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VOICE of the Valley

57TH YEAR, NUMBER 29
MAPLE VALLEY, WASHINGTON
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026



Since 1969



The Black Diamond Historical Society is hitting the field! They are thrilled to team up with their friends at the Enumclaw Plateau Historical Society Museum for a special joint presentation at Mud Mountain Dam. Join them as they explore the incredible geology and engineering of this site.

Sunday, August 23 at 11:00 a.m.

Mud Mountain Dam Park - Chinook Shelter
30525 SE Mud Mountain Rd, Enumclaw, WA 98022



Proposition 1 Ballot Measure
Annexation into Puget Sound Regional Fire Authority
August 4 Election Day



In just a few days, King County will start mailing ballots for the August 4th special election, and Proposition No. 1 for King County Fire Protection District #47 will be on there. Our fire district's levy rate has gradually dropped to about \$0.54 per \$1,000 of assessed value due to limits on annual property tax growth, even though districts are authorized up to \$1.50.

Proposition No. 1 would restore the levy to \$1.00 per \$1,000, starting in 2026 for collection in 2027, which is the same rate voters approved back in 2008 to support local fire and EMS services.

This week is a great time to make sure your voter registration and mailing address are up to date so you're ready when your ballot arrives, every vote on Proposition No. 1 will help determine the future of fire protection and emergency medical response in our community.



The August 4 ballot will include a measure asking voters whether to create a Covington Park and Recreation District (CPRD). Common questions residents are asking include what is the CPRD and how is it funded. The CPRD is a separate local government entity that can provide funding for park and recreation improvements, maintenance, and projects. It would be funded through a property tax levy if approved by the voters. To learn more about the specific levy rate and what the potential costs to homeowners could be based on home values, visit www.covingtonwa.gov/cprd

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“100 Years of Kimonos” Exhibit at Neely Mansion

Fashion Meets History at this exhibit featuring a variety of kimonos dating from the 1860s through the 1960s. Collector and amateur historian Devin Dondero will discuss the collection and background of the various garments, many of which reflect the spirit of the times in which they were produced. He will present a brief kimono dressing demonstration at 1pm.

Tour the Mansion and 1930 Japanese bathhouse, built by one of the two Japanese farming families who leased the Neely property for over 20 years.

Complimentary admission - Donations are appreciated
Saturday, July 25, 2026 Noon to 4 p.m .
Neely Mansion
12303 SE Auburn-Black Diamond Road, Auburn, WA 98092
(East of the Highway 18 Auburn-Black Diamond Road Exit)
www.neelymansion.org

NHRA Thunder Is Coming

By Bill Archer

The National Hot Rod Association is bringing the thunder to Pacific Raceways this weekend **July 24th to 26th**. This is the weekend we all look forward to, the Muckleshoot Casino Resort NHRA Northwest Nationals. The three-day racing action will be electrifying as the “Fastest Sport on the Planet” takes to the premiere quarter mile in the Northwest.

Top Fuel, Funny Car, and Pro Stock will be competing for the coveted “Wally” at the end of the three-day event. Drivers such as Antron Brown, Tony Schumacher, Leah Pruett, Justin Ashley and others will be on hand in Top Fuel. Funny Car has Ron Capps, Matt Hagan, Jack Beckman, Alexis DeJoria to name a few ready to battle it out for Countdown points. Can’t forget drivers such as Dallas Glenn, Erica Enders, Greg Anderson and others competing in the Pro Stock class.

In addition to the pro classes will be the Sportsman drivers and teams from around the country and Canada all in search of their share of greatness from winning in the Northwest.

They also will be looking to add points for their chance at the Championship in their respective classes at the end of the season. Local drivers from in and around the State will be competing in the classes of Super Stock, Stock Eliminator, Super Gas, Super Comp, Super Street, Top Sportsman, Top Dragster and Competition Eliminator, and of course Top Alcohol Dragster and Top Alcohol Funny Car will be lighting up the quarter mile.

If that is not enough then get ready for the Mission #2Fast2Tasty Challenge racing in Top Fuel, Funny Car and Pro Stock . The pro classes will be qualifying with Friday and Saturday sessions and eliminations begin Sunday after **Pre-Race Ceremonies at 10:00 AM.**

Tickets are available at www.nhra.com or by calling Pacific Raceways at (253) 639-5927. We haven’t had much rain in the Northwest lately, but next weekend there will be plenty of thunder as the NHRA is on its way to Pacific Raceways. So, make sure that you do not miss all the action of the 2026 Muckleshoot Casino Resort NHRA Northwest Nationals. Need any more information, then check out www.pacificraceways.com.



HOPE FELLOWSHIP

Are you wondering if there’s a God and what place He should have in your life? Join us Sundays! Sing to contemporary music. Hear the Bible explained simply. Keep your money. Wear normal clothes. Nursery and children’s program provided. Did we mention coffee? Visit either at 9 a.m. or 10:45 a.m. Hope Fellowship, 21115 Kent Kangley Road just past Sawyer’s Village. 425-432-5114. www.HopeFellowship.net

TAYLOR CREEK CHURCH

A place for you to grow in your relationship with the Lord and fellowship with His people. We invite you to join us each Sunday for Sunday School Classes for all ages at 9 am, and for our Worship Service with verse-by-verse teaching of the Word of God at 10:15 am. (Children’s Church and Nursery are provided through Kindergarten) A cry room is provided for nursing mothers with a video feed of the service.

We invite you to also join us throughout the week for personal encouragement and spiritual growth through Adult Small Group Bible Studies, Studies for Men, Studies for Women, as well as Youth Ministry (grades 7-12) and Adventure Club (ages 3 through grade 6).

We are located at 21110 244th Ave. SE (right off Hwy 18). For more information about our church or other activities, please call the church office at (425) 432-0634 or visit our website at www.taylorcreekchurch.org. Senior Pastor: Jason Katen

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Making People Our Excuse

I get to talk to a lot of people as a pastor, and it usually is not because they are coming to me for counseling but rather in passing conversation. I have found it interesting that when a person finds out I am a pastor, they often tell me what they believe and why they do not go to church anymore. One of the more common excuses for not going to church is that the Christians they know who go to church are hypocrites.

Now, there is a certain amount of irony here, but should people stay away from church because of hypocrisy or because they don’t want to be a hypocrite? This is the worst thing you can do. We need to be honest with ourselves. We are all hypocrites to some extent, as no one is perfect. However, this does not excuse hypocrisy but shows us our need for Jesus.

We must understand that when a person truly does become a Christian, it is the start of a relationship where God begins to transform the heart. Those who are indeed children of God will have new convictions over sin they did not have previously and a new desire to please Him because Christ lives in us. We are His. God’s word says that those who trust in Christ are to lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit. He instructed believers to become renewed in the spirit of their mind and to put on the new self that is in the likeness of God. – Ephesians 4:22-24. In other words, it is like changing clothes, taking off the old and putting on the new. It is the process of those old habits being changed to reflect a new heart that has been changed by Jesus Christ.

It does not happen overnight. We cannot expect perfection. However, that does not mean we should not strive to be like Christ. As the Apostle Peter makes clear writing, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.” - 1 Peter 1:14–16. Christ does not command what he does not enable – John 15:1-5.

Those who are truly Christians will have conviction over sin. If they do not, they are not truly Christians or are clouded by their sins.

Finally, we must understand that going to church is not primarily about other people but about being under the instruction of God’s Word and worshiping the Lord together. God will deal with all, including the hypocrite. We need to be concerned with our own soul. It is not man who is the judge, but God. Something that all people should remember in the days we live in as the Apostle Paul warns, “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS...” Romans 2:4–6

Don’t be a hypocrite! See you at church! Service begins at 10:15 AM. Taylor Creek, 21110 244th Ave. S.E., Maple Valley. Find out more at www.taylorcreekchurch.org.

GoodGuys Return to Seattle

By Bill Archer

Next weekend **July 24th - 26th** the GoodGuys Rod and Custom Association are headed for the Washington State Events Center in Puyallup for the 38th Griot’s Garage Pacific Northwest Nationals this year presented by Wicked Fabrication.

This is the best of the best when it comes to vintage muscle cars, hot rods, customs, and classic trucks. On display for the three-day event will be over 3,000 vehicles for everyone to enjoy. Saturday will be full of excitement as there is a Burn Out Contest and don’t forget the Summit Racing Nitro Thunderfest as the exhibition dragsters come to life. There is also the model car display, vendor booths, pinstripping artists and from the Impalas’ Car Club a special Lowrider display.

If you have never taken in this event then you might want to head out to the Washington State Events Center this weekend. If you have a love for rod and custom cars and trucks then this is your weekend.

To purchase tickets or register a vehicle go to, www.goodguys.com/pnwn. Hope to see you there.

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When Coal Was King

By Bill Kombol

Knowledge is most easily preserved in written words. Oral histories can last generations, but they lack the permanence of scripted accounts, which survive the ages. While the legendary Library of Alexandria preserved the wisdom of the ancient world, it was Gutenberg's printing press that eventually made books accessible to everyday people.

This legacy of free, shared knowledge traveled widely and even found homes in coal mining towns. Black Diamond's first-known library was fittingly housed in the Pacific Coast Coal Hotel, located at the corner of Railroad Avenue and Baker Street on the Fraternal Order of the Eagles' parking lot.

After a 1914 fire in the downtown district consumed two hotels, a meat market, and a bakery, PCC built a two-story hotel with 67 rooms, with three toilets, 13 plumbing fixtures, and a coal-fired steam boiler for heat. The hotel, built in 1916, housed single miners, as families typically rented company-provided homes. A small room was set aside as the library, and lending books were gathered by the Parent-Teacher Association with donations from townspeople. With so many single men in residence at the hotel, young women were not allowed to visit the library unless they went in pairs or with chaperones.

As coal mining declined in importance in the early 1920s, Pacific Coast began selling properties. In 1922, the library was relocated to the back room of the real estate office in the railroad depot, which now serves as the Black Diamond History Museum. As reported in the May 24, 1922, Pacific Coast Bulletin, the library was open four days a week and had just received 380 new books. Victoria Niemczyk was the librarian. It remained in the depot for 35 years, by which time trains had long abandoned the downtown district. The library closed briefly during World War II.

Thanks to the efforts of Gladys Cobb, a longtime schoolteacher and wife of Frank Cobb, the school's principal, the library became part of the King County Rural Library District around 1943. In March 1957, the Black Diamond library was moved to the old teacher's cottage, shown in this March 18, 1940, photo. The home was built in the early 1900s to house primarily single women hired as schoolteachers.

When Pacific Coast began liquidating their company town in 1939, the teacher's cottage was deeded to the Black Diamond School District, which offered the site to the library. It was located next to the First Presbyterian Church, a 1910 wooden structure that burned to the ground in the early morning hours of January 5, 1959.

To convert the aging home, members of the PTA and other volunteers



installed sheetrock over wooden walls, installed new shelving, laid linoleum, and painted to spruce up the structure. A.R. Botts leveled the ground in front of the library, while Ann Steiert, co-founder of the Black Diamond Historical Society, donated curtains. Jewell McCloud and Ruth Zumek were librarians. Jewell's husband, Darrel McCloud, built the shelving, magazine racks, checkout desk, and stools. Bonnie Merrill succeeded as librarian, and Alice Norton served later.

Black Diamond was incorporated as a city on February 19, 1959, by a narrow vote of 170 to 144. By the mid-1960s, plans were afoot to build a proper city hall that would also house the police station and library. Construction began in July 1967, financed by a \$67,000 general obligation bond approved the prior November.

On Sunday, April 28, 1968, the new 4,206-square-foot building was dedicated in a ceremony featuring Rev. Donald Klinger, delivering the invocation; Mayor Louie Zumek, providing a welcome address; remarks by the town's first mayor, Lloyd Hagen; plus, a benediction by Father Charles Cross. The combined city hall, police station, and library building was constructed on the site of the old Presbyterian Church and adjacent to the teacher's cottage. Today, the library portion of the former City Hall is used for Black Diamond Council meetings.

In 1990, the local library was absorbed into the King County Library System (KCLS). As the space needed for City Hall increased, it was time for the peripatetic library to find a new home. In 1991, the library's book collection was moved from City Hall to a 2,000-square-foot portion of a larger building on Roberts Drive constructed by then councilman Mario Sorci for his Anesthesia Equipment Supply Company.

In the fall of 2001, KCLS began searching for a new library site. At a meeting that fall, citizens gathered with the library system director, Bill Ptacek, and a three-acre lot on Jones Lake Road with commanding views of Mt. Rainier and the lake was selected. An agreement was signed with the property owner, Palmer Coking Coal Co., but the City of Black Diamond's condition that KCLS build a sidewalk from the elementary school to the library squelched the deal. Instead, a two-acre site was acquired on Roberts Drive, where a 5,000-square-foot

facility was constructed. In May 2008, over 150 people attended its grand opening.

This brief history of the Black Diamond Library was sourced from Museum Newsletters, the Black Diamond History Facebook site, HistoryLink.org, King County Assessor records for tax parcel 084400-0975, and VOICE of the Valley & Enumclaw Courier-Herald articles.

"When Coal Was King" by Bill Kombol is published weekly in the VOICE of the Valley. This column appeared in the July 21, 2026, edition.

The 40th Annual Renton River Days is This Weekend July 24–26, 2026

The multi-day community celebration spans across Liberty Park, Cedar River Park, and the Renton Community Center. This year's festival features a weekend of family-friendly activities, live music, the beloved Chalk Art Competition, and the newly added "River Nights" evening concert series at Legacy Square.

The festival's core events offer plenty of variety across its linked campus:

- River Nights at Legacy Square (July 24–25):** Kick off the evenings in downtown Renton with live cover bands (including a Fleetwood Mac tribute), food trucks, and a beverage garden.
- Liberty Park Main Events (July 25–26):** The heart of the festival featuring family-centric activities, arts and crafts, community booths, and diverse food vendors.
- Chalk Art Competition (July 25):** Head to the Renton Community Center to watch local artists create temporary masterpieces on the pavement.
- Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park Events:** Expect exciting outdoor kickoff celebrations.

For the complete daily schedule, event times, and stage lineups, check the Official Renton River Days Website at rentonwa.gov/riverdays

Through the Decades ★ 1986-2026



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RIVER DAYS

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, JULY 24-26, 2026

rentonwa.gov/riverdays

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