

Narrative: KEDA Nomination, Economic Development Advocate of the Year – Chad Melton

KEDA makes this nomination for three reasons.

1. **\$2.5 million Investment in Olympic College.** Chad successfully secured a \$2.5 million gift from his employer, Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, to invest in the first phase of the Health Sciences Expansion at Olympic College Poulsbo. This contributed to a \$10.5 million public-private partnership, which allowed the renovation and expansion of the Olympic College Poulsbo campus to increase Allied Health careers in Kitsap. The renovation was completed October 2026.

Virginia Mason’s investment in Olympic College created a brand-new radiology tech classroom at the Poulsbo campus, and created the opportunity for 20 students a each year to go through that program in the Virginia Mason Franciscan Health Learning Labs. This investment also helped unlock the rest of the first phase of Olympic College’s renovation and expansion, enabling some 70 more students to attend expanded healthcare programs in Poulsbo including in surgical tech, ultrasound tech, phlebotomy certification, and in the Practical Nursing Navy Corpsman Bridge Program, which allows for a more efficient path for military medics to become certified nurses.

2. **Direct Support of Economic Development.** Chad has been a member of KEDA's board and executive committee since 2022. He has served as KEDA's Treasurer and currently serves as Vice Chair. In 2024 he was instrumental in the success of KEDA’s first five-year regional economic strategy, One Kitsap. Under his leadership Virginia Mason Franciscan Health increased their investment in KEDA by 2.5 times, becoming one of four “champion investors” that invested \$50,000 or more in KEDA annually. This led to other private investors increasing their investment in KEDA, which allowed our economic development alliance to grow staff, increase impact, and bring our funding model closer to parity with of public and private funding.
3. **Growing Kitsap’s Healthcare Footprint.** Under Chad’s leadership Virginia Mason Franciscan Health has also vastly increased its investment in Kitsap—they have opened three new facilities in 2025, including a \$23 million investment in two new freestanding emergency rooms in Bremerton and Port Orchard. They also opened a \$120 million new tower at St. Michael Medical Center, increasing capacity at the premier hospital of the peninsulas by 74 beds.