

United Way of Mason County hires new executive director

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

When Carrie Lemmon attended United Way of Mason County's annual dessert auction fundraiser last February, little did she know that nine months later she'd be at the helm of the organization.

Lemmon's life underwent an upheaval this year, after her position as dental office manager was eliminated at Shelton Dental Excellence, her workplace for the past decade.

"I looked into WorkSource and I quickly became one of those people that was needing to use a lot of services that I didn't think I'd need to use," Lemmon recalled of her job search this past fall. "I wasn't just looking for a job, though. I wanted to be somewhere long term."

Lemmon has lived in Mason County all 29 years of her life, and her mother was also born and raised here, having worked on the fam-

ily's shellfish farm, Blanton Oyster Co.

Lemmon considered going to massage school, before realizing that field wasn't for her.

She landed a job as a sterilization technician for dentis Richard Downing of Shelton Dental Excellence and quickly worked her way up within the company.

For the past seven years at Shelton Dental Excellence, she worked as the office manager, but when her position was eliminated in September, she had to look for work elsewhere.

"I'm involved in the community and I felt that with my sons getting bigger, they're 4 and 7, I wanted Mason County to be a good place for them," Lemmon said. "I want there to be programs and help for the homeless and the issues we're having so we can all have a safer community."

Lemmon had a vague idea of the work that United Way does, through workplace campaigns that Shel-

ton Dental Excellence had been a part of and by participating in United Way's functions.

She found the job opening for the executive director position and after talking with people involved, she decided to apply.

"If you had told me a year ago, I'd be here, I'd be shocked," said Lemmon, whose first day was Nov. 17. "I literally thought I'd be at my last job forever."

As United Way's new executive director, Lemmon doesn't expect to make big changes right away, but she does want more businesses and employees to feel appreciated during the nonprofit's workplace campaigns.

"The biggest thing I want is an employee appreciation program through our workplace campaign where we can recognize those individuals and support the workplaces through social media, letting everybody know which businesses support United Way," she said.

United Way's workplace

campaigns, where employees at local businesses band together to support the nonprofit, are a main fundraiser for United Way.

"We get grants and we do the Valentine's auction, but we rely on people in Mason County to support United Way through the workplace," Lemmon said.

Lemmon is working on building relationships with the service providers that United Way funds, such as local food banks and homeless shelters.

"It's difficult to build those relationships again; I was so well-known through Shelton Dental," she said. "I know many of the businesses, it's the service organizations where I need to build relationships."

Lemmon is involved on the ambassador's committee for the Shelton-Mason County Chamber of Commerce, the Shelton Rotary and the PTSO at Mountain View Elementary, where her two sons go to school.

She and her husband are

very active with their sons' schools, helping to coach soccer as well.

It's also important for Lemmon to show her children that it's important to give back to the community. At last year's United Way Day of Caring, Lemmon and her oldest son helped move furniture into the new homeless shelter at Crossroads Housing.

"The thing that I love about United Way is that I'm not the executive director for the shelter or the food bank but sort of the hub for these places," she said. "We disperse to all of these organizations. United Way supports so many aspects of Mason County."

United Way's workplace campaign is still ongoing. For more information, visit www.unitedwaymasonco.org or call 426-4999 or visit United Way's offices at 221 West Railroad Ave., Suite 12, in Shelton.

The nonprofit's annual Valentine's Luncheon and Dessert Auction will be held



PHOTO COURTESY OF DJM DESIGNS
Carrie Lemmon is the new executive director of United Way of Mason County. Lemmon started Nov. 17.

from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Friday, Feb. 13, at the Shelton Civic Center. To donate money or desserts, contact United Way. ■

MTA expands bus service

By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

New bus routes and increased service hours, including express trips on routes to Olympia and Belfair from Shelton, are in the works for Mason Transit Authority riders this spring, provided the agency can hire enough drivers this month.

The transit authority board approved a 2015 budget that included funding for three service change projects, however, the agency must hire between five and seven new drivers, as well as a new supervisor to train those drivers before some of the projects can be rolled out.

"We have the funding allocated for it, we just don't have the manpower," said Christina Kramer, MTA outreach manager. "We are looking at an April 4 rollout, the caveat being that we will only move forward if we have enough

staff hired to cover the increase in service hours."

Project 1 is fully funded and will be implemented with the opening of the new Transit-Community Center in downtown Shelton in April.

The project realigns all routes to service the transit center and eliminates the existing Routes 9 and 10, reallocating those funds toward a new Route 9 that will service the Shelton Mountain View

area to the downtown.

Routes 9 and 10 were originally created to alleviate Routes 5 and 7, which serve the same areas of Shelton in a North and South Loop, connecting communities in Mountain View, Arcadia, Northcliff Road, Turner Avenue and more to downtown and Wallace Kneeland Boulevard.

"We will cover the same areas, but we're making it more effective and efficient,"

Kramer said.

The new Route 9 will service the Mason County Senior Activities Center, Capitol Hill and Railroad Avenue.

Projects 2 and 3 increase service hours on routes that travel to Belfair and Olympia, however those service changes may be implemented gradually as the agency hires more drivers.

The proposed changes within the projects include a morning and afternoon express trip on weekdays on Route 6 from Shelton to Olympia, as well as two new

roundtrips added to Route 6 on all service days.

If the projects are implemented, Saturday service also will be increased on Routes 6 and 7 and a new Saturday service will be added to Route 4, which serves Belfair locally.

Route 1 from Shelton to Belfair via Grapeview Loop Road and Highway 3 will see a new morning express trip on weekdays added as well.

For more information on Mason Transit Authority, visit www.masontransit.org or call 427-5033. ■



PHOTO BY ARLA SHEPHARD
Christina Kramer, outreach manager of Mason Transit Authority, stands by a Mason Transit bus. The transit agency plans to add new routes and service hours for Mason County riders this spring.

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