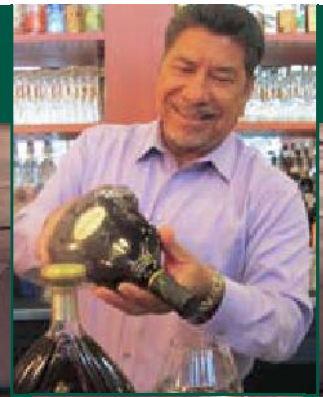


BELLINGHAM BUSINESS ACADEMY LAUNCHES MARCH 11



**Jesse Cantu**  
*'Great American  
Success Story'*

# BUSINESS PULSE

MAGAZINE

Winter 2015

## Consummated CEO

Matt Mullett found his niche  
building businesses and boats

### 2020 VISION

Whatcom leaders look into  
their crystal balls...

**Busiest border in U.S.**  
not just about milk and gas

**Are WIDs the answer  
for local farmers?**



NWHCL's state-of-the-art facility runs from morning to night, showcasing a meticulously coordinated dance between attentive workers and advanced German machinery.  
*Photos by Mike McKenzie*



# How innovation and attention to detail led continuous growth for Northwest Healthcare Linen

*Northwest Health Care Linen sets sights on growing from 15 million to 24 million pounds of laundry a year.*

By Sherri Huleatt

**I**n every doctor's office, birthing room and intensive care unit is something most people take for granted: clean sheets, starched towels, and bleached gowns.

Even though clean linens seem like a given as a staple, medical facilities are not required to use accredited launderers for their linens, and according to the Joint Commission, the nation's leading hospital accreditation organization, there are no specific standards for hospital linen laundering and care.

Residents in western Washington not only get to take advantage of some of the best health-care facilities in the nation, they also benefit from some of the cleanest

and greenest linens on the market. Northwest Health Care Linen (NWHCL), founded by CEO Jim Hall about two decades ago, is a leader in its specialized laundry service.

The company stands as one of the three largest medical laundry facilities in the state. NWHCL processes millions of pounds of laundry every year, enforces continually-improving green initiatives, and became one of the first facilities in the nation to receive the Hygienically Clean Healthcare Certification from the Textile Rental Services Association.

When they first opened their doors, NWHCL, a family-owned company, processed about 2 million pounds of textiles a year for four hospitals (all of which now are PeaceHealth facilities) – St. Joseph Health Center, United General



**“The focus in health care right now is cost reduction, so we spend a lot of our time helping our customers lower their cost of laundry.”**

—Jim Hall, CEO

Hospital, Island Hospital, and Whidbey General Hospital. Now, 22 years later, the company processes about 15 million textiles a year—a 650 percent increase—and serves 13 in-patient hospitals and more than 200 out-patient locations across western Washington. NWHCL has also grown from about 25 employees to 105, with all but three living in Whatcom County.

The passion and dedication Hall and the rest of his team show is an obvious reason for their success. Every step of the process — from washing to folding to delivery — is meticulously performed. In fact, each piece of linen undergoes

inspection before being sent out the door. “We live and breathe our customer needs on a daily basis and do whatever it takes to make sure their patients’ needs are met,” Hall said. “We focus on the patient need and if we do that, everything else is good.”

It’s with this same passion that Hall initially funded his business: before opening, he pitched his vision for NWHCL to several hospitals, and by the time he went to the bank for a loan, he already had four contracts ready to go.

Several decades later, NWHCL still puts the customer first. “The focus in health care right now is cost reduction, so we spend a lot

of our time helping our customers lower their cost of laundry,” Hall said. “We help them buy less of our products, which sounds odd, but helping them reach their financial goals solidifies a long-term relationship. This company was built with that long-term vision, and we have continued that philosophy for the 22 years we’ve been in business.”

### MASSIVE EXPANSION

In 2002, NWHCL tripled the size of its Bellingham facility, located off E. Bakerview Road, so they could process more laundry with greater efficiency.

**NWHCL processes about 50,000 pounds of linen every day. To put that in perspective, that’s over 24 years’ worth of a typical family’s laundry – in just one day.**

During a tour he said, “When all this started 22 years ago it was manual labor, back-breaking hard work loading the washers and dryers by hand. Now, with all the automation, hardly anything requires heavy lifting.

Now, almost all of the water they use is recycled. Their machines use about one-third less water than conventional washing machines. And, they recycle all soiled plastic linen bags, reducing the solid waste stream by 85 percent. The state-of-the-art facility also was built with barrier walls and air filtration systems to significantly reduce the risk of contamination. Hall even went so far as to tour German facilities — the leaders in laundry innovation — so he could model his facility after the best in the world.

These green advancements aren’t



Joel McCollum, the supervisor of the Soil Processing department, confers with Kelsey Van Miert, who handles marketing and textile management and is the daughter of owner Jim Hall. She's learning the family business, front to back.



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Unlike most laundry facilities, NWHCL only focuses on medical laundry, ensuring they have the cleanest product possible.

### BUSINESS BOX SCORE:

Location: Bellingham

Start-up date: 1992

Founder/CEO: Jim Hall

No. of employees: 105 (102 in Whatcom County)

Startup funding: Before opening, contracts with four local hospitals

just integral to preserving the environment, they're also integral to NWHCL's bottom line. "Being green saves resources for everyone, and our customers have to assure that their service providers are green and don't contribute (negatively) to their overall (environmental) impact," said Hall. "Our trade association is very much committed to encouraging members to be 'green.'"

**"Our products are a part of almost every medical procedure performed, which makes medical linen an essential service,"**

—Jim Hall, CEO

This advanced technology has brought the company to an incredible production level: NWHCL processes about 50,000 pounds of linen every day. To put that in perspective, that's over 24 years' worth of a typical family's laundry – in just one day.

Much of this continued change in Hall's business is a reflection of national health care policies changing. As U.S. health care policy evolves, all of its service providers must, too. "Our products are a part of almost every medical procedure performed, which makes medical linen an essential service," Hall said. And as health care services continue to grow, so will the demand for NWHCL's services, giving them a bright future.

In fact, their facility has the capacity to reach 24 million pounds of laundry a year, a number that Hall and his team eagerly look forward to.