



June 27, 2023

Welcome to Employment Connections' (EC) Division newsletter - *The Connection!* This newsletter focuses on sharing information to connect, engage, support, and excel.

Read regular updates on projects and programs, and messages from Director, Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi. We also want and need to hear from you! Send your thoughts and suggestions to the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#); and for newsletter ideas and comments, you can share those by emailing the EC Communications [inbox](#), and we'll be in touch with you!

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## Message from the director



Greetings, Employment Connections team,

It's hard to believe that we are half-way through the year and our new fiscal year starts next week. It is flying by, and we are making amazing headway in supporting you and the work we all do.

Alberto Isiordia accepted the new role of the division's first Assistant Director of Operations. Todd Wurl was confirmed as the Central Regional Director, and we are welcoming John Dickson to work with Jennie Weber and step in as the new Eastern Regional Director. In the next few weeks, we will post the second assistant director position. This position will be focused on quality service delivery and will work closely with me, Alberto, and the rest of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT).

We've been listening to your suggestions and are acting as quickly as possible on the greatest pain points. The Professional Pathways In-Training program is one of those. This month, we announced the end of this program. The team took great care to ensure that all Pathways participants will have the opportunity to promote to a WorkSource Specialist 4 level. Time was needed for us to determine all the options for current participants, and [WSS options](#) and a [thorough Q&A](#) were shared with EC staff on [June 22](#). Everyone impacted will have until July 31, 2023, to make their choice.

In the future, we will be establishing a project team to research and analyze training needs for the division and to look at hiring and retention policies to build a sustainable system for the EC team. Leadership will be closely involved to make sure we are designing a successful framework.



Hybrid work schedules are another initiative that we dove into headfirst. The Hybrid Service Delivery Innovation Project Team, which consists of 25 EC staff, was pulled together and quickly turned around a summary report with recommendations. Our ESD executive leaders considered the team’s recommendations, and we shared our plans for a new hybrid work model with the Washington Federation of State Employees. We are moving forward to implement the model and your local leadership will be letting you know your schedule no later than Monday, July

24. I just sent out an email with all the details. You can read it on Teams [EC – General](#).

Pathways and having a new hybrid work model were both touched on as topics in the [EC Town Hall Meeting on June 21](#). We also rolled out the Workforce Services Portfolio outlining some of EC’s current projects. These are important pieces of the puzzle, and I’m very proud of our progress to date and know that we will keep the momentum going as we address needs to support you and better serve our customers.

These accomplishments have been a team effort, and you are all an important part of our team! We have very dedicated employees at EC, and many of you have let us know you need specialized training to do this work. In response, we hosted an introduction to compassion fatigue with our own, Monty Webb, and also implemented our first intensive one-day workshops on [Compassion Fatigue and Avoiding Burnout](#). We want to hear from you to know if this was helpful and also to hear people’s feedback from the [Washington DEI Empowerment Conference](#) that concluded this week.

Comprehensive training with clear expectations is critically important for our division. Leadership is committed to looking at future training for EC staff and will have a team dedicated to that goal. We will continue to look for ways to make your work environment supportive and rewarding.

A big thank you to the supervisors, coaches, coordinators, and specialists that supported Pathways participants and help every day to provide guidance to your coworkers. Supervisors and managers are often carrying full loads with multiple responsibilities. I believe it is important for the whole team to support our supervisors, so they are equipped and inspired to lead their teams and coach new talent.

We know that there have been past division successes, and we are looking to bring back the popular WorkSource Supervisor Summits. These created the time and space for supervisors from around the state to come together to learn, share and collaborate. It is an opportunity for supervisors to get on the same page and share best practices in guiding and building teams. We are hoping to get this scheduled some time in October.

Commissioner Cami Feek and Deputy Commissioner Phil White are engaging all of us with their short videos on [ESD’s new vision, mission, and values](#). The entire Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is committed to this new foundation. The more I experience and apply our new core values, I realize the strength and purpose that each word brings. This week’s message is focused on “[Stewardship](#),” and this is the value I am most passionate about.



**Stewardship** is integral and connected to all the other values. It is the guardian that holds **equity and belonging** in high esteem. It is the guide that opens the door for **access**. It is the extended hand that keeps **love** and kindness at the center

of all our interactions and accomplishments. Stewardship keeps us responsible and accountable. It instills and builds trust, and it keeps us honorable and humble.

Effective stewardship requires that we become caretakers of resources and services dedicated for the benefit of others. Our public service mission helps define our priorities and requires us to be proactive and act rather than be responsive or passive. My goal is to be that example for our division and continue to build your trust and faith in our leadership to act and make changes that will influence our work for years to come.

The Fourth of July is next week, and we have a list of public fireworks around the state later in the newsletter. If you are planning private fireworks, please be safe and consider fire season.

I hope your Independence Day is a festive day filled with family, friends, and fun as you celebrate our wonderful country and the freedoms that come when you live in a land with a democratic heart and soul.



*Ismaila Maidadi*

Ismaila "Ish" Maidadi

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## Project updates



### ***A little bit about WIT***

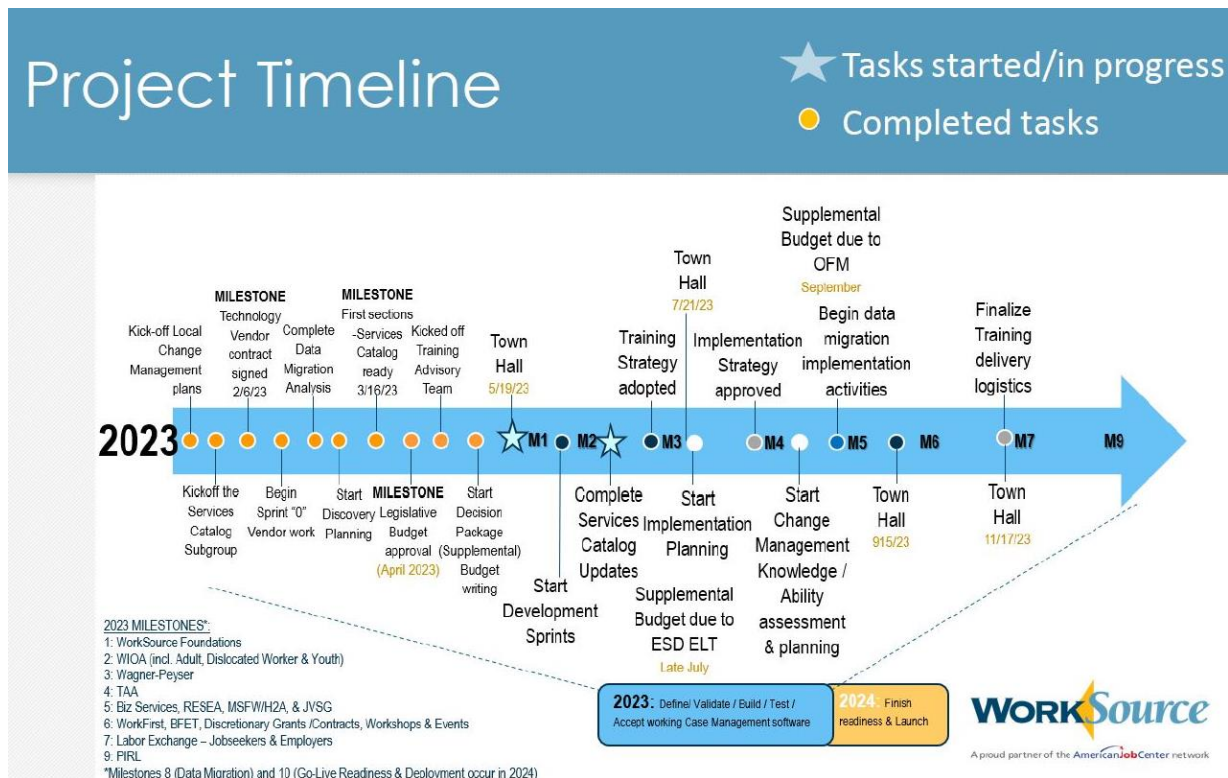
*Submitted by Michelle Griffith, WIT Project Owner*

Summer is here and we're jumping head-first into all things WIT!

WIT work continues with the product team and the lead development partners (LDPs). You may recall that the LDPs are a group of five folks that represent the WorkSource community in the product discovery sessions. This month our discovery sessions focused on discussion about Eligibility and Enrollment, along with continuing to develop a system that will meet our federal reporting requirements. To ensure your voice is part of those discussions, the LDPs act as liaisons between

WorkSource Subject Matter Experts and the product team. During last month’s WIT Town Hall, we hosted a campfire chat and heard from each of the LDPs about their experience on the WIT project.

If you were not able to make it to the WIT Town Hall hosted in May, you can check out the recording on the Workforce Professionals Center site: [WIT Town Hall: May 19, 2023](#). Here’s a tip: watch the afternoon session as you get to hear from all five fabulous LDPs.



Before we wrap up, just a friendly reminder to regularly check out the [WIT Replacement Project](#) page on the Workforce Professionals Center site. It’s continuously updated with excellent information about the project, including the most recent recordings from the WIT Town Halls, Q&A documents, and project status updates.

Until next month...that’s a little bit about WIT!

**Out and about: Creating connections. Building belonging.**

**Highlights from Employment Connections Central Region.**



Early in June, Employment Connections' Director, Ismaila Maidadi, and Assistant Director, Alberto Isiordia, were joined by Ayanna Colman, Director – equity, diversity and inclusion, Marie Burrows, Director of people and culture, and Ardriel Galvan, WorkSource IT Systems Supervisor visited five WorkSource centers and affiliate locations in Wenatchee, Okanogan/Omak, Central Basin/Moses Lake, Mattawa Outstation, and Kittitas/Ellensburg. Here are some highlights and a few candid moments with our WorkSource teams.

When leaders visit our local WorkSource centers, they learn about all the good work that is going on in communities around the state, and this trip did not disappoint. Everyone connected through sharing testimonials and success stories along with pain points and frustrations for staff with requests for support and proposed solutions. Whether its resources, software, hardware, or about process, we know that it's tough to deliver on services when the workday could run more smoothly. We need to understand the challenges to help improve operations and make it easier to delivery great service.

In **WS Wenatchee**, like other centers, they have some positions to fill and are down a few staff members. Since the work doesn't stop, that means the team is filling the gap to make sure that customers are served. There were IT challenges related to online classes, processes when staff are leaving, and conversations on program requirements and marketing support. The day was one of listening, understanding, and prioritizing remedies – no matter the size of the problem or the request involved. It is an open conversation with all team members involved – from front desk and team support to senior specialists and administrators.



*WS Wenatchee: Leadership takes time to listen to local trends and needs. Pictured left to right: Nicole Conner, Instructor; Maria Maravilla, Business Services; Todd Wurl, Central Regional Director; Ismaila Maidadi, EC Director; Ayanna Colman, Director of EDI; Ardriel Galvan, WS IT Systems Supervisor, ITSD.*

For **WS Okanogan** in **Omak**, every topic was covered in our meetings — from administrative questions on salary levels and grant work supporting Latino businesses to recognizing the breadth of outreach achieved for the Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker program. When offices are more remote, it can take longer to get issues fixed, and that's when team members learn to wear multiple hats to meet local center and jobseeker needs. Creative solutions to meet customer and business needs are many and WS teams have shown how innovative and resourceful they can be.

**WS Central Basin's** team in **Moses Lake** started their meeting with introductions and why they loved their jobs. There were some powerful and moving testimonials that reaffirmed why we are all

committed to doing this work for Washington communities and families. EC and ESD leaders also heard the local teams concerns over staff retirements creating a knowledge void and their struggles to help customers with critical UI and PFML questions. Leadership hears you, and solutions are in the works!



*WS Central Basin - Left to right: Todd Wurl, Central Region Director; Lora Wood, Administrator; Belen Ledezma, WS Specialist; Crysie Kluth, Business Services; Cecilia Villa, WorkFirst; David Nava, TAA; Raquel Castillo, SFS instructor; Estella Segura, WS Specialist; Eileen Boylston, CVSR; Stacey Gurley-Womack, Supervisor; Mary Brucker, WS Specialist.*

**WS Mattawa Outstation** has its own unique challenges. Running with a lean staff, they serve a small agricultural community in the center of our state, where 34% of the population is below the poverty line. Agriculture production is strong and growing with available water resources from the Columbia. The team is finding ways to partner with the local school on job counseling and ESL resources and their goal is to rebuild community presence and engagement to pre-pandemic levels. Go, Mattawa! Keep up the great work.

**WS Kittitas in Ellensburg** and other offices had Professional Pathways and hybrid work schedules as shared concerns. Printer breakdowns and maintenance were another common pain point and one that limits service delivery and creates frustration. Pathways and hybrid work have solutions coming, and the Central Operations team can work on equipment and office support. The Kittitas team is making WIOA co-enrollments to the benefit of customers and seeing if better coordination with DSHS will increase positive customer outcomes.



*A few ESD characters coming to your local WorkSource center soon!  
(Ayanna Colman, Marie Burrows, and Ismaila Maidadi — at your service!)*

*Contributed by Alberto Isiordia, Assistant Director of Operations, and Victoria Pruett, Communications Consultant.*

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## Kudos



***Honoring and recognizing 45 amazing years  
with Jennie Weber.***

We know and feel the impact of your contributions to this meaningful work and our communities. We will miss you and wish you a retirement with many stories worth telling!

**To read more best wishes and to add your own message for Jennie,  
please go to [Kudoboard for Jennie](#).**

“Jennie, you are an inspiration! I have learned so much from you over the past few months. I have appreciated how you approach the work with humility, grace, and a positive outlook. I am grateful for your leadership, mentorship, and dedication. You are irreplaceable and will be missed. Thank you!”

*Ismaila Maidadi, Director*



“Thank you, Jennie for always being so kind and taking the time to have a conversation with me. You truly embodied what a true leader should be. You will be truly missed, and I wish all the best for you in your retirement! May it be filled with lots of fun and great memories.”

*Oscar Coronado, WorkSource Specialist, WS Spokane*



“How fortunate I’ve been to have the privilege to know and learn from you for so many years! My life is richer because of your friendship! What a commitment to have given 45 years to our agency mostly in a leadership role! You have been our historian that has kept our history alive. The way you engage in sharing your stories makes me want to jump onboard every time! I have the highest respect for you for so many reasons but especially for your value lens, led by high integrity and always wanting to make a difference in the lives of others. Wishing the best as you enter this new phase of life! Cheers to your retirement as a person who gave their all. May this be some of your best years ahead!”

*Mary Zavala, Virtual Services Administrator*



“I wish you all the best going forward and want to thank you for taking the time to share your vision and philosophy on customer service when I started as a Customer Service Specialist at WorkSource. That amazing moment that happened to me when I first started, laid the foundation for just what our commitment to our customers should be and why we do what we do!”

*Bret Lancaster, Employment Development Specialist, WorkSource Pullman*



“Thank you for your dedication to ESD and its people. Your courage to take on challenges, resiliency to stay the course, and belief in our ability to grow and provide excellent services is immeasurable. You have led by example, and I hope that you take time to honor yourself and acknowledge the impact you’ve made on so many lives. Cheers to new adventures!”

*Shawndy Hawkins, WorkSource Specialist, WS Spokane*

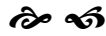


“Congratulations Jennie. I started working as an Administrator at WorkSource Redmond from July 2022. We met in-person just once at Kennewick and a few times virtually. When I heard you at Kennewick meetings, I started admiring your thoughts. The way you presented at Kennewick was outstanding.



I have also heard a lot about you from my peers. Thank you so much for the great work that you have done for many years. My best wishes for your retirement. Congratulations again!”

*Hetal Karia, Administrator, WS Redmond*



“I am thankful to have gotten the opportunity to consistently learn from you all these years. I have always admired your leadership approach and your relentless focus on our customers. It's hard to imagine ESD without you. I hope you fully enjoy this next phase of your life. In me, please know you will always have a friend.”

*Alberto Isiordia, Assistant Director of Operations*



“Thank you for all the wonderful and encouraging words and actions you have added to my life here at WorkSource Spokane. You have been a ray of sunshine and always been an example of the POSITIVE team of friends that work for ESD. You have always kept us in mind, and I always knew you had our backs in all situations. I will carry with me your friendship and mentorship for the rest of my days. Thanks for just being you. God be with you in your new and fun adventures that is be part of your retirement!! Come see us some time. We do not want you to be a stranger.”

*Bev Pogue, Workforce Development Professional, WS Spokane*



“So happy I've had the privilege to know you for so many years. I've always looked up to you as someone who was always trying to find better ways to serve our customers. I've always enjoyed your ESD historical stories from back in the good old days, Job Service Centers. You've been a big part of so many changes in the ESD world and those changes have helped so many customers get back to work or received their UI benefits. Thank You for being one of my role models when I was just starting out with ESD. Congratulations on your retirement a much-deserved milestone.”

*Rick Perez, Employment Specialist, Worker Retraining Program, Columbia Basin College*



“Thank you for all your service to ESD and to our Eastern Washington Communities. We wouldn't be where we are today without you! Thank you for your leadership and mentorship. Your laser focus on the interests of our customers is inspiring and we will continue to follow your example of customer-first. Enjoy this next phase in life!”

*Rebecca Williamson, Administrator, WS Columbia Basin*



## Resources and other updates

**We need you! Come help make a difference for local Washington communities.**

### **Combined Fund Drive is bringing fun and games back to ESD!**



At The Village Circle on June 7, Jeanne Lenz, the Combined Fund Drive Leader, gave a presentation on the Combined Fund Drive (CFD) annual multiple-agency game day fund-raising events. Game days have been a successful summer favorite with softball teams from multiple state agencies competing for charitable giving and to be the custodian of the game day trophy! These have been so successful because individuals came together to make the **FUN** happen to benefit charities across the state.

Now, with the pandemic officially behind us, we can get back to in-person events, and fully participate in playing, serving, and fundraising. For those who don't already know, CFD is our very own workplace giving program, where you can give to the charity of your choice through payroll contributions and agency fundraising events. We know it takes a village and with the Employment Connections team showing up, there will be **FUN** involved.

### **Save the Date: Join us on Saturday, August 26.**

This year, CFD is ramping up for a more inclusive, all-around game day full of food, fun, laughter, and field games. We are going beyond soft ball and including even more competitive and fun-filled events — with more fun for everyone! ESD's executive leaders are already involved and have reserved the game fields at Game Farm Park in Auburn. They are also getting competitive on division baskets and creative ideas for the raffle!

### **Take our SIMPLE survey!**

Our goal is to build **more enthusiasm, more presence, and “more” of your involvement**. We created a short survey to get your input on what works for you, your ideas for the August 26 game day, and how you would like to participate. We want and need to hear from you **ASAP**. To make sure we are including everyone, getting ideas from a lot of sources, and considering many viewpoints – we need your help. This is **your** day to make a difference and have fun every step of the way.



**[PLEASE click here to take the CFD survey.](#)**

The theme this year is **Make a Difference: Without U There Is No Us!** It would be great to break the record on ESD team participation for this traditional summer event! Let's all come together this year and make a difference for Washington communities.

We are looking forward to seeing you on **August 26 at Game Farm Park in Auburn, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. The first pitch goes out at 9 a.m.** Be there or be square 😊!

For more information on CFD, please go to: [www.give.wa.gov](http://www.give.wa.gov) or contact CFD leader, [Jeanne.Lenz@esd.wa.gov](mailto:Jeanne.Lenz@esd.wa.gov), to get the name of your local office CFD Coordinator.

*Contributed by Jeanne Lenz, WorkSource Specialist and CFD Leader, and Victoria Pruett, Communications Consultant, Employment Connections.*

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## WorkSource Lewis takes Silver in Employment Services.

### **Congratulations WorkSource Lewis County!**

The annual KMNT Country Radio Listener's Choice Awards are in, and WorkSource Lewis County took the 2023 Silver Award for Employment Services. The award came as a complete surprise to the local team. They learned when the KMNT Radio staff showed up in the office and presented the award.

*"We just do the best job we know how, every day for everyone. I guess it paid off in the award. We are a small, but mighty team that puts 110% effort into helping folks."*

— Gary Mersereau, WS Lewis Supervisor

Congratulations WorkSource Lewis team! We see you and appreciate all your hard work and dedication to the Lewis County community.



*Front row: Aaron Hensley, WorkSource Specialist-WorkFirst; Jennifer Purcell, WorkSource Specialist-LEX/RESEA; and Kim Nguyen-Olson, CVSR-Tribal. Back row: P.J. Hall, Strategies for Success Instructor; Alicia Little, WorkSource Specialist-LEX/UI; Elijah Kurzeika, Technology & Resource Navigator; Steven Ratcliff, LVER; and Gary Mersereau, WorkSource Supervisor. Not pictured: Maudie Olmstead, WorkSource Specialist-RESEA Lead.*

Contributed by Gary Mersereau, WorkSource Supervisor, and Ryan Norskog, Administrative Assistant extraordinaire.

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## WorkSourceWA.com improvements

### New feature: Notifying customers of important information online!

WorkSource staff and leaders recognized the need to communicate valuable information to our users, such as program or system updates, outages, fraud notices, or best practices.

As a result, we've added a new section on [WorkSourceWA.com](#) (WSWA) to display this important information, which has the same look and feel as the content we have today. The solution will allow ESD to internally manage the content for ongoing alerts, notifications, and important community information, without the need to rely on the vendor.

Additionally, WSWA customers will be able to view valuable information quickly since updates are published hourly instead of daily, making them more visible to site users, and readily accessible.

The first notification to be promoted on the new alerts page is the [Avoiding Fraud](#) content developed by ESD's OSI Fraud Management team.

### What customers see

We've placed three new links on WSWA that lead to the [Alerts and Important information](#) page so that customers will have more than one opportunity to visit the information. You can find those links in the WSWA banner, the Resources Tab, and in the WSWA Carousel.



### How to request content updates to WorkSourceWA.com

1. **Have approval from your Regional Operations Managers** (messages may require approval/coordination from other offices and/or partners).
2. Submit an Intake Request to Communications.



3. <http://insideesd/resources/writing-and-graphics-standards>
4. <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6471467/Communications-Intake-Form>
5. The ESD Communications team will work with you to finalize the request and then submit it to the WorkSource Systems Support Team to post.
6. For technical support, submit a service request ticket through the ESD Technical Solutions Service Desk [Request Online](#) or email this [Service Request Form](#) to [ESDDLITSDTechnicalSolutions@esd.wa.gov](mailto:ESDDLITSDTechnicalSolutions@esd.wa.gov).

*Contributed by Donetta McCormack, Business Systems Analyst, WorkSource Systems, ITSD.*

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## Month-end Inspiration: PRIDE Month, Juneteenth, graduation speeches and looking forward to Independence Day

### Time to celebrate and embrace our freedoms.

This month ESD Employee Resource Groups (ERG) [PRIDE](#) and [BEING](#) brought their game and delivered with inspiring panels of ESD speakers and heartfelt celebrations in recognition of diverse identities and freedom for PRIDE Month and Juneteenth. Here are links to a few of the highlights:



Articles for you, from PRIDE members —

"[Welcome to Pride Month](#)," by Becca Vigoren

"[All the colors of the rainbow](#)," by Wendy Music and Ellen Richter

"[Still defining](#)," by Chuck Steinhilber

"[WorkSource Everett shows up for Pride](#)," by Michelle Cochran



Read ESD Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, [Ayanna Colman's](#), article on [the celebration and remembrance of Juneteenth](#).

[BUILD](#), the statewide Blacks United in Leadership & Diversity, business resource group (BRG), held a special Juneteenth celebration on June 15. [Watch the recorded event](#) or [read an account of the event](#) by [Gary Lott](#), Commissioner's Office communications.

## Graduations are fertile ground for inspired speeches and rich life stories.

Graduates completing high school, college, and advanced degrees, are stepping from one life stage to the next, and looking to a future that, for most, is unwritten. We serve and support our EC customers – students of life – as they move from one milestone and life change to the next. Commencement speeches are akin to the Academy Awards in the college world with everyone from leaders of foreign wars, favorite celebrities, and respected politicians wielding wisdom.



We can find rich stories, humor and inspiration for ourselves, our loved ones, and our customers. Here are a couple reviews followed by links to the top 10 favorites for 2023. Read the review of the [Most Inspiring Graduation Day Speeches of 2023](#) or watch [Katie Couric's take on some of our favorites](#).

- 1) [Tom Hanks, Harvard University](#)
- 2) [Michelle Yeoh, Harvard Law School](#)
- 3) [Pres. Biden, Howard University](#)
- 4) [Oprah Winfrey, Tennessee State University](#)
- 5) [Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, American University and Boston University](#)
- 6) [Pres. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Johns Hopkins University](#)
- 7) [Christiane Amanpour, Columbia School of Journalism](#)
- 8) [Shawn Welcome, Orlando Poet Laureate, University of Central Florida](#)
- 9) [Wynton Marsalis, University of Michigan](#)
- 10) [Hamza Azhar, Outstanding MBA Student, University of Ohio \(Power of Kindness\)](#)

## Celebrating Our Independence: Things to do and places to go.



The Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day, is a day when most of us get together with family and friends to celebrate this great country we live in and to celebrate each other. It is a day when the red, white, and blue of flags and banners of all sizes are displayed with pride.

It is a day where we can step outside to our sunny backyards, smell the fresh cut grass and be proud to live in a country where freedom is honored, and life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable rights.

There is power and unity in everyone celebrating the same ideal. Make it a day to honor your freedom to choose and have fun. Wherever you are, there is something for everyone. **Get out and celebrate!**

- [Washington State: 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks celebration guide](#)
- [Cowlitz County: Go 4<sup>th</sup> Festival](#)
- [Pasco's Grand Old 4<sup>th</sup>](#)
- [Seattle: 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend Events & Fireworks](#)
- [Seattle-Tacoma metro area – Where to see fireworks](#)
- [Spokane 4th of July Patriotic Pops](#)
- [Stevenson Skamania Lodge 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration](#)
- [Thurston County 4<sup>th</sup> of July](#)
- [Tri-Cities: 4th of July Fun](#)
- [Vancouver: SW WA Fairgrounds. 4<sup>th</sup> of July Derby and Fireworks](#)
- [Yakima 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parades, Fireworks and Things to do](#)



Test your knowledge of the Declaration of Independence by taking the Free Speech Center's [Great 4th of July quiz!](#)

**Wishing you all a fun and safe Independence Day!**

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