



THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2026
YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

PAUL CATHCART, SAM GODWIN, BRIAN PEARSON
AND ELIZABETH HARGRAVES
GLOBAL AG EXPO FIRA USA COMES TO YAKIMA

Create
Lasting
Impact



October 20th through the 22nd Yakima is hosting FIRA USA, the premier trade show and conference that brings together growers, technology builders, robot manufacturers, researchers, investors, and media under one roof to accelerate the adoption of autonomous and agricultural technology solutions. Co-organized by Yakima County Development Association and Yakima County, with the support of the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission, it puts Yakima County on the map as the go-to location for

ag tech innovation and investment.

Moderating the panel discussing is **Dr. Ines Hanrahan, Executive Director of the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission**. She leads the Commission's research investments and partnerships, helping provide growers with the tools and knowledge needed to improve productivity, quality, and global competitiveness. Originally from East Germany, Dr. Hanrahan now manages a commercial orchard near Yakima with her husband and son. This week's program will feature a panel discussion on what this event means for Yakima county and our agricultural industry. The panel includes:

Paul Cathcart, R&D, Washington Fruit and Produce

Paul Cathcart is the area manager for Chiawana Orchards. Paul manages five ranches in Ellensburg and Cowiche, primarily planted with Honeycrisp apples. His responsibilities include budgeting, spray and irrigation planning, work orders, and labor supervision. Outside of work, Paul enjoys skiing and playing tennis.

Sam Godwin, Owner, Godwin Family Orchards

Sam Godwin grew up on his family's fruit farm near Tonasket, Washington. He earned an engineering degree from Washington State University and an MBA from Seattle University before spending 15 years with Boeing. In 2002, he returned to farming and has since built extensive experience in the tree fruit industry, including serving as CIO for Chelan Fresh Marketing. Sam and his family continue to operate Godwin Family Orchards.

Dr. Brian Pearson, Director, OSU Mid-Columbia Research and Extension Center

Dr. Brian Pearson is Director of Oregon State University's Mid-Columbia Agricultural Research and Extension Center and an Associate Professor of Horticulture. His work focuses on improving tree fruit production through digital agriculture, robotics, mechanization, and other emerging technologies. He collaborates with researchers and agricultural industry partners across the Pacific Northwest and Europe.

Elizabeth Hargraves, Senior Enterprise Account Executive, Orchard Robotics

Elizabeth Hargraves has more than five years of experience helping Pacific Northwest growers and packers adopt agricultural technologies, including artificial intelligence, computer vision, and farm-management software. She also brings nearly a decade of experience leading organizational change and project transitions for Fortune 500 companies.

**FOR THURSDAY'S
MEETING**

Greeters – Dennis Carlson, Elisabeth
Tutsch

Inspiration – Lila Cohen

Sergeant-at-Arms – Kelly Gasseling

Program – Jon Smith

Attendance – Jake Hambly

ROTARY PICNIC



Mark your calendar for Thursday, September 17th from
5pm – 7pm for an evening of games, activities, face
painting, and shave ice at the Yakima Tennis Club.

Grab a refreshing drink from the Tennis Club Cafe, and a delicious meal
from the food trucks. Lounge inside the club house or relax in the
grassy area.

ALL YAKIMA ROTARY SOCIAL

Tuesday, August 25th all three Yakima Rotary clubs, District Governor Jill Leonard, and Yakima Rotaract will enjoy Pint Night at The Kiln Taproom located at 815 S 72nd Ave from 6pm to 9pm.

A portion of the proceeds will go to benefit Yakima Rotaract to support their projects that include an expansion of their pollinator garden, annual scholarship, Kissel Park toddler playground, and a Liberia Maternal Health Clinic. You purchase your own delicious food and beverages – we supply the fun and fellowship!



REVIEW

August kept its reputation for being the dog days of summer and we were grateful for the cool comforts of the Convention Center. President John opened the meeting and thanked Corey Burck who greeted everyone as you arrived. Joe Biondi shared an inspirational message that was a powerful reminder that love and determination can overcome incredible challenges. Bob Romero’s legendary sergeant-at-arms trivia was once again a highlight. Best wishes as he heads into retirement and will be leaving the area. Other things mentioned were the need for volunteers to deliver backpacks to Adams Elementary. Contact the Rotary office if you would like to help. Donations collected last week for the White Swan Fire Relief fund, plus an additional \$1,600 approved by the board, bring our total contribution to more than \$4,000. Social Committee Co-Chair Jedean Corpron announced the Rotary Picnic will take place September 17th from 5pm – 7pm at the Yakima Tennis Club. See article for more information on this and for Pint Night at the Kiln.

August is Rotary Membership Development Month making it the perfect time to welcome our newest member, Brandon Jarrett, introduced by Drew Harris. Originally from East Orange, New Jersey, his family moved to North Carolina where his father worked first as a public defender, then a judge, and next a professor at NC State and East Carolina University. After graduating from ECU with a BA in English, he planned to pursue law as so many family members had done. But after taking the LSAT and gaining admission to his preferred law school, he instead chose an apprenticeship with a dry cleaner. He met his wife Emma while still in North Carolina. They moved to Washington after his wife finished her medical residency so she could join the Farm Workers Clinic in Toppenish. Since arriving, he has immersed himself in the community by volunteering at Rod’s House, Safe Yakima Valley, and helping set up the Farmers Market on Sunday mornings. He also launched his business, Eastern Select Wash, a laundry delivery service that helps families, restaurants, event spaces and more. Welcome to Rotary Brandon!

Megan Nobbs introduced today’s program speakers who shared what Yakima Valley Tech Center (YV-TECH) is, the programs they offer and the benefits students receive from vocational training. Joining Clem See, YV-TECH Career and College Specialist for the panel discussion were fellow educators Ryan Broom, Entertainment Media Projections; John Arnold, Automotive Technology; and Shelly O’Neill, Community Outreach. Both John and Ryan are graduates of YV-TECH.

Founded in 1977 and hosted by the Yakima School District, the Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center (YV-Tech) serves students from 16 Yakima Valley school districts. With the motto *Education with Purpose*, YV-Tech offers 19 technical career programs—including Automotive Technology, Business Administration, Nursing Assistant, Dental Assisting, Firefighting, Culinary, Electrical and Industrial Mechanics and more - at no cost to local high school students. Programs provide college credit, industry certifications and hands-on experience designed to prepare students for careers

with minimal additional training. Many also offer internship and apprenticeship opportunities, with efforts underway to expand paid opportunities.

YV-Tech’s 21 career center experts help students build resumes, explore career pathways and develop the skills and confidence to enter the workforce. Students also take an active role through conferences, an industry insights interview event, ASB, national competitions, a student advocate legislative team, and presentations showcasing their work. Their hands-on approach goes far beyond technical skills. Students learn 21st century workplace skills such as communication, problem solving, interviewing, and working with clients. Rather than relying on lectures, instructors give them a theory, teach them what they need to know, show them, explain it, and immediately go into a project that’s going to demonstrate that skill. The transformation in students is remarkable. Those who may begin the year shy or uncomfortable speaking, finish confident enough to interview and communicate with clients and present their work. Healthcare students experience similar growth during clinical placements, developing the confidence and professionalism needed to work with patients in challenging situations.

Local business involvement is an important part of success. YV-TECH works closely with industry to prepare students for three primary pathways after graduation: direct entry into the workforce, apprenticeships or additional certifications, and college degree programs. The goal is to ensure students graduate with the skills employers need and the confidence to take their next step.

With time for questions YV-TECH representatives emphasized the importance of community and industry input in shaping programs and preparing students for workforce needs. The discussion highlighted YV-TECH’s strong regional partnerships, hands-on learning and commitment to giving students practical skills, industry certifications, and opportunities for further education. Each fall, 200 to 250 CTE teachers and advisors, and industry professionals gather to discuss current trends, workforce needs and ways to keep programs relevant. They are incorporating AI tools into programs to ensure students are prepared for the technology they will encounter in the workplace. For example, they learn to use AI as a productivity tool to help develop ideas and scripts, while emphasizing the importance of human creativity and storytelling. Rather than replacing skills, AI is taught as another tool and used responsibly. The goal is to help students become comfortable with emerging technology and prepared to meet the expectations of today’s employers. If a student decides a program is not for them, they are able to try another program and unlike traditional college, the program is free. The presentation ended with an invitation to visit them and take a tour to see their program firsthand. It was a great look at how YV-TECH is preparing high school students for meaningful careers while strengthening the future workforce of the Yakima Valley.



THANK YOU TO OUR
ROTARY AUCTION SPONSORS!

Platinum



Gold



Trouvés

SAINT ELIZABETH'S

Silver



Morgan Stanley



BAIRD



VALLEY MALL



Bronze



Quinn & Aaron Dalan



GLACIER SALES, INC.



TERRIL, LEWIS & WILKE
INSURANCE, INC.