

38TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

Stories inside

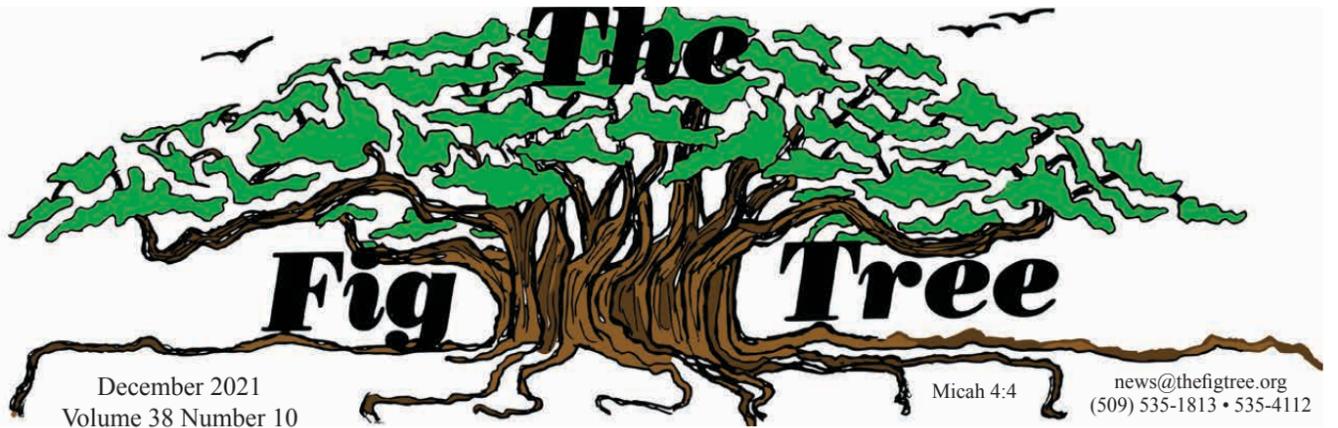
450 join in international conference - p. 7

Human rights awards announced - p. 8-9

Global Neighborhood trains refugees - p. 11

Women's Hearth serves for 30 years - p. 16

**CALENDAR ON PAGE 15
FEATURES 75 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

FAN leader has changed policies, lives

By Mary Stamp

Paul Benz leaves an imprint on the State of Washington in the influence he has had turning priorities of the state's faith communities into laws that improve lives.

Over his 10 years with the Faith Action Network, he has marched with people in the streets and halls of power related to a \$15 minimum wage, farmworker safety, cutting gun violence, addressing climate catastrophes, fighting a Muslim ban, welcoming refugees, declaring that Black lives matter, challenging policies that perpetuate poverty, assuring food security, increasing affordable housing, standing with the voiceless, caring for neighbors, improving health care, reforming immigration policies, caring for children, seniors, women and more.

Through his political savvy, he has promoted compassionate justice.

On Dec. 31, Paul retires, but he intends to continue to advocate for issues, because there is and always will be so much more to do.

"There are two sides to the coin called advocacy," he said of his work for 11 years as executive



Paul Benz visits Spokane church for Fall Cluster meeting.

director of the Lutheran Public Policy Office (LPPO) and 10 years at the co-director of the Faith Action Network of Washington (FAN).

One side of the coin of advocacy is about how well "we care for our neighbors" in terms of feeding, sheltering and visiting the imprisoned—as in Matthew 25—and the other side is being a voice to bring about change in systems on behalf of neighbors who are oppressed and suffering from systemic injustices—as set forth in Exodus 3.

Paul offers this reflection because he is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as well as being a long-time social justice leader addressing numerous issues in FAN's legislative agenda.

Rather than acting alone, Paul combined lobbying and meeting elected officials with organizing faith communities around the state.

He has helped FAN nurture a growing network of Advocating Faith Communities that partner with FAN to advocate in the halls of power. He has traveled around Washington to meet clusters of

Continued on page 4

Book tells how Community Building is building community in Spokane

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

Nestled in the block on W. Main between Division and Browne in downtown Spokane is the Community Building, a complex of five buildings owned by Jim Sheehan, who envisioned them as a hub where nonprofits work during the day, and people come for entertainment, food and night life.

To tell the story of the complex, Summer Hess compiled contributions and edited a book, *One Block Revolution: 20 Years of Community Building*, for the 20th anniversary of the Com-

munity Building.

In a chapter Jim wrote, "The Antidote Is Community," he turns the noun "community building" into a verb.

Formerly a public defender, he inherited an unexpected gift that made it possible to think about giving back to the community.

Considering himself a Zen Catholic—raised and educated Catholic and practicing Zen Buddhism for 30 years—he believes in the mystical arm of Christianity or any faith and is thankful for his "early encounters with Catholic mystics" for

expanding his spirituality.

Guiding his core belief are "experiences of enlightenment" and awareness expressed by Catholic theologian, Thomas Merton, who speaks of all faiths emerging from the same source. From that, Jim struggled with how to engage the world around him, while honoring what he calls the "wisdom of emptiness."

He explained that he wanted to reach out and act "with courage and honesty, and to be present to what is there, to go into silence, to the place there can be no differences between people."

His first goal was to found the Center for Justice, while at the same time look for a building to "translate truth and justice into action," he writes in the book.

From that core set of beliefs and practices, finding the place was kismet. He was driving around looking at buildings and saw a building he was interested in. The owner did not want to sell, but said the owner across the street wanted to sell.

Then Jim walked across the

Continued on page 5

Fr. Pat Conroy is keynote for Legislative Conference

For the 2022 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Saturday, Jan. 22, the keynote speaker is Fr. Pat Conroy, S.J., who has been working with Gonzaga University's Office for Mission and Ministry since he retired as the 60th chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives, serving from 2011 to 2021.

Fr. Pat, along with participants on an interfaith panel and workshop leaders will address the theme, "Mobilizing for Our Future." The conference will be from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., on Zoom as a way to involve more people from faith communities in the Inland Northwest.

An interfaith panel with people from various faiths will tell how their faith communities mobilize for action, what their priority issues are, what challenges they face and how they need solidarity.

Workshops will address the climate crisis, housing and homelessness, food security, refugees, human trafficking, racism and securing democracy.

Advocacy leaders from the Faith Action Network of Washington, the Washington State Catholic Conference and Earth Ministry-Interfaith Power and Light will present issues coming before the 2022 Washington State Legislature of concern to members of faith communities.

The event is organized with by The Fig Tree, Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, Faith Action Network, Earth Ministry, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and NAACP Spokane.

For information, call 535-4112, email event@thefigtree.org or register at <https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/mobilizing-for-our-future/2022-legislative-conference>.

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WCC supports children returning to school

On the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children on Nov. 20, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and other organizations called for schools to reopen to prioritize children's mental health, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. They said that the pandemic magnifies existing economic disparities and shows how inequalities violate children's rights. Millions of students, parents and teachers are digitally illiterate and lack access, depriving them of online education." The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as of mid-October 2021, said 58.7 million students are affected.

They call faith communities to help schools and educators create learning environments sensitive to the social, emotional and the spiritual needs and concerns of children and youth, while responding to changing realities and uncertainties of the pandemic," they said.

The WCC also calls schools to teach about climate change and solutions, and use eco-certified school supplies.

Event explores future of interfaith dialogue

A Dec. 6 to 10 conference at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey will explore "The Future of Interfaith Dialogue" to develop "10 Principles for Common Formation." The principles are based on the idea that interfaith dialogue is best accomplished by encouraging common formation in which people, especially young people, of different faiths learn together with a common goal and, as they learn, discover more about each other.

People from different religions will share perspectives and join in prayer in their own traditions. They will discuss interreligious aspects of the 2022 WCC 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe.

Online events look at 'Missing and Murdered'

Two online events on "Missing and Murdered: Addressing Femicide and Sexual and Gender-based Violence in our Global Context" will look at the shadow pandemic of violence against women as part of 16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence, which is Nov. 25 to Dec. 10.

UN statistics in 2017 show that 87,000 women were killed because of their gender. Of those, 58 percent—137 women a day—were killed by a family member or intimate partner. COVID-19 exacerbates the violence. By September 2020, 121 countries adopted measures to support survivors of violence.

Across the world, churches and community organizations are working to bring change and accompany those affected by femicide, and sexual / gender-based violence. Through online events Nov. 25 and Dec. 2, the WCC, ACT Alliance, Lutheran World Federation, World YWCA and regional partners, sought to raise awareness of missing and murdered women.

'Is racism a faith question?' WCC asks

For a "Dies Academicus" panel discussion, 33 students from 20 countries at the WCC Bossey Ecumenical Institute listened to four panelists discuss "Is racism a faith question?" They reaffirmed the WCC's declaration at its 4th Assembly in Uppsala that racism is a sin. Students shared poetry, prose, news and lyrics for an exhibition on "Talking about racism and other forms of discrimination."

WCC acting general secretary Ioan Saucă said, "This Dies Academicus is an invitation to listen to experiences of racism and racial discrimination. In the ecumenical movement, understanding starts with listening, especially on this topic." He urged students to use their traditions to confront mentalities and practices that perpetrate racial discrimination.

Peter Cruchley, secretary for Mission Development at the Council for World Mission, said attitudes that informed the legacies of slavery continue to shape the collective imagination in global economic and social structures. He called for "confronting the global phenomena of Afro-phobia."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

'Spreading Seeds of Hope' is theme

In a time when justice, peace, health, climate integrity, human dignity and even love seem impossible, The Fig Tree has chosen the theme for its 2022 Benefit Events on Friday, March 4, and Wednesday, March 9, to be "Spreading Seeds of Hope."

Our image is seeds of figs, the fruit of a fig tree.

"We will be celebrating people whose stories we have shared, everyday heroes who make a difference in lives of people, our

communities, our region and the world," said Mary Stamp, editor. "We will be celebrating our 38th year of publishing."

She noted changes over those years—beginning with pasting galley pages on layout pages with wax, typing with a manual, then an electric typewriter.

"I resisted entering the computer age—only the first three years—and since then I spend many hours at a screen, and since COVID even more hours. Not

only do I write and edit on the computer and do all the planning and bookkeeping, but also I now do interviews on Zoom," she said.

Planners are still waiting to see what COVID safety protocols will be and may do one event in person. Part will be online. Organizers seek a videographer and volunteers.

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

German American Christmas service set

The annual German American Christmas service will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 19, at St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave. St. Mark's pastors Lori Cornell and Kate Leppard will

officiate for the service.

The Concordia Choir will perform traditional German Christmas carols for the ecumenical service, which will be in German and English.

After the service, there will be coffee and Christmas cookies at the Deutsches Haus, W. 25 3rd Ave.

For information, call 230-5017 or email easgeos@comcast.net.

PJALS hires new organizer on staff

Jac Archer has joined the staff of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane as an organizer.

A graduate of PJALS' Young Activist Leaders Program, Jac has served on the PJALS Steering Committee and been active in the Spokane Community

Against Racism, Platform for Change coalition and Smart Justice Spokane.

As a student at Eastern Washington University (EWU), Jac served on the Multicultural Coalition from 2015 to 2017, representing the Black Student Union and Scary Feminist Club.

Now, Jac is on the board of Spectrum Center, the City of Spokane Human Rights Commission and the Washington State LGBTQ Commission, along with being the 2021 Activist in Residence at EWU.

For information, call 838-7870.

Winterfest displays celebrate cultures

To brighten up the holiday season, the annual Northwest Winterfest runs this year at the Spokane County Fair and Expo Center from 5 to 9 p.m., seven days a week Nov. 26 to Jan. 2.

It offers a space where people can wander through the ADA-accessible, outdoor path of lighted holiday lantern displays to celebrate the magical holiday season.

It includes a holiday lantern display and a cultural celebration, representing holiday traditions from around the world.

For information, email info@northwestwinterfest.com.

Climate Resiliency Academy begins

The Spokane Climate Resiliency Academy, a four-month, interactive learning environment, is designed to help Spokane community members become active leaders in the sustainability issues and initiatives that shape the city and region.

Through sessions on topics like environmental justice, water, energy and waste, participants will learn sustainability practices and bring this knowledge back to their workplace and peers.

This experience will give community members tools to be agents of change that will serve the community and advance the

goals of social justice, be in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet, said Pat McCormick of 350 Spokane.

The Spokane Climate Resiliency Academy will meet Tuesdays from noon to 1 p.m., Jan. 18 to April 26.

The academy is offering a \$500 honorarium for the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community to participate as a way to acknowledge their sharing their time and energy.

"The hope is to have a pool of participants representing different career focuses and knowledge areas," said Pat. "This would allow for fruitful discussions with different insights and experiences, giving participants a holistic view of what sustainability looks like in Spokane." He invites people to register

and to nominate other people to participate as well.

For information, email montesiml@gmail.com.

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

Deadlines:

COPY - 3rd Fridays ADS - 4th Tuesdays

It is published by The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.

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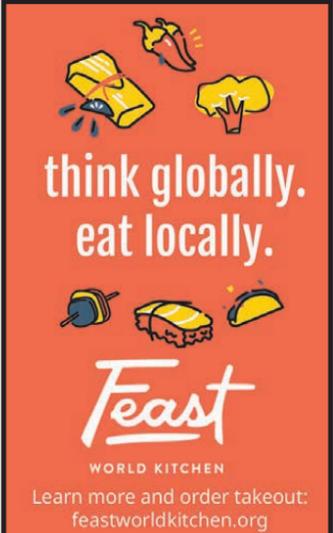
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Habitat-Spokane transfers keys to new homeowner in West Central

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane's transformation of abandoned, derelict homes in the West Central neighborhood celebrates as another future homeowner accepts keys to their safe, decent and affordable home at 11:30 a.m., Friday, Dec. 10.

They will be in their newly rehabilitated home in time for the holidays, said Habitat-Spokane CEO Michelle Girardot.

Habitat for Humanity acquired the home as part of the Derelict Housing Acquisition and Homeownership program, a collaboration between the City of Spokane and Habitat for Humanity to revitalize neighborhoods and increase homeownership opportunities for those experiencing low incomes. "Funded through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Habitat and its partners have focused on acquiring units in neighborhoods at the highest risk for displacement, gentri-



Farrah will receive keys to home volunteers helped him remodel.
Photo courtesy of Habitat-Spokane

fication and lack of affordable homeownership opportunities," she said.

By partnering with the city to identify possible acquisitions, Habitat-Spokane could leverage its volunteer base, sponsors and homebuyer readiness activities to breathe new life into these homes while creating access to

homeownership. Those activities also ensure the homes are affordable at purchase and remain affordable for generations.

"Programs like CDBG are crucial to creating a sustainable future for Spokane by building more affordable homeownership opportunities. Every revitalized 'zombie home,' completed with

partnerships, promises to be an affordable homeownership option now and forever," said Michelle. "Shared equity homeownership programs and revitalizing abandoned properties like these directly correlate with positive job creation and thriving mixed-income neighborhoods."

This home is especially unique, as it was the first home acquired with this partnership.

According to the Federal Reserve, one abandoned property in Spokane diminishes by \$60,000 the value of nearby properties. The financial burden doesn't end there. Derelict units in Spokane represent a municipal expenditure in excess of \$2M every year as the responsibility of cleaning, marketing, or even demolishing these properties falls onto the city and taxpayer, further depressing these areas and Spokane as a whole, Michelle said.

"While the work to rehab

blighted properties in Spokane is powerful to witness, the transformation during a future Habitat homeowner's journey to homeownership is even more so. Habitat seeks to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope," she said.

The partnership requirements for qualified home buyer families earning 80 percent below the area median income are rigorous but ensure each home buyer is more than prepared to be a successful homeowner.

"At the West Central home dedication, supporters of Habitat for Humanity-Spokane will come together to witness two families unlock strength, stability and self-reliance through the keys to their new future," Michelle said.

For information, call 534-2552 or visit <https://habitat-spokane.org/dedications>.

Volunteers of America sets up new location for young adult shelter near SCC

Volunteers of America (VOA) will move their overnight young adult shelter from their temporary location downtown to the former Spokane County Clean Air Building located at 3104 E. Augusta Ave.

The shelter will operate from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., seven days a week with a 44 bed capacity.

"The placement of this shelter is strategic in our service mod-

el," said VOA CEO/president Fawn Schott. "We are moving the youth we serve out of the downtown core and closer to educational resources. The proximity to Spokane Community Colleges is ideal as we provide wrap-around case management to overcome homelessness for the youth in our community."

VOA opened the shelter in May, operating at a 15-bed ca-

capacity at Women's Hearth until the building purchase was completed. In the past few weeks, VOA has seen an increase in need and staff had to turn away people each night. The move will help provide more beds ahead of the winter months.

A few building renovations are scheduled for next spring that will allow the shelter to operate 24/7 with onsite case manage-

ment. In addition, VOA's Crosswalk youth shelter is scheduled to move to a new building in fall of 2023 on land purchased off Mission Ave.

"Focusing on early interventions and the unique needs of young adults takes us upstream in efforts to prevent the next generation of homelessness," stated city of Spokane Mayor Woodward. "This resource expands

the capacity to provide young adults with wrap-around services and technical training, and is another example of what can be accomplished with a plan that is executed through partnership and collaboration. Volunteers of America is perfectly suited with the right expertise to make a difference at a critical stage in life."

For information, call 624-2378 or visit www.voaspokane.org.

December meals and gifts events set

Dial area code 509 unless otherwise indicated

- Dec 1-9 • Christmas Gifts for Cheney Kids, Cheney Outreach, 616 Third St., Lower Level
- Dec 1-18 • Gifts, 9 a.m. to 4:30 M-F, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat, Toys for Tots, spokane-wa.toysfortots.org
- Dec 1-24 • Gifts - M, W, F 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Greenhouse, 211 N. Fir, Deer Park (G)
- Dec 2, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19
 - Gifts, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., New Hope Resource Center, 4211 E. Colbert
- Dec 4, 11, 18
 - Breakfast & Photo with Santa, 10 a.m., Southside Senior Center, 3151 E. 27th
- Dec 4-16 • Gifts & grocery vouchers, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Christmas Bureau, Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana, christmasbureau.spokane.org
- Dec 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19
 - Santa Express, 4 to 6 p.m., Vanessa Behan, 5004 E. Sprague, santaexpress.org
- Dec 10 • Senior Meal, 10 a.m., Sinto Senior Center, 1124 S. Sinto, 327-2861
- Dec 11 • Spokane Fantasy Flight, Spokane International Airport, nwnorthpole.org sign-up
- Dec 13-15 • Gifts, Salvation Army Adopt-a-family, 222 E. Indiana, 329-2721
- Dec 15 • To Go Meal, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Women & Children's Free Restaurant, 1408 N. Washington, 324-1995, wcferspokane.org
- Dec 17 • Youth (14-24) Meal & Gifts, 6 to 10 p.m., Cup of Cool Water, 1106 W. 2nd, 747-6686
- Dec 18 • Meal, Clothing +, 12 to 3 p.m., Blessings Under the Bridge Winter Event, 4th & McClellan, 294-7265
- Dec 19 • To Go Meal & Gifts, 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., Kingdom of Christ Ministries, HUB Center, 218 S. Howard
 - Senior Members Meal, 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., Mid-City Concerns, 3151 E. 27th Ave.
- Dec 20 • Sit Down Meal & Gifts, 5:30 p.m., Off Broadway Outreach, 2225 W. Mallon
 - Christmas in a Bag (hygiene items, coats, scarves & clothing for residents), Union Gospel Mission Christmas, 1224 W. Trent, 535-8510
- Dec 23 • To Go Meal, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Shalom Ministries, 518 W. 3rd Ave., 455-9019
- Dec 24 • To Go Meal, 12 to 1 p.m., City Gate Christmas Dinner, 170 S. Mallon, 455-9670
 - Meal, 5 p.m., The Salvation Army, 222 E. Indiana, 325-6821

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KEYNOTE - Fr Pat Conroy, SJ
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Paul Benz retires after 20 years with LPPO and FAN, but will still advocate

Continued from page 1
representatives of faith communities to elicit priorities in the fall and to report back on successes in the spring.

His roots as the son of a small farmer in southwestern Minnesota during the 1950s set him on the walk for social justice. His father engaged in grassroots organizing for economic justice in the form of fair prices for farmers. He sought to organize farmers to withhold products and hold protests.

His paternal great-great-grandmother, Sophokab, rebelled against the U.S. treaty with the Sac and Fox tribes, now in Oklahoma.

She was in a group led by Black Hawk that crossed the Mississippi in 1832 in violation of a treaty. The group of men, women, children and elders with Black Hawk drew the attention of the U.S. military, which chased them through North Central Illinois, and Southern Wisconsin for three months.

They ran out of supplies and were desperate. Many died of malnutrition. Their only way to survive was to cross the Mississippi into Iowa, which was not a state, but then the military attacked and killed many beside the Bad Axe River, in what is now called the Bad Axe Massacre.

Sophokab, then six, was put on a log canoe that floated to East Dubuque, Ill., where she was picked up by Jordan's Ferry as a military boat taking survivors to prison passed by. She was adopted by a family, and called Indian Kate after her mother, Katequah. She married an Eberle, whose daughter, Katherine, married a Fishnick. Her daughter, Pauline, his grandmother, married a Benz.

"I remember my father's respect for Native Americans and his social activism. I did not understand then, when farmers had a strike and dumped milk, that farmers were independent and resisted uniting for higher prices for oats, beans and soybeans," he said.

Another social justice seed was planted in Paul during high school when his pastor ran for school board in Pipestone, Minn. When Paul went on to college, he majored in political science and religion.

He has helped with political campaigns, including Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey's 1972 run for U.S. President. That was related to his participation in a summer institute in political and economic systems at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

After graduating from high

school in 1971, he worked on the farm for two summers. His father decided there was no future in farming, sold the farm in 1973 and moved to town.

Paul did studies in D.C., Texas and Seattle, and youth ministry in San Jose in 1975-76, before coming to Seattle Pacific University, where he graduated in 1979 after two years there. In 1980, he worked on the campaign of Senator Warren Magnuson.

Then he went to seminary at Pacific Lutheran Theological School in Berkeley, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 1985.

His first church in Appalachia in Northeast Kentucky engaged him in social justice issues as he saw the disparity of the wealth of a few and the poverty of most people. He engaged with the NAACP and Kentucky Council of Churches.

His wife Linda's work in domestic violence led them to return to Seattle where she was executive director of the King County Domestic Violence Agency. Paul was called to serve a Lutheran parish and then to direct the Lutheran Public Policy Office.

In that role, he worked ecumenically on a common agenda for public policy with the Washington Association of Churches with former directors Loren Arnett and John Boonstra.

"Realizing the two organizations were of one heart, they merged to form the Faith Action Network: A Partnership for the Common Good," Paul said.

Alice Woldt and Paul served at first as part-time co-directors. Three members of each board and three others—one each from the Jewish, African-American and Hispanic communities—formed the governing board.

Its 30-member advisory council included other members of the former Washington Association of Churches and LPPO boards, as well as diverse faith groups.

"Our vision was to bring together two organizations with limited resources and a common purpose to be a strong interfaith organization to do public policy advocacy," he said.

The new organization brought together the two agencies' staffs and constituencies in "a state-wide partnership of faith communities striving for a just and sustainable world through community building, education and courageous public action."

Now 162 faith communities are involved in the network.

"The dominant religion in the state was and is Christian, but we chose the name, Faith Action

Network, specifically 'faith,' rather than 'Christian' or 'church' to build a larger tent for social justice as a faith organization," Paul said.

In 21 years of lobbying in Olympia, he has worked on many bills, but he said part of his advocacy is still being accomplished. That is to make known the progressive faith voice in Olympia.

"When many in the U.S. think of religion and the political realm, it is usually dominated by the religious right," he said.

"How the LPPO, WAC, FAN and advocating partner the Church Council of Greater Seattle view faith is different from that. Always our witness and purpose are to have those in power and the broader public realize there are many faith communities, not just the religious right," he said.

What have his efforts and those of FAN accomplished? There is a long list over the years of successes related to priorities of housing, hunger, child care, minimum wage, health care, the safety net and more.

In the last legislative session, the main issues were police reform and tax reform. For years the religious and secular communities spoke of Washington having the most regressive tax structure and have challenged the built-in racist structure of the criminal justice system, Paul said.

The 2021 session adopted a capital gains tax on wealth.

"Wealthy businesses need to pay their fair share to the state treasury. To whom much is given economically, much is required," Paul said. "It's not enough for them to donate to a good neighbor fund.

Racial equity called for police reform and accountability regarding training law enforcement officers on de-escalation tactics to reduce use of violence, like chokeholds, he added.

After he retires, Paul plans to volunteer to add his hands bending the moral arc of history towards social justice and racial equity via his new consulting, lobbying, advocacy organization, Partners for Social Change.

So he will be lobbying on social justice issues both in Olympia and in Washington, D.C., in 2022.

"I look for greater impact. There are always more people who can be involved and there will always be more issues requiring advocacy," he said, noting that the work of advocacy is never done.

FAN's recent Annual Dinner honored Paul, presenting him

with the Justice, Leadership Legacy Award for his work putting faith into action. The dinner raised more than \$122,000 on

Nov. 21 towards a goal of reaching \$150,000.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit fanwa.org.

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Community Building has served Spokane nonprofits for 20 years

Continued from page 1
street, talked to that owner, and they made a deal. Expansion came naturally. He bought the 35 W. Main Ave. building, then the smaller one next door, then the Saranac, the Pub, the Saranac Commons and the Main Market across the street.

Gratified that the venture has lasted 20 years, he said he had “never thought how long it would last. We just go with what we have and try to stay in the now and do what we do.”

He attributed it to the dedication and commitment of the people who work or worked there, some of whom wrote chapters.

His vision included prioritizing the whole person to be involved in the community, not just work there.

“Writer Ken Wilber talks about being an integrated person, cognitive, spiritual, emotional and relational. Those things come together to make the person,” said Jim

“Our buildings do that. The art gallery, movie theater, food, work and childcare, all go together to make the person complete and present all the time, even when they are working,” said Jim.

“The book, like the building, began organically,” Jim said. “I wanted to display aspects of the building, such as green materials, insulation, glues and water saving.”

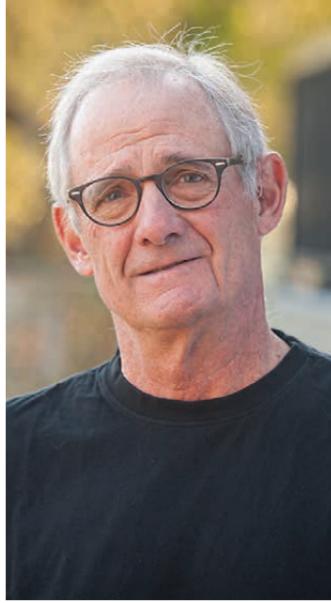
Then, Summer started working with him. As they talked about writing a book, they realized they didn’t have to write it, but could create an anthology, bringing together a chorus of voices to tell the Community Building story. Chapters are written by 20 people who were or are part of the Community Building.

“I was a conduit to capture this good work. I just translated what has been done into written form,” said Summer, who interviewed many people.

“It’s challenging when 100 people contribute to a project bringing together complex and diverse threads to tell the story,” she said.

Summer, a master of fine arts graduate from Eastern Washington University worked with Community-Minded Enterprises, then with Jim, starting in 2009 as a work study student at the Community Building.

In 2013, she took on more responsibilities as a project manager, running two professional development series, “Learn Together, Grow Together,” in the Niche Co-Working Center and Mac ‘n Cheese gatherings



Summer Hess and Jim Sheehan collaborate to create a book about the Community Building in downtown Spokane and its venture in building community in a green space.

Photos courtesy of the Community Building

at the Saranac Pub. The Niche Center provides small nonprofits with remote office spaces with temporary offices for wifi and community. Mac ‘n Cheese gatherings helped staff learn about each other’s work and nurture relationships.

Because she had gotten her legs under her in Spokane when she found this place, she wondered if there were other people like that, who could be represented in the book.

The Community Building recipe comes from Jim’s vision of having “constant energy on the block, not just about the 9-to-5, but continuous.” He wanted a place set aside for people to physically gather with the intention of building community.

Jim believes that at the foundation of affecting social change is building strong relationships and bringing people together. Once there was a place to host different people and organizations, that would be possible.

He created a space that would host nonprofits and change makers. His priorities after finding a place and populating it with nonprofits, people and businesses, were to nurture elements of community, where people come and go, bring new ideas as the city changes and evolve as the community evolved.

“The block became a magnet for builders. One apartment building was constructed to be in proximity to the Main Market Co-op. Economic development was an offshoot of the project,”

said Summer.

“Initially we started telling the story with Jim’s voice and at the end that didn’t feel right because so much of his philosophy is about getting out of the way and letting people act,” said Summer.

In addition to Jim’s chapter, “The Antidote Is Community,” some of the other chapters are “Beauty and Inclusion: People Centered Space” by Patsy O’Connor, “The Rise and Sunset of the Center for Justice” by Breean Beggs, and “Childcare as Social Justice” by Anita Morgan.

Jim and Summer also sought to communicate dynamics of a “green” building infrastructure, the groups that show up every day, the mix of the stewards of the space, the tenants and behind-the-scenes people who make it happen.

On the green technology and materials used in remodeling and designing the spaces, Jim said, “We have problems in different areas. The seminal issue in the world is climate change, which leads to diaspora, war and destruction. We can only do what we can do.”

Aiming to have a small carbon footprint, he wanted the buildings put together “in a way that is life giving,” with an aesthetic that is life giving and a system that is not destroying the earth.

Jim considered how to heat and cool space, what kind of materials to use and how to put spaces together,

Breean, former director of the Center for Justice, said that

when it started, there was need for space where nonprofits could thrive.

Being in proximity, relationships formed in the Community Building as local leaders talked about what the community needed, he said. It was easier to make, coordinate and launch new plans, such as beginning smart justice initiatives and finding alternatives to a new jail.

Summer captured other examples of leaders in proximity initiating changes they had not anticipated.

The theory is that if people came together they would have good ideas to change the city.

Warrin Bazile, who is on the Community Building staff, writes in his chapter, “Building Stewardship,” that he seeks to treat people in the neighborhood, including those who are down and out “just as well as the people who come to work here every day. I see every encounter as a chance to show people the love of God.”

Jim said that in coming into the neighborhood and building something, it was important to

connect with neighbors so they knew what the building was about and so “we knew what the neighborhood is like so we can be included in the community.”

Latah Books and the Community Building are hosting a book launch party to celebrate the publication of the *One-Block Revolution: 20 Years of Community Building* from 5 to 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 3, at 25-35 W. Main Ave. There will be appetizers, music, tours and conversation with neighbors and book contributors.

For information, call 232-1950 or visit latahbooks.com.



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Young Activists program series begins

Young Activist Leaders Program (YALP) begins on Wednesday, Dec. 1.

It's a program of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) for young people interested in social justice and community organizing.

YALP is a cohort-based program for young people aged 12 to 20, both experienced and new to PJALS, from around the region.

It will be a four month long intensive session, running from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Wednesdays through March 2022.

Youth organizers Sarah Hegde and Ivy Pete will collaborate and teach alongside youth in the community for workshops, speakers, projects, connections, activism, change-making, strategizing, art, snacks, games and good times.

Participants may come every week or once in a while, they said.

The Young Activist Leaders Program within the PJALS engages young, change-minded individuals in grassroots organizing through workshops, networking and collaboration, Sarah and Ivy said.

Participants will abide by COVID guidelines and operate based on guidance from the Spokane Regional Health District meaning an online or hybrid model with Zoom is likely for the year.

"We are working to accommodate our ever-growing participation from geographically diverse populations of young people," they said.

For information, call 838-7870, email pjals@action.pjals.org or visit pjals.org and click link for YALP.

Appeal nearly at goal by press time

The Fig Tree's 2021 Fall Festival of Sharing from Oct. 21 to Nov. 30, inviting support from new and renewing sponsors raised more than \$6,500 as of Friday, Nov. 26, when The Fig Tree went to press.

"We will meet our goal of \$7,500 for the campaign," said editor Mary Stamp. "The year-end appeal will help us reach our budget goal for sponsors."

For information, call 535-1813, mary@thefigtree.org or visit thefigtree.org/donate.html.

Conservatory sets events

In December, Coeur d'Alene's Music Conservatory plans Holiday Joy Festivities and a Concert, 6 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 10, with tours of the Historic Hamilton House.

Northwest Brass performs 7 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 14 in the conservatory instructor MariAnn Flynn. For information, call 208-901-8190.

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International Conference on Hate Studies at Gonzaga University

Higher education centers address bigotry, bias, freedom, inclusion

Kristen Clarke, assistant attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice, pointed to the importance of centers for hate studies in higher education because they deal with marginalization, bigotry, bias, freedom, compassion and inclusion.

Speaking at the International Conference on Hate Studies Nov. 4 to 6 at Gonzaga, Kristen said the theme, “Justice and Equity: Challenging Hate and Inspiring Hope,” sounds like the call to action expressed by the late Thurgood Marshall: “Where you see wrong, speak out. This is your country.”

“He reminded us that everyone is responsible to make a difference,” said Kristen, concerned about the rise in hate crimes.

“We work to uphold every person’s civil rights so they can live free from violence and hate,” she said.

Responsibility requires that people be proactive on hate crimes, which have risen for Asian-Americans and Black Americans.

“The Department of Justice is not waiting to deploy its tools against hate crimes,” she said. “Prosecution of hate crimes will



Kristen Clarke of U.S. Justice Department speaks.

be swift and effective.”

The 20-year-old who killed Black people in a Kroger store admitted he shot them because of their race. He is just one of many who have shot Asian women, transwomen, and people attending Jewish and Muslim services.

“There are too many stories,” she said. “Our department stands by victims of hate.”

Kristen said that, however, is hard because of the underreporting of hate crimes. In Miami, with a population of 3 million,

there were just five cases reported. If hate is not reported, it is hard to address.

Kristen called for training new police officers to investigate and report acts of hate.

“The state of Washington has one of the highest rates for reporting hate crimes,” she said. “A low rate comes from a lack of trust between communities and law enforcement.

“Hate takes many forms—online attacks, burning churches, physical assaults—but are all

intended to terrorize communities because of race, ethnicity, ability, sex and gender identity.”

“To revitalize civil rights, we need to facilitate dialogue, mediation and training,” she said, telling of multi-million-dollar grants for awareness, healing, reconciliation and resource development to improve civil rights reporting.

Kristen added that law enforcement needs to make it possible for complaints to be made in different languages to make reporting easier.

She thanked Gonzaga University’s Institute for Hate Studies for encouraging a comprehensive approach to hate and justice.

“Because of advocates like those gathered for the International Conference, I have faith justice will win,” Kristen said. “We promote a passion for the American dream. Our work strengthens our democracy, protecting people’s rights to be free from violence and intimidation.

“Bringing together academics and others to converse fosters collaboration, a key element in inspiring justice and hope,” she said.

More than 450 people from 15 countries, 30 states, 51 orga-

nizations and 60 institutions of higher education participated in a keynote speech, four plenary panels, 39 paper presentations, and 20 workshops or roundtable discussions—including 137 presenters—during the conference.

Human rights advocates, faith leaders, university professors, high school teachers, librarians and other community leaders involved in challenging many forms of hate and bigotry gathered to explore and share their research on hate and how its impact on people and communities is being addressed around the world.

The themes of the sessions included teaching strategies, hate crimes, attitudes toward victims, Holocaust memorials, language and lies, teaching diversity and equity, weaponizing hope, rethinking Nazism, ex-extremists, root causes of hate, recovering from racism, connection and stories, fascism in academia, extremist ideologies, anti-bias lessons, depictions of migrants, countering extremism, hate crimes, hate groups, hate speech, challenging hate, conflict and inclusion, corporate responsibility and human rights champions.

For information, call 313-3665 or visit gonzaga.edu/icohs.

NIC Molstead Library houses collection on extremism from 1981 to 2006

As technical services librarian at the North Idaho College (NIC) in Coeur d’Alene, Ann Johnston keeps the Molstead Library collection of events related to the Aryan Nations group that was located in North Idaho from the 1980s to 2000.

Most of the collection was donated by Tony Stewart, who retired after teaching political science for 40 years at NIC. He helped found and still serves with the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.

For 35 years, he kept scrapbooks and collected his own writings and videos, along with reports of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations.

“We have the collection digitized on the website,” Ann said.

Tony produced videos on campus when he hosted weekly programs interviewing people on regional, national and international human rights.

“We have the collection because, as a community that experienced hateful activity when the Aryan Nations was here, it is important to preserve that history so it is not forgotten,” she said.

Ann pointed out that it is of national and international importance that this history be preserved locally. Because few students and others know the



Ann Johnston

group that had brought hate and bombings to the region, was held in North Idaho in 2000, Ann said. Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center came as the attorney to pursue a civil lawsuit.

In a criminal trial, security guards who had chased a woman and her 19-year-old son, firing into their car and forcing them into a ditch, were found guilty of a felony and sentenced to prison.

“The lawsuit 21 years ago bankrupted Aryan Nations,” Ann said.

It was a moment to remember and it took place in Coeur d’Alene and Kootenai County, she said.

Details of events in the 1980s included in the collection, start with threats in 1981 against the Jewish owner of a restaurant in Hayden, and go through the 2000 trial and video of the May 2001 demolition of the Aryan Nations compound to turn it into

a peace park.

Community members, NIC students and people from the Idaho Panhandle can check out materials. Those who live outside the area can access the website by looking for the link to the Human Rights Collections under the Walden History Project, which digitized NIC yearbooks from 1933 to 1974.

Ann was one of five librarians across the U.S., participating in a

three-session workshop on “Curating Hate” at the Gonzaga’s International Conference on Hate Studies.

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Four women recognized as 2021 Spokane Human Rights Champions

The 2021 Spokane Human Rights Champions awards were presented along with the Eva Lassman Take Action Against Hate awards at the closing of the International Conference for Hate Studies on Nov. 6. Nia Wong, evening anchor and reporter for 4 News Now/KXLY-TV, was emcee.

The Spokane County Human Rights Task Force (SCHRTF) and Spokane Human

Rights Commission joined the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies to honor “neighbors who not only saw a need but found a way to satisfy it,” Nia said.

Nia said the Spokane Human Rights Champions Awards started a few years ago after “horrific events in Pittsburgh and Christchurch where sanctuaries of love and faith were rocked by violence driven by hate.”

While those incidents did not involve people in Spokane, gatherings at Temple Beth Shalom and at the Spokane Islamic Center brought faith and community leaders, even political adversaries “together to unite in healing and reweaving the fabric that invisibly binds us all,” she said.

The Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, decided to celebrate the good that happens every day but is overlooked.

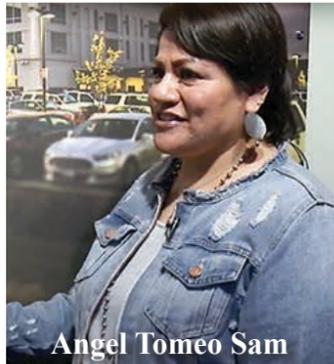
So the government-based Spokane Human Rights Commission and the volunteer-based Spokane County Human Rights Task Force started the Spokane Human Rights Champions Awards.

Because of COVID-19, the awards committee chose to do a live streaming event with prerecorded award presentations.

Excerpts of their stories are below.



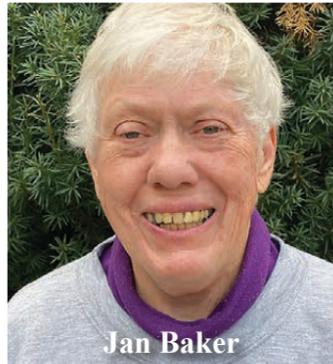
Jennyfer Mesa



Angel Tomeo Sam



Katie Urbanik



Jan Baker

Jennyfer Mesa brought information and resources to the Latinx community by starting a Facebook page to translate news and a grassroots movement in 2017 in response to anti-immigrant sentiments that left families afraid to access resources.

It grew into a nonprofit, Latinos En Spokane, to help Latinos and immigrants access resources, develop community and participate in civic life through events, education, activism and partnerships.

In nominating her, Guillermo Espinoza, said she and her family faced obstacles immigrating from Colombia, seeking a safe place, but they did not give up.

In COVID isolation, knowing Latinx community likes to gather, he said, Jennyfer built community on Facebook, where people encourage each other and share resources, urging people to participate in the census, be vaccinated and know health guidelines so they can gather and celebrate.

Jennyfer opened the Latinos en Spokane office at 1502 N. Monroe, as a center to empower Latino and immigrant families with local, state, insurance, technical, cultural and other resources. She also started a monthly cultural and fresh food summer market, El Mercado.

“When I think of human rights, I think of how we are all born free and should have the right to be who we are with access to clean air, clean water, food, health care, education, a home and safety,” said Jennyfer.

Angel Tomeo Sam uses her experiences to call others to re-enter productive society.

Moving through personal adversity of domestic violence, addiction, homelessness and incarceration, she became chair-

elect for the Racial Equity Committee of the Spokane Regional Law and Justice Council. She also works with the Health and Justice Recovery Alliance, the Bail Project, the Spokane County Domestic Violence Coalition and State Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Work Group.

Her advocacy to change the name Ft. George Wright Dr. to Whistalks Way led Spokane to name her a Woman Warrior.

Other involvements include the Equal Justice Coalition, Native American Alliance for Policy and Action and Peer Reentry Navigation and Community Bail Fund. As acting director of Salish for Strong Spokane, she works with Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women and People.

Angel said that work for human rights “comes from a place of love of humanity and my neighbors.” She said many faiths speak of love. A favorite is “love casts out fear,” because “when we are fearless we can be bold and when we are bold we can get stuff done.” Having been impacted by many experiences, she advocates for the “things next to me.”

“My life would be different if someone had not reached out and given me a hand up,” said Angel, who seeks to do that for others.

Katie Urbanik took what many families struggled to accept and created the opportunity for parents to be proud of their gay and lesbian children, said Gene Otto and Ted Clark, who nominated her as “a pioneer.”

The SCHRTF recognized her for helping start a local chapter of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). In another community, her son, Hal, came out as gay, when it was less accepted than now.

She and her late husband, Harry, were proud of him. They joined a PFLAG group and held meetings in their home. At first just five came, then there was standing room only.

When they moved to Spokane in 1984, Katie and Harry brought PFLAG with them, changing the conversation here by helping families understand, accept and also be proud of their gay or lesbian children.

PFLAG also works with schools to help children who are bullied and have no one to talk with, to prevent suicides and to inform counselors.

“I soon found that there were people all over the place who were glad to know that there were other parents like them, and they could join together and learn to be able to support their children,” said Katie, now 97.

Jan Baker has changed many lives through her involvement with organizations that promote democracy, guide young

people, teach gardening and support LGBTQ people.

She has registered voters, recruited candidates and organized advocacy events through the NAACP Spokane Political Action Committee before and after retiring from 39 years as a medical technologist and educator in the clinical lab at Sacred Heart.

As a master gardener, she has taught organic gardening to youth at Riverfront Farms, now Youth Ops, which divert youth from drugs and jail to complete high school and college. She also taught gardening to women at the Growing Hope Program of the former Women’s Drop-In Center, now the Women’s Hearth.

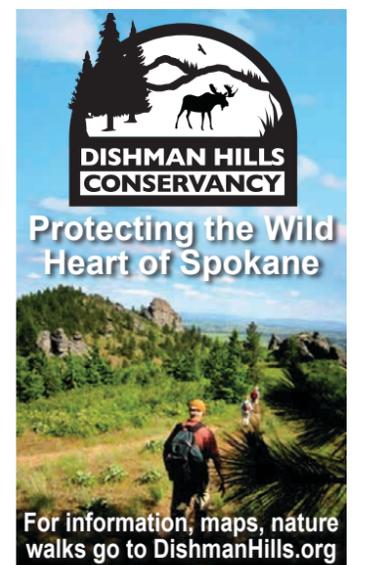
Jan’s worked to enact legislation for the GLBTQ community. She was the first to register voters for the Democratic Party at the PRIDE event, and she invited the NAACP to march in the parade and Master Gardeners to have a booth at the event.

City Council member Betsy

Wilkerson said, “Jan embraced me early on and started educating me on human rights from a different perspective. We talked about race, but more discrimination than race.” She considers Jan a “great ally with a heartfelt commitment” and “a servant leader vested in the community.”

Jan said that “human rights is never done in a vacuum, it’s essential to start at the grassroots level and move from the bottom up, not the top down. The umbrella uniting us in human rights is to do unto others as we would like others to do to us, a concept from the Bible, and other religions and spiritualities.”

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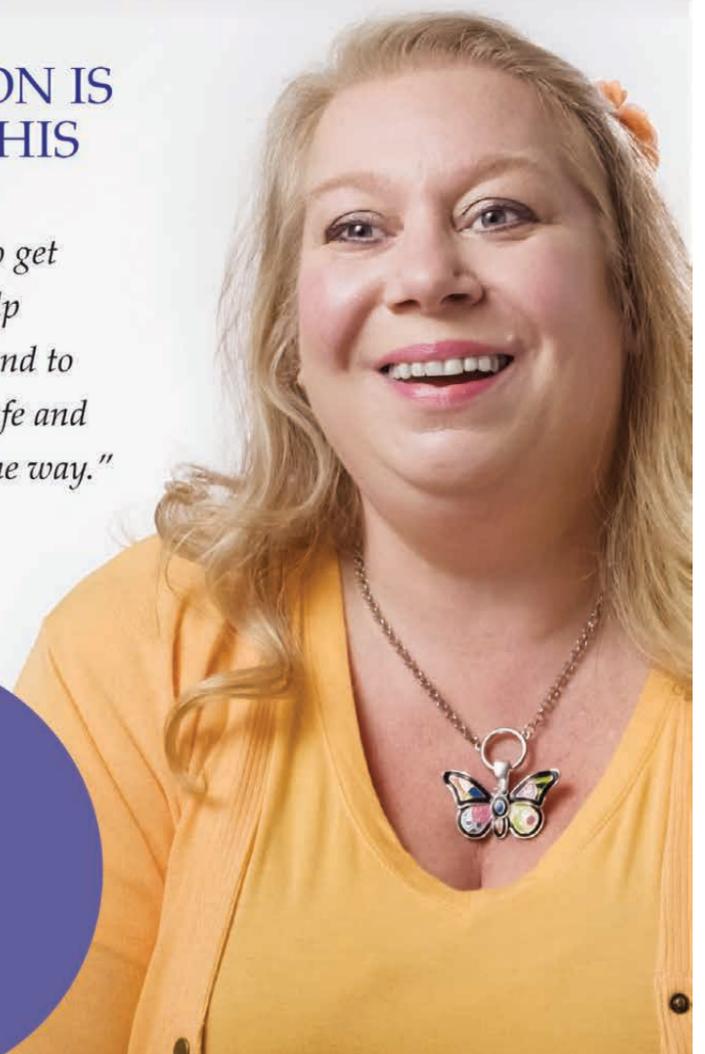
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Take Action Against Hate Awards presented during conference

Rachelle Strawther, a Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies Advisory Board member, presented the 2021 Eva Lassman Take Action Against Hate Awards.

As chair of the Take Action Against Hate Awards, she shared the story of the award, which is named for Eva Lassman, a Holocaust survivor and long-time community educator on the Holocaust, hate and human rights for more than 50 years in the Inland Northwest.

“Eva was an advocate for human dignity, respect and perseverance,” Rachelle said. “She dedicated most of her adult life to the ‘personal obligation that came with her survival’—giving testimony to atrocities she endured and inspiring others to take action against hate. The awards recognize those following in her footsteps.”

The Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies gives annual awards to one individual and one organization.

The individual recipients are Rowena Pineda and Pui-Yan Lam, immediate-past co-chairs of the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition



Pui-Yan Lam and Rowena Pineda accept the recognition.

(APIC) of Spokane. Ryann Louie of the coalition said they “built a team of energetic, talented, progressive folks to work in solidarity with their communities of color for civil and human rights.”

Tia Moua, who shared information for the nomination, wrote: “Rowena and Pui-Yan guided me to see the importance of coalition-building, multi-racial solidarity, lobbying and activism work, and cooperation with other anti-racist organizations. Ever since I joined APIC, I saw their clear passion and commitment to serving our community, especially the Asian American and Pacific Island communities.”

Pui-Yan started speaking out during graduate studies when she saw racism on campus.

“I decided to speak up and do

something about it because it was happening in my community. I didn’t care if my face was red or my hands shook when I spoke in public, I just had to do it,” she said.

Now she realizes that for any social justice movement it’s not about waiting for a perfect charismatic leader, but it’s about the power of ordinary, imperfect people, who despite their flaws, fears and insecurities, step up and do what they can.

Rowena, as a young community organizer, learned that those impacted need to be at the forefront. While she liked being in the background, “the time came when my community was impacted and I had to step up and be up front.”

Both are members of the advisory board, welcoming a new



Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Scheppe give award to student.

generation stepping up in APIC to join in the fight against racism.

Rachelle announced that the organizational winner is the European Centre for the Study of Hate located at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Co-directors Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Scheppe accepted the award.

The center was nominated because of its commitment to understanding and countering hatred on an individual, community and global scale. Its work, including research, policy and practice, is evident through its “Call It Out” Campaign, its engagement with the Coalition Against Hate Crime Ireland, and publications such as “Alternative Report on Hate Crimes and Related Issues,” and “Ireland and Our LGBT Community.” Its work shows how

knowledge can be paired with action to challenge hate towards those who are marginalized.

“Good scholarship is scholarship with impact that changes people’s lives for the better, especially people like Eva Lassman who directly experience the harms of hate,” said Amanda.

Jennifer expressed appreciation for Gonzaga’s Institute for Hate Studies’ interdisciplinary approach to understand hate that divides. to explore means by which that hate can be countered and challenged and to do that wherever possible, “always speaking truth to power.”

They dedicated the financial award to Gonzaga for funds for a Native American student there.

For information, email jjjohnsonhome@msn.com.

ADL education leader suggests tools for anti-bias lessons for educators

Scotland (Scottie) Nash, director of education for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Pacific Northwest region, presented three sessions on Anti-Bias Lessons for Educators for the International Conference on Hate Studies in November.

Those sessions offered tools for people to explore their identities and connect with others as means to empower them to build understanding and empathy.

In the first session, “Growing Up Culturally,” she offered practical suggestions for teachers committed to doing anti-bias work in their classrooms. She is hearing from teachers who are now having in-person classes that there is more conflict in their classrooms than prior to the pandemic shutdown.

Using the example of a woman describing herself in the New York Times, Scottie solicited information from participants about what they heard her say about her race, ethnicity and culture.

The point of the exercise was twofold: first, to clarify assumptions and use her self-description either to find out how she identified or to be able to raise questions that would clarify this, and second, to find things a person might have in common with her.

Scottie then went on to explain how such an exercise might be used in a classroom to help students identify and modify their biases to achieve greater justice and harmony.

In the second session on “Anti-Bias Education: Unpacking Race, Ethnicity and Culture,”



Scottie Nash

Scottie shared experience from 20 years as a high school history teacher and as education director with the 100-year-old ADL.

“We as an organization fight hate through education, investigation and advocacy,” said Scottie, who works with K-12, universities, religious institutions, communities and work places.

Her work focuses on anti-Semitism and bias in general.

Doing anti-bias education since the 1980s, she offers a four-part framework: 1) Identifying or understanding oneself to understand one’s relationship to bias, power and society; 2) Understanding diversity/difference through being able to connect across differences; 3) Understanding bias, implicit

vs. explicit, and how it presents itself internally and externally, and 4) Championing justice with education as a call to action.

In the third session, she showed participants videos in a “Being 12” series on how students understand their identity through the lens of race, ethnicity and culture. She offered the video as a tool for starting discussions: <https://www.wnyc.org/story/people-sometimes-think-im-supposed-talk-ghetto-whatever-kids-race>.

Youth on the video include an Indian British girl, an adopted African-American with two dads, an African-Irish-American, a Hispanic girl telling of shopping, a white privileged person and an Ecuadorian student.

“In showing the video, we work with teens on identity, talk about white privilege and encourage building empathy muscles. We ask students to write what they see, hear and feel in the video to elicit constructive listening,” Scottie said.

Students in history, reading or science classes respond to a prompt and talk to connect.

“We assure their voices will be heard, as they have an opportunity both to speak and to listen,” she said. “It takes bravery to tell their stories, to build listening muscles and build bridges as they discuss examples of stereo-

types, bias and racism they hear in the video.

“We ask: What person do you relate to? Who? How? How does it make you feel? If it was filmed at your school, how would it be the same or different? How can you be an ally to students?”

“For me, it’s about empowerment,” said Scottie.

As a teacher, she worked on projects for social justice and social action. Then she worked with adults, collecting data to make sure there were equitable practices for every student in a classroom.

She worked with principals and coached teachers to be more equitable in the classroom.

After doing that, she wanted to do more self-reflection to talk about race, ethnicity, culture and belonging. It’s been a journey of self-discovery and growth for her, drawing on her experience and connecting with others dif-

ferent from her.

“As a mother to two sons, I want to make sure they feel confident in who they are, to explore their own identities and connect with others who are different than themselves,” said Scottie, who earned a doctorate in educational leadership at Seattle University in 2010, and holds a master’s in secondary education from Northwestern University in 1997 and a bachelor’s in history and education from Bucknell University in 1996.

Growing up with a Jewish mother, a Christian father and in a traditional Christian setting, she said she works from a spiritual lens.

Scottie said the ADL offers programs on understanding hate and bias.

For information, email snash@adl.org or visit <https://educationevolution.org/anti-bias-education/> or adl.org.

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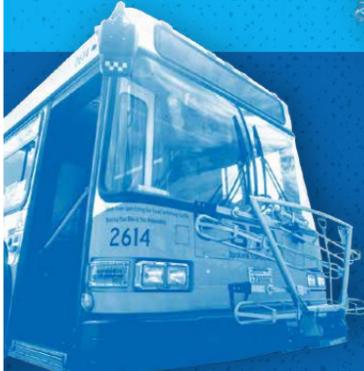
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Human rights groups bring cumulative experience to counter extremism

By Kaye Hult, Mary Stamp

In the session on “Countering Extremism: The Role of Community Human Rights Task Forces” at Gonzaga’s recent International Conference on Hate Studies, Kristine Hoover, director of GU’s Institute for Hate Studies, moderated and four individuals presented.

The presenters were Tony Stewart from the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Rights, Dean Lynch from the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, Brenda Hammond from the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force and Travis McAdam from the Montana Human Rights Network.

Tony said the Kootenai County Task Force for Human Relations (KCTFHR) continues to assist law enforcement on behalf of victims, to consult with people who face bias, to have a speakers bureau and to offer human rights education.

Tony himself continues to write guest opinions in local media, consult and provide materials for scholars.

A political scientist, lecturer, author and activist, he taught political science and was a pre-law advisor at North Idaho College from 1970 to 2008.

During those years, he also produced the “North Idaho College PBS TV-Public Forum” and documentaries, including a 10-week series in 2006 on the then 25-year history of the KCTFHR from 1981 to 2006.

“We address how some use fear tactics to manipulate segments of the population to gain political power,” he said. “Fear was used during the Jim Crow era. Our history includes policies during the Great Migration from Europe to discriminate against Irish and Italian Catholics, and Jewish immigrants, and more recently the LGBTQ community.

“Some on social media label social justice and diversity as communist doctrine, rather than seeing them as establishing democratic principles to guarantee freedom and justice,” Tony said, quoting former South African President Nelson Mandela: “To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

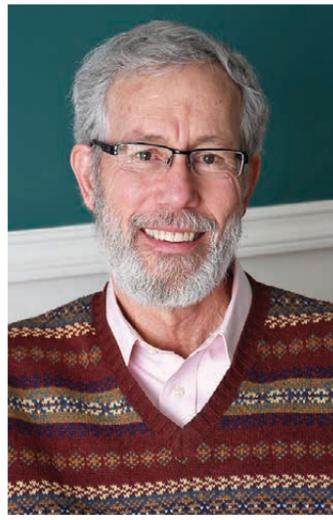
In his four decades teaching college students, he did not see education addressing historical injustices used to create guilt, but rather saw it used to “encourage a new path toward social justice.”

Tony is impressed with the intelligence, wisdom and compassion for human beings by college students as the path to understanding social justice and embracing diversity.

“Our public education system is key to keeping a democratically representative government,” he said. “To challenge hate, we need to be informed and



Tony Stewart



Dean Lynch



Brenda Hammond



Travis McAdam

to advocate.”

For information, visit idaho-humanrights.org.

Dean told of the Hate Documentation project of the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, which began in 2016, has 23 directors, who represent diversity in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, religion and ability. Directors also represent nonprofit agencies, higher education and local governments.

“Our mission is to guard and advance human rights so people feel safe, welcomed and included,” he said. “We promote positive human relationships and monitor hate in all its forms.”

Its Hate Documentation Project was created to monitor hate crimes, as nationally only 25 to 42 percent of hate crimes are reported to law enforcement.

A hate crime is an action that causes injury, damage or threat. It is an incident where the motive is to attack an individual or an individual’s community. It can come from speech used or a crime committed.

When gathering information for the report, it is important to collect data that is specific. To help that happen, a person can file a report anonymously.

The reporter answers: Is the person reporting the victim, a witness or a third party? What is the address and the setting? On what date did it happen, and at what time? What was the motivation? Who were witnesses? Were police present? Describe the crime in detail.

The information shared is entered into the database. Privacy of the person filing the report is maintained, Dean said. If the person wishes a follow-up, contact will be made.

A compilation of the information in the Hate Documentation Project’s database is shared annually with the community and is made available on the task force website in English, Spanish and Russian. Other languages will be added.

Hate crime documentation is necessary to assure appropriate community response. Hate

crimes may be reported at www.reporthathebias.org.

For information, visit spokane-countyhumanrightstaskforce.org.

Brenda said that the Bonner County Human Rights Task Force, which was founded in 1992, celebrates its 30th year in 2022.

She spoke of the importance of being organized to stand against hate groups. The task force formed to counter a vision by some in the 1990s to create an all-white Aryan homeland in the Pacific Northwest and inform people of the agenda tactics of white nationalist groups who chose the area because it lacked diversity.

The task force now has more than 500 members.

“We vow never to be silent in face of hate,” Brenda said. It’s important to create opportunities for people to speak out and take a stand.

The task force disseminates information and gives people a voice, empowering them to feel they can act in accordance with their values. They are proactive, using the framework of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration on Human Rights. They support educational activities in schools and collaborate with other human rights groups.

In this time of increased polarization, the task force seeks to be apolitical, yet aware of the agenda of some on the far right to take over governments on all levels.

Task force members learn to talk to people whose beliefs differ from their own.

“We need to speak less from lecterns and pulpits, and have the ability to speak with and listen to people across the kitchen table, seeing them as human beings beyond labels,” Brenda said. “Each person is due respect.”

“Our goal is not to act out of anger or fear, but to build bridges

instead of walls,” she said.

For information, visit bchrtf.org.

Travis McAdam said the more than 30-year-old Montana Human Rights Network seeks to work in two directions: from the state level down and from community members up to counter white nationalism and paramilitary groups.

They research and monitor extremist groups.

“That is to say we do opposition research,” Travis said. “Extremists work hard to spread a sanitized version of their beliefs.”

The information they gather helps educate others on what “the real, unfiltered views of groups in our area are,” and influences how the press describes them.

The press and public want verification of the research, so they double check on accuracy and triple check word usage and labels. They ask: Will the information create good or harm? They need to be thoughtful about how and when to use their research, Travis said.

The information they share helps inform actions that are taken. Concerned people who come together to counter the far right need information that’s real and guidance on how to use it.

The monitoring and research not only help do that, but also create relationships with new allies, who can offer convergence with their research.

“Different groups and activists can play different roles in working for human rights,” Travis said. “The dynamics in rural areas can be different from urban areas.”

This statewide organization can help remove pressure from local groups as it provides research that helps people understand what they see and process it for future events, he said.

As he closed, Travis advised, “never underestimate the power of people coming together to do good to push back against extremism.”

“It only happens when people find each other,” he said.

For information, see mhrn.org.

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Global Neighborhood provides training, employment for refugees

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

Brent Hendricks started Global Neighborhood 14 years ago and Global Neighborhood Thrift Store 10 years ago out of a desire to provide long-term support to people coming to Spokane as refugees.

Initially, the program matched volunteers with refugee families for educational resources, cultural events, community support and tutoring efforts.

“In the first four years, as we spent time with people in the community, it became apparent that the biggest need was employment,” he said.

“We offered classes and English tutoring, but most people came to us saying that they needed help with English homework, job applications and finding jobs,” he said.

The pressure refugees feel about providing for their families was overwhelming, Brent said.

“When they felt stress from financial instability, it was hard for them to focus on anything else,” Brent said.

So they pivoted the organization’s focus to employment.

In 2011, they opened the Global Neighborhood Thrift Store to provide jobs and training for refugees. They started with two men, who learned how to operate a business to help people. They were not sure if they could grow beyond that, but they tried.

The thrift store has been operating for more than 10 years now.

Now they have paid \$800,000 in wages to refugees and provided job training to more than 150 people. They plan future training to help refugees find jobs.

“We keep pushing on that and see how big an impact we can have when people have jobs to support themselves,” said Brent, who started volunteering right out of college, working with refugee families in the community.

“After studying theology at Whitworth University, I stumbled into my work with refugees,” he said. “I didn’t leave college knowing what I would do. I didn’t even know what a refugee was.

“When I formed relationships with refugees, it transformed my beliefs rather than my beliefs motivating the work,” said Brent.

He worked at World Relief for a year as a resettlement case manager, “getting my feet wet, learning about the resettlement process. I realized I wanted to focus on something that would provide ongoing support for stage two in resettlement. That’s how I got introduced to the world of refugees,” said Brent.

Global Neighborhood has had 151 refugees complete job training and gain English skills. The training includes showing up on time, customer service, receiving feedback in the job setting and knowing all aspects of the job.

Global Neighborhood work also includes how to use a clock-



Brent Hendricks runs Global Neighborhood Thrift Store.

in and clock-out system with computer skills, recycling textiles, certification to operate a forklift and having cashier experience with American money.

Trainees take the skills to other jobs. Global Neighborhood currently has 31 people on pay-

roll, 20 of whom are former refugees from Iraq, Syria, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Marshall Islands, Sudan, Ethiopia and Tanzania. Other employees work in management.

The thrift store accepts any donations in good condition—clothing, household items, home

décor, furniture, electronics and books. In reselling donations, they provide jobs. They recycle donations they cannot sell.

Global Neighborhood is conversing with other refugee service providers about the wave of refugees from Afghanistan. He said they are ready for the influx.

They did a clothing drive and told other service providers they would give free shopping vouchers for the thrift store, so refugees can come to “shop” for items in a dignified way.

Brent realizes they will need to offer as many jobs as possible and help people find jobs, so they can support themselves. In the last four years, there were fewer refugees and less demand for job training.

“We hire former refugees, who work in the store for one to six years. We provide training, referrals and case management to help them set up,” said Brent.

“I consider myself a spiritual person. We approach this work with a belief that we are all interconnected and rely on one another,” he said. “We are spiritual beings, so we are trying to provide

a safe, uplifting environment for people, a place to support people where they are. People need a job to earn money to pay rent, but we also understand that a job is just one part of who we are,” he said.

Brent sees people holistically, whatever their tradition or beliefs. He wants Global Neighborhood to build people up so they do more than earn a paycheck.

“We seek to empower people so they have dignity. That starts with meaningful work and earning a paycheck. Where people want to go with that is up to them,” said Brent.

“Since I stumbled into the social enterprise business, I’ve become a strong believer in the power of a job to have a transformational impact on communities. We are going to keep doing what we can to keep writing paychecks,” said Brent.

“We are figuring out logistics to bring people in after hours to shop with gift certificates. We are able to do that with donations from the community,” said Brent

For information, call 509-868-0001 or email info@global-neighborhood.org.

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NAACP seeks to change the narrative

The Spokane NAACP has presented eight episodes of "Challenging the Narrative," an online series highlighting what is happening behind the scenes and the issues facing the Black, Indigenous, People of Color community in Spokane.

Episodes are presented at 2 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month on Facebook Live.

Speakers examine prevailing mindsets about issues that impact people of color in Spokane. They examine facts and stories behind what has occurred and what needs to be done to shift the narrative around civil rights and social justice.

For information, visit [facebook.com/spokane.naacp/videos/](https://www.facebook.com/spokane.naacp/videos/).

Tree display benefits Symphony

The 39th annual Christmas Tree Elegance was postponed in 2020, so the 2021 event with a display of 15 decorated trees and gifts includes 11 trees from the 2020 event and four more for this year. It will be held Nov. 30 to Dec. 12 at the Historic Davenport Hotel at 10 S. Post.

The Spokane Symphony Associates will raise funds to support the Spokane Symphony through a raffle for trees and prizes. The event draws more than 400,000 visitors.

For information, call 998-2262 or email annie@matlow.org.

IHRC invites people for retreats

Immaculate Heart Retreat Center offers one-, two-, and three-day individual Advent Silent Retreats through Dec. 21.

The center at 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd. provides opportunities for people to pray and reflect.

Advent means "Coming." The mystery of Christmas invites silence to remember what's important in life, said Kristen Parker, administrative assistant.

For information, call 448-1224 or visit www.ihrc.net.

Walk-through funds UGM camps

At a Contemplative Christmas through Trees, guests reflect on the meaning of Christmas as they walk through Undercliff House mansion at 703 W. 7th Ave.

They view 25 Bible-themed trees that tell the story of humankind and God through the

Christmas story to Revelation.

The event, from 4 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 15, to Sunday, Dec. 19, raises funds for Union Gospel Mission Youth Camps.

For information, call 994-6305 or visit contemplative-christmas.com.

Thank you to our volunteers, donors, customers and the Spokane community for sticking with us during this difficult year. We are so grateful to still be able to serve our community with the generous donations we have received.

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Get your COVID & Flu shots — encourage others to do the same.

Encourage others while listening to and respecting their concerns. Share your own experience using "I" statements. For example, "I was concerned too, but after talking to my doctor, I decided to get vaccinated."

If you're sick after an event, test & tell.

If you develop any COVID-19 symptoms within 14 days of a gathering, get tested and let people who were near you know right away.



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EWU's Multicultural Center creates welcoming, safe environment

By Marilyn Urness

Vanessa Delgado strives to create a safe place for the students of Eastern Washington University (EWU). She works closely with a student staff and attends EWU's community events to meet and talk to new students. She strives to be open and friendly to connect with students and create a welcoming environment in the Multicultural Center.

The Multicultural Center, known as the MCC, is part of the Division of Student Affairs. It was founded in 2017 to provide student support for diversity and inclusion at the university.

While EWU had individual programs, such as the Pride Center, Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies, there was no central program or space for students of color to gather in community. Students, advocating for an office to represent marginalized students, brought this concern to EWU's administration. The students felt that their voices as students of color were not being heard and considered by the university.

"EWU has a high first-generation population. Many are from underrepresented backgrounds," Vanessa explained.

In response, EWU established the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in 2016. It works with the Pride Center. In 2017, the office then established the MCC.

It was first located in a temporary space with an office and a lounge space. When renovation of the Pence Union Building (PUB) was completed in 2019, the MCC gained a location in PUB 329, with a full-size student lounge, kitchen, office space, meditation room and windows.

"Since student advocacy started the MCC, we really try to listen to student feedback," Vanessa said. "We do this by hiring students as equity educators. They reach out to the community via social media, the website and advertising events, and by attending EWU community events to engage with students."

It hosts workshops, events and discussions to broaden perspectives of students and faculty.

The MCC has two main functions.

One is to provide a welcoming environment for students of color and marginalized identities.

"Some EWU students have never experienced such a diverse population before coming to EWU, and this gives them the chance to explore and learn more about different cultures and people," Vanessa explained.

A secondary role is to invite white students to engage in learning about other cultures.

During COVID, the MCC moved some content online, doing virtual programming. Engagement was down compared to pre-COVID, she said.



Vanessa Delgado gathers multicultural students at EWU.

Photo courtesy of Vanessa Delgado

"It's better this fall. At first, we spent time seeing what would be feasible and waiting for guidelines from the university and state," she said. "Now that we are into the quarter, student engagement and excitement are up. The sophomore class has not been on campus, so they are excited about events on campus."

"Our big event, Eagle Familiarize Affirm Matter (FAM), is an immersion experience to build community, empowerment and a sense of belonging for first year students of color. It drew 26 students. This pre-orientation event was a time to show new students the campus and resources and have them build relationships that can continue. It's also an opportunity for staff to motivate students and recognize that their identities, needs, aspirations and skills matter," Vanessa said.

The chance for students to ask questions to discover resources and for staff to sit down with other students could not be done during COVID. They were lost in the virtual environment, Vanessa said.

"We learned there's no substitute for what happens in space together as physical community, sharing triumphs and tribulations, and building trust," she said. We tried to do Eagle FAM last year, but couldn't duplicate it virtually.

"It's important for vulnerable

populations who experience marginalization to build trust and community to set them up for success," she said.

Enrollment percentages remain consistent in 2021, with about 15 percent Latinx, 3 percent Black, 3 percent Asian, 1 percent Pacific Islander and 1 percent Native American and indigenous.

"In my experience, we have white students who love to hang out in the Multicultural Center and who join race-based student clubs and organizations. These students are typically interested in spreading awareness about racial inequity within their communities and are committed to practicing white ally-ship that upholds and centers the experiences of people of color," Vanessa said.

One program is the annual Tunnel of Oppression, a national immersion program on spreading understanding. It simulates situations and hurdles groups face every day. Topics covered include mental health, immigration detention, climate change, police brutality, transphobia, deaf culture and domestic violence.

"After each simulation, participants debrief and share their experiences. It raises what was learned and teaches ways to help solve issues," Vanessa said. "We want people to take action, learn

more or just understand that as they are going through the tunnel, there is light at the end of it."

Growing up in El Paso, Texas, Vanessa didn't experience minoritization until the latter part of her life. Her mother was a translator and the population included people from both sides of the border. Mexico was on one side of the city and New Mexico was on the other.

"I grew up in brown America, not white America. I didn't experience being a minority until I moved to Arizona," she said.

Vanessa went to Texas A&M University to earn her bachelor's in psychology. Because students there were predominantly white and conservative, she experienced culture shock. Being a Latina coming out as a lesbian, Vanessa felt out of place and alone for the first time in her life.

"I looked around and thought, 'Oh wow, this is what it's like to be a minority,'" she said.

Vanessa didn't feel out of place for long, because she found a home away from home when she became a student employee for the Women's and Gender Equity Resource Center. The center then became two offices: LGBT Resource Center and Women's Resource Center. In this space, she felt safe and accepted. Then she flourished in college, and helped other people find a sense of community and belonging.

"I was 17 and coming out. By all accounts, I should not have been happy at A&M, but I was because I had that safe place, a

place of belonging," she said.

When Vanessa moved to Northern Arizona University, she was a part of the LGBTQIA Task Force responsible for needs of LGBTQIA students. The task force later founded the Office of LGBTQIA Resources and Support.

"I loved working with a community and helping impact a whole community all at once versus one person at a time," she explained. "In a way, psychology is helpful when trying to connect with multiple people versus just one."

One day Vanessa was talking to a friend about finding job opportunities. Her friend asked what she liked doing. Vanessa said she loved working with communities at colleges.

"I realized I wanted to work in higher education," she said.

Vanessa moved to the University of Kansas to manage the Center for Sexuality and Gender Diversity, working to provide a safe place for students to feel at home. She helped direct the program as it grew.

"I've often been part of the start of the programs, the ground zero," Vanessa explained. "It gives me the ability to be flexible and grow with the program."

When Vanessa was hired as director for the then new Multicultural Center at EWU, she and her wife found a welcoming place to settle down and start a family, she said.

For information, call 359-4121, email mcc@ewu.edu or visit <https://inside.ewu.edu/>

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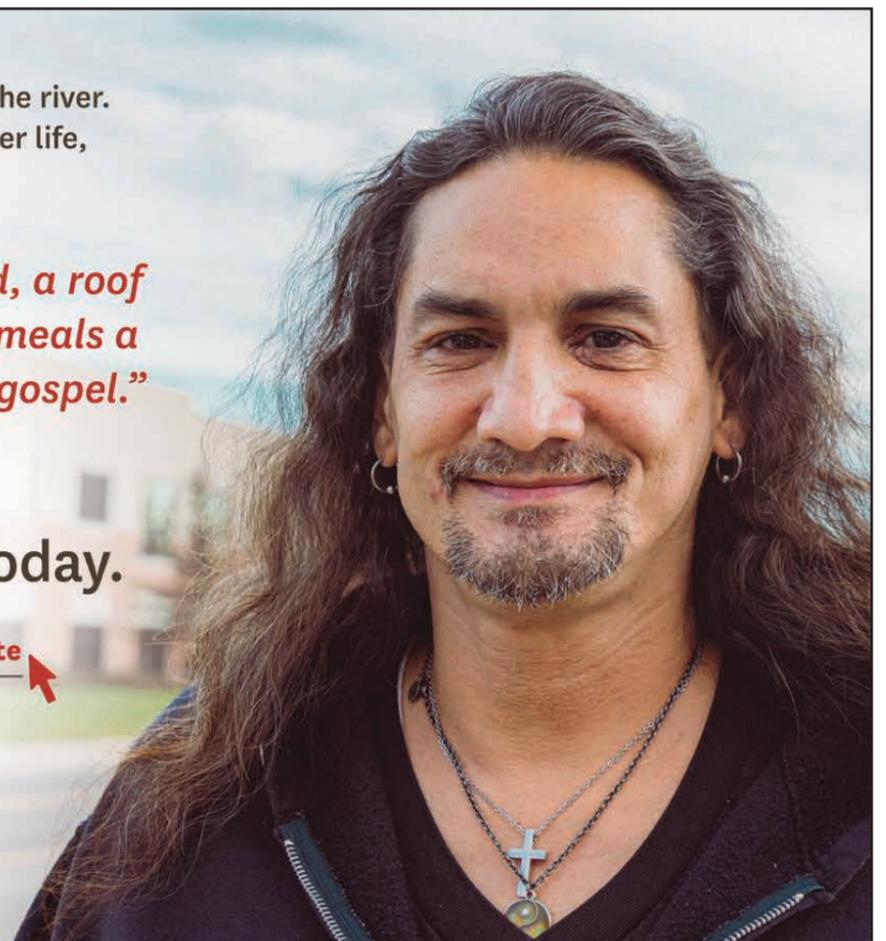
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We've got to be carefully taught to hate and fear from year to year

The concern raised about critical race theory—learning about the impact of racism on systems and people—calls us to look at how, as a song from the musical “South Pacific” says, we’ve been “carefully taught to hate and fear,” “from year to year” about people whose eye shapes and skin tones differ from ours. We know that teaching impairs empathy and impedes love. What might happen if “we’re” not taught that? We might become a glorious multicultural, multiracial society with people who care about each other.

For those who have been carefully taught, it’s necessary to teach more than one point of view about what, as Leonard Pitts, Jr., columnist for the Miami Herald, says, is the “story of treating other people inhumanely, enslaving the Africans, killing the indigenous, deporting the Mexicans, imprisoning the Japanese.” He asks, “How can we do it justice without making white children feel, well...bad?”

Are white children/people too fragile to have their empathy and solidarity with suffering people aroused, to have their

indignity about injustice and oppression awakened?

Leonard goes on to tell about his daughter at age five putting her arm beside his and declaring she was “tan, not black.” I remember a five-year-old in a black family I visited in 1968 near Boston—probably having been told a “white” couple was visiting—asked me what color I was. I looked at my arm and said, “pink.”

By then I had been involved in 1960s civil rights protests and growing awareness that my great-great grandfather was part Iroquois (Haudenosaunee). I learned two years ago he was sold by his white father as an indentured “servant.”

My journey to interracial, intercultural awakening was beginning. I’m thankful for that learning. In eighth grade, I sat for weeks right next to a bulletin board with photos of Holocaust genocide victims. The injustice of those mass murders stuck with me as I later lived and studied six months in Vienna, Austria, and heard my Vienna mother tell of her struggles through and after World War II. Buildings were still dam-

aged in 1966 and walls were still riddled with bullet holes. I saw what enemy images do and grew more committed to peace.

In 1985, 40 years after that war, I visited West and East Germany, then divided, and saw how enemy images lingered as tools of propaganda to keep people divided and suspicious so politicians can hold their grip on power by repeating lies so often they seemed almost true.

I saw colorful, insightful graffiti on the West side of the Berlin Wall and the white, barren East side of the wall. The color was in red banners saying, “Communism makes you free.” It didn’t look free to me. It didn’t feel free to the people I met. Education content and voting was controlled by those wanting to maintain their power.

Those wanting an iron grip on power, however, lost it. Churches opened doors to visits with groups like ours that broke through enemy images. The people knew. They wanted to be free. They broke through the walls that divided their society and families. Those in power had to let the wall fall—then claimed they did it.

We’ve got to be carefully taught what lies couched as truth are. Repeated often enough, some people may want to keep on blinders about slavery, genocide, deportations and internment. Even children can understand—before they are carefully taught to hate and fear, from year to year, having it drummed in their dear little ears.

Isn’t learning to hate and fear a precursor to inequities, taunting, war and genocides? Instead, how might we change if we learn what happened in history, what happens and what will happen if we live into the love and freedom from fear that a baby born long ago brought into our world?

To enter that love in this season when we often talk of light and dark, may we be cautious about equating “light” with good and “dark” with bad. It’s a way to avoid “carefully teaching,” as we preach and teach faith. We can use nouns, like “evil,” “uncertainty,” “joy” or “hope” without “light” or “dark” as adjectives. It may be a simple step toward birth into a new way of being, seeing and loving.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Letters to the Editor

Sounding Board

Commentaries

Faith-based organizations challenge climate change

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

On Nov. 13, 2021, the United Nations COP26 held in Glasgow, Scotland, ended with a negotiated agreement to deal with climate change—arguably the most important issue for our planet and one which organizations of most religious traditions believe requires an ethical and a moral commitment.

As such, faith-based organizations came to COP26 and had an influential presence there.

COP26 was the latest iteration of the annual climate change conference of parties (nations) that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a 1994 treaty renegotiated each year to respond to the climate crisis. In 2015 at COP21, negotiators reached the historic agreement called the Paris Accord where 197 nations made commitments to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

Prior to the opening of COP26, nearly 40 figures from the world’s major religions united at the Vatican issuing a joint appeal to government leaders at COP26, calling for “urgent, radical and responsible action” to drastically curb greenhouse gas emissions and for the world’s wealthiest countries to lead in healing the planet. In their appeal, representatives from across the Christian denominations, both Sunni and Shi’a Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism also pledged to increase awareness of the climate crisis and actions to address it within their own congregations.

“We are currently at a moment of opportunity and truth. We pray that our human family may unite to save our common home before it is too late,” the declaration read. “Future generations will never forgive us if we squander this precious opportunity.”

Faith-based organizations made significant contributions to the meeting.

Advocacy and public policy teams from the World Council of Churches, Lutherans, Evangelicals, Catholics, Muslims and Jews among others, provided updates and information on various events, and partnered in prayers and activities. They met and prayed with leaders who were at the conference and advocated with them asserting their faith teachings required them to meet certain outcomes for the good of the planet and its peoples.

They organized a grassroots march of more than 100,000 people to demonstrate the need and their desire for urgent action.

Some provided their own commitments to further net zero emissions. CommonSpirit, a large U.S. faith-based health care organization, committed to halve its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to arrive at net zero emissions by 2040.

“Urgent action is needed now to reverse climate change,” said Shelly Schlenker from CommonSpirit. “We are committing to an ambitious, science-based goal that leverages advances in the pace and scale of renewable infrastructure.”

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) brought 32 youth, 16 women and 16 men from 25 countries and 28 member churches to promote their climate justice work. “Never before have we had such a broad representation of young people across the communion,” said Elena Cedillo, LWF’s program executive for climate justice.

Evangelical Alliance launched new resources to equip churches to respond to climate crisis with gospel motivation on their website: eauk.org/what-we-do/initiatives/changing-church/climate-change

What did the faith-based organizations want out of this year’s COP26?

- To hold governments to the 1.5° C (2.7° F) target for global warming.

- To have developed nations begin to deliver long-promised funding of \$100 billion annually to developing countries to adapt to climate change and reduce their own emissions.

- To have a new fund established to cover losses and damages already caused by climate change.

- To have the use of fossil fuels consigned to history.

What did they get?

Some progress, but not enough to satisfy them:

- A ramped-up commitment to submit new emissions reduction plans by the end of next year instead of in five years—perceived by some as a major disappointment because it does not address the needs of communities suffering from drought, heatwaves and flooding

- Commitments to cut methane emissions by 30 percent and end deforestation, both by 2030—not enough as projections show that even if the commitments are kept it would allow temperature to rise

1.8° C instead of the targeted 1.5°.

- Promise of money by 2023 instead of 2020.

- A push to double funding for adaptation by 2025 and a recommendation to provide further funding for loss and damages, but no financial mechanism.

- “Acceleration of efforts” on the phase-out of “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies and a watered-down version of the language on coal, changing to “phasing down” of coal rather than “phasing out.”

None of this is obligatory under the convention.

For the first time in the history of climate negotiations, it directly states the need to reduce the use of fossil fuels, though not as forcefully as activists and some delegations hoped.

A last-minute petition from more than 40 Catholic organizations pressed delegates to include in the final agreement “a clear and ambitious timeline” for transition away from fossil fuels. While “phase-down” language did survive in the final document, it did not specify a timeframe for that to happen.

Lutheran World Federation expressed the reaction of many: “As people of faith, we are disappointed but not disheartened by the lack of results from COP26. ... We call on churches worldwide to keep raising their voices for creation and for climate justice.”

Is anything happening in Spokane related to climate change?

350 Spokane focuses on building an effective movement for climate action in the greater Spokane area, promoting a just transition to 100 percent fossil-free energy and a low-carbon economy that works for everyone.

The Sustainability Action Plan approved by Spokane’s City Council in 2021 provides a blueprint for local climate action. As reported in the May 2021 Fig Tree, the plan has three goals: reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 95 percent of 2016 levels by 2050, build a community and economy that are resilient to climate change, and prioritize people who are most at risk of health and financial impacts.

For information, visit lutheranworld.org/content/lwf-delegation-cop26; maryknollogc.org/issues/environmental-justice; oikoumene.org/news/wcc-executive-committee-cop26-statement-november-2021

Episcopal bishop shares learnings during COVID

What we have learned about being the church and engaging in ministry during this time of COVID will shape us for generations to come. We have learned that Episcopalians can make changes quickly and effectively when we need to. We have been reminded that the church is the people not the building, and we also have been reminded of how valuable our buildings are for facilitating our congregations’ ministries.

This year started as we headed into what I now call the winter of our discontent, then into a spring of hopefulness, and the burning off of hopes in the heat of summer. We experienced congregations going into and out of, and into, and out of, and into, in-person worship.

We urged our people to get vaccinated. Vaccines save lives! We had the challenge of the mask mandate returning to those who live in Washington. Currently we see our hospitals struggling with the numbers of patients who have COVID. Clearly, we are in this for the long haul and so the process of engaging in our ministries while keeping our people safe and healthy is ongoing.

Ministries are alive and well in the diocese. Women had an online retreat with more than 60 from around the diocese. Men had zoom Bible study in three groups during the year, joining one another across congregations and are planning a virtual retreat for next month. These efforts have brought our members together in new ways to deepen their life in Christ.

Our Creation Care working group and Beloved Community working group continue to meet and are looking forward to doing more with the larger diocese.

This year we launched four regional Community of Hope groups using zoom. Community of Hope is a Benedictine based pastoral care training. There were already three groups in the diocese. With this initiative, we were able to have groups in every region, with congregations joining for the training. It’s great to have more of our members trained for pastoral care, able to support one another.

These ministries are beautiful examples of our diocese reaching beyond our walls to work together, study together, worship together and serve together.

Bishop Gretchen Rehberg
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

Calendar of Events

- Dec 1 • **Medicare Open Enrollment Clinic**, Spokane County Library District, 1 to 3 p.m. appointments by phone at 509-458-2509 x 219, scl.evanced.info/signup/list?df=list&nd=150&kw=Medicare
- **World AIDS Day** Commemoration and National AIDS Memorial Quilt Display, Spokane AIDS Network, Washington Cracker Building, 304 W. Pacific, 4 to 7 p.m., san-nw.org
- **Lego Menorah**, Southside Senior Center, 3151 E 27th, 5:30 p.m., Chabad of Spokane, 443-0770
- Dec 1-4 • **2021 Winter Festival**, Kendall Yards
- Dec 1-5 • **Chanuka**, Temple Beth Shalom, Congregation Emanu-El, tbsspokane.org
- Dec 1-7 • **Children's Christmas Joy Drive**, Mission Community Outreach Center, 1906 E. Mission Ave., 535-1084, www.4mission.org
- Dec 1-12 • **Tree of Sharing** tables at three area malls open to receive gifts, tosspokanedirector@gmail.com
- **Christmas Tree Elegance**, Spokane Symphony Associates, Historic Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post St., 800-899-1482
- Dec 1-13 • **Gnome Holiday Ornaments**, 12 p.m., scl.evanced.info/signup/list?df=list&nd=150&kw=Gnome
- Dec 1-21 • **Advent Individual Silent Retreats**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 448-1224, ihrc.net
- Dec 1-22 • **Winter Market at the Pavilion**, Wednesdays, 574 N. Howard St., 625-6600, mysokanecity.org/riverfrontspokane/calendar/2021/12/22/winter-market-at-the-pavilion
- Dec 1-23 • **Ornament and Small Works Show**, Spokane Art School, 811 W. Garland Ave., 325-1500
- Dec 1-24 • **Salvation Army's Christmas Red Kettle** Campaign outside area businesses.
- Dec 1-26 • **The Great Outdoors Art Show**, Liberty Building, 402 N. Washington, 327-6920
- Dec 1-31 • **Art Overcomes**, Exploring the healing power of art. The Jacklin Arts & Cultural Center, 405 N. William St., Post Falls, 208-457-8950
- **Staying Home**: Interior Views from the Collection of the Jundt Museum, 200 Desmet Ave., 313-6843
- Dec 1-Jan 2 • **Northwest Winterfest**, Mirabeau Meadows Park, 13500 Mirabeau Pkwy, Spokane Valley, 5 to 9 p.m., 995-7700, mk@genesiscreatescolor.com, northwestwinterfest.com
- **Light Up the Night**, Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard, 625-6600
- Dec 2 • **Holiday Remembrance Service**, Heritage Funeral and Cremation, 508 N. Government Way, 6 p.m., marketing@fairmountmemorial.com, 838-8900
- **Jazz Christmas Concert**, Gonzaga University, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center 7 to 8:30 p.m.
- **Peace and Justice Action Committee**, 5:30 to 7 p.m. slichty@pjals.org
- **Holiday Craft and Sip Fundraiser**, Spokane Domestic Violence Coalition, 5:30 p.m., www.changinglivesandhealinghears.com
- Dec 2-5 • **The Nutcracker**, Spokane Symphony, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, 7:30 p.m., Tues, Fri, Sat and 2 p.m., Sat and Sun
- Dec 2-18 • **Black Lives Matter Artist Grant Exhibition**, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, WSU, 1535 SW Wilson Rd., Pullman, Tues to Sat 335-1910
- Dec 3 • **Community Building Book Launch Party**, Saranac Roof Top 4 to 7 p.m., dana@community-building.org
- Dec 3-4 • **Outdoor European Christmas Market**, McIntire Park, 8930 N. Government Way, Hayden, 208-762-1185, andrea@haydenchamber.org
- Dec 4 • **Winter Wonderland**, Church of the Nazarene, 9004 Country Homes Blvd., 1 to 3:30 p.m., sfnaz.org
- **Taste of Gingerbread**, The ISAAC Foundation, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., theisaacfoundation.configio.com/page/eventsgingerbread-2021
- **Colfax Winterfest Parade**, Fireworks Show and Festivities, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Dec 4-16 • **Christmas Bureau**, Spokane Fair Grounds, 404 Havana St., 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. covid restrictions apply
- Dec 5 • **Advent Lessons and Carols**, St. John's Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., 5 p.m., 838-4277
- **Holy Cannoli**, Festa Italiana, Buon Natale, David's Pizza, 12:30 p.m., caputo@gonzaga.edu
- **Tree Lighting Event**, 15601 E. 24th Ave., Spokane Valley, 4 p.m.
- **Sharing the Dharma Day**, Sravasti Abbey, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. 447-5549, sravastiabbey.org
- **Gingerbread Bake-off**, Christ Kitchen, Northern Quest Casino, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., competition, event goes to 4 p.m., 325-4343
- Dec 6 • **Gonzaga Symphony Orchestra Concert** with Concerto/Aria Competition Winners, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- Dec 7 • **"Around the Table," World Relief Spokane Virtual Gala**, 5:30 p.m., 484-9829
- **Whitworth Symphony Orchestra Fall Concert**, Martin Woldson Theater, 7 p.m., 624-1200 foxtheaterspokane.org
- Dec 8 • **A History of Pandemic Literature**, Lance Rhoades, Spokane Public Library, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., South Hill Library, Virtual
- **"A History of Pandemic Literature,"** 6:30 p.m., events at spokanelibrary.org
- **Stage Left Holiday Patron Gala**, 108 W. Third Ave., Host Molly Allen, 7 to 10 p.m., stagelefttheater.org/tickets
- Dec 9 • **Showing up for Racial Justice**, Peace and Justice Action League, 5:30, slichty@pjals.org
- **Washington Housing Alliance** virtual annual meeting, 2022 priorities, 4:30 to 6 p.m., info@housingactionfund.org, 206-422-9455
- **Legislative Session Kickoff**, Wash. Coalition for Police Accountability, 12 p.m. https://washingtoncoalitionforpoliceaccountability.com/
- **Understanding Israel**, Humanities Washington, 11 p.m., humanities.org
- Dec 9, 12, 19 • **Advent Holiday Concert Series**, Holy Names Music Academy, 2 p.m., YouTube, hnmc.org
- Dec 10 • **Holiday Joy Festivities**, Music Conservatory of Coeur d'Alene, 627 N. Government Way, 7 p.m., cdaconservatory.org
- Dec 10-19 • **Manito Holiday Drive-Thru Lights**, The Friends of Manito Park
- Dec 11 • **Candlelight Christmas Concert**, Gonzaga University, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- **Holiday Market**, Five Mile Prairie Grange 10 a.m.
- **Handel's Messiah Concert**, conducted by Derrick Parker, First Presbyterian Church, 3 to 5 p.m., masking and reservations required, 747-1058, reserve@spokanefpc.org/messiah, https://www.spokanefpc.org/messiah
- Dec 11-12 • **Children's Christmas Joy Drive Event**, Mission Community Outreach Center, 1906 E. Mission Ave., 535-1084, www.4mission.org
- Dec 12 • **Christmas Festival Concert**, Whitworth choirs and student instrumentalists, The Martin Woldson Theater, 3 p.m. foxtheaterspokane.org, 624-1200
- **Candlelight Christmas Concert**, Gonzaga University, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 3 to 4:30 p.m.
- Dec 12, 13 • **Whitworth Chamber Ensemble Concert**, 8 p.m., youtube.be/llcvTtpMjO, youtube.com/whitworthuniversitymusicdepartment, Loree Swegle, 777-3280
- Dec 13 • **Chanukah Parade**, Menorah Lighting, Shopko, 44th & Regal, 4 p.m., Riverfront Park, 5 p.m., rsvp, jewishspokane.com
- Dec 15 • **People for Effective Government Event**: "U.S. Foreign Policy in China: The Future of our Trade and Political Relationship," Gary Locke, 21st Governor of Washington, U.S. Secretary of Commerce and ambassador to China, online, 7 p.m., pegnow.org
- Dec 15 - 18 • **Contemplative Christmas**, Come and Go Open House, Undercliff House, 107 W. 7th Ave., 4 to 8 p.m., info@contemplativechristmas.com
- Dec 17 • **Northwest Brass Program**, Music Conservatory of Coeur d'Alene, 627 N. Government Way, 7 p.m., cdaconservatory.org
- Dec 18 • **BRRZaar**, Terrain local art gift market, 70 booths, River Park Square, 1 a.m. to 8 p.m., terrainspokane.com
- **Posada Navidena**, Latinos En Spokane, West Central Community Center, 1603 N. Belt St., 5 to 8 p.m.
- Dec 18, 19 • **Holiday Pops** with the Spokane Symphony, Morihiko Nakahara conductor, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 2 to 7 p.m., 624-1200, spokanesymphony.org
- **An Out of the Box Christmas**, Kids Drama, Church of the Nazarene, 9004 Country Home, Sat 6 to 8 p.m. and Sun 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., 467-8986, office@sfnaz.org
- Dec 19 • **German American Christmas Service**, Eberhardt Schmidt and the Concordia Choir, St. Mark's Lutheran, 314 E. 24th Ave., 3 p.m., 928-2595
- Dec 20 • **NAACP Membership Meeting**, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com
- Dec 31 • **New Year's Eve: Beethoven's Ninth**, Spokane Symphony, Martin Woldson Theater at The Fox, 621-1200
- Jan 5 • **The Fig Tree Distribution and Mailing**, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 535-4112
- Jan 6 • **The Fig Tree Benefit and Board**, Benefit, noon, Board, 1 to 3 p.m., Zoom, 535-1813
- Tues • **Drop In & Write**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 279-0299, programs@spark-central.org, spark-central.org
- Tues-Sun • **What We Make: Nature as Inspiration**, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC), 2316 W. 1st Ave., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 456-3931
- **Awakenings**: Traditional Canoes and Calling the Salmon Home, MAC, 2316 W. 1st Ave., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. 456-3931
- 1st,3rd Weds, Sats • **Un,ited by Water**, MAC, 12 to 1 p.m., 456-3931
- Weds • **Drop In & Draw**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 5:30 to 7 p.m., 279-0299, programs@spark-central.org, spark-central.org
- **Medical Personnel Appreciation Night**, Golden Handle Project, 111 S. Cedar, 868-0264

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Women's Hearth creates compassionate space for women downtown

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

Women's Hearth celebrates 30 years of presence to women in downtown Spokane. It provides activities, classes, social-service referrals and housing-search case management in a compassionate and supportive environment seven days a week.

Participants have access to phones, computers, internet, healthy food, hygiene supplies, free showers, and a respite room. None of these makes the Hearth a unique program.

The fact that so many participants feel accepted as regular persons and for who they are leads them to recognize the Hearth as a community where they are safe, secure and belong. That makes it a unique program.

The current program director, Susan Tyler-Babkirk speaks warmly of the program, its history and memories.

"The women talk about their memories in both the new and the old building. I have only been here since 2004 and was never in the old building, but I love to hear their stories," she said.

In December 1990, the then Women's Drop-In Center was begun by Holy Names Sister Cathy Beckley, who had a heart for needs of women on the streets. No one could have known that 30 years later it would need to be and continue to be a place of safety, security and community for women in the city.

At first, the Drop-In Center was housed rent free on the first floor of the Jefferson Hotel.

"Our beginnings were very humble," said Sister Cathy. "My phone bill was paid by another woman who participated in a prayer group I directed and everything else was done by volunteers or given to us."

Today, two moves away from the Jefferson Hotel, the Hearth is in its own permanent space at 920 W. 2nd Ave. It has also changed its name from Women's Drop-In Center to a more inviting name, Women's Hearth and has become a program of Transitions.

It remains as it was in 1990, a safe space for women who have experienced poverty, trauma and/or homelessness, offering women a "hearth" of welcome, respect and community as a drop-in day center in downtown Spokane.

In the last year, 900 women accessed the Hearth and 33 of them found permanent housing.

Sarah Lickfold, Transitions development director, describes the Hearth as a unique program in the United States.

"One reason for this is the access women who are homeless have. Hope House, an overnight women's shelter, is now only a few minutes' walk from the Hearth. This means women who stay overnight at Hope House have a safe, secure and family-like place with many resources to come to during the day," she said.

Over and over during the recent Transitions "People Who Care" fundraiser, which featured the Hearth's 30-year anniversary, the women, staff and volunteers emphasized their sense of belonging and the sense of community that made such a positive difference in their lives.

Sister Patty Beattie, the Hearth's second director, while it



Susan Tyler-Babkirk creates environment conducive to hope.

was still the Drop-In Center and on Howard St., described a serendipitous event that helped build a sense of community in her time.

"A woman who was living on the third floor of the hotel where we were, came to us one day because her apartment was being renovated and they were going to start charging her an extra \$500 because she had a pet—a parakeet. She wanted us to take the parakeet because she couldn't afford that extra charge."

At first Sister Patty didn't want to take the bird but she

eventually did only to find out that it gave great comfort to some women who were troubled when they came in.

"A woman would come and sit down in front of the bird, begin talking with it, and it would talk back to her. After a time, I could see her visibly relax, and then come in the rest of the way and engage positively with others."

The bird is no longer there but many other special things take place that help everyone feel that the Hearth is a community where they belong: an

annual spring prom, a knitting and crochet circle, a snow event in the middle of a hot summer, birthday celebrations and as many creative events as staff and volunteers can provide.

In her keynote at the fundraiser, Anjali Dutt, a one-time volunteer at the Hearth, described learning from the women there.

"I learned from them about resilience in the face of compounded inequity, solidarity with others who have experienced harm and deep pain. I learned from the women every day about the joy of feeling that you are part of a community," she said.

In 2020, Anjali, now a college professor and researcher, returned to the Hearth for a research project, interviewing 22 women who participated in the Hearth for varying lengths of time. She found that coming facilitated a sense of agency and capability. The women could better accomplish goals they had in their daily lives. Most important, the women emphasize how powerful it was to be treated like a regular person when they were there.

"To them, we aren't homeless people, we are just people," one woman explained. "We are

accepted for who we are."

Another said, "I can come here and feel like I am a part of some kind of light, some kind of sanctuary, some kind of collaboration, some kind of future."

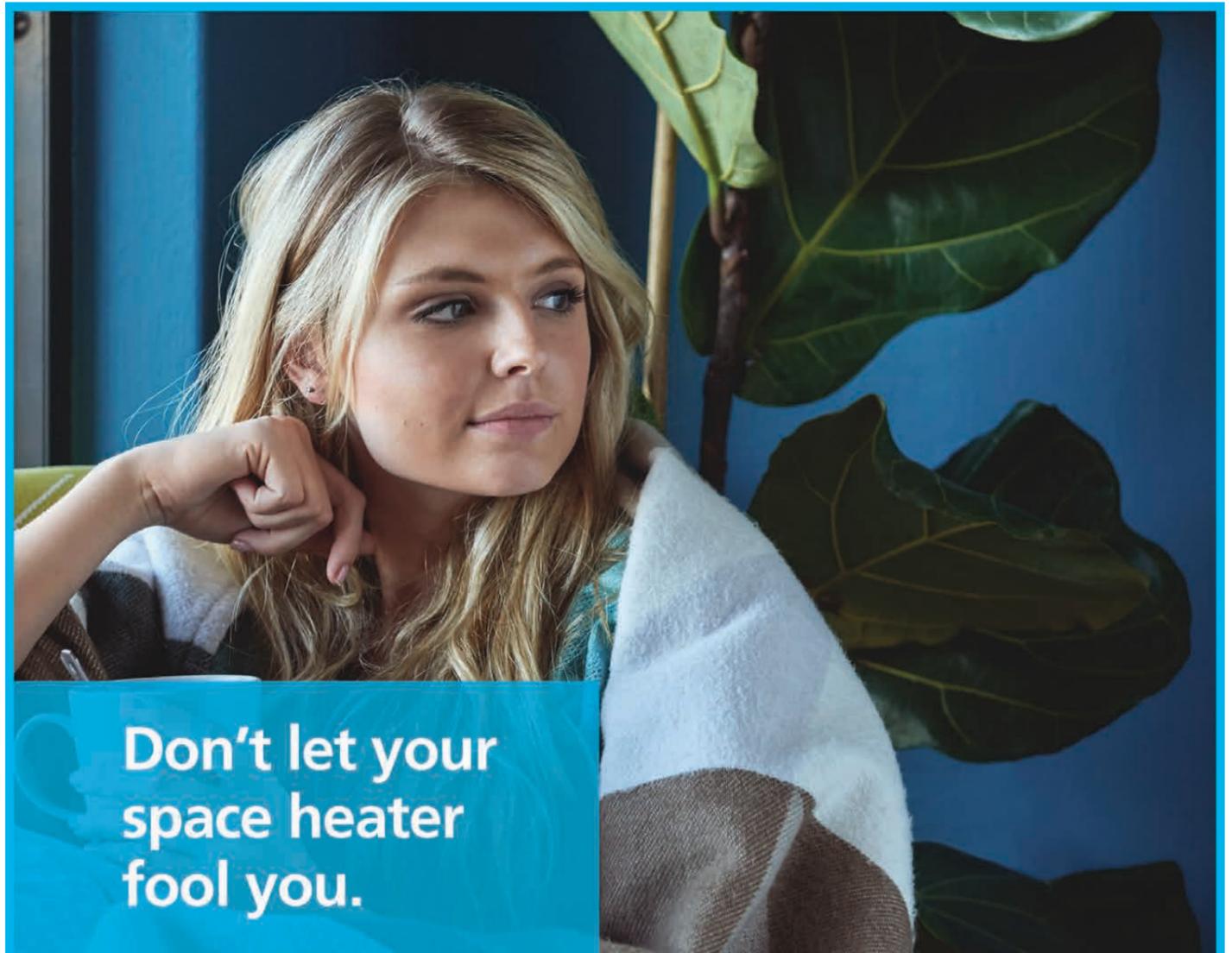
At the fundraiser there were also women and staff from the Hearth who gave their first-hand testimony about what the Hearth meant to them and how it empowered them to live out the ideal that "the fullness of each person is realized in relation to others."

Michelle Schlienger, an alumna from the Hearth shared a poem that expressed how she benefited from the Hearth and its programs at a time when she was suffering from mental illness.

"I felt very grateful that I was there. They always made time for you and accepted you as you were," she said.

Susan said there are volunteer and employment opportunities for those wanting to work in this program.

For information, email info@help4women.org or view the video on the 30 years of Hearth history at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kW_Hi3vyh0&t=87s. Another video is at <https://youtu.be/hV8v1jemGVE>.



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