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Chamber, City of Tukwila, and COAR 2019 PNW Future of Retail Summit and Job Fair A Huge Success

In honor of Careers in Retail Month, Governor Inslee declared in his proclamation, "I encourage all people in our state to join me in celebrating this industry and its workers who help our state's economy thrive." The Seattle Southside Chamber, the City of Tukwila, and COAR gathered together top industry experts last Friday to do just that—celebrate the retail industry.

At the DoubleTree in Southcenter, over 80 attendees heard from Lisa Bridge, President of Ben Bridge Jewelers, who delivered a keynote to kick off this event. The program was then followed by a panel discussion co-facilitated by Sandeep Krishnamurthy, Professor and Dean at the University of Washington School of Business, and Renée Sunde, CEO of the Washington Retail Association. This diverse panel of industry leaders also included: Jason Dyer, General Manager of Westfield Southcenter; Karen True, Director of Business and Community Development for the Alliance for Pioneer Square; Tamara Marsh, Store Manager of Nordstrom at Southcenter; James Thomas, Senior Manager Inclusion Diversity Equity and Accessibility at Starbucks; and Alesha Shemwell of Kemper Development Company. Thanks to a media sponsorship with South King Media, 458 additional guests joined to watch the Facebook LIVE broadcast as the panel discussed the current state of retail in the Pacific Northwest as well as what the future holds.

"We were proud to help co-host this opportunity to bring regional business leaders together to interact, engage, and discover new opportunities," offered President/CEO of Seattle Southside Chamber, Andrea Reay.

In conjunction with the Summit, there was also a job fair at Westfield Southcenter in the Macy's Court. More than 140 job seekers came to visit and interview with over 25 employers as well as receive free professional headshots courtesy of Crain Photography. Those employers brought over 378 open positions in total and were able to conduct at least 41 interviews and receive 44 completed applications. According to participating employers—which included companies such as Ben Bridge Jeweler, Macy's, and AMC Theaters—more than 164 interactions were considered to be with qualified potential candidates.

"We were excited to provide this opportunity and environment within Westfield Southcenter for employers, job seekers, and community partners alike," said Christine Young from Port Jobs' Center for Onboarding and Advancement in Retail (COAR). "It was great to see everyone meeting, engaging, and sharing information surrounding career opportunities and community services."

Brandon Miles, Business Relations Manager for the City of Tukwila, was appreciative of the day's events. "Thank you to the Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce and Port Jobs for putting on a great Summit and job fair. Tukwila has always been a leader in Seattle's retail economy and so it's fitting both events would be here."

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About the Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce: The Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit business organization that has served the communities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, SeaTac, and Tukwila

A Voice for Business, A Leader in the Community

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since 1988. The Chamber focuses on business advancement in the region by helping to build and maintain a strong economic environment.

About the City of Tukwila: Incorporated in 1908, the City of Tukwila is one of the most diverse cities in the United States, with more than 80 languages spoken in the Tukwila School District. While 20,000 people call Tukwila home, during the day, Tukwila becomes one of Washington State's largest cities, with more than 150,000 people coming into the city daily to work, shop, play, and dine. Long at the center of commerce in Washington State, Tukwila is home to many well-known businesses such as Boeing, BECU, Top Pot Donuts, Seattle Chocolates, and Rainier Industries. Tukwila is also a retail powerhouse; home to the largest shopping center in the Pacific Northwest, Tukwila generates \$2.5 billion in taxable retail sales annually.

About Port Jobs, Center for Onboarding & Advancement in Retail (COAR): Port Jobs is delighted to lead the new Center for Onboarding and Advancement in Retail, in partnership with the Seattle King County Workforce Development Council. Modeled on the successful Airport Jobs and Airport University programs at Sea-Tac Airport, COAR focuses on the Southcenter District. Onsite training and scholarship opportunities for entry-level workers, with support from employers and anchor tenants, will strengthen employee retention and promotion in this retail and dining sector. Thank you to The National Fund for Workforce Solutions and The Walmart Foundation for funding this initiative!

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