

Columbia Gorge 2020 Economic Symposium Speaker Information

Keynote

Anne Kubisch, President of The Ford Family Foundation



Anne Kubisch joined The Ford Family Foundation in 2013 as its second president. She came to the Foundation after 19 years at The Aspen Institute (New York), an international non-profit leadership development and policy studies organization. She founded and served as director of the Aspen Roundtable on Community Change, a national resource center that advised policymakers, funders and practitioners on strategies for improving outcomes for low-income children, families and communities. From 1977 to 1993, Anne worked in the international development field on poverty, health and economic vitality programs in Latin America and Africa.

Anne currently serves on the Portland Branch Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco and on the board of Foundations for a Better Oregon (Chalkboard Project). She is also a member of Oregon Governor Kate Brown's Early Learning Council. Anne holds a master's degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Tufts University. She is married to Mark Montgomery, professor of economics at Stony Brook University, NY, and senior research associate at The Population Council, NY. They have two children, Marina and Nicholas.

Economist Presentations

Scott Bailey, Regional Economist, Washington Employment Security Department

For the past 30 years, Scott Bailey has served as the Regional Economist for the Employment Security Department's Labor Market & Economic Analysis Branch covering Southwest Washington. Scott is the local source of labor market information for the region, tracking unemployment, industry trends, the occupational outlook, and wages and income. He publishes a monthly newsletter on local and national economic trends. Scott has done extensive research on wages in the state, with a particular focus on the minimum wage. He has served as a national trainer with the Census Bureau for the Local Employment Dynamics database, and is a board member of the Pacific Northwest Regional Economics Conference. He received his master's degree in economics from Portland State University. Scott is also an adjunct professor at Clark College, teaching economics and geography.

Dallas Fridley, Regional Economist, Oregon Employment Department

Dallas Fridley has been employed by the Oregon Employment Department since December of 1991, including Regional Economist – based in Hood River – since October of 1995 and as an Employment Economist – in Salem. Prior work experience includes one year as a Community Development Planner for the Umpqua Regional Council of Governments in Douglas County and three years as an Economic Development Planer for the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council in Deschutes County. Dallas attended and graduated from Willamette University in

Salem, Oregon with a BS in Economics. He is a native of Central Oregon and attended Crook County schools. Dallas currently lives in Hood River and is married with three children.

Josh Lehner, Oregon Economist, State of Oregon Office of Economic Analysis



Josh Lehner is an Economist with the State of Oregon’s Office of Economic Analysis. He develops the quarterly Oregon Economic forecast, including outlooks for employment, income and housing. Mr. Lehner also acts as the state’s de facto vice economist by forecasting revenues for the Oregon Lottery, Oregon Judicial Department, and state marijuana and tobacco taxes. Outside of work, Josh enjoys spending time with his wife and kids, traveling the state and consuming Oregon’s craft beverages.

Mr. Lehner’s economic research has been cited by Calculated Risk, The Economist, Financial Times, National Public Radio, The New York Times, The Washington Post and other local media. Prior to joining the state, Mr. Lehner worked as a research analyst for a local economic development organization and published a paper on the border tax effect between Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Mr. Lehner earned a B.A. in Economics from the University of Colorado and an M.S. in Economics from Portland State University.

Stephen Lerch, Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council



Stephen Lerch is the chief economist and executive director of the Washington State Economic and Revenue Forecast Council. Previously, he has worked as an economist and researcher on public finance and health care issues in government (U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Taxation; Washington State Department of Revenue) and the private sector (HCIA-Sachs). Most recently, he held the position of Research Director at the Washington State Investment Board. He has a Ph.D. in economics from Johns Hopkins University.

Industry Panel

Nicole Hughes, Executive Director, Renewable Northwest



Nicole Hughes joined Renewable Northwest as Executive Director in July 2018. Nicole has over 15 years of experience in the renewable energy industry. She has experience in project development, construction, finance, permitting and policy for utility-scale wind and solar energy, working for AWS Truepower, HDR, Element Power, RES Americas, Tetra Tech and The Bonneville Power Administration. In her previous work, Nicole engaged with Renewable NW as a member and understands firsthand the importance of the organization’s coalition work between advocacy organizations and renewable energy businesses in moving the region forward towards a clean energy future. Nicole has served in a variety of board and volunteer positions working on issues related to support for individuals with

disabilities, environmental conservation and energy issues. She currently serves on the boards of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies and the Renewable Hydrogen Alliance.

Dennis Knox, President and CEO of Mid-Columbia Medical Center, The Dalles, OR



Dennis Knox is a 40-year healthcare executive and is the President/CEO of Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles, OR. He most recently served as the CEO of Urgent Point, a national urgent care company and previously was the Chief Executive Officer of Antelope Valley Hospital in Lancaster, CA. His experience in healthcare includes over 30 years at the CEO level and has spanned for-profit and not-for-profit healthcare companies, including operating multi-hospital sites. It has also included post-acute care (Memorial Hermann Continuing Care Corporation) and pre-hospital care (Urgent Point).

During his career Mr. Knox has established a reputation for successfully creating organizational cultures of performance, accountability, and positive attitude throughout the hospital community and improved, sustainable bottom-line results in highly competitive environments. He also has a proven track record of establishing cultures of delivering high quality and safety while leading financial and regulatory turnarounds.

Mr. Knox is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and holds both a Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Management Science from Duke University, which he attended on a football scholarship and was a three-sport letterman.

Mr. Knox has been the president and CEO of Mid-Columbia Medical Center since 2017.

Rudy Kellner, Co-Founder and CEO of pFriem Family Brewers



Being born in the former Czechoslovakia, Rudy was no stranger to the kind of mountains, lakes and rivers (and crisp beers) that are plentiful in his adopted home in the Columbia River Gorge. Armed with a technical degree and an MBA, Rudy has felt fortunate to enjoy a successful career in business, but nothing has been as rewarding to him as helping build pFriem Family Brewers from the ground up and being around so many talented people who are passionate about what they're crafting. When he's not at the brewery, Rudy enjoys hanging out with his wife and two boys catching trout in the beautiful lakes that surround Mt. Hood.

Paul Jones, CEO of WyEast Timber Services LLC

Paul Jones is the CEO of WyEast Timber Services, Middle Mountain Trucking and Neal Creek Forest Products based out of Hood River, Oregon. WyEast Timber provides forestry services that include logging, fuels reduction, land management and wildland firefighting throughout Washington and Oregon. WyEast has been a key contractor for the USFS and ODF in regard to wildland firefighting throughout the Gorge. Paul also sits on the Hood River County Forestry Advisory Board, Eastern Oregon Forest Practice Committee, was a graduate of Ag Forestry and is currently a member of Vistage. Fun Fact— Paul also worked one summer for Amanda Hoey's parents running combine on their wheat ranch east of The Dalles.

Jill Nickerson, Vice President of Finance and Administration, Zepher Inc.



Jill Nickerson is the VP of Finance and Administration for Zepher, an aerospace manufacturing company in Bingen, Washington. Her mission at Zepher is driving strategic planning and analysis to align Zepher’s organizational goals with financial resources.

Prior to working with Zepher, Jill was the CFO at Audio Precision, where she was recognized in 2015 by the Portland Business Journal as an honoree for the annual CFO of the Year award. Jill has over 20 years’ experience working as a financial executive in the manufacturing, nonprofit, and construction sectors. Jill’s passion is to solve problems by listening deeply, envisioning collaboratively, and creating opportunities.

Jill lives in Beaverton with her husband and two teenage sons. She serves on the boards of Albertina Kerr and Financial Executives International (Portland Chapter). In her free time, Jill enjoys spending “socially distanced” time outdoors with her family.

Don Gibson, President and CEO of Mount Adams Fruit Company



Don Gibson is the President and CEO of Mount Adams Fruit Company, which packs and ships apples, pears, and cherries and farms over 2,000 acres between Mt. Adams and Mt. Hood in the Columbia River Gorge. Don received his bachelor’s degree in Business Finance and Economics from Central Washington University. He is associated with the Washington Cherry Marketing Committee, Washington State Tree Fruit Association – Pear Research Committee, Washington Fruit, and sits on the Board of Directors for Pear Bureau Northwest, Fresh Pear Marketing Committee, and the Association of Washington Businesses.