

37TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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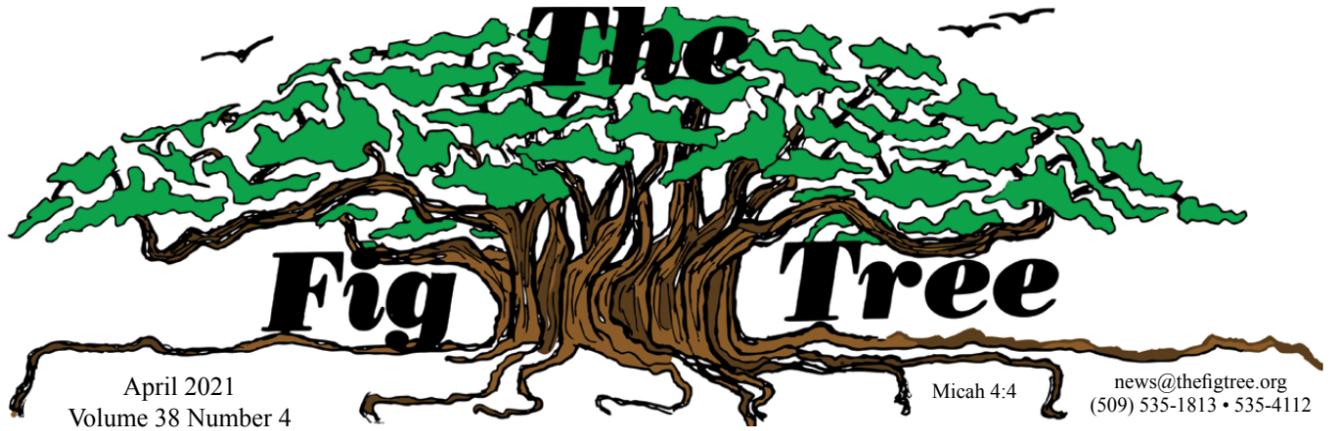
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CALENDAR ON PAGE 11 FEATURES 40 EVENTS



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Bookstore uplifts literacy, diversity

By Mary Stamp

A few months after Janelle Smith opened Wishing Tree Books in the South Perry District in November 2019, COVID led her to temporarily close the purple, 100-year-old house she remodeled as a bookstore.

Running a bookstore was her childhood dream, so she wouldn't let COVID stop her from selling books to children and adults.

At first, she was able to run the store temporarily out of her own home, because she had set up a website before COVID, but then she missed doing sales with a personal connection that allows her to match people to books, as she is again able to do.

Now the store is able to allow browsing customers, limiting the number of mask-wearing customers. She also offers porch pickups.

Janelle's mission is to encourage literacy for children, to have families read together, to facilitate community cohesion and to promote diversity.

Matching people to books facilitates literacy and family involvement.

"Customers value our knowledge of the books. I'm always



Janelle Smith's joy is the magic of connecting children with a book they will treasure.

happy to help people find a treasure," she said.

She wants children to be motivated to read books to themselves or have their parents read to them over and over.

Janelle likes to spend time with customers to learn about their stories, their lives and their children's eccentricities. That helps her guide them to books that connect to their children's interests.

"We are here for the community. I love asking questions and learning about customers. Talking with customers is the fun part," she said.

Because Janelle also wants to create a community of readers through story times, book clubs and other groups, she renovated the garage in the back yard to be an event space. She was holding a few events—weekly yoga and mindfulness classes, family games and crafts, and even a creative monster writing workshop for kids—when COVID closed those events. She plans pop-up shops in the garage and backyard family game nights and craft days in the summer (COVID-willing).

"I keep reviewing my inventory to be sure it represents the

Continued on page 4

Virtual event brings together people impacted by U.S. nuclear legacy

For the virtual Washington-Marshall Islands Nuclear Remembrance Week March 15 to 20, organizers gathered many groups affected by U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958, and survivors of other bombings and test sites, people impacted by mining, transport, processing and clean-up, and young people.

Each day focused on different aspects of the history under the overall theme of "We Are Not Alone" to remind participants that their many voices together can have power. Participants

told their stories to encourage healing, remember victims, honor survivors and protect future generations.

People joined on Zoom or on the Facebook page of the nonprofit Compact of Free Association (COFA) Alliance National Network (CANN) of Washington.

COFA is the international agreement establishing relationships between the United States and the sovereign states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.

On Monday, an intergenerational panel from Spokane's Marshallese community included two elders who survived nuclear testing, Bubu Erine Jitiam and Sam Levai, and two youth, Laura Daniel and Catherine Loeak.

The elders told how U.S. nuclear tests vaporized several islands and atolls, and radiative contamination left some islands unfit for habitation. The tests dislocated people, destroyed their culture, damaged the land, sea and marine life, but few in the U.S. knew what took place.

Although they were in their 20s then and it is now 64 years since the testing, their fear and pain continue.

"People and animals kept dying," said Bubu, who gave birth to three babies who died soon after birth with birth defects.

Catherine found only brief mention of the Bikini bomb in a history class. Through high school and college, she wrote about it and now uses social media to amplify messages.

Continued on page 7

Benefit nears 2021 goal, Directory is under way

From a month of benefit appeals, The Fig Tree now focuses on inviting support of advertisers and community partners for the Resource Directory.

"We raised more than \$30,000 as of March 26 plus \$1565 in pledges. We will continue appeals until we reach our goal of \$34,000 for the virtual benefits," said Mary Stamp, editor. "We are pleased with the response and with the many comments of support and solidarity coming with the donations."

The promotional video and Zoom recordings of the speakers with the full comments of those in the video, plus the full Zoom recordings of the two events are online at thefigtree.org/Benefit2021videos.html. The videos, prepared by Nathan Slabaugh Media, may be viewed any time for inspiration or shared with friends, groups and congregations to inspire discussion and donations, fulfilling the benefit's goals of educating and raising support.

Costs for printing the directory will be higher this year, and the printer notified us of a new page size," said Malcolm Haworth, directory editor. "It will be published in color, so advertisers may pay a little more to run their ads in color and build the quality appearance of the overall publication.

"We are updating listings, as well as contacting advertisers and community partners to help underwrite the 2021-22 Resource Directory," he said. "Businesses and nonprofits wishing to place ads may contact us now."

The Fig Tree began distributing on 10 grocery store racks through the Inlander in February. In April, it will print 2,000 copies to distribute at 15 stores, increasing circulation.

For information, call 535-1813 or 535-4112, or email mary@thefigtree.org or resourcedirectory@thefigtree.org.

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Religion News Briefs Around the World

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WCC, faith leaders issue 10 points on climate

The World Council of Churches (WCC) joined grassroots religious activists and high-level faith leaders to issue 10 demands and condemn inadequate progress on climate action by governments and financial institutions. In more than 400 grassroots religious actions in 43 countries, thousands of people of faith called on political and financial leaders to meet ambitious climate demands at COP26. On March 11, more than 120 religious groups co-sponsored a multi-faith climate day of action.

Alarmed by the massive gap between what is required to limit global temperature rise and actual climate change commitments by governments and financial institutions, religious activists released demands to address the injustice and impacts the climate crisis is inflicting. They call governments and banks immediately to end support for new fossil fuel infrastructure and tropical deforestation; commit to universal access to clean, affordable energy; enact policies creating green jobs with a just transition for impacted workers and communities; secure policies and funding supporting those forced to migrate due to climate impacts.

The Greenfaith International Network said as the COVID-19 pandemic cost millions of people their jobs and health, the fossil fuel industry secured billions of dollars of emergency bailout funds while lobbying to weaken climate and environmental protections. In Brazil, Congo and Indonesia, home to the largest tropical rainforests, governments made it easier for agribusinesses to log.

The demands are 1) achieve 100 percent renewable, clean energy for all; 2) realign global finance with compassionate values; 3) assure jobs and health care for all; 4) respect indigenous rights; 5) welcome migrants; 6) end climate pollution; 7) end the planet's desecration of bio-diversity; 8) eliminate immoral investment; 9) grant climate reparations, and 10) have bold faith community leadership.

Media Monitoring shows exclusion of voices

Preliminary findings of the World Association for Christian Communication's Global Media Monitoring Project show progress in gender balance in some news but show media overall are far short of being an inclusive space for women, vulnerable women and historically marginalized groups.

While women's role as TV reporters is more prominent—with 48 percent of TV news reported by women—as subjects and sources, women are sharply underrepresented. In Latin America, indigenous people are only one percent of subjects and sources—persons seen, heard or spoken about—in TV news despite being eight percent of the population, and only three of 10 are women. In European TV news, people aged 80 and over are less than one percent of subjects and sources and just under 28 percent of them are women.

COVID-19 was a chance to investigate gender dimensions of news in a pandemic. On TV, women were subjects and sources in just 30 percent of COVID news—despite a meteoric rise in TV viewership in many countries. On radio, the gender gap in subjects and sources in COVID news is narrower than before 2015.

Pandemic reporting on the internet increased space for women's voices as eyewitnesses and spokespersons. The gender gap for spokespersons is 10 points narrower in stories compared to pre-COVID. The gender gap in reporters on pandemic news is narrower than in non-pandemic news. Latin America outperforms the world, with an over-representation of women as reporters in COVID online news.

The Global Media Monitoring Project's final report will present a gender analysis of the 25-year change in the presence, representation and voice of subjects, sources in mainstream print newspapers, radio and television newscasts, news websites and news media tweets in 120 countries.

"Women are still shockingly absent from news, even as we are more aware of gender injustice," said Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC deputy general secretary. "Churches and ecumenical organizations have a role to play by promoting and supporting women's leadership and calling on media to stop perpetuating gender stereotypes and the marginalization of women especially in vulnerable populations."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

FAN will join in Lands Council tree planting

The Lands Council is offering opportunities for community groups and individuals—wearing masks—to help plant trees from 3 to 5:30 p.m., Thursdays, April 8, 15, 22 or 29, at its Marshall Creek site at 17607 S. Short Rd., between Cheney and Spokane.

That site is undergoing a restoration to revitalize the wetland

ecosystem, said Kat Hall, conservation and education director with the Lands Council.

The Faith Action Network (FAN) of Washington is partnering with The Lands Council on Thursday, April 15, to plant trees.

The Lands Council is partnering with One Tree Planted for an Earth Day Tree Planting, which

will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 24, at the Marshall Creek site.

The Lands Council provides seedlings and shovels for these COVID-safe, family-friendly events.

For information, email schubring@fanwa.org, or visit landscouncil.org.

Whitworth President Beck Taylor is leaving

Beck Taylor, Whitworth University president since 2010, has resigned effective May 31. On July 1, he begins as president of Samford University, a 6,000-student Christian institution in Homewood, Ala., where he was dean of the Brock School of Business from 2005 to 2010.

Whitworth has selected Scott McQuilkin, its vice president for institutional advancement since 2009, to serve as interim

president starting June 1.

Under Beck, Whitworth added graduate and doctoral programs, campus capital projects and programs such as a student ambassador program.

Beck headed Whitworth's 10-year strategic plan, "Whitworth 2021: Courage at the Crossroads," to elevate Whitworth among Christian universities.

Scott, a 1984 Whitworth graduate in physical education with

minors in math and religion, earned a master's in health sciences at Whitworth and a doctorate in exercise and sport science from Pennsylvania State University. He has served Whitworth in faculty, coaching and administrative roles. Currently he is responsible for fundraising, marketing and communications.

For information, call 777-4703 or email tcoder@whitworth.edu.

CMTV14 offers new programs, training

On May 4, Community-Minded Television (CMTV14), which has provided video training in Spokane since 2007, begins CMTV Academy, a five-week course on video production, said Lee Williams, CEO of Community-Minded Enterprises, the nonprofit home of CMTV14.

The academy will take students through the full video production process to produce original videos, said DaShawn Bedford, production manager.

It includes two-hour in-studio

sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on camera, audio, editing, lighting and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org/academy. Information on a teen summer camp series is at cmtvspokane.org/camp.

CMTV14's website, developed by Darrien Mack, the graphic designer, shows videos the station produces.

In COVID, the station shut

down several months in 2020. As guidelines allowed, it re-opened, provided 60 members access to \$300,000 of professional TV equipment and helped five nonprofits to do virtual fundraising. Later in 2021, it will launch a CMTV14 app.

CMTV14 has added two staff: production associate Michael Bethely and administrative associate Maddie Cattle.

For information, call 960-7452 or email CMTV@community-minded.org.

Nonprofit conference challenges thinking

The 2021 Washington State Nonprofit Conference on the theme, "Rethinking Place, Space and Time," will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways of

thinking about place, space and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities nonprofits serve.

In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will

hear innovative and adaptive stories from the field in a week of virtual experiences and learning opportunities.

For information, visit wastatenonprofitconference.org.

Gonzaga opens academic climate center

In response to the threat of global warming and its Catholic, Jesuit, humanistic mission, the Gonzaga University is launching the Gonzaga Center for Climate, Society and the Environment in a Zoom event at 3:30 p.m., Thursday, April 22.

The center will serve students

and the region by advancing innovative, interdisciplinary scholarship, teaching and consulting.

Panelists for the opening are Jay Inslee, Washington State Governor; Bill McKibben, founder of the global climate action group 350.org, and Keya Chatterjee, executive director of the U.S. Climate Action Network.

Brian Henning, the center's director, will give the center's

first lecture, "Universities in the Eozoic Era," outlining his vision for the center, at 5 p.m., Monday, April 26, on Zoom.

Brian, the center's founder, came to Gonzaga in 2008 as professor of philosophy and environmental studies.

For information, visit <https://www.gonzaga.edu/center-for-climate-society-environment/events>.

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May is Clean Air Month Poster Contest!

Create a poster using the theme:
Healthy Air - Important for Everyone!

Submission Deadline: Monday, April 19, 2021

Open to Spokane County students in grades K-6

Details at SpokaneCleanAir.org





Long-time human rights advocates say current times show need to persist

By Kaye Hult

Three human rights and civil rights activists involved for many years with the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations (KCTFHR) recently commented on a new “dis-ease” in the country and the need for ongoing efforts to challenge it.

That “dis-ease” is that people have trouble conversing, because their views of reality are so at odds with each other. The divergence is now so wide it causes rifts within families, they said.

Norm Gissel, retired attorney and former member of the task force board, likened it to a rapid move from stage 1 to stage 4 cancer.

Commenting in separate interviews since the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capital and the Feb. 8 spraying of graffiti on Temple Beth Shalom, the three discussed the breakdown in relationships and offered ideas on how to repair the brokenness.

The others interviewed were Marshall Mend, a local realtor, and Tony Stewart, a former educator.

Through the task force, the three were instrumental in overcoming divisiveness caused by the Aryan Nations and its leader, Richard Butler, between 1980 and 2000 in North Idaho.

The task force, which is founded on principles of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Idaho State Constitution, promotes the dignity and worth of each human being.

Marshall said the people who participated in the insurrection in Washington, D.C., “need to be held accountable. They need to be responsible for their actions, just like everyone else. We’re all accountable for what we do.”

Tony had a similar thought: “The insurrection needs to have an aggressive investigation and prosecution needs to happen.”

Norm likened politicians on both sides of the aisle to sharks.



Marshall Mend



Tony Stewart



Norm Gissel

“They eat what’s in front of them,” he said. “They’re living with existential dread and anxiety,” he said.

“Power, moral judgment and policy drive political parties,” he said. “At this point, they are not interested in moral judgment or policy. They’re interested only in power.”

The first government ruling in 1869 that “for-profit companies are people” led to companies choosing only to consider the bottom line—making money—not moral judgment, Norm said.

He used the example of dumping dioxins into the Spokane River.

To a corporation behaving amorally, “it’s ‘good’ if it makes a profit,” Norm said. “That’s immoral. Our country is losing the battle to immorality.”

Tony took a different tack. “I don’t think we’ve ever been in this situation before,” he said. Democrats and Republicans could communicate once. Both sides used rational thinking. Not now.

“My father told me: When you’re dealing with someone whose perception of reality is so opposite from yours, there is no starting point,” he said.

Tony reflected on the time that Butler and the Aryan Nations had a small following in North Idaho.

“A sociology professor from Eastern Idaho thought the task force should sit down with Butler and dialogue,” he said. “We couldn’t. One has to work

with people who disagree, but we are realistic. If someone has lost touch with reality, there’s nowhere to go with dialogue.”

Tony saw the insurrection at the Capital as an attempted coup. Some who participated have said they now realize it was wrong.

“I’m encouraged by those who said, ‘I can’t believe I did that.’” he said.

In seeking to heal the brokenness, Marshall said that the truth needs to be told to counter the lies. He also spoke of the challenge of speaking out because silence gives consent.

“If we don’t tell people the truth, they will believe the lies,” he said. “We all need to speak up and speak out. Sometimes it’s difficult, but we need to do it anyway. In Nazi Germany, they didn’t speak out. The United States is not Nazi Germany, but it could become that. That’s why we need to speak up and speak out.”

Tony believes it’s important to work with people who are open to conversation.

“I want to spend my time where I can help,” he said. “Why should I spend my time where I can’t make a difference? I’ve seen too much. I can see where one can be productive and where one can’t. Many need encouragement and help building confidence, so they can make a difference.”

He referred to practices of Martin Luther King, Jr. He said that Dr. King was in charge and

set the agenda. He would not let those who opposed him change the conversation.

Tony then reflected on the years they were countering the work of the Aryan Nations.

“We would never attend Butler events. We had our own events,” he said. “People yelling at each other is never productive.”

“We were never going to be confrontive with Butler. The horrible treatment by the racists of Dr. King actually grew his moral movement. He never yelled back,” Tony added.

“When working in human rights, it’s a mistake to remain silent, but we certainly must decide our own agenda,” he said.

Tony gave as an example the Aryan Nations’ first march down Sherman Ave. in Coeur d’Alene in 1998.

“At the same time as their march, we held a huge rally themed ‘Lemons to Lemonade.’ We raised \$34,000 for teaching diversity. After giving \$10,000 to other human rights groups, we gave a third of the remaining \$24,000 away three different times to area teachers for diversity programs, receiving positive publicity each time,” he said.

Norm believes in the importance of forcing political and corporate entities to think about moral judgments by asking moral-based questions.

“Every time a discussion swerves away, we need to reiterate, ‘What are the moral underpinnings of your argument? Where do they come from?’” he said.

At this point, Norm said, “We can’t find agreed-upon objective facts. We can return to this by asking about the moral basis on which our political and corporate leaders make their votes and decisions. Everyone has to ask these philosophical questions.”

“If our former president is

indicted or goes away, much of the populace will go through a grief process, like when a dearly loved person dies,” Norm continued.

“What comes out will be a new America,” he said. “Into that space, we must bring the conversation to moral judgments. We have to refuse to ask questions except about those.”

Tony summed up by quoting the late Fr. Bill Wassmuth, a former leader of the task force: “It takes time. Life is a process. It takes day-by-day persistence.”

When Tony once joked about being tired from work with the task force at one point, Fr. Bill replied, “Stewart, you’ve signed up for life. Get with it!” Now Tony says, “That holds for all who would heal the brokenness between us these days: It’s important to not walk away.”

The task force’s board has continued to meet each month since 1981, gathering representatives of Hispanic/Latinx, Asian American, Jewish, African American, religious, law enforcement, LGBTQ, student, veteran and education communities, as well as the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, local governments and the Coeur d’Alene Chamber of Commerce. Their goal is to promote human rights in the region.

It played a major role in passing laws in Idaho to combat hate crimes and promote human rights and in many efforts to challenge white supremacy and hate, including a legal case that shut down the Aryan Nations compound and turned it into a peace park.

They continue efforts to educate the community and school children on hate and on the legacy of Dr. King and to challenge discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations.

For information, visit idahohumanrights.org.

Faith Leaders seek image in art contest

Out of grieving about the violence against Temple Beth Shalom, the murders of Asian women and coworkers in Georgia, and shoppers in Colorado, the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience (FLLC) of Eastern Washington and North Idaho has been seeking ways “to lift up our common humanity, while breaking through apathy and helplessness,” said Gen Heywood, FLLC convener.

Looking for something in addition to vigils, statements and legislation to reach into “the

heart of our communities,” she said the group developed an art contest, to be followed by a short-story contest and later a photojournalistic contest.

For they art contest, they seek a color graphic image to put in windows of businesses and homes, on social media, signs, merchandise and other media to share the message that people of Eastern Washington and North Idaho “Celebrate Curiosity” through solidarity, inclusion, advocacy, accountability and truth.

Entries must be received by

Wednesday, May 12, and a virtual awards ceremony is planned for Thursday, June 10.

The poster/graphic needs to communicate that all people—religious and non-religious, who are indigenous or new here, all genders, skin tones, sexual identities and differing abilities—are connected and are to be respected, supported and valued.

For information, email fllc-conscience@gmail.com or find Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience Eastern Washington and North Idaho on Facebook.



Join us on Earth Day 2021 for the launch of

Gonzaga's new Climate Center!

Featured panelists:
Jay Inslee
Bill McKibben
Keya Chatterjee


 Center for Climate, Society, and the Environment

April 22, 2021
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Book store owner matches books with interests of readers, customers

continued from page 1
mission, especially diversity. I strive to offer books where children can see themselves, be it the color of their skin, their gender, their religion, their culture or their dreams. Just as important, is having these books available to the community in hopes of creating tolerance for others," Janelle said.

Growing up in a loving, supportive family in Kennewick, Janelle spent time in her closet reading, and at 14 had lists of books she wanted to include in her future bookstore.

While studying at Eastern Washington University earning her first degree, she was given the assignment to interview someone doing a job she wanted to do. This led her to the Children's Corner Bookstore. She bugged owners Judy Hamel and Susan Durrie until they hired her. There she learned about customer service and the children's book industry. That bookstore, which opened in 1972, has since closed, but Janelle keeps in touch with Judy and Susan.

In 1999, Janelle studied for a second degree, elementary education with a major in reading. While going to school, she also managed the children's section of Auntie's Bookstore.

After student teaching, Janelle worked for three years with at-risk fourth to sixth graders in an after-school program funded by a school district grant. She taught kindergarten two years, but raising a son on her own, needed a consistent position, and the district was not offering continuing contracts at that time, so she started teaching in preschools, and then worked again at Auntie's.

Janelle then met and married

Ivan, a graphic artist. After their son was born in 2007, she cared for him and then returned to Auntie's for three years, responsible for events and children's books.

Three years ago, with Ivan's support, she began her effort to start a children's bookstore. They began looking for a place to rent in the Perry District, where people came for the park, pubs, and great restaurants, and where there's a school—Grant Elementary. The single-family house they liked was not available at first, but two weeks later, it was for sale and was zoned for commercial use.

"As luck would have it, a fellow bookseller from Seattle's Queen Anne Book Company stepped forward and offered to invest in my dream," said Janelle. "Tegan Tigani and her husband Jordan are avid supporters of both the importance of independent bookstores and a sense of community.

"They purchased the house and shared the cost of renovating it into a viable business," she said. "It is a gorgeous neighborhood store now with a pretty stained glass window designed by a local high school student, who also painted the murals on the outdoor windows. It stands out."

On Nov. 2, 2019, Janelle opened Wishing Tree Bookstore at 1410 E. 11th Ave.

What values drive her to sell children's books?

Believing literacy is important, she wants children to be able to read and be read to, to read books that excite them, and to read books with stories that help them figure out life.

"A child's connection with a favorite book can carry on

through life," she said.

Aware that some children do not have books at home, and some parents do not make it a priority to read to their children, Janelle wants to provide books even for people who cannot afford them.

So she hopes in five years to start a nonprofit to bring authors to schools and books into the lives of the less fortunate. With a nonprofit, she can apply for grants to pay authors to speak to children attending schools in low-income neighborhoods, and buy books for those who cannot afford them.

She has numerous outreach projects on her list, however COVID has made it difficult to move forward with many of them. They did continue their annual Wishing Tree Project this Christmas.

"It was successful in getting books to children in our community," Janelle said.

Wishing Tree Books is currently open for browsing from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sundays and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesdays to Saturdays. They are closed on Mondays.

In May, it will be open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursdays to Saturdays, and closed Mondays.

People may also shop online at the website, www.wishing-treebookstore.com

The store also offers porch pickups for no-contact purchases and are able to ship to family and friends elsewhere.

Masks and hand sanitizer are required and only a limited number of customers can enter at a time. Janelle is making an effort to keep her community and

her staff safe.

While there are only a handful of books on COVID, such as LeUyen Pham's *Outside, Inside* picture book for children, she expects more books will come to help people make sense of these times.

Another book with writings on COVID, for adults, is by various authors and is called *Alone Together: Love, Grief and Comfort in the Time of COVID-19*.

Wishing Tree Books has a new

partnership with the Northwest Passages to do a book group aimed at a younger audience—middle school through young adult. They have had two events. The next is at 7 p.m., Monday, April 19 with Sabina Khan, author of a new young adult novel, *Zara Hossain Is Here*. It will be online through NW Passages and the store's website.

For information, call 315-9815 or email books@wishing-treebookstore.com.

ORGANIC METHODS
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Vigil organizers seek to stop hate of Asians

Ping Ping, one of the organizers of Spokane's March 20 Stop the Hate rally, is a commissioner for Asian and Pacific American (API) Affairs of Washington and on the Spokane Falls Community College sociology faculty.

Spokane's United We Stand members who organized the event were Charity Bagatsing, Tia Moua, Rosie Zhou, Pascal Bostic and Ping.

Spokane's United We Stand is a Facebook group formed after a young Vietnamese American, Vina Cathcart, was called "Chinese virus" in a grocery store, said Ping. Charity (Filipino), Vina (Vietnamese), Cisco Aguon (Palao) and Ping (Chinese) established the group.

"We stand for anti-racism and unite Asian and Pacific Islanders, and all people in Spokane," said Ping, who spoke at the vigil as a daughter, mother and immigrant.

"When I saw a video of 84-year-old Richa Ratanapakdee slammed on the ground, my heart froze. I imagined that could be my father. I haven't slept well since Feb. 8," she said.

"As an immigrant, I speak English with a heavy accent, giving me an inferiority complex even though I have a PhD in sociology. I tend to be quiet," Ping said.

When she was showing SFCC students the film, "Who Killed Vincent Chin?" she realized Vincent was a victim of hate crime. "Tears rushed out of my eyes!

At that moment, I saw myself as an Asian American. As a mother I need to fight. I have a voice, I want to stand up for people who can't speak for themselves out of fear, feelings of subservience or simply due to a language barrier," Ping said. "His death and his mother Lily Chin's fight makes me a warrior for equity and justice.

"We are perceived and expected to be 'model minority,' overly achieving academically but not stir the pot when facing discrimination. It is a trap for all of us," she said.

Her full speech will be published at thefigreee.org along with Jasmine Meredith's. Rosie Zhou's speech is on page 11.

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This month, please participate in our ThoughtExchange community conversation about the new stadium proposal at spokaneschools.org/stadiumTE. This online survey allows everyone in our community to voice their opinion.

Learn more at spokaneschools.org/stadium.

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Educating children and adults has a positive impact on air quality

Through her multifaceted work with the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, Stephanie May believes she and the agency have a direct, positive impact on Spokane's air quality.

Her roles as the public information specialist, the youth and education specialist and the communications and social media specialist allow her to use her skills and interests in communication and advocacy to help individuals and the community understand the impact they can have when they make good choices.

Stephanie's work intersects with many other agencies to inform people of air quality concerns, resources and actions.

"I'm interested in having a clean environment so my child and other children can play outside safely," Stephanie said.

"With the Clean Air Agency, I have seen how much change can happen if we advocate," she said.

Stephanie, who was an intern with the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency during her journalism and communication studies at Eastern Washington University, returned to the agency in 2016.

After graduating in 2007, she worked with Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington while living in the Portland, Ore., area for five years, and then in community outreach with a soccer club in Vancouver, B.C., while her husband completed a master's degree. Back in Spokane, they started a family, and she pursued her interest in environmental advocacy with the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency.

Stephanie's focus is on educational outreach for children and youth. The agency itself has been involved in air quality education with schools since they began their work more than 50 years ago.

During May, the agency is launching a "Clean Air Month" Poster Contest for children in K-6. The theme is: "Healthy Air Is Important to Everyone."

She sent information to educators to invite participation. The agency did not do the poster contest last year because of COVID, but previously held the contest in 2018 and 2019.



Stephanie May worked with child in 2017 pre-COVID.

Photo courtesy of Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency

Stephanie is working through contacts at Spokane Public Schools and Mead Public Schools. She sends a newsletter to educators and it is also in the agency newsletter, "On the Air."

The Clean Air Agency also partners with Spokane EnviroKids, a cooperative program of Spokane County's Regional Solid Waste Agency, Stormwater Utility and Water Resources, the Regional Clean Air Agency, the Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Aquifer Joint Board, the City of Spokane Solid Waste Department and Water Department, the National Weather Service, the Library District and more to explore the many aspects of the environment—air, water, weather, garbage, recycling, plants and animals.

"We have scheduled events and had to continually push them back because of COVID. Normally we do programs at the public libraries with different agencies doing different activities," she said.

For example, the Regional Solid Waste System did a project on recycled paper, and the Conservation District led a project on painting with soil.

"We had children make particle catchers they could take home to see the air quality in their homes," Stephanie said. "We made them by cutting circles out of paper and covering those holes with double-sided tape to catch things floating in the air that they might not otherwise see.

"It's a good way for kids to grasp the concept of dust, pet hair and other things bigger than microscopic air particles," she said. "The kids observe themselves."

In October 2020, EnviroKids

worked with the Spokane Joint Aquifer Board to offer a Virtual Science Fair Extravaganza with agency partners offering "booths" with activities.

Participants could go to different booths and do different activities.

"It filled a gap left when it was no longer possible to offer science fairs in elementary school gyms, where students would visit different tables and do activities," she said.

"It's a way to continue to reach out to do environmental education," Stephanie said.

The Virtual Science Fair Extravaganza continues as a resource at <https://sajblearning.org> with "booths" on Aqua Duck, building an aquifer at home, inspiring artists, meeting scientists on KSPS-PBS, master composting, recycling, weather, conservation, water, EnviroKids, clean air, solid waste, being water wise, the aquifer, science and food sense.

She said the Clean Air Agency also envisions activities children can do on their own through the school year, uploading activities as the agency creates them.

There were no plans for a 2021 Earth Day as of mid-March.

Stephanie said the Clean Air Agency also reaches out to offer direct help to high school

students, especially those doing senior projects. The agency has an AirBeam personal air monitor it shares with groups at schools to map the air quality in their homes and schools. It's a hand held sensor that connects to a smart phone. A laser tabulates the air quality to help students see if areas they monitor are clean or polluted.

Five students at Pride Prep are using it now, and a few at Central Valley High School have contacted the agency for information.

Stephanie has also promoted and run the "No-Idle Zone" Program for middle and elementary schools, setting up street signs designating areas where parents come to pick up students, as no-idle zones, to encourage them to turn off their vehicles. About 35 schools are signed up.

"We provide the materials at no cost. They send information home, telling why idling is not good for respiratory health.

"We have seen changes as fewer drivers idle their vehicles," she said.

"Before recent summer forest fires, people didn't always think about air quality," she said. "Seeing smoke in the air, they realized air quality can quickly degrade. Many began to check the air quality index regularly. Education helps the community understand air quality concerns better."

People understand that what they do can have a positive effect on air quality—not idling or biking to work one day a week.

"Small changes can impact air quality," she said.

Each year from November to March, wood heating has a major impact on air quality. The agency runs a wood stove change-out program to help people replace old wood stoves for something more efficient. The 2020-21 grant cycle ran out in February

with the agency having replaced 161 wood stoves, Stephanie said, reducing small particles in the air by 6.45 tons.

The agency's commitment to share the message about clean air includes community outreach to give presentations for faith communities.

With more working from home during COVID, the agency saw impact in what they were able to monitor with fewer cars on the road equating to better air quality.

While not downplaying detrimental effects of the pandemic, it "forced us to make many behavioral changes that can have a positive impact on the environment, many of which we might have thought were impossible or unreasonable—combining errands into fewer car trips, tele-working and using less disposable products," Stephanie said. "These are behaviors we hope will continue once the pandemic is over."

She urges people to reflect on behavioral changes to decide which ones are worth continuing and then do them.

For information, call 477-4727 or visit spokanecleanair.org.

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The Black Lens and Terrain collaborate to do health education through the arts

The Black Lens independent newspaper and Terrain, a non-profit building community and opportunity for artists, collaborated from January to March to commission artists for "Create Health," a project to raise awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on the Black community and other communities of color.

The Department of Health provided a grant to The Black Lens, said editor Sandy Williams, to develop new ways to reach the Black community and communities of color with health messages related to COVID.

Artists created poetry, graphics and visual op-eds published in The Black Lens, images that were projected on buildings around town and a "COVID Crusaders" comic book.

The culmination of the project on March 15 was an event that drew 100 masked people to the parking lot at 244 W. Main. There they viewed the Black Lives Matter mural that was painted during a few weeks in June and July on a downtown building.

The program included projections of visual art onto that building, including the published art and a review of the mural's development, mixed with health messages.

"The art contained COVID-friendly messages targeting the Black community," said Ginger Ewing, executive director of Terrain, which is both an art and events organization.

"We began with art in the January Black Lens, including a visual op-ed and a poem," she said.

The February issue in Black History Month included more art and poetry, information on the website on resources and art events related to COVID, along with a "rack card," created for the Black community by the Department of Health and distributed to Black businesses who partnered with Create Health to provide information to their customers.

They also developed a website, createhealthspokane.com, that presents health information, artists' background, future events, and data underscoring how disproportionately the Black community was affected



Small crowd watch projections on Black Lives Matter mural.

Photo courtesy of The Black Lens

by COVID-19.

Ginger said Terrain and The Black Lens commissioned a digital artist who was in Spokane as an artist-in-residence with Laboratory Spokane. Sarah Turner from Portland, Ore., used her skill in "projection mapping and coding," taking large-scale imagery and projecting it on buildings.

"We gave her imagery from the 16 artists who created the mural and from 10 other artists in the Create Health project. Sarah embedded the images in the mural," Ginger said.

The March 15 event used art to share the message in a new way.

Other participating organizations were the NAACP Spokane, providing refreshments, and Spokane Community Against Racism, which projected images on another building to draw attention to "Our Stolen Sisters."

"It gave me hope to feel there is momentum and that we can all work together to create the change we need," said Ginger.

The comic books not only went to The Black Lens mail subscribers, but also to businesses and were handed out at a vaccine clinic held March 13 by The NATIVE Project in collaboration with the NAACP

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www.spokanecity.org/wastereductionclasses

For more information call 625-6580 or go to
www.spokanecountysolidwaste.org

Partial funding provided by WA State Dept of Ecology.

Week-long event provides overview of impact of nuclear weapons, waste

Continued from page 1

On Tuesday, three speakers—Twa-le Abrahamson-Swan of the SHAWL (Sovereignty Health Air Water Land) Society, Samantha Redheart of the Environmental Restoration and Waste Management program of the Yakama Nation, and Trisha Pritkin of Consequences of Radiation Exposure—told how U.S. nuclear programs affected the Spokane and Yakama tribes, and people living near Hanford.

In addition, the Rev. Senji Kaneada, a Buddhist monk, and Emma Belcher, president of the Ploughshares Fund, connected concerns to the peace movement.

Francine Anmontha Malieitua of the Marshall Islands National Nuclear Commission connected the speakers.

The session opened with a video of Deb Abrahamson, who died Jan. 1, speaking at Indigenous People's Day, telling of her life as a warrior for justice against the Midnite Mine's uranium contamination that caused the cancer that took her life at 66.

Uranium from the mine was processed at Hanford for the bombs tested in the Marshall Islands. People in those sites suffer similar cancers and illnesses.

Deb's daughter Twa-le, Samantha and Trisha continue to tell their stories and educate about the effects of nuclear production from people exposed to radiation and toxins from mining uranium through nuclear waste that contaminates the lands and waters of the Yakama Nation and affect people living downwind of Hanford. That facility also produced the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Twa-le, former air quality specialist with the Spokane Tribe of Indians and is a River Warrior, is committed to "share our stories and connect our communities."

"When we started organizing it was important to travel with our elders, so I went to meetings with my mother," she said. "We knew the issues would last generations. It's important to have young people involved in organizing because even as progress is made, it will take time."

"In the last few years we saw some deregulation. The impact will be ongoing, so we need to stay in touch with each other," she said.

Samantha, who has been on the technical staff of the Confederated Yakama Nation's environmental program since 2009, not only keeps people informed on cleanup at Hanford but also educates Yakama youth in science, law and STEM.

"Hanford is a multigenerational challenge," she agreed. "Because we are impacted, the Yakama nation has strict cleanup guidelines. The Columbia River must be protected. Our homeland cannot be a sacrifice zone to nuclear waste. The Yakama Nation Treaty of 1855 cannot be abrogated by the Department of Energy (DOE). Local communities can participate virtually in public meetings, as work continues to protect Yakama cultural sites."

The DOE recently tried to reclassify 66 million gallons of high-level waste at Hanford as low-level. That would contaminate the Columbia River. She summarized decades of progress removing millions of tons of



David Anitok, co-founder and director of COFA Alliance National Network, and Telenja David, pastor of the Spokane Marshallese United Church of Christ.

contaminated soil, treating millions of gallons of ground water, cocooning six reactors, demolishing hundreds of buildings and removing two old test reactors, but said there is more to do.

A video, "A Future Worth Fighting For," suggested options for action at Columbiariverkeeper.org.

Transitioning to the next speaker, Francine affirmed: "We stand with all who are affected by nuclear wastes."

Trisha, an attorney, has worked for more than 30 years for justice for those who, like her family, lived downwind from Hanford—and other Manhattan projects and Cold War nuclear weapons production and testing sites. Many suffer with or have died from radiogenic cancers and illnesses from exposure.

Her 2020 book, *The Hanford Plaintiffs: Voices from the Fight for Atomic Justice*, introduces the stories of 24 personal injury plaintiffs in litigations filed by people injured because of Hanford's decades of secret offsite radiation releases. The stories provide real-life illustration of the devastation to health and life from exposure to the fallout from production, testing and use of nuclear weapons.

In 2005, Trisha formed a nonprofit, Consequences of Radiation Exposure, as a voice for populations around the world exposed to ionizing radiation.

Born and raised in Richland, the community closest to Hanford, she said that "in utero, in infancy and in childhood, I was exposed to the airborne radioactive byproducts of plutonium production." She ingested it with milk products in her vulnerable years, but did not learn about exposure until 1988, after being sick for years. She suffers from autoimmune thyroiditis (hashimotos), hypothyroidism and hypo-parathyroidism.

"We are not alone," Trisha

said. "We are more powerful when we raise our voices in solidarity. This is the first time I have ever been to an event that brings so many groups together. This event is visionary."

Trisha is glad that Medicaid and children's health insurance have been reinstated by the COFA for Marshallese in the U.S., but people in the islands have no cancer care specialist to treat them there.

"I stand in solidarity with Marshallese to achieve nuclear justice that includes: 1) paying claims from the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, 2) providing quality health care for the Marshallese, 3) reducing exposure to radiation in the environment, 4) building national capacity to understand the impacts, and 5) educating people on the nuclear legacy."

"The theme, 'We Are Not Alone,' is important. We are all fallout-exposed civilians—downwinders, Marshallese, other Pacific Islanders and Americans, including uranium miners, millers and transporters, military veterans who observed the tests or came to the cleanup, test site workers and family members of all those groups."

"We have been disrespected, disregarded and mistreated by the U.S. government that exposed us without regard for our welfare or notifying us of the dangers we faced," she said.

Trisha called those affected to stay informed of their interconnection, be aware their exposure is the legacy of the U.S. nuclear weapons program, seek compensation and form a Frontline Community Advisory Group to unify all exposed groups for nuclear justice. She also called for creating a unified online archive of stories telling the impact of fallout on people.

Francine reaffirmed, "We need to stand together and share our stories."

Senji of the Nipponzan Myo-

hoji Temple Buddhist Order on Bainbridge Island has been engaged in the anti-nuclear, peace, non-violence, social justice and environmental movement worldwide for many years. He has organized and participated in many peace walks, connecting with nuclear frontline communities.

He joined peace marches at the Nevada Test Site and at the Bremerton Nuclear Base with people of all races and religions.

"Human beings need to walk and pray together to stop nuclear weapons," said Senji, who was born in 1963 on Kyushu Island where Nagasaki is. His parents, who were teachers and peace activists, took him in August 1989 to visit the museum in Nagasaki. Scared and shocked by what he saw, he joined an annual peace conference with people from Africa, Europe and America, people of more skin colors than he had ever seen in his village.

"Now, I live in Washington State where the bomb dropped on Nagasaki was produced," he said, adding that he hopes to coordinate peace marches with the Spokane Tribe and downwinders, because "people of diverse backgrounds should walk, pray and act together."

Emma, former advisor in Australia's National Security Department and International Affairs and former staff with the Australian embassy in Washington, D.C., added perspectives from work with Ploughshares.

"Pacific communities, indigenous people and people of color are most impacted by nuclear weapons but policy debate is dominated by abstract, technical ideas on strategy and systems," she said. "It's easy to overlook the human toll, especially on those disproportionately affected."

"Ploughshares values equity and justice as we address humanitarian consequences and real world impact of nuclear weapons. Voices of Pacific Islanders and other communities are essential in the debate to craft better, saner policies, said Emma, who grew up in Australia and was outraged as a teen about French atmospheric testing in the

Pacific. "It led me to seek a more just, peaceful, and safer world free of nuclear weapons."

"We need to increase support for disarmament and build a movement of people committed to eliminate nuclear weapons," she said. "COVID has shone light on the need to reassess U.S. national security policy that spends hundreds of billions each year in defense."

Ploughshares Fund seeks to redefine national security to focus human needs not weapons.

Wednesday's session included speakers from the National Association of Atomic Veterans, the Navajo Nation, Pacific Association for Radiation survivors, the Tularosa Basin Downwinders and Children of Atomic Veterans.

On Thursday, filmmaker Brian Cowden shared his video, "Voices: Our Water World on Fire." Speakers included Giff Johnson, editor of the Marshall Islands Journal, Marshallese people in Arkansas, and descendants of Enewetak and Bikini.

Friday's session focused on Enewetak cleanup veterans.

Saturday celebrated the COFA Medicaid restoration and included statements by Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, Washington Rep. Rick Larsen, and Washington State Rep. Marcus Ricelli. They also honored journalists who have helped Marshallese tell their stories in media and videos.

Students Leimama Wase and Lilly Adams led a discussion on priorities: 1) health care access, 2) cleanup and environmental remediation/climate change solutions, and 3) compensation.

They discussed the need to 1) have medical facilities in the islands, 2) train Marshallese doctors, 3) care for veterans silenced for years and now suffering health issues, 4) clean up radiation so people can grow food and eat the fish, and 5) curb rising sea levels to protect the Runit Dome over nuclear waste on the Bikini Atoll.

For information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/CAN-NWashington> to see all the programs and to follow future actions.

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Local farm renamed Vinegar Flats Farm

Local farm changes its name from Urban Eden to Vinegar Flats Farm to clearly state they are in the Spokane city limits.

The farm was named "Urban Eden Farm" 15 years ago by a woman who lived on the farm to say it was an "urban eden."

"In conversation with our customers at farmers' markets, we were always explaining that the farm is located in the Vinegar Flats neighborhood of Southwest Spokane," said owner, Jim Schrock. "It only makes sense that we make the unique neighborhood name part of the farm's name."

In 2015, he registered the trade name, Vinegar Flats Farm, with the State of Washington's

Department of Licensing and claimed the website Vinegar-FlatsFarm.com, before then, anticipating a name change.

Jim and the farm manager, Tarawyn Waters, decided to finalize the name change before the 2021 growing season.

"We have some big things going on this year and wanted to cement that name before the transition," Jim said. "We're doubling the size of our CSA this year from last year's record number."

CSA is shorthand for Community Supported Agriculture, which is typically a weekly or bi-weekly share of vegetables in season.

For the third year, the farm will have its Saturday morning farmstand.

It is also working on its organic certification.

"While we've been using organic methods for years, we haven't been certified," he said. "We haven't used herbicides, pesticides or other 'cides,'" he said.

This year they will start a transition to a "no till" philosophy and practice which he and Tarawyn believe will improve the health of the soil so they can grow even better vegetables on the historic farmland.

Jim invites people to become part of the farm's community by visiting the farm, eating the food they grow and coming to volunteer.

For information, visit VinegarFlatsFarm.com.

YWCA names new CEO

The YWCA Spokane's board of directors announced in March that Jeanette Hauck, interim CEO since August 2020, would begin serving as the agency's new chief executive officer immediately.

Jeanette has 10 years of experience as part of the agency's executive team, starting in 2011 as director of finance and serving since 2014 as chief financial officer. In that role, she led the organization from a staff of 60 to a team of more than 90 employees.

She is dedicated to advocating for women, youth and children. Her 30 years of nonprofit work include serving as director of finance for the Institute for Drug Development and the Cancer Therapy and Research Center in San Antonio.

A native of Colorado, Jeanette earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from the University of Denver and is a certified public accountant.

She has started a roundtable discussion series, "Pathways Forward," discussing topics related to the YWCA Spokane's work and mission.

For information, visit ywcaspokane.org.

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James Lowe returns from Scotland to conduct spring concert series

Rather than traveling around the world to conduct concerts—from Osaka to Trondheim, Moscow to Indianapolis—Spokane Symphony’s music director and conductor James Lowe spent the pandemic year in Scotland living near the parents of his wife, Charlotte, in the hamlet of Bedrule in Southeast Scotland, where she has lived 40 years.

The year included their wedding between lockdowns during August in a small garden gathering there.

“In Scotland, lockdowns were early, strict and long,” James said, noting that kept them in one place, reconnecting with nature and relating with her parents in the isolated village looking over green hillsides, an ancient church and castle ruins near the border with England.

“I spent a year in one place for the first time since I was 18,” he said. “It was a good place to be in the pandemic, because it’s in the least populated part of Scotland with no neighbors and countryside right outside.”

The first strawberry last spring was picked and cut in quarters for his in-laws, wife and him to share and relish.

James grew up in Lowdhan outside Nottingham in central England. Since graduating from the University of Edinburgh, he has traveled and lived all over the world, including Boston and Berlin. He started with the Spokane Symphony in 2019 after serving Vaasa City Orchestra in Finland. The 75-year-old Spokane Symphony is his focus now.

In 2020, he virtually conducted the Spokane Symphony’s New Year’s Eve Concert from Scotland—still available online—and guest conducted the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with which he was previously associate conductor, for an online concert.

His interest in classical music came at the age of eight in a village primary school assembly, when he heard a recording of the William Tell Overture by Rossini—the “Lone Ranger” theme.

He bought a record and played it until it wore out, not realizing it was part of a whole genre of music—classical. He also sang in



James Lowe will also return later in 2021.

Photo courtesy of Spokane Symphony

the choir at the village’s Anglican Church, that dated from 1154.

During lockdown, James sang with the virtual choir of the Episcopal Church of Scotland in Melrose 15 miles from his home.

“I would record to a pre-recorded click track, and someone would edit the singers’ recordings together. It’s different from music making,” he said.

In a recent conversation with him, Kristina Ploeger-Hekmatpanah, the Symphony Chorale’s director, commented that “singing to a metronomic click track rather than being in a room and sensing how people are breathing is not the same as music-making.”

“Digital is better than nothing, but it does not replace live,” said James, appreciating now working with the live, smaller, distanced, masked Spokane Symphony to film music “audiences” can watch on their TV screens at home.

After flying to Seattle and spending two weeks quarantining there, he is in Spokane on a National Interest Exemption that allowed his entry for eight weeks to record five digital concerts with five themes for a series of Spring Concerts.

“We are on the stage in small groups following strict COVID regulations related to the number on stage, six feet apart for strings and percussion and nine feet apart for woodwinds and brass players, who remove masks only to play. All others are masked all the time,” James said. “We also have testing twice a week.”

The orchestra rehearses 45 minutes and then takes a half hour break—keeping social distance.

moment, while classical music seeks to produce a good reproduction of the same music,” he said. “Folk music tells a story.”

James said the first of the five concerts, which will be available on-demand, starting Friday, April 2, will examine folk roots of classical music. Themes of other concerts are “Classical Perfection,” “Individualism,” “Light,” and “Heaven and Earth.”

James said the concerts are a mix of music and ideas as he chats with orchestra musicians and local experts from other disciplines on how the themes relate to their field and the music selections.

For example, for the first episode, Spokane’s Poet Laureate and orchestra trumpeter Chris Cook will read a Czech folk tale to set the scene for Dvořák’s “Serenade for Winds,” and an Emily Dickinson poem that sets the atmosphere for the fourth episode on the theme of “Light.”

Anya Rasmussen of the Washington State University physics and astronomy department in Pullman, will also talk in that episode about the science of light.

In the second program, Museum of Arts and Culture executive director Wes Jessup will discuss how the meaning “classical” is different in art and music.

Spokane Falls Community College’s chair of the philosophy department Britni Weaver Forsman will talk with James on individualism.

Full lists of the music in each episode and how to listen are at the Spokane Symphony website.

James returns to Scotland in May, and will return to Spokane later in 2021 to work with the symphony as state COVID phases advance to allow the orchestra to perform live in the Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox.

“I love Spokane. Pre-pandemic it was a rich, diverse musical

landscape. In COVID, music was the first to shut down and last to open, so musicians have suffered. Many symphony members were furloughed. We have a skeleton office staff on reduced hours and the orchestra is back at a limited percentage of work,” James said.

“Orchestras have relied on patronage of donors since before Bach. Most rely 60 to 70 percent on donors, but because the Spokane Symphony owns The Fox, it relies 60 to 70 percent on earning income by hiring out the Fox, booking other artists and people paying to attend symphonies,” he explained.

“It has been a blow. We lost \$4 million, but took the first round of the PPP loan/grants and are looking at the second round,” James pointed out. “Donors have been phenomenal in sticking by us. People love the Spokane Symphony and want to keep the institution alive and thriving into the future. Donations are not far behind a normal year.”

At the start of the pandemic, the Spokane Symphony started the Musicians Emergency Relief Fund, raising \$100,000 in two weeks. While some musicians play in other orchestras or teach, many have faced financial stress, James said.

For information, email information@foxtheaterspokane.com or visit spokanesymphony.org.

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2021 Benefit speakers invite support for Fig Tree turning words to action

Comments of seven of 14 speakers at the Fig Tree Benefits are quoted below. Others will be in May. Share videos at thefigtree.org/Benefit2021videos.html.

Gretchen Rehberg, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

When I served a congregation in the Lewis and Clark Valley, I thought The Fig Tree and Resource Directory were about Spokane, but I realized they helped us make connections with what faith communities are doing together to transform the world to justice.



Making connections is vital. Going Beyond Words Doing Justice is not possible without connections. Alone, I believe my way is the right way and people should listen to me. We need connections to build community so every voice is heard. We all need to hear all voices, connect people of faith, justice and action to live into justice.

I am grateful that the Fig Tree, Legislative Conference and Resource Directory help us do the justice we need in the world.

Peggy Troutt, Calvary Soup Kitchen founder and educator

I attribute the success we have had at Calvary Baptist's feeding program to connections people have from reading The Fig Tree. People came to the Soup Kitchen to donate and volunteer because of The Fig Tree.



I also volunteer to deliver The Fig Tree.

I have lived in Spokane 35 years. When I go places, The Fig Tree is there.

When I worked for the School District, tutoring high school kids, I took the resource directory. If someone wanted something more than homework help, I looked in the Resource Directory and found what they needed—many places I did not know existed.

It doesn't matter who you are, what ethnicity you are or what changes you, we need to have faith, go to The Fig Tree.

Carla Peperzak - Holocaust survivor



I was 16 when Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940. I had an ID without a J for Jewish, so I worked with the Dutch underground and helped 40 people find hiding places. After the war, I met my husband, came to the U.S. and never talked about the Holocaust. It was painful, but difficult to forget.

I moved to Spokane in 2004 and was invited to talk in schools. It was very difficult. I still do that on Zoom because there is need in middle, high schools and universities. It is important to learn about the Holocaust.

I am grateful to talk about it so it will not happen again. People can easily get brainwashed as they have been now. Germany was the most educated culturally advanced society, so it was amazing that it could happen. Some people want easy solutions.

Mary interviewed me several times and wrote good articles in The Fig Tree. The Fig Tree shares stories effectively and affirms the credibility of experiences.

Toby Hallowitz - naturopath

In Coeur d'Alene and Spokane, I operate an integrative health care clinic, emphasizing a return to nature and holistic healing



looking at ways to bring balance to the body. The Fig Tree did an article on working with the community to help people restore balance. We all go through emotional turmoil with politics. Many live in fear. It's hard to find the will and what reserves to pull on. We lean on the community in times of need and lean on nature for us to heal from divisiveness.

I see people in the community on the left and right. People care. Patients have divisive views but I seek to increase both community and love of outdoors and nature.

The Fig Tree is more than words on pages, helping people connect and share, to see the interconnection of the world, family, communities and nature. It gives a holistic look at what is out of balance and tries to balance it.

Susan Hales - community activist



I have long recognized The Fig Tree's role in bringing people together to create a community of diversity with respect. It makes the community better, moving people beyond words to act on social justice.

When I worked with Refugee Connections, we partnered with the Resource Directory to translate portions in five languages to make resources accessible

so more people could live better. I was grateful to work for that cause for justice.

The Fig Tree continues to work for justice in many ways. Recently it did an article on my work with the League of Women Voters to translate the 2020 ballots into guides refugees and immigrants could use as they filled out their ballots.

Kurtis Robinson - NAACP Spokane first vice president

The Fig Tree is a vital partner to reach the community. The newspaper, resource guide and legislative conference are vital. It is a consistent, willing partner, providing meaningful interaction on race and personal relationships.



It is the best cross-class, cross-racial partner.

Dale Soden, professor of history at Whitworth University

It's a different newspaper with a range and depth. Stories reveal fighting for justice for people on the margins, individuals active in faith to make the world a better place. It records the history of religious activism in the Northwest. Although we live in the least church area of the U.S., with The Fig Tree we realize so many are shaping the region.



In these times, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and lose sight of how important it is to maintain a sense of hope. The Fig Tree helps us maintain a sense of hope. People matter.



Asian-American high school teen speaks out at Stop the Hate Vigil

Rosie Zhou, a senior at Ferris High School and a local Asian-American activist and leader, helped to organize the Stop Asian Hate Vigil March 20 in Spokane. She is involved in incorporating more Asian-American history into school curriculum.

In addition, Rosie is active in Sunrise Spokane, a youth-led organization working on climate change and environmental justice issues. At Ferris, she is part of the Black Student Union and in the community, she is a student ambassador for the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area.

When I first learned about the shooting on Tuesday night in Atlanta, I felt numb. Like I couldn't process what I was seeing on my phone screen, I couldn't believe, or maybe didn't want to believe, what I was seeing. I had trouble sleeping that night, I couldn't stop picturing horrific images in my head and thinking about the fact that this happened, that eight people were now dead, eight lives lost—six of them being Asian American women. For what? For simply going to work that day? For working and striving to create better lives for their families, for being Asian American?

The next morning, when I woke up I immediately checked the news, only to be disappointed and angered. Here were all of these articles, showing the murderer's face, describing his life—his hobbies, his passions, his strong ties to his church, even his grandparents' descriptions about him. So this murderer was being humanized—suggesting that we needed to empathize with him.

Then came the part that really made my blood boil—the video of the Cherokee police officer talking about the shooter—saying “He was pretty much fed up, at the end of his rope and this was a very bad day for him, and this is what he did.”

A bad day for him? For him? What about the eight people who lost their lives? Does him having a bad day mean he can take the lives of eight innocent people? Does him having a bad day mean he can target Asian women because of his supposed “sexual addiction,” which, by the way, in and of itself reflects on the history of U.S. imperialism in Asian countries, the dehumanization of Asian women, and the fetishization of Asian women.

It is saddening that in America, a white man went out and intentionally took the lives of Asian women, then had his actions justified and attributed to him having a bad day, and was not even said to have committed a hate crime. Why? Because he didn't explicitly tell the police that he was targeting Asians?? Well, his murders speak louder than his words.

When I started learning the stories of the victims, I think that's when the numbness finally started to wear off, replaced with pure grief. These women had families, they had desires and dreams for the future, they were kind and loving and beautiful and resilient. They, like so many other Asian immigrants, came to America, filled with hope and a desire to create better lives for their children.

Now I'd like to share the stories of Xiaojie Tan and Hyung Jung Grant, who were both killed in Atlanta on Tuesday. We do not need to humanize the murderer, we need to humanize these women and remember them forever.

That day was the day before Xiaojie Tan's 50th birthday. Her family in China were gathering to celebrate her birthday. Her mother kept on asking if she could talk to her daughter on the phone but her family didn't want to tell her that her daughter had been killed, because they were worried it would make her sick. So they cut a slice of cake and told her that



Rosie Zhou speaks at vigil.

Photo courtesy of Rosie Zhou

her daughter couldn't come to the phone.

Xiaojie was an immigrant from Nanning, China. She opened her spa in America and was described as the sweetest person, she housed her own workers and had a cake ready for her customers on their birthdays. She and her daughter, Jami, were best friends. They soon planned on celebrating her 50th birthday with a slice of fresh strawberry cream cake.

Jami said, “She did everything for me and for the family. She provided everything. She worked every day, 12 hours a day, so that me and our family would have a better life.” She had dreams of traveling the world.

When I read about Xiaojie, I immediately thought of my own family: my mom and I here in America, and my aunt and grandma in China. My grandma messaged us a few days ago telling us to be extra cautious, she didn't want us to get hurt.

Hyung Jung Grant was a 51 year old Korean American. She was a single mom, raising two sons. Her son Randy said that she lived a life of work and not much else to support their small family. He said that they were best friends and he could talk to her about anything. She loved disco music

and she loved to dance. She was full of energy and joy, described by her son as a “big kid.” Eleven days ago, Randy and his mother had danced around together and laughed to music. It would be the last time they would. Asked what he would say to his mom today, Park said, “You did a good job. You've done enough and finally get some sleep and rest.”

Now, I would like for us to say the names of the eight victims together, to remember them and honor them. I would also like for us to say the names of two Asian American elders, Vichy Ratanapakdee and Pak Ho, who were killed in recent months due to anti-Asian sentiments.

I'd also like for us to say the names of two Asian American men who were killed by police. Christian Hall and Angelo Quinto.

Soon Chung Park
Hyun Jung Grant
Sooncha Kim
Young Ae Yue
Xiaojie Tan
Daoyou Feng
Delaina Ashley Yaun
Paul Andre Michels
Vicha Ratanapakdee
Pak Ho
Christian Hall
Angelo Quinto

To these 12 kind, beautiful souls, may you forever rest in peace and power. You will never be forgotten, your Asian American brothers and sisters from all around the country will carry you in our hearts forever and carry on your spirits. We will speak up for you, we will stand up together, united, against anti-Asian racism and violence, we will NOT let your deaths be in vain.

Rosie's speech will be published online at thefigtree.org with speeches of Ping Ping and Jasmine Meredith.

Calendar of Events

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Mar 31</p> <p>Mar 31</p> <p>Apr 1</p> <p>Apr 2</p> <p>Apr 3</p> <p>Apr 5</p> <p>Apr 6</p> <p>Apr 6, 7, 28</p> <p>Apr 7</p> <p>Apr 7, 13</p> <p>Apr 7, 27</p> <p>Apr 8, 22</p> <p>Apr 8, 15, 22, 29</p> <p>Apr 12-18</p> <p>Apr 13, 14</p> <p>Apr 14</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build Back Fossil Free: Chase Bank, 350 Spokane and Sunrise, 601 W Main Ave. Ste 100, info@350spokane.org, 3 to 4 p.m., https://actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-chase-bank-2 • Build Back Fossil Free: Oil Trains, 350 Spokane and Sunrise, University District Gateway Bridge, info@350spokane.org, 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-oil-trains-2 • Build Back Fossil Free: Wells Fargo, 601 W. 1st Ave., 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-oil-trains-2 • Spokane Symphony on-demand Spring Concerts start, spokanesymphony.org • Build Back Fossil Free: Bank of America, 601 W. 1st Ave., 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-bank-of-america-2/ • "Sometimes Heroes: America's Changing Relationship with Its Veterans," Jeb Wyman, faculty at Seattle Central College examines America's relationship to wars and veterans in the last century, Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • "Taking a Seat at the Table: Bridging the Network Gap," Unity Multicultural Education Center, online event, gonzaga.campuslabs.com, 4:30 to 6 p.m., panel on bridging BIPOC/underrepresented students and the professional world on career options • "From Crime to the Classroom: How Education Changes Lives," Omari Amili, author and community leader, on the benefits of college education for formerly incarcerated people, 1 p.m. Tuesday or 2 p.m. Wednesday, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • Morning Prayer, "Easter Reflections on Bishop Daly's Pastoral Letter, The Most Holy Eucharist," St. Mary's Parish, 9 a.m. to noon, 448-1224 ext 100, ihrc.net • Transitions Education Renovation Reveal, on Zoom, 4:30 p.m., EduCare's program director is doing virtual walk-through of the EduCare remodeled facility, help4women.org • "Civil Conversation in an Angry Age," David Smith, religious studies at University of Washington, 2:30 p.m. on 7th and 1 p.m., 13th, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • "What's Age Got to Do with It?" Dori Gillam, Northwest Center for Creative Aging, 6 p.m. on 7th, 10:30 a.m. on 27th, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • Showing up for Racial Justice, videoconference, 5:30 to 7 p.m., slichty@pjals.org • The Lands Council tree planting on Marshall Creek site from 3 to 5:30 p.m. Faith Action Network will be planting April 15 at 1 p.m., landscouncil.org. • "Get Lit! Literary Arts Festival," Downtown Spokane, 10 S. Howard, Virtual Festival on YouTube, with week of readings, lectures, interviews, workshops, panels, poetry slams, writing contests, book signings and visits by authors to schools, links and details at https://inside.ewu.edu/getlit/festival/ • "Is Truth Really Dead in America?" Steven Stehr, professor in civic education at Washington State University, 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, 1 p.m., Wednesday, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • "From Mexican to Mexican-American: A Family Immigration Story," Carlos Gil, professor, 10:30 and 6:30 p.m., Spokane Community College, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? | <p>Apr 14</p> <p>Apr 15</p> <p>Apr 17-24</p> <p>Apr 19</p> <p>Apr 19-22</p> <p>Apr 21</p> <p>Apr 22</p> <p>Apr 22, 28</p> <p>Apr 24</p> <p>Apr 28</p> <p>Apr 29</p> <p>Apr 30-May 2</p> <p>Apr 30-May 9</p> <p>May 5</p> <p>May 6</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> events/2021-04/? • "Resilience, Resistance and Renewal," Open Mic Poetry gathering, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), 7 p.m., pjals.org • "The Future Is Now: Creative Expressions of Church," Ignite the Church Conference 2021, online 11 a.m., ignitechurch.net • "Tangled: Why Your Hair Matters to Society," University of Washington professor Anu Taranath, noon, humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • Peace and Justice Action Committee, Zoom, 7 p.m., amurillo@pjals.org • Virtual Spring Compost Fair, sign up at spokanecity.org/wastereduction classes, 625-6580 • Clean Air Month Poster Contest deadline, spokaneleanair.org • Symposium on Sino-Christian Architecture, Whitworth, Zoom, 8 a.m. • "Heating Up: The Ethics of Climate Change," Brian Henning, professor of philosophy and environmental studies at Gonzaga University, 11:15 a.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • Chertok Lecture Series, Eastern Washington University, Kathleen Belew, University of Chicago historian, "The White Power Movement," lectures 1 to 2:30 p.m. on zoom, collins3@ewu.edu, https://www.ewu.edu/campus-events/ • "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Principal's Office?" Daudi Abe, professor and historian, 1 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • "Contemporary Issues of Feminist Research: From Classroom to Community," Mujeres in Action, noon, Zoom, llogan83@ewu.edu • Earth Day Launch of Gonzaga's Center for Climate, Society and the Environment, Live Stream, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., gonzaga.edu/climatecenter • Earth Day Virtual Vigil for the Healing of the Earth," 6 to 7:30 p.m., FLLConscience@gmail.com for Zoom link • "Higher Power: The History of Evangelicals in American Politics," Matthew Sutton, professor of history at Washington State University, 6:30 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • "Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion," Clarence Moriawaki, president of Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community," Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, 1 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04/? • 2021 Northwest Intermountain Synod Assembly for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on Zoom, nwimsynod.org/2021assembly-about • Spokane Walk to Defeat ALS, Riverfront Park, 11 a.m., http://webwa.alsa.org • GrassRoots Organizing Workshop (GROW), PJALS, 7 p.m., pjals.org • Habitat for Humanity-Spokane Hope Builders Virtual Lunch-In, noon, habitat-spokane.org • "Rooted in Love," Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ Annual Meeting, online, https://bit.ly/2MHi5VW • Bloomsday Worldwide 2021: A Virtual Race, https://www.bloomsdayrun.org • Fig Tree Mailing and Distribution, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct • The Fig Tree Development, noon, and Board, 1 p.m., Zoom, 535-1813 |
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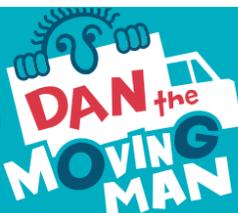


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- 350 Spokane, Silver Valley Community Resource Center
- Solar Acres Farm, Responsible Growth NE Washington
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Habitat Lunch-In raises support for rising number of future homeowners

Building on their 2020 effort to pivot quickly to a virtual, safe annual Hope Builders fundraising event, Habitat for Humanity Spokane is applying what they learned to their 2021 event to keep people's attention and inform them of the unique needs in the COVID pandemic housing crisis.

Michelle Girardot, executive director of Habitat-Spokane, said they appreciate the energy of gathering friends, but online is the safest way for now.

The Hope Builders Virtual Lunch-In will be at noon, Thursday, April 29, accessible online at habitat-spokane.org.

Michelle outlined today's crisis in affordable housing and homeownership. Pre-pandemic, Habitat-Spokane had 12 qualified families. Now there are 48, with three or four new families entering the homeownership program each month.

"A 400 percent increase of applications by families for homeownership makes it clear why dollars are so important now," she said. "We hope to accommodate them."

"There was a housing shortage and crisis before the pandemic, but the pandemic has added challenges with the volatility of the housing market, decrease in the number of houses available and the increase in costs of building in terms of both labor and materials, making it hard to provide affordable mortgages," she said.

The Lunch-In seeks to raise \$150,000 from individuals.

While that won't build one home, it will leverage funds to provide down payments for 15 families, Michelle said.

It will also leverage funds from partners like the City of Spokane Community Block Grant Funds, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines through Banner Bank locally, the Self-Help Home Ownership Opportunity Program Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds, and private foundation grants, as well



Soon-to-be homeowners: Rachel and Ike, and their two children, have been in Habitat's Homeownership Program for a little over a year. They hope to sign their mortgage papers and purchase their affordable Habitat home in the fall.

Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity Spokane

as individual donors.

Habitat-Spokane raises nearly 70 percent of its support from individual donors at the Hope Builders Virtual Lunch-In and giving throughout the year, Michelle said.

"We rely on the Lunch-In as we launch a heavy construction season," she said.

While it may be more impressive to see family testimonials in person, she said families will share what success for them looks like living in Habitat homes during COVID.

"Many Habitat homeowners have said that while life has been hard, it's been their best year because they live in a safe, decent, affordable home, which is a safe place to teach their children," Michelle said.

"Affordable housing and home ownership are not simple," she pointed out. "There are significant barriers to achieve them."

Three leaders will speak at the Lunch-In. Ezra Eckhart, CEO of STCU, will speak on affordable home ownership. City Council Member Betsy Wilkerson will share her desire to provide

the video links to those who pre-register. Those videos include family testimony, a tour of a Habitat home and a ride in a Habitat truck to pick up donations for the store.

The Lunch-In itself will last under an hour. Last year's event drew nearly 500 and Michelle expects more in 2021 because it is accessible.

"Those attending do not need to find parking or shift schedules. They can watch at noon or at their convenience," she said. "We have seen more give in advance when they register."

"Spokane is a caring commu-

nity with a strong philanthropic spirit," she said. "They know problems exist, and they want to be part of the solution. Habitat is a beacon of hope and will be needed more when we emerge from the pandemic."

Looking ahead, she said that in the current phases for vaccine access, construction workers are not listed, even though they are essential.

"Before we deploy volunteers, we want to be sure it is safe to do so," Michelle said.

For information, call 534-2552 or visit habitat-spokane.org to register.

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