CLARK COUNTY COMPASS

The Columbian

SEPTEMBER 2026



CLARK COUNTY LIVING
FALL EXERCISE IDEAS
PAGE 6

MAKERS & MUSINGS
COUVE ZINE SWAPS
PAGE 18

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS
LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHTS
PAGE 20

WHAT'S GOIN' ON
HARVEST FESTIVALS
PAGE 28

FALL EDITION

COMPASS CONTENTS



Clark County Living

Kids, Screens and Nearsightedness: What Parents Need to Know 4

Fall into Fitness 6

Inner Influencer 7

Plan Now for Your Fall & Winter Crops 8

Peacehealth Celebrates 2000th WATCHMAN Procedure 9

Your Fall Home Tune-Up Guide for a Cozy Winter Season 10

Watch Out! It's Fall! 12





Makers & Musings

You're Reading The Columbian, but What Is The Columbian Reading? 14

Movies to Watch While the Leaves Turn Orange 16

Couve Zine Swap Brings Analog Joy to a Digital World 18

Cozy Book Recommendations for Fall Reading 19

Know Your Neighbors

Shop Local: Eryngium Papeterie 20

Hire Local: Matrix Roofing 23

Dine Local: Relevant Coffee 24





What's Goin' On

Trebek, What Is Exciting Clark County Trivia Nights? 27

Harvest Traditions Across the Countryside 28

Events 30



Welcome to the Clark County Compass!

Autumn is a time of transition. Of course, the trees turn orange, and the air cools from incoming clouds. The days get shorter as the night creeps earlier in the evening. And with each fallen leaf on the pavement, some mourn while others rejoice.

It may still be warm and sunny in the early season, so the idea of grabbing a sweater from the top shelf feels premature. But time moves faster than we expect.

Before we know it, there will be fires in fireplaces and soups simmering on the stove. Students will be taking steps into a successful school year, and parents will be supporting them along the way. While transitions can be hard, it's important that we face them with our heads held high. Changes are coming, so let's welcome them with open (and warmly dressed) arms.

In this edition of Clark County Compass, you'll be directed toward advice for fall, including topics like health and wellness, autumn gardening, and saving home energy. You'll also connect with your neighbors through our local business profiles and discover seasonal movie recommendations to enjoy on a cozy autumn evening. If you flip to the back of the section, you'll find an array of upcoming events, with a special feature on harvest festivals.

Through all the changes, The Columbian is here for you, documenting local stories and forging community connections.

Wishing you all the best,
Olivia Johnson
The Columbian

CLARK COUNTY COMPASS

Your guide to the people, places, and stories that shape our community.

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Kids, Screens and Nearsightedness:

What Parents Need to Know



By HUONG FEARINGTON, OD, Vancouver Clinic

Screens are everywhere, and it's easy for children and teens to spend a lot of time on them. Yet many parents are unaware of one of the biggest risks of screen time: vision changes.

More kids are becoming nearsighted than ever before—and research has linked it back to digital devices. The good news is that there are practical steps parents can take to help support healthy vision development. Understanding how screens affect children's eyes and what warning signs to watch for can help you make informed choices for your family.

Myopia: More than an inconvenience

Myopia, or nearsightedness, is a condition that makes distant objects appear blurry while close-up objects remain clear. For many years, myopia was viewed as a minor issue that could be corrected with glasses or contact lenses. Today, we understand that myopia is much more than a vision inconvenience.

When a child develops myopia, the eyeball grows too long from front to back. As the eye elongates, the delicate tissues inside the eye stretch and thin. This permanent stretching increases the child's lifetime risk for serious sight-threatening eye conditions in adulthood, including retinal detachments, myopic macular degeneration, early cataracts and glaucoma.

That's why preventing myopia when possible and slowing its progression during childhood has become a major focus in eye care.

How screen time affects vision

Children who spend more time on digital devices are more likely to develop myopia or experience faster progression of existing myopia. Evidence from a 2025 study published in JAMA Network Open suggests that the risk of myopia increases as screen time increases:

- Less than 1 hour of screen time per day: lower risk
- More than 1 hour per day: higher risk

Each additional hour of daily screen use may increase myopia risk by about 20 percent. Children younger than 7 appear to be especially vulnerable.

Importantly, light from screens does not cause myopia—it's the visual distance that matters. Screens require prolonged, close-up focusing. When children spend hours looking at objects just inches from their faces, it may encourage the eye to continue growing longer than it should.

Not all screens carry the same level of risk. Smartphones, tablets and handheld gaming devices tend to be the most concerning because they are typically held very close to the eyes and often used for long, uninterrupted periods. Computers are usually viewed from a greater distance, while televisions pose the least concern because they are viewed from across the room.

Why children's eyes need time outdoors

During my more than 20 years as an optometrist, I've seen a noticeable increase in the number of children developing myopia. I've also seen children becoming nearsighted at younger ages than in the past. An important part of my job now is to teach families how to prevent myopia and to explain what proactive steps can slow its progression.

My best piece of advice? Make sure kids spend time outside. Studies consistently show that spending time outdoors is one of the strongest protective factors against developing myopia.

Healthy eye development requires exposure to bright, natural outdoor light. Even on a cloudy day or in the shade, outdoor light is dramatically brighter than indoor lighting.

When children spend large amounts of time indoors focused on screens, homework, or books held close to their faces, they miss some of the bright-light signals that help regulate healthy eye growth. At the same time, prolonged near work may encourage the eye to keep growing longer.

Outdoor time appears to be more important than the specific activity. A child reading on a park bench in daylight receives more protective benefit than a child spending hours exercising indoors. For most children, I recommend aiming for at least 90 minutes of outdoor time each day.

Limiting screen time

While every family's needs are different, current screen time recommendations to help reduce myopia risk are:

- Children under 2 years old—Avoid handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets whenever possible.
- Children ages 2 to 5 years old—Limit screen time to about 1 hour per day and encourage kids to take frequent breaks.
- Children age 6 and older—Limit recreational or nonessential screen time when possible. Balance screen use with time outdoors.

Continued on next page ▸

When children are reading, studying or using screens, encourage meaningful breaks every 30 minutes. Ideally, they should stop all close-up work for at least 5 minutes.

Many people are familiar with the 20-20-20 rule, which recommends looking 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes. While this can help reduce eyestrain, younger children often need longer and more structured breaks.

There isn't a specific age when screens stop affecting vision, but the risk does decrease as children mature. Myopia tends to progress most rapidly between ages 6 to 12. Progression often slows during the teenage years, and many adolescents experience stable vision by age 15 or 16.

However, vision can continue changing into young adulthood. Some people even develop myopia during their college years, likely due to extensive near work and reduced outdoor time. Healthy visual habits remain important throughout adolescence and beyond.

Signs of vision problems

Children don't always recognize when their vision is changing. Many assume that the way they see is normal because they have no point of comparison. Parents should watch for signs such as:

- Squinting or closing one eye
- Sitting unusually close to the television
- Holding books, tablets or phones very close to the face
- Frequent eye rubbing
- Head tilting
- Complaints of headaches after reading or screen use
- Difficulty seeing the board at school

If you notice any of these behaviors, it's a good idea to schedule a comprehensive eye exam.

Don't wait for symptoms

Even if your child seems to see well and hasn't reported any concerns, an eye exam is still important.

Many vision problems develop gradually and may not be obvious. I recommend children undergo a comprehensive vision exam by preschool age. Schedule follow-ups every one to two years—especially between ages 5 to 12, when myopia most commonly develops. If either parent or sibling is nearsighted, earlier or more frequent screening is advised.

What parents can do today

If there's one message I hope families remember, it's this: Less screens, more greens.

The most effective step parents can take is to help children spend more time outdoors every day. Pair that with reasonable screen limits, regular breaks from close-up work, and routine eye exams.

When it comes to protecting your child's vision, small habits today can make a meaningful difference for years to come.



Dr. Huong Fearington is an optometrist at Vancouver Clinic. She gets to know patients personally so that she can better meet their visual needs. She believes in taking the time to educate people about how to care for their eyes so that they can make health and lifestyle changes that protect their vision.

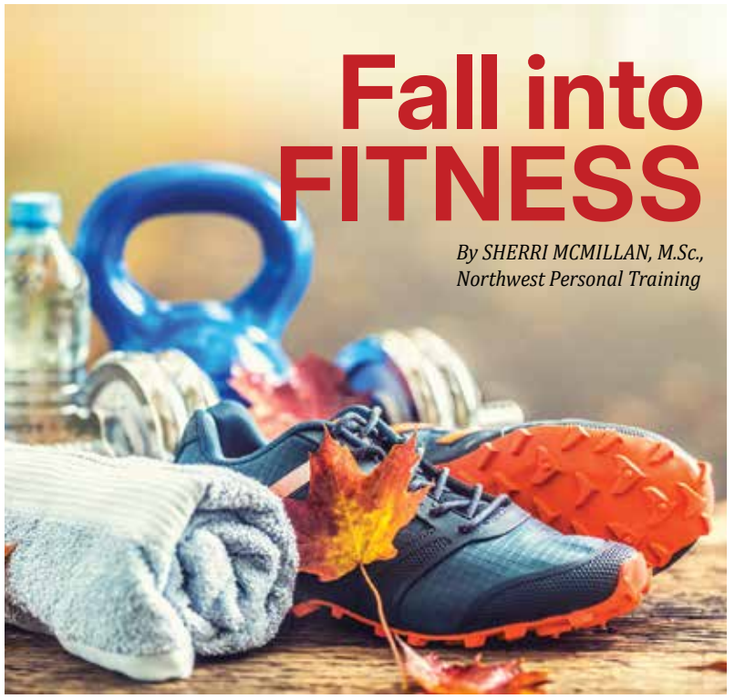
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Fall into FITNESS

By SHERRI MCMILLAN, M.Sc., Northwest Personal Training

There's something special about fall. The air turns crisp, leaves shift into brilliant shades of red, orange and gold, and life settles back into routine. Kids return to school, vacations wind down and many people look for a fresh start after summer.

Rather than seeing fall as the start of colder, darker days, think of it as the perfect season to fall back into fitness. Cooler weather makes outdoor exercise more enjoyable, and now is an ideal time to build healthy habits before the holidays.

Here are ten simple ways to put Fitness First This Fall.

1. TAKE A WALK - There may not be a better time of year to walk. Vancouver is breathtaking as the leaves change, creating a spectacular backdrop for movement. Schedule walks along Officers Row, through Fort Vancouver, the waterfront trail, Salmon Creek, Lacamas Lake or Discovery Trails. Walking strengthens your body, reduces stress and reminds you to appreciate the beauty around you.

2. GO HIKING - We are fortunate to live close to beautiful hiking destinations in the Pacific Northwest. Whether it's the Columbia River Gorge, Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood or Forest Park, the scenery is majestic in fall. Hiking strengthens your heart, legs, core and lungs while offering the mental refresh only nature can provide. Invite family or friends, pack a healthy lunch and explore the trails.

3. LIFT SOMETHING HEAVY - As rainy days become more frequent, spend time building strength indoors. Strength training is one of the closest things we have to a fountain of youth. It preserves muscle, boosts metabolism, improves posture, strengthens bones, enhances balance and makes everyday activities easier. Use dumbbells, bands, kettlebells or body weight two to three times each week. Your future self will thank you.

4. TAKE A FITNESS CLASS - When colder temperatures make outdoor workouts less appealing, head inside and enjoy the energy of a group fitness class. Try Muscle Conditioning, Barre, Indoor Cycling, Bootcamp or Functional Fitness. Classes provide motivation, instruction and community, and you may discover a new favorite activity.

5. STRETCH AND MEDITATE - As temperatures drop, there's nothing quite like the warmth of a Hot Yoga class. Stretching improves flexibility, mobility, posture and recovery while reducing stiffness. A few minutes of mindful breathing or meditation can calm the nervous system, lower stress and improve clarity. Sometimes the healthiest thing you can do is slow down.

6. JOIN A RUNNING GROUP - It's easier to stay committed when you're not doing it alone. A local running group adds accountability, friendship and encouragement. Vancouver has wonderful running communities including: Why Racing Events, Clark County Running Club, Vancouver Run Grug & Chug Club, and Foot Traffic.

7. JOIN A CYCLING GROUP - Cycling through fall and winter can be challenging, especially when weather is unpredictable. Having a group ready to ride whenever conditions cooperate makes all the difference. The Vancouver Bicycle Club hosts year-round rides and can help you stay consistent.

8. TRY SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW - Every season offers an opportunity for growth. Have you wanted to try indoor rock climbing at The Source in Downtown Vancouver? Maybe ballroom dancing, pickleball or martial arts is the challenge you need. Trying something new keeps exercise exciting, challenges your body differently and reminds us that fitness should be fun.

9. PRIORITIZE SLEEP - As daylight shortens, work with your body's natural rhythms. Aim for seven to eight hours of quality sleep each night. Sleep repairs muscles, balances hormones, strengthens your immune system and restores energy. Create a relaxing bedtime routine by turning off electronics, reading, dimming the lights or stretching gently before bed.

10. DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE - Cold, dark mornings can make it tempting to hit snooze, but before jumping into your day, pause for one minute. Take several slow, deep breaths. Fill your lungs and exhale slowly. Deep breathing reduces stress, improves focus and helps you begin the day calm and energized. Sometimes the smallest habits create the biggest positive impacts.

Fall is a fresh opportunity to recommit to yourself. You don't have to do everything on this list. Choose one or two habits and build from there. Small actions, repeated consistently, create extraordinary results.

Sherri McMillan, M.Sc. has been inspiring the world to adopt a fitness lifestyle for over 37 years and has received numerous industry awards including International Personal Trainer and Fitness Presenter of the Year. She is the author of multiple books and the owner of Northwest Personal Training. She can be reached at www.nwPersonalTraining.com

Note: As an avid Columbian reader, you can redeem an Introductory Training package at her world-class training studio to help get you started. Contact 360.574.7292 for more details.



Inner Influencer

By JEANNE FARBER

I wanted to stand up and scream "Get me out of here!" The silence was thick, except for the distant gurgle of a fellow meditator's belly. My body hummed with pain. My mind raced. And still, I sat. And sat. And sat.

At the silent meditation retreat I was quickly regretting signing up for, I was so uncomfortable. Not just physically. Not just mentally. Psychically. Foundationally. I was really feeling it. And in that moment, as my mind looped back to my everyday life, I craved all the things that regularly take me out of this level of discomfort. Chairs. Television. Food. The gym. Noise. None of them were accessible to me at the moment. But what I wanted, what I wished for more than anything? Embarrassingly, my phone.

Oh, how I longed to scroll! To lose myself in the points of view of the anonymous other. The photos and the memories, the news, the reels! I dreamed I was holding it, I swore I could feel it in my hand, the sweet relief of distraction away from the discomfort.

Before I left for the 10-day retreat, I did two weeks of no social media, intentionally leaving my phone at home. I figured that might make the retreat easier. Prior to that, I was a regular user, so it was jarring to be off of it. I felt dismembered, untethered. To my surprise, though, it felt kind of good.

Then, after my precious phone was placed in a velvet black bag until the end of the retreat, a battle ensued between my ears and throughout my body. It was a battle to hold my attention and keep my brain and body calm. I had to figure out how to self-soothe without the aid of my phone. What was it about my phone that eased my distress? In my pocket, I had enlisted a host of people to help me make decisions, take care of my health, make me look pretty, provide feedback and reassure me. Who were they? ***Influencers.***



My algorithm was filled with "influencers": a person who builds a loyal online audience on social media and uses their authority or trust to shape what people buy, think or do. Many are truly genuine and have the best intentions. But... something about that just irked my sense of independence and self-sovereignty. I particularly hate the term "thought leader." Ick. I want to lead my own thoughts, thank you. Lots of people told me which workouts make you jacked, how to sleep 8 hours a night, erase my wrinkles, obliterate my anxiety and cure my aching back. People who thought like me politically and relationally. It created a context where I subconsciously thought their ideas and opinions were even better than my own. I judged people who didn't share my identity. I relinquished my capacities. I mean, who can blame me? With the exhaustion and decision fatigue of modern life, I wanted someone else to give me some ideas. It really is brilliant, the algorithm. You get fed what you eat.

While on the retreat, with time, I came to understand something. I dreamily revisited an earlier pre-phone time in my life when the people helping, guiding and teaching me were people who actually knew me. They weren't always my race, my gender, my political party. But because they cared about me, they could really see me. My favorite people, my family, my friends. They are the ones who can give me honest feedback, sometimes painful. They open my eyes and help me see. They have my number. And in a brilliantly human way, I have theirs too. I help them, I hold them accountable. We have reciprocity. We are social. We care. They connect me to something bigger, the larger "we" that I haven't yet met but am nonetheless open to knowing.

I told all my friends and family that I'd go back to Instagram and Facebook eventually. But I never did. That was four years ago. It frustrates them sometimes. I definitely miss a lot. Recently, a good friend got engaged and I didn't even know until I saw her. But I'd rather it was that way, so I could see her ring sparkle in the warm sunlight and feel the joy when I hugged her. I also get texts with funny reels and videos and posts that keep me in the loop because they know I am out. And it's their opinion, their curated feed, that I value most.

They are my OG influencers.

Because in that big meditation hall that was so very quiet, I heard something. Not the stomach rumble or the birds chirping outside. Though I did hear all that. More deeply, I heard something I hadn't heard in a really long time. Something I wasn't expecting, and something I hadn't even known I'd lost. My inner influencer was the one talking now. And whose voice was it? My own.

Plan Now for Your *Fall & Winter Crops*

By LIZ PIKE, WSU Extension Clark County Master Gardener







This is the time of year when it feels like summer will never end. But the calendar and your changing garden are good reminders that autumn will be here soon, and now is the time to make a plan to grow fall and winter crops. The days will get shorter as night falls earlier and earlier each evening.

Southwest Washington had one of the mildest winters and springs ever. I've lived and gardened here for the past 40 years and yes, as Bob Dylan opines, "the times, they are a changing." Our climate is warming which provides opportunity for not just bountiful fall and winter crops but other specialty plants too. My patio is now home to a couple of hardy olive plants and a lime tree, which move indoors during the harshest winter months. If you would have told me 20 years ago that I'd be growing these types of plants in Southwest Washington someday, I may have thought you were nuts. But here we are!

Benefits of fall and winter crops

Many gardeners are not ready to end the healthful cycle of heading out to the garden to "pick dinner." And, with mild temperatures continuing over the next several weeks, we can plant some new crops in August and September and expect beautiful, fresh greens all the way through Thanksgiving and possibly beyond into the new year.

We are fortunate to live, grow food and thrive in Southwest Washington because our growing season is so long. While it's tempting to take a break from planting crops until next spring, don't give in; this is an ideal time to plant winter greens including arugula, kale, leaf lettuces and spin-ach. Plant a new crop of beets, garlic, winter onions, cabbage and some herbs.

Recondition your soil before planting new crops

Consider planting fall and winter crops in garden beds where other plants have already been harvested. First, remove all of the spent plant material. Give it a good raking to loosen the soil. It's important to add new organic matter before you plant your fall and winter crops. New plants need new nutrients and it's likely that whatever was growing there before has already used up the healthy attributes of your soil.

If you don't want to sow new winter crops from seed, many specialty nurseries offer starts of fall and winter crops ready to plant. There is an element of instant gratification that comes from planting healthy starts because there's no seed germination time and planting starts eliminates the chore of seedling thinning. The best time to transplant starts is in the cool of the morning or evening hours. Be sure to give your reconditioned garden beds a good watering before you plant and then again, right after. Starts need a good soaking for the first several days. Keep an eye on the forecast. If autumn rains do not fall, your winter crops will need a thorough watering a few times each day.

Spruce up your herb garden with new plantings

Now is also an ideal time to clean up your herb garden. Many of us are not ready to give up on fresh basil, thyme, parsley and rosemary as we head into the hearty soup season of our kitch-ens. Take a look at your herb garden. Prune off dead sections of thyme and any other herbs that need it. Remove spent herb plants entirely that have bolted. Before planting, add fresh, organic potting mix into the existing herb bed. This will feed the new herbs with the nutrients they need to thrive over the next several weeks and beyond.

Happy gardening and enjoy this wonderful autumn weather.

PeaceHealth Celebrates 2,000th WATCHMAN procedure, marking milestone in cardiac care



VANCOUVER, Wash. — PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center has reached a major clinical milestone with the successful implantation of its 2,000th WATCHMAN cardiac device, reinforcing the program's position as the largest WATCHMAN implanting center in the Pacific Northwest.

PeaceHealth Southwest in 2015 was the first hospital in the Pacific Northwest to implant the WATCHMAN device, underscoring more than a decade of clinical leadership.

Officially named the WATCHMAN Left Atrial Appendage Occlusion (LAAO) device, the apparatus is about the size of a quarter. It reduces the risk of stroke in patients who have atrial fibrillation, or AFib, by sealing off an area of the heart where blood can collect and is a common source of blood clots. When a clot travels to another part of the body, it can cut off the blood supply to the brain, causing a stroke.

The WATCHMAN device offers a safe, effective alternative to blood thinners. The implant procedure is minimally invasive, making the entire process from start to discharge relatively short. The one-time procedure also has less impact on patients' lifestyles than using blood thinners.

"Reaching 2,000 WATCHMAN implants is a testament to the expertise of our physicians, the dedication of our lab teams, and our long-standing commitment to providing advanced stroke-prevention options for patients," said PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center Chief Hospital Executive Cherelle Montanye. "This milestone reflects years of teamwork, innovation, and patient-centered care of our entire PeaceHealth cardiovascular team, including our valued partnership with The Vancouver Clinic cardiology clinicians."

Since its inception, PeaceHealth Southwest's WATCHMAN LAAO program has grown steadily, supported by a highly skilled implanting team and robust lab infrastructure. Today, it stands as the largest WATCHMAN implanting program in the Pacific Northwest, offering minimally invasive alternatives to long-term anticoagulation therapy for eligible patients.

"Behind every one of those 2,000 implants is a patient who came to us with two serious concerns: the threat of stroke and the difficulty of managing long-term blood thinners," said Dr. Nashwa Abdulsalam, a board-certified cardiologist and electrophysiologist at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center that specializes in treating complex cardiac arrhythmias. "Finding a real solution for both is what this program has always been about. We've had the privilege of doing this work longer than any other center in the region, and the skill our team has developed over that time is something I'm deeply proud of."

Dr. Vishesh Kumar, a structural cardiologist at The Vancouver Clinic, said the device offers another option for elderly patients who take blood thinners for atrial fibrillation. This reduces their risk of bleeding related to falls and injuries.

"Using blood thinners for atrial fibrillation presents a challenging clinical scenario for the physicians as well as for the patients," Kumar said. "With the WATCHMAN procedure, we can safely take patients off the blood thinners while reducing the risk of stroke. We are fortunate that PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center is one of the leading centers in the country to offer left atrial appendage occlusion procedures."



Dr. Nashwa Abdulsalam, M.D.



Your Fall Home Tune-Up Guide for a Cozy Winter Season

Making your home winter-ready to maximize comfort, performance and energy efficiency

By DAMEON PESANTI, Clark Public Utilities

The mornings are getting crisp, football games are starting up, and pumpkin spice is popping up in everything — the signs are everywhere: fall is here and winter's coldest and stormiest days aren't far behind. The good news: it's not too late to make sure your home is ready.

A few easy steps now can help you avoid any frustrating, expensive and inconvenient repairs when the weather is at its worst. This is also a great time to make the upgrades that'll make your home more energy efficient and comfortable this season and every season after.

To start, make sure you know the location of your home's main water shut-off valve before winter arrives. If a pipe ever bursts, shutting water off quickly can significantly mitigate any secondary damage.

Next, prepare your water system for the cold. If you have an irrigation system, have it blown out in late summer or early fall. Then remove all garden hoses from outdoor faucets. Investing in frost caps is a smart additional step. Make sure to drain hoses completely before storing them. If your home has them, shut off exterior hose bib supply valves then open the outdoor faucet to drain any remaining water.

While you're outside, inspect your home's exterior.

Check the weather-stripping around doors and the thresholds. If you can see daylight or if the stripping is cracked or flattened, it's time to replace it.

Look at the caulk around the windows, electrical and plumbing fixtures. If it's cracked or showing gaps, scrape it out and apply a fresh layer. You don't have to be a journeyman carpenter to do it, but you may feel like one when you're finished.

Make sure your foundation vents aren't blocked by anything other than a screen. Blocking them was a common practice in the era before floor insulation, but they're critical for allowing moisture to escape during the cold, wet winter.

If your home uses a heat pump, inspect the outdoor unit for any clogging or damage to the fins. Those are essential to the system's heat transfer process, so it's imperative they're clean and straight.

Indoors, change the filter on your central air system. Like your car, the

Continued on next page ▸

system runs best when it can breathe easily. The same is true for the people living inside. A fresh furnace filter will lead to cleaner indoor air, which will directly benefit anyone with respiratory issues. Choose a filter with a high MERV rating, but consult your furnace manual to make sure you select the proper replacement. While you're at it, consider programming your thermostat to maximize energy savings and personal comfort ahead of schedule.

There are few winter surprises as unwelcome or costly as a damaged furnace or heat pump. That's why it's smart to have yours inspected or serviced at least once a year by a professional. They'll correct even the subtle issues to ensure you get the most out of every heating dollar.

If your home uses zonal heaters — think baseboard or wall heaters — give them a good cleaning. Dust build-up lowers efficiency and can affect indoor air quality.

Indoors, look for typical of sources costly air leaks. Check to see if you have insulation pads behind outlet and light switch faceplates. There aren't any in place, installing them is quick and easy. Also look for gaps around light fixtures or anywhere plumbing enters the house. Air leaks are surprisingly powerful energy vampires.

Beyond basic maintenance, certain home improvements can significantly improve your home's comfort and energy efficiency, especially if it was built before the year 2000.

Weatherization experts can find and address the many comfort-sapping air leaks that make a home feel drafty. In addition to managing air leaks, a weatherization pro can improve your insulation and seal HVAC system ducts (if you have them). They can also offer guidance on windows and door replacements, if needed.

Adding a smart thermostat is easy and can automate energy savings.

Upgrading to a heat pump or ductless heat pump, can reduce winter heating costs and also provide air conditioning in the summer.

Upgrading from a standard electric water heater to a heat pump water heater can significantly lower what is typically the second largest cost on an electrically heated home's energy bill.

Clark Public Utilities has money-saving rebates and incentives for all of these and more. The programs are designed to help people in all financial positions live more comfortably while using less energy in their electrically heated homes.

For more information, contact the Energy Counselor of the Day at ECOD@clarkpud.com or call 360-992-3355 during business hours. If you'd like to look at the options on your own time, visit the rebates page on our website.





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Watch out! It's Fall!

By REBECCA HOFFMAN, MD



Dear Doctor,

I hate to see summer go, reminding me as the year gets older, so do I. I don't want to slip up when the leaves start to come down. Any advice to keep from falling this fall?

-Fearful of Falls in Five Corners

Dear Fearful,

You're right, we can't prevent fall, but we can reduce the risks of falling now and for our future older selves. Here are some simple steps you can take to keep balanced year-round.

-The Doctor

Falls are a problem at any age, but risks get higher as we age. For every four adults over 65, one will fall this year. That's **14 million people!** Falls are the leading cause of injuries for older Americans and adds up to more than **$80 billion** in healthcare costs.

Falling is not a natural consequence of aging. Anyone can fall. Multiple systems are at work in our bodies to keep us upright and balanced. The good news is that even age-related changes can be improved and even reversed. Let's review.

1. Muscles, bones and joint strength.

Everyone loses muscle mass starting at age 30 – faster after age 60. Muscle fibers shrink and reduce in number. They become less responsive to the nerve signals asking them to move. Bones are living tissue, constantly remodeling, but by age 50 bone resorption outpaces bone formation resulting in fragile, easily broken bones. The cushioning provided by joint cartilage thins and wears out over time, contributing to stiff and painful joints.

WHAT TO DO

Seek exercises aimed at strengthening and flexibility. Small amounts of exercise – even a few minutes – done several times in a day instead of single, longer workouts actually build strength more efficiently.

Try reverse lunges. Stand behind and hold a chair, reach one leg back, bend into a lunge, hold, then return to standing. Repeat on the other side. Try for ten times for each leg. Work toward doing this hands-free. This weight bearing exercise improves bone strength, too.

Diet tips: Aging muscles and bones need calcium (1200 mg), vitamin D (2,000 units) and more dietary protein. Figure about half-gram of protein per pound or about 75 grams for a 150-lb adult. The best sources are lean meat, dairy, eggs and nuts.

2. Proprioception.

This is the body's sense of where it is in space, without looking. It enables you to adjust to walking on uneven surfaces, or to scratch your nose without directly watching your hand.

WHAT TO DO

Practice rising unsupported from seated to standing. Sit in a chair, feet flat on the floor, arms folded across the chest. Lean forward with chest over thighs, slowly lift up using your legs, then rise to standing, keeping feet stable. Ten times. Work toward rising with eyes closed.

3. Vision.

Around age 40 the lens in your eye stiffens, making it hard to focus – meaning you may need reading glasses or bifocals. Cataracts may cloud the lens and eye pressure may increase which, if left untreated, can cause blindness.

WHAT TO DO

Get an eye exam every two years, then annually after age 65. Add hearing testing too. While you're with the doctor, take time to review your medications for side effects like dizziness or sleepiness.

Continued on next page

4. Balance and the vestibular system.

Specialized cells in the inner ear detect movement and send signals to the brain to keep you upright when you move your body or turn your head. It helps you balance on each leg when walking. If it's not working well, you might feel vertigo, lightheaded, or unsteady.

WHAT TO DO

Try heel-toe walking, as if walking a tightrope, the heel touching the toes of the other foot. Walk forward for 30 seconds, then backward. Try four to six times daily. Work toward being steady without wobbling. Maintain good posture – no slouching! Tai chi and yoga help too.

5. Environment and equipment.

There's more, Dear Fearful! Check out your environment. Most falls happen at home. Get rid of clutter and tripping hazards like loose rugs. Put in handrails and grab bars by the toilet and shower. Brighten your home with better light, especially at night to guide you in the dark.

And equipment, starting with your shoes. Flat, flexible and supportive shoes promote balance. Avoid too much cushioning which can cause ankle instability. Shoes should be wide enough to wiggle your toes. And no walking around in socks or slippers!

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) promotes Falls Prevention Awareness Week this year from September 21-25, 2026. For more info go to www.ncoa.org

So, Dear Fearful,

the best advice is to keep moving! Exercises, removing home hazards, regular vision and hearing tests and a visit with your doctor for a health and medication review. Now put your best foot forward and enjoy the – er – autumn!

-The Doctor

Rebecca Hoffman, MD is a Family Physician, board certified in Washington and Oregon, practicing in Vancouver WA for more than 25 years. She hosts a nationally syndicated program on health for local radio stations KXRW and XRAY.FM. She lives with her husband of 43 years, has 2 adult daughters, a dog and a cat and an organic garden.

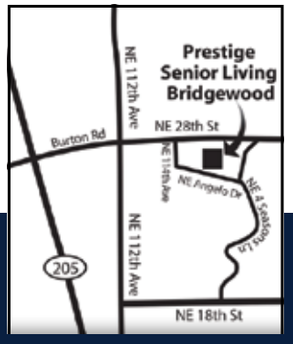


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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY



You're Reading The Columbian, but What Is The Columbian Reading?

by OLIVIA JOHNSON, The Columbian

Fall is approaching, and so is the time to get cozy with a new book. Whether picking up a thrilling mystery or lighthearted rom com, there's plenty of tales to get you into the fall mood and ease the transition into more indoor pastimes. If you're having trouble picking a book, take a look at the stories that The Columbian team members are reading. Many will be available at your local bookstores!

April J. from Customer Service recently read...

"The Good Part" by Sophie Cousens



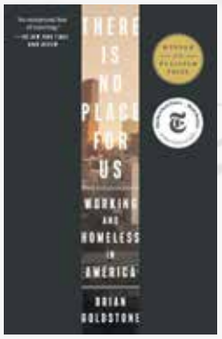
Lucy is in her 20's and tired of the daily struggles of life, no money, a job that seems to be going nowhere, bad dates, a crummy apartment. After one particularly rough night, Lucy makes a wish to skip to the good part of her life. When Lucy awakes in a strange apartment, next to a strange man, and 2 kids calling her mom, Lucy begins to wonder if skipping the bad parts makes it harder to enjoy the good parts.

Readers will like "The Good Part" if they also like movies like "Big," "13 Going on 30" and "Freaky Friday."

April's Rating: 5 stars!

Shari P. from the Newsroom/Metro recently read...

"There Is No Place for Us" by Brian Goldstone



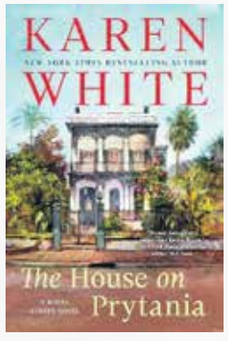
This book is an examination of the crisis of the "working homeless" through the stories of five Atlanta families who hold jobs but cannot afford housing in a gentrifying city.

Readers will like "There Is No Place for Us" if they also liked "Evicted" by Matthew Desmond.

Shari's Rating: 4 stars!

Bobbi F. from Advertising recently read...

"The House on Prytania" by Karen White



This is the 2nd in a series of paranormal cozy mysteries. In the first book, Nola ends up purchasing an older house that "selected" her in New Orleans and plans to fix it up. In the second book, while restoring her house, she is talked into restoring a string of other houses called "Murder Houses." However, the ghosts have other ideas.

Readers will like "The House on Prytania" if they also like ghosts, old and dilapidated homes, and New Orleans.

Bobbi's Rating: 4 stars!

WHITE OAK BOOKS

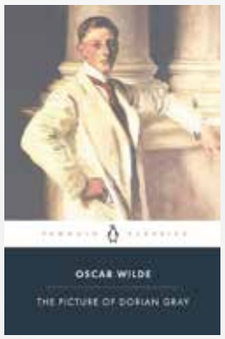
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Hope M. from the Newsroom recently read...

"The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde



When impressionable young Dorian Gray meets Lord Henry Wotton and painter Basil Hallward, his life is forever changed. Between Wotton's corrupting philosophies filling his head and becoming transfixed by the eerily lifelike portrait of himself painted by Hallward. Dorian Gray descends into an increasingly criminal double life, all while remaining young and beautiful as the portrait transforms in new and twisted ways before his very eyes.

Readers will like "The Picture of Dorian Gray" if they also like classic literature, gothic horror and suspenseful thrillers.

Hope's Rating: 4 stars!

Kevin W. from Advertising is currently reading...

"The Parisian Heist" by Jo Piazza



The Parisian Heist is an art world thriller set in dual timelines. Emma who is a struggling artist in 1990's Paris and while working for wealthy families, becomes entangled in an art heist at the Musée d'Orsay. And in the late 1800's the young widow Jo Van Gogh, sister-in-law of Vincent, who after inheriting hundreds of his paintings is determined to prove his genius and create a legacy for him all while trying to provide for her and her son.

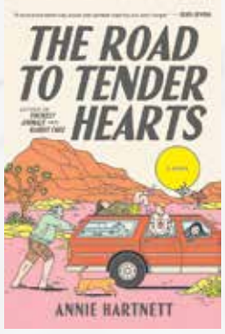
Readers will like "The Parisian Heist" if they also like art history, dual timeline stories, suspense and mystery, and European settings.

Kevin's Rating: To be determined!



Olivia J. from Marketing is currently reading...

"The Road to Tender Hearts" by Annie Hartnett



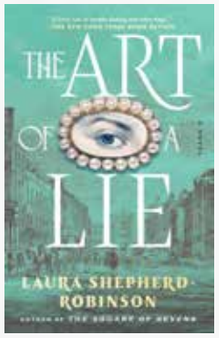
A 63-year-old lottery winner, PJ Halliday, goes on a cross-country road trip to reconnect with his high school sweetheart after learning of her husband's death. Although, tragedy strikes his own family (not the first time), and he becomes the sudden legal guardian of his estranged brother's grandchildren. Joined by the newly orphaned kids, his own adult daughter, and a death-predicting cat, they go on the road for an adventure of a lifetime.

Readers will like "The Road to Tender Hearts" if they also like dark comedies, family road trips and the movie, "Little Miss Sunshine."

Olivia's Rating: To be determined!

Shelly A. from Advertising recently read...

"The Art of a Lie" by Laura Shepherd-Robinson



"The Art of a Lie" is a historical mystery set in 1749 London that follows Hannah, a widowed confectioner struggling to save her business after her husband's apparent murder. Hannah becomes entangled in a web of deception and betrayal. As magistrate Henry Fielding investigates the suspicious death of her husband, Hannah must navigate dangerous secrets and competing lies to protect her future.

Readers will like "The Art of a Lie" if they also like historical settings, romance and mystery.

Shelly's Rating: 4.5 stars!



Movies to Watch While the Leaves Turn Orange

By OLIVIA JOHNSON, The Columbian Marketing Department

Someone find the remote; it's time to press play on a fall movie! Many of these films are favorites of The Columbian staff members to watch during the season. Some explicitly revolve around autumnal holidays and others just help build a fall-ish atmosphere. Regardless, take a look below and add some to your list!

**Not all films are suitable for all ages. They are grouped according to their official MPA age rating.*

G RATED G

- **"It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown" (1966)**
  Genre: Family, Animation
- **"Monsters University" (2013)**
  Genre: Fantasy Comedy, Animation

PG RATED PG

- **"Halloweentown" (1998)**
  Genre: Family Fantasy
- **"The Spiderwick Chronicles" (2008)**
  Genre: Family Fantasy, Adventure
- **"Coco" (2017)**
  Genre: Family Fantasy, Animation
- **"Twitches" (2005)**
  Genre: Family Fantasy
- **"Fantastic Mr. Fox" (2009)**
  Genre: Adventure Comedy, Stop Motion Animation
- **"Hocus Pocus" (1993)**
  Genre: Family Fantasy, Comedy
- **"Monster House" (2006)**
  Genre: Supernatural Horror Comedy, Animation
- **"Coraline" (2009)**
  Genre: Dark Fantasy, Horror, Stop Motion Animation
- **"Rudy" (1993)**
  Genre: Biographical Drama, Sports
- **"You've Got Mail" (1998)**
  Genre: Romantic Comedy
- **"Remember the Titans" (2000)**
  Genre: Coming-of-Age, Sports Drama
- **"Clue" (1985)**
  Genre: Mystery, Comedy
- **"Little Women" (2019)**
  Genre: Period Drama, Romance
- **"Dead Poets Society" (1989)**
  Genre: Coming-of-Age, Drama (older ages recommended)

Continued on next page ▸

PG-13 RATED PG-13

- **"Practical Magic" (1998)**
  Genre: Romantic Fantasy, Comedy-Drama
- **"Knives Out" (2019)**
  Genre: Mystery/Thriller, Comedy-Drama
- **"Beetlejuice" (1988)**
  Genre: Comedy Horror, Fantasy

R RATED R

- **"When Harry Met Sally" (1989)**
  Genre: Romantic Comedy
- **"Good Will Hunting" (1997)**
  Genre: Coming-of-Age Drama, Romance
- **"Planes, Trains and Automobiles" (1987)**
  Genre: Road Trip Comedy
- **"St. Elmo's Fire" (1985)**
  Genre: Coming-of-Age, Drama, 80's Brat Pack

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Couve Zine Swap *Brings Analog Joy to a Digital World*



Mintie and Fae of Couve Zine Swap with their zine box at White Oak Books. Photo by Adriana Baer.

By ADRIANA BAER

Hidden in shops on and around Main Street in Vancouver are small boxes filled with tiny publications. For those lucky enough to find these boxes, a treasure trove of art and creativity awaits. Inside are the Couve Zine Swap zines – and they're entirely free for the taking.

A "zine" is a DIY publication (think "magazine" without the first four letters) that can be printed on copy paper, folded, and distributed easily and quickly. Zines are simple and grassroots, and an effective and efficient way of getting creativity and information out into the world.

Mitch Rogers (aka "Mintie") and Tayler Bradley (aka "Fae") are the brains and hearts behind local organization Couve Zine Swap where they help creative people, poets, artists and folks who are interested in sharing information create these tiny publications. The makers, called "zinesters," send their pieces to Mintie and Fae who then print, photocopy, fold and distribute them.

Zinesters might make an informational zine like how to plant tulip bulbs or what to do with leftover chicken stock, or they might create an illustration or an original poem. When printed on a single sheet of paper and folded in a specific way, an eight-page zine emerges. Voila – the creator is now published, and their work is ready to go out to the public.

Couve Zine Swap currently has 11 distribution locations where folks can go to pick up these tiny books - as many as they want – or even leave their own zines to be discovered later. While Couve Zine Swap's footprint is only the size of their plastic "distro boxes," their impact is enormous. They're helping folks who don't have access to mainstream publishing get their work out into the world.

Couve Zine Swap also brings their work to schools, libraries and festivals across Clark County. Among other events, they teach free zine making workshops at the Washougal Community Library on the first Saturday of every month.

Find Couve Zine Swap boxes at: Birdhouse Books, Clark County Historical Museum, Dandelion Tea House, Eryngium Papeterie, Kadence Collective, Kindred Vancouver, Metallion Cafe, Our Third Space, Ronald Records, White Oak Books and Wild Camp Goods.

You can see pictures, find links and listen to an interview with Mintie and Fae on I'm Into This Place, a podcast and website about arts, culture and heritage in Clark County. https://imintothisplace.com/episodes/couve-zine-swap

Adriana Baer has been an arts professional for over 20 years and is the founder and host of I'm Into This Place, a podcast and website focused on highlighting the vibrant arts and culture scene of Clark County, WA. She is dedicated to community building in the arts sector and believes in the power of creativity to enhance local economy, cultural identity and civic life.





Cozy Book *Recommendations* FOR FALL READING

By JAX GOERTZEN

Reading is a magical thing because you can be transported to another world, another time, or to the minds of others with nothing but words. In a world of short-form media content and the increasing use of AI, reading can allow us to learn new vocabulary, build empathy, lower stress and improve our critical thinking skills. Now more than ever, we encourage our readers to pick up a good book.

Autumn is the season of all kinds of genres: dark academia, historical fiction, thriller, mysteries, horror or a good cozy romance! Whether you prefer an audiobook, an e-reader or flipping the pages of a physical book, we have recommendations for you while you curl up with a blanket and a mug of your favorite fall beverage. Happy reading!

GOTHIC HORROR

"MEXICAN GOTHIC" by Silvia Moreno-Garcia

Receiving a frantic letter from her newlywed cousin forces a woman to travel to a distant house in the Mexican countryside, where she begins unravelling the dark secrets of both the family and the house itself.

"GALLANT" by V. E. Schwab

After receiving an invitation to her extended family's estate, an orphaned girl discovers a dark, parallel world beyond the walls and uncovers truths about the past.

"SHE IS A HAUNTING" by Trang Thanh Tran

A teenager returns to Vietnam to spend the summer with her estranged father and restore an old house, but nightly hauntings begin to uncover dark secrets about her family's past and her own identity.

"THE THIRTEENTH CHILD" by Erin A. Craig

A healer gifted with the ability to instantly deduce the cure to any sickness is also a goddaughter of the god of death, able to see when someone is marked to die.

"WHITE SMOKE" by Tiffany D. Jackson

A teen recovering from addiction moves to a new home with her blended family, unleashing paranormal activity and terrifying secrets and forcing her to confront her past.

DARK ACADEMIA

"IMMORTAL CONSEQUENCES" by I.V. Marie

Six students in the afterlife compete to change their fate between taking magic classes and guiding souls through purgatory.

"NINTH HOUSE" by Leigh Bardugo

The sole survivor of an unsolved homicide receives a chance to attend Yale on a scholarship, where she finds that the secret societies are much more sinister than she could have imagined.

"IF WE WERE VILLAINS" by M.L. Rio

After serving ten years in jail for murder, a former acting student recounts the events to the detective who put him behind bars as they unpack the mystery together.

"ACE OF SPADES" by Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé

An anonymous texter named Aces targets two private school students based on their race, forcing them to team up as their deepest secrets are exposed.

MAGIC AND MISCHIEF

"THE NIGHT CIRCUS" by Erin Morgenstern

A fantastical nightly circus pits two young magicians against each other in a game where only one can be left standing.

"WEYWARD" by Emilia Hart

Three different generations of women explore their mystical bond with nature while navigating lives full of abuse and resilience.

"PRACTICAL RULES FOR CURSED WITCHES" by Kayla Cottingham

A young witch cursed so that anyone she loves will forget her is forced to break a powerful family's curse to gain her full powers, only to fall for a girl whose fate is tied to it.

"BURNED" by Kellie O'Neill

Magic suddenly emerges on a witch's seventeenth birthday, causing her to balance her new identity with the mystery of why witches from her coven are disappearing.

"STRANGE FAMILIARS" by Keshe Chow

Two rival scholars and their animal familiars team up to stop magical surges from causing chaos throughout London.

HALLOWEEN CLASSICS

"DRACULA" by Bram Stoker

An English solicitor travels to Transylvania to help Count Dracula purchase property but quickly realizes that he's dealing with a vampire.

"FRANKENSTEIN" by Mary Shelley

A scientist creates a living creature who turns violent after being rejected and abandoned.

"THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW" by Washington Irving

Terrifying nighttime encounters with the legendary Headless Horseman frighten a superstitious teacher and lead to his mysterious disappearance.

"THE COMPLETE STORIES AND POEMS" of Edgar Allan Poe

A collection of poetry and short stories which explore themes of death, fear, guilt and revenge through suspense and psychological horror.



Like these books? Check them out at a locally owned bookstore!

SHOP LOCAL

MEET CRYSTAL, OWNER AND OPERATOR OF ERYNGIUM PAPETERIE





> ***It was a dream that settled deeply and grew steadily throughout my life and never melted away.***

By OLIVIA JOHNSON, The Columbian Marketing Department

A giant wood dip pen hangs above the door, beckoning me inside the brick storefront. Paper airplanes fly across the ceiling, and butterflies flutter between violin strings. Above a book-filled fireplace, I see Frog and Toad share a chat over drinks. Each drawer holds a new treasure waiting to be unearthed, and every item has a story waiting to be told.

This place has a story of its own, too.

Eryngium Papeterie is a local stationery store located on downtown Vancouver's historic Main Street. In its three years of business, the shop has been owned and operated by Crystal Humble Lary (also affectionately known as Cricket). She is not only the creative mind behind the company but the smiling face that greeted me behind the cashier's desk.

Crystal's passion for stationery sparked young.

"It was 1991 when I first peered through the aged windows of The Third Elm and Press," she shares, reminiscing the stationery store back in her home state of Rhode Island. With large iron machines and paper drying from the ceiling, Crystal remembers believing "fairies must be about some magic there." The store quietly carved a spot in Crystal's heart, the tinder sparking a new dream.

Her passion followed as she went to college in the Rocky Mountains, where she found a home in her "dream store." She was even offered the shop when it changed ownership. However, financial constraints ultimately led her to decline the offer.

It was in stationery stores that she sought the cure for homesickness when she moved to the Pacific Northwest. "Raw and lonely in a new city, I burst into tears at the familiar sights and beauty of the world of paper," she shares.

This collection of stores, each with their own atmosphere and circumstance, made Crystal's dream



grow increasingly more tangible.

Accompanied by her husband, she relocated once more to Vancouver, where the seed of Eryngium Papeterie began to take root. And in 2023, on Crystal's birthday, it finally blossomed.

Despite Eryngium's relatively recent opening, the space is steeped with the kind of charm that many businesses take decades to cultivate.

"It was crucial that as many antiques were used as possible," Crystal says. I could hear the pride in her words as she described her wooden 1910 postal sorting shelf and antique French mantle. Even newer items, like the front counter, were stained to match the older furniture. "All the stationery stores I've loved over the past decades have token nods in my store layout and décor, and it's filled to the brim."

The store's name, Eryngium Papeterie, draws its inspiration from Crystal's favorite flower, commonly called sea holly. While the Eryngium plant is not associated with papermaking, Crystal enjoys that it "invokes a bit of curiosity" and "dwell[s] by the sea" – qualities I find also match The Third Elm and Press, her original inspiration back when she was a young girl.

Papeterie, meanwhile, is a French word that has evolved from meaning a box holding paper, to a paper mill, to a stationery shop. "I like to present my own little store as the box that holds pretty paper," Crystal shares.

But Eryngium holds far more than just pretty paper.

Visitors will find treasures old and new, local and international within those whimsical walls. Each wooden apothecary drawer pulls out to display greeting cards and letter sheets, and every shelf is stacked with beautifully crafted journals. There are even candles and jewelry to browse through as well. The variety is a feast for one's creativity.

In my own short visit (I say "short" because I could

Continued on next page ▸

have spent hours there), I felt as though I'd stepped into the pages of my favorite stories. Like pushing through C.S. Lewis' wardrobe or opening the door to Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium. Like stumbling into a dream realized. My eyes widened with the unrestricted wonder of a child.

I was in awe not only of the environment she had built but the community Crystal had forged. I quickly gained the sense that she was the kind of woman that had never met a stranger. Nearly every customer was greeted by name, and those she didn't know were welcomed as friends.

"Watching people connect and have the merchandise resonate with them is nothing short of a thrill," Crystal says. Over the years, several customers have come to her sharing that the store has inspired them to write, often after a long drought of not picking up a pen. "[It's] such a rich and joyful experience for me."

Whether you're a seasoned stationery collector or just looking to explore something new, you'll find a home at Eryngium Papeterie – a place where curiosity is encouraged, wonder is cultivated, and dreams are written into existence.





To learn more about Crystal and Eryngium Papeterie, visit their website at www.eryngiumpapeterie.com . You can also check out their social media pages on Instagram and Facebook (@eryngiumpapeterie) to find updates on new products and featured brands.

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HIRE LOCAL

MEET WENDY MARVIN, FOUNDER & CEO OF MATRIX ROOFING

Matrix
YOUR HOME, OUR PROMISE





To begin, could you tell me a little bit about Matrix Roofing?

I'm the founder and CEO of Matrix Roof & Home, a woman-owned roofing company based in Vancouver, serving Clark County and greater Portland Metro for more than 19 years. My role ranges from setting the vision for how we treat customers to staying active in the industry nationally, and I serve on the NRCA Board of Directors and as President of the Roofing Technology Think Tank. Above all, I'm accountable for making sure every homeowner we work with is treated with honesty and respect.

What was your initial spark behind forming Matrix?

Years ago, my family went through a bad plumbing leak. My husband and I were both working full time with young kids at home, and we'd rearrange our whole day just to be home for a contractor appointment, only to have no one show up. It happened over and over. We realized homeowners deserved better, and that we could build something better. My ex-husband had roofing experience, and I had a background in business management, so we took the leap, even though our families thought we were making a huge mistake. In 2015, I became sole owner of Matrix, and I've spent the last 11 years building it around the mission that started it all: quality work, rave reviews, giving back to the community we serve, and elevating our industry.

What is the biggest challenge you face in your industry?

The biggest challenge in our industry is trust, eroded by sales organizations that train reps on urgency and pressure instead of roofing knowledge: same-day discounts, doom-and-gloom warnings about your roof collapsing, promises that insurance will cover everything. These are sales scripts, not roofing expertise, built to get a signature before a homeowner has time to think. We overcome it by doing the opposite: leading with transparency, not urgency, real photos, honest answers and no pressure to decide today. When homeowners can see exactly what we see, they make better decisions. That's what keeps people trusting us for the long run.



What is one thing you wish people knew about roofing?

Most roofing problems don't announce themselves. By the time a leak shows up inside your home, the damage has usually been building for a while, which is why regular maintenance matters. A yearly inspection can catch a small issue while it's still a reasonable fix, instead of a costly repair later. Maintenance is key to your roof lasting, to your shingle warranty, and even to your homeowner's insurance renewal.

Could you tell me about your experience being a woman-owned roofing company in a predominantly male field?

I won't lie, it's been a challenge at times. Being a woman-owned business in a male-dominated field has meant constantly proving myself before earning the benefit of the doubt. And after 20 years, there are still days I do a little Wonder Woman power pose in the mirror before walking into a boardroom full of men. Even so, my overall experience has been a positive one. Serving on regional and national roofing boards and speaking at international expos has connected me with mentors who see me as an owner first and a woman second. Early on, women in roofing were all competing for the one seat at the table. Now we're building tables of our own and inviting others to join us.

What's your favorite part about your work?

It's the relationships. Whether it's a community member, an employee, a customer or another industry professional, the connections I've built over the years feed my soul. I also love being a changemaker: while much of this industry has moved toward high-pressure sales, we've proven a relationship-first approach can still succeed. One of my favorite things is bumping into a past customer at the grocery store or an industry event and receiving a hug. We've done good things over the years, and I'm building a company that will last long after I'm gone.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about Matrix Roof & Home? How can readers connect with your business?

Matrix is proud to be locally owned and active in our Clark County community. We're here to assist with any roofing, siding or window questions, big or small. Our website, www.matrixroof.com, has educational resources if you'd like to learn more. We also blog for Ask A Roofer (askaroofer.com) and will be offering in-person classes on predatory contract language and how to research contractors.

Reach us at info@matrixroof.com, wendym@matrixroof.com or (360)474-5828. Let us know how we can help.

DINE LOCAL

A STEP INTO RELEVANT COFFEE



> ***...we're not really in the business of just selling coffee. Coffee is the product, but hospitality, community and connection are really what we're trying to create.***

By OLIVIA JOHNSON, The Columbian Marketing Department

From the outside, Relevant Coffee looks like a cool corner spot to drink a delicious brew – the perfect place to study or have a chat with friends. And while it certainly is all of those things, its doors open to so much more.

From regional coffee roaster to cold brew manufacturer, hospitality company to wholesale partner, even branching into beer production through sibling business Irrelevant Brewing, Relevant Coffee's thread is deeply woven into the fabric of Clark County.

It's hard to believe that it all began in someone's garage.

Back in 2014, founder Mitch Montgomery turned his lifelong passion for coffee into a startup. He roasted the beans off-site at a roasting collective in Portland and "setup office out of his garage" to finish packaging and labeling. From there, he'd sell the bags at local farmers markets – first at Legacy Salmon Creek, then the Esther Short Farmers Market.

"Selling coffee wholesale to local bakeries, cafes and offices can be difficult when you don't have a storefront," Operations Director Brian Clemens shares.

In 2017, Mitch opened the doors to a small Relevant Coffee tasting room. The goal? Introducing his light-roast approach and sharing their coffee's story, from the farmers who grew it to the brew in your cup.

Measuring at about 425 square feet, their first café space quickly grew too tight. The current Relevant Coffee team chuckles now at the space the company once worked in. The stools may have been short to the ground and the bar top cramped, but it was cherished by employees and customers alike.

"The community embraced us both at the farmers market and our café," Brian says, "which gave us the opportunity to grow."

And grow, they did.

Now located on Vancouver's Main Street, Relevant Coffee has the room to place café and roastery side-by-side. The open, calm environment not only welcomes customers to order a drink and catch up with friends, but it encourages them to see the coffee roasting process firsthand. The only



Continued on next page

wall between the person enjoying their coffee and the beans being roasted is made of glass. A transparent wall for a "transparent experience."

To produce one batch of coffee, Relevant's roasting team must walk through a series of detailed steps. The coffee beans, at first a light brownish green, are loaded into the roaster with a woosh. As they spin, the team monitors several attributes like temperature, color, smell and even sound to track the roast and ensure consistency between batches. Roasters check the beans at specific time increments, down to the exact second. Once they reach an ideal roast, the beans are emptied into a rotating tray to cool down. Now, they're a perfect medium brown color. The entire process is much more than a recipe – it's a scientific formula for your morning pickup. And it's solved 12-15 times a day, producing over 60 light-to-medium coffee roasts every week.

But it doesn't take a glass wall to see the level of care that Relevant puts into their coffee at both global and community levels. By sourcing their coffee beans from around the globe and sharing those stories with Clark County, Relevant Coffee "connects Vancouver to a much bigger world." They actively work to build connections within the larger supply chain, prioritizing a sustainable future for all members – especially the agricultural farmers who grow the beans at the start of that chain.

"There's this interesting balance," Brian says. "We're very local in our identity, but what we do is connected to a global coffee community."

Relevant certainly takes the science and sourcing of their coffee roasting seriously. However, it doesn't take an expert to experience the café's magic. Whether you're a coffee aficionado or brand new to holding the mug in your hands, the roasting team "[wants] you to feel equally comfortable."

Relevant Coffee is frequently asked the all-important question of "What's your why?" and for Brian, it's simple. "It's seeing that sip."

Beyond a coffee shop, Relevant is a place to gather and connect. People go there for work meetings and friend debriefs. They excitedly celebrate birthdays or nervously sip through first dates. They come to find peace in an otherwise chaotic world. That single sip can mean something different for every person that walks through Relevant Coffee's doors.



"We get to see people through different seasons of their lives," Brian remarks, "...[and] These small interactions add up over time."

Relevant Coffee also collaborates with several local organizations and nonprofits to extend "community and hospitality... beyond [their] four walls." At their community swap events, attendees exchange books, clothing or plants with one another, with leftover items or drink sales going toward local nonprofits.

At many of Clark County's chillier events, you can find Relevant Coffee giving out complimentary coffee and hot chocolate. Attendees will often line up for a delicious cup of warmth at Esther Short Park's annual tree lighting and Clark Public Utilities' Race for Warmth.

Between partnering with The Diner Vancouver, supporting Meals on Wheels People, and donating in-kind coffee at food pop-ups, Relevant Coffee continues to weave its thread even deeper into the fabric of the community.

But where is this thread sewing next?

Brian and Mitch are looking to continue growing the company through e-commerce and wholesale business, as well as forming more creative collaborations with local organizations.

"Our goal isn't simply to become bigger," Brian shares, "We want to become better. For ourselves and for the community."

As time passes and Clark County grows, it's vital that the core of Relevant Coffee remains the same. The core that was first assembled in a garage and forged at farmers markets. The core that supported them through tightly spaced cafés and Covid-19's economic uncertainty. The core that supports them now. The core of community.

"I'd love for Relevant to continue being a business that Vancouver is proud to have here," Brian says. "One that contributes to the community fabric of downtown while making really good coffee."



To connect with Relevant Coffee, visit their café at 1703 Main Street in Uptown Vancouver. You can also find them online at relevantcoffee.com and @relevantcoffee on Instagram for behind-the-scenes content and community updates.

For wholesale inquiries, Relevant Coffee can be reached at orders@relevantcoffee.com.

> ***"Come in, say hi, grab a cup of coffee and see what we're building.***



Whether you're stopping in for your morning coffee, meeting a friend, or just looking for a place to slow down and peer into our roasting process, **we'd love to have you!**

RELEVANT COFFEE
VANCOUVER

1703 Main Street, Vancouver, WA • relevantcoffee.com



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"Trebek, What Is Exciting Clark County TRIVIA NIGHTS?"

You may not be heading back to school this fall, but you can still learn new things each week at these regular trivia spots! Be sure to check them out online for any updates or registration/drop-in information.

MONDAYS

EVERYBODY'S BREWING, 7PM
1401 SE Rasmussen Blvd
Battle Ground, WA 98604

SILVER BALL SOCIAL CLUB, 7PM
114 E Evergreen Blvd
Vancouver, WA 98660

THIRSTY SASQUATCH & HUNGRY SASQUATCH, 7PM
2110 Main St
Vancouver, WA 98660



TUESDAYS

ASHWOOD TAPS, 6PM
1535 E St
Washougal, WA 98671

FULL HEART IRISH PUB, 7PM
1013 Main St
Vancouver, WA 98660

LOOWIT BREWING AT OLE'S OUTPOST, 7PM
11202 NE Fourth Plain Blvd
Vancouver, WA 98662

OAK TREE STATION, 6PM
5900 NW Friberg-Strunk St
Camas, WA 98607

PLAYMAKERS SPORTS BAR AND GRILL, 6:30PM
4327 S Settler Dr Ste 100
Ridgefield, WA 98642

RIDGEFIELD CRAFT BREWING, 6:30PM
120 N 3rd Ave
Ridgefield, WA 98642

WOODLAND NORTH BOUND TAPHOUSE AND SPORTS BAR, 6PM
1350 Atlantic Ave Suite A
Woodland, WA 98674

WEDNESDAYS

GRAPES 'N HOPS, 6PM
3425 SE 192nd Ave #105
Vancouver, WA 98683

TAPS BEER RESERVE, 6PM
201 S 47th Ave
Ridgefield, WA 98642

VICTOR 23 BREWERY, 7PM
2905 St Johns Blvd #3718
Vancouver, WA 98661

THURSDAYS

A BEER AT A TIME, 7PM
216 NE 3rd Ave
Camas, WA 98607

BRICKHOUSE BAR AND GRILL, 7PM
109 W 15th St
Vancouver, WA 98660

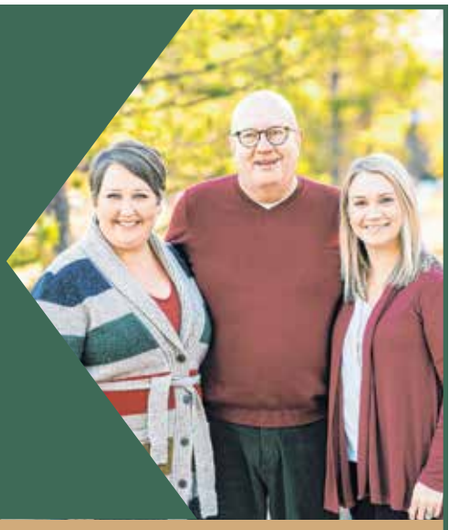
GHOST RUNNERS BREWERY AND KITCHEN, 7PM
4216 NE Minnehaha St #108
Vancouver, WA 98661

GRADY'S PUBLIC HOUSE, 7PM
2714 NE 114th Ave
Vancouver, WA 98684

But what do I do
Friday *through* **Sunday?**
Study up for next week!

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- Offer personalized and affordable services and products
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What's Goin' On

Harvest Traditions Across the Countryside

By ALLY ROSSI

As fall approaches, it brings a familiar shift in the air, welcoming the deeply rooted traditions that make this corner of the Pacific Northwest so special. The landscape comes alive with crisp mornings, changing leaves and lively celebrations that mark the arrival of a new season. It is a time when local growers invite people to enjoy the fruits of their labor, turning the changing scenery into an adventure to be experienced firsthand. From apple orchards to sprawling pumpkin patches, the region's farms offer plenty of opportunities to gather with loved ones. Whether you are hunting for the ultimate jack-o'-lantern or simply looking to admire the changing foliage, Southwest Washington offers a variety of activities that capture the abundance of autumn.



BI-ZI FARMS PUMPKIN PATCH & HARVEST FESTIVAL
September 26th – October 31st | 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday
9504 NE 119th St, Vancouver, WA

This historic property has been tended by the Zimmerman family since 1872. Over the decades, the land has grown alongside the local community, evolving from a working farm into a festive destination. The acreage is operated by Bill and Peggy Zimmerman alongside their three children, Joe, Amy and Doug. Their continued stewardship is reflected in the warm hospitality that has become a hallmark of the atmosphere. Visitors can embark on a scenic wagon ride to the pumpkin patch, navigate the winding corn maze, and enjoy live music on Saturdays and Sundays. Guests of all ages can test the pumpkin launchers, meet friendly farm animals, and warm up with a complimentary hot cider. Bi-Zi Farms remains a cornerstone of Clark County agriculture, giving multiple generations a place to make lasting memories.



PUMPKIN LANE AT POMEROY FARM
October 1st – October 31st | 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturdays & Sundays
20902 NE Lucia Falls Rd, Yacolt, WA

Established in 1910, this 160-acre homestead comes alive during the iconic Pumpkin Lane event, honoring the harvest with timeless charm and local folklore. Founded by EC and Adelaide Pomeroy, the property has long been dedicated to portraying life from the pre-electrical 1920s. A tractor-drawn hayride carries travelers across the sprawling countryside, rolling past rustic barns, vibrant foliage and handcrafted "pumpkin people" scenes that bring playful traditions to life. After selecting a pumpkin from the patch, guests can visit an authentic blacksmith shop, wander through the quaint gardens, and savor a hot cup of coffee on a cold day. With its dedication to preserving heritage, Pomeroy Farm offers a glimpse into a simpler way of life.



U-PICK PUMPKIN PATCH AT GATHER AND FEAST FARM
October 1st – October 31st | 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily
2706 NE 369th St, La Center, WA

This peaceful destination is great for folks who want to enjoy the weather at their own pace, giving locals the opportunity to take a self-guided tour of the space. After grabbing a bag of apples at the self-service store, visitors can explore the pastures to feed the goats and the adorable Scottish Highland cows. Once October begins, the farm invites guests to pick their very own pumpkin at the patch. When November arrives, patrons can return to participate in the pumpkin recycling program, smashing leftover gourds and watching the happy farm animals gobble them right up! This annual event offers a wonderfully sustainable way to close out the harvest season.

These rural excursions provide a chance to step away from the everyday and appreciate the work, craft and history that bring people together. A day spent tackling a corn maze or riding through the fields on a hay wagon turns familiar farmland into something worth appreciating. Children can run between rows of pumpkins while parents and grandparents share stories, smiles and the simple pleasure of being outdoors together. For generations of local families, these farms have provided more than food from the soil; they have become places where neighbors can gather and stay connected. As weekend plans come together this September, consider stepping outside and partaking in these classic regional rituals.

NONPROFIT Spotlight

For information contact communitypartnerships@columbian.com



Join us to celebrate and raise critical funds in support of our mission to rescue, return, restore, rehome, reconnect, one animal at a time!

Grab your friends and enjoy a night on the town with great food, wine, stories of impact, live and silent auctions, and dancing.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

ilani

COWLITZ INDIAN TRIBE

COWLITZ TRIBAL FOUNDATION Clark County Fund

Every day at the Humane Society for Southwest Washington, pets receive shelter, medical care, behavior support and a second chance to find a loving family. Last year, we served more than 16,000 animals in our community – reaching more than ever before in our 125-year history.

And this year, we're on track to make an even greater impact, serving even more pets and families.

At our campuses in Vancouver and Longview, our dedicated staff and volunteers provide animals lifesaving shelter, essential medical care, and the second chance they deserve. We reconnect lost pets with their worried families, help pets find loving homes, and provide solutions that help keep pets and people together.

And last September, we opened our Community Veterinary Clinic. The Clinic provides low-cost, high-quality veterinary care for pets. By offering vaccines, microchips, spay/neuter and more, we are bridging the care gap, helping pets stay healthy, happy, and in homes with the families they love.

At our Behavior and Training Center, we offer dog training solutions that help solve common behavior challenges. From group training classes to puppy playgroups and private one-on-one training, our professional team of trainers helps every dog put their best paw forward.

Those are just a few ways that our team is making a difference, and this work is possible thanks to the support of our generous community.

Our annual Unleash Your Heart Gala & Auction is one way you can support our lifesaving work. This event is a powerful fundraiser, directly supporting animals throughout Southwest Washington. Your generosity helps provide safe shelter, lifesaving medical care, and the second chance every animal deserves. Every ticket and every auction bid contributes to our vision of a community where everyone loves and cares for animals.

Join us Saturday, October 3 for an unforgettable evening celebrating compassion, connection and the transformative power of love - for animals and the people who care for them.

Unleash Your Heart for the animals! Get tickets now at hssw.org/gala.

COMPASS EVENTS

FALL 2026

HERITAGE CHOIR FALL STREET FAIR

Saturday, September 5th, 9AM – 4PM

Heritage High School, 7825 NE 130th Avenue, Vancouver, WA 98682



RIDGEFIELD MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Saturday, September 5th, 9AM – 3PM

Overlook Park, 113-131 S Main Ave, Ridgefield, WA 98642





CAMAS LIONS OKTOBERFEST RUN & WALK

Saturday, September 12th

Registration Opens 9AM, Race Time 10AM
54-40 BEER, 3801 S Truman St #1, Washougal, WA 98671



CAMAS LIONS OKTOBERFEST BEER GARDEN

Saturday, September 12th, 11AM-7PM

54-40 BEER, 3801 S Truman St #1, Washougal, WA 98671





AMERICA250 SERIES: CONSTITUTION DAY

Thursday, September 17th, 4PM – 7PM

Artillery Barracks, 600 E Hathaway Rd, Vancouver, WA 98661

THE WATERFRONT VANCOUVER BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

Saturday and Sunday, September 12-13th

The Waterfront Vancouver, 695 Waterfront Way, Vancouver, WA 98660



ELKTOBERFEST

Friday and Saturday, September 18-19th, 4PM – 10PM (Fri) & 2PM – 9PM (Sat)

Vancouver Elks Lodge, 11605 SE McGillivray Blvd, Vancouver, WA 98683



AMERICA 250 FALL FEST

Saturday, September 19th, 11AM – 6PM

Hulda Klager Lilac Gardens, 115 S Pekin Rd, Woodland, WA 98674



CEDAR CREEK GRIST MILL CORNBREAD DAY

Saturday, September 26th, Starts at 1PM

Cedar Creek Grist Mill,
43907 NE Grist Mill Rd,
Woodland, WA 98674



CLARK COUNTY FLEA MARKET

Saturday, September 26th, 9AM – 4PM

Manor Grange, 17901 NE 72nd Ave,
Battle Ground, WA 98604



ALDERBROOK PARK OKTOBERFEST

Saturday, September 26th, 11AM – 10PM

Alderbrook Park Event Center,
Artillery Barracks, 600 E Hathaway Rd,
Vancouver, WA 98661

CAMAS PLEIN AIR EVENT & TRIBUTE TO MARQUITA

Saturday, September 26th, 8AM-3PM

Downtown Camas



PUMPKIN PATCH

BI-ZI FARMS PUMPKIN PATCH & HARVEST FESTIVAL

September 26-October 31st,
10AM - 6PM (Tuesdays-Sundays)

Bi-Zi Farms, 9504 NE 119th St,
Vancouver, WA

PUMPKIN LANE AT POMEROY FARM

October 1-31st,
10AM - 5PM (Saturdays & Sundays)

Pomeroy Farms, 20902 NE Lucia Falls Rd,
Yacolt, WA

U-PICK PUMPKIN PATCH AT GATHER AND FEAST FARM

October 1-31st, 10AM - 7PM Daily

Gather and Feast Farm, 2706 NE 369th St,
La Center, WA

BIRDFEST & BLUEGRASS

Saturday, October 3rd, Various Events
9AM-7PM

Downtown Ridgefield





OLD APPLE TREE FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 3rd, 11AM – 3PM

Old Apple Tree Park, 112 Columbia Way,
Vancouver, WA 98660

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S SW WASHINGTON

Saturday, October 3rd
Registration Opens 11AM,
Opening Ceremony 12PM

Esther Short Park, 605 Esther St,
Vancouver, WA 98660

HOWL-O-WEEN: POOCH PARADE

Wednesday, October 14th, Starts at 6PM

Battle Ground Event Center, 912 East
Main Street, Battle Ground, WA 98604





LUMINARIAS DIA DE MUERTOS

Saturday, October 17th, 2PM – 8PM

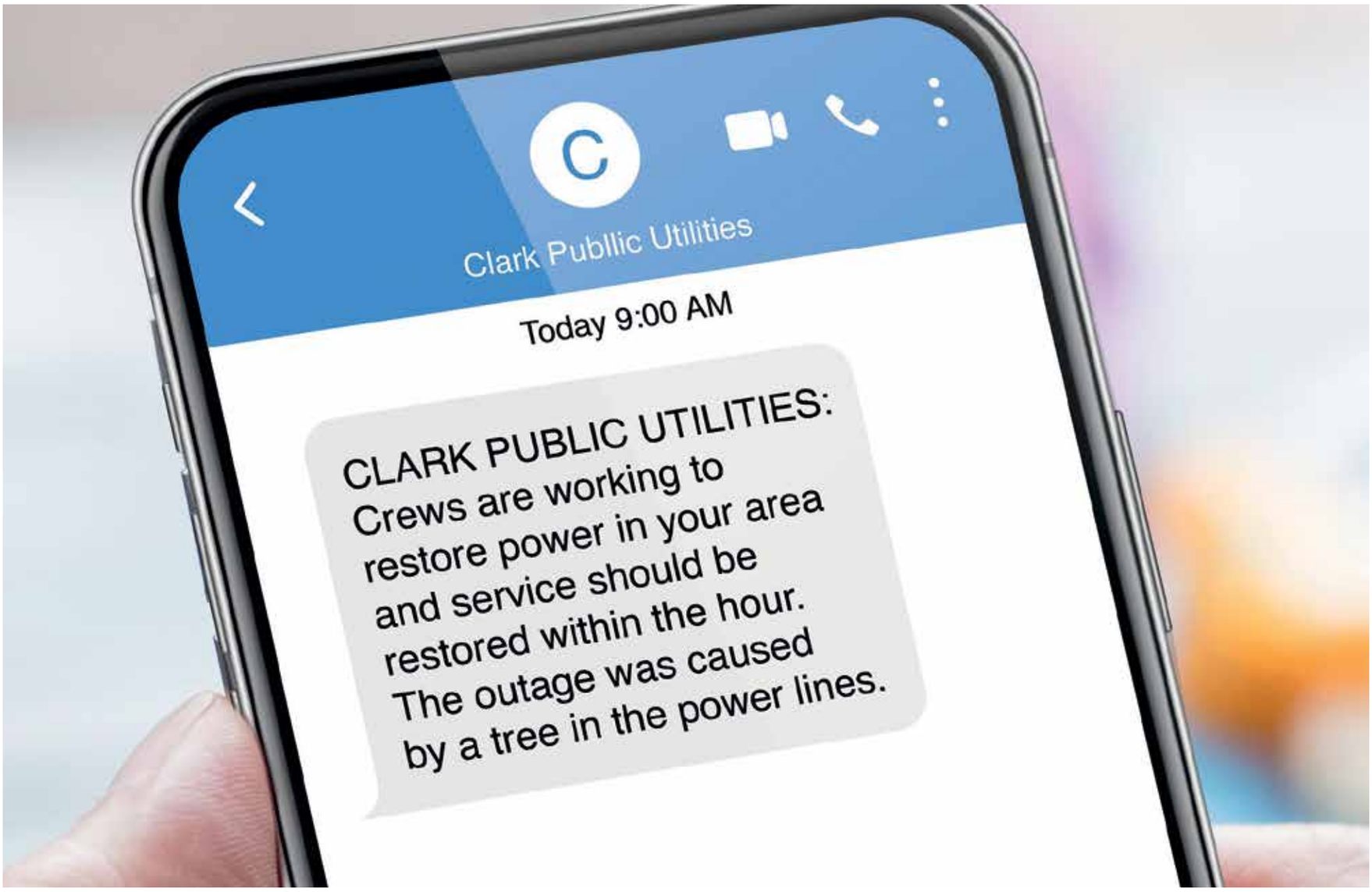
Esther Short Park, 605 Esther Street,
Vancouver, WA, 98660



CITY OF WASHOUGAL – PUMPKIN HARVEST FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 17th, 12PM – 3PM

Hathaway Park, 732 25th Street,
Washougal, WA 98671



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You expect reliable electric service, and that's our goal. We've designed, built and maintained one of the most reliable electric systems around, but as much as we do, some outages still happen, especially during winter storms. Stay informed about outages in your area by signing up for text alerts. Just log into MyAccount at ClarkPublicUtilities.com.

Clark Public Utilities

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