



Grant County faring better than others

*By Lynne Lynch
Herald staff writer*

MOSES LAKE — There were 900 more people working this February in Grant County, than a year ago, said Terry Brewer, the executive director of the Grant County Economic Development Council, on Thursday.

But he also acknowledged the February unemployment rate of 12.3 percent as being the highest in 11 years.

Traditionally, high unemployment spikes in February and March because of the slowdown of agricultural work in the winter.

"While we're receiving signs of unemployment, there's still a lot of good things happening in Grant County," he said.

Although the economy is troubling many people and businesses, the county's economic situation is still not as bad as in other parts of the state and nation.

He pointed out the help wanted pages in the Columbia Basin Herald takes up multiple pages most days.

The same newspaper section in The Wenatchee World uses much less space, sometimes one column, he said

"It's very different over here in Grant County," Brewer commented.

Grant County was listed in a state report as a micro-economy with a population growth of 2.8 percent in 2008, which was more than any other micro-economy.

"We can be thankful for most of the things that remain strong here," he said.

He also spoke of ongoing area projects, with one being Washington Tire's interest in locating at the Port of Ephrata.

The project is moving forward.

Port of Ephrata and EDC officials traveled to Olympia last month seeking a \$1 million state loan to pay for roadwork for the expected site and other port land. The port received the loan.

Brewer said Washington Tire received their applications for business tax credits and the company's sales tax exemptions were approved.

Washington Tire is still working on its environmental and building permits.

He estimated the first phase of work to entail construction of 100,000 square feet or larger building, with jobs for 250 people.

Other projects include data centers in Quincy planned for construction by the Sabey Corporation in the summer. The company built two large facilities in Douglas County.

There are also two clients talking about building data centers in Moses Lake, he said.

Although the economy is sagging in the areas of housing, automobiles and construction, Internet activity is resulting in companies needing more data centers.

Grant County offers a stable and cost-effective environment for data centers.