

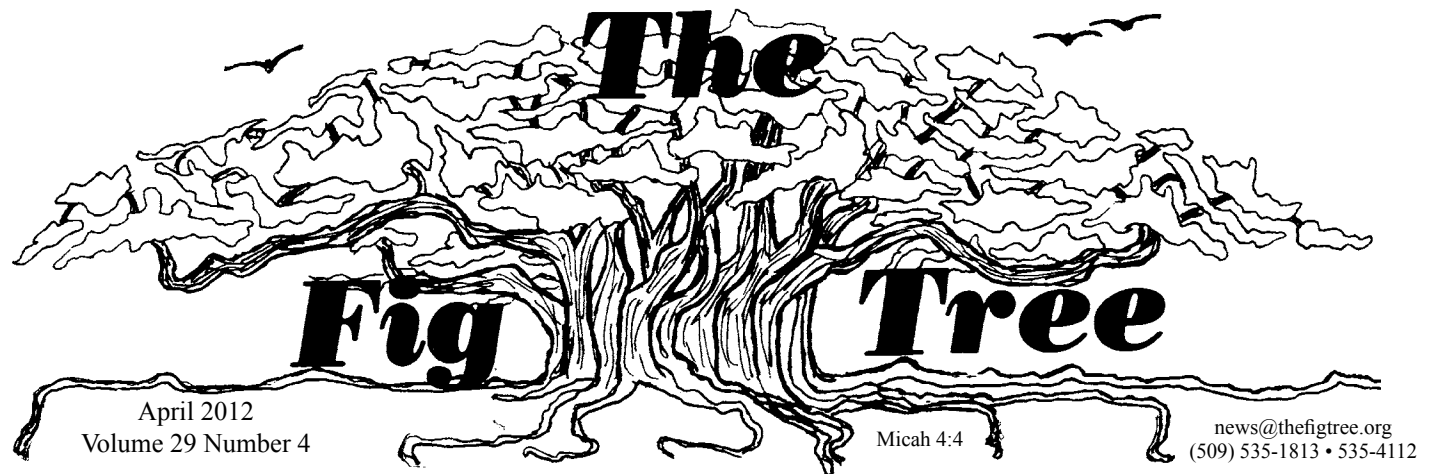
STORIES INSIDE

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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Ethics matter at bedsides, streamsides

By Mary Stamp

Educating and engaging in action with people through the Sierra Club and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, physician-conservationist John Osborn applies principles he uses to diagnose and treat sick people to heal the environment.

Caring for patients at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Spokane, he listens, gathers history, examines the patient, and does lab tests and x-rays to make a diagnosis and decide on treatment.

"History is key to providing care for sick people and sick ecosystems," said John, who edited the *Transitions* journal for the Lands Council from 1988 to 2000, recording historic changes in the Columbia River area.

He believes ethics matter at bedsides and streamsides.

"My work with caring for veterans and river systems has been much of my life," he said, "I do what I do because it's the right thing to do.

"Decisions we make about water, forests, environment and health care are moral decisions," John said, noting that the 2001 Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Columbia River Watershed, "Car-



Physician-conservationist John Osborn persists in calling for accountability.

ing for Creation and the Common Good," underscores that.

To help people face facts and act ethically, he is learning to produce videos to tell stories and give voice to the voiceless, who include future generations, tundra swans, osprey, salmon and the river.

His love of the outdoors grew from fishing, hunting, canoeing and backpacking with his father, Cal, who worked with IBM in Boise. Being in Indian Guides, Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts furthered that love.

The commitment of his mother, Marie, a nurse practitioner who ran a medical clinic in Stanley, Idaho, serving a 6,000-square-mile area in the Sawtooth back country, inspired his medical career.

Four summers, while studying zoology, history, human ecology and chemistry at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, he fought forest fires. After graduating in 1979, he spent three summers with hot shot crews fighting fires in the West to pay for medical school.

John entered the regional Washington Alaska, Montana and Idaho medical program, studying his first year in Moscow and Pullman.

After two years of clinical studies in Seattle, he did residencies

Continued on page 8

Central Valley High School teachers committed to teaching on the Holocaust

Central Valley High School teacher Steve Bernard visited the Auschwitz concentration camp during a month-long People-to-People visit in Europe in 1980.

Even though he taught world affairs and government, he had known little about the history of the Holocaust before then.

What he saw in the labor camp and death camp made him feel sick, sparking his passion for teaching students about the Holocaust.

At first, he incorporated Holocaust history into his class on world affairs. In 1985, Steve de-

veloped a semester-long elective course. Now it is so popular that in 2011, 400 students signed up.

In 2010, Steve retired after 34 years of teaching and passed on his legacy of teaching the course at Central Valley High School (CVHS) to Geoff Arte. Geoff was a student teacher under him in 2006 during his master's in teaching program at Whitworth. He began teaching at CVHS in 2007.

Steve and two other area teachers, Brad Veile, a teacher at Lakeside High School in Plummer, Idaho, and Julie Scott, a teacher at East Valley Middle School, have

completed the week-long training at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., to be Holocaust Museum Teacher Fellows.

They will be honored and will light a candle during the 2012 Yom HaShoah, Holocaust commemoration service, at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 19, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave.

Steve was also one of the readers of the 110 essays area middle and high school students submitted on why it's important to teach about the Holocaust. The essay contest is now an annual part of preparations for this year's Yom HaShoah service.

As a historian, Steve, who attends St. Mary's Catholic Church in Spokane Valley, said he taught the Holocaust because it is the right thing to do.

"I do not want that history to die. There is an amazing lack of knowledge among people who do not study history," said Steve, who also has taught adult education classes. "It's important that this genocide has a name. It

Continued on page 9

Communities mark Earth Day

With Earth Day on Sunday, April 22, the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program has worship resources on "Abundance of Life: Ethics of Energy." The resources communicate that God gives energy sources in abundance, even though some sources like coal and gas are limited. Sun, wind and water have the potential to generate power in perpetuity, say resource preparers. For information, visit ncccecojustice.org/earthday.

Earth Day events are being planned in the Inland Northwest before, on and after Earth Day.

In Spokane, the celebration will be from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, April 21, on Main Ave., between Browne and Division. It will feature community booths, "green" activities for children, food, music and art.

Earthworks Recycling is compiling information on Earth Day Spokane events at earthdayspokane.org.

Spokane's Earth Day celebrations inform people on conservation, recycling, renewable energy, green businesses, habitat and wildlife protection and environmental conservation.

The day includes a Procession of the Species in which children make masks of favorite animals and join in a parade.

REI and Dishman Hills are planning a service day from 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday, April 22, with tree planting, trail building, trash clean-up, fence and deck staining, tree thinning and noxious weed removal.

Coeur d'Alene's Earth Day Fair is from noon to 3 p.m., Sunday, April 22, at the Coeur d'Alene Library. Last year, 550

Continued on page 3

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at Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N. Government Way.

Religion News Briefs

Around the World

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Interfaith groups say Middle East peace is urgent

In the context of developments in the Middle East, the National Council of Churches has joined leaders of major Jewish, Christian and Muslim national religious organizations to "affirm with urgency that Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace is more vital than ever."

Leaders guided by "Principles of Cooperation" acknowledge bonds with those on different sides of the conflict and emphasize a common agenda for peace.

Aware that the months leading up to U.S. national elections present a special challenge, the Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders urged candidates not to use rhetoric that could make prospects for peace more problematic.

The National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East calls on the Administration, Congress and candidates for office to support the following:

- Address warnings to both sides to prevent violence and undertake diplomatic efforts;
- Continue to support Palestinian state-building and economic development capacity;
- Support Palestinian efforts to form a government capable of representing the West Bank and Gaza, halt violence and negotiate a two-state peace agreement with Israel;
- Urge Israel to halt settlement expansion, including in East Jerusalem and
- Urge a resumption of negotiations for a two-state peace agreement, which might lead to an agreement acceptable to both sides.

The national religious leaders pledged to urge members of their communities "to work actively to preserve and further prepare the ground for Middle East peace, and to support positive efforts by political leaders in both parties to help move towards this goal."

What is the church's message to young people?

Members of the millennial generation, born between 1980 and 2000, are often seen with white cords dangling from their ears and studiously squinting into tiny screens in their palms.

In an opening essay in the National Council of Churches' 2012 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, editor Eileen Lindner asks, "Can the Church Log In with the 'Connected Generation'?"

The Yearbook is a source of church membership and financial trends in the U.S. and Canada.

"People in the millennial generation blog, email, text, download, upload and consume electronic messages at a rate and volume in excess of any other age group," said Eileen. "As a generation they are self-aware of the distinctiveness of their ever-present connectedness and seek far-flung relationships with persons, electronic 'friends,' quite unlike themselves."

The virtual connectedness affects their religious and political views. Few are affiliated with churches, but she said the generation is no less religious than preceding generations.

"Suggestions that this generation is signaling the secularization of American culture are premature and ignore the rather nuanced religious identity of this age group," she writes. "Belonging to a religious organization is a behavior. Belief is a conviction."

Most—53 percent according to General Social Surveys and 64 percent according to Pew—believe in God, she reported.

In many ways, their viewpoints are more traditional or conservative than their boomer parents.

"Affiliated millennials are more inclined than their elders to believe their religion is the single path to eternal life," Elaine writes, "yet they are more open to various interpretations of religious doctrine and less likely perceive the Bible as literal truth."

While most have withdrawn from worshipping at regular times and places, Eileen believes, pastoral care may reach them.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Speakers offer a new vision of security

Navy Capt. Wayne Porter and Marine Col. Mark Mykleby will discuss "Imagining a New Vision for American Prosperity and Security" at a conference co-sponsored by Pax Christi Spokane and Gonzaga University's political science and religious studies departments, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 21, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga.

Wayne and Mark co-authored "Mr. Y: A National Strategic Nar-

ative," a document outlining their views is published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

They say the vision of U.S. security and economic interests since 1946 is rooted in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and United States as world powers. With the Cold War over, they say threats to security and prosperity are more about challenges of sustainable energy and

agriculture, the need to revise education and social policies, and an emphasis on foreign policy guided by diplomacy and international development, rather than military force alone.

Wayne and Mark are military strategists and assistants to the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They speak at forums across the United States. Their policy paper is at www.wilsoncenter.org.

For information, call 358-4273.

Kootenai human relations banquet planned

Jianli Yang, a leader of the democracy movement in China, will speak on "A Dissident's Struggle to Bring Democracy to China" at the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations' 15th annual Human Rights Banquet at 6 p.m., Monday, April 23, at the Coeur d'Alene Inn, 506 W. Appleway in Coeur d'Alene.

Yang protested in the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. On a list of 48 banned leaders, he came to the United States and earned doctoral degrees at the University of California (UC) and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He has taught at UC Berkeley and Santa Cruz.

In 2002, he went to China to re-

port on labor unrest and was held for a year, tortured, tried for spying and sentenced to five years in prison—drawing an international outcry. He returned to the United States in 2007.

Proceeds benefit Human Rights Education Institute scholarships at North Idaho College. For information, call 208-765-3932.

'Our Kids Our Business' activities are online

April is "Our Kids: Our Business" month with pinwheels reminding people of the need for parents and adults to keep children safe and loved, and to prevent abuse, neglect, violence, drop-outs, crime and substance abuse.

Events planned are listed at ourkidsspokane.org.

Lutheran Community Services is presenting the Clothesline Project, a T-shirt display honoring women affected by violence, April 9 to 21 at the Downtown Library.

Salk Middle School students plan a Bullying Campaign, starting at 9:15 a.m., Monday, April 16.

A National Day of Cyber

Awareness event is at noon, Saturday, April 21, at the Children's Home Society of Washington.

At the SPO-CAN Council Training and Awards Breakfast, 7 a.m. to noon, Friday, April 27, at Mukogawa, the Rev. Darrell Armstrong will speak on the impact adults can have on a child's life.

Pianist performs benefit concert for Barton School

Pianist Hsia-Jung Chang, who has performed with the Spokane Symphony and given solo recitals in Scandinavia, China, Taiwan and other U.S. cities, will perform a benefit concert for Barton School at 7 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at First Presbyterian Church,

318 S. Cedar St.

The graduate of Shadle Park High School received her bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance from the University of Houston and a doctorate of musical arts from the Manhattan School of Music.

Half of proceeds will benefit Barton School, a volunteer tutoring program for adult students from Belarus, China, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Moldavia, Russia, South Korea, Ukraine and Vietnam.

For information, call 747-1058.

Unity Church hosts Spring Arts Festival for peace

One Peace, Many Paths' Spring Arts Festival, "Celebration of Peace," will be held from 1 to 4 p.m., Saturday, April 28, at Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard.

The day of music, art and family activities will include Sound Travel's "Inner Dimensional"

music; Hawaiian music by Lokahi; original Songs of Peace by vocalist-guitarist Michael Robinson, Dances of Universal Peace, Poets of Peace and a drumming circle, a visual arts gallery, workshops, an art raffle and arts-and-crafts vendors.

The art show includes works of local artists and art created for the Global Art Project for Peace. Those works will be shipped to partners around the world, who will send art to Unity Church.

For information, visit www.onepeacemanypaths.org.

The Fig Tree is planning the Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service 6:30 a.m., Sunday, April 8 at Greenwood Memorial Terrace 211 N. Government Way

The Fig Tree is published 10 months each year, September through June.

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Editorial Team
Editor/Publisher/Photos - Mary Stamp
Mary Mackay, Nancy Minard, Heather Kennison, Sara Weaver, Eugenie Alexander, Shannon St. Hilaire, Inga Jablonsky
Coordinators & Contract
Malcolm Haworth - Directory Editor
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Please join in the Spokane Community Observance of the Holocaust
Yom HaShoah
'Honoring the Holocaust Educators'



Keynote speaker - John Roth

Founding director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights at Claremont McKenna College

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Yom HaShoah service is April 19

The 2012 Yom HaShoah observance in Spokane at 7 p.m., Thursday, April 19, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., will honor Holocaust educators, including three local Holocaust Museum Teacher Fellows (see page 1).

The 2012 essay contest invited students to explore the need for Holocaust education today. John Roth, of Winthrop, a professor of philosophy from 1966 to 2006 and founding director of the Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights at Claremont, Calif., McKenna College, will respond to the essay contest winner. In addition to serving on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and the editorial board for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, he has published articles, reviews and books.

For information, call 747-3304.

Hospice hosts End-of-Life Ethics Conference

Hospice of Spokane will host an End-of-Life Ethics Conference from 10:15 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, at the Lincoln Center, 1316 N. Lincoln. Participants will consider ethical decisions related to finances, laws, values, culture and technology. Topics include artificial nutrition and hydration, palliative sedation, surrogate decision-making and how end-of-life ethical issues can create moral distress and influence grief. For information, call 532-6731 or visit www.hospiceofspokane.org.

Lands Council plans annual auction and dinner

The Lands Council's April Showers Auction and Dinner is at 4:30 p.m., Saturday, April 14, at the DoubleTree Hotel, 322 N. Spokane Falls Ct. The council works to preserve the region's forests, water and wildlife through advocacy, education, action and collaboration. For information, call 209-2851 or email aswan@landscouncil.org.

Shower of Stoles exhibit will be in Spokane

The Shower of Stoles exhibit of more than 1,000 stoles and stories will be on display from April 27 to May 2 at Bethany Presbyterian Church, 26th and Ray. There will be workshops for clergy on ministries with and of gays and lesbians, and for teachers and youth concerned about bullying.

For information, call 994-6879 or see bethany-spokane.org.

The Fig Tree offers volunteer training

For new training, The Fig Tree is planning two volunteer orientation sessions. They will be at 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 10, and 1 p.m., Thursday, April 12, at Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct. The Fig Tree seeks volunteers to help with mailings, deliveries, displays, promotion, writing and editing. For information, call 535-4112.

Earth Day events educate and involve people

Continued from page 1

guests and 35 vendors came. The 2012 theme, "Earth Day in Your Backyard," invites tips and tools for improving back yards. For information, call 208-667-9093.

Sustainable Walla Walla Earth Week, April 16 to 22, includes Green Travel Awards for businesses, agencies, schools, churches and organizations with the best green travel programs for employees, students, customers and members April 16 to 22.

Green Travel is about low-energy ways to go to and from work, school, worship, meetings and other tasks—biking, bussing, walking, carpooling, riding scooters and other low-energy alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

Participants may send a description of their program to Sustainable Walla Walla, PO Box 1222, Walla Walla WA 99362 by Friday, April 27. For information, email sustainableww@charter.net.

In Pullman, Washington State University is planning an Eco-Adventure Earth Day Clean-up and Climb. Participants will spend a day climbing at Granite Point, Wash. For information, call 335-0104.

Colville Confederated Tribes' 2012 Earth Day Celebration from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Friday, April 20, at the Colville Indian Agency Pow Wow Grounds in Nespelem will include dancers, drummers and 50 information booths. For information, call 634-2413 or visit colvilletribes.com.

Several Green Okanogan Earth Day events are planned. A Green Building and Green Inten-

tional Community tour of a home built with recycled materials and using eco-friendly practices begins at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, April 21, at the Community Cultural Center of Tonasket, 411 S. Western Ave.

Earth Day activities include information on recycling, glass crushing, solar and wind power, alternative transportation, community gardens, composting, rocket stoves, community action, conscious buying, Slow Food Okanogan and GMO food at the community center.

Sandpoint's Earth Day Festival from noon to 4 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at Sandpoint Charter School, 614 S. Madison Ave., will include booths, children's activities, service-learning projects, music and food. For information, call 208-946-6960.

The Bonners Ferry Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring an Earth Day Fair, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at Memorial Hall at the Boundary County Fairgrounds to share ideas on reducing, reusing, recycling and sustainability as part of a Green Weekend. For information, call 208-290-2720.

Lewiston, Idaho, will hold its seventh annual Earth Day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday, April 19. For information, call 208-746-1187.

The Palouse-Clearwater Environmental Institute will host its annual Paradise Creek Stream Clean-up from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at the PCEI Campus, 1040 Rodeo Dr., in Moscow.

Ellensburg's fourth annual Earth Day Celebration will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at the Ellensburg Transfer Station, 1001 Industrial Way. For information, call 962-7542.

Wenatchee's Centennial Park will become an intergenerational, interactive learning center from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday, April 17. Jacobson Preserve will become an Earth Day hub for families and walkers to explore Wenatchee's wild side with naturalists at interactive stations. For information, call 667-9708.

Chelan's Community Services Workgroup will present an Earth Day Fair from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., April 17, at its Riverwalk Park. For information, call 682-5756.

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Conference addresses mission partnership issues

The Ethiopia Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is holding its ninth annual Network Conference Thursday through Saturday, April 26 to 28, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar in Spokane, said registrar Mary Beth Baker.

The conference is primarily for Presbyterian (PCUSA) churches with partnerships in Ethiopia but also for area people interested in mission partnerships, said Mary Beth, who has worked with First Presbyterian's partnership with the Bethany Gambella Synod for several years.

The Friday focus is on "The Changing Face of Mission" and the Saturday on "Health Ministry."

Speakers will discuss "What We Do in Mission," "When Hurting Helps: How We Do Mission," "Responding to the Needs of Vulnerable Children in

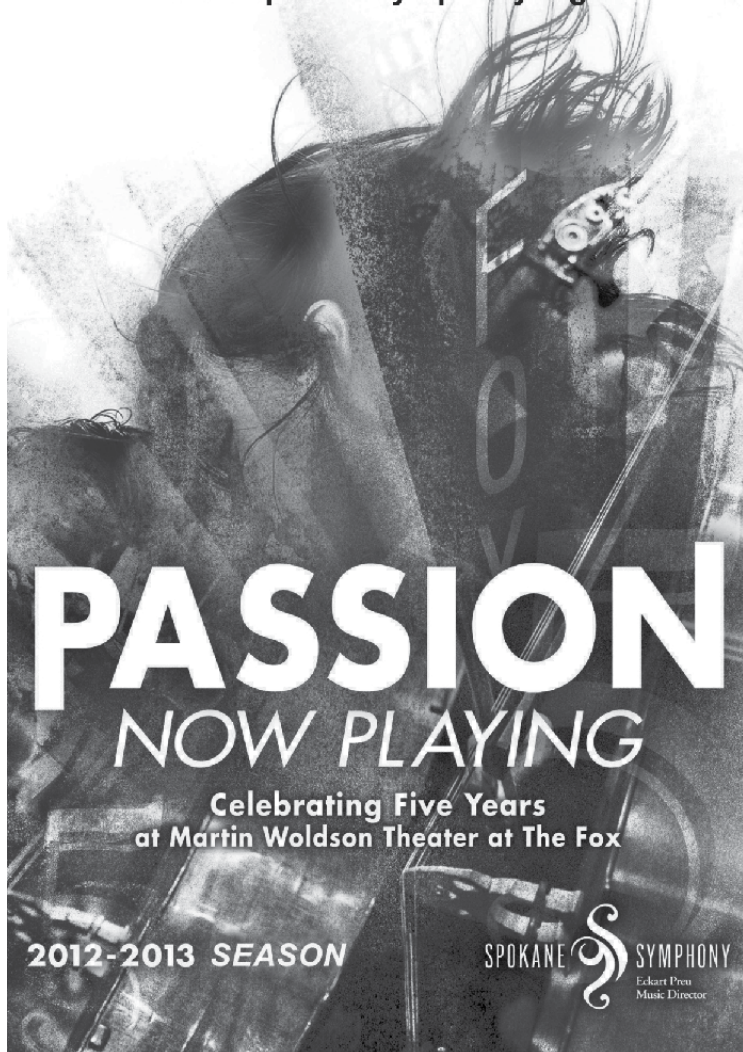
Ethiopia," "Villagization—Pastoralists Physical and Cultural Resettlement," the impact of partnerships and Community Health Evangelism. There will also be workshops on short-term mission trips, background on Ethiopia, health challenges, saving forests

and understanding Islam.

"Being in partnership requires persistence," said Mary Beth, so sharing with others doing partnerships is helpful."

For information, call 466-4807 or 939-6198 or email rmbbaker@sprintmail.com.

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As church disbanded, it assured continuation of ministry to children

By Deidre Jacobson

When Grace Lutheran Church disbanded in October 2011, members transferred the former church office at Pacific and Magnolia to the SPEAR (Serving People with Education, Arts and Recreation) program. The church originally started it in 1968 as Project SPEAR (Summer Program for Enrichment and Recreation).

For more than 40 years, the basement of the nearly century-old church at 1827 E. Pacific was filled with children eating, playing, learning and laughing.

SPEAR was started to provide meals, activities and support for children from the ages of four to 18 in a corner of the East Central neighborhood between Sprague Ave. and Interstate 90.

When the aging, dwindling Grace Lutheran congregation closed its doors, it sold the church and property on the Northwest corner of Pacific and Magnolia.

Grace members who had supported SPEAR for 40 years did not want to abandon the SPEAR children and families, so they donated a small plot of land and the office building across the street from the church to ensure that the program could continue.

The payments from All Nations Christian Center, which bought Grace Lutheran's building, cover the costs of much of the program.

Sheryl Kruger, a 36-year member of Grace Lutheran who teaches at St. Charles Catholic School in Northwest Spokane, is the part-time program coordinator and plans the activities for the 15 to 30 children who come Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

Younger children play with games and toys while older ones study, chat with friends or help the little ones with arts and crafts.

"I have worked with the children for nine years," said Sheryl. "Every child in the program has finished high school. Many are going to college. We provide school supplies, backpacks and the support of adults who value education."

Second Harvest, Feed Spokane and the House of Charity provide food for SPEAR. Staff and volunteers prepare hot meals on hot plates and in a microwave. When they lost the church basement, they lost use of a kitchen.

Extra food is also given to parents when they come to collect their children.

"Sometimes we receive boxes of cereal, which the families love," Sheryl said. "Recently we received a donation of good coffee to distribute to the families."

Along with food, SPEAR passes on donations of clothing, toiletries and paper products. Items



Volunteers help children with crafts at SPEAR.

such as light bulbs, laundry soap and toilet tissue are especially appreciated because they cannot be purchased with food stamps.

St. Mark's, Bethlehem, Zion, All Saints and Salem Lutheran churches provide funds, donations and volunteers. Three staff members and volunteers lead activities and spend time with the children.

Some churches donate unique items like handmade quilts.

"The children and their parents are blessed by these special gifts," Sheryl said.

"Families have moved out of this neighborhood and come back because of SPEAR. The support makes a major difference for those who struggle to make ends meet," she said. "It can be the difference between stability and becoming homeless. Our families are the working poor, many have two or more part-time jobs."

SPEAR children also benefit from Success by Six's book drive. Board members and congregations also donate books.

Last year, three children received bikes through the Bikes for Books program. The participants submitted a slip for each book they read and names were drawn.

"Competition will be stiffer this year because the children vowed to read more books to have a better chance to win," Sheryl said.

A summer highlight is the week SPEAR sends children to camp at Lutherhaven on Lake Coeur d'Alene or at its Shoshone Base Camp in North Idaho. In 2011, SPEAR recruited and paid for 18 to go, giving each of them cameras, spending money and new sleeping bags, which they can use as blankets in the winter.

"We are now a nonprofit under the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America," said board chair Claudia Holtz, a member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

"We need a kitchen and hope to double the space to serve more children and families. When we were in the church basement, we served meals to the neighborhood,

feeding up to 100 people. We want to increase our program to five nights a week.

Because much of its budget comes from payments for the church building, SPEAR needs alternative funding in place when it is paid off. Its board of directors is working to be ready for this.

Claudia, who has lived in Reardan since 1976, said there is "nothing more precious than providing a meal for a child."

She feels a connection with working poor people, because she

worked as a house cleaner.

"I relate to poor families and am grateful for the ability to share," she said. "As many parents are busy trying to make ends meet, we provide family for the children."

"There were times in my life when I struggled," Claudia said. "Now I have the opportunity to help others and find joy serving through SPEAR. I witness the miracles the program provides."

For information, call 475-5470, email spearspokane@gmail.com or visit www.spearspokane.org.

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We've Got Stuff ministry is an outgrowth of Rathdrum church

By Kaye Hult

When clients of North Idaho social service agencies need household goods but cannot afford to pay for them, the agencies often call We've Got Stuff.

Founded by Molly Shirey with the help of other members of New Life Community Church in Rathdrum, Idaho, We've Got Stuff provides "everything from cups to couches" free of charge to people the ministry assists.

Recently, several volunteers gathered with Molly to reflect on the church's three-year-old outreach ministry.

It began when members of one of the church's home groups discussed ways to help those in need in their congregation. A family in their group needed some beds but could not afford them. Their children were sleeping on the floor. The group met that need.

The volunteers concluded that if one in their group had that kind of need, others might too. They announced to the church that they set aside an area in the back of the sanctuary where people could put nice things they no longer needed and someone else might use.

They learned, however, that members of New Life Community Church are givers, not takers. So We've Got Stuff branched out.

They hooked up with Fresh Start, which works with homeless people in the Coeur d'Alene area. Fresh Start connected them with Dirne Outreach, which helps homeless people find housing.

We've Got Stuff was able to help furnish those homes.

"We began by functioning out of my garage," said Molly, a full-time radiation therapist.

Later the group began delivering their items.

We've Got Stuff has formed relationships with organizations such as the Department of Health and Welfare, the Coalition for the Homeless and the Christian Community Coalition. They now receive referrals from some area social service agencies and churches. We've Got Stuff now serves 40 to 50 families a month.

The stories are varied.

It provides for people moving into transitional housing, and people who have to set up new households to escape domestic violence. When returning veterans need furniture, We've Got Stuff assists.

Volunteers help with needs for the elderly and the disabled. One client normally sleep on the floor



Molly Shirey, Nancy Schooley and Marsha Reese - Photo by Kaye Hult

but, after surgery, needed a bed. A mother cannot have her children returned to her care until she can provide acceptable housing.

Volunteers at We've Got Stuff see God's hand in every aspect of their work, Molly said. They have had prayers answered.

When they needed expanded storage for donated goods that accumulated, a rent-free warehouse was provided. When that space was sold, another landlord, who wanted a Christian organization to occupy his storefront, approached them. They have been in that space at 1130 N. 4th in Coeur d'Alene, since May 2011.

With a storefront, We've Got Stuff has now opened The Estate Store. There they market fancier donations. The proceeds help to finance the ministry.

"They rely on God to provide what they need. Tithing through New Life Community Church not only helped the group start but also helps keep the program going," Molly said.

Most of their donations come from yard sales. They have also received a few grants.

Another aspect of the ministry, said volunteer Nancy Schooley, is that volunteer couples meet with individuals or families who come to assess their needs and bring them hope. They also pray with them if the clients desire it.

Volunteer tasks range from matching lids with plastic containers to sorting utensils.

Molly's husband Mike painted the building, makes deliveries and picks up donations at garage sales.

Hotels donate bedding, towels, TVs and lamps.

A men's group at Friends Church in Hayden builds dressers.

Another men's group from Emmanuel Baptist Church helps repair furniture.

"We believe it's important for the community to be involved," said Marsha Reese, a volunteer.

Molly said that Coeur d'Alene High School chose We've Got Stuff as a student community outreach project for Christmas 2010.

"Last fall, Lakes Middle School

also worked with us," she said. "We gave them backpacks and binders. We also have sent camping gear like tents, sleeping bags, coats and boots to Fresh Start. We give the Humane Society blankets and towels that are too worn for us to give to clients.

"We've become resourceful and frugal," she continued. "Everything we receive finds a home. Once a motel gave us 93 curtains. What we couldn't use, we turned into aprons for our volunteers.

"We try to maintain people's dignity," said Nancy, "so we give only what we would use ourselves. Our goal is to give our clients the basics, not to fill their house. Even so, we try to throw in extra touches, like a picture or two for the walls or a few toys for the children."

"People who come into The Estate Store learn our history even if they don't buy anything," Marsha added. "Often they begin to help with donations."

The volunteers admit that the work can be tiring, but when they come here and pray, they are rejuvenated, Marsha said.

"We have built deep relationships with each other," she said. "I used to pray for friends. Now we have fellowship as we pray for each other and for the community. We lift each other up."

Molly's and Mike's dream of having many groups come together in this ministry is beginning to happen.

"We are being invited into peoples' homes," Molly said. "We're not overtly Christian or recruiting for the church, but we want people to know there's unconditional love. We pray over an order and then fill it. Most clients don't know we're in the store."

Molly, who helps evenings and weekends, said the program needs donated warehouse space for large items and more volunteers to help with deliveries, because they provide personal contacts with clients.

The Estate Store is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

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Buddhist scholar finds common concerns among different faiths

By Shannon St. Hilaire

The Venerable Geshe Thubten Phelgye (Gesh-la), a Tibetan Buddhist monk who is Gonzaga University's first visiting global scholar in residence this academic year, said it was easy to take spirituality for granted growing up in Tibet, where nearly 90 percent of the people are Buddhist.

Buddhism, an inherent part of culture in Tibet, was threatened when the Communist Chinese invaded in the 1950s. They killed 1.2 million Tibetans and destroyed more than 6,000 monasteries and nunneries.

In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and more than 80,000 Tibetans went into exile in India. In the 1960s, Tibetans were tortured in the name of "cultural revolution," Geshe-la said.

By the late 1970s, they smuggled drugs, alcohol and arms, brought prostitution and transferred many Chinese into Tibet.

"It was the 'sweet poisoning,'" said Geshe-la. "They tried to wipe out our remaining cultural heritage, but failed."

Although drawn to spiritual life in his childhood, he grew up with anger and hatred against Chinese.

"I did not feel spiritual after the invasion. I wanted to fight back, to die for the cause," he said.

At 13, he and six boys ran away to join the Indian military. Only the oldest, who was 16, was accepted. The rest were sent home.

Resistance to Chinese control of Tibet persists stronger in the young generation today, he said. From 2010 to today, 30 young Tibetans protested by self-immolation—sacrificing their lives by setting themselves on fire. Every few days, he hears of another.

In 1972, when he was 16, the Dalai Lama came to his school and gave a short talk on interdependence and compassion.

"That changed my way of thinking. I took some time to contemplate," said Geshe-la, "and I turned away from the military."

In 1973, he took the first ordination to enter the monastery.

"The process for acceptance into a Buddhist monastery is simpler than it is in other religions. Anyone can enter a Buddhist monastery with a good renunciation, even someone with a past criminal record," he said.

"The Christian tradition of a gradual entrance process to monastic life is inspiring to me," he said, "Buddhists can learn from Christian monasteries."



For Geshe Phelgye, meditation makes people take responsibility.

He studied 18 years in a monastery. Buddhism, Geshe-la said, is a vast spiritual study, based on the Four Noble Truths that show the nature, origin and cessation from the cycle of suffering, and the path to liberation. This achievement, through study, work, practice and meditation, is called "Nirvana or Enlightenment," he said. "You cannot go into the depth of Buddhism just by reading a few books or taking a course."

Since the 1960s, westerners have been drawn to Buddhism's practical teachings. Many have taken monastic ordination and are good scholars, but most disrobe after time. To live a monastic life in the West is challenging, he said.

"Every step in life needs to be mindful. Practicing Dharma means to learn, experience, internalize and live it," he said. "Buddhism draws many because you can ask any question and seek a reasonable answer."

"The Law of Karma makes us take responsibility for ourselves, rather than leave everything to God," Geshe-la said. "It requires dedication to be a Buddhist monk, particularly in difficult times."

Geshe-la studied, worked and helped build a monastery on land India gave the Tibetans.

"India opened its heart to us, but had little because it was just independent of British rule," he said.

The land was "in the middle of nowhere," so the monks had to make a living there. He and other monks plowed and harvested food with animals and by hand.

"Americans find what we went

through as refugees unbelievable," he said.

Geshe-la longed to leave the monastery and go to the Himalayan mountains to meditate and internalize what he had learned. He asked the Dalai Lama for his blessing to do that in the early 1970s, but the Dalai Lama told him to finish his studies first.

"You do not meditate much at first," he said, "because you have nothing to meditate on until you have studied."

Geshe-la finished his studies, went to the mountains and lived in isolation, only interacting with people for food. He had no running water or modern facilities.

"It was like life 200 years back," he said, "but it was the most meaningful, joyful, awesome time of my life."

He left after five years when he learned his father had died. He returned to his village in India and stayed to take care of his mother.

While living in the monastery, he adopted three orphaned students. He and his brother have also helped more than 150 monastic students with their studies.

Geshe-la was a founding member of the Jerusalem Peacemakers, an organization spreading peace and tolerance among the Muslims and Jews in the Middle East.

He also founded the Universal Compassion Movement, which is devoted to a compassionate lifestyle, including promoting vegetarianism to stop the slaughter of animals. While studying Buddhism, "eating meat did not make sense," he said, even though

the culture accepted it.

When he saw animals slaughtered for food, he "made a commitment to be a voice for the voiceless," he said. "It has been a long, difficult journey, but I know what I am doing is right."

In 1997, he received the blessing of the Dalai Lama, who also promotes vegetarianism. Now, most Buddhist monasteries are vegetarian. Geshe-la would like to start an organization for the movement in the West.

In a prayer at the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in Spokane, he gave recognition of the 45 million turkeys who were killed for the U.S. holiday. Although concerned about offending people, he found many appreciated it.

Geshe-la has travelled the world, teaching Buddhism and benefits of meditation. He teaches meditation Thursdays at the Saranac building. He said meditation centers people and helps them watch their own minds.

"Only then can we improve ourselves," he said.

After speaking at Gonzaga in 2010, he was invited to teach there. Gonzaga created the global scholar in residence program.

The first semester, he co-taught a course on Asian religions. This semester, he teaches an in-depth study of Buddhism. His class

filled up quickly.

"Students give me hope for the upcoming generation," he said. "They tell me I am an asset, and my presence is a gesture of diversity and for religious harmony that is part of the Jesuit mission of pluralism."

He also visits area churches and monasteries.

After his year at Gonzaga, Geshe-la may return to India and continue to travel and teach, but he hopes to extend his time here.

"I appreciate teaching upcoming leaders, to share Buddha's teaching of loving kindness, tolerance and forgiveness, because they are our hope," he said. "It aligns with my key mission in life, to promote compassion and religious harmony."

As a member of the Gelug school of Buddhism, he finds his faith intersects with the Jesuit tradition. Both emphasize service and academic life.

"We need this cultural, spiritual service," he said. "It is healing. Only spirituality gives us peace of mind, not materialism, but people do not understand or are too busy in mundane things. Spiritual practice is not something we can impose on people. People have to awake by themselves."

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Native American culture lends insights to spiritual, personal life

Not white enough for the white culture and not Native American enough for that culture, psychologist and educator Catherine Swan Reimer straddled both worlds to help educators and psychologists understand how to communicate with Native Americans in schools and counseling.

Now retired, she and her husband John live in Chewelah and continue to educate people.

Both were born in Alaska to Inupiat Eskimo mothers. Her father was German, Lithuanian and Jewish. His father was German.

Catherine shares professional insights and her personal story in two books—*A Circle of Swans: A Native American Counseling Spiritual Journal*, which will be published this year, and *Native and White in One Breath*, which will be published next year.

Circle of Swans captures her developmental process as she began coming back into Inupiat culture.

"The Native American culture is a way of thinking and being I left when I was a child," she said. "I was in the Anglo community until I met John."

Because her father put down her mother for speaking the Inupiat language or cooking Inupiat food, her mother did not teach Catherine her culture or dances. By working with Native Americans Catherine came to know Indian people, their culture and spirituality.

"I felt validated as I searched for the native part of me," she said.

She and John will speak on "Wisdom in Native American Traditions" from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, April 14, at the Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto.

Their presentation is part of the institute's second-Saturday series on "Seeing with the Eyes of the Heart: Recognizing God in Wisdom, Mysticism and Daily Life."

They will offer wisdom from Inupiat and Native American traditions, exploring how they intersect with their commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

At six, John moved from Nome to Anchorage. At five, Catherine moved from her village to Nome and to Los Angeles, where she stayed in a Spanish Carmelite convent while recuperating from tuberculosis. Her family eventually moved to Portland, Ore., where she completed high school before she went to Seattle University, graduating in 1969.

Knowing Father Armand Nigro, founder of the Ministry Institute, since she was at Seattle University, Catherine is spending time at the Ministry Institute with John, editing *A Matter of Maturity*, compiling Fr. Nigro's works.

"Fr. Nigro reinforced the integration of Christian and Native



Catherine Reimer values wisdom of Native spirituality.

American spirituality," she said.

Catherine said John, who dropped out in 10th grade, earned a GED and graduated in 1968 in science and education from Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colo., earned a master's in educational administration at Pennsylvania State University. Later, he finished a doctoral degree in education.

After graduating, she went to Phoenix, earning a master's in counseling in 1980 at Arizona State University and then counseling with Navajo, Pima and other tribes.

The Reimers met in Norman Okla., at a training for research on Indian education. John was deputy director of the research for the National Indian Education Association. For two years, Catherine gathered information from parents, students and administrators to improve Indian education.

John moved to Arizona and was principal at a Navajo school. She worked at Phoenix College until they went in the 1980s to Washington, D.C. He was educational line officer with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for six years.

Catherine earned a doctoral degree in psychology at George Washington University, earning straight A's, even though a high school counselor had said she would never complete college. Then she worked with Macro International, designing trainings and helping gather Native American Nation Training.

Graduating at 55, she met age discrimination, so when they settled in Portland, John traveled to work with school superintendents through the BIA in five

Northwestern states, and she developed her business, Swan Circle, Inc. Through it, she shared insights on counseling, education and spirituality with people who work with American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Counselors helping Native Americans often are limited by European-American psychology that values individualism, she said. The training builds sensitivity to Native American communication styles. She integrates individual tribes' cultures and values into therapy and interventions.

In 1991, she wrote, *How to Counsel the Inupiat Eskimo*, using it at universities and summers at the University of Alaska.

Her workshops evolved to integrate interventions using music, crafts, symbols, nature, rituals, sacred stories, dreams and myths with popular psychology.

"We did not use a tribe's specific rituals, but created rituals—celebration activities—meaningful for adults and helping youth resist substance abuse and work for good grades," Catherine said.

Once using the theme of stars, teachers gave students stars for good work, integrated stars into curricula and held a celebration with parents. Sitting around a fire, elders shared star stories. Youth made commitments to shoot for the stars—do their best, she said.

In counseling, she helped calm a woman who had been sexually abused as a child. The woman kept rubbing her hands and saying she felt dirty. Catherine suggested doing a ritual. She brought water, blessed it and blessed the woman

as she washed her hands, saying, "You're beautiful. You are cleansed." It helped the woman release her negative feelings.

Catherine also used the theme of washing with a group of Indian women—having them pair up and wash each other's hands—and for a training of business executives and professionals, demonstrating how important rituals are.

"One executive felt it was one of the most powerful experiences he ever had and encouraged me to continue this work," she said.

She encourages trainees to use a tribe's cultural elements, but not specific ceremonies. They need to read so they know about a tribe's culture and rituals if they are going to integrate the culture into a counseling or educational program.

Catherine, who serves on the board of the First Nations Behavioral Health Association, had a private practice and was a clinical supervisor at two treatment centers. In 2010, she led a workshop at Gonzaga on "Suicide Prevention: The Spiritual Connection" in counseling for Native Americans.

In Chewelah, they are involved in Immaculate Conception parish.

In addition to her participation in the Catholic Church, Catherine participated in Talking Circles, Native American therapy, sweats, a Vision Quest and other Native American spiritual and ritual ceremonies while she was in Arizona.

"God helped me understand the depth of Native American spirituality," said Catherine, who teaches meditation classes in parishes.

"I was not raised Native American, but I learned about our cultural ways, because my ancestors and God, who loves native people, teach us and help us meet the teachers we need," she said.

Her mother, who died three years ago, had started to share Inupiat culture with Catherine, her four children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. After her mother left her father, she began sharing about her culture, began dancing again and helped further Catherine's awareness of her heritage. Catherine is grateful for the tribes who encouraged her to learn about her culture and shared their cultures with her.

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Conservationist-physician organizes people to protect environment

Continued from page 1

in internal medicine and critical care at Boise's VA Hospital; in pediatrics at Pocatello; in multiple rotations at Seattle; in surgical pathology at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota; at McCormick Presbyterian Mission Hospital in Thailand, and in cardiology and nephrology at Spokane.

After his residency in Spokane, he planned to do mission medicine in poor countries, so he spent six weeks in 1985 at a Quaker mission hospital in Kenya. His involvement in conservation led him to set aside those plans.

In 1972, John's mother took him to a public hearing where he testified against an open pit mine proposed in Idaho's White Cloud Mountains. He helped organize public support for what became the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area in 1980.

During college, his work writing a book on the history of national forest protection informed his thinking on conservation.

In 1983 when John moved to Spokane for residency training, he became involved in efforts to protect wilderness in the Salmo-Priest and Kettle Range areas, and advocating for a 300,000-acre Mallard-Larkins wildland on the divide between the St. Joe and Clearwater Rivers. Today, that wildland remains unprotected.

In 1976, Congress passed the National Forest Management Act because of national furor over clearcutting. It required the U.S. Forest Service to complete management plans for 156 national forests and update them every 10 to 15 years.

"In Idaho, the forest plans were not written by scientists and economists but by timber politics," he said.

In 1985, the Idaho Congressional delegation sought to rewrite the draft national forest plans to permit logging at high, unsustainable levels. John was involved in challenging the political system on that before he went to Kenya, and long distance while there.

Although he took a position at the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center in Spokane in 1986, expecting to be there a year, he has been there 25 years. Two years ago, he became chief of medicine for the center that covers Eastern Washington, North Idaho and Northwest Montana.

He also serves as ethics consultation coordinator, palliative care team physician, medical director for the community living facility and webmaster for clinical staff caring for veterans in three states.

He notes that the web is a powerful tool for conservation and medical care.

Over the years, John helped start ethics training programs for resident physicians and the Regional Ethics Network of Eastern Washington (RENEW), which piloted a form used to honor people's choices at the end of life

called "POLST" for Physicians Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment, now used statewide.

From 1986 to 2010, when he became chief of medicine, John coordinated the VA hospital's HIV-AIDS program, beginning with few options for treatment until protease inhibitors came out in 1996 and more drugs since.

"It was like a miracle," he said. "Patients I thought we would lose were pulled back from the brink. The key to the pandemic, however, is prevention."

In medicine and conservation, he persists in challenging difficulties to bring progress.

His work in 1994 to reform the 1864 Northern Pacific Railroad Land Grant led to him meeting his wife, Rachael Pascal, attorney and director of the Center for Environmental Law and Policy (CELP) in Seattle, then part of the University of Washington Law School. They were married in 2000.

John explained how the railroad land grant history had impact. Lands intended for homesteaders ended up in the hands of large corporations. In the 1980s, when large timber companies liquidated forest holdings, they cut many trees and exported them overseas.

"People could see the destruction to forests in the area," he said, "because the old law granted public land to the railroad in alternating square-mile sections. Logging those sections transformed the checkerboard pattern on the map into a clearcut reality in forests."

Railroads and Clearcuts, which he published in 1995 with Derrick Jensen and George Diaffan, explains that the law signed by Abraham Lincoln to "promote the public interest and welfare" created a swath of checkerboard lands up to 120 miles wide from Lake Superior to Puget Sound.

Although John has sought unsuccessfully to reform this law, because of the damage it has brought, he has worked with others with some success to reform the governance of some companies by bringing resolutions to shareholders.

In the 1990s when presenting resolutions at shareholder meetings he gave autographed copies of *Railroads and Clearcuts* to companies on the Northern Pacific Railroad grant, reminding them of the public obligations that go with the grant lands.

With grant funding to do a legal analysis of the land grants, consumer protector Ralph Nader suggested he hire lawyers. That led him to CELP.

As a connector and educator, John organizes people and groups to advocate for the environment.

In 1983, while working on

wilderness protection, he created the Spokane Resident Physicians Action League, organizing the medical community to protect the Mallard-Larkins Area. It evolved into the Lands Council. John was board president until 1996.

He has served on the executive committee of the local Upper Columbia River Group of the Sierra Club since 1983. He is also coordinator of the Columbia River Future Project, part of Sierra Club's Water Sentinels program, to restore the river.

"Water scarcity is the pressing issue in Eastern Washington because of climate change and mismanagement of ground water by state and federal governments," he said. "The state continues to give away water rights, letting corporate agriculture take water from deep basalt aquifers that do not recharge. Mining the aquifers drops water tables and creates a crisis for many communities."

Since 2005, he helped organize and support Connell area family farmers when Attorney General Rob McKenna reinterpreted a 1945 statute that once limited landowners to pump no more than 5,000 gallons a day for their stock or households. Family dryland wheat farmers learned of plans for 300,000-cattle feedlot next to their farms. Pumping a million gallons a day from a 1,500-foot-deep well threatens the farmers' 700-foot-deep wells, he said. Family farmers are losing access to water and their way of life.

Dam construction is another issue. John is challenging Governor Christine Gregoire's and the legislature's 2006 decision to build new dams in Eastern Washington, costing \$1 to \$9 billion, while cutting vital programs.

A dam on Lower Crab Creek near Othello would flood federal and state wildlife refuges and fishing lakes. With the alarm sounded, the state backed off, he said.

A dam on the Similkameen River would have flooded a popular fishing area and seven miles into Canada. With opposition from political leaders in Canada, proponents abandoned that dam.

Two new dams proposed for the Yakima Basin would destroy an endangered-wildlife habitat and ancient forest. Recently about 1,700 people submitted letters opposing these dams.

"Water has political currency and economic value. We know we're up against substantial political and economic forces," he said. "In saving these places and finding reasoned solutions to water scarcity, we empower people who care about these places."

To clean up PCB pollution in the Spokane River, Sierra Club

and CELP filed citizen lawsuits in late 2011 to compel federal and state governments to enforce the federal Clean Water Act.

"For eight years, we asked the Environmental Protection Agency and the state to follow the law and set a cleanup plan," said John.

Cleaning up 100 million tons of waste left from Silver Valley mines—lead, cadmium, zinc, arsenic and other metals—is another priority. The contamination has moved downstream through wetlands into Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River, threatening human health and wildlife.

"Tundra swans migrate to wetlands covered with mine wastes. Heavy logging and logging-road building from the 1950s to 1990s destabilized the forest watershed, so it can't hold water and is flood prone," he said. "Floods flowing across the polluted floodplain carry mine wastes into Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River."

John testified before a U.S. Senate subcommittee in 1995, urging "the health of our watersheds and rivers." In floods the next year, the U.S. Geological Survey measured a daily flow of 1.4 million pounds of lead into Lake Coeur d'Alene. Facing opposition from North Idaho business and political leaders who did not want a Superfund cleanup of mine wastes, John helped coordinate public efforts to clean up the pollution.

By leading ecological-historical tours of the Spokane River watershed, John helps people see the impact of Manifest Destiny on the region—starting with Lewis and Clark coming in 1805, to the

Northern Pacific Land Grant Act, the 1872 mining law, the creation of states in 1889 and 1890 with unworkable boundaries, the 1891 National Forest System Act and then the era of dam building.

Spokane was a center for four transcontinental railroads, mining, logging and dam building.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, John saw a natural outgrowth of history: that the end of the timber frontier would inevitably come. Corporations overcut forests and transferred capital to new forest regions, leaving shuttered timber mills, social upheaval and damaged forests, he said.


"In this transition, we were then able to protect some forests and advocate for local communities," said John, who is less optimistic about the cleanup of mine wastes.

One success has been in restoring water to the Spokane Falls, with Sierra Club and CELP working with Avista.

Although discouraged about efforts to build new dams, he sees an awakening of public interest in "the economic folly of spending billions of tax dollars for water projects rather than conserving water."

Work for conservation for John requires ongoing commitment, as an activity of daily living and as a moral imperative.

For information, call 939-1290 or email john@waterplanet.ws.



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Teaching Holocaust history stirs students to challenge injustice

Continued from page 1
would be tragic to let this history disappear. We learn lessons from history—U.S. history and Holocaust history.”

The Holocaust Memorial Museum spends billions of dollars to keep this history alive and to help people realize how genocide happens.

“The museum emphasizes that there are four groups of people: perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders and victims,” Steve said. “The message is to not be bystanders. We have a moral responsibility to stand up for what’s right.”

Steve grew up in Mead, earned a degree in political science with a minor in history and coaching at Washington State University and taught at Greenacres Middle School before starting to teach at Central Valley in 1979. He was also a CVHS’s football coach.

In 2006, the Washington State Holocaust Center invited Steve to the Lerner Fellowship Program at Columbia University in New York City. He has been to the U.S. Holocaust Museum five times.

Steve has taught seminars at Chapman College, Portland State and the University of Washington. He volunteers six days a semester to teach the history of the Holocaust before the students in the West Valley School District’s Contract Base High School read the novel, *Night*, by Elie Wiesel.

Geoff, a graduate of Regis University in Denver, had at first been uncertain about teaching a whole semester on the Holocaust.

Before joining the CV faculty, he taught a year at Gonzaga Prep, which has a nine-week genocide course.

Geoff, who attends St. Aloysius Catholic Church, now feels he is lucky to have a full semester to teach the Holocaust in contrast with others who may have three days to teach it in a history class.

Another of Steve’s former student teachers now teaches the semester curriculum in Oroville.

“The curriculum is so full, but we could teach more. It follows the rise of the Nazi Party, the development of concentration camps, Jewish life in the ghettos, Germany’s defeat in World War II, war crimes trials and the aftermath in post-war Germany and Europe. We have talked of teaching another semester course on the genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, Sudan and other areas of the world,” Geoff said.

“The course is like a college-level class,” he said. “Students have many questions: How could it have happened that 11 million people were killed and no one



Steve Bernard and Geoff Arte by a display in the classroom.

stepped in? What happened to those who said something?

“We teach students that the Holocaust was not inevitable if people had been courageous. People made good and bad decisions,” Geoff said.

“The hope is that students and adults will learn lessons from the history of this horrific event, but other genocides have happened,” Steve said. “We can learn from the past and apply it to today’s society to prevent future genocides.”

Genocides grow out of economic, social, political and historical contexts, he said, pointing out how Nazis developed anti-Semitism and began defining Jews as a race, rather than as people who follow a religion.

Steve added that Americans were complicit in not opening their immigration quotas to allow more Jews to enter during the 1930s.

At a 1934 conference in Evian, France, nations met to discuss how to help Jews in Germany. The United States, Great Britain and France knew of the discrimination against Jews, but none would make an effort to help them. After that, Germany felt it had a “green light,” and the world would not care, Steve said. “Only the Dominican Republic allowed more Jews to come.”

“The nations of the world were bystanders and collaborators,” he said. “The world also knew of the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia.”

What can people do to prevent genocide?

Geoff tells students they can write to Congress and speak out on issues today.

One issue today is that the Polish government is considering whether to save millions of Euros by letting Auschwitz return to dust, rather than spending money to preserve it.

“Germany and Poland are not proud of their history,” Steve said.

“I’m worried about Holocaust denial from people saying the Holocaust was exaggerated or did not happen,” he said.

“The camps were built in Eastern Europe where there was a concentration of Jews. The six death camps were in isolated forest areas of Eastern Poland, because the Nazis did not want the world to find out,” he said.

Dachau was the first concentration camp to open and its focus was for political opponents of Nazis, arrested for speaking out.

Steve said students wonder how the minds of people, especially young people, were manipulated by negative and positive propaganda.

“Positive” propaganda glorified the Nazi state, portrayed Hitler as a God or as the savior of Germany and created the myth that the Aryan race was superior.

“Negative propaganda turned people against Jewish people because of their beliefs and way of life. To create fear, it made Jewish people a race who were considered to be disease carriers and a lower life form. First graders were taught to hate Jews,” he said.

In the 2012 essay submissions, Steve found students focusing on

prejudice, hatred, bullying and racism.

“They see themselves as able to take a small-scale stand against those attitudes. Many in this generation have no knowledge of this history. Through knowledge of social, political and economic perspectives, we can prevent history from repeating itself,” he said. “People allowed the government to do something that was not right.”

Students also talk about the Aryan Nations in North Idaho, and dynamics of hate and white supremacy today.

“There’s a connection between that and Nazi Germany,” Steve said. “The message to students is ‘don’t be a bystander.’ Stand up for what is right. We have a moral obligation.”

Steve said high school students were most impressed by listening to a Holocaust survivor. As a historian, he believes that the late Eva Lassman touched the lives of many young people.

“She played a crucial role by sharing the testimony of her personal experience as a Holocaust survivor,” he said, noting that in 10 years, there will be only the testimonies of the second generation, which are not as powerful.

“Eva told of life in Lodz, in the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw and of riding on a cattle train,” he said. “Here was a small, old woman who did not have an ounce of hate. She preached tolerance and forgiveness.”

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Fig Tree uplifts the many credible ways the faith community contributes

Comments by Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp during the 2012 Benefit Breakfast and Lunch in March:

The ecumenical and interfaith content in our monthly newspaper, website, social media, annual resource directory and face-to-face gatherings is about people.

Ecumenical means we are part of God's whole inhabited earth. Yes, some folks live faithfully, and some are sometimes hypocrites. Secular media often play on the latter—the sensational, the sexy, the unusual and conflicts that divide people, congregations and faith groups. That emphasis discredits the faith community.

We seek to communicate that, despite the failings of some people and institutions, there is much that is credible going on in the faith community. The YWCA empowers abused women. The SHAWL Society continues to monitor uranium mining cleanup on the Spokane reservation. Professors introduce college students and churches introduce members to experiences abroad that give perspective. Jerusalem peacebuilders seek peace in the Holy Land.

A Nez Perce nurse educator finds power of stories to heal historic trauma.

These are just a few recent stories.

Interfaith means we recognize we have differences and we will disagree on some aspects of our faith, but we also seek to communicate that we share common ground in our faith lives.

Communicating credibly means we challenge economic, social and political powers that will divide and disempower us, silencing the challenge of our faith to live abundantly in today's scarcity, security mindset. Faith reminds us there is hope.

We cover stories of institutional religion and stories of people of faith, articulating their understandings of and inspiration from their faith.

Rather than focusing on the hot-button issues or using differences to further divisions, prejudices and hate, we share human interest feature stories and news events—stories of people countering the culture and taking risks to care because of their faith.

There is much we could fear in the world around us.

• Given the toxics in the environment, we share stories of people protecting our watershed and challenging coal trains.

• We could fear profiteering corporations, but we share stories of the Faith Action Network, Catholic Charities and denominations educating us on issues so we can speak out and have hope.

• Given political and extremist efforts to undermine human rights, we share about the work of the World and National Councils of Churches, the NAACP and the Hate Studies Institute to challenge media spin that would confuse us.

• Our editorials uplift a call for media responsibility.

Efforts to undo progress in relationships of neighbors and the family of God arise in every age, so we need to be informed by credible media to draw on the power of our faith and values to see beyond worries from news.

Credible communication engages people, to spark thinking and move us to act, rather than be victims, bystanders, collaborators or even perpetrators of hate, injustice and

oppression.

Credible communication empowers us to speak in solidarity with victims, to empower them to move from survival to share their stories and educate others to keep the cycle of caring going.

Our media also include collaborating with other media and face-to-face encounters for celebration, dialogue and networking. We need individuals, congregations and agencies to link their websites to our website, to like our Facebook Page and follow us on Twitter.

We hope our stories help people think, reflect and connect, so they become voices of hope in their own settings.

We hope people will be inspired by our content and spread their excitement about our media with others.

Communicating credibly is about people power—finding ways to multiply donations to our efforts and offering volunteer support.

Through The Fig Tree, we can multiply voices to spread more action-inspiring hope.

Benefit Breakfast & Lunch

Sounding Board

Speakers' Commentaries

Comments of speakers at the 2012 Benefit Breakfast and Lunch in March reflect on what they value about The Fig Tree.

One of the great stories of Genesis poses the question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" It's asked in an attempt to get off the hook.

The Fig Tree understands that we are each other's keepers and the more deeply we understand that and the more fully we live into that truth, the better the whole world becomes.

The Very Rev. Bill Ellis
Cathedral of St. John

I was introduced to The Fig Tree when my wife and I were co-directors at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center above Lake Chelan. The Fig Tree was in our library.

As a Western Washington boy, I began to learn about the unique life in Eastern Washington. I was hooked.

I remain hooked and grateful for Mary Stamp and hundreds of volunteers who make The Fig Tree a critical resource for the faith community here.

The heart of that gratitude has to do with its credible, trustworthy reporting.

When Martin Luther wrote his catechisms for use in the home, he included the 10 commandments. He addresses the eighth commandment: not to bear false witness against your neighbors. He says we are not to tell lies about them, betray or slander. We are to come to their defense, speak well of them and interpret everything in the best possible light.

It's a counter-cultural word in our charged political environment of invective, demagoguery and hate speech. It's why I read the Fig Tree.

The Fig Tree has a point of view without becoming ugly or ideologically skewed. I read it for its fundamental goodwill, its capacity to report news and seek the range of voices weighing in on issues we face together as a community of faith—expressed through extended interviews.

That The Fig Tree does this month in, month out, meaning good, meaning to build up our community, and meaning well for each person, is a remarkable achievement.

Thank you for creating this community in hard days and making us look good.

Bishop Martin Wells - Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Fig Tree and World Relief have embarked on a partnership. There are 30,000 refugees in Spokane and World Relief brings about 600 new refugees a year. We received a grant from the Washington State Human Services for refugee elders. Many who have resettled are too old to work. Many suffered severe persecution. After 65, it's a struggle to learn a new language. It takes longer. There are barriers for elders. They become permanent residents and citizens, but struggle to communicate and access the resources Spokane provides.

We decided to develop a resource directory and looked to The Fig Tree's comprehensive resource directory to develop a specialized directory for elder refugees struggling and needing to know about resources. We established collaboration with Refugee Connections, Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington and Lewis and Clark High School, too. The Fig Tree worked to select eight pages of resources, which we are translating into five languages.

Mark Kadel - executive director of World Relief in Spokane

The Fig Tree is a true jewel in the Inland Northwest at this time in our world when people tend to see people of faith and religion connected with atrocities, hate, intolerance and violence.

That's where The Fig Tree provides a service for our community and nation. It serves as a light in the darkness, revealing what faith can really do and what faith is really about. As Psalm 119 says, God's word is a light on our path, going into the darkness to bring light to our communities.

The Fig Tree manifests how God is speaking to us in our faith. We can see through The Fig Tree that our faith can be a powerful force for change and transformation. It can be a force for good that uplifts the marginalized, oppressed and outcast. Through the interfaith work of The Fig Tree, we have learned that they are not our enemies, but are children of God we are called to serve.

Because of Mary Stamp's dedication and commitment as founder and editor, Gonzaga University's Institute of Hate Studies awarded her the 2011 Eva Lassman Take Action Against Hate Award. The Fig Tree challenges hate and supports social justice, understanding and compassion, strength-

ening the Inland Northwest's resilience against hatred. It is committed to truth reflected in peace journalism, showing us that journalism can reflect what is good, beneficial and just.

The Fig Tree and Mary Stamp bring love, light and hope to the region, pushing back on hate and intolerance.

Jim Mohr - Gonzaga University Hate Studies Institute Board chair

In my 27 years with VOA, I have known I can count on The Fig Tree. When VOA started the Crosswalk program to help young people on the streets downtown, we wanted to recruit 30 churches to provide one meal a month. The Fig Tree ran a front-page story, and instantly we had 30 churches.

The Fig Tree covers news for the heart and spirit. It helps us feel connected to a caring community so we feel hopeful.

Its Eastern Washington Legislative Conference was fabulous, gathering people to help us figure out how to support the poor.

Marilee Roloff, executive director of Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest

One of arms of NW-ARM (Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media) is to promote media literacy, teaching people to use media in a positive way rather than letting mainstream mass media consume our lives and dictate our lifestyles while they pursue profit. Only six corporations own the media—Disney, GE, News Corp., Time Warner, Viacom, and CBS.

A Spokane Falls Community College teacher recently likened the problem of concentrated media ownership to a chef working at McDonalds. The chef can't make something different than what McDonald's wants: Less ketchup? More relish? Nutburgers with tofu? No. Ketchup comes out of a dispenser in a measured quantity to go onto the weighed, timed and formed burger. He likened Time Warner to McDonalds and journalists to chefs. Journalists have major constraints working for the media corporations and are unable to help people solve the problems we face.

The Fig Tree covers faith in action to connect people through stories that bring understanding. A Quaker activist said an enemy is a person whose story we haven't yet heard.

Through the Fig Tree we are connected

through stories—full, detailed, comprehensive stories about people and groups of people right here in the region, all trying to solve the problems we face. The Fig Tree says, "Let's break down divisions among people of faith, let's open dialogue and explore issues together, and let's build understanding and promote unity for the common good."

Because of the prevalence of domestic violence and human trafficking in our society, mainstream media—our public trust—should report continuously on investigations, busts, outrage, interrogations related to these issues. They happen and should rate as news. They should be front-page everyday until we at least reduce the scope of these problems.

Journalists at Time Warner cannot do it, but might want to. The Fig Tree can and does. In the Fig Tree, I have read stories about domestic violence, human trafficking, a punitive penal system and how people are working to alleviate these problems and make our communities healthier.

That is valuable journalism—credibly communicating. Credibility is about trustworthiness. I trust a paper whose mission is to connect the faith and nonprofit communities. Credibility is about goodwill and having our best interests at heart.

The time the journalists at the Fig Tree take to listen to people in our community and connect us through their stories and efforts is evidence of having our best interest at heart. The Fig Tree does not have to make stories for corporate profit, only stories to connect us.

I want to add another kind of credibility to this conversation. The Fig Tree has street cred. Street credibility means we can believe someone's word on the street. The Fig Tree is out in the community—on the street—which carries a level of respect in our environment.

The NW-ARM gave Mary Stamp an award in 2010 for her vision that the Fig Tree practice responsible media in our community. On the award is an engraving of words from Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

The NW-ARM notices, and hopefully we all notice how much we need to celebrate and be thankful for this vital work.

Heather Crandall - Gonzaga Communications Department - Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media



Prayer Breakfast has World Vision speaker

Romanita Hairston, vice president of U.S. programs for World Vision, is keynote speaker for the annual Greater Spokane Leadership Prayer Breakfast at 7 a.m., Thursday, April 26, at the Spokane City Center DoubleTree.

World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, works to help people around the world reach their potential by tackling poverty and injustice. For information, call 953-8003.

Samuel Torvend leads Spiritus workshop

Samuel Torvend, professor of religion and Pacific Lutheran University since 1996, will lead a workshop on "Splendor in Ordinary Times: The Gospel of St. John for Unsettling Times," from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, April 21, at St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave.

The event is presented by Spiritus, a center for spirituality co-sponsored by the cathedral and the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane. For information, call 838-4277.

Second Harvest plans Agency Conference

Second Harvest will hold its third annual Partner Agency Conference Thursday, April 19, at CenterPlace Regional Event Center, 2426 N. Discovery Pl., in Spokane Valley.

The agency conference brings educational resources and information to 250 nonprofit organizations that feed hungry people with Second Harvest food in 21 counties of Eastern Washington and five counties of North Idaho.

Second Harvest includes a resource fair to help agencies educate and serve their clients.

For information, call 534-6678.

Spokane CROP Walk is April 29

"Ending Hunger One Step at a Time" is the theme for the 2012 Spokane CROP Hunger Walk, with registration at noon, Sunday, April 29, at the Spokane Community College Lair.

Following entertainment, the walk along the Centennial Trail begins at 1:30 p.m.

Because of conflicting spring walks, the walk was held last fall, but has returned to the spring.

For information, call 891-1045.



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Calendar of Events

- Apr 8 • **Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service**, Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N Government Way, 6:30 a.m., 535-4112
- Apr 9 • **Nuclear Energy: An Environmentalist's Perspective**, Rich Wolfson Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-4263
- Apr 11 • **Fair Housing Conference**, CenterPlace at Mirabeau Point, 2426 N. Discovery Pl., 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., cindy@slhc.org
- **"Generation M: Mysogyny in Media and Culture"**, Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media Film Discussion, Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 6:30 p.m., 313-3578
- Apr 11-May 13 • **Exhibit: "Manifold Greatness: The Creation and Afterlife of the King James Bible"** Cowles Memorial Library, Whitworth, 777-4751
- Apr 12 • **Crosswalk Anniversary Open House**, Crosswalk Teen Shelter, 525 W 2nd Ave, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., 624-2378
- **Digital Dissent: The Origins of Revolution in Egypt and the Role of Social Media in the Arab Spring**, David Wolman Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-4937
- Apr 13 • **First Friday with the Bishop**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 11:15 a.m. to 1 p.m., 448-1224
- Apr 14 • **"Wisdom in Native American Traditions"**, The Ministry Institute, 45 E. Sinto Ave., 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 313-5765
- **The Lands Council April Showers Auction and Dinner**, DoubleTree Hotel, 322 N. Spokane Falls Ct., 209-2851
- **Hawaiian Club Lu'au**, Fieldhouse, Whitworth University, 5:30 p.m., 777-3773 or ssagarang13@my.whitworth.edu
- Apr 14, 21, 28 • **Engaging the Artist Way**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 483-6495
- Apr 17, 24 • **Thomas Merton's Bridges of Contemplative Living Series**, The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., 483-6495
- Apr 18 • **Coffee and Contemplation**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., 448-1224
- Apr 18 • **Spokane City Forum**, "Our Homeless Youth, Who They Are," First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar St., 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., 777-1555
- Apr 19 • **Yom HaShoah Service**, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 7 p.m., 747-3304
- **Second Harvest Partner Agency Conference**, CenterPlace Regional Event Center, 2426 Discovery Pl., Spokane Valley, 534-6678
- **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m. 838-7870
- **"Manifold Greatness"** Exhibit James Edwards Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-4751
- **"Education under Fire"** documentary and discussion, Foley Teleconference Center, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 863-4461
- Apr 20-22 • **"God's Earth, Our Home, Spirit Center"**, Monastery of St. Gertrude, 465 Keuterville Rd., Cottonwood Idaho, 208-962-2000
- Apr 21 • **Earth Day** - see pages 1 and 3
- **"Splendor in Ordinary Life: The Gospel of John for Unsettling Times,"** Samuel Torvend, professor of religion at Pacific Lutheran University, St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.,
- **"Imagining a New Vision for American Prosperity and Security,"** Navy Capt. Wayne Porter, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 358-4273 or scooper@ccspokane.org
- **Emma's Revolution Benefit Folk Concert** for Maia Water Project, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 8 p.m., 325-6383
- Apr 21-29 • **Japan Week Spokane**, www.japanweekspokane.com
- Apr 23 • **"Manifold Greatness: the Bible and Culture,"** Panel Discussion, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-4751
- **"A Dissident's Struggle to Bring Democracy to China,"** Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations Annual Banquet, Coeur d'Alene Inn, 506 W. Appleway, 6 p.m., 208-765-3932
- Apr 24-26 • **"Losses of Our Lives,"** Spirit Center, 465 Keuterville Rd., Cottonwood Idaho, 208-962-2000
- Apr 25 • **End-of-Life Ethics Conference**, Hospice of Spokane, Lincoln Center, 1316 N. Lincoln, 10:15 a.m. to 2 p.m., 532-6731
- **Union Gospel Mission Annual Banquet**, Mirabeau Park Hotel, 1100 N Sullivan Rd, Lunch 1:30 p.m., Dinner 6:30 p.m., 535-8510
- **Farewell Worship**, Davenport First Presbyterian, 7 p.m., 924-4148
- Apr 26 • **"Building Together, Closing the Gaps,"** Greater Spokane Leadership Prayer Breakfast, DoubleTree Spokane City Center, 7 a.m., 953-8003
- Apr 27 • **Stand Against Racism**, YWCA of Spokane, 930 N Monroe, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 789-9291
- **Bishop's Spring Fling Lunch**, Style Show and Silent Auction, St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., 11:30 a.m., 326-6870
- Apr 27-May 2 • **Shower of Stoles Exhibit**, Bethany Presbyterian, 2607 S. Ray, 994-6879 or www.bethany-spokane.org
- Apr 28 • **One Peace Many Paths Spring Arts Festival**, "Celebration of Peace," Unity Church, 2900 S. Bernard, 1 to 4 p.m., onepeacemanypaths.org
- **Sukiyaki Dinner**, Highland Park United Methodist Church, 611 S. Garfield, noon to 7 p.m., 535-2687
- **Barton School Benefit Concert**, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 7 p.m.
- **Spring Compost Fair/Arbor Day Event**, Finch Arboretum, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 625-6800
- Apr 29 • **CROP Hunger Walk**, Spokane Community College Lair, noon 891-1045
- May 2 • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- May 3 • **Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 p.m., 535-1813

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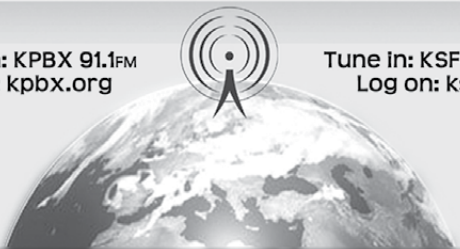


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In 25 years, Habitat-Spokane has built 210 homes and rebuilt 25

By Heather Kennison

In 25 years, Habitat for Humanity-Spokane has built 210 new homes and rebuilt 25 homes for low-income families in Spokane County.

Chief executive officer Michone Preston said Habitat amazes her with its ability to help people find a “fire in their lives,” given that society tries to stamp out that fire with doubt and hopelessness.

The homes restore people’s pride every day, she said. As the families have converted from renting low-income homes to home ownership, there are other less obvious effects.

“The years have produced many college graduates, business owners and productive people, because family members could pursue their education,” she said. “The stability owning a home brought to their lives has changed the face of their families forever.”

“Habitat is a way for people to see their community at its best—in service to others,” she said. The local affiliate has built on the momentum of people who care. Although it depends on some grants funding, she said the community is the largest contributor.

“Habitat is a model that helps people of any faith background express their love for others and for Christians to express their love for Christ through action,” Michone said.

Established in 1987 by volunteers, led by Grace Harris, who has since moved to Colorado, the local affiliate has evolved from a \$250,000 to \$6 million budget, Michone said. Most revenue for Habitat-Spokane comes from donations by individuals, corporations and churches.

Last year, Habitat-Spokane built eight new homes and rebuilt 10 others.

“**This affiliate can build 10 to 25 homes a year,**” Michone said. “We’re in a recession in terms of fund raising, and that restricts us.”

Habitat currently works with 100 active churches in the Spokane area, as well as some non-affiliated faith groups.

“We’re ecumenical, so people of no faith or people who are not part of an organized faith feel welcome on our job site,” she said.

In fact, many people consider Habitat to be like a church for them, Michone noted.

At any given time, Habitat is working with 25 to 35 families. About 3,000 volunteers work two shifts year round each year. A van pool transports volunteers to work sites.

“I believe each of us has a responsibility to serve the poor,” Michone said. “I’m attracted to Habitat because it allows people



Michone Preston believes building a home is an instrument.

Photo by Heather Kennison

to minister with their hands instead of their voices.”

She joined Habitat-Spokane in 1995 as development director, and later applied for executive director in 1999. As a part owner of her family’s wheat and cattle business in Mansfield, she wanted to work someplace close by.

A Gonzaga graduate, Michone studied public relations, communications and marketing and is currently working on a master’s degree in philanthropy and development with St. Mary’s University in Minnesota.

“I came here because I saw an opportunity to serve others in a concrete way,” she said. “I learned after working here that building a home is just an instrument. The power of God’s love is happening through our committees, staff and

hundreds of volunteers.”

Habitat-Spokane is the fourth largest tithing affiliate in the world, giving 10 percent of undesignated funds to international efforts. This year, the organization’s goal is to continue focus on fund development as well as grow in the area of faith relations.

Most Habitat homes are located in inner Spokane within the East Central and Chief Garry neighborhoods. However, the organization also works in Airway Heights, Cheney, Hillyard and Spokane Valley.

“We’re intentional about not building where it’s convenient, but to build where there’s need and where we haven’t built before,” Michone said.

The current focus is a 114-home, 20-acre development in

Deer Park, which Habitat plans to complete in 10 years. Six units are under construction, along with 10 other rebuilding efforts around Spokane.

June 1 is the kick off for the annual Blitz Build, which is at Deer Park this year. The accelerated build is one of Habitat’s most publicized annual events and helps generate enthusiasm, Michone said.

One of Habitat-Spokane’s challenges over the years has been the changing housing industry.

“Housing in general has changed a great deal,” she said. “When we started it took just a few people and some dollars, but we’ve had to become much more sophisticated. The amount of regulations tied to each of our facets has compounded.”

Habitat has also been part of the Green Building Movement for

about eight years.

Habitat homeowners sign up for a 30-year, no-interest loan held by Habitat. About 20 families have paid off their mortgages.

Each year, hundreds of people who live in substandard housing apply for Habitat homes. About half are accepted for interviews and about half of interviewees are accepted.

Families earn 25 to 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI)—\$62,900 for a four-person home in Spokane County in 2012. For most, their rent exceeds 30 to 35 percent of their income.

Each family must also put in 500 hours of “sweat equity,” with at least 100 hours on their own house. Sweat equity is volunteer work in the field or office.

For information, call 534-2552 or email michone@habitat-spokane.org.

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In addition to workshops for pastors, we also offer special programs for children, teens and spouses, as well as recreational opportunities and family activities. Affordable on-campus lodging and meals are available (special reduced children's rate). Visit us on the web to see a list of things to do in and around Spokane - it's a beautiful time of year to visit!

For information, please visit www.whitworth.edu/wim or contact Toni Sutherland at 509.777.4345 or tsutherland@whitworth.edu.

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