



# The Re PORT OF BENTON

*Your Window of Opportunity*

TENANT STORIES  
Mercer Estates  
Chukar Cherries  
Penford Food  
Cormac Thompson

## Mercer Estates



*Mercer Estates partners: Mike Hogue, Barbara & Ron Harle and Rob Mercer.*

Mike Hogue, Rob Mercer, and Ron & Barbara Harle are partners in a new winery called Mercer Estates, located in the Port of Benton's Prosser Wine & Food Park.

The winery will have a 15,000 square foot 65,000 case production facility with a crushing pad, bottling, fermentation room and warehouse. Another 12,000 square foot building will house the tasting room

and oak barrel storage facility. Customers will be able to enter the tasting room, pass through a door and enter the oak storage facility for barrel tasting events and to absorb the ambiance of old world production methods. The architectural feel of the structure will accurately depict the roots of the Mercer and Hogue farms.

Their goal is to make the highest quality wine available at affordable prices. They will have total control over the entire process from growing their own grapes to the final processing decisions. The red grapes are grown by Mercer Farms in the Horse Heaven Appellation and the white grapes will come from Hogue Farms in the Yakima Appellation. David Forsythe will be the head winemaker and General Manager and Kyle Cook will be the National Sales and Marketing Manager for Mercer Estates.

Mercer Estates will make white wines like Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Grigio

*Continued on page 5*

## Transload Facility



The photo above shows a transload operation in the Port of Benton's Manufacturing Mall. Four different potato products, corn and underlayment have been off-loaded from trucks and are being loaded into the box cars in the background. From here, northwest produce is shipped all over the United States.

The DOE train facility was originally built to service trains, not transload product, and is not conducive to moving mass quantities of product.

The Port of Benton is applying for a Washington State Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) grant and, if approved, will be building a facility specifically for transloading product between trucks and trains.

The specialized building will be refrigerated and conditioned so temperature sensitive products,

*Continued on page 5*



## Willow Pointe

Making a vision become reality is one of the most exciting and fulfilling experiences one could have. Willow Pointe is the outcome of vision and commitment. Similar to the Columbia Point neighborhood, Willow Pointe is planting seeds of change that will start a new legacy for the future use of the waterfront and North Richland lands.

The vision for Willow Pointe is a neighborhood of people who care about their environment and what it has to offer, never taking it for granted. While enjoying the breathtaking view of the last stretch of free flowing waters on the Columbia River and watching the wildlife abound, you will be able to

*Tour Willow Pointe's townhouses and discover the Reach.*

enjoy a seven mile walking path and truly refined neighborhood living.

Bristol Development's mantra, "Building With Purpose", is clearly established at Willow Pointe, which is designed to flow and connect from beginning to end taking advantage of topography and view to provide a premier community. Offering six different townhouse floor plans in Phase 1, Willow Pointe brings diversity and luxury that exceeds expectation. The community pool and clubhouse add more dimension to the neighborhood and offer a place to exercise and bask in the sun. The European design and finish for each home separates this neighborhood from all others.

Willow Pointe isn't just about homes; it also offers specialized retail and office opportunities. A coffee shop, day spa and various boutiques are the types of businesses that will be a part of the retail center, carefully placed within the master-planned community. The vision is one of an ever expanding neighborhood of businesses and people coming together to achieve the best quality of life for all. Willow Pointe: serene, waterfront living.

**For more information, call Toby Bouchey, representing Coldwell Banker Adams Realty, at (509)539-3232.**

## Penford Food Ingredients Co.



*Above photo shows arborvitae planted on a berm along the north and west section of Penford Food Ingredients. A native variety of Sheep fescue has been planted on both sides of the berm.*

The Port of Benton recently finished a beautification project at the Penford facility in North Richland. Penford has interest in expanding their footprint at this facility and is working with the Port to clean up and shield their operations from street level views. The goal is to provide a balance between industrial and the increasing residential and commercial use within the Technology & Business Campus. In addition to the Port's investments, Penford is planning improvements to the water side of its site, which will include increased screening along their existing fence and strategic placement of rock. Penford has already upgraded their scrubbers and will be investing additional capital to ensure clean emissions into the future.

# Vintner's Village

On February 14, 2007, the Port of Benton Commissioners approved changing the name of the North Prosser Business Park to Prosser Vintner's Village. This name truly reflects the genre of this site. As this publication goes to press, two more wineries are almost complete, with another one in process. Current companies in chronological order include: Yellow Rose Nursery, Willow Crest, Thurston Wolfe, Olsen Estates, Airfield Estates and The Winemaker's Loft. Two other wineries have purchased land and are planning on building before the end of this year. The Port is in the process of deciding whether to keep the one remaining lot and build a development building or sell/lease it for private development.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Commission Meeting	Port of Benton	June 13, 2007
Richland Fly-In	Richland Airport	June 22-24, 2007
Commission Meeting	Port of Benton	July 11, 2007
Scottish Festival	Prosser Wine & Food Park	July 16, 2007
Antique Air Tour	Prosser Airport	July 19, 2007
Commission Meeting	Port of Benton	August 8, 2007
Wine & Food Fair	Prosser High School	August 11, 2007
Prosser Fly-In	Prosser Airport	September 1, 2007
Tenant Appreciation BBQ	Prosser Wine & Food Park	September 17, 2007
Tenant Appreciation BBQ	Richland Airport	September 20, 2007
Great Prosser Balloon Rally	Prosser Airport	September 28-30, 2007

Commission meetings are open to the public and held the second Wednesday of each month at 8:30 a.m. in the Port of Benton Conference Room, 3100 George Washington Way. March and September Commission meetings are held in Prosser at the Fire Department Conference Room, 1200 Grant Avenue, Prosser, Washington.

# Chukar Cherry Co.

## FEATURED BUSINESS

*Editor's note: I interviewed Pam & JT Montgomery and Kathleen Young at Chukar Cherry Company headquarters in Prosser on April 6. Pam is the President and founder, JT is the COO and Kathleen is the Production Manager.*

*Editor: How did this business get started?*

Pam: We had a cherry orchard, which can be a real gamble because you have years when the spring wind and rains come and crack the cherries. We were initially looking for ways to use the unsalable cracked cherries.

*Editor: Did it work?*

Pam: No, we were never able to use the cracked cherries, but Chukar Cherry Company was formed in 1986 out of the initial work of drying the cherries, adding chocolate, using different varieties, adding fruits and nuts. It just continues to grow as we innovate new products.

*Editor: Do you have much competition?*

Pam: Yes, there are several other companies, but they seem to add a lot of oil or corn syrup to their products and we don't.

*Editor: So, you really took off when the Port built this development building in 1988?*

Pam: No, we had a really rocky start. At the end of the first harvest, we were about two hundred thousand dollars in debt with no customers. If anything, we were really good examples of how not to do things!

*Editor: How did you turn things around?*

Pam: We received a loan from the Benton Franklin Council of Governments that we eventually paid off. I went to a lot of trade

shows and basically did everything myself. We initially used employees from the orchard business, but then separated the two businesses and the Chukar Cherry business started to gradually grow.

*Editor: How many employees do you have now?*

JT: We have about 50 full time and a crew of up to 80 during the Christmas season.

*Editor: Where do you get your cherries?*

Kathleen: Most of our cherries come from six local growers.

*Editor: How many tons of cherries do you purchase per year?*

Kathleen: Last year we bought about 60 tons.

Pam: Even though we're a cherry company, we also have lines of energy mixes, berries, nuts and sauces. We use everything from sweet and tart cherries to fruit concentrates.

*Editor: Who's your market? Is it largely the Pacific Northwest?*

Pam: The whole rim of the U.S. just loves us.

JT: We have as many customers east of the Mississippi as we have in the west; although we do have a concentration of customers in the immediate vicinity and we sell a lot of product from the retail outlets in the SeaTac and Tri-Cities airports.

*Editor: How much of your market is wholesale?*

JT: About 40% with the rest coming from our retail stores and internet.

*Editor: What do attribute your success to?*

Pam: As soon as I hired JT, he hired Kathleen and we started to make more money because JT understands that side of the business and he knows how to hire.

JT: We've developed a process where we hire personnel as a team.



*Pam & JT Montgomery and Kathleen Young.*

*Editor: The Port of Benton is building a new warehouse and shipping and receiving facility for you because you've outgrown this one. How many times have you remodeled?*

Pam: I think about three times. If we were to start over, this building wouldn't even resemble what we would build today.

Kathleen: We used to move product around to keep the chocolate from melting in the summer; the new facility will be climate controlled and much more efficient.

*What is the key to your success?*

JT: Balance sheet management, planning, hiring, operational know how, knowing your customers, knowing your markets, listening to your employees, marketing, sustainable growth, it's an integration of many things.

*Editor: What's the best way to find Chukar Cherries products?*

Pam: We have many retail outlets, like SeaTac airport, the phone and our web site.

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For more information about Chukar Cherry Company call

**(800) 624-9544**

**[www.chukar.com](http://www.chukar.com)**

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*Construction of the Mercer Estates winery is under way with an expected completion date in September.*

*Continued from page 1*

and Sauvignon Blanc. Red wine will primarily be Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah.

When Mike Hogue started selling wine in 1982, Washington State didn't have much of a presence in the wine market. The fledgling industry took off after consumers realized this region was producing consistent gold medal winners at the national competitions. It also takes time to build a product as complex as wine and with as many variables. The five partners have all worked in the agricultural business of winemaking for decades and they all bring unique capabilities that will make this winery a success.

## *Transload Facility*

*Continued from page 1.*

like wine, won't be sitting out in the sun in the summer and freezing during winter months.

The Port of Benton's short line rail is operated by Tri-City & Olympia Railroad, which is served by both Burlington Northern and Union Pacific railroads.

The 6,000 square foot facility will be built on 6.8 acres along the Horn Rapids Rail Spur in North Richland. It will include a covered truck dock and truck receiving area. An additional 650 feet of rail will be built to connect the existing spur to the facility.

If this facility is built, more produce from our region will be delivered to homes in the Midwest and South.

## *Cormac Thompson*

To say 'Cormac is a pilot' is an exaggerated understatement. His father gave him his first lesson when he was just five years old. Cormac received both his pilot and driver's license on his sixteenth birthday, plus he's a certified instructor and a commercial pilot with instrument flight rating. Cormac was the fixed based operator at the Prosser Airport from 1974 until 2000. He has dabbled in other careers, like owning a commercial FM radio station and a consulting business which provides advertising and marketing services.



*Cormac Thompson with his Cessna 172 Skyhawk.*

After a seven year hiatus, Cormac is back. His new goal is to increase the level of aircraft usage and attract a new generation of aviation related business at the Prosser Airport. The first major event will be on July 19th when the Antique Air Tour is stopping and spending the night. They'll be bringing antique aircraft from the 1930's through the 1960's. Two years ago, they showed up with seven Stearman biplanes. The public is invited to come out and see this event and Cormac will be right in the middle, coordinating and marketing the event and loving every minute of it.

**For further information, call  
Cormac at: (509) 786-2053.**

# President's Message

The Port of Benton is a municipal corporation, which serves the western two-thirds of Benton County, including the Hanford Site, Prosser, Benton City and most of Richland. Our mission is to promote economic development. The annual budget is about six million dollars, of which two million is currently kept in reserve.

We are in the process of developing a new five year Strategic Plan to target the Port's future and leverage its assets for the public good. During this year, I plan to identify for you some unique opportunities the Port has to leverage our assets and create economic development.

The Port is seeking grant and loan funds from Washington State to construct a controlled atmosphere building to be built near our Manufacturing Mall. This railroad transload facility will receive agricultural products from central Washington's small producers for

short to mid-length hauls to a variety of locations. This project is possible due to the partnerships with the City of Richland, Tri-City and Olympia Railroad, Washington State and the Port. It is estimated that the facility could increase traffic to forty rail cars per month and generate annual revenues of \$500,000.

New emphasis has been placed on bio-fuel as an energy source. The Port has been performing a demonstration project during the last year to determine which waste agriculture products in pellet form would provide the highest BTU rate when burned in a stove.

We have determined several agricultural waste products, such as grape pulp, have a higher BTU rate than wood chips. These waste products are available locally in large quantities. The Port is applying for a patent to protect the results of our demonstration project. We have new companies that want to use our results to produce the waste pellets. This is a new and exciting way for the Port to promote economic development for our area.

## Port of Benton Management Team



**Scott D. Keller**  
Executive Director



**Stuart B. Dezember, CPA**  
Director of Finance/Auditor



**Diahann C. Howard**  
Director of Economic Development & Governmental Affairs



**John D. Haakenson**  
Director of Airports & Operations



**Marvin J. Kinney**  
Director of Special Projects

## Commissioners



**Jane F. Hagarty**  
Commission Vice President



**Robert D. Larson**  
Commission President



**Harold B. Lindberg**  
Commission Secretary

This newsletter was produced by the staff of the Port of Benton, Jan Jackson editor. For information about property acquisition, please call the Port of Benton at

**(509) 375-3060**

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