

STORIES INSIDE

Outreach center aids new mothers - p. 4

Chaplain imparts insights on life - p. 7

PTSD prevalent after genocide - p. 8

SNAP staff on streets with homeless - p. 9



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

Record crowd rallies, marches

By Mary Stamp

The people gathered for the 2009 Martin Luther King Day rally at the INB Performing Arts Center overflowed down a back hall, across the breezeway outside and into the Convention Center.

"Spokane, look at yourself," said Ivan Bush, emcee and co-chair of planning, as he looked over the crowd of more than 2,500, a record for the event in Spokane.

"Wow!" exclaimed several speakers as they stepped to the podium and saw the crowd.

The Spokane Community Massed Gospel Choir sang the messages: "I know who I am" and "behold I do a new thing."

Ivan, equity opportunity officer for Spokane Public Schools, announced it was the 80th birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.

"In our first march in 1980 from the jailhouse to the courthouse, 49 of us marched in the rain and mist. We felt lost and out," he said. "Now as I look around, this is humbling. It shows me the greatness of our community. We're not just black. We're not just white. We're not just Native Americans. We're not just Asians. We're not just Latinos. Look at us Spokane!"

David Brown Eagle, represent-



David Brown Eagle encourages respect of ancestors' lessons to love.

ing people who "cherished the river outside the door" before there was a Convention Center, Riverfront Park, City Hall or asphalt and concrete, spoke on behalf of the Spokane ancestors, land, river and animals.

"Everything is connected. If we pollute the land or water, we pollute ourselves. If we pollute ourselves, we pollute our spiritual being. If you want to be hated, be hateful. If you want to be loved, be loving," he said.

"We are growing. We stand as one. When many 'ones' stand together, we are strong," he said.

David told of walking with his grandmother in downtown Spokane when he was eight. She was wearing high-top moccasins, a calico dress, a scarf, and carrying a beaded bag to go shopping. When three young men taunted her, David wanted to attack them. She walked straight and tall, all four-foot-eight inches of her.

"Didn't you hear them?" he asked as he walked on with her.

"Yes," she smiled.

David looked back at them and asked his grandmother: "Doesn't it bother you?" She looked at him and smiled, "I know who I am."

Continued on page 4

Islamic center's new mosque to promote peace, love and caring

The Spokane Islamic Center's new mosque at 6411 E. Second gives the center more space for their faith community and space to welcome people to come to learn about Islam as a faith that promotes peace, love and caring.

They particularly invite other "people of The Book," Jews and Christians, with whom they share common roots from Abraham.

Their new website at www.spokaneislamiccenter.org expresses their goal "to cherish the bonds of friendship and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in the community."

While media dwell on wars, conflicts and violence that divide faiths and forge enemy images,

Mamdouh El Aarag and Nissar Shah hope Spokane's first mosque can be a center for dialogue and relationships that counter the common connection of the name of their faith with "terrorists."

While the mosque will host a grand opening in late spring when construction is completed, Muslims from throughout the region already gather there Fridays for noon prayers and evening meals.

Dialogue is integral to the life of the Spokane Islamic Center, because the Muslim community of more than 1,100 in the region come from such diverse cultures—Kashmiri, Bosnian, Syrian, Palestinian, Indian, Pakistani, Arabic, Jordanian, Iraqi,

Libyan, Senegalese and other African ethnicities.

While they are from different languages, cultures, nations and world views, they share a common faith and worship together as they settle here.

Many Muslims, such as Mamdouh, who is president of the council, and Nissar, a past president, came as students and stayed. Spokane is now their home.

The Spokane Islamic Center draws about 50 students from Gonzaga and Eastern Washington University, where the number of Saudi Arabian and other Middle Eastern students is on the rise.

About 500 Muslims in the area have come to the mosque during the two Muslim celebrations, Eid ul-Fiter after the month of Ramadan and after the pilgrimage to Makkaha (Mecca) for Haj.

The 6,000-square-foot metal-sided building has a cupola over the east end. Inside, the men's and women's sections each have 2,000-square feet and there is another 2,000-square-foot for multi-purpose uses. The Sunday school

Continued on page 6

SustainableWorks may draw stimulus funds

After small group sharing on the economy, the environment and jobs, more than 300 participants at the Spokane Alliance Jan. 26 Assembly heard leaders confirm commitments on clean air, asbestos, school contracts and SustainableWorks.

Cathy Gunderson of Highland Park United Methodist Church learned at Kaiser about the danger of asbestos, damaging lungs and skin.

She and Mike Campbell of the Spokane Education Association said the public needs to be aware of the asbestos violation history of contractors, who cut corners while removing asbestos.

County Commissioner Bonnie Mager agreed to work with the alliance to post the violations history of contractors on the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency website by April.

"We cannot limit posting to asbestos, so we will list businesses that pollute the air," she said.

The alliance will evaluate results after six months.

Cathy said the alliance helped pass the 2003 school bond so schools would be built up to new energy standards. She said the school bond on the March 10 ballot will include doing asbestos removal right, creating green-collar jobs and continuing discussion on spreading use of 15 percent apprentices evenly among the crafts.

Mike said schools can teach about environment in curricula and by building green schools. Screening asbestos contractors will help meet standards.

Contractors with three serious violations in three years will be banned from bidding on school contracts. Those with two

Continued on page 12

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Church leaders craft social creed for century

Two architects of "A Social Creed for the 21st Century, recognizing that the 44th President of the United States shares a common church tradition with them, have crafted a message promising "to help achieve deeds that will bring positive change for Americans and the world." NCC General Secretary Michael Kinnamon and Christian Iosso, coordinator of social witness policy for the Presbyterian Church (USA), prepared a message for Inauguration Week.

"We Protestant and Orthodox churches, the ecumenical faith community, know how serious is the need for social reconstruction at home and the restoration of honor abroad," they write. "We have long worked in the soup kitchens, sheltered the homeless, pushed for environmental justice, defended public education, volunteered overseas, and steadily opposed the war with Iraq, despite the weaknesses of media and congressional oversight."

The mainline church tradition, out of which Obama comes, "while solidly patriotic has resisted the kind of nationalism that confuses the flag and the cross. We remember the Bible's warnings about empire, that only a people who humble themselves shall be exalted," they wrote.

Woman pastor preaches at inaugural service

In her sermon at the first prayer service attended by U.S. President Barack Obama after his inauguration, the Rev. Sharon Watkins, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), called on the leader who, she said, would "set the tone" for the nation, to choose compassion, faithfulness and love over vengefulness, anger and fear.

Preaching Jan. 21 at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., Sharon, a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee, said, "Even in hard times, rich or poor, we can reach out to our neighbor, including global neighbors, in generous hospitality, building communities of possibility and of hope."

In a Jan. 20 letter to President Obama, representatives of WCC member churches in the United States said they would "roll up their sleeves and partner with Obama to help bring changes that are desperately needed for the United States and the world to more closely reflect God's vision for humankind and all of creation."

She is the first woman in U.S. history to preach at the inaugural service. Her sermon took on a recent emphasis suggested by Muslim scholars worldwide for love of God and love of neighbor to be a "common basis for building a world at peace." She explained that the best way to express love of God "is by facing hard times with a generous spirit: by reaching out toward each other rather than turning our backs on each other."

Speaking to the President and Vice President, she said, "The nation that you serve needs you to hold the ground of your deepest values, of our deepest values. Beyond this moment of high hopes, we need you to stay focused on our shared hopes, so that we can continue to hope, too."

She shared a Cherokee story about internal battles each person faces between the wolf of vengefulness, anger, resentment, self-pity and fear, and the wolf of compassion, faithfulness, hope, truth and love. The grandfather tells his grandson that "The one you feed wins."

"There are crises banging on the door right now, pawing at us, trying to draw us off our ethical center—crises that tempt us to feed the wolf of vengefulness and fear," she said. "We need you, Mr. President, to hold your ground. We need you, leaders of this nation, to stay centered on the values that have guided us in the past; values that empowered us to move through the perils of earlier times, and values that can guide us now into a future of renewed promise."

"We need you to feed the good wolf within you, to listen to the better angels of your nature, and by your example encourage us to do the same," Sharon said.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast marks 25th

The Fig Tree will hold its sixth annual Deepening Our Roots Benefit Breakfast from 7:15 to 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 11, at the Globe Room of Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

"Stories Empower: Peace Journalism" is the theme of the event, which will celebrate The Fig Tree's 25th anniversary.

Kim Harmson of Kizuri, journalism professor Steve Blewett, Shahrokh Nikfar of The Persian Hour on KYRS and Mary Rathert of Women's Hearth will share how the publication and website

have had impact.

The Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media will be there to present two awards.

The goal is to move The Fig Tree ahead to build its capacity to share more stories in the region, to connect diverse people and communities, to promote action on behalf of the vulnerable, to explore alternatives to violence, and to share about people who live their faith and values.

"The theme, 'Stories Empower: Peace Journalism,' reflects our model of community journalism,

covering the many opinions and faith expressions people hold, and solutions that emerge from them to improve life," said editor Mary Stamp.

In addition to the website and newspaper, The Fig Tree produces the annual Directory of Congregations and Community Resources, connecting the faith and nonprofit communities in the region.

While there is no charge for the breakfast, guests are asked to help support The Fig Tree's outreach.

For information, call 535-1813 or visit www.thefigtree.org.

Legislative briefing addresses sustainability

The 2009 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on "Sustainable Community: Advocacy for Equity and the Environment in an Economic Crisis" is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 14, at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

Bishop William Skystad of the Catholic Diocese of Spokane will give the keynote address on sustainable community as an expression of faith.

Giving briefings on issues will be Alice Woldt, transitional director of the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), and a

representative of the Washington State Catholic Conference. There will also be briefings on environmental issues by Kitty Klitze of Futurewise and Sister JoAnn Showalter, SP, of Earth Ministry.

Workshops will be led by the Spokane Alliance on their energy audits and green collar jobs; the Peace and Justice Action League on the living wage; Envision Spokane on their initiative to amend the City Charter, and VOICES and the Children's Alliance on poverty and families.

There will also be statements from local, state and national

elected leaders, including Spokane Mayor Mary Verner, State Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown and a representative of U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell.

The event connects faith values to issues, offers advocacy training to help people take action to reduce poverty, said Alice.

The Washington Association of Churches (WAC) is planning the event with WAC liaison Malcolm Haworth and Scott Cooper of Catholic Charities.

For information, call 216-6090 or 358-4273 or visit www.faihadvocabularyday.webs.com.

Library hosts 'Faces of Poverty' exhibit

From March 2 to April 10, Gonzaga University's Foley Center Library hosts "The Faces of Poverty," a photo art exhibit of global and local poverty.

Included with images from around the world are photos from Colombia by photo-journalist Brad Reynolds, SJ, and from Spokane by local photographer Bethany Mahan.

Complementing the exhibit will be a week of presentations on is-

ues of poverty from 4 to 6 p.m., Sunday, March 22, and from 7 to 9 p.m., Monday to Friday, March 23 to 27.

The exhibit invites Gonzaga University's community and the public to observe, explore and reflect on poverty.

"It seeks to disturb our own concept of poverty while inviting observers to reflect on the meanings of these images," said Jerri Shepard, associate profes-

sor of teachers' education, who is organizing the event with Hector Javier Rocafort, an education professional at Gonzaga.

"Presentations help observers to personalize their understanding of poverty," she said, inviting people to ask: Are those really "Faces of Poverty"? Does poverty mean unhappiness? Who seems to be really poor in the pictures?

For information, call 313-3630 or email hrocafor@gonzaga.edu.

Benefit aids church's after-school program

Bethany Presbyterian Church, across the street from the Sheridan Elementary School at 5th and Freya, felt called to serve children in the poor neighborhood. They have given school supplies, warm clothing and scholarships for extra curricular activities.

Two years ago, they started Tiger Time After-School Program, a ministry providing daily after-school care for 15 to 20 children from 3 to 6 p.m., in their church.

The program offers a snack, homework help and activities such as games, arts, science and outdoor recreation.

The program is run by an elementary educator, two part-time staff, and volunteers from Bethany, area colleges and the community.

The church is planning "Sweet Sensations!" a dessert benefit for

Tiger Time from 6:30 to 9 p.m., Monday, Feb. 9, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar.

Sweet Sensations! brings in a third of the annual budget. It includes a gourmet dessert, song and dance entertainment, a silent auction and a live auction.

For information, call 953-8249 or email prodkey@centurytel.net.

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Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Sustainable Community: Advocacy for Equity and the Environment in an Economic Crisis

Saturday, Feb. 14 - 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.

Episcopal Cathedral of St. John
127 E. 12th Ave. - Spokane

Keynote speaker:

Bishop William Skystad
Catholic Diocese of Spokane

Registration (includes lunch):

\$12 students \$15 adults \$20 at door

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click on Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

CALL 216-6090, 358-4273 or 206-625-9790

Sponsors: Washington Association of Churches
& Catholic Charities of Spokane

Pastor's visit timed with benefit events

While the Rev. Jozsef Kotecz of the Unitarian Church of Felsorakos, Romania, is in Spokane in early February two churches are holding events to raise funds to restore an old house in Felsorakos as a guesthouse to draw tourists and employ villagers.

The annual Hungarian Dinner with folk dancing and a presentation will be at 6 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 7, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr. For information, call 325-8889.

Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ will also host a lunch with a presentation, contra dancing and a silent auction at noon, Sunday, Feb. 8 at 411 S. Washington. For information, call 448-2360.

Performance benefits Shalom Ministries

A performance of Interplayers Theatre's "Cowgirls" at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 8, will benefit Shalom Ministries, a program at Central United Methodist Church that serves 150 to 200 homeless and low-income people breakfast four mornings a week and dinner Monday evenings. Organizers say "Cowgirls" is "a hilarious musical with classical and country music." For information, call 747-4755.

Power company leads energy workshops

Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, a project of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, and Bonneville Power Administration will offer two workshops—"Save Your Congregation Energy and Money" at 10 a.m. and "Energy Stewardship for Households" at 11:30 a.m., Monday, Feb. 9, at the Richland Community Center. On Thursday, Feb. 12, a workshop for congregations will be at 3 p.m., and a household workshop in Spanish at 5:30 p.m. at the Pasco Senior Center. For information, call 503-221-1054 ext. 201.

Envision Spokane sets town hall meetings

After community meetings to shape a bill of rights to amend Spokane's City Charter, Envision Spokane is holding 12 town hall meetings from Jan. 16 to March 21 to refine the draft. Remaining meetings are from 6 to 9 p.m., Fridays and 9 a.m. to noon, Saturdays, Feb. 13 and Feb. 14 at Ferris High School, 4202 S. Regal; Feb. 27 and 28, at Corbin Senior Center, 827 W. Cleveland; March 13 and 14 at Northeast Community Center, 4001 N. Cook, and March 20 and 21 at East Central Community Center, 500 S. Stone. For information, call 607-5034 or visit www.envisionspokane.org.

YWCA, YMCA leaders tell of collaboration

Rig Riggins YMCA president and CEO, and Monica Walters, YWCA executive director, will speak at the Spokane City Forum at 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, Feb. 18, at First Presbyterian Church, 318 S. Cedar, on "Your (New) Y." They will preview their collaboration on a shared new building at 930 N. Monroe that will be the first of its kind in the nation. For information, call 777-1555.

Orthodox church hosts icon workshop

Christ the Savior Orthodox Church will host an Icon Painting Workshop from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday, Feb. 23 to 27, at the church, 12407 E. 16th Ave. in Spokane Valley with master iconographer Vladimir Blagonadezhdin. Vladimir, a graduate of the Volgograd Engineering Institute in architecture, has been painting icons and teaching iconography for 25 years. He has lectured at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver and now teaches iconography at the Vancouver Academy of Art. For information, call 208-687-2025.

Temple invites essays on Holocaust topic

Temple Beth Shalom invites area high school students to submit 500- to 1,000-word essays on "Honoring the Rescuers: People who saved Jews during the Holocaust" by March 1. There are stories of rescuers on the Holocaust Memorial Museum of Israel website www1.yadvashem.org/righteous-new/featured-stories.html. The winning essay will be read at the Spokane Community observance of the Holocaust service on Sunday, April 19 at Temple Beth Shalom. For information, email neveragain-spokane@comcast.net.

Pakistani Christian, Muslim engage in dialogue

The Rev. Maqsood Kamil, executive secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, and Khuram Dastgir Khan, a member of the Muslim League Party in Pakistan's National Parliament, will visit the Inland Northwest Presbytery Feb. 21 to 24 to engage in interfaith dialogue.

They will address challenges of Christian-Muslim relations in Pakistan and tell about Christianity and Islam life in Pakistan.

They will speak at the 10:30 a.m. worship service at Bethany Presbyterian Church on Sunday,

Feb. 22, and after a 1 p.m. lunch at the Spokane Islamic Center, 6411 E. Second Ave.

The Interfaith Listening Program of the Presbyterian Church, USA, arranges annual inter-religious team visits to U.S. churches, colleges and communities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue.

Maqsood, a professor of systematic theology and homiletics at the Gujranwala Theological Seminary, served as a pastor of Pakistani churches and has written four books. He has a master's in religion from Louisville Presbyte-

rian Theological Seminary.

Khurram, an engineer, is central joint secretary of his party, which works for civil liberties and political stability. He studied at Bowdoin College and the California Institute of Technology.

The program seeks to foster interfaith ties by replacing stereotypes with new information and intention through direct experience and interaction, said the Rev. Paul Rodkey, pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church and organizer of presbytery events.

For information, call 534-0066.

Conference explores future for NW agriculture

A conference on "Creating a Sustainable Future for Agriculture in the Pacific Northwest" Feb. 10 to 12 at the Shilo Inn in Richland, will discuss "economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable" agriculture.

Participants will share experiences with sustainability, highlight lessons learned and develop a plan to sustain Northwest agriculture

and rural communities.

The plan will address the interests of families, organizations, businesses, cooperatives, communities, higher education, government agencies and media who influence the future of the region's agriculture and natural resources.

Event sponsors are Washington State University Extension, the

WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources, Kittitas County Conservation District, Washington Sustainable Food and Farming Network, Rural Roots, Managing Change Northwest, NUVision Evaluation and Learning, Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association, Healing Hooves and Solar \$.

For information, call 335-2922.

'Our Kids: Our Business' targets dropout rate

Plans are underway for the April 2009 "Our Kids: Our Business" emphasis.

This year's focus is on increasing Spokane's high school graduation rates by promoting mentoring, said Mary Ann Murphy, executive director of Partners with Families and Children Spokane, who pointed out that one in three local students drop out.

"Our Kids: Our Business" invites schools, businesses, nonprofits, faith communities, recreational groups, law enforcement, health and social services, individuals, families, media and young people to join together to prevent child abuse and promote successful childhoods, high school completion with readiness for the work force, college and active citizenship.

The month of programs will include training on mentoring,

a Coeur d'Alene breakfast, a Spokane luncheon and a Dropout Prevention Summit.

Pinwheel displays throughout the month will serve as reminders of the call to care for children.

"Our goal is to eliminate waiting lists at our community's mentoring organizations that belong to the Inland Northwest Mentoring Partnership," said Mary Ann.

For information, call 473-4827.

68th Annual
Kosher Dinner

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Menu Assorted Appetizers Beef Brisket Potato Knishes Carrot Tzimmes Challah (Egg Bread) Mediterranean Spiced Apples Apricot Kuchen	Sunday March 15, 2009 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Internet Ticket Sales at www.pgiinc.com For information, call 509-747-3304 ext. 32
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Challenges of Christian-Muslim Relations in Pakistan

Sunday, Feb. 22
1 p.m. lunch • 2 p.m. presentation
Spokane Islamic Center
6411 E. Second Ave.
**Co-Sponsors: Bethany Presbyterian Church
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Record crowd rallied and marched on Martin Luther King Day

Continued from page 1

"I did not understand then, but tears came to my eyes as I heard the choir sing: 'I know who I am,'" he said. "If I know who I am, and we know who we are, we can stand together. She could have taught me about hate and anger, but she taught me a lesson about love and acceptance."

David invited the crowd to think of their ancestors, knowing that every group has trials and tribulations, and that "our ancestors taught us to love, not hate. What teachings will you give your children, grandchildren and future generations? One day so many people will gather here there will be no room to march," he said.

Mayor Mary Verner said: "Look at what King started. We are overcoming as was promised. We are overcoming right now in our nation and in our world as we honor the truth of King's words, the power of his intellect, his advocacy for non-violent action and his reminder that great causes involve great sacrifices.

"Let us not be satisfied," she said, "until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

County Commissioner Bonnie Mager observed: "What a



Overflow crowds gathered after the rally and march for a program at River Park Square.

difference a year makes! Last year speaking on "The Silence Is Deafening," she told of growing up experiencing her family's racism towards others, hoping telling her story would be healing.

"Last year, we had made strides, but the country whispered racism. This year's theme is 'Advancing the Dream.' This year, we know it's in our power to come together, advance the dream and end oppression," Bonnie said. "In these hard economic times, we come together in hope.

"This year what we thought would not happen in our lifetimes

has happened. After years of struggle, hope and justice, unforeseen events turned the impossible into reality, like the Berlin Wall falling and South Africa's apartheid ending. Now we have hope for a better nation and world.

"Obama spoke at the Lincoln Memorial, where King presented 'I Have a Dream,' and welcomed us to a renewal of America, saying no obstacle can stand in the way of millions of voices. What makes a difference is that people have heard the call to do their part to make the dream real," she said.

Seeing young people in the

crowd, Ivan challenged, "Let's embrace our young people. If we reach, care for and love one, we lift up all our young people."

Spokane Public Schools superintendent Nancy Stowell, on behalf of the school board and 4,500 staff members, made a renewed commitment to public education; to eliminate the achievement gap; to understand racism; to create classrooms, schools, a district and community founded on social justice and compassion; to believe in the value of each student, and to advance all 30,000 students.

Freda Gandy, interim director

of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center said: "We honor a great leader who believed in a color-blind society and worked to make it reality. He endured harassment, threats, being jailed 29 times and paying the ultimate price, so we could stand here today and remember that this is a day for all people, not just African Americans. We are all part of his dream for America."

The Rev. Happy Watkins, event co-chair, presented King's "I Have a Dream" speech: "I say friends in Spokane, though we face difficulties today and tomorrow, I still have a dream that this nation will rise up and live its creed that all people are created equal.

"I dream that President Obama will lead a nation in which people will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content and beauty of their character.

"We will stand together . . . and be able to sing, 'My Country Tis of Thee, sweet land of liberty.' Let freedom ring! When we let freedom ring in every state and city, we speed the day when all God's children, black and white, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic will say: Thank God almighty, we are free at last!"

For information, call 455-8722.

Outreach center receives people in need with dignity

Mission Community Outreach Center exemplifies how people can be in mission locally, without packing a suitcase, paying for travel or crossing a border.

Carol Williams, a volunteer at the center, said the center serves about 50 people an hour when it is open from 1:30 to 4 p.m., Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, at 1906 E. Mission Ave.

A few weeks ago, a woman who received help six years ago came and told Carol how much she appreciated being treated with dignity when she came for help.

"We seek to be the hands and heart of Christ to those who come," said Carol, who retired in 2007 as pastor of the nearby Mission Community Presbyterian Church.

When the city and county gave up the Infant Crisis Bank eight years ago, the Mission Outreach Center picked up the service, now called the Walt Shields Infant Center of Spokane County, in honor of the center's former volunteer director.

That program provides baby formula, baby cereal and food, shampoo, lotion, disposable diapers, wet wipes, baby blankets,



Amanda Gauthier joins in AmeriCorps day of volunteering.

cribs, strollers, high chairs, car seats and prenatal vitamins that are donated. Several women's church groups

make receiving blankets to include with the baby clothes. Youth groups often help sort clothes.

For the Martin Luther King Day of Service, the center took several bags of donated baby clothes to the STA Plaza, where AmeriCorps service team members did volunteer projects.

Amanda Gauthier, an AmeriCorps member, said volunteers came in shifts to sort the clothes into bags that the center will give to mothers. In each bag, they put a hat, blanket, two sleepers, two onesies and an outfit.

The center, which began in 1996 as a Christian ecumenical outreach, is volunteer run. Services are free to qualified low-income people. Assistance offered includes personal care items, clothing, shoes and household items.

Seasonally, the center provides

school supplies and backpacks, school clothes, shoes and coats, and a Christmas party and toys.

For information, call 991-6249 or visit www.4mission.org.

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Sorrento Centre announces its spring retreats and courses:

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Elder challenges people to see what God wants them to do

The Spokane celebrations of Martin Luther King Day—the service at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the rally and march in downtown Spokane on Jan. 18 and 19—invoked the connections between the dream of King and the inauguration of the first African-American President.

The Rev. Ezra Kinlow, pastor of Holy Temple Church of God in Christ, opened worship with the Lord's Prayer for God's "Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven," asking God to "watch over us and care for us" and for Jesus to "reign in hearts, minds and souls as the dream of Dr. King unfolds."

The Rev. Rodney McAuley, director of the Act Six leadership initiative, read from Haggai and Hebrews, reminding people to be strong because God is with them and not to fear as God shakes the nations. He celebrates "advancing the dream that is shaking us all."

The Rev. Lonnie Mitchell of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, said: "What a blessing it is to live in these days."

Recalling that King knew he would "not get" to the promised land "with us," Lonnie said, "I'm so glad as we swear in the 44th President to know that Dr. King foresaw Barack Obama. We are here to witness the dream. Welcome to the promised land."

Freda Gandy, interim director at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Family Outreach Center, introduced Discovery School children, who sang the "Hymn to Freedom," saying when everyone joins our song to sing in harmony "that's when we'll be free" and "live in dignity."

Ben Luety, of the center's board, was not born at the time of King, but learned of him through school, books and his father. Ben gave highlights of King's life from high school graduation at 15, study at Morehouse College and Crozer Theological Seminary to earning a PhD in 1955 at Boston University.

"At 35, he was the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize," Ben said. "At the center, we live his vision and legacy of respect, serving about 2,000 people with pre-school, after-school and summer programs, food vouchers, school supplies, and counseling."

"We do not start living until we rise above individualistic concern to broader concerns for the good of humanity and the good of the



Discovery School children sing at the Martin Luther King 2009 community celebration.

community," Ben said. "Genesis reminds us we are our brothers' keepers."

The Spokane Community Massed Gospel Choir with people of different faith, cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds sang: "It's a new day and a new beginning" and "I know who I am. My name is victory."

Preaching, Elder Jimmy Pierce of Unspeakable Joy Christian Fellowship told of the biblical story of Esther asking her husband, King Ahasuerus, to protect the Jewish people and then told those attending the celebration "to know that each of you is born for such times as these. While an assassin took the physical life of Dr. King, he did not take away the life of his words."

He said the inauguration of an African-American President was a time to celebrate King's words and rights won through the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

To remind people of the past as a way to embrace the future, he recounted highlights of King's life—a Baptist minister at 19; the bus boycott; his arrest for sitting in at a restaurant; the Congress on Racial Equality's freedom rides and protests ending segregation on interstate buses and in stores, houses and jobs, and the March on Washington where King shared his dream in 1963.

"Why would such a man take on such a dangerous undertaking?" Jimmy asked. "God's hand was on his life. As in Luke 12:48, we know that 'to whom much is given, much is required.' He preached and stirred action. King was born for such a time as that."

"Serving God is not governed by time. We are in God's timing. It's not about what I want to do. Our time has come. God puts

people in a place to help people: Esther was in place as queen to intercede, risking her life, so the king would not kill the Jews.

"Don't forget who you are and from where you come," Jimmy said. "It could be your time in this place to act."

He said King knew he could not be concerned about longevity if he were to do God's will.

"I believe he knew his words would not be in vain," Jimmy said. "Sometimes the time picks you. Barack Obama was born for such a time as this and elected the 44th President of the United

States. We are born for such a time as this. God's plan does not stop with the inauguration, but continues with each of us."

Jimmy told everyone to take responsibility, to be concerned that despite the rhetoric of "no child left behind," many children are left behind in Spokane, which has a 30 percent dropout rate.

"Each of us here has work to do for such a time as this," he said.

The Rev. Happy Watkins, co-chair of the event and pastor at New Hope Baptist Church, reminded worshipers that King was not born great, but was helped by

his home and family.

He invited children forward to say that the greatest gift to pass on to children is hope.

He invited Willie Earthman, 100, forward and quoted Obama's Nov. 4 acceptance speech, telling of 106-year-old Alice Nixon Cooper, born a generation past slavery when there were no cars or planes and she couldn't vote because of being a woman and because of the color of her skin.

Both lived to see history include the election of the first African-American President, Happy said.

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Spokane's Islamic community of 1,100 unites people of many cultures

Continued from page 1
meets in the women's section.

Walls are subdued beige. The floors in the men's and women's sections are carpeted with alternating stripes—narrow dark green and wider light green—designating rows for standing, kneeling and bowing in prayer. A wall separates the men's and women's sections, so women watch the prayers projected on the wall facing east.

Most of the funds for construction are from local donations. Some are from Seattle, Mamdouh said.

At their former location, a house at 505 W. Wedgewood that is now for sale, there was capacity for about 100. The Spokane Islam Society first incorporated as a nonprofit in 1979.

"This is more centrally located and feels like a mosque," he said. "Our move has drawn more people because some have seen it from the freeway."

Mosque leaders plan to host workshops for Muslims and other faiths, so that it can be an interfaith center.

One of its first interfaith gatherings will be at 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 22, for a meal and Christian-Muslim dialogue, co-sponsored by Bethany Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery of the Inland Northwest is hosting a listening team with a Muslim and a Christian from Pakistan to tell of how they live together in Pakistan.

The mosque is volunteer run, so volunteers shovel the parking lot, shovel snow off the roof, do building maintenance, organize activities and lead the prayers.

Five members of the council, including Mamdouh and Nissar, have been trained to lead the prayers. The volunteers take turns reading the Quran, leading prayers and delivering the messages.

The message of the speaker on Jan. 12 focused on Allah forbidding oppression: "Do not oppress each other. Oppression can occur in different forms. The most offensive is revolution or rebellion against authority that harms people and religions."

The leader said that those who oppress will face painful torment, because there is no worse sin.

Mamdouh said those who deliver sermons research the theme on the internet, taking ideas from approved sermons.

"Our next goal is to bring a full-time leader, an imam, to conduct the services," he said.

In the early 1980s, the Spokane Islamic Center began meeting at the house. It grew out of prayer groups at Gonzaga University and Eastern Washington University.

While many students went back



Entrance to the Spokane Islamic Center's new mosque.

to their homelands, those who stayed formed the center.

Mamdouh first came to the United States in 1982 and in 1986 came to Spokane to study civil engineering at Gonzaga University. He works as an environmental engineer in wastewater management with the Washington State Department of Health.

"I stayed, as many have, because I do not have a country to go back to," said Mamdouh, whose uncles and cousins are in Gaza. He and his wife are Palestinian.

Nissar, who came from Kashmir in 1970 to study engineering at Gonzaga University, said that "the mosque has been a dream for a long time, so we would have a place for Muslims to gather, but also for Muslims, Christians and Jews to come to learn that Islam is peaceful."

For many years, he went to church with friends from Gonzaga. He has visited different churches. He also appreciates interfaith gatherings, such as for the United Nations' International Peace Day in September at Unity Church.

"We need to respect each other," he said.

"Now we are blessed to have

a beautiful place to welcome people to come to dinners and gatherings," said Nissar, an engineer who works for the City of Spokane. "I married and my children were born here, so this is our home," he said.

"The languages and traditions in the Muslim community here give us connections that go around the world," he said. "In the mosque, we live peacefully with people from the Middle East, Kashmir, Pakistan, India and Bosnia. We eat together. We do not all agree.

"Our sermons are about peace and loving each other. Our Creator is one," he said.

Nissar, who visits family in Kashmir every few years, wants people to gather for workshops and dialogue to share their knowledge for the benefit of all humankind.

"We worship the same one God. We are a peaceful people, even though the world has its ups and downs," said Nissar, who has led prayers as one of the volunteers for nearly 10 years.

"It's a big responsibility. The Creator is one, so all people should be compassionate to each other," he said. "In the Koran,

we are told we are not created for nothing. Our job is to help all people.

"If a neighbor is suffering or struggling, no matter what his or her religion is, the Muslim neighbor is to make sure to take care of our neighbor," he explained.

"The key to keeping our children away from drugs, lying, cheating and dishonesty is to teach and practice our faith. We teach our children so they will not waste their lives but will grow up to help people."

Nissar said that Islam has a powerful influence that means few Muslims are in jail. They are not to drink alcohol, commit adultery or use drugs.

"Teaching right living comes from parents spending quality time with their children," he said.

In addition to their invitation for people to come to the mosque

to learn about Islam, Mamdouh and Nissar said they are available to visit churches and give educational programs.

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Chaplain imparts insights about God's hand at work in people's lives

By Virginia de Leon

The Rev. Gail Duba hopes retirement residents she encounters as chaplain will experience a sense of God's role in their life journeys, as she has.

She didn't plan to work in a retirement community, but her experiences as a high school biology teacher, forester, Christian education director and Lutheran pastor each help her relate to the diverse people in that community as she serves their spiritual needs.

Her ministry as chaplain at Rockwood South came as a surprise after seven years as associate pastor at Central Lutheran Church in Spokane.

She said she learns as she goes. Every day, she acquires new insights and grows closer to the people she serves.

"I know God will use me here as much as God used me in the church. Each place I served was where I was supposed to be as part of God's plan," she said.

"In God's economy, nothing is wasted," said Gail, describing her conviction that there is a purpose for everything—even if the reason isn't always apparent.

"It means God is putting the things we have done into an intricate pattern we can build on. Everything that I have done has helped lead me to where I am today," she said.

Through her life journey, faith has strengthened Gail, inspiring her to explore new territory—studying in Germany as a young adult, spending two years in Saudi Arabia, and work in forestry, education and then ministry.

Her faith has led her into pastoral care. After earning a seminary degree at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, Calif., Gail started at Central Lutheran as a student intern.

Rockwood South is a retirement community with more than 430 residents and about 200 staff members. Affiliated with the United Methodist Church, Rockwood has provided care for seniors for more than 40 years.

In her first six months as director of pastoral care, Gail said her role has been to lead ecumenical worship, conduct services, lead a Bible study, prepare devotions for management meetings, support



Gail Duba is now chaplain at Rockwood South

Photo by Virginia de Leon

staff and visit with residents.

On Sundays at 9:30 a.m., she leads a half-hour service in Rockwood's atrium for people with memory impairment or needing assistance with day-to-day tasks.

A half hour later, the community gathers for an ecumenical worship service that includes hymns, prayer, a sermon and monthly communion.

"We seek to keep people involved in their churches," she explained, "but there comes a time when it becomes too hard to go out."

Gail has not officiated at baptisms or weddings at Rockwood, nor does she deal with management or finances. She can devote her time to pastoral care for staff and residents.

She has an open-door policy, so people can just stop by her office and talk about God, spirituality and other issues and concerns.

"People here are in a different place in life experience. When I talk to people here about their future plans, it's a shorter duration. We focus on the spiritual dimensions of their lives," she said.

At 57, Gail is more than a decade younger than most residents, but people appreciate her perspective and value the life experiences she brings to the job. In subtle ways, she incorporates her life experiences to encourage residents to share their own stories.

As a member of the Faith and Environment Network, she shares with residents her passion for the Earth and sustainability. Rockwood residents care, too.

Growing up Lutheran in a family of five children in Canon City, Colo., she said her parents nurtured her love of nature. Gail learned about the connection between faith and preserving the Earth. Her father, who died two years ago at 90, was a forester who devoted his life to caring for the environment. Her mother was a teacher

Gail earned a biology degree at Valparaiso University in Indiana. Before graduating, she spent eight months traveling in Europe and the Middle East. Based in Reutlingen, Germany, she studied theology and the teachings and life of Martin Luther. Travel in Israel, Greece, Egypt and other countries brought appreciation of each unique culture, awareness that has shaped her life and faith.

After graduating from Valparaiso, Gail taught high school

biology for several years in Colorado before she studied for a master's degree in forestry at Colorado State University.

While there, she fell in love with David Duba, a rangeland ecologist. Eight months after they met, they married at a camp Gail attended as a child.

A week later, they left for Saudi Arabia, where David did research on vegetation near Jeddah for two years. As his assistant, Gail learned about Arab and Muslim culture. She went into the field and met men who worked with him. She also spent time with Muslim women and children.

"I learned religious tolerance. Everyone has their own way of looking at the world," she said.

Gail finished her master's degree and worked in forestry for four years in Boise, before they moved to Seattle so David could attend the University of Washington Medical School.

In 1989, with three boys—aged seven, four and one—they moved to Minneapolis for David's resi-

dency in rehabilitation medicine.

Gail's journey took another turn as she became aware of a yearning to work in a church. Her volunteer church work and her background in education led her to serve as a Christian education director for a church south of Minneapolis.

No longer a forester, Gail volunteered with outdoor organizations and shared her love of nature with her sons and others.

In 1992, the family moved to Spokane. Gail worked in Christian education at Christ Lutheran Church. Her call grew.

"Whenever I led worship, I felt like I was on holy ground," she said. "It was a call to ministry."

At 45, Gail entered long-distance seminary studies at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Four times a year, she traveled to Berkeley to attend classes.

"I don't remember feeling uncertainty. I felt God's hand was in my call," she said. "Feeling called, I didn't worry about what was going to be next."

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Counselor organizes local effort to rebuild Rwandan medical system

Compelled by her Jewish faith to “do something to heal the world”—tikkun olam—Adie Goldberg taught counselors in Rwanda last summer about treating post traumatic stress disorder, which many have suffered since the 1994 genocide there.

Her daughter, Maggie Yates, spent six weeks in 2007 on a human rights young-adult delegation in Rwanda. As part of her international studies and cultural anthropology major at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn, she worked with Amani, a group promoting reconciliation through sports.

While there, she met a physician who is the director of the United Nations’ Millennium Village Project.

Maggie learned that just \$27 per person spent on infrastructure can help a community. She also told her mother of the need to rebuild the medical infrastructure. In 1994, 50 percent of medical students and 75 percent of medical school faculty were killed in the genocide. The medical system was in shambles.

In 2005, Maggie had also brought her mother a reminder when she visited Poland and Israel for a March of the Living and the post-Holocaust commitment: “Never Again!”

Adie was frustrated that genocide happened again in Rwanda.

“We need to remember so it won’t happen,” she said “With my people’s history, we have an obligation to humanity to do work to prevent human rights abuses.”

“We do not need to look for our place to heal the world,” said Adie, who was education and youth director at Temple Beth Shalom for eight years. “It will find us. Maggie brought my place to me.”

Because Adie has worked part-time for 22 years as a clinical social worker at the WomanHealth medical practice in the Deaconess Education Center, she knew she had skills needed.

She has dealt with post-traumatic stress of veterans, and victims of sexual assault, crime and domestic violence.

After earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology and Russian studies at Grinnell College in Iowa, Adie trained to be a midwife and health volunteer in French-speaking West Africa.

From 1977 to 1980, she served with the Peace Corps in Togo, where she met her former husband and father of her three daughters. They then lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, where she did child-abuse prevention for five years with one of the tribes.

She also has a master’s degree in education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (1984), a master’s of social work at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver (1985), and a post-master’s certificate in marital and family therapy.

So Adie was ready to respond when she learned of the need in Rwanda. She began to correspond with the doctor and plan the trip.

“We formed Ujama, which means ‘extended family,’ to take medicine, physicians and ancillaries to rebuild the medical infrastructure,” she said.

From June 17 to July 3, 2008, a medical mission of 19 people from Spokane went to Rwanda. The Health Development Initia-



Adie Goldberg’s daughter, Maggie Yates, brought concern about Rwandan genocide recovery.

tive Rwanda—a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that provides community health care development to build alliances between health care providers—invited the delegation.

“We were from diverse and strong faiths,” Adie said.

The team included an oncological surgeon, an obstetrician-gynecologist, a urologist, a neonatologist, a nurse midwife, a nurse practitioner, a public health educator, a cardiology specialist, a surgical technologist, an ultrasound technician, a cardiology technician, a registered nurse, an environmental engineer, a psychiatric social worker, a medical student, two pre-med students, and a high school student.

It included members of Unity Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, and other Christians and members of the Jewish community.

Adie shared her story, and as the project develops, others will share their experiences.

In 2008, the team delivered \$75,000 in medical equipment donated by Deaconess, drug firms and physicians.

One goal is to raise money to stock Rwanda’s 300 clinics.

Another goal is to train Rwandan physicians to do heart surgery, other surgeries and deliveries, so they can sustain their medical system without the U.S. doctors.

They found other needs. In a Twa hunter-nomad pygmy community, they started a well project, weighed and measured babies and children, de-wormed children and gave them shoes to prevent worms and to wear to school. About 30 percent of Twas, who are one percent of the population, were killed in the genocide. The team took photos of them so they could have ID cards to gain access to health care.

Adie led a two-day workshop, training mental health workers who do post-traumatic stress disorder treatment. She said the session became group therapy for the counselors, who are also trauma survivors.

Today, people no longer refer to themselves as Hutus or Tutsis, she said, but as Rwandans.

“They are reconciling by establishing their national identity. While people do not ask about ethnic origins, there is still tension below the surface,” she noted.

Hutus and Tutsis are mixed in the government, which is a “de-

mocracy” with a president for life, she said. Because of intermarriage, distinctions such as Hutus being shorter than Tutsis are no longer identifying features.

Rwandan genocide memorials disturbed Adie. There were piles of skulls, books or clothing filled with bullet holes and stained with blood, such as in a church where some fled and were massacred.

“Traumatic memories, activated by a smell, sound, sight or anniversary, may lead survivors to recurring dreams, alcohol abuse, depression or other stress symptoms,” she said.

“Talking about the trauma in groups and sharing experiences can be healing. Rwanda’s oral tradition is conducive to storytelling, so the U.S. treatment modality works there,” she explained.

Some seek reconciliation with neighbors through “gacaca,” grassroots courts that meet outdoors in villages, Adie said. Elders hear about genocide crimes, which are too extensive for the national government to deal with.

Usually if someone pleads guilty, elders give a sentence of jail or community service. Because many claim innocence, some find no closure.

“Proceedings may reactivate trauma and memories when victims see the perpetrators,” said Maggie, who saw a gacaca court session in 2007.

In theory, Adie said, if those who suffer PTSD have their day in court they could heal, but without treatment many are left with unfinished business, especially if the perpetrator is found not guilty.

“For many victims, there is no healing,” she said, “Everyone is a survivor and has a story.

The need to rebuild the medical infrastructure comes not only from genocide losses, but also because many households are headed by older children who missed adult guidance. The median age is 18.7. There are few old people. Older siblings, who were 13 to 15 when their parents were killed, work to help their siblings go to school. They are trying to figure out how to reconstruct the country, she said, impressed by the people’s resilience.

While some people question sending resources abroad when there is suffering here, Adie is drawn to Africa.

“We need to serve and witness where we see pain. Not everyone needs to go. I happen to have seen pain in Africa,” she said.

Because the group found Rwandans they met gracious, polite, humorous people, they have done much soul searching since returning, Adie said, wondering how such delightful people could have participated in a genocide.

“We each have questions to answer about how to explain evil,” she said. “These are fundamental questions all religions have to answer. We struggle to have answers. Academic answers did not apply readily after we visited the memorials.”

Concerned by what she saw in Rwanda, she is returning Feb. 17 to March 18 with six others to finish a well, train hospital administrators, physicians and counselors, and bring equipment for seven clinics.

In April, a Spokane doctor will host two Rwandan doctors.

Ujama is planning another trip in the summer.

For information, call 939-0800 or email adieleeg@hotmail.com.

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GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

Bob Peeler spends time on the streets visiting homeless people

By Virginia de Leon

Every week, Bob Peeler spends 10 to 12 hours on the streets—talking and sharing experiences with people who sleep under bridges, camp along the river and dive in dumpsters for food.

“Their life stories could be ours,” said Bob, family development specialist with the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program (SNAP) homeless program. “I’ve talked to people who had the dream—the house, the RV, the car—but because of circumstances beyond their control, they lost it all.”

The stories of men, women and youth are familiar to Bob. He empathize not only from working 28 years as a homeless advocate, but also because he has walked in their shoes. During his junior year in high school, Bob was on the streets off and on after experiencing conflict and trouble at home.

Although he continued to attend classes at Spokane’s North Central High School, he sometimes had no idea where he would eat dinner or sleep at night.

During warmer months, he spent evenings in parks. Often he stayed with friends and relatives. A few teachers, school counselors and other adults were aware of his problems, he said. They offered him food, clothing and encouragement until he was able to rent an apartment with a friend.

“People were supportive and they stuck with me through that,” he said. “They made me realize that with help and resources, people can pull themselves out.”

The encouragement and assistance he received in high school motivated him to change the course of his life. It shaped his commitment to service and social justice, as well as his conviction that “everyone has value.”

After graduating from North Central, Bob joined the Army and served two years in Germany. While overseas, one of his high school teachers visited him at the army base. Bob returned to Spokane and studied human services at Spokane Falls Community College and Fort Wright College.

In 1980, he started a job with SNAP, a nonprofit community action agency that has helped homeless and low-income families, children and seniors since 1966. He said the organization is the largest private human services agency in Spokane County. It serves the poor and vulnerable by providing basic human needs, searching for long-term solutions to eliminate poverty and working as an advocate for those in need.

“It’s remarkable how hard low-income people have to work to put themselves back on their feet,”



Bob Peeler builds relationships with homeless people and helps them draft their recovery plans.

Photo by Virginia de Leon

said Bob, describing his work with clients. “Anyone who is facing poverty can become homeless at any time.”

He and others at SNAP work as a team to address needs of people in crisis, he said. They do this through 45 city- and county-wide programs that include emergency shelters, transitional housing, community voice mail, day care for homeless children and other services that help people discover stability and self-sufficiency.

“Much is role modeling and listening to people,” Bob said. “We need to really listen to what they want, find out their dreams and help them realize the dreams.”

There is no “typical” workday at SNAP. When he’s not in the office talking to clients, he’s handling emergencies—a family of five living in their car, for instance, who need to find shelter for the winter.

Bob also goes to highway exits, parks or anywhere on the streets, spending time with people others have forgotten.

“Many folks don’t trust us yet, so you have to meet them where they are and earn their trust,” he said. “It takes time to do that.”

He works hard to treat people with dignity and respect, no matter their lot in life. When he visits a homeless camp, he makes a knocking sound as he would ring a doorbell before entering a person’s house.

Then he takes the time to sit down with people and hear their stories—their past, their troubles,

their hopes for the future.

He also learns about their resilience and survival techniques.

By talking to people who live on the streets, Bob and others at SNAP learn that individuals in dire need often don’t know where to go for help. These street conversations and experiences often teach them how to better serve this vulnerable population.

In addition to addressing crises, Bob maintains relationships with those who receive SNAP’s services. It’s a matter of finding and designing programs and services to fit people’s needs. The homeless and others who receive services help create the design, because having ownership increases their likelihood of success.

“We work on education because we don’t want them to be homeless again,” he said. “We want to enhance their quality of life.”

The workload at SNAP and other human services agencies has increased in recent months with the current economic crisis. Donations are down yet the need continues to grow.

SNAP and other agencies see people who have never been homeless or received an eviction notice before, he said.

“They’re scared and they don’t know what to do,” he said.

Only 25 percent of those who turn to SNAP for help suffer from generation-to-generation poverty. Most experienced the sudden loss of a job, a disability, a divorce or some other major change that affected their ability to earn a liv-

ing and pay the bills. Many are one or two paychecks away from homelessness, he said.

Although the work can be overwhelming, being part of a team “can bring us through the tough times,” he said. “Social workers often don’t see the result of their efforts. We plant many seeds.”

SNAP works with various agencies including the Spokane Police Department, Community Health Association of Spokane, the Salvation Army and other shelters to reach out to the homeless.

SNAP is part of the Homeless Coalition that includes churches and organizations such as Volun-

teers of America and the Union Gospel Mission. Because there are limited resources, it’s essential that these groups work in partnership, he said.

In 2007, Bob and a team of social services providers helped relocate more than 200 people evicted from three downtown Spokane apartment buildings. The Commercial, the Otis and the New Madison were bought by corporations that wanted to renovate the buildings.

For that leadership, U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers entered his actions in the Congressional Record in August and honored him at the dedication of Riverwalk Point II, a housing project for poor families.

“Even though I received the award, there were many others who worked as hard,” said Bob, who listed government leaders who regularly take the time to listen to the needs of the poor.

“Spokane is remarkable because it’s one of the smallest big cities that I’ve ever been in,” he added. “I don’t know of any other place where agencies and homeless people have access to those who are making decisions. It’s a place where people work together to find solutions.”

For information, call 456-7106.

Speakers tell of Iraqi refugees

Karlene Arguinchona and Gerri Haynes speak on “Iraqi Refugees: The Unspoken Consequence of War.” at the United Nations Association (UNA) at 7 p.m., Monday, Feb. 9, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr.,

The women participated in a 2008 United Nations Association USA trip to Syria. Gerri organizes trips to the Middle East for the UNA-USA and the Seattle and Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility and has gone one

or more times a year since 1993.

They will report on refugee statistics and dangers for refugees returning to Iraq—physical threats plus the inability to work.

Karlene is a physician at Sacred Heart’s emergency room. She has served medically overseas in Central America, Mexico and Africa.

Gerri is a nurse and palliative care consultant on the clinical associate faculty of the University of Washington School of Nursing.

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In our time, how and what we choose to do makes all the difference

Returning to four-foot snow banks and driving home from the airport Dec. 27 after being away two weeks, I hoped my neighbors had been taking care of my place.

I was almost certain that they had. Ever since we moved into our south-side home 33 years ago, we have been part of a neighborhood where neighbors looked out for each other. In our new home less than a month, our neighbors dug us out of an early snowstorm while we were gone for Thanksgiving. Since then, I have been among neighbors making it a practice to snowblow driveways, mow lawns and do other small favors for each other, and for elderly and less able residents on our street.

It was no surprise—though no less welcome—when we pulled onto our street and saw our driveway and walk clear.

What goes around comes around.

It made me reflect on the convergence of historical events in January and their relationship to our American heritage and Christian service.

Deep in the heart of this harsh, record-setting winter, in the heart of a harsher financial storm, it would be easy to give in to despair, and simply hunker down and let nature take its course, let those who can't

fend for themselves fall by the wayside and just take care of ourselves.

Another notion keeps nudging me in a different direction. I think about words I read years ago in the first Federalist Paper, words by Alexander Hamilton at a time of greater crisis, when the existence of this nation was at stake. He wrote:

"It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force."

When I read and reread these words, I realize Hamilton, like Jesus, was able to tap into a set of essential truths that are as valid today as they were then.

Our fate and our future do not have to be determined by accident or force. We still have the opportunity and capacity to determine what tomorrow may bring. As we consider the message of change our new President hopes to introduce, we must remember it is not a change in our essential nature or purpose, but a change

back into honoring who we are and where we came from.

Some of that change can be seen in the fact that a bit of the promise the Rev. Martin Luther King saw from that mountaintop he was not permitted to cross has borne fruit—an African-American/Anglo is President!

It is a result of choices made by people of conviction, courage and hope not only in the last election but through the history of this nation's struggle against the crimes of slavery, segregation and racial bigotry.

That promise and choice are acted out and reflected in the world-changing actions of giants at the national and universal level. It is clearly and personally acted out in day-to-day actions of neighbors and friends deciding to choose good instead of evil, action instead of surrender, hope instead of despair.

Just as my neighbors choose to go into the storm to help each other make it through another winter, we are asked to do the same with each other, as Jesus asked us to do 2,000 years ago: To feed the hungry, to comfort the sick, to visit those in prison, to clothe the naked, to do all of these for the least of those we meet, for we each, rich and poor, black and white and all hues of the

rainbow, are beautiful in God's eyes.

As I consider the bleak forecast for the winter, as I watch the grim financial forecasts on the TV screen, as I look at horrifying images of people in war's way, I think of my neighbors coming together to do a small favor for me. I remember how often and well we as a nation, as a people and as a community have come together so many times for ourselves and others. I realize the lofty words of Hamilton, King and Jesus are not brought to life only on the great stage of history, but also in our own hearts and neighborhoods by our choices.

The nation's founders, though far from perfect, wrought better than they knew. Perhaps their greatest gift to us was the realization that no nation, people or person has to be trapped by history. We can change.

Now, as we listen to the challenges that confront us, as we reflect on the words of Jesus, Hamilton, King, now Barack Obama and all the great leaders who choose hope and change rather than surrender to despair and the status quo, let us remember that now, in our time, it is how and what we choose that will make all the difference.

Steve Blewett

Fig Tree Board Member

We will suffer less if we share our wealth in money, goods and love

"Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again the work of remaking America," said President Barack Obama in his inaugural address.

For most people under 50, "pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off" probably has no meaning unless a grandmother told them that after they fell.

For those of us a bit older, it was a reminder of an imperfectly remembered song that tickled our memories. Written by Jerome Kern and Dorothy Fields, the song was in the movie, "Swing Time," starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

Why use a line from a frothy movie in an inaugural speech?

As I thought about it, I decided it fit. The movie was made in 1936 in the middle of the Depression. In that grim time, Hollywood made uplifting films to keep us going and frothy ones to keep us cheerful.

By the way, the next line is, "Start all over again."

We don't need to start all over again. Our founders gave us a good start. What

we need to do is reclaim the ideals our country is built on and rebuild what has been tumbling down around us. As we have been warned by our new President, it is not going to be easy or fast.

One way to facilitate the process is to hold onto the spirit we felt within ourselves and around us during our December snowstorms.

Neighborliness, kindness, thoughtfulness, a few extra steps or telephone calls, community, the common good: these were all reflected in reports of people helping people during our December snowstorms.

Letters to the editor thanked neighbors who used plows or snow blowers to clear driveways and make mailboxes accessible. In various conversations, we learned of grocery shopping done for some who couldn't go out and people being taken to medical appointments.

Don Young, project supervisor for the Washington Reading Corps, tells of being outside with his wife, both of them trying to do a bit of berm busting, when a young man

used his plow to clear away the berm.

The answer to Don's question, "What can we do for you?" was, "The Union Gospel Mission needs warm hats and gloves."

Their driveway was no longer blocked, so Jan and Don went shopping and delivering.

In a move reminiscent of the owner of the Polartec factory keeping his employees on the payroll while the factory was rebuilt after a fire, the management of Rosauer's grocery stores is keeping employees of the store at Francis and Maple on the payroll while the snow-damaged roof is being rebuilt. These employees will work at other locations when replacement workers are needed.

We were shoveled out from the first snowfall by Santa and an elf in mufti. A niece and her husband do the elf and Santa turn at neighborhood gatherings, nursing homes and other locations.

As the snow becomes gray and unattractive, we're increasingly tired of it and maybe a bit snappish.

However, the motivation that contributed to the positive experiences we had while digging out is still needed as we deal with our current national economic crisis.

According to the latest Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, hate groups think that the election of our first African-American President and our economic situation will result in growth for their organizations.

We need to hold fast to a sense of involvement and responsibility in our communities. There could be a high price for not doing so.

There may be backlash with any election from those who feel disenfranchised, but we also have the choice to experience the abundant life that comes when people are generous, caring neighbors, caring citizens of the nation and world.

Our nation need not suffer long if we take each step forward to help where we are placed, to share our wealth in money, material goods and love.

Nancy Minard - Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

A fantasy of spring flashed across the screen of my consciousness as I was scraping snow away from the gates of my garbage surround. I could see the deep green that clothes the back lot of the church and the trees with leaves under a blue sky.

I don't despise the snow. Snow, if nothing else, is an extremely clever method of storing water on dry land. In our cold winters, snow is the blanket that covers the winter wheat so that the fields are green in the spring and golden in the fall.

The Rev. Dan Berg
Open Door Congregational United
Church of Christ - Deer Park

We live in a world where everything seems disposable, including people. The general idea is that we "use them and move on" and "take what we can out of things, then drop them." The seventh commandment—you shall not steal—invites us to resist that temptation and instead to take care—to be careful—with others.

Stealing is being careless with someone else's things—a rental home, a borrowed appliance, a friend's toy or furniture in a place of business. When we don't take

care with things that don't belong to us, including the earth, the air and the water, we are stealing.

Stealing is being careless with someone else's money, getting ahead at another's expense, the idea of "finders keepers," plus mismanagement, cheating, reaping excess profits and paying unjust wages. We are stealing when we use an "angle" to gain advantage over our neighbor, instead of thinking about how it affects them and how we might help them.

In God's commandments, we are invited to look out for our neighbor's best interests in all our actions.

The Rev. Janine Goodrich
American Lutheran Church
Newport

Most of us in our affluent society are surrounded by "stuff," handy gadgets, sentimental keepsakes, vital documents and various accoutrements that we are convinced are essential to life. Almost every day, we are confronted with some advertisement trying to sell this or that item that we "cannot live without." Having to part with any of it sends some into paroxysms of regret.

Not being able to distinguish between "life" and "stuff" is a tragic but common error.

I thought about that when the jetliner crash-landed in the Hudson River on Jan. 15. As the plane sank rapidly into the murky water, passengers beat a hasty exit to the wings.

One woman, confused, began to remove her luggage from the overhead bin. A fellow passenger yelled, "Leave it here! It's not important!"

I cannot think of a more apropos six-word sermon for any of us to try to sort out our values in this materialistic world.

The Rev. Wilbur Rees
Shalom United Church of Christ
Richland

Twice during the snow season I have had to depend on the kindness of strangers (or at least friends!) to pull me out of some snow berm.

These small disasters of weather and snow remind us of how interdependent we truly are, and how much difference we can make with one small act of kindness.

The Rev. Debi Hasdorff
Cheney United Church of Christ

I suggest celebration and support with the determination to let President Obama know, early and often, that his vision for peace and social justice must be nourished, exercised, and grown.

One of our tasks will be to point out the economic advantage of nonviolent solutions for every ailment of our country.

We can apply less money and more courage and leadership and creativity to govern properly.

Rusty Nelson - Peace and Justice
Action League of Spokane

Christmas is about embodying the Spirit of Christ of compassion, justice, forgiveness, mercy, transformation and reconciliation. The work of Christmas continues in serving the homeless, seeking a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the "Holy Land" and standing beside those whose lives are falling apart.

Christmas is not a "feel good" time of year but rather a time of engagement, where the vision of God's realm becomes flesh in the lives of followers.

The Rev. David Helseth
Englewood Christian
Yakima

Cheney assistance programs relocate

The Cheney Outreach Center, Cheney Food Bank and Cheney Clothing Exchange, accustomed to responding to the emergency needs of people in their community, faced emergency relocation when snow on the roof of the Wren Pierson building compromised the building on Jan. 2.

Although they were housed together rent-free for 14 years on the first floor along with the Cheney Museum, the damage most affected the second floor that houses the Senior Center and City Parks and Recreation Department.

By Jan. 4, Carol Beason, director of Cheney Outreach, said she moved the files and electronic equipment. By Jan. 6, volunteers moved furniture to storage.

Having a disaster plan helped each organization know what they needed to do and whom to call.

She worked from her home until Cheney Outreach reopened its office on Jan. 13 at the Cheney United Church of Christ, 423 N. Sixth, where it is now open from 9 a.m. to noon, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The Clothing Exchange moved to the basement of the United Methodist Church, 204 Fourth St., and gave extra clothing to Our Place Community Ministries in Spokane. It is now open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesdays.

The Food Bank has reopened at the Recycling Center, 100 Anderson Rd., It is now open from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays.

Cheney Outreach, which operates with 10 volunteers and Carol as paid staff, provides basic emergency assistance—energy, transportation (gas vouchers and bus tokens), and limited rent and prescription aid. It refers homeless people to the Spokane Neighborhood Action Program. The outreach center also provides scholarships for the Parks and Recreation programs, and does the paperwork for the Food Bank and Clothing Exchange.

Keeping the files for three places in three locations will require new logistics, Carol said.

The center receives support from the community, churches, service clubs, fraternities, sororities and community grants.

John Matthews, director of the food bank, said, "We were at maximum capacity with the amount of food we had stored for cold weather and from food drives for this season."

Second Harvest came and moved food in three freezers and

a cooler to their storage. The City of Cheney provided vans and prisoners came from Airway Heights Correctional Facility to move the equipment. Volunteers also helped move the food to the Recycling Center.

John said the food bank has picked up the food it stored at Second Harvest and has set up four freezers and two coolers in its temporary location.

The concern of each service provider is that many people walk

to seek help and now need to go to different locations for a year or more until decisions are made about the damaged structure.

This year, Cheney Outreach decided not to provide Christmas gifts, but the community rallied. Sally Shamp, a member of the United Church of Christ, organized the community to provide four gifts per person for low-income families. They served 182 children.

For information, call 235-2325.

Calendar of Events

- Feb 5** • "Humanitarian Relief in the Middle East," Bill Dienst of Omak, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Magic Lantern, 25 W. Main, 7 p.m., 838-7870
- Feb 6** • "Plant a Row for the Hungry," Second Harvest, 1234 E. Front, noon, 747-2173
- Feb 7** • Hungarian Dinner, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr., 6 p.m.,
- Feb 8** • Felsorakos Luncheon, Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington, noon
- "Cowgirls," benefit performance for Shalom Ministries, Interplayers, 174 S. Howard, 2 p.m., 747-1878 or 747-4755
- Feb 9** • "Iraqi Refugees: The Unspoken Consequences of War," United Nations Association, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Fort Wright Dr., 7 p.m., 456-2382
- "Sweet Sensations!" Benefit for Tiger Time After School Recreation Program, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 6:30 p.m.
- Feb 10-12** • "Creating a Sustainable Future for Agriculture in the Pacific Northwest," Shilo Inn, Richland, 335-2922
- Feb 11** • "Tough Talk: Difficult Conversations in Difficult Times," Lunell Haight and Laura Asbel, Herak Club Room, McCarthy Athletic Center, Gonzaga University, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 800-986-9585
- Feb 11-Mar 11** • Hospice of Spokane Caregivers Classes, Rockwood at Hawthorne, 101 E. Hawthorne, 456-0438
- Feb 12** • "Peak Oil: Expected Impacts on the Domestic and Global Economies in the Next Decade," Melissa Ahern, Great Decisions and World Affairs Council, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-3270
- Feb 13** • "100 Ways in 100 Days Mass and Celebration," Catholic school students, St. Patrick Catholic Parish, 5021 N. Nelson, 358-4273
- Feb 13-14** • "From Stained Glass back to the Street: Wesleyan Holiness and Social Justice," Fowler United Methodist Church, 3298 N. Howard, 7 p.m., Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday, 325-3242
- Town Hall Meetings, Envision Spokane, Ferris High School, 607-5034
- Feb 14** • Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., 216-6090
- Feb 16-17** • Intensive Workshop on Racism, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th, 7-9 p.m., Monday, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Tuesday, 838-4277
- Feb 17** • Deadline for Women's Leadership Nominations for March 6 Women's Leadership Conference, Spokane Community College Lair, 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m., gonzaga.edu/wlcin
- Feb 18** • Spokane City Forum, "Your (New) Y," Monica Walters and Rig Riggins, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 11:45 a.m.
- Feb 19** • Whitworth University Service Learning Fair, Whitworth University, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 777-4685
- Feb 20-22** • "Mindfulness Meditation: Awakening into Presence," retreat, Dori Langevin, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 7 p.m., Friday to noon Sunday, 483-6495
- Feb 21** • Big Bend Cluster Mid-Winter Event, "Understanding Islam and Stereotypes," Roger and Lee Bruggink, Emanuel Lutheran Church, 206 S. Division St., Ritzville, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.,
- Feb 22** • Pakistani Christian Muslim Dialogue, Spokane Islamic Center, 6411 E. Second, noon lunch, 2 p.m., 534-0066
- Feb 23-27** • Icon Painting Workshop, Vladimir Blagonadzhdin, Christ the Savior Orthodox Church, 12407 E. 16th Ave. in Spokane Valley, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 208-687-2025
- Feb 25** • Ash Wednesday
- Feb 27-28** • Town Hall Meetings, Envision Spokane, Corbin Senior Center, 607-5034
- Feb 28** • "A Time to Weep," Shonna Bartlett, Ministry Institute, 405 E. Sinto, 10a.m. to 1 p.m., 313-5765
- March 4** • Fig Tree Distribution, St. Mark's Lutheran, 24th & Grand, 9 a.m.
- March 5** • Fig Tree Board, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m.
- "In the Shadow of Slums," Steven Jensen, Great Decisions, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-3270
- March 11** • Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m., 535-1813

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presentation by

Kenneth Kinghorn

Asbury Seminary professor of church history

February 13 & 14

7 p.m., Friday • 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., Saturday

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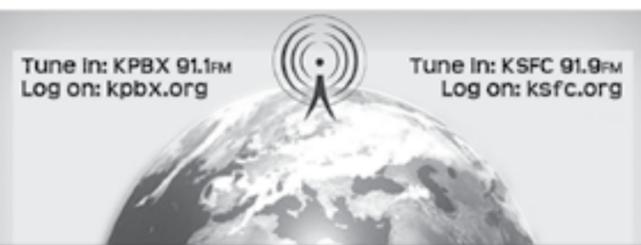
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Community leaders commit to energy savings, green jobs, apprentices

Continued from page 1
in three years will need to pay to have their work monitored.

On behalf of the alliance, Mike encouraged participants to help promote the levy and bond by distributing fliers, knocking on doors and doing phone banks.

Mark Anderson, assistant superintendent, said Spokane Public Schools would use the standard for contractors if the bond passes.

School Superintendent Nancy Stowell agreed to continue to collaborate with the alliance and to spread apprenticeships.

The bond, he said, will rebuild older schools—Ferris High School, and Jefferson, Hutton, Finch and Westview elementary schools.

Neither the levy nor bond will raise taxes, he said. They are renewals. The bond will put \$300 million into the local economy, and the levy, \$60 million.

“They will stimulate the economy,” said Mark.

Co-chairs Kolby Hanson of the Sheet Metal Workers Local 66 and the Rev. Andrea CastroLang of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ then guided discussion of efforts to create jobs and preserve the environment to stimulate the economy through SustainableWorks.

David Sproull, project manager, said SustainableWorks includes doing energy audits of how efficiently homes or businesses use energy; offering recommendation of changes; providing evaluation of costs related to reduction in energy bills, and providing reliable contractors.

Kolby said SustainableWorks now plans to focus on neighborhoods, providing services for 100 to 300 buildings. That approach, he said, will provide 30 permanent, living-wage jobs, while reducing tons of emissions.

Representatives of member institutions came forward to express their commitment to recruit apprentices, provide training, offer funding, raise funds, do



Chris McLain and Bill Easley sing “This Land Is Your Land.”

public education, support creation of living-wage jobs, encourage youth to become apprentices, provide leadership for the alliance, to serve as examples and share their experience in audits and retrofits.

Several pastors said that the efforts at reducing energy usage is in line with their churches’ belief in environmental stewardship, as is working together for the common good.

Colleen Daniel of Liberty Park United Methodist Church said her congregation’s support of recruiting apprentices “arises from our belief to respect all people as children of God.”

The Rev. Dale Cockrum, superintendent of the Inland United Methodist District, said the mission of SustainableWorks is in harmony with the church’s mission. He spoke on behalf of Catholic Bishop William Skylstad and Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells to say that “churches share a commitment to environmental stewardship, justice, shalom and caring for the earth.

“Oikos—God’s household—is the root of economics and ecology. Stewardship of the ecology and the economy relate in the concept of shalom, peace and wholeness that are central to what SustainableWorks seeks to do in Spokane to add to shalom: help us use our resources efficiently and

create jobs that help the economy,” Dale said. “I challenge alliance members to take stewardship to the next level to their homes, churches and offices, to challenge young people to be apprentices to find careers for the ecology and economy of Spokane.”

Mike Edwards of Banner Fuel then agreed partner with SustainableWorks efforts and listed 13 contractors ready to participate.

County Commissioner Bonnie Mager said: “As an environmentalist all my life, I support SustainableWorks for its environmental value. As a homeowner of a 1911 house where I feel the wind blowing through, I’m interested in comfort and savings. As a county commissioner, I’m interested in seeing living-wage jobs in the community. I will present ideas to the other commissioners and invite you to meet with us.”

Beth Thew, of the Spokane Regional Labor Council, agreed to partner.

Tom Lienhard of Avista Utilities said the “nexus of our goals is to save energy, so I don’t need to go out to buy energy at higher rates.” He backs the energy savings and job creation the alliance promotes so “the number one export of Spokane County will not be our children leaving to find good paying jobs.”

Promising to make personal sacrifices himself, he challenged

everyone to help bring change, by changing to “the culture of using energy wisely.”

Spokane Mayor Mary Verner said SustainableWorks fits her goal to have a green city. She agreed to continue to collaborate, believing SustainableWorks puts Spokane in a unique position to create good jobs with good pay, to train apprentices, to save money by saving energy,” she said.

She endorsed reducing carbon in Spokane by seven percent, and said the city would take a package that includes SustainableWorks projects to Congress and the President to request federal economic stimulation dollars.

SustainableWorks plans a door-to-door campaign and phone calls, and members will educate by

living the values as a witness to neighbors and friends.

Lance Morehouse of The Arc of Spokane introduced the alliance’s 2009 state legislative agenda for sustainable jobs; workforce development; homeowner protection; environmental protection; early childhood, high school post-secondary education; health care reform and tax equity.

The Spokane Alliance’s advocacy day will be Wednesday, Feb. 18, in Olympia. Members will meet with legislators.

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