

EMILY RUCHERT, Owner of The LEEP Center

Emily Ruchert is the owner of a licensed childcare center in rural Washington. Her journey to becoming a provider began with the frustrations faced by many families in the state. As a fulltime employee of the United States Department of Agriculture, Emily struggled to find reliable affordable childcare in her town. By the time her oldest son turned five, he had been to five different care providers. Emily realized that though they meant well, licensed providers couldn't figure out how to be successful financially, and the unlicensed providers were in legal battles with the state. Through extensive research and innovative and creative entrepreneurship, Emily and her partner Danyle (dan-yell) Thomas opened The LEEP Center in Pomeroy, Washington in May 2008. Currently 40 children are enrolled.

Emily is passionate about her community and loves the small-town life. After high school, she fell in love with Eastern WA and moved to Pullman where she attended WSU. Her studies of Animal Science, Agricultural Economics and English were chosen specifically to prepare her to find a job in rural Washington. After graduation, she moved to Pomeroy and started her family. Over the years, Emily has leaned on her own mother for inspiration. Says Emily: "My Mom never took a hand out. She accepted help when offered, but never worked the system or felt the world needed to take care of her because she was a single mom of two girls. She put herself through a master's degree program in Social Work (UW) and worked full time. It is from her that I learned the power of people who are willing to make something out of nothing."

KRISTINE REEVES, Representative 30th Legislative District

Kristine Reeves is a working mom who understands the balance between working hard to succeed and raising a family. That's why she is a strong advocate for working families, raising the middle class, and providing opportunities for those who sacrifice for their communities.

A Moses Lake native, Kristine received her bachelor's degree in Political Science from Washington State University (Go Cougs!) and went on to pursue a master's degree in Organizational Leadership at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

She's served in a variety of roles, include Statewide Veterans Constituency Coordinator for U.S. Senator Patty Murray. Currently, Kristine is the Director of Economic Development for the Military and Defense sector for the state of Washington. Her role focuses on promoting public and private economic development that supports military bases; defense industry suppliers, contractors and small businesses, as well as working with community advocacy support organizations in their engagement with the U.S. Military in Washington State.

STEVE TAMMARO, President/CEO YMCA Northwest Inlet

Steve Tamaro is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of the Inland Northwest in Spokane WA. He has worked for the YMCA movement for forty-plus years having begun his career on the front lines of the YMCA as a summer day camp counselor and member service staff person. Over that time, he has held leadership positions in YMCA's across the country including the YMCA of Greater Boston, YMCA of Greater Rochester (NY), YMCA of Middle Tennessee (Nashville) and the YMCA of Metropolitan Denver.

In addition, he chairs the Washington State Alliance of YMCA's and recently served as the board liaison for the partner agencies of the Spokane County United Way. He and his wife Margaret live in Spokane and have three children, Emma, Bartlett and Sarah.

ANDY BILLIG, Senator 3rd Legislative District

Andy Billig is a proud father, businessperson and member of the Spokane community. He was elected to the state Senate by from the 3rd Legislative District in 2012 and 2016. He was elected Majority Leader by Senate Democrats in 2018.

In addition to serving as the Senate Majority Leader, Andy is a member of the Ways & Means, Environment, Energy & Technology, and Rules committee. His work in the legislature spans from campaign finance reform and transportation to education. Throughout his career, he has been a tireless advocate for high-quality early learning, and has received the 2016 and 2014 Golden Crayon Award from the Early Learning Action Alliance as well as multiple “Champion for Children” awards from several children’s advocacy organizations.

In addition to his work in the Legislature, Andy is an award-winning business executive, part owner and former general manager/president of the Spokane Indians Baseball Club and committed community volunteer. He has previously served as a Big Brother, youth sports coach, and as a volunteer in several capacities with Greater Spokane Incorporated. He also served on the board of directors for the YMCA of the Inland Northwest and on the City of Spokane Human Services Advisory Board. Andy is currently a board member for SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners).