



## THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026 YAKIMA CONVENTION & EVENT CENTER

*Unite For  
Good*

### DR. MIKE MITTELMAN & DR. CHRIS GILMER PNW AND HERITAGE UNIVERSITY:

### HEALTH SCIENCES EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH COLLABORATION



Dr. Michael H. Mittelman became the seventh president of Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in August 2025, bringing with him a wealth of experience in military medicine, academic leadership, and healthcare innovation to the role.

His career began with a Doctor of Optometry degree from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1980, followed by a distinguished 33-year tenure in the U.S. Navy Medical Service Corps. Rising to the rank of Rear Admiral, he served as Deputy Surgeon General of the Navy and held key leadership positions such as Command Surgeon for U.S. Joint

Forces Command and U.S. Pacific Command Surgeon. His global experience includes directing the Department of Defense's medical response to the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

In addition to his military service, Dr. Mittelman holds advanced degrees in public health and business administration — an MPH from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and an MBA from Temple University's Fox Business School. He is a Fellow of both the American College of Healthcare Executives and the American Academy of Optometry. His numerous honors include the Legion of Merit, the Defense Superior Service Medal, and induction into the National Optometric Hall of Fame, underscoring his impact across multiple sectors.

Dr. Mittelman also brings extensive academic leadership experience, having served as president of Salus University from 2013 until its recent merger with Drexel University. During his tenure, he spearheaded initiatives in interdisciplinary collaboration, strategic growth, and community-centered education. His leadership style emphasizes deliberate planning, infrastructure development, and partnership-building — all aligned with PNWU's goals.

His commitment to listening, learning, and fostering collaboration reflects a deep alignment with the university's values. Dr. Mittelman's credentials and vision signal a promising future for PNWU and the communities it serves.



Dr. Chris Gilmer is the President of Heritage University, assuming the presidency in July 2025. Before arriving at Heritage, he served as Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Social Justice and as a tenured Professor of English at Tougaloo College, a Historically Black College (HBCU) in Mississippi, his second tenure at Tougaloo.

Previously, he was President of two Appalachian universities: West Virginia University Potomac State College, and West Virginia University at Parkersburg (WVUP). Earlier, he served as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Adams State University, Colorado's oldest federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), and as a faculty member and administrator at three HBCUs—Tougaloo College where he was Chair of the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages, Jackson State University where he served as a faculty member, and Alcorn State University where he led Alcorn's Vicksburg, Mississippi campus and also directed online education for the Alcorn system.

Dr. Gilmer is the founder of the National Institutes for Historically Underserved Students. He is currently chair of the board of directors for the International Society for College and University Planning (SCUP). He has served on the Tougaloo College Board of Trustees, the Community Colleges of Appalachia Board of Directors, and other national and local boards. Dr. Gilmer was the co-founder of the U.S. Department of Education's Research Alliance on Promoting Post-Secondary Success at HBCUs. He is a published author of numerous book chapters and peer-reviewed articles on higher education and social justice, as well as creative nonfiction published alongside Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors. He was chosen a Paragon President by Phi Theta Kappa upon the nomination of his students at WVUP and has served as the Scholar-in-Residence for the Tennessee Williams Festival at the playwright's birthplace.

Early in his career, Dr. Gilmer was the inaugural national chair of a network of technical assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for all 50 states and all U.S. jurisdictions. For many years, he has served as a senior consultant to the U.S. Department of Education's regional educational labs at Florida State University, RMC Research Corporation, and Educational Testing Service (ETS), having led significant educational consulting projects in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. He earned a Ph.D. degree in English from the University of Southern Mississippi and has been a faculty member throughout his entire administrative career.

## FOR THURSDAY'S MEETING

Inspiration – Margaret Filkins  
Sergeant-at-Arms – Quinn Dalan  
Program – Charlie Robin  
Attendance – Matt Crow

## FUTURE PROGRAMS

January 22nd – Classification Talks

January 29th – Lawrence Golan, Native American  
Symphony & Ballet

February 5th – Jennifer King, Celebration of Black  
History Month

## "REINVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY"

MLK JR. PEACE WALK  
Monday, January 19, 2026  
Meeting Time: 11:30am at 5th Ave and  
MLK Jr. Blvd  
Celebration Following at 1pm  
Yakima Convention Center  
Keynote speaker Tyler Monk



## REVIEW

After two weeks away we were back together as team Rotary. The song of the day was "I'll Be Around" chosen by Anthony (A.P) Peterson who shared his gratefulness for the relationships he has built and while they have changed, he is still one call or text away. Just by coincidence there was a committee chair theme as Kaylene Stiles and Shawna Groot served as our greeters; Sharon Miracle provided a new year's blessing; and Kellie Connaughton raised touchdown bucks for Rotary Charities as sergeant-at-arms.

Drew Harris and A.P. (two more chairs) kicked off this year's Jobs for Youth program. Jobs for Youth is one of the largest initiatives in Yakima County supporting high school aged youth with employment and readiness skills in the summer. Last year there were over 200 youth who wanted a job and didn't want to spend time on their devices all day. The sad part was that there were only enough resources for 20 jobs. Drew and A.P. are committed to changing that. They need your help by attending committee meetings every two weeks by zoom (call either one for a link), signing up as an employer to host a student and pay for their wages, sponsoring a job for a youth to work somewhere else, and as mentors to help with mock interviews. A QR code was provided to share your interest – it will continue to be available every week.

Drew and A.P. stayed at the podium to help Eric Silvers with a surprise presentation to Past President Erin Black who has taken our celebration of cultural events to the next level by securing sponsors, finding speakers, and taking Rotary outside our four walls – enriching our community, Rotary family, and youth. In appreciation, she received a signed jersey of last year's Black History speaker Shaquem Griffin framed with a picture of the two of them. Thank you, Erin. I can't think of a more deserving person!

We also had our first new member introduction of 2026 as Rich Austin introduced Megan Nobbs. Megan was born and raised in Yakima. After graduating from West Valley High School, she moved to Bellingham to attend Cosmetology School and began teaching and working behind the chair before moving to a career in Professional Beauty Sales. When traveling became harder with two boys, she transitioned to radio sales where she was introduced to many non-profits in the Valley and a new passion for philanthropy. She owned and operated GSD consulting for 5 years, creating relationships with many local non-profits. When the opportunity to become Executive Director of the First Tee arose, she took it. Megan loves golf, traveling, walking her dog, and spending time with friends and family. She is married to Chris, and they have 6 kids between them and 2 grandchildren. She is already being recruited to help with the next auction. We are so happy to have her as part of Rotary!

Dana Eliason introduced our featured speakers Lance Strite and Rod Jacobson who talked to us about Airlift NW and Air Methods Corporation. Lance serves as the Outreach Coordinator for Airlift NW in Eastern and Central Washington and has over two decades of experience in emergency services. After a 38-year career with United Airlines, Rod Jacobson is a pilot for Air Methods Corporation based in Yakima and is contracted to fly for Airlift NW.

Airlift NW was founded in 1982 by Dr. Mike Copass as a result of a house fire in Alaska. Forty years ago, Dr. Copass, the director of Harborview Medical Center, sat in a local community with 3 children pulled from that fire with a desperate need to get them to his level 1 trauma center in Washington. He spent 2 hours calling every fixed base operation he could find. He eventually found a pilot and a plane, but it was too late. He was determined that it would not ever happen again - the region's first critical air ambulance was born with him serving as a one-man dispatch center.

Today Airlift Northwest is a non-profit under the UW Medicine umbrella with partnerships for pediatric and NICU transports with

Seattle Children's and Mary Bridge Children's hospitals. They have a combination of rotary wing and fixed wing aircraft and are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems, meaning they meet or exceed national standards for safety and quality care. Their primary mission is to share values, goals and strategies to improve the health of the public. That includes outreach education of the highest quality free to first responders and hospitals throughout the state.

They have 6 helicopter bases and 1 fixed wing base in Washington that allows them the ability to serve the majority of the state located in Arlington, Bellingham, Bremerton, Davenport, Olympia, Wenatchee, and Yakima. Yakima is the fixed wing base; its location allows it to cover most of the state in 1 hour. Their transport missions include 911 and hospital inter-facilities. They have nurses specializing in neonatal, pediatric, high-risk obstetrics, MCI, ECMO and Impella Cardiac devices. If there is a major trauma coming in a call to Airlift will bring an ICU team and equipment to them. They can provide airway access and ventilator services. One thing that differentiates them is that they carry packed red blood cells and plasma on every flight.

Their helicopters (Airbus H135) can fly at cruising speeds of 158 miles per hour and come equipped with a spotlight and night vision goggles for nighttime support. The fixed wing planes in Yakima are Pilatus PC-12s used for large range transport and the ability to fly in more inclement weather because they are landing at airports. Staffing for both rotor wing and fixed wing include 2 nurses at all times in addition to the pilots. They take family members if needed and it meets weight criteria.

They also do early activation, air standby, and search operations. Early activation departs for a scene prior to the arrival of first responders based upon a high suspicion that specialty services are needed. Air standby moves teams to the closest airfield location if the flight time is more than 25 minutes to the scene – if they get cancelled, they get cancelled. Assistance with search operations are provided at request of other agencies at no cost. Once they arrive on a call, they seek out the paramedics and try to remain 10 minutes or less. Hospital calls take longer to make sure that patients are stable.

Air Methods provides Airlift Northwest with pilots, maintenance personal, and aircraft. Founded in 1980, it is a nationwide corporation founded in 1980 with over 5,000 employees and approximately 300 bases serving 48 states. There are 34 Air Methods Corporation employees supporting Airlift NW in Washington made up of 24 pilots and 10 aircraft maintenance technicians with each of the 6 helicopters and 3 fixed wing aircraft worth \$3 to \$5.5 million apiece. The Yakima base employees 8 fixed wing pilots and 7 aircraft maintenance technicians. Pilots work one of five 12-hour shifts per day, with seven days on and seven days off. In 2025 Yakima's two aircraft flew 1,700 flight hours (140 hours per month) with 80-90 transports per month. The six EC-135 helicopter bases flew 200 to 300 transports per month.

It was a fascinating program. The passion for those that choose to serve started with one individual and is unmeasurable today.



Past President Eric Silvers, Drew Harris and A.P Peterson presenting Past President Erin Black with a framed signed jersey of Shaquem Griffin.