

# Unsung Hero

**B**ill Hoke came to Seattle in 1969, escaping the “Mad Men” advertising world of Woodward and Madison Avenues. He had fallen in love with the Pacific Northwest on a boyhood trip, attended the World’s Fair in ‘62, and when a New York ad agency purchased an agency in Seattle, he came to write the introductory advertising for the Boeing 747.

After several other moves around the country, in 1975 Hoke came to North Kitsap, where he and his wife, Patricia Graf-Hoke (executive director of the Kitsap Peninsula Visitor and Convention Bureau) lived on a 20-acre “farm” and raised four children. Both have extensive histories of volunteering in the community with a special emphasis on disability issues.

After working with more than 10 nonprofit organizations, Hoke said he found a home in the Washington CASH (Community Alliance for Self Help) program, which provides business startup training and ongoing support to economically disadvantaged or disabled entrepreneurs. He has been previously named Mentor of the Year by the organization for his volunteer work with nascent entrepreneurs.

## WHY WASHINGTON CASH

It’s a privilege to be around people who work hard — often facing huge or overwhelming odds to start their own business. Starting a business is tough and starting a business in this economy takes courage and stamina; it’s not for the faint of heart. I felt like this was the place for me and I volunteered for nine years as coach, mentor, instructor, and recently became a part-time contract worker.

## BEST PART OF THE JOB

What makes CASH unique is the ongoing support offered at no cost in business support group meetings twice a month in Bremerton. Graduates of the eight-week basic business training classes are eligible for the support group program. There’s a real magic in the air when 40 to 50 entrepreneurs in all stages of business development meet



## Bill Hoke

*Married to Patricia;  
resident of Manette  
Owner of Hoke Consulting;  
volunteer mentor for  
Washington CASH*

and break into their peer development groups. I love watching them come into the meeting and Stuart Walton, our gifted Kitsap CASH director, asks them for "recent success stories," and there might not be many dry eyes after hearing what's been accomplished. I like how transactional it is, how we have few meetings and no processing — the entire focus is setting goals and moving forward, never quitting.

### BIGGEST CHALLENGES

Funding is an issue. Fortunately, Washington CASH has a national reputation, top-ranked in micro-enterprise organizations. CASH is good business, adding an estimated \$2 million into the Kitsap economy, so it can deliver a demonstrable return on investment. Our local metrics are very good. I have now worked with more than 1,000 startups and each one brings a new, unique challenge. Every business must continually reinvent itself. Imagine trying to start a business in this economy, in this culture of expanding technology, globalization and social media.

### THINGS I CAN'T DO WITHOUT

The support of my family when I am away in the evenings. At a recent business development training class I was teaching, I looked up to see that five people had come to be business coaches. Five! As an instructor, having five coaches to work in small groups with a class of 30 is a gift I never take lightly. We also have mentors who provide coaching to the 40-50 people in the ongoing support programs. These volunteers are a great blessing and I wish I could mention them all.

### BEST COMPLIMENT ON THE JOB

I have come to believe strongly that entrepreneurs learn best by self-discovery, so we spend a lot of time working in small groups, challenging assumptions and trying to strike a good balance of being supportive — and "doing business." Hearing someone say, "I get it!" is the best compliment. We also encourage our entrepreneur business owners to handwrite and mail thank-you cards. They've sent me some over the years and I treasure them all. Seeing a business built from scratch and take its first steps is plenty of reward. Each one is a miracle and I honor these brave business owners-to-be.

### BEST WAY TO RELAX

Get out of town, take no computer. Turn cell off. Try to get away for at least three nights. We go to our place on Hood Canal, where we clam and oyster and build things. I can't sit still and have hiked more than 2,000 miles in the Olympics, mostly solo, and climbed most of the major peaks in Washington, including Mount Ellinor 38 times. Reading time is the unfortunate casualty of this crazy world. I like to walk and be outdoors.

### HOBBIES OUTSIDE OF WORK

Patty and I love to travel (with no reservations) on road trips on back roads or abroad. We both do creative work and you've got to find new perspectives to keep energized. We've hiked and climbed together and had a lot of fun but she is not into the long, seven- or eight-night hikes or climbs I call relaxing. I never cease to marvel at the "Brothers" of the Olympic Mountains, shining in the morning sunrise, or silhouetted in the sunset. This is a wonderful place to live and to have a fulfilling volunteer-work job is an added bonus. ♦

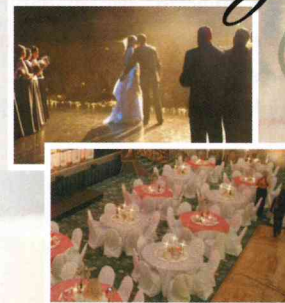
*WestSound Home & Garden has launched a new series that will recognize our local unsung heroes who go above and beyond in their daily jobs. Do you know a first responder, teacher, public servant, assistant or any other professional who deserves to be in the spotlight? Email a nomination to [rtollefson@wetapple.com](mailto:rtollefson@wetapple.com) with a short statement why this person is an unsung hero. Please include your contact information.*

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