



TOLEDO LIONS CLUB *presents*

FREE

Toledo Cheese Days

July 9-12, 2026

For the Love of Country and Cheese

-
- A vibrant mosaic illustration depicting a scenic view of Toledo, Ohio. In the foreground, a large white tugboat with a red stripe and the name "AMERICA" and "250" is moving down a river, leaving a white wake. The tugboat has a large wheel at the back. In the background, a blue house with white trim is nestled among green trees and foliage. A large deer with antlers is visible on the left, and a black and white butterfly is on the right. The entire scene is composed of small, colorful mosaic tiles.
- Big Cheese Social
 - Golf • Tennis
 - Frog Jumping
 - Parade • Auction
 - Classic Car Show
 - Food • Live Music
 - Beef BBQ in Park



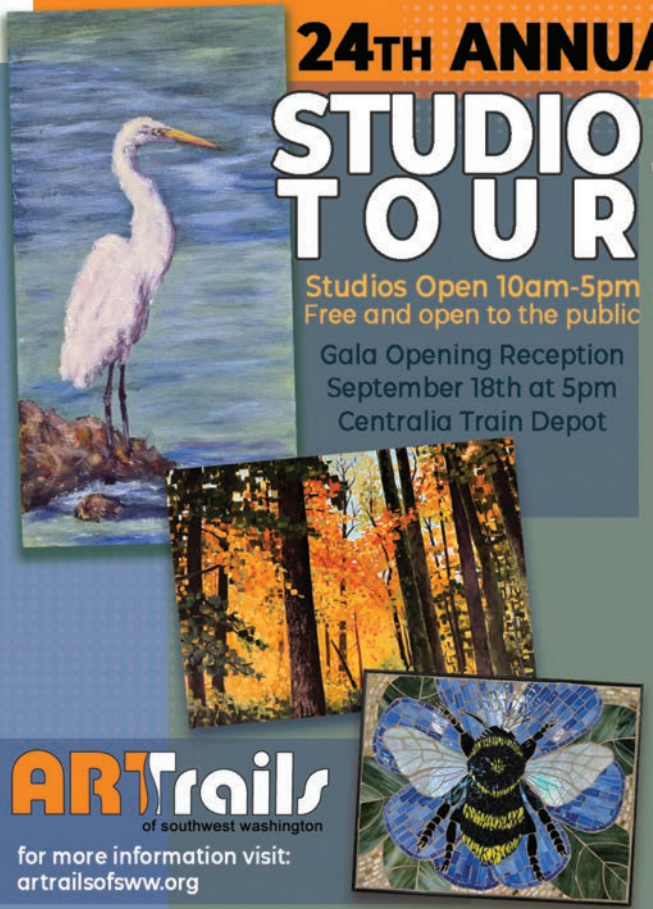
ON THE COVER

Artists Carl and Sandra Bryant of Linden, Wash. designed and fabricated a huge mosaic mural titled "Toledo" that shows Mt. Rainier, Mount St. Helens, forty-three creatures including elk, geese, salmon, birds, bugs, and Bigfoot, as well as the steamboat Toledo, a threshing machine, and a portion of downtown with the new high school.

The Bryants cut about 130,000 pieces of glass to make the mosaic, which was unveiled in the Toledo High School commons on May 4, 2026.

The mosaic was funded by the Washington State Arts Commission and was acquired for the State Art Collection in partnership with the Toledo School District.

Magazine cover collage by Jake Morgan.



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Welcome to the 2026 Toledo Cheese Days

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* Sometimes our events schedule has last-minute changes. Visit **toledolionsclub.org** for the latest updates and follow us at **www.facebook.com/CheesedaysToledo**



2026 Toledo Cheese Days Committee Members

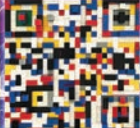
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Big thanks go to Jake Morgan for doing this magazine, TJ Downes for updating our website, and Brandie Devine for managing our social media.

Visit Art Gallery 505

TOLEDO MADE

11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Tues. - Sat.
102 Kellogg Way
Toledo, WA



Thanks to all the volunteers that make
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one of our area's best annual events!

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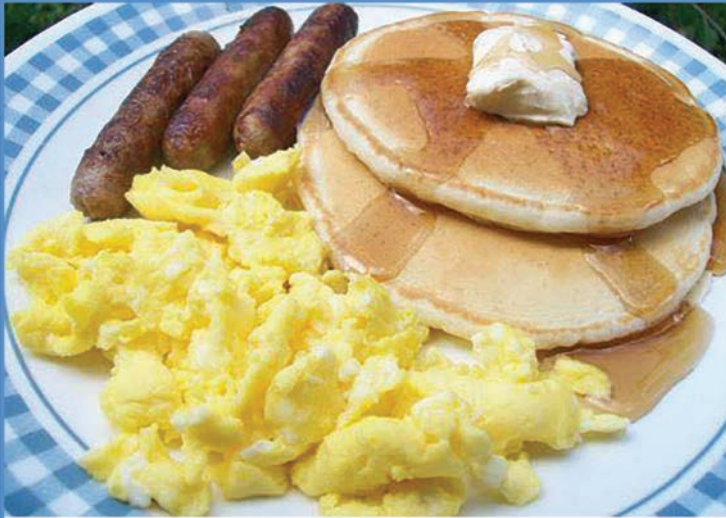
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History of Cheese Days

By Jake Morgan

Toledo once had a cheese factory that made high-quality cheese and dairy products sourced from area farms. The Cheese Days tradition outlasted our cheese factory, causing many today to wonder “where’s the cheese?”

It all began in 1919, with the opening of the Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association’s new factory on N. Second Street. Dairy farmers brought their milk to the factory, where it was made into American cheddar and pimento cheese. More than a hundred co-op members held the first gathering on June 15, 1919 at Day’s Grove and celebrated with coffee and cheese sandwiches. Everyone had such a nice time they decided to celebrate again the next year. The Toledo Commercial Club sponsored Cheese Day and included the whole community.

The factory produced more than eight hundred pounds of cheese a day. An ice machine installed in 1920 provided cold storage for public use. In 1924, the association sold the cheese factory to Art Karlen, who continued to produce excellent cheese. In 1927, the cheese factory relocated and installed a butter churn that produced hundreds of pounds of butter a day. The factory also produced ice and the protein casein.

Cheese Day expanded to include sporting competitions for baseball, tennis, and wrestling. People danced to hillbilly music and enjoyed a Ferris Wheel and merry-go-round. There were cheese sandwiches for everyone. The local Veterans of Foreign Wars post took over sponsorship of the event in 1937.

Cheese Days was suspended during World War II and the factory stopped producing cheese and focused on producing butter and powdered milk. The cheese factory burned down in 1945.



Cowlitz Valley Cheese Association members celebrated their first payday outside the factory on June 15, 1919.

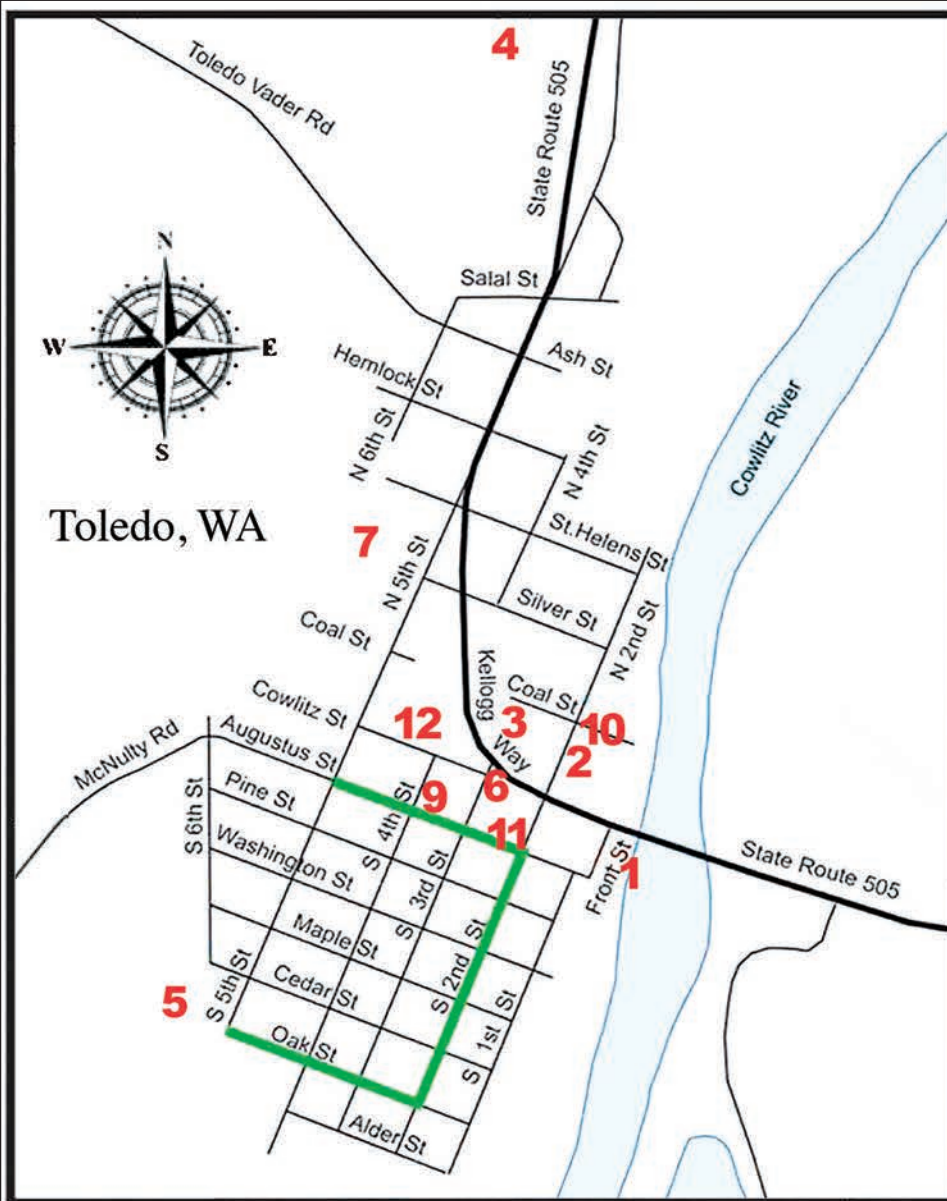
In 1948, the newly formed Toledo Lions Club restarted Cheese Days and in the 1950s they added a logging competition, boat races on the Cowlitz River, a carnival, and a farm show with bale breaking, sack sewing, wild pig catching, wagon backing, and a milking contest.

In 1962, the Lions decided to focus on fixing the new community park and other projects such as leveling Day’s Grove to create a playing field for the school, which is now the location of our annual classic car and motorcycle show.

The Jaycees brought back Cheese Days in 1975 and moved the celebration to July. Events included a parade, logging show, old-time fiddlers’ jamboree, baseball games, and dances. The Lions soon resumed sponsorship of Cheese Days and continue to do so today.

There are many active dairies in the area today still producing milk and cheese products, including the local Alpine Dairy in Ethel, which supplies the Organic Valley brand. Darigold also sources from local dairy farmers.

The Toledo Cheese Depot has a variety of cheeses and charcuterie for purchase. Also check out Vision:Toledo’s annual Cheese Days tasting garden, 3-7 p.m. July 11 at Steamboat Landing.



Newaukum Valley Golf Course
153 Newaukum Golf Dr, Chehalis, WA



This year's Cheese Days magazine was paid for by a generous grant from Lewis County's lodging tax advisory committee.

If you are looking for somewhere to stay in Lewis County for Cheese Days or other area activities, check out Discover Lewis County's growing list of lodging and places to stay in our beautiful county. Check out discoverlewiscounty.com/stay by scanning this QR code.



2026 CHEESE DAYS EVENTS MAP

1. Boat Launch
2. Fire Department
3. Gallery 505
4. High School
5. Kemp Olson Community Park
6. Library
7. Middle School
8. Newaukum Valley Golf Course
9. Presbyterian Church
10. Senior Center
11. Steamboat Landing
12. Toledo Market Fresh

 PARADE ROUTE

2026 Toledo Cheese Days EVENTS SCHEDULE

Thursday, July 9, 2026

Big Cheese Social: 6 pm

Toast the 2026 Big Cheeses at 6 pm featuring music by Dakota Robins and Mason Gaul. Dinner by Bonanza BBQ sponsored by The Paula Burrows Team, music sponsored by Julia Gaul. Tickets available on Eventbrite. Location: Kemp Olson Community Park. Contact Paula Burrows 360-520-4810

Toledo Made: 11 am - 5 pm

Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products all made by folks who live in the greater Toledo community. Contact Di Morgan at 360-864-4ART. Location: Art Gallery 505, 102 Kellogg Way

Toledo Thursday Market: 2 pm - 6 pm

Location: Steamboat Landing, 115 Ramsey Way

Coloring Contest

Pick up your contest picture at Toledo Market Fresh. Submissions must be turned in on or before July 3rd to Toledo Market Fresh.

Friday, July 10, 2026

30th Annual "Cheddar Open" Golf Tournament

Registration starts at 9 am. Shotgun start at 10 am. Four-person scramble. Contact John Sanford 360-480-4429 or Dale Pomeroy 360-324-2843. Proceeds go to the Toledo Lions Club. Cost: \$80 per person, lunch provided. Location: Newaukum Valley Golf Course 153 Newaukum Golf Dr., Chehalis, WA

Toledo Made: 11 am - 5 pm

Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products made by folks who live in the greater Toledo community. Location: Art Gallery 505, 102 Kellogg Way

Tennis Tournament Begins: 3 pm

Events: Men's Singles, Women's Singles, Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles, Mixed Doubles. Anyone 12 years of age and over is welcome to play! Pre-registration forms are available at Betty's Place or from Mrs. Armstrong. Due to scheduling, please pre-register. Balls are furnished. Trophy/Ribbon prize awards. \$5 entry per event. Contact Signora Armstrong, 360-864-2594

Frog Jumping Contest: 5:30 - 7 pm

Come have a hoppin' good time racing frogs! Frogs available for rent. Cash prizes! 1st Place: \$15; 2nd Place: \$10; 3rd Place: \$5 \$1.00 per frog/race. Sponsored by: Century 21 Lund Realtors. Location: Toledo High School football field

Class of 1984's 40th Reunion: 5pm

Location: Bateaux Cellars, 288 Smokey Valley Rd

Bingo: 6:30 pm - 9 pm

Location: Toledo High School. Proceeds go to Girls Basketball Team. Contact Brian Layton 360-864-4639

Music in the Street: 8 pm

Featuring: Chris Guenther. Location: Ramsey Way outside Donna's Place. Also: DJ at El Tejano's Mexican Restaurant

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Saturday, 7/11

Groove Syndicate @ 8:00pm

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2026 Toledo Cheese Days EVENTS SCHEDULE

Saturday, July 11, 2026

Pancake Breakfast: 7 - 10 am

Pancakes with eggs and sausage, OR biscuits with gravy and eggs. Cost: \$8 Donation
Sponsored by Cattermole Funeral Home
Location: Toledo Senior Center, 150 Coal St.

26th Annual Car & Motorcycle Show: 7 am - 4 pm

Come see cars and motorcycles from nearly every make and decade! Sponsored by local businesses. Car show application forms online. \$25 entry fee per vehicle. Awards at 3 pm
Location: Toledo Middle School Field
Contact: Teresa Reynolds 360-306-1020

Cheddar Challenge: 8 am

Registration begins 6:45 am - 7:45 am at the Toledo Fire Station. Race begins at 8 am. 3-mile and 8-mile run/walk for all ages!
Sponsored by Toledo Girls Softball.
\$20 entry, \$30 with T-Shirt, \$15 T-shirt only
Contact Sarah Hensley 360-880-9480

Library Bake & Book Sale: 9 am - 2 pm

Location: 241 Cowlitz St., Toledo, WA

Food and Assorted Vendors: 9 am

Location: Toledo Middle School. Vendors include Dukes Food Truck, Grandads Kettle Corn, J&L Ears & Rootbeers, Kona Ice, Liquid Sunshine Beverage Co., Loca Dogz, Mike's Fresh BBQ, Pagkaing Pinoy, Tacos Clandestinos, Tacos & Tortas, Toledo Cheer, The Cookie Box, The PNW Scoop, and Two Brewnettes.

Silent Auction: 9 am - 2 pm

Location: Toledo Middle School field

Toledo Made: 10 am - 5 pm

Arts, Crafts, Gifts, and Products made by local artists. We have kids' art activities Saturday.
Location: Art Gallery 505, 102 Kellogg Way

Toledo Cheese Days Parade: 11 am

This year's parade theme is "For the Love of Country and Cheese." Parade marshals are the 2026 Big Cheeses Alan & Ardith Crawford, Karen Grove, Vickie Meyer, and Mike Olson. Parade registration is ongoing. See registration forms online. All parade entries are assigned assembly and dispersal plans. Parade route starts at 5th and Augustus, moves east on Augustus to 2nd, continues south on 2nd to Oak, then west on Oak to 5th.

Trophies presented to the 1st and 2nd place winners of each division at the judges booth, located at the Presbyterian Church.
SPECTATORS: Safety is our biggest concern. Please prevent your children from getting too close to the moving vehicles. Drivers of large trucks and other potentially dangerous vehicles have been instructed *not to throw* candy from their vehicles. Toledo Lions Club members and student athletes will monitor the main parade areas to ensure crowd compliance. Parade sponsored by: El Tejano's Mexican Restaurant

Free Cheese Sandwiches

We will drive around after the parade handing out free cheese sandwiches. The Presbyterian Church will give out fresh watermelon slices.

CHEESE DAYS

SATURDAY, JULY 11TH

≡ NOON UNTIL SOLD OUT ≡



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2026 Toledo Cheese Days EVENTS SCHEDULE

Saturday, July 11, 2026

Barbecue: Noon Until Sold Out

Featuring baby-back ribs, corn on the cob, side salad, and a roll. Cost \$12.99. Sponsored by Toledo Market Fresh. Location: Toledo Market Fresh, 400 Cowlitz St.
Contact 360-864-2161

Toledo Fire Dept. Open House: Noon - 3 pm

Join us for some fire house fun! Ice cream, cooling station, kids activities, cotton candy stand, coloring contest, and meet a firefighter.
Location: Toledo Fire Dept.

Big Tent Auction: 1 pm

Location: Toledo Middle School field

Class Reunion 1955 to 1959: 3 - 7 pm

Location: Toledo Senior Center

Tasting Garden: 3 pm - 7 pm

Sample local beers, ciders, chocolates, wine, and various cheeses at vision: Toledo's only fundraiser. This year's theme is "America 250: Love the Red, White, and Brew!"
Location: Steamboat Landing, 115 Ramsey Way
Contact Mike Morgan 360-480-3092

Music in the Street: 8 pm

Featuring: Groove Syndicate
Location: Ramsey Way outside Donna's Place

Also featuring: Sucker Punched
Location: El Tejano's Mexican Restaurant

Sunday, July 12, 2026

Church Services

Attend the service of your choice.

Horseshoe Tournament: 8 am

Sign up: 8 am. Playing begins at 8:30 am
Three classes: Beginner, Amateur, Advanced.
Total payout each class. \$5 entry
Location: Kemp Olson Community Park.
Contact Stan Spears at 360-864-2096

All-Class Reunion: 11 am - 4 pm

Location: Kemp Olson Toledo Community Park

Toledo Lions Club Beef BBQ: Noon - 2

Join the community in savoring the best beef with all the trimmings sponsored by Toledo Market Fresh. Menu includes: barbecue beef, baked beans, coleslaw, roll, watermelon, and beverages! Cost: \$5. Bring your own chair.
Location: Kemp Olson Community Park

Lions Club Beef Auction: 2:30 pm (following the Barbecue)

Bid on the delicious BBQ Beef, breads and watermelons!

22nd Annual Dessert Auction: 3 pm

The Toledo Volunteer EMS and Firefighters Assn. has baked some of the most delicious pies to ever grace our green Earth, and they're all up for auction! Proceeds benefit the Toledo Volunteer EMS and Firefighters Association.
Thank you for your generous support!



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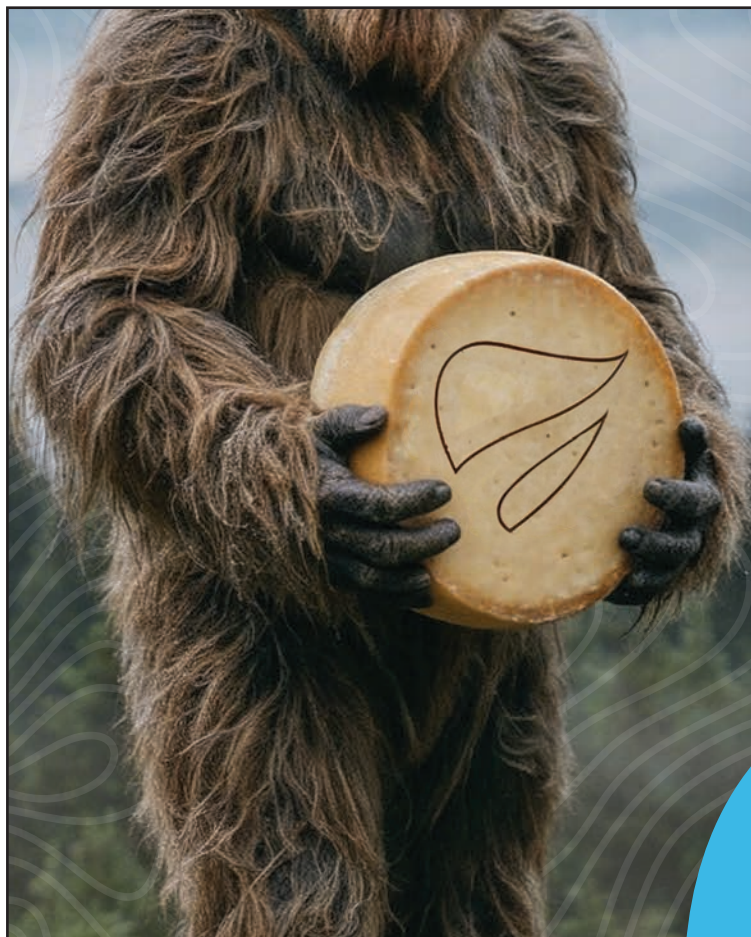
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Members of Toledo's Phil Kearney Post No. 7, Grand Army of the Republic assemble in this 1898 photo from the Lewis County Historical Museum's archives.

Toledo's First Fourth of July was a Blast

By Jake Morgan

On July 4, 1853, early pioneers gathered near present-day Toledo to celebrate both America's birthday and the birth of the newly formed Washington Territory in typical frontier fashion: with homemade explosives.

"Having no guns, we put powder into thirteen of the large fir logs and touched them off at sunrise," wrote an eyewitness in the July 16, 1853

edition of *The Oregonian*. "The people gathered quite early and raised a liberty pole. At twelve o'clock a procession of thirty couples formed and marched, with music, to the dinner table on the banks of the river. The table was canopied with boughs and spread with abundance of good cheer."

The article, quoted on page 28 of *The Toledo Community Story 1800-2019*, said after the feast there was more music, then the Declaration of Independence was read and received with cheers, followed by a ceremonial speech. Lafayette was thanked (in French) for aiding America's struggle for independence.

By 1853, Toledo's location on the Cowlitz River made it a major trading port second only

See BLAST continued on page 16

BLAST continued from page 15

to Monticello (now Longview) with a saw mill and grist mill, a general store, saloon, and a hotel. Steamboats ferried passengers and cargo to Cowlitz Landing, the furthest point settlers could travel by river before continuing over land to Olympia by horse or stagecoach.

People came into town to trade and socialize.

“School was held three or four months during summer months,” wrote W.A. Rogers on page 154 of *The Toledo Community Story*. “Many of the children had to walk two miles or more over trails through the dense forest.”

The Indian uprising of 1855-1856 and the American Civil War from 1861-1865 had early pioneer families on high alert, then waves of immigrants came to or through Toledo, first by steamboat, then by train through Winlock and Vader.

In 1883, the community pooled contributions to purchase a 10' x 20' American flag made of wool (*Toledo Community Story*, page 178). The Phil Kearney Post No. 7, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), had a large and active membership, as did its ladies auxiliary called the Wom-

en's Relief Corps. These patriotic volunteers organized Decoration Day in May and Independence Day in July. The GAR Hall was built in 1888, located on Cowlitz Street between Second and Third streets (*Toledo Community Story*, page 160).

Decoration Day

“On Decoration Day we prepared bouquets from our gardens for the graves of our loved ones,” wrote Ida Lyon on page 136. “All the old soldiers, GARs, met at the GAR hall and marched to the cemetery. My husband had two grandfathers that marched in that group ... After decorating the graves, everyone went to the grove south of town on the Miller place ... There a stage would be erected and a plank seat for everyone's comfort (?), with a prepared program of music, reading, and a patriotic address delivered by a special guest. It was a solemn occasion honoring those old soldiers living as well as those who had given their lives for their country.” School children participated by carrying flags and flowers to the cemetery, and afterwards joined in a taffy pull.

“The Women's Relief Corps was very active

in those days and always helped the Grand Army of the Republic with the day's services,” Lizzie Arrington wrote on page 70. “The soldiers in their blue uniforms bore the flag proudly to the beat of the drums and carried flowers to decorate the graves of their dead.”

Carl Motter recalled walking for miles to attend Decoration Day dances in 1885.

“My father had a homestead three miles from Toledo on the road to Winlock,”



Toledo residents honored their fallen war dead on Decoration Day.

Motter wrote on page 130. "The evening of [May] 29th, a boy from Mossyrock came along the road and invited me to go with him to Toledo. He said a big dance was to be held that night, and that Decoration Day exercises were scheduled for the following day, May 30th. We reached Toledo about four o'clock that afternoon. The town was crowded and the dancing had already begun. They danced

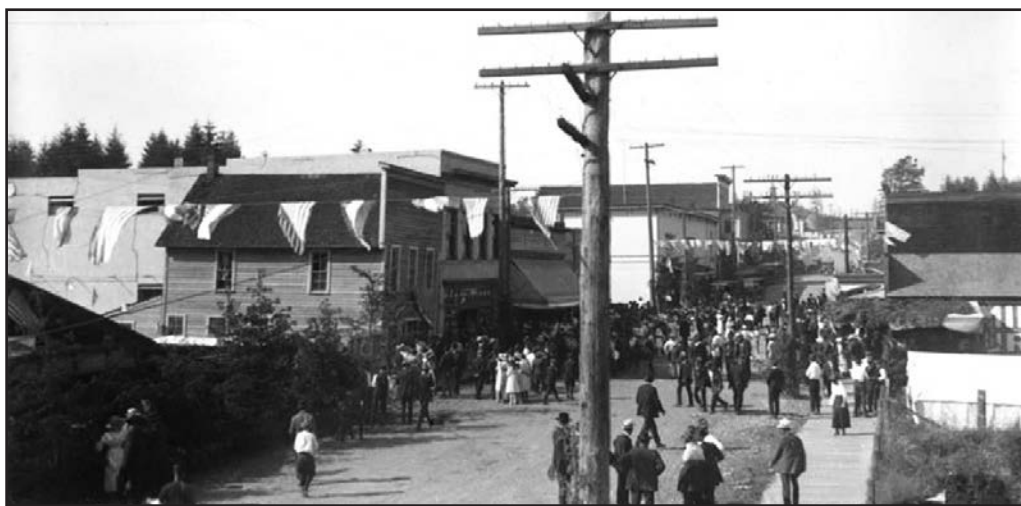
all that night and until 5 a.m. of the 30th, then they rested until nine o'clock, when the exercises began."

Motter said the crowd of about five hundred was made up of all nationalities, and most were small farmers from the surrounding community or GAR pensioners from all over the country.

"In that day, we didn't travel by auto, of course," Motter said. "We used a pony but most of the time the mud was too deep for him to go. Many a night I took my shoes under my arm, put a pair of long-legged gum boots on, and waded to a dance. Usually a collection was taken up to pay the fiddler, and he was lucky if he got two dollars for playing all night, for we would never break the dance and go home until daylight."

Independence Day

"Fourth of July was a gala day; in the forenoon would be a parade," wrote Ida Lyon on page 136. "The most important float was the liberty wagon, horse-drawn, fitted with a rack. In the center would stand a pretty teenage girl, dressed in white, holding a large American flag. On the improvised seats on the rack were most of the little girls in town dressed in white, each waving a small flag ... There would usually be a float with someone representing Uncle Sam



People gathered in downtown Toledo, Wash. in this photo from July 4, 1892.

in size and costume. It was a happy, noisy occasion with horses shying and stepping high as the youngsters threw bunches of fire crackers into the street. People came from miles around and friends met who perhaps had not met since the last Fourth. Then came the picnic lunch in the grove, with plenty of fried chicken and other food that made up a good lunch. In the afternoon was the racing, foot races, sack races, three-legged races, etc., in which girls, boys, and men participated. One big event, the day's climax, was horse races."

On page 65, Lettie Lemon wrote, "The big celebration of the year was Fourth of July, with picnics and oration in the Miller grove at the southwest corner of Toledo, under the huge spreading maple trees. It was a beautiful location. Horse racing on Second Street started at the Curry nursery and ran uptown. There would be E.P. Layton with Fluky and Fly, Lou Patten with a string, the Indians, and many others. It was the good old days before baseball was known in these parts."

Arrington recalled early morning salutes from settlers' shotguns, speeches, music, and a feast where everyone brought food.

See FEAST continued on page 19

TOLEDO LIONS CLUB
BEEF BBQ

LIONS INTERNATIONAL

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FEAST continued from page 17

On page 120, Jennie Steinhoff described a Fourth of July picnic in the park at a “long table groaning with its load of food brought by everyone.”

“Fourth of July celebrations in the old maple grove, just south of Toledo, were the big features of each year,” W.A. Rogers said on page 154. “Toledo had a good band, which could be heard early in the morning as far away as Cowlitz Bend. The GAR was very active on the Fourth of July and came out all dressed in their Civil War uniforms, brass buttons, swords, etc. The marshal of the day led the grand parade astride his big grey horse. There was a liberty wagon loaded with girls of all ages, and all dressed in white. All gathered in the old grove where the program was held, followed by a picnic. Usually the steamboat made an excursion trip that day, which was a big treat to many of the early settlers. For entertainment there were Sunday school socials and school programs.”

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“The Fourth of July was started by firing of the daybreak salute ... and of course it wakened the town.”

“Besides dances, we had box socials, where somehow the girls were able to let the favorite swain know whose lunch was whose,” wrote Alice O’Conner on page 115. “In later years we had literary societies.”

“The Fourth of July was started by firing of the daybreak salute, done with an anvil from a blacksmith shop placed over another one, with powder between, and of course it wakened the town,” wrote George Denny on page 115.

Washington became the forty-second state in 1889. In 1892, the wooden “Red Wagon” bridge crossing the Cowlitz River was completed and Toledo officially became a town.

Armistice Day

We began celebrating Armistice Day in 1919 after the end of World War I. It was renamed Veterans Day in 1954.

Toledo was recognized as a Bicentennial Community in 1975. A wagon train made an overnight stop in Toledo in June of 1975 and presented a program of old-time entertainment before continuing on to Valley Forge and Philadelphia by July 4, 1976.

In 2011, the Toledo Lions Club unveiled the Veterans Wall of Honor, located in the old maple grove in Kemp Olson Community Park. A morning parade through town on November 11 ends with a ceremony at the Veterans Wall of Honor at 11:11 a.m.

Volunteers still decorate the graves of our veterans at the Toledo cemetery with flags and flowers every Memorial Day.

And thanks to the Toledo Lions Club’s impressive fireworks selection, Toledo continues to celebrate the Fourth of July with a blast.



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Cheers to 20 years and to another great Toledo Cheese Days!

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2026 BIG CHEESES

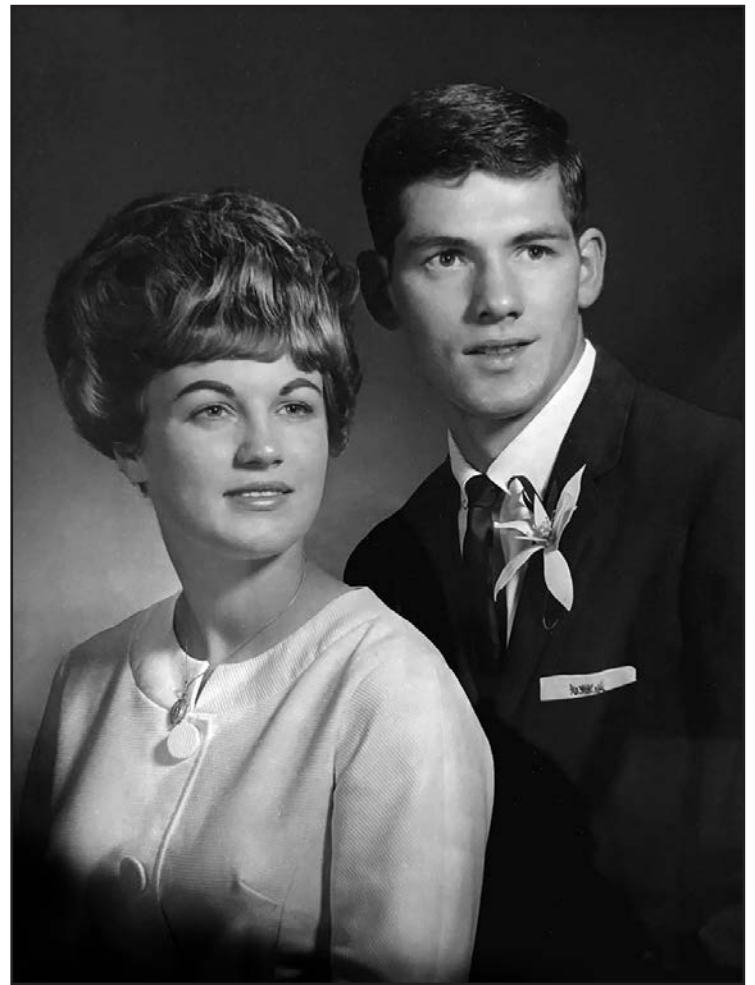
Al and Ardith Crawford

As a lifelong Toledo couple, Alan and Ardith Crawford's roots run deep in the town, and their years of service from classrooms to childcare, union halls to home businesses, the two have helped shape the heart of this community. Alan Crawford was born in Menlo, Washington, to Charles and Fern Crawford on August 31, 1943. Ardith Dalbeck Crawford was born in Raymond, Washington, to Walter and Hazel Dalbeck on April 9, 1945.

The two crossed paths while Alan was pursuing a teaching degree at Central Washington University. They married on December 19, 1964, and soon after he accepted teaching positions that would plant them permanently in the community they would grow to love.

The Crawfords moved to Toledo with their first child, Roger, in August 1966, planting roots that would deepen with time. Alan had been hired for his first teaching job at the Toledo School District, where he began teaching seventh and eighth grade Social Studies and Science. In 1973 they built a home on Plomondon Road, and moved with their four children Roger, Lisa, Angela, and Jill, establishing a family home that remains their residence to this day.

Alan's 28-year teaching career was remarkably diverse. He instructed Math, Physical Education, History, U.S. Government, and Geography, a breadth of subjects that reflected his commitment to shaping well-rounded students. He also served as a middle school basketball and track coach, guiding young athletes through the



challenges of teamwork and perseverance. Even after retirement, Alan continued to contribute as a substitute teacher, teaching and filling in through 2019.

Beyond the classroom, Alan's professional life included a long association with the Teamsters Union, which he joined in 1969. His first job was at the Centralia Steam Plant, a position he returned to each summer until 2017. His employment record reflects consistent dedication, diligent effort, and dependable contributions to the community.

Ardith's contribution to Toledo extends far beyond a single business venture. She owned and operated a wig shop in their Toledo home,

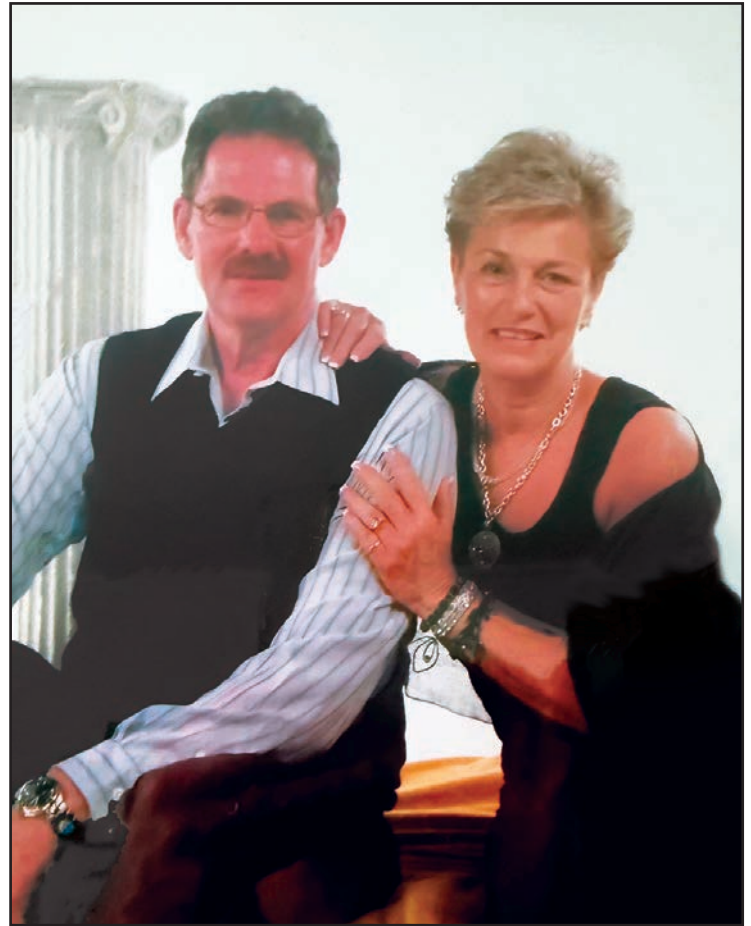
2026 BIG CHEESES

selling beauty products for Avon and Jafra. In 1977 she opened an in-home childcare center that continues to provide childcare and preschool opportunities for Toledo families. This center, born from a desire to support working families and nurture children, stands as a tangible example of Ardith's dedication to community welfare and the next generation.

In 1973 the Crawfords built a home on Plomondon Road, the cornerstone of a family life that would endure for generations. With Roger, Lisa, Angela, and Jill growing up in a town that valued education, service, and neighborly connection, the Crawfords contributed to a Toledo identity grounded in stability and care. They remain in that home to this day; a living symbol of the community they helped shape.

As Toledo Cheese Days prepares for another festival, the nomination of Alan and Ardith Crawford shines a spotlight on a couple whose lives reflect the values of the town: dedication to education, service to labor and work, entrepreneurship that supports families, and a shared home that has stood as a beacon of stability for over five decades.

If you're looking for a story that tastes like



home and feels like community, it's the Crawford story of two lifelong Toledo residents who have worked, taught, cared for, and stayed with their neighbors through many chapters of life.



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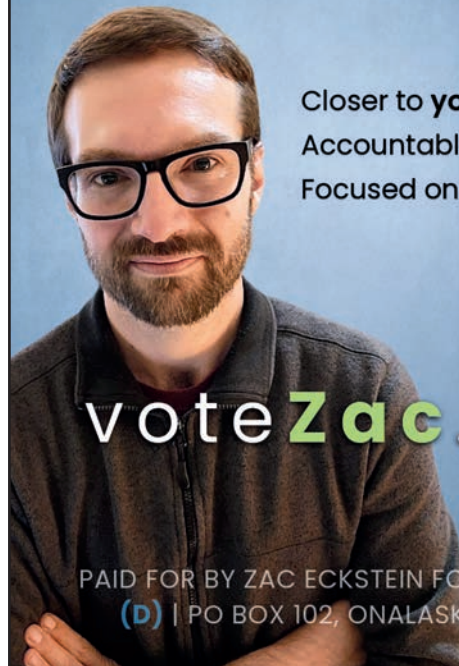
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2026 BIG CHEESES

Olson siblings Vickie, Karen, and Mike

Ron and Velma Olson had four children; Susie, Vickie, Karen and Mike. They raised them just outside of Toledo on the old “Kangas Farm” just off Toledo Salmon Creek Rd. The Olson family has been a part of Toledo for many generations and that still continues today.

All the Olson children would like to thank everyone for choosing them to being the Big Cheeses this year as it also marks the 20-year anniversary of their dad Ron when he was selected to do the honors in 2006.



Vickie Meyer, Karen Grove, and Mike Olson

The following pages will tell you a little bit about Vickie, Karen, and Mike.



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2026 BIG CHEESES

Karen Grove

Karen was born in May of 1952, the third of four children to Ron and Velma Olson (BNR/Olson Bros Trucking), and has remained TOLEDO through & through since!

Karen graduated from Toledo High School in 1970 and married Rick Grove in 1976. Together they share six children: Mike, Eric, Willie, Chris, Donivananne, and Zachary. All of whom attended Toledo Schools and played various sports.

Being the mother of six, Karen had her hands full in the early years donating her time to multiple committees and organizations to aid in funding for the various groups, clubs, and teams the kids were involved in.

Since the 1970s, Karen has quietly helped in the background, whether that be during her time working at The Landing, Riverside, The Country House, Harry's Place, The Tap House, or The Crowded Kitchen. She has cooked and cleaned, welcomed visitors, and brought smiles and hot meals to generations of Toledo residents past and present.

Never one to sit idle, she is always on standby whenever a "cause" emerges and a community member or friend needs help.

Karen learned to hunt in Naches through her dad and uncles, and has enjoyed hunting, clamming, and fishing with husband Rick ever since. Karen enjoys road trips, camping, lunch dates with Mary Jane Halls, and daily outings about town.

Known as "Mama Grove" to many, Karen enjoys spending time with her large family that now includes grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is always a phone call away from those she loves or someone in need.



Mike Olson

I'm the youngest of the four Olson children, born in June of 1953 to Ron and Velma Olson.

My first job was at Olson Bros Garage; my great uncles owned it. Then I went to work for my dad and Uncle Bob at B&R Logging as a fire watchman. Then soon after that I started driving and hauling logs, also moving oversize equipment. This was my real passion.

I joined the Toledo Fire Department when I was eighteen as a fire fighter and EMT, and I continued this for years. I also was on the city council for numerous years, doing my best to keep Toledo a great city to live in.

My hobbies include clam digging, golfing, and my favorite: hunting. We went annually to Little Naches, which included the starting of the golf tournament "The Grass Hopper." It was so hot that year we didn't see many animals but had some golf clubs so we made do. So many great memories with family. I still enjoy hunting with my nephews.

I met my wife Connie and we have three daughters, six grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

2026 BIG CHEESES

Vickie Meyer

I am the second of four children (Sue, Vickie, Karen, and Michael) born in March of 1951 to Ron and Velma (Perry) Olson. I was raised in a three-story farmhouse on Salmon Creek Road on the east side of Toledo. A fun fact about that old farmhouse: the third story had to be removed after the 1962 Columbus Day storm!

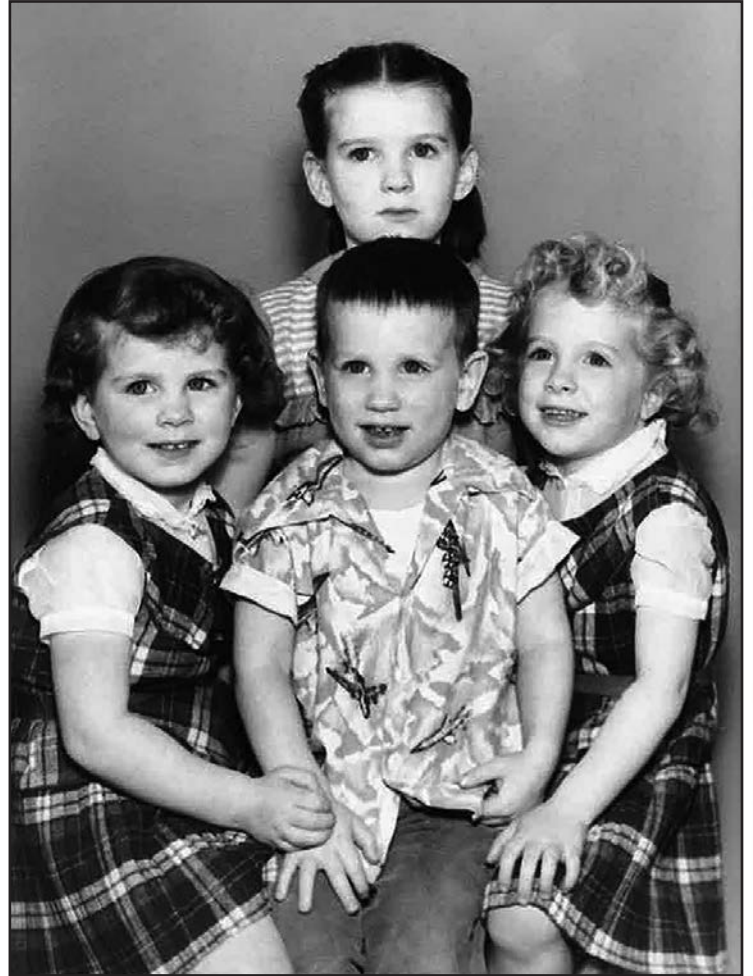
I graduated from Toledo High School in 1969, where I stayed busy with cheerleading, drama, and just about any activity I was asked to take part in. After high school, I went on to graduate from Longview Business College. My work life has always kept me busy and connected to our community. I held several jobs, including working for Washington State legislators Frank Marzano and John Martinis, and doing bookkeeping at Shakertown in Winlock.

I was proud to be the mom of three wonderful children (Andrew, Jeff, and Kathy) and the bonus mom to five stepchildren (Mitchell, Matthew, Derek, Joel, and Stephanie).

Family and work often went hand in hand for me. I worked as a bookkeeper for my parents' company, B & R Logging, and we operated our own logging company for several years.

Community involvement has always been close to my heart. Somehow, George Murdock decided I was his "personal secretary," and for years I created flyers for the Toledo Cheese Days parade. My family and I also supported Mr. Murdock by helping clean the park, supporting the annual men's fastpitch tournament, and working the Toledo Open bowling tournament.

I volunteered with Toledo Little League and Toledo softball for many years coordinating concessions, mowing fields, and helping wherever



I was needed. There were weekends when my family spent hundreds of dollars out of our own pockets at the concession stand while I was making burgers, and I wouldn't trade those memories for anything. Managing the Little League concession stand with Laura Lee Bowen remains one of my fondest memories.

I also served on the Toledo Cheese Days Committee for several years and spent long days working at the annual car show during Cheese Days which is another event close to my heart.

For a time, our family left Toledo and embraced island life in Port Alice, Alaska while logging. During that season, I had the unique opportunity to teach special education at the

See VICKIE continued on page 33

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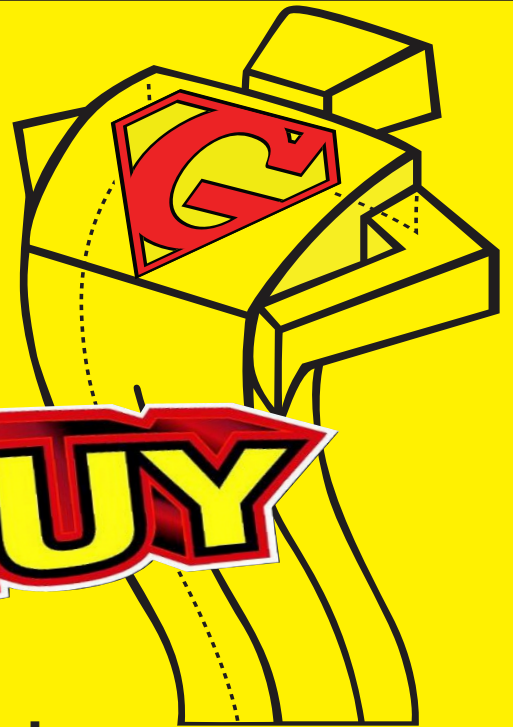
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The Day the Steamboat Arrived

By Larry Davidson

The river was already awake when a new sound carried downstream—a low, steady rhythm rising above the current. Long before the vessel itself came into view, the beat of machinery and the distant call of a steam whistle moved through the timber and along the banks, drawing attention to the bend in the river. On the morning of November 23, 1878, those near Cowlitz Landing would have paused in their work and listened, knowing that something was approaching with a purpose not often seen on the Cowlitz.

Moments passed before the boat herself

appeared. Then, slowly, she came into view through the morning mist, her paddlewheel turning with deliberate force, her single stack trailing a plume that marked her progress upriver. As she advanced, the sound grew clearer and more certain, no longer distant but present—announcing not simply a vessel, but an arrival that carried a different kind of certainty along the river.

She had come upriver from Portland, a journey that could be made in roughly a day under favorable conditions. The trip followed the established river route, winding northward through the Cowlitz Valley. Like other riverboats of the period, the Toledo likely

stopped at small landings along the way, where freight, mail, or passengers might be taken on or set ashore.

New to the river but built for its demands, the Toledo made her way along the Cowlitz Valley with steady purpose. She passed farms, open fields, and long stretches of timbered bank, following a route already known in part, yet not often worked with such consistency. Small landings slipped by as she advanced upstream, each marking her progress toward a destination that would soon come to share her name.

Aboard the vessel, the crew would have felt the importance of the run with each mile gained upriver. This was her maiden voyage—her first run from the yard where she had been built—and nothing about it could yet be taken for granted. Each bend in the channel tested what

the boat—and those who worked her—could do. The engines held steady, the channel answered, and the boat moved as she was meant to move. Later accounts would note the success of the voyage, but that success would have been clear in the moment. Along the banks, those who watched her pass or listened for her whistle would have understood the same thing—that the run was holding, and that the river had been met with purpose and skill.

As the Toledo drew near, the landing itself would have come to life. Those who had heard the whistle—or who had been watching the river in expectation—would have

made their way down toward the bank. Work paused, conversations shifted, and attention fixed on the approaching boat. Along a river where travel was often uncertain, the arrival of a steamer was more than routine—it was an event.

The vessel eased toward the bank with practiced care, the paddlewheel slowing as the crew prepared lines. The steady beat of the engines softened, and the motion that had carried her upriver gave way to a controlled stillness at the landing. For those gathered

nearby, the moment was not simply one of curiosity, but of recognition: the journey had been made and it had been made successfully.

For those who saw her arrive, the Toledo would have been an impressive sight—long and purposeful, alive with motion and sound. Built for the Kellogg

Company, she measured 109 feet in length, was powered by two steam engines, and registered 207 tons net. Yet figures and specifications mattered less than the simple fact of her presence. A steamboat on the Cowlitz meant a dependable connection to the outside world.

At the time, Cowlitz Landing was not yet a town, but a working place along the riverbank. Goods moving into the region—supplies, tools, and household items—depended on river transport, as did goods moving out. From the landing, freight would be carried

*The river stirred before the dawn,
A sound not born of wind or rain;
A turning wheel, a rising plume,
And steam where none had been.*

*She came not fast, but steady still,
With purpose pressed in oak and steel;
And in her wake, the river knew
That something here had changed.*

*— A reflective verse inspired by the
maiden arrival of the steamboat Toledo*

See STEAMBOAT continued on page 33



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STEAMBOAT continued from page 31

inland by wagon to surrounding settlements such as Salkum, Mossyrock, and other outlying points. On that day, the arrival of the Toledo made that movement feel more certain and more within reach.

In the early years of regular service, steamboats typically made the run from Portland about once a week. While other boats appeared on the river at various times, the Toledo became one of the most consistent and dependable vessels serving the route. As settlement increased, trips became more frequent, eventually reaching several runs per week. The riverboats did not eliminate hardship or distance, but they reduced

isolation. Schedules mattered. Whistles mattered. Knowing when the boat would come mattered deeply.

As the lines were secured and the motion of the boat came to rest, those gathered along the bank would have taken in what had just occurred. The river had been worked. The journey had been completed. What had arrived was not simply a vessel, but the beginning of something that could be counted on to return.

And in its name, Toledo remembers.

*This narrative is written in a descriptive style based on historical records and period accounts.

© 2026 Lawrence F. Davidson

VICKIE continued from page 27

small island school. After one logging season, we returned home to Toledo.

One of our favorite hobbies has been classic cars. Along with great friends from the Toledo-Winlock Classic Cruisers Car Club, we cruised in our two 1956 Chevys and a 1930 Ford. I planned and coordinated many memorable trips, including cruises along the Oregon coast, to Hot August Nights in Reno, and even a trip into Canada. A couple of personal highlights were running a powder puff drag race at Seattle International Raceway and racing our 1930 Ford at Riverdale Raceway in Toutle.

My family and I are longtime Seattle Mariners fans. We held season tickets during both the Kingdome and Safeco Field years. One memorable day, I even made it on television during a game when I was interviewed about being prepared for all types of Seattle weather (my bag held everything needed for any forecast)!

I continue my Mariners tradition with an annual girls' trip to Peoria, Arizona for spring training, where I also enjoy visiting my grand-

daughter, Samantha.

I love to travel and have been fortunate to visit places such as Hawaii, Mexico, Virginia, New York City, California, Arizona, and Washington, D.C.

Even after "retiring" from concessions, my daughter Kathy and I were pulled back in when my son Jeff coached high school baseball for the Toledo Indians, some things never change!

Today, Kathy and I own and operate a pilot car business together. I have handled bookkeeping for Inman Logging since 2010 and also work as a bookkeeper for Justin Pitts Trucking.

Those who know me know I enjoy helping others and rarely pass up an opportunity to lend a hand.

When I'm not working, my husband Bob and I enjoy spending time with family, traveling, sharing meals with friends, playing bingo and bunko, and simply enjoying life.

I've lost count of how many grandkids and step-grandkids we have, but I now proudly enjoy the next generation which includes four great-grandchildren: Charles (7), Blake (3), Elijah (3), and Elodie (7 months).

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Three \$1,000 scholarships from the Toledo Lions Club

Two \$1,000 scholarships from the Toledo Cheese Days Committee

One \$500 scholarship from the Toledo Lions Club Outdoor Recreation Fund

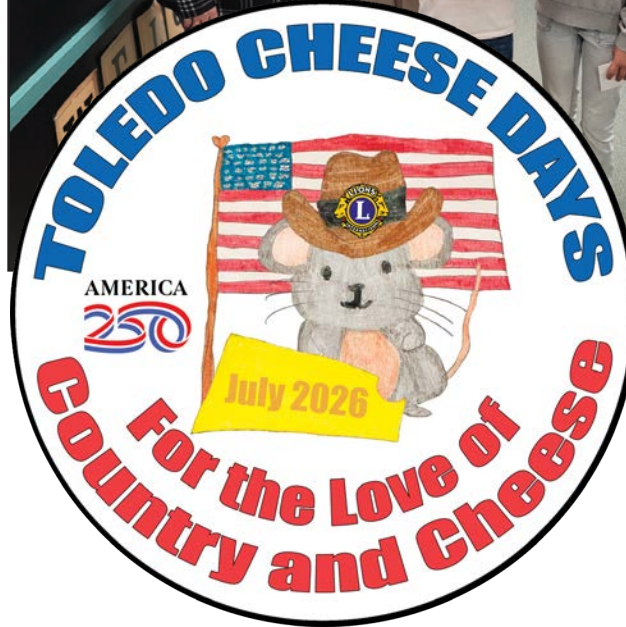
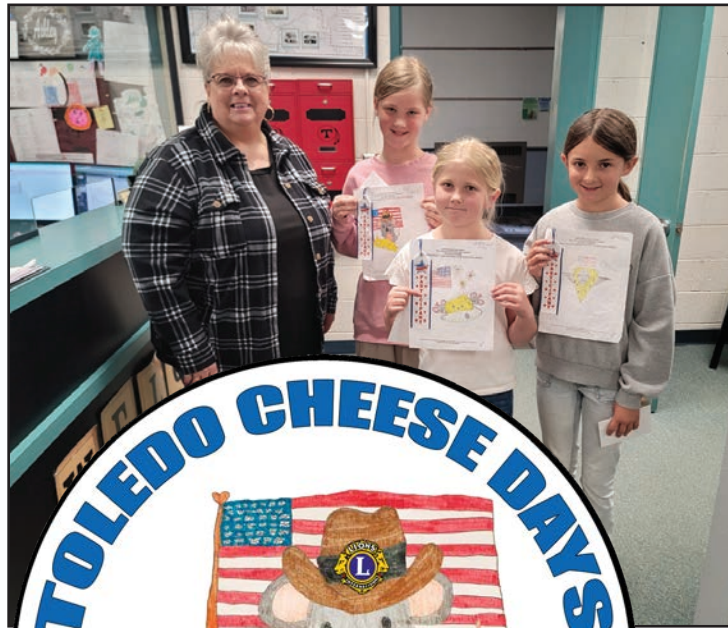
Five \$1,000 scholarships from the Toledo Legacy Fund

The Cheese Days Committee also donated \$5,000 to the Toledo Senior Center, \$4,850 to TES PTO, and \$1,000 to the THS track team. Additionally, the Toledo Lions Club sponsors every Toledo High School sports team that goes to state, we present turkey bingo in November, and we deliver food boxes to area families in December.



Cheese Days couldn't be possible without the efforts of dozens of incredible volunteers and generous support from our major event sponsors and Lewis County. We thank you!

All Phase Construction	13
Art Gallery 505	4
ARTrails of SW Wash.	2
ASE Electric	34
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The winner of this year's Cheese Days button drawing contest is Arienne Sarkinen, 4th grade. Top four winners are pictured above. Thanks everyone who participated!

Reprographics	29	Toledo Historical Society	24
Richardson Construction	14	Toledo Market Fresh	10, 18
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Scotz Construction		Toledo Presbyterian Church	20
Shine Your Sht	13	Toledo Senior Center	4
Skyline Pump & Machine	14	ToledoTel	12
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