



Press Release

May 8, 2023

Sierra Oliver, Apprenticeship Program Director

E: soliver@waterfrontfoundation.org PH: 360-820-9135

Deb Granger, Training Coordinator

E: debgranger@waterfrontfoundation.org PH: 360-223-3994

May is Marine Service Excellence Month

Bellingham, WA – May 4, 2023 – The month of May celebrates **Marine Service Excellence** with the launch of the busy commercial and recreational boating season. Our waterfronts pulsate with preparations for commercial and sport fishing seasons and recreational boating adventures.

In addition to our commercial fishing families busily prepping and provisioning for long summer fishing seasons in distant waters ('North to Alaska' - Southeast, Prince William Sound, and Bristol Bay), several local recreational charter companies also depart for northern waters in May. Leaving Bellingham on Mon., May 15, [Northwest Explorations](#), launches their popular "Mother Goose" flotilla. The fleet travels together north through the Canadian Gulf Islands into the pristine waters of Southeast Alaska. With a captain, naturalist, and technical support, the 'mother ship', ensures a smooth and safe cruising adventure for all.

Local celebrations showcasing the launch of the summer seasons on the water include, but not limited to:

Sat., May 13 – **Bellingham Blessing of the Fleet Ceremony** – Zuanich Point Park – 11 a.m.

Mon., May 15 – **Mother Goose Flotilla** leaves Squalicum Harbor

Sat., May 20 –

[Blaine OysterFest](#) – noon to 8 p.m.

[Bellingham Dockside Market](#) – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. – Squalicum Harbor, Bellingham

Ensuring that our boats float safely, efficiently, and adhere to all environmental regulations, requires an abundance of trained and competent marine technicians. To meet this workforce need, the **Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship** launched an official Registered Apprenticeship in October 2022 training **Marine Service Technicians**.

Marine Service Technician apprentices "Earn and Learn". In addition to their jobs at local marine service companies, apprentices participated in the "Related Supplemental Instruction" (RSI). Weekly classes and once/month Saturday workshops included hands-on instruction in twelve subject areas including general marine technology and safety; gasoline and diesel engines; repair of wooden/fiberglass composite hulls; electrical systems; paint and finish applications; and more. Each unit was taught by local Subject Matter Experts – those people who have decades of experience within this sector.

We proudly announce that the "maiden voyage" cohort of apprentices finished their first year of a four-year professional non-union Marine Service Technician training on Saturday, April 29th with a full day of outboard engine servicing taught by Calen Mahrer with the Schooner Zodiac's Bosun's Workshop. This group of apprentices now 'graduates' to Level Two RSI and will be joined by a new cohort of apprentices entering Level One. Eventually, there will be four levels of apprentices receiving this comprehensive training.

Sierra Oliver, recently hired Program Director, takes the helm of this important maritime training program. A graduate of Western Washington University, Sierra has been involved with non-profits for many years and has spent the past 5 years in a leadership role at a local veterinary clinic. She is passionate about being on the water and educating the next generation of marine service professionals.

Continued on page 2

Organized via the Whatcom Working Waterfront Foundation, the Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship begins its second year in September 2023. The classroom-based supplemental component (RSI) incorporates the curriculum from [Quadrant Marine Services Institute in B.C.](#) Operating for 29 years, Quadrant now graduates over 40 apprentices each year in three training sites, ensuring trained and competent marine service technicians.

With a thriving maritime sector in Whatcom County (over 6,000 jobs representing 7% of our region’s workforce), marine trades businesses are in desperate need of trained workers. From diesel engine repair to boat building/repair to fitting and rigging, this comprehensive, competency-based education/training program will provide Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties with the trained workers needed to maintain and grow this booming sector.

“This Marine Service Technician Apprenticeship offers waterfront businesses the clear opportunity to hire and train workers in a competency-based progression. With this program, new hires are able to contribute fully to a company’s bottom line much sooner”, says Ross Tennant, CEO/Owner of NW Explorations, Inc.

Because apprentices are required to be employed (80% of the learning is on-the-job), we are grateful to [Northwest Diesel Power](#), [NW Explorations](#), and the [Community Boating Center](#) for their partnership with this inaugural training program. We welcome additional marine service-related companies to participate as “Training Agents”.

[Washington Sea Grant](#) and [Career Connect Washington](#) have provided key financial support in developing this important educational program. Private donations and tuition for each apprentice also provide financial support.

Building, repairing, and maintaining vessels requires highly-skilled and competent workers to ensure safe and successful navigation and environmental stewardship of our marine waters. Programs such as the newly-approved Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship program, producing trained competent Marine Service Technicians, ensures that our region continues as a hub of skilled marine service technicians.



Vanessa Pena applying Gel Coat
In the composites unit



Apprentices servicing Outboard Motor

About the Whatcom Working Waterfront Foundation - A 501c-3 tax-exempt organization, the Foundation supports programs (education/training, scholarships, maritime heritage, etc.) to enhance the maritime sector of Whatcom County.

About the [Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County](#) - With over 135 members representing businesses and individuals in 7 sectors (marine trades, charter/broker/passenger boats, marine retail/chandlery, commercial fishing, seafood processing, manufacturing/boatyards, and associates) the Coalition works to promote the vitality and economic benefits of the maritime sector for all residents of Whatcom County.

#