Indicator News:

**New Crime Statistics for Washington State Recently Released**

The Washington Association of Sheriff’s and Police Chiefs (WASPC) is a collection of law enforcement representatives from across the state, who must either hold positions on the executive level or must be in top management positions in a law enforcement agency. Across the state, these representatives range from smaller police agencies, such as city and tribal police agencies, up to county and state law enforcement agencies. WASPC is unique as it is one of a kind in the U.S. It joins law enforcement of all levels into a single entity with a common goal “to lead collaboration among law enforcement executives to enhance public safety”.

WASPC is also the hub for crime statistics in Washington State. Law enforcement agencies send WASPC their crime data that then produces individual yearly reports for each reporting agency, and collectively for all of Washington State. In addition, WASPC reports their data to the FBI to compile two different national crime statistics reports: the Unified Crime Report (UCR) and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). The Community Indicators Initiative uses the crime statistics gathered by WASPC for the majority of the offered indicators in the public safety category. Whenever possible, a national benchmark is offered for each indicator, which in the public safety category, this usually refers to data from the FBI’s UCR or NIBRS reports.

The UCR and NIBRS statistical crime reports for 2013 will be released in October, 2014. When this occurs, we will be updating all of the related public safety indicators. Until then, you can view the WASPC crime report for Washington State by following this link.

**Benton – Franklin Counties Developing a Community Indicators Website**

The Counties of Benton and Franklin, along with the Tri-Cities (Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco), are in the process of developing a community indicators website. The steering committee is currently choosing the indicators that will be featured on the website. The new indicators website will launch in March, 2015.
Featured Indicators:

**Single-stream program boosts Spokane recycling rates – CII 5.18**

A city’s capacity to recycle depends on a variety of factors, including regional littering and recycling laws, the local citizens’ interest in recycling, the burning of trash or other waste disposal methods, and the ease with which municipal officials make recycling available to citizens.

If recycling is easy and people have incentive to do it, they most likely will engage in it. If it’s difficult, costly or they don’t see an incentive to doing so, they may be less likely to practice it.

According to information from the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System, “Under Washington state law (Chapter 70.95 RCW), each county, in cooperation with the cities located within, is required to prepare a coordinated, comprehensive solid waste management plan. Solid waste plans provide long-term, environmentally-sound solid waste management guidelines.”

These plans get reviews and updates every five years. Spokane’s 2009 plan currently is in use for the area’s 13 regional cities, including Fairchild Air Force Base, until 2029.

Spokane’s Regional Solid Waste System, first formed in 1988 to more efficiently operate the city’s recycling and waste disposal facilities, is managed by the city of Spokane. Recently it was joined by the cities of Liberty Lake and Spokane Valley.

Committees and staff within the system work to keep it running and find ways to keep the public interested in recycling and responsible waste disposal, particularly for objects people tend to dump at the side of the road or down a drain.

Things like old tires, electronic waste, paint and batteries, glasses and broken appliances are examples of things people aren’t always sure what to do with.

In 2012, Spokane began what is known as single stream recycling, where clean recyclables such as junk mail, cereal boxes and most plastics are collected without pre-
sorting by households. Recycling jumped about 25 percent from 2011 numbers, from 281,747 tons to 352,913.

According to Suzanne Tresko from the city of Spokane, the city put significant effort into a recycling and waste reduction campaign in 2011 and 2012, anticipating the single stream recycling, or 'Big Blue' initiative in 2012.

“I like to think that that campaign was at least partly responsible for the increased percentage in the 2012 rate because we promoted both waste reduction and waste diversion,” Tresko said.

“But during a slow economy like we've been experiencing, we buy less stuff and therefore throw away less stuff, so that probably had an effect on the stats as well. I am anxious to see what 2013 has to show since that will have the first full year of data [from the single stream recycling program],” she said.

Spokane County already has one of the highest recycling rates in the state, according to Tresko.

“We started diverting food scraps through our composting program long before Portland caught up. We have lower contamination rates (that’s the amount of non-recyclable materials that end up in recycling containers but end up getting thrown out as garbage) than San Francisco. And we have one of the best hazardous waste programs in the county,” she said.

Where the county could improve, besides the areas of commercial and multi-family recycling, which may require more upfront investment than individual programs, she said, is overall waste reduction, which has a bigger environmental impact than recycling on its own.

“By the time I recycle my bottle or can or paper, the bulk of the Earth's resources that it took to get that product to me have already been expended – the extraction, the water/air/soil/greenhouse gas impacts, the transportation, the manufacturing, the packaging, more transportation – those resources are already gone by the time I purchase the product, way before I feel smug about dropping it in my recycling bin,” Tresko said.

Net Job Creation Key Piece of Economic Recovery – CII 3.21

A measure of the health of an economy, job growth is a key goal of economic policy at any level. Spokane felt right at home with the rest of the nation when, in 2009, regional net job creation fell through the floor, characterized in the Spokane area by a net loss of 9,434 jobs. In 2010, Spokane net employment decreased by another 4,033 jobs, marking the 2009-2010 biennium as the worst period for Spokane employment between 1991 and 2013.

Even with the devastating loss of employment in the 2009-2010 biennium, Spokane appears to be recovering. Net job creation in 2013 was 3,183 jobs, just shy of the median of 3,383 for the 1991-2013 period. “The kinds of jobs are more important than the totals,” writes Doug Tweedy, regional economist in labor market and performance analysis for Washington's Employment Security Department. “Leading the recovery currently are a diversified mix of industries, which lay a good foundation for jobs: hot industries, advanced manufacturing, health services,
transportation/warehousing, finance/insurance, and education. All of these industries pay more than the average for all industries, increasing total income.

In a period that surprised economists with downward turns in both unemployment and inflation, 1993 and 1994 represent the largest growth biennium for Spokane, with 6,250 new jobs and 7,341 new jobs created, respectively. “Payroll employment grew by 4.3 percent during that time period,” notes Tweedy. “We have reached those levels but only during a bubble economy, which we’ve found have devastating effects when the bubble is burst.” As Spokane (and the nation) has witnessed, bursting bubbles trigger economic contractions.

Our region has, however, responded to the recession. “Spokane has become even more of a regional hub for Health services and professional technical services” following the most recent recession, Tweedy adds. “Jobs were lost but the jobs recovered are more efficient, producing more goods and services.”

As a visualization of the indicator demonstrates, the Health Care and Social Assistance industry in Spokane has been on a steady rise (actually experiencing its largest annual wage growth during the 2008-2009 biennium, continuing to increase into 2010) even as net jobs were disappearing in the area. Considering the recent Riverpoint Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Sciences Building, local healthcare expansion, and the enactment of federal health care legislation, interested residents should watch and track the local labor market in the health services industry.

For job seekers, Tweedy has some advice. “Employers now are looking for experience,” he says. “Education is good, but the determining factor is some type of work experience. For young adults it’s going to be important that they have completed a mentorship or internship. Any type of work experience is helpful, showing you know the basic of commitment to the job.”

WorkSource Spokane offers job assistance to residents, and, for younger job seekers looking to capitalize on Tweedy’s advice, Spokane’s Next Generation Zone covers everything from GED classes to placement services. Although Tweedy carefully notes that “the future is hard to predict,” resources for Spokane’s resurgence into a healthy economy are not in short supply.
Early educational involvement is known to have many positive and long-term benefits. In many ways, preparing children for success in education can be compared to setting dominoes up properly so they all fall into the correct place. The general purpose of programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program is to best prepare incoming kindergarten students for the upcoming kindergarten curriculum. The more a student is prepared for kindergarten, the more they will hit the ground running from day one. Additionally, if students are not prepared for kindergarten, the chances they will be playing “catch-up” will be greater, perhaps creating a situation where a student finishes kindergarten without being fully prepared for entering the first grade.

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) measures six domains of kindergarten readiness: social/emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and math. Each incoming kindergarten student will have their own skill levels compared to the general skill levels of children who are ages: birth to 2 year old children; 2-3 year old children; 3-5 year old preschool children; or typical of 5-6 year old kindergarteners. Incoming students with skill levels matching those of typical 5-6 year olds are considered “ready” for kindergarten in that particular domain. Any skill level matching those of 3-5 year old preschool children or lower are considered “not ready” to enter kindergarten.

Specifically, this indicator gives the share of the incoming kindergarten students who “demonstrate characteristics of entering kindergartners” in zero, one, two, three, four, five and all six domains for all participating children. According to Jeffrey Bierman, PhD, president of the Spokane Public Schools board of directors and co-legislative liaison, within the six main domains, there are approximately 36 individual indicators that are not “just about academic readiness”, but they really provide a “whole child assessment.”

In Spokane County during the 2011-2012 school year, approximately 1,300 incoming kindergartners were evaluated.

During the 2013-2014 school year, this number increased to approximately 2,300. The WaKIDS assessment is heading into its third year and the number of assessments is expected to increase once again as the 2013-2014 school year is the last that Washington State is allowing for schools to apply for exemptions.
The 2014-2015 WaKIDS assessment is expected to include nearly 100 percent of full-day, publicly funded kindergarten schools in the state. As it continues into the future, Dr. Bierman believes that the WaKIDS assessment “is going to lead to a much tighter connection between pre-school programs and kindergarten programs.”

WaKIDS is based on the observations of the kindergarten teacher and is completed for every student by October 31 of the school year. This is early enough so the results can be immediately applied to the specific needs of each student, as well as shared with the families of the students. Still, the implementation of WaKIDS is not a simple task. Dr. Bierman said, “It takes a lot of training for teachers to be able to implement the assessment consistently across all kindergarten classrooms in both our district but the state as well.” He continued, saying the WaKIDS assessment involves “a large number of areas to find the time and environment to assess 20-plus kids in a particular classroom during just the first 7 weeks of classes.” As a result, the WaKIDS assessment will likely “result in a much smoother and consistent transition for students.”

It must be noted that the WaKIDS assessment is not used as a determination if the child should enter kindergarten. Rather, it serves to help them finish kindergarten successfully and to better equip them to enter first grade. In essence, WaKids is simply trying to set the dominoes up correctly to better prepare incoming kindergarten students for grades one through 12, and beyond. Additionally, only students entering kindergarten at a full-day, publicly funded school are eligible, while privately funded kindergarten students are not.

Indicators in Action:

Five Questions with Cheryl Kilday, President and CEO at Visit Spokane

1. What is your outlook for visitor traffic to the Spokane area over the next 2-3 years?

The travel outlook is good for Spokane. Leisure travel remains strong and will enjoy steady growth while business transient has returned. The meetings market is slowly recovering and the newly expanded convention center and hotel will help drive new demand. We expect some discomfort on the way to success as the hotels work to absorb the new inventory but the Visit Spokane sales pace is doing well and we anticipate a 3-5 year ramp-up to stabilization. The national trends impact Spokane and as the larger cities recover in hotel room rates and overall visitor spending Spokane will follow suit. Travel indicators are positive.
2. As you guide Visit Spokane to attract various types of visitors to the area, what are the most important metrics that visitors care about?

Visitors are seeking authentic experiences and they care about peer reviews as a metric for evaluating destinations. Our research indicates a solid satisfaction rating for Spokane within our competitive set for meeting planners and we enjoy favorable ratings for leisure travelers. Meeting planners want great hotels, air lift, meeting space, low crime, and great access to the community; leisure travelers want many of the same things but in a different priority order.

3. What are the trends on the Spokane Community Indicators site that you and your staff pay most attention to?

We monitor the economic vitality, people, culture and recreation indicators the most. The benefits from visitation include monitoring their spending and the indicators in the economic vitality are very helpful. There are also opportunities for us to use the information within the Spokane Community Indicators to demonstrate to a prospective client something we have that they are seeking in a host community for a convention.

4. You moved here from Virginia. Are there any metrics about Spokane you wished you would have known before you moved here?

I feel like the metrics about Spokane were accurately represented before we moved here. One metric of the Spokane region that I don’t think I fully appreciated until after living here for a few years is the size and experience of the work force in the tourism industry. Recruiting and finding talented tourism professionals can be challenging because they don’t see as many long-term career options for employment within the Spokane MSA as a larger MSA would provide.

5. As you look at all the aspects of life measured on the Spokane Indicators site, are there any that jump out at you?

The Spokane Indicators are useful to monitor as we can work toward helping create regional prosperity through tourism as an economic development tool. One indicator that stood out to me this year is the decline in the number of good air quality days. Air quality is critical to our destination brand and positioning: Spokane Near Nature. Near Perfect.