May resulted in numerous wet fields and stuck TerraGators®.*

## CO-OP AT WHATCOM AG CAREER FAIR

Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) sponsored and participated in the Whatcom County Agriculture Career Fair, held at Lynden High School on April 30, 2024. Hosted by Whatcom Family Farmers, the fair involved over 400 students from local high schools who visited with reps from over two dozen organizations and potential employers. Local growers, ag suppliers and post-high school educators were on site to greet interested students and discuss opportunities.

"It's important to help today's youth understand that a career in ag is often varied," comments Mike Hunskor, Skagit's director of human resources. "They may work as a supplier, a consultant, in ag tech, in research or in another field." The fair opened the eyes of these students to the possibilities.

"We spoke with many students," reports Mike. "Some don't know what they want to do yet—and that's okay!"

Some hope to become doctors, notes Mike. Still others grew up on the farm and hope to continue its legacy.

Mike concludes, "Helping students understand what types of ag jobs are out there and asking students to consider these jobs as a career is really in line with SFS's mission to preserve and enhance local ag."

This also aligns with Whatcom Family Farmers' mission: Preserving the legacy and future of family farming in Whatcom County by unifying the farming community and building public support. With these powerful statements, SFS and WFF have similar missions. Engaging the future workforce to open eyes and ears that may be attracted to ag as a career is a great start.



*Lynden Agronomy Manager Doug Lambert interacts at the fair with a student from Lynden High School.*



“Helping students understand what types of ag jobs are out there and asking students to consider these jobs as a career is really in line with SFS’s mission to preserve and enhance local ag.”

– Mike Hunskor, SFS Director of Human Resources

# FROM OUR INTERNS

In their letters below, Madesyn Skinner, SFS's agronomy intern, and Olivia Weaver, SFS's Purina intern, talk about where they've been, what they're doing and what they're hopes are for the future. Please greet them as you meet them in our stores or on your farms.

## HELLO EVERYONE!

I am Madesyn Skinner, and I am interning with the agronomy department this summer at the Burlington location.

I am from Lyman, which is just outside Sedro-Woolley, so I'm a local! In my off- time, I am exploring the outdoors, taking day trips to Baker Lake, camping in Mazama, hiking, and kayaking a lot! On these trips, I often bring my family dogs: Daisy (a Shorkie) and Bailey (a Bernese Mountain Dog).

I currently attend Washington State University, pursuing a degree in Animal Science with a focus on Production Management. I've found myself gravitating towards nutrition and management disciplines.

I'm excited to use this intern opportunity to expand my knowledge of crop health through fertilizing, sampling, and planting management. It will be fascinating to see Skagit's many operations and to utilize the knowledge I will be learning towards my future endeavors. I'm ready to soak in lots of new information.

Looking forward to meeting you all!



Madesyn Skinner



Madesyn at the Burlington Agronomy Plant.



Training with SFS's Purina rep Lane Howe.



Madesyn Skinner takes soil samples on a local farm.



Farm delivery.

## HI!

My name is Olivia Weaver. I am going into my senior year at Washington State University. I am set to graduate in the Spring of 2025, with a degree in Business Management.

My favorite hobby is "eventing" with my mare Fernie, but I also love turkey hunting, eating good food, and of course spending time with friends and family.

So far in this Purina internship, I have enjoyed shadowing Bryant and meeting some of the stores' customers. The chance to visit the Purina research farm in Missouri allowed me to see where the studies and development of products take place, and it was incredible. My favorite part was watching a horse perform on the treadmill. He got up to 21 mph!

This internship opens the door for new experiences and a glimpse into the sales and feed industry. Regardless of the field I choose after college, I am grateful for new connections, new skills, and new opportunities thanks to the Country Stores and Purina's commitment to young rising talent.

My after-college plans are unknown and will unravel as I get closer to that point. I know that I want to make a positive impact with any opportunity that I pursue and to give back to the people and organizations that helped me get to this point.



Olivia Weaver

# 2024 AFCO BUYING SHOW



– David Underwood,  
Sales Manager  
AFCO Distribution & Milling

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“Sharing knowledge and resources with horse owners, trainers, and professionals worldwide, LMF contributes to a more informed and connected equine community.”



The “home team” is ready for the show.



Let's play ball!



Customers talk with vendors Thursday evening during the “hot buys” hour.

## IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME ...

... and they did come.

The AFCO team swung for the fences at this year's Buying Show, held at the convention center in Spokane, WA. Staying true to our values of customer commitment and community, we utilized over 60,000 square feet of floor space in this local facility to host a baseball-themed event.

Over 100 vendors attended the buying show from as far away as Dania Beach, FL, and Boston, MA. Over 200 of AFCO's PNW retail customers also attended, from as far away as Fairbanks, AK, and Sheridan, WY.

Retailers looking to build future relationships in the AFCO distribution and transportation network also joined us.

From the national anthem with dueling pianos to the cash grab and every small detail in between, the AFCO team played on its own field of dreams.



Yakima Co-op's Elias Moreno talks business with AFCO reps David Underwood and Wade McNeilly.



LMF rep Cheyanna Wing catches up with Marti and Colleen Anthony from Horse Canyon Consulting & Services.



## Customer Profile: AFCO PARTNER FOR 30 YEARS

Kiperts Korner Feed is a quintessential, family owned, community focused farm and feed store serving the neighborhoods around Olympia-Tumwater, WA since 1990.

The initial inventory offered for sale at Kiperts Korner consisted of 500 bales of local hay, eight tons of Darigold® grain, and a semi-load each of alfalfa and straw. This inventory provided customers with the first reasons to support Craig and Roxy Kinneman's fledgling business.

Thirty-four years later, Kiperts Korner is an established community treasure. It has grown into a highly diversified, full-service retailer for pet, small animal, livestock, equine, and farm supplies. In fact, Kiperts Korner has expanded two more times; opening Kiperts Trailer Sales in the early 2000s and Kips Garage in 2015.

This year marked the 30th Anniversary of AFCO Distribution and Milling's business partnership with Kiperts Korner. This partnership began on March 25, 1994. Kiperts has since become one of our independent top three largest sales volume dealers in western Washington.

Craig and Roxy have passed their culture and their way of conducting business on to long-serving employees who continue to cultivate a service-oriented, knowledge-based approach to meeting the needs of a diversified customer base.

When it comes to serving customers and supporting the local community, Kiperts gets it. Whether you are a consumer, an employee, or a supplier, doing business with Craig and Roxie (or Julie, Jenn, and Rob) its truly a positive and valued experience.

Here's to another 30 years of partnership with Kiperts Korner!



Craig and Roxy Kinneman, founders of Kiperts Korner, serving Olympia-Tumwater, WA.

## Vendor Profile: OUR ALL-STAR BOOTH WINNER

*Boss Nation® Brands was chosen for our vendor profile because of its focus on frozen dog and cat foods; however, winning the coveted "All Star Booth 2024 AFCO Buying Show Award" was a great reason, too.*

Basel "Vasili" Nassar thinks of Boss Nation Brands, Inc. as an expression of himself. Vasili's venture into pet nutrition comes after a successful venture as one of the founding partners of a Greek yogurt company that now generates hundreds of millions in sales and is carried by major grocers all over the world. A serial entrepreneur, Vasili began a company in late 2018 that is a testament of who he is, what he believes in and a test of his resolve.

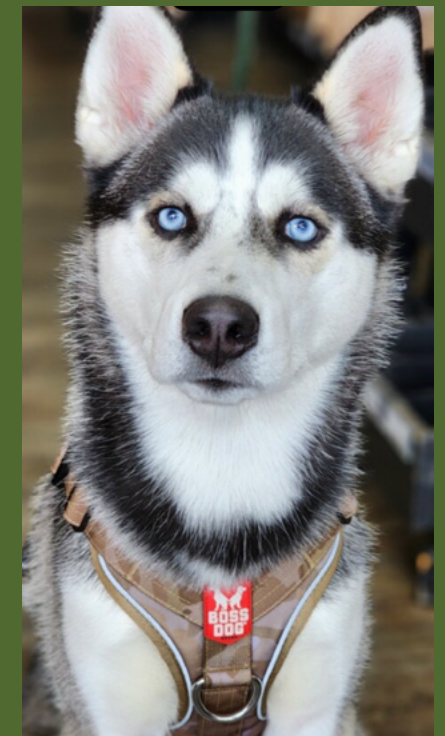
Comprised of Boss Dog® and Boss Cat®, Boss Nation Brands is seeing success like no other. With the adoption of pandemic pets and the humanization of animals as a coping mechanism for pet owners during COVID-19, Boss Nation Brands has managed to hit financial milestones despite worldwide challenges. Vasili, a Seattle businessman, is thankful his company weathered the storm; but he admits he would "never wish what happened in 2020 on any start-up business."

If one positive thing came out of that challenging time, Basil says it's clear that high-quality nutrition is important to people who have a strong bond with their dogs and cats. As a business owner who insists on a healthy lifestyle, he personally makes sure his four dogs, Kelby, Toby, Layla and Abby, and cat Niko always have good nutrition. It's that passion of feeding his own pets the very best that sparked Basel on a mission to create innovative pet products, which he did at record speeds.

Basil was able to push his recent innovations by maintaining pricing controls and COGS, despite supply chain challenges. In fact, year-over-year, many of the Boss Nation family of products saw core segments doubling and tripling in volume and sales. Key expansion into international markets was a driving factor in the finances of the company. There are now more than 450,000 points of distribution just in North America, with AFCO being his choice for the PNW and expansion abroad on the horizon.



The BOSS Team at AFCO's Buying Show from left to right: Mike Hom, Henry Lam, David Underwood, Basel Nassar, and Tyson DeFrance.



This husky model sports a BOSS tactical harness.

# Wiggin's Landscape: NURSING PLANTS LONGER IMPROVES HEALTH

– Brianna Hackler, Graphic & Multimedia Specialist



Wiggin's uses free-range chickens to eat bugs as a sustainable method for pest control.

During nearly four decades they have been in business, the owners of Wiggin's Landscape Nursery in Mount Vernon have taken their time learning the industry, understanding what their customers want, and developing sustainable practices that consistently produce quality products.

"It takes time to put a system like this together," says Terry Wiggin. "We're always learning, always adapting."

Wiggin's Landscape Nursery specializes in a large variety of ornamental plants, including an extensive collection of large container specimens. Wiggin's focuses in propagating and growing many plants including cultivated conifer varieties, garden ornamental flowering trees and shrubs, broadleaf evergreens, and a mix of specialty perennials.

The nursery often lets their products mature in pots or containers, or plants them in the ground, before selling to customers. Terry said this allows the nursery to be sure the plants are viable and high-quality before customers take them home.

"We expect these crops to be with people a long time, to be in the environment a long time," Terry says. "I like to go with things that I'm confident will do well."

Terry and his wife Cheryl purchased the property for Wiggin's Landscape Nursery in the mid-1980s. Previously, the Wiggin's farmed on the San Juan Islands, but they decided to head to the mainland for better soil, fewer deer and easier business access. The couple said it was a big learning curve at the time to figure out the best way to grow on the land, as well as how to choose products the customers would want.

"When we start, how do we know what you're going to want in your place five years from now?" Terry says of choosing what to grow at the nursery. "That's been some of the challenge—and the fun of the challenge."

The nursery is situated on about 80 acres off Pulver Road in Mount Vernon and has about 20 employees. Wiggin's sells products across the country, from North Carolina to Maine, throughout the Midwest, from Utah north to British Columbia, and across the Pacific Northwest. The climate in Western Washington allows the nursery to grow a large variety of products, and the long growing season and short winter allow plants to grow quicker than they do elsewhere.

"A lot of people come here for the first time, and they're overwhelmed by the selection," says Bill DeMott, who is in charge of sales for the nursery. "It's at least a two-visit place."

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"It takes time to put a system like this together, we're always learning, always adapting."

Terry says the nursery's sustainability practices set the business apart from other landscape nurseries. They mix crops to help control disease, use integrated pest management along with insect traps to monitor what pests are in the area, and utilize free-range chickens to eat bugs for pest control.

Additionally, Wiggin's recycles by grinding and composting all woody material and uses the compost in their fields and containers.

The team at Wiggin's is also selective about the plants they grow. They choose plants that are proven to grow best in the Pacific Northwest climate and don't need a lot of maintenance, such as annual spraying to kill disease.

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Terry and Cheryl Wiggin have owned and operated Wiggin's Landscape Nursery in Mount Vernon since the mid-1980s.



The nursery has about 20 full time employees, but the current owners are actively searching for a younger person who may want to take over ownership of the business.

In addition to the nursery's sustainability practices, Cheryl credits the support the nursery receives from their employees and from Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) for the nursery's success.

"I think it's the combination of the right choice in plants, knowing how to grow them, having wonderful employees and good support on fertilizer and all the things that Skagit Farmers [Supply] does for us," she said. "It's made the plants healthy, and the people – we don't even advertise – they just come in. The plants speak for themselves."

For many years, SFS has provided Wiggin's with fertilizer for their plants.

The biggest challenge for the nursery has been finding staff in younger generations. Cheryl says the nursery has a great employee team, but they don't see many young people interested in growing landscape plants. However, the Wiggins are ready to pass the nursery on to someone who wants to learn. They are actively moving towards retirement.

But like most farming, Terry says those in the industry need to be passionate about the work.

"You have to really like doing it to do it. If you don't, it'll wear you out and you'll be done with it, and it'll be done with you," Terry concludes. "So it's got to be in your blood, just like any type of farming."



*Wiggin's focuses in propagating and growing many plants including cultivated conifer varieties, garden ornamental flowering trees and shrubs, broadleaf evergreens, and a mix of specialty perennials.*



*Wiggin's Landscape Nursery specializes in a large variety of ornamental plants, including an extensive collection of large container specimens.*



*Wiggin's Landscape Nursery is located on about 80 acres off Pulver Road in Mount Vernon. The nursery sells to customers across the country, including from North Carolina to Maine on the east coast.*

FROM THE BOARD

## DIRECTOR APPOINTED TO FILL TERM

– Nels Lagerlund, Chairman



Greetings everyone. On behalf of the SFS Board of Directors, we want to officially welcome Jennifer Schuh of Schuh Farms as the newest member of our board! Jennifer brings a wealth of experience to the board, and we're happy that she's making room in her busy schedule to take on this additional responsibility.

Our co-op serves a much-needed role in support of agriculture. It allows for farmers to have input regarding reinvestment in important, local agricultural infrastructure, as well as in the direction of SFS. The board appointed Jennifer at our June 2024 meeting after the call for nominations came up empty last winter.

Jennifer will serve the remaining portion of a three-year term. For more information on Schuh Farms, please read the grower spotlight article in our Spring 2024 newsletter.

The mild winter hurt propane sales, and we're not sure if the showers in May had a similar impact on sales. We were up 15% in dry fertilizer and even more in liquid fertilizer prior to the rain. Having said that, the agronomy team has worked around the rain to keep product flowing. We continue to invest in our capacity to serve the membership.

I want to remind everyone to watch your mailbox for an invitation to the annual appreciation picnic. Our Skagit County tradition of salmon, steak, oysters, live music and fun brings our farmer-members together for a great Saturday afternoon in July. *NOTE: We have some members who can be busy in July with the berry harvest, so we do offer another event in early October in Whatcom County for anyone who misses the Skagit County event.*

If other members of your farm would like to receive this newsletter, please let the agronomy staff know or email [directors@skagitfarmers.com](mailto:directors@skagitfarmers.com) to be added to the list.



"Jennifer brings a wealth of experience to the board, and we're happy that she's making room in her busy schedule to take on this additional responsibility."



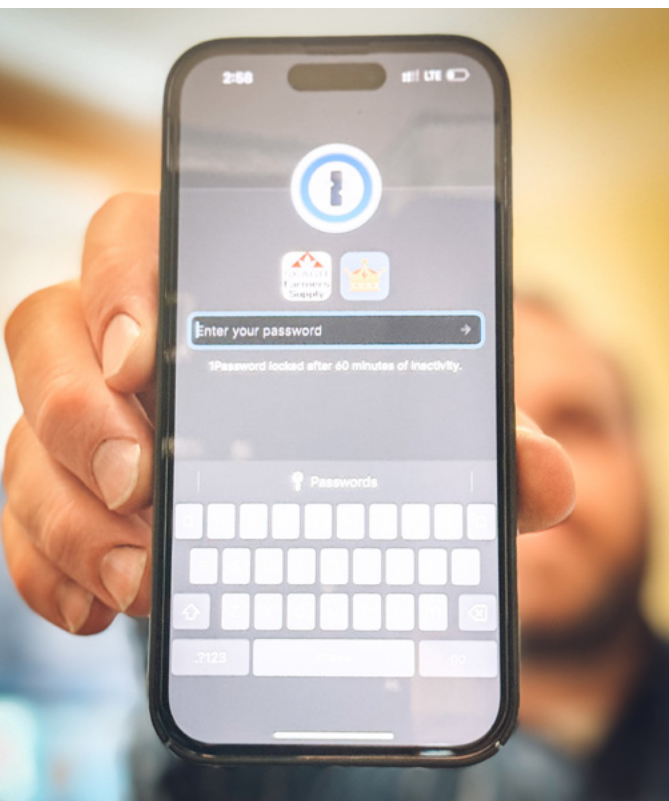
*Jennifer Schuh of Schuh Farms, SFS' newest director.*



*Scene from our 2023 Customer Appreciation Picnic.*

# HAVE I EVER BEEN PWNED?

– Devin Day, Director of IT



1Password app on the author's cell phone.

I bet you never asked yourself this question. What does it even mean? Well, "pwned" is a term that originated in the gaming community when you got "owned" or "bested" by another player. Today, it's a term in the cyber community for folks who have their usernames, passwords, or any other data compromised or exposed in cyber hacks or breaches.

Cyber breaches are all too common. Names like Adobe, Yahoo, Equifax, Facebook, eBay, LinkedIn, Sony PlayStation, and Target come to mind. In 2018, hackers exposed 56 million Home Depot users' card numbers and e-mail addresses. You may remember getting a notice from your bank to change your debit or credit card after the Home Depot hack. (I was one of those users who had to get a new debit card).

If your information is online, it's only a matter of time before your information is compromised. Take these steps to "harden" your own personal digital life and secure your online data.

**STEP 1:**

Check your email: Go to [haveibeenpwned.com](https://haveibeenpwned.com) and enter all of your email addresses to find out if your information was leaked in any of the big data breaches. This website tracks all the major data leaks and is a great resource to see if you have been compromised. *NOTE: This story includes a graphic showing where to type your e-mail address at this website.*

**STEP 2:**

Don't panic...yet: Understand that being exposed in a data breach is beyond your control but knowing you will be exposed at some point and how you prepare and respond to being compromised is within your control.

**STEP 3:**

Protect yourself: The first thing to do after checking if your data has been leaked is to take action and protect yourself. Change all your passwords and use a different password for every site. You should also use a passphrase, not a password. (A good example of a passphrase is "I love apples on a rainy afternoon" versus a password like "f4rmerjohn82"). The

passphrase in this example will take hacking software more than 100 years to break, as opposed to a few hours to crack your password.

You should also turn on multi-factor authentication (MFA), which adds another layer of security to your logins. MFA requires users to provide two or more verification factors to access an account. MFA makes it significantly harder for unauthorized users to access your accounts, even if they have your password.

At this point, you might be thinking: "How the heck do I remember or create a unique password for every website?" Step 3 seems very daunting. The best way is to take 20 minutes out of your life and YouTube a few things. YouTube "passphrase vs password" and "multi-factor authentication." In 10 minutes, you will have a good idea of these concepts and be armed with more info than most of the general public.

Next, get and use a password manager. 1Password [1password.com](https://1password.com) or Dashlane [dashlane.com](https://dashlane.com) are two

good options. Personally, I use 1Password, and it allows me to have extremely complicated passwords for every website or application that I use.

If you take just a few minutes learning these concepts and act on Step 3, you will reduce your potential exposure by over 90% and prevent many future headaches or identity theft.

There is an excellent side benefit to you taking control of your personal digital security. Nearly all company breaches, especially in small to medium-sized organizations, are caused by the mistakes of employees and not some shady character in a dark room somewhere. If you are securing your own digital life, you will become an employee who by default makes their company network safer because you are practicing digital safety. This is a skill I believe will be a very desirable asset on future resumes.

## 2024 INNOVATION AWARD

Congratulations to our CEO Tom Boland on being honored by the Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland (SPF). SPF presented Tom with their 2024 Innovation in Agriculture Award on June 12, 2024, at the organization's "Our Valley Our Future" breakfast in Mt. Vernon.

During the award presentation, it was noted that Skagit Farmers Supply (SFS) has invested in technology and eliminated or improved processes to be able to deliver more with less. Oftentimes, that means less time, less people and less cost.

At SFS, our mission is to support the economic viability of agriculture, and we use the cooperative business model to do that.

Your cooperative has long been a supporter of SPF and their mission to keep farmland in the hands of farmers as well as advocating on behalf of farmers.



SPF Board Member Darrin Morrison presents Tom the 2024 Innovation in Agriculture Award.

';--have i been pwned?

Check if your email address is in a data breach

devind@skagitfarmers.com

pwned?

Good news — no pwnage found!

No breached accounts and no pwnage (subscribe to search sensitive breaches)

Enter your e-mail addresses at [haveibeenpwned.com](https://haveibeenpwned.com) to see if your usernames have been compromised.



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### MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve and enhance viability of the local agriculture economy through cooperative profitability.



### VISION STATEMENT

To be the premier cooperative in the Pacific Northwest by being:

- The producers' first choice
- The consumers' first choice
- The employees' first choice



### CORE VALUES

- Customer Commitment
- People
- Integrity
- Performance
- Quality
- Safety
- Community

## DIRECTORY

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### AGRONOMY-CONWAY

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### AGRONOMY-LYNDEN

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### AGRONOMY-BURLINGTON

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### PETROLEUM & PROPANE DELIVERY

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### EMERGENCY

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### COUNTRY STORES

Burlington.....	360.757.4055
Colville.....	509.684.2232
Freeland.....	360.331.1970
MountVernon.....	360.424.4207
OakHarbor.....	360.675.2277
Oroville.....	509.560.7088
SedroWoolley.....	360.856.6567
SpokaneCentral.....	509.534.1412
Stanwood.....	360.629.7033
Stevensville(MT).....	406.777.5527