

PASCO

New Darigold processing plant begins operation

WENDY CULVERWELL
TRI-CITY HERALD

Somewhere in the Mid-Columbia on Monday, dairy cows were milked, as usual.

The milk was collected in tanker trucks, as usual.

Then — unusually — the trucks detoured to north Pasco, where Darigold Inc.'s massive new processing plant was waiting for its first shipment.

Darigold, the Seattle-based processing and marketing arm of the Northwest Dairy Association, confirmed it processed its first shipment of milk June 2 amid ongoing construction.

The 500,000-square-foot new butter and milk powder plant on Railroad Avenue is the largest dairy processing facility in the Northwest. It employs 200 and cost a reported \$900 million, more than \$300 million over the original budget.

It is one of the most significant economic development wins for the region in recent years, ranking alongside three Amazon Inc. warehouses and Local Bounty's greenhouse operations, all in Pasco.

'Big relief'

At full operation, Darigold will convert milk from 100 Mid-Columbia dairies into butter and powdered milk for customers around the world.

It is Darigold's 12th plant. Its nearest neighbor is in Sunnyside, where Darigold makes various cheeses. Others are in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana.

Officials say it was necessary investment in Darigold's future, though one that came with significant engineering and financial challenges.

The Pasco plant began operating at least six months behind schedule and well above the original budget of \$500 million to \$600 million. In May, Capital Press, citing Darigold documents, reported milk payments were cut by 20% to 25% or \$4 per hundredweight to cover costs.

Jason Vander Kooy, a second-generation Darigold farmer in Mount Vernon, is eager to see construction give way to operations.

SEE **DARIGOLD** PAGE 2D

NEW AND UPCOMING



making space

Business owners plan shared-use commercial kitchen in Walla Walla

Katie Hopper, one of the co-founders of Goodness Botanicals, outlines plans for the empty space that will be a commercial kitchen on May 29.

Photos by Julia Eastham, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

JULIA EASTHAM
WALLA WALLA UNION-BULLETIN

When Katie Hopper, one of the co-founders of Goodness Botanicals in Walla Walla, heard that there was a need for a commercial kitchen in the area, she immediately pictured where it could go.

The answer was the new production space Hopper and Laura Hoffman started looking for to make teas, salves and soaps for their company.

"We found this space, started designing and developing the project (and) we realized we had the opportunity to integrate a shared-use commercial kitchen," Hopper said.

The Rose Street Co-Kitchen project at 940 W. Rose St. is not yet ready for bookings and is in the process of getting necessary equipment such as sinks, refrigerators, stovetops, ovens and prep stations.

However, Hopper is meeting with interested small businesses and has received "overwhelmingly positive" feedback from those looking for a kitchen to rent.

Walla Walla's closest commercial kitchen is located at the Blue Mountain Station in Dayton, which is about 30 miles from

More Information

To reach Katie Hopper about renting the Rose Street Co-Kitchen, contact katie@goodnessbotanicals.com or visit goodnessbotanicals.com/rose-street-co-kitchen for more information.

downtown. College Place is working to create a commercial kitchen at its community center, but construction has not yet started.

Some of the small businesses that have already expressed interest in booking a timeslot to use the Rose Street space include Meal Thyme Affair, Hayshaker Farm, Palette, Muffinkind and the Walla Walla Roastery.

"I've been able to form relationships with those people who are enthusiastic, excited, supportive and very patient for (the) opening," she said.

Businesses that have expressed interest in using the space once operational include farmers, caterers, bakers and small food entrepreneurs. Hopper said she is open to discussing how more businesses could use the 415-square-foot kitchen and recommends business owners contact her for more information.

Hopper said she used her experience in the restaurant industry and background of

running a small business to meet various needs when designing the space.

Some of the research she put into the commercial kitchen includes understanding the necessary licensing each business would need to operate in the space.

"Each business here in the kitchen is going to function on their own. They will have to have their own county health license. They'll have to have their own WSDA food processor license, depending on the end result of what it is they're producing," Hopper said. "So each business will have its own autonomy to run as a business, but there's going to be a shared experience here that I think will benefit small businesses."

The opening date for the commercial kitchen is still tentative as there are many hurdles to come, she said. One of the many details to be worked out includes setting rates and getting a website up for booking dates and scheduling timeslots.

Businesses will be able to rent the space in timeslots and use the space nearly 24/7. The five timeslots available include the dawn shift, 5 a.m. to 9 a.m., morning shift, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., afternoon shift, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., evening shift 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., and the

SEE **SPACE** PAGE 2D

LABOR MARKET

US job openings rose in April, signaling resilience

PAUL WISEMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. job openings rose unexpectedly in April, showing that the labor market remains resilient in the face of uncertainty arising from President Donald Trump's trade wars.

The Labor Department reported Tuesday that employers posted 7.4 million job vacancies in April, up from 7.2 million in March. Economists had expected openings to drift down to 7.1 million.

But the number of Americans quitting their jobs — a sign of confidence

in their prospects — fell, and layoffs ticked higher. And in another sign the job market has cooled from the hiring boom of 2021-2023, the Labor Department reported one job every unemployed person. As recently as December 2022, there were two vacancies for every jobless American.

Openings remain high by historical standards but have dropped sharply since peaking at 12.1 million in March 2022, when the economy was still roaring back COVID-19 lockdowns.

The Labor Department's Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary showed little evidence of cuts to

the federal workforce by billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency. Openings for federal jobs rose to 134,000 in April from 121,000 in March. And federal layoffs fell to 4,000 from 8,000 in March and 19,000 in February.

Although it has decelerated, the American job market has remained resilient in the face of high interest rates engineered by the Federal Reserve in 2022 and 2023 to fight a resurgence of inflation.

The economic outlook is uncertain, largely because of Trump's economic policies — huge taxes on imports, purges

of federal workers and the deportation of immigrants working in the United States illegally.

Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics, said the JOLTS report shows that companies are waiting to see how Trump's policies play out. "Once companies are more certain that bad times are coming, they will start to shed workers," he wrote in a commentary. "However, the economy is still near full employment. We suspect companies are still hoarding workers until they are very, very sure about an economic downturn."

» BUSINESS NOTES «

Burlington

Walla Walla's new Burlington store, also known as the Burlington Coat Factory, opened Friday, June 6, at 1648 W. Poplar St.

Following the grand opening on Friday, the retailer's hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sundays.

For more information visit burlington.com/store-locator.

Fort Walla Walla Museum

The Fort Walla Walla Museum received the Washington Museum

Association's Award of Excellence in Projects for its bilingual multimedia tour. The tour includes 26 video and audio stops through the museum grounds and is available for visitors at no additional cost.

This is the second award received by the museum this year, the other being the Lifetime Achievement Award given to James Payne, the museum's executive director.

Fort Walla Walla Museum will be honored at the 2025 WaMA Annual Conference at 6 p.m., Tuesday, June 10.

— Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

Report: Households in Washington can't afford basics, even if they're not poor

JESSICA FU
THE SEATTLE TIMES

Over a quarter of households in Washington earn more than the federal poverty threshold but still struggle to afford necessities like housing, child care, transportation and more, according to a recent report on affordability in Washington.

Often, these households don't qualify for social assistance programs like food stamps or Medicaid because their incomes exceed eligibility limits. Meanwhile, they have to contend with high costs of living and may even go without necessities to make ends meet.

These households represent an underrecognized kind of hardship: economic precarity that falls outside the technical definition of poverty, as set by the federal poverty level.

The federal poverty level "is an outdated instrument that does not consider the wide variation in cost of living by location," wrote the authors of the report. As a result, measurements based on the federal poverty level "sharply underestimate the true extent of financial hardship in the U.S."

The report was published in May by United for ALICE, a research organization affiliated with United



Ivy Ceballo, The Seattle Times file

Northwest Harvest SODO Community Market Manager Roy McCree in Seattle stocks potatoes at the food bank. Over a quarter of households in Washington earn more than the federal poverty threshold but struggle to afford necessities, according to a new report.

Way, a network of nonprofits that advocate for community well-being. "ALICE" is an acronym for "asset limited, income constrained, employed."

Federal poverty guidelines are a set of thresholds that determine whether a household qualifies for various kinds of government benefits

based on income and size. Critics of these thresholds say they are too low, especially in high cost-of-living regions.

"We know there's huge regional variation from Seattle to Mississippi," said Stephanie Hoopes, national director of United for ALICE. "Even within Washington state, the cost of living in Pierce County is different than some of the rural counties."

The authors of the report sought to calculate what they referred to as a "survival budget," the minimum cost of living in each state that would allow a household to afford all basic needs, including housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and utilities, plus some room for unexpected expenses. Average costs of basic needs in Washington were drawn from a variety of federal, state and nonprofit sources using 2023 data.

"The survival budget is that bare minimum," said Hoopes. "It's really not a great budget, it's just day-to-day. We developed that because we really wanted to understand who's ultimately struggling."

According to the report, a single adult in Washington under 65 would have needed to earn \$32,436 before taxes in 2023 to afford a

survival budget. In comparison, federal guidelines in 2023 set the poverty threshold for a single-person household at \$14,580 for the contiguous states and Washington, D.C.

A family of four, including one infant and one preschooler, in Washington would have needed to earn \$109,500 before taxes in 2023 to have a survival budget. Federal guidelines in 2023 set the poverty threshold for a family of four at \$30,000.

The study laid bare the vast gap between poverty as defined by official measures and economic hardship as it's experienced.

In Washington, 10% of households earn less than the federal poverty threshold. According to the report, 28% earn more than the federal poverty threshold but less than the minimum cost of basic needs in Washington. Combined, 38% of households in the state don't earn enough to afford all necessities.

"It's obviously several times the poverty level," Hoopes said.

In King county, a single adult under 65 would have needed to earn \$50,256 before taxes in 2023 to afford necessities, significantly more than the state average. A family of four with two young children would have

needed to earn \$138,612.

The study also looked at which occupations were hardest hit by high living costs. Cashiers, fast food workers and cooks were among those who struggled the most to afford a survival budget.

While the share of Washington households living in poverty has stayed relatively steady in the decade leading up to 2023, the share of those making more than the poverty threshold while struggling to cover basic needs has risen by 7 percentage points.

That might seem counterintuitive. Over the past few years, low-wage workers in Washington have seen significant pay increases. The minimum wage almost doubled between 2010 and 2023, the duration of the study. But in the same window, costs of living also went up, sometimes outpacing wages, the study found.

By 2023, some households in Washington found themselves financially worse off than they had been a decade prior, based on how costs climbed relative to earnings.

"People thought they were starting to get ahead," Hoopes said. "Then they would kind of turn to the side and see they weren't making progress."