

## JOBS, JOBS, JOBS! OUR MAJOR EMPLOYERS ROCK ON

Job growth was solid and steady in 2019, as Pierce County employers added thousands of full-time employees to their payrolls. The region's educational institutions saw a big boost in employment numbers, and the aerospace sector continued to soar.

The EDB's **2019 Major Employers List**, spotlighting and celebrating companies with more than 100 full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees, identified 272 qualified employers representing 172,415 jobs. Familiar faces again lead the pack of private employers: **MultiCare Health System, CHI Franciscan Health, The Boeing Company, State Farm Insurance Companies** and **Milgard Manufacturing**.

The EDB welcomed new additions to this year's Major Employers List, including: **AHBL** (a Tacoma engineering consulting company formerly on our Companies to Watch list of mid-sized companies), **Avamere Health Services, Community Health Care, Concentra Health Services, Inc., City of Sumner, First Student Transportation, McMenamins, Palace Casino, Puyallup Nursing and Rehabilitation, Rickenbaugh Pentecost Development, SeaTac Packaging, Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits of Washington, SSB Manufacturing Company, UniFirst Corporation** and **Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics**.

### Growth across the board

Thirty-eight Pierce County companies that provided data this year and in 2018 reported at least 5 percent expansion of their workforces. Of that number, 29 posted double-digit increases over last year. **Sekisui Aerospace** (formerly AIM Aerospace), **Rainier Guest Services** and **Yusen Logistics** topped this list, an indicator that growth is happening across diverse sectors.

### Talent pipeline poised for priming

Because education and employment go hand in hand, it's notable that the biggest job growth in Pierce County last year was in K-12 and higher education. Collectively, the Tacoma-Pierce County education workforce swelled by 21,108 FTEs, making up more than 12 percent of our total major employers.

Washington State's \$52.4 billion 2019-21 biennial budget brought historic funding to K-12 education. New and expanded programs will help prepare students to fill the region's high-demand jobs and good, family-wage positions. That's welcomed news for our major employers who are ready to add to their payrolls as these students move into the workforce.

### Aerospace flies high

With loads of activity over the last year, employment numbers in the aerospace sector are on the rise. Three regional companies are in expansion mode, two of which were recently acquired by foreign investors. The EDB and Pierce County have been involved with expansion efforts and are standing by ready to assist new owners grow their businesses here.

- **Farwest Aircraft Inc.** is one of the world's leading manufacturers of aircraft maintenance tools and electrical testing equipment. Based in the **City of Edgewood**, Farwest manufactures and supplies ground support equipment and maintenance tooling for commercial aircraft produced by Boeing, and services hundreds of other aerospace clients.

In May 2019, Farwest was acquired by Japanese company **ANA Trading Corp. USA** (part of **All Nippon Airways Trading Co., Ltd.**), a provider of aircraft parts and related devices and a longtime Farwest client.

With ANA's substantial backing, Farwest will move to a new site in the City of Pacific early this year. The 55,000-square-foot manufacturing facility will include a dedicated electric department and the latest in automated, high-tech equipment. The location also offers room to expand down the road.

Over the next year, Farwest plans to add 10-15 full time employees to their current staff of 35. More FTE hiring is on the horizon as the company continues to grow its product line.

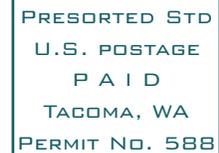
"Being part of the ANA Group is a win-win, and we're all excited to see where we're going from here," said Farwest President and COO Frank K. Gutfrucht. "We've set the stage to be a major player for the next decades, and the future for our employees and their families is secure for generations to come."

- **AIM Aerospace** is a leading Tier II Supplier of composite ducting, substructural and interior parts for the commercial aerospace industry. Over the last year, the company consolidated multiple Auburn plants into its Sumner location and expanded operations, putting the number of employees at the location at more than 600 FTEs. This longtime EDB client is now the second-largest aerospace employer in Pierce County behind Boeing.

In November 2019, AIM was acquired by Japanese conglomerate **Sekisui Chemical Company** for \$510 million. Now known as **Sekisui Aerospace**, the company becomes the foundational aerospace organization



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in Sekisui Chemical's portfolio. The deal unites AIM's technical, product and market expertise with Sekisui's advanced materials and processes, along with its deep manufacturing knowledge and considerable resources.

- Nalley Valley-based **Tool Gauge** is nearing completion of an 81,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art aerospace manufacturing facility that will double its size, expand operations and capabilities, and significantly boost its full-time workforce. The manufacturer of complex, high-value plastic and metal assemblies is a long-certified Boeing supplier that ships parts across the U.S. and the world. The EDB partnered with the **City of Tacoma, Pierce County, Impact Washington** and the **Washington State Department of Commerce** to support Tool Gauge's first major company expansion.

### Hot resource

The Major Employers List is the most requested and downloaded resource in the EDB's tool shed. New this year, Jacqueline Moffo, EDB economic development manager, compiled list results into an annual report for site selectors and prospective future employers around the world. The **2019 Pierce County Major Employers Annual Report** is available at [edbtacomapierce.org/majoremployers](http://edbtacomapierce.org/majoremployers).

*Teamwork is a service of the EDB, a non-profit corporation focused on recruitment and retention of primary businesses in Tacoma and Pierce County, Washington, USA.*

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