

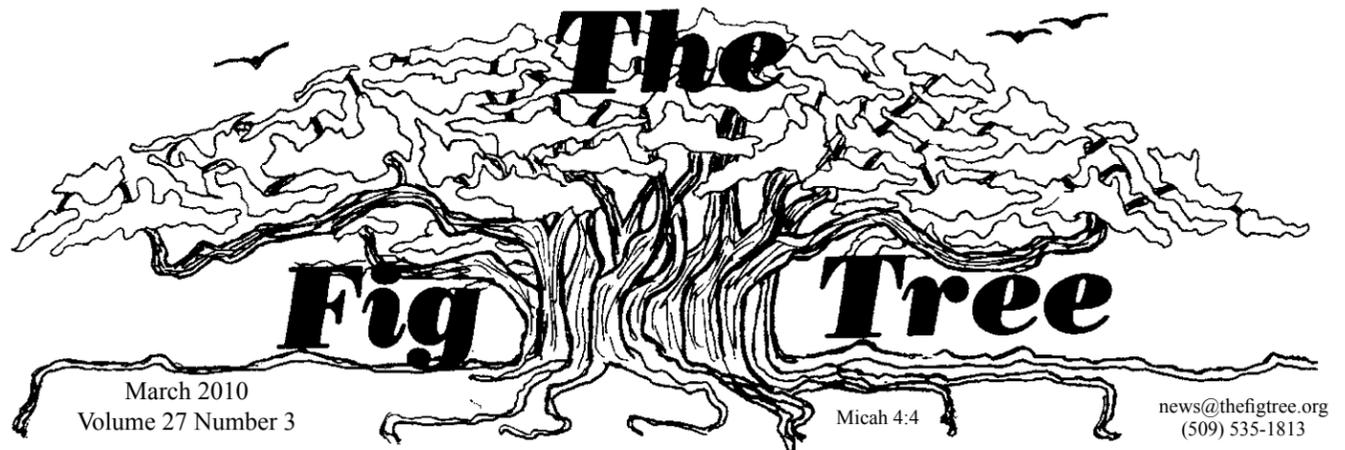
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Teen develops diaper drive - p. 9

Business students learn to address hate - p. 12



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest

online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Faith obligations instill perseverance

By Mary Stamp

In his career from identifying Superfund sites to working on Hanford nuclear waste cleanup, Robb Lowy knows the complexities of fulfilling his religious obligation to do his part to heal the world. From that, as well as from blowing a shofar, he knows the obligations can be difficult to do, so he appreciated the opportunity to help build a well to supply water to a village in Rwanda.

"I'm in the heal-the-earth business—from developing clean water supplies for Native American pueblos with the U.S. Geological Survey, to cleaning contaminated soils for private industry, to identifying solutions for waste management to protect the Columbia River at Hanford," he said.

With religious obligations integral to a life of faith, Robb said that from the Jewish call to heal the earth and people comes Tzedaka—charity in Hebrew. The need to heal the earth has been exhibited through individuals and organizations that, through the generations, have cared for people, organized workers, started labor unions and created social service organizations. The process is ongoing. The process also grows in each



Robb Lowy holds his shofar—one instrument for fulfilling religious obligations.

individual life.

As a waste remediation specialist, he has dealt with toxic wastes from oil refineries, natural gas exploration, mine tailings, unprotected landfills, radioactive tank-waste and 55-gallon barrels dumped in back yards or junk yards.

Politics, economics, people and zero tolerance for error at Hanford limit his ability to apply what he knows as a geologist and environmental engineer to deal with protecting groundwater from leaking tanks, stabilizing waste with a radioactive half-life and finding a "safe" long-term storage site.

In November, he accomplished a tangible task: ensuring a supply of clean drinking water to a remote, 120-person, pygmy village in Rwanda by bringing equipment and helping local workers convert a contaminated surface water spring into an eight-foot-deep well with a distribution pipe.

From there, he knows it's up to the Batwa—the pygmy tribe—what they will do with the new resource.

Through his life, he said that his understanding of Judaism has grown as he has participated in Reform and Conservative synagogue

Continued on page 4

Suggests boycotting big banks

VOICES' leader gave up job to volunteer

To listen to people's stories and help them advocate for themselves so they can move from low- to middle-income, Kiondra Bullock left a full-time job with an insurance company to become full-time volunteer executive director for Voices for Opportunity, Income levels, Childcare, Education and Support (VOICES).

Aware how health care costs impoverish people, she said she "jumped at the opportunity to help people speak for themselves and work themselves out of poverty."

Her husband's work as a hunting, fishing and tour guide in British Columbia provides support

that made her decision possible.

"Growing up Pentecostal, my relationship with God calls me to help people, especially the most vulnerable in society," said Kiondra, a member of Mt. Zion Holiness Pentecostal Church who also volunteers at Calvary Baptist's Soup Kitchen. "I had a good job, but decided to give it up and give back."

"If it's in your power to do that and not be hurt, how can you decide not to help people?" she challenged. "If I can inspire someone to change, I need to give my time."

VOICES' speakers' bureau,

through which people share their personal stories of how public policies affect their lives, is a key part of its public policy education. Working with other organizations, VOICES has recently advocated for lower swimming pool fees, police accountability, tax fairness, human services funding and health care for all.

In addition, VOICES has started two other education programs: Adolescent Women Actively Learning Life's Lessons (AWALL) and Financial Independence Courses.

"VOICES is the place to go to find what issues keep people in poverty," she said. "Our focus is on solutions. Our slogan is that no decision should be made about us without us. We seek to bridge the gap between haves and have nots through education to break the cycle of generational poverty."

VOICES grew out of the Greater Spokane Coalition Against Poverty, which was started by the former Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries in 1988.

After she earned a bachelor's degree in business management in

Continued on page 7

Benefit Breakfast helps support The Fig Tree

"Stories Spread Hope" is the theme for The Fig Tree's annual "Deepening Our Roots" Benefit Breakfast, with a buffet beginning at 7:15 a.m., Wednesday, March 10, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

Community leaders featured in stories over the last year will share why they value the publication in their lives and work. Among the speakers are Madelyn Bafus of Interfaith Hospitality, Jason Clark of Second Harvest, Elisha Mitchell of Emmanuel Family Life Center and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Rev. C.W. Andrews of Calvary Baptist Church, Deidre Jacobson of Miryam's House, Steve Blewett, professor emeritus at Eastern Washington University's School of Journalism.

The event raises funds to build The Fig Tree's capacity to share stories, connect diverse people, promote volunteerism, encourage action, explore alternatives to violence and learn about people who live their faith and values.

"This event is a chance to celebrate the volunteers, advertisers and sponsors who make The Fig Tree possible," said editor Mary Stamp. "Our goal as a media venture is to spread hope that inspires people to be involved and realize they are not alone. Our stories uplift solutions that foster peace, justice and care for creation—common commitments of the faith communities in the region. We also share ideas for resources to strengthen life in the faith and nonprofit communities."

Seating begins at 7 a.m. The buffet starts at 7:15 a.m., and the program begins at 7:30 a.m.

Reservations are due by Friday, March 5.

For information, call 535-1813.

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WCC welcomes Iraqi council of church leaders

With hope and satisfaction, the World Council of Churches (WCC) welcomes news that a Council of Christian Church Leaders of Iraq has been established.

"It is a development that augurs as much for the future of the churches in Iraq as it does for the nation," the WCC general secretary Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit wrote in February.

The council includes patriarchs, archbishops, bishops and heads of churches in Iraq from the 14 Christian communities registered in Iraq since 1982, belonging to the Catholic, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox as well as Protestant traditions.

The aim of the new council is "to unite the opinion, position and decision of the churches in Iraq" on issues related to the churches and the state. It seeks to uphold and strengthen the Christian presence, promoting cooperation and joint action. Founders highlighted the importance of Christian education and dialogue with the Muslim community in order to promote mutual acceptance.

The formation of the council of church leaders comes as sectarian violence, including deadly attacks on Christian citizens and churches, continues to be a major problem in Iraq and is forcing many members of religious minorities to flee their homes.

Iraqi church leaders have pledged to work together to establish an ecumenical forum for all Iraqi church leaders that allows them to speak with a common voice to religious and political authorities inside and outside of Iraq.

Yearbook reports rises, declines in membership

The National Council of Churches' 2010 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches reports membership gains in the Catholic Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Assemblies of God, among others.

The 78th annual edition reports a continuing decline in membership of all mainline denominations. The Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's second largest denomination and long a generator of church growth, reported a decline in membership for the second year in a row, down 0.24 percent to 16,266,920.

The Catholic Church, the nation's largest, at more than 68 million members, also reported a slight membership loss in 2009 but rebounded this year with a robust growth of 1.49 percent.

The Latter-day Saints grew 1.71 percent to 5,873,408 members. The Assemblies of God grew 1.27 percent to 2,863,265 members. Jehovah's Witnesses grew 2 percent to 1,092,169 members, and Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), is up 1.76 percent to 1,053,642.

Churches reporting the highest membership losses are the Presbyterian Church (USA), down 3.28 percent to 2,941,412; American Baptist Churches in the USA, down 2 percent to 1,358,351, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, down 1.92 percent to 4,709,956 members.

Figures reported in the 2010 Yearbook were collected by the churches in 2008 and reported to the Yearbook in 2009. Eleven of the 25 largest churches did not report figures.

The Rev. Eileen Lindner, editor of the yearbook since 1998, said observers attribute membership decline of some churches to "an increasing secularization of American post-modern society, and its impact on liberal religious groups."

She advised caution in assessing the causes of decline: "American society has not experienced the kind and rate of secularization as in the last quarter century in Western Europe. Indeed, American church membership trends have defied gravity particularly when the Pentecostal experience is included," she said.

In addition, the largest plurality of immigrants to the U.S. in the last 50 years have been Christian in their religious affiliation, said Eileen noting that more information is at nccusa.org.

"In an era in which we have come to expect the inevitable advance of secularism in the United States, the influx of robust Christian communities among new immigrants once again amends the topographical map."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Called to Care Conference will be March 20

The area's annual Called to Care Conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Saturday, March 20, at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 1832 W. Dean Ave.

Sponsored by the Faith and Environment Network, the event will focus on local organizing for environmental stewardship and sustainability.

Presenters are Wim Mauldin and Jessica Amundson of the Spokane Alliance and SustainableWorks, a

community development corporation formed by the Alliance to provide energy efficient retrofits for homes, small businesses and non-profits; Leanne Beres and Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry in Seattle, and local sustainability planner Juliet Sinisterra.

Councilman Jon Snyder will give a presentation on what the new federal program, Partnership for Sustainable Communities, might mean for Spokane.

The Faith and Environment Network consists of individuals, faith communities and conservation organizations working together to engage people of faith in caring for the life of the earth and all its creatures, said FEN volunteer Lynda Maraby.

For information, call 206-579-1884, email faithandenvironment@gmail.com or visit faithandenvironmentnetwork.org.

John Temple Bristow is Easter Sunrise preacher

The Rev. John Temple Bristow, pastor of Country Homes Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Spokane, will preach on "If I Were in Charge of the Resurrection" at 6:30 a.m., Sunday, April 4, at Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N. Government Way, for the Ecumenical Community Easter Sunrise Service.

This year, The Fig Tree and Coalition of Progressive Pastors are sponsoring the event, said the Rev. Joyce O'Connor Magee, pastor of Manito United Methodist Church and member of those

organizations.

Having helped plan services in recent years, she suggested that the Interfaith Council transfer the service to those groups. Given their mission, the council's board voted in February to do that.

The service has been planned by successor organizations to the Spokane Council of Churches—the Spokane Christian Coalition, the Spokane Council of Ecumenical Ministries (SCEM) and the Interfaith Council.

The Fig Tree has roots in the coalition and SCEM.

John, who has doctor of ministry and doctor of literature degrees, is author of two books, *What Paul Really Said about Women* and *What the Bible Really Says about Love, Marriage and Family*.

He is an adjunct faculty member at Gonzaga University, teaching the synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark and Luke. He previously taught at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland and is a frequent lecturer on Pauline writings regarding women and faith.

For information, call 535-1813.

Fig Tree plans dialogue on 'Wisdom and Media'

"Wisdom and the Media" is the theme for The Fig Tree's 2010 Faith in Action Dialogue, which will include a presentation, panel discussion and small group sharing from 7 to 9 p.m., Tuesday, April 27, at the Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave.

The session will open with Steve Blewett, journalism professor emeritus at Eastern Washington University, providing an overview of journalism and how it has dealt with key issues over the years and today.

Panelists will reflect on avenues and barriers for sharing information and understanding among groups, and between groups and the media. The panelists are Susan English, associate director of journalism at Gonzaga University and member of the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media; the Very Rev. Bill Ellis of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John; the Rev. Scott Kinder-Pyle of Latah Valley Presbyterian Church; the Rev. Joyce O'Connor Magee of Manito United Methodist Church, and the Rev. Happy Watkins of

New Hope Baptist Church.

Small-group table discussions about how media coverage of faith empowers and how does it

disempowers faith communities and people in their faith journeys will follow.

For information, call 535-1813.



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Wim Mauldin and Jessica Amundson, Spokane Alliance & Sustainable Works

Jessie Dye and Leanne Beres from Earth Ministry, Seattle
Juliet Sinisterra, Local Sustainability Planner
Jon Snyder, Spokane City Council Member

Saturday, March 20, 2010

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
1832 W Dean Ave. - West Central Spokane

Registration (includes lunch) \$20 for individuals
\$15 for individuals from groups with 3 or more

For more information or to register,
contact Lynda Maraby at (206) 579-1884
or faithandenvironment@gmail.com

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Church World Service
& the Interfaith Council
of the Inland Northwest



Second Harvest expands mobile food distribution

Second Harvest has expanded its Mobile Food Distribution program to make fresh, perishable and frozen foods available to people in need.

It partners with local churches, schools and other community organizations to provide a host site with space and volunteers, said Drew Meuer, who is coordinating the program.

"Mobile food distributions do not have the requirement that those attending live in the community, which is often the case

using a local food bank, meal site or food pantry," she said. "Folks attending the mobile food bank must only have a need for food. Proof of income is not required and the person signing in need only state the number of members in the household and a phone number for use in case of a food recall."

In March, there will be four events in Spokane County. They are:

- From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesday, March 9, at East Valley Bap-

tist Church, 14516 E. Wellesley in Spokane Valley;

- From noon to 2 p.m., Friday, March 12, at Millwood Presbyterian, 3223 N. Marguerite Rd. in Spokane Valley;

- From 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 16, at Northeast Youth Center, 3004 E. Queen in Spokane, and

- From noon to 2 p.m., Tuesday, March 23, at Mid-City Concerns, 1222 W. 2nd Ave. in downtown Spokane.

For information, call 534-6678.

Buddhist monk urges action

When Geshe Thupten Phelgye, a Buddhist monk in the tradition of the Dalai Lama, was in Spokane last summer, he challenged people not just to talk about compassion but to act on it, said Joan Broeckling, who is organizing a March workshop on "Compassion in Action" with One Peace, Many Paths, the Universal Compassion Movement, the Interfaith Council and the Eastern Washington University Compassionate Interfaith Society.

It will be held from 2 to 5:30 p.m., Sunday, March 21, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr.

It connects organizations that need volunteers with people who feel compassion, but are unsure how to act on it. It will include a volunteer fair, a presentation of the Charter for Compassion, talk by Geshe Phelgye, a "showcase" of nine organizations/programs, and small group sessions for attendees to meet with the representatives of the nine organizations, said Joan.

The organizations to be showcased include: Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Habitat for Humanity, St. Margaret's Shelter, the Community Warehouse, Volunteers of America, Goodwill's GoodGuides, the Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Service, Spokane Animal and the Calvary Baptist Soup Kitchen.

"We chose a variety of organizations so there would be something for everyone—short and long term commitments, volunteer jobs involving people contact as well as skills such as gardening, cooking, driving, cleaning, office work, homeless people, young people and animals.

Geshe Phelgye will speak at several locations for Inland Northwest groups from March 9 to April 14. He finished Buddhist studies in 1991 and became a PhD in Buddhist philosophy. He has worked six years with the Sulha Peace Project in the Middle East, engaging Jews, Muslims and Christians in dialogue.

For information, email onepeacemanypaths@gmail.com

Three Jesuits lead 2010 Novena of Grace programs

Three Jesuit priests will lead the 2010 Novena of Grace, nine days of prayer and worship on "From the Heart of the Church to the Frontiers" Saturday, March 6, through Sunday, March 14, at St. Aloysius Church, 330 E. Boone.

The church will offer three daily services: 12:15 (12:30 Sundays), 3:30, and 5:15 p.m. In keeping with Lent, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will begin 45 minutes before each service.

Each presenter, Fr. Paul Cochran, Fr. Bob Erickson and Fr. Chuck Schmitz, has engaged in outreach ministry as Jesuits.

Fr. Paul, who grew up in Walla Walla, entered the Society of Jesus in 1982 and was ordained in 1994. His priestly formation took him to Toronto, Alaska and Nigeria. Most of his ministry has been with Native peoples of Western Alaska. Last July, he became Superior of the Regis Jesuit Community in Spokane, through which he serves the Oregon Province and its aging population.

Fr. Bob grew up in Wenatchee,

entered the Society in 1964 and was ordained at St. Aloysius in 1974. In addition to parish ministry in Woodburn, Ore., and at St. Aloysius, he served six years among the Bemba tribe in Zambia, Africa, 13 years on the Colville Reservation, and eight years ministering to the Gros Ventres (White Clay) and Assiniboine (Nakoda) Indians in Montana.

Fr. Chuck, who grew up in Seattle, was ordained at St. Aloysius in 1972. He has served ministries in the Oregon Province, as well as in Zambia, and frequently visited

Central America and Mexico as liaison between U.S. Jesuits and apostolates in those regions.

He has been director of campus ministry at Seattle University, pastor in several parishes, administrator with the Jesuit Provincial, superior of the Jesuit Community and director of Ignatian Spirituality for the Diocese of Yakima.

During this Novena, he will focus on the gifts and challenges of the Hispanic ministry for the Catholic Church in the U.S.

For information, call 313-5896.

Earth Day marks its 40th year

Plans are underway to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day in Spokane from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, April 17, on Main St., between Browne and Division. There will be booths, vendors and performers outside from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and music and vendors inside the Community Building at 35 W. Main until midnight.

Registration forms for booths,

vendors and performers are due by March 19.

Activities include the Procession of the Species with children in costumes, art, films and tours of the Main Market, the Community Building and the certified-green Saranac Building.

For information, call 879-9337 or email earthdayspokane@gmail.com.



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Tangible project in Rwanda still requires sensitivity to people

Continued from page 1
 functions—while growing up on Long Island, during a two-year journey around the United States, and in his professional career in New Mexico and Washington.

Living outdoors or under field conditions for much of his career as a geologist and environmental engineer and living on a houseboat three days a week when he is in Richland, he appreciates nature. There he has the Columbia River is his “back yard” and the Bate-man Island Wildlife Refuge is his “front yard.”

After graduating in 1972 from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y., with a degree in geology, he worked two years as a machinist, saved \$2,000 and used that money to travel around the United States.

When his money ran out in New Mexico, he began doing odd jobs in Albuquerque and then began his career working with the U.S. Geological Survey on a water resource development project to protect indigenous water rights in Northern New Mexico.

Robb worked an environmental regulator for the State Environmental Protection Agency, while finishing a master’s degree in geology at the University of New Mexico.

With New Mexico’s Superfund Program, he worked three years to identify hazardous waste sites that threatened groundwater and soils. His work entailed driving around the state and Indian reservations to find waste sites, including four Superfund sites he put on the national registry for cleanup. Along the way, he earned a second master’s degree in environmental engineering.

Through a private consulting firm he joined in 1987, he assisted clients such as the U.S. Department of Energy, private firms, petroleum companies, mining concerns and the city of Albuquerque on environmental restoration. He has worked on projects in seven states where remediation efforts are now underway.

In 1990, Robb moved to Richland to help start a field office for Los Alamos Technical Associates (LATA), an engineering firm that does waste investigation and remediation. While at LATA, he worked on developing treatment and action strategies to manage radioactive wastes at Hanford.

He started his own small business, TDP Roberts Corporation, in 2000 to work as an environmental consultant throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Over his career, he has seen many kinds of hazardous, toxic, chemical and radioactive contamination—PCPs, PCBs, dioxin,

gasoline spills, radioactive mining sites and uranium tailings.

“It is hard to reconcile that to clean one site, we may make a previously clean site dirty,” he observed.

He understands the frustration of finding clean energy sources and returning land and water to a pristine state.

For example, while some consider coal a “clean” energy source, Robb said large quantities of radioactive materials can be released when it is burned to generate electricity.

Similarly while some consider nuclear energy a “clean” alternative, the problem of what to do with the radioactive waste remains.

While he considers nuclear energy an effective way to generate energy the nation demands, he said the cleanup processes complicate that source.

“We have not agreed on a safe disposal repository for radioactive waste,” he said. “While Yucca Mountain could be engineered to be a safe repository, it has been rejected because of politics and economics.”

“Even though the radioactivity of nuclear waste dissipates over time through radioactive decay,” he said, “the waste can’t be stored at Hanford long term.”

“It can’t reside in dry soil, because rain will transport it down 200 feet into the groundwater,” Robb said. “The creation of artificial lakes or ponds as part of processing at Hanford has also accelerated the migration of contaminants to the groundwater.”

“It can’t remain in single-shell tanks, because they have exceeded their design life—66 of the 149 single-shell tanks are suspected to be leaking as they have reached the end of their 50-year life span. We are running out of storage capacity in high-integrity double-shell tanks built to replace the single-shell tanks,” he said.

Government requirements have eliminated options of stabilizing radioactive waste in glass, as France does, for lack of proof it would be stable for 10,000 years, and of reprocessing waste to separate and reuse part of spent fuel for medical research or energy production in breeder or thermal

reactors.

“Meanwhile, use of nuclear energy continues to generate more waste, while more than 100 million gallons of waste sit in tanks at different DOE sites,” he said.

In the context of that frustration, Robb appreciates the tangible results in Rwanda.

In 2008, he joined the Healing Hearts Northwest Project of UJAMAA-Medical Connections, a medical and public-health organization that organized Spokane doctors to travel to Rwanda six times to help rebuild the medical infrastructure destroyed in the 1994 genocide. He is UJAMAA’s only engineer.

In November, Robb went to Rwanda with funds he raised to help build a well and distribution system to provide clean water for the village of Bwiza.

It took little money. He hired local villagers to dig a well downstream of an existing spring. Villagers no longer have to spend hours walking down a steep trail to slowly fill four-gallon containers with a cup from a trickling surface spring that is contaminated with fecal bacteria, worms and parasites from the soil. They no longer have to carry the water back up to their homes.

Robb designed the project and paid \$50—\$1 a day each for 10 village men for five days—to dig the well, glean well construction materials from nearby hills and install a rock-lined distribution pipe-in-channel to provide water on demand. The water flows at a rate so villagers can fill a four-gallon can in 10 minutes.

“That gives people more time to tend their fields, improve their agricultural plots, care for goat herds, and sustain their culture,” he said. “I have given them the gift of time. It’s up to them how they spend it.”

He also brought other simple gifts to help improve their standard of living and increase their life expectancy, which now averages 45 years.

He and other humanitarian workers supplied blankets to keep people warm at night.

“We thought they would want mosquito nets to fight malaria, but villagers said malaria does not concern them, because most

already have it and the nets easily catch fire from cooking fires they maintain in their grass huts.

“Although at the equator, Rwanda is 6,000 feet above sea level and it can be cold at night. That’s an example of why we need to work with the village council to identify meaningful improvements—not just those we think are necessary,” he said.

Knowing that people are exposed to soil-borne diseases through their bare feet as they walk to school or the market, or work in fields, Robb and the team have delivered donated flip-flop sandals, so children can attend school and people can work. They have also supplied school uniforms, so children can meet the school dress code.

Helping villagers is more than charity.

“The tribal leader insisted that, for children to receive a uniform so they can attend school, parents must guarantee their child will eat one meal a day. With food, children can keep alert, learn and use their knowledge to benefit their family,” Robb said. “Traditionally, parents eat first so they can work, knowing they can have more children to replace those who die.”

Robb hopes his assistance will help improve the village’s safety and quality of life, just as he hopes applying his geological and engineering skills to hazardous and nuclear waste cleanup will improve safety and quality of life here, fulfilling his mission to “heal-the-world.”

For information, call 509-308-578 or email robb_lowy@TD-PRoberts.com.

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‘From the Heart of the Church to the Frontiers’

2010 Presenters:



Fr. Paul Cochran, SJ



Fr. Bob Erickson SJ



Fr. Chuck Schmitz, SJ

Daily Novena Services: 12:15 p.m. Prayer Service (12:30 p.m. Sundays)
 3:30 p.m. Benediction Service
 5:15 p.m. Mass

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Advocates discuss old and new ways to share ideas with elected officials

Leaders from Catholic Charities of Spokane (CCS), the Washington Association of Churches (WAC), the Lutheran Public Policy Office (LPPO) and the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) gave updates on proposed legislation and an overview of changes in advocacy in presentations at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference Jan. 30.

The pervasiveness of electronic media means that's how most constituents communicate with their elected officials, said Scott Cooper, director of parish social ministries with CCS.

"People still write letters, make phone calls, sign petitions and visit legislators, but the weight has shifted to electronic and email communication," he said. "It requires less time than writing a letter or phoning, so elected officials assign less weight to email than phone calls, which have less weight than a letter, which has less weight than a visit."

Building a relationship with an official is key, he said. He often emails, but has been to Olympia and met legislators.

Because legislators track the number of emails, they have impact, said Paul Benz of LPPO.

Scott suggested thanking legislators "when they vote the way you requested,

letting them know you are keeping an eye on what they do. Persistence and patience for the long haul are important."

Understanding how media influence perceptions of problems and options for solutions is important, said Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp.

Dominican Sister Sharon Park of the WSCC also pointed to the importance of contacting the media, given the influence it has on decision making and voting.

Malcolm Haworth, coordinator for the conference, suggested building relationships with legislators by helping with their election campaigns.

From helping people seeking help, Sister Sharon and Donna Christensen of the WSCC said Catholic Charities is aware of the intersection of policy and need.

"Many issues, on which the faith community has worked for 30 years to assure delivery of social services to the vulnerable, face being cut from the budget this year and next because of the budget deficit," said Sr. Sharon.

"We see more people in food banks and shelters. Catholic Charities knows the impact on the neediest," she said. "We have worked for years to protect General Assistance to the Unemployable (GAU), which faces cuts again this year."

The Governor's second proposed budget would restore programs if there are additional revenues, she said.

Donna added that "any of us could face a catastrophic medical problem, lose our assets and be unable to work. If someone on GAU loses benefits, it also affects agencies and churches that serve GAU clients in housing programs or shelters."

"It means churches may need to pick up more, but churches can't pick up some things, like the basic subsistence GAU offers or health care," said Sr. Sharon.

Volunteer Chore Services (VCS), initiated in 1981, was cut completely in the first budget. VCS keeps senior in their homes, with volunteers doing household chores. Sr. Sharon said if seniors cannot stay in their homes, it costs the state substantially more if they have to go to a nursing home. Catholic Community Services, which have the state contract to connect volunteers with seniors, has developed software to manage volunteer and recipient information.

In addition to chores, Volunteer Chore Services helps people manage finances and find legal and financial advice from retired lawyers and financial advisors.

The Housing Trust Fund—reduced from \$200 million to \$100 million in

2009—has been spent, leaving nothing for 2010. Sr. Sharon suggested people invite legislators to visit transitional housing, homeless shelters and food banks, so they see the impact of cutting programs such as Basic Health Care more than half.

"People with mental health, drug and alcohol problems have no voice unless we in the churches advocate for them," she said. "We know the stories and can make a difference by telling them to legislators. Faith motivates us, but we also need to know costs and facts, so we can speak to those who only look at money."

Alice Woldt, transitional executive director of the WAC, told of lifting up Gospel values by building coalitions to have influence. She spoke of the power of individuals in the faith community when they organize—providing a table for letter writing during coffee hour.

"As revenues fall and costs increase, fewer can pay for health insurance, increasing the demand for basic health coverage," she said. "We seek to prevent an erosion in quality schools, affordable health care, services to elderly and environmental cleanup."

For information, call 206-625-9790.

Photos and Bishop Martin Wells' presentation at www.thefigtree.org.

Blowing shofar helps people fulfill their obligation to hear it

Robb Lowy considers his learning to blow the shofar to help lead services at Congregation Beth Shalom in Richland as an example of how living one's faith can be challenging.

With just 50 families and no rabbi, the members must help lead the services. Because everyone had to take on a role at High Holy Day services, he started blowing the shofar, a curved ram's horn with a hole at the tip.

Even for him, a former French horn player, the task was not easy. There is no mouthpiece, so he had to learn how to use his throat and lips to set up vibrations to resonate through the horn.

"It only took a few weeks to figure out but over 15 years to get good at," he said.

Traditionally, the shofar is blown publicly only three times a year: to welcome day one and day two of Rosh Hashanah—the Jewish New Year in September—and one blast to announce the end of

Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement in September or October.

In ancient days at the Temple in Jerusalem, the shofar was used more frequently. It announced festivals, holidays and the new moon. Robb also blows the shofar at the annual Spokane interfaith Thanksgiving service each November.

"Our sages say there is no commandment to blow the shofar, only to hear it," he said. "Without me blowing it, the people cannot fulfill the 'Mitzvah'—commandment or good deed—of hearing it. One of our wise men, known as the Rambam, explained that blowing the shofar is a call to action—for sleepers to awaken and arise. It is a call to examine our behavior and become the best we can be."

When he stays in Spokane, Robb attends Temple Beth Shalom, where he shares the Ba'al Tekiah—shofar blower—duties with Ron Grossman.

"Our shofars blend beautifully in harmony," he said, noting that "when I am spiritually healthy, the blasts come out cleaner."

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Award is catalyst for further commitment to human rights efforts

By Yvonne Lopez-Morton

While working to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in both her professional and personal life, Joan Menzies has a new catalyst for continuing that commitment as she retires this month from more than 30 years at Washington State University in Pullman and Spokane.

After receiving the 2009 Carl Maxey Social Justice Award at the Women of Achievement Luncheon last fall, she agreed to join the YWCA's Social Justice Committee to help them pursue their mission of eliminating racism.

With the award, Joan believes, comes accountability and a challenge to protect human rights.

While believing Spokane's heart is in the right place when it comes to diversity and eliminating racism, she knows there is still much work to be done.

"I have talked to people of color in the community who feel that while we have made progress, Spokane is not a welcoming place for them," Joan said.

The committee is working to help the YWCA address how it will move forward to acknowledge racism and how the organization can play a key community role in ending discrimination.

One effort will be to join in the national YWCA's "Stand Against Racism" Day on April 30. The local YWCA has gathered people involved in diversity issues to plan the day's activities.

Along with her involvement with the committee, Joan has accepted an invitation to join the YWCA Board of Directors, beginning this month.

A member of St. Ann's Catholic Church in East Central Spokane, she believes faith and social justice go hand in hand. For her, being Christian or a person of any faith is synonymous with believing "we should love one another and value each person."

Joan grew up in California, moving as her father was promoted in a national retail store.

"Even as a child, I had a foundation with my parents who looked at fairness and discussed injustices they observed. I remember my father being outraged about how a neighboring Hispanic family was treated," Joan said.

In 1962, after her Catholic high school studies in La Puente, Calif., Joan attended local community colleges and ended up at California Polytechnic where she earned a bachelor's degree in social sciences. During this time, she met her husband, Doug, who was studying to be an architect. They married in 1966 after they graduated.

The first years of their married



Joan Menzies continues quest to promote diversity.

Photo by Yvonne Lopez-Morton

life mirrored the family moves of her youth as she and Doug traveled around the country pursuing careers and education.

They went from Pacific Grove, Calif., to Doug's hometown near Chicago, to Auburn, Ala., where Doug secured a teaching job.

During her three years in the South, she was surprised by visible signs of discrimination, a deep-rooted bias beneath the surface of a cordial environment.

"I thought things had changed," she said "until I saw separate waiting rooms for whites and African Americans," she said.

"I was in Alabama when Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were murdered and remember people cheering. I knew I didn't want my two daughters raised in a world that hated."

The Menzies left the South for a year in Minneapolis where Doug earned a master's degree at the University of Minnesota. Then they returned to California.

While he worked as an architect, she filled her time with her daughters and volunteering. A lifelong Catholic, Joan taught religious education, volunteered at a co-op preschool and decided to return to school to earn her master's degree at California State University in Fullerton.

In 1978, the Menzies moved to Pullman when Doug accepted a teaching position at Washington State University.

There, Joan attended Sacred Heart Catholic Church where she served on the parish council. She said the "open, progressive parish" encouraged women to take leadership roles.

She started her career at WSU in student affairs positions from 1984. From 1991 to 1996, she

was an assistant dean of students, associate director of orientation and interim director of new student orientation.

In her work, Joan determined she needed to learn more about diversity and social justice as she became aware of the challenges students of color faced in their daily lives. As she served as staff advisor for various student organizations, she also made a commitment to help students feel comfortable and supported.

As part of a team at WSU, she participated in a conflict resolution program that gave students, staff and faculty an opportunity to bring people together to talk, listen and resolve their conflicts.

"We addressed everything from two employees who could not work together to students who needed intervention and a neutral party who would facilitate a dialogue and allow students to come up with solutions," she said.

In 1996, the Menzies moved to Spokane, where she continued her work with WSU at the Riverpoint campus in downtown Spokane.

After arriving in Spokane Joan was drawn deeper into activism when black students at Gonzaga University's Law School were targets of hate. Incidents ranged from threatening phone calls and letters to racist graffiti.

Joan joined a committee of Gonzaga and community people to address the incidents. As a result the Task Force on Race Relations (TFRR) was established. She was a founding member.

She also was a key player in organizing the TFRR's annual Congress of Race Relations, which brought together students, educators and community members to dialogue and identify ways

to eliminate racism.

The group, later renamed the Task Force on Human Relations, has since disbanded, but its commitment continues through various diversity-focused initiatives in the community and the ongoing commitment of Joan and other members of the TFHR.

Joan, who served on the WSU Diversity Committee, has volunteered in Spokane to help plan and participate in Unity in the Community, Japan Week, the Asian Cultural Awareness Month, the Spokane Minority Advisory and

Resource Team (SMART), the annual Get Connected Student of Color Career Day and many other activities and initiatives that both celebrate and address diversity.

"I was fortunate that WSU supported the work I did to address diversity and identify solutions to discrimination," Joan said.

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VOICES targets teen girls with learning lessons for life beyond poverty

Continued from page 1
 1989 from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Mo., and a master's in organizational communication in 1991 from the University of Missouri in Columbia, Mo., Kiondra did what she was supposed to do: go back to her hometown, Caruthersville, Mo., and make life better for the people there.

As executive director of Southeast Missouri Weed and Seed, she worked eight years in 29 cities "to weed out negative influences and seed positive reinforcement."

In 1995, she met and married her husband, Donald, but continued to live in Caruthersville until 2003, when she moved to Spokane to be closer to his work in Cranbrook, B.C. She worked as diversity mediator with an insurance company, handling personnel discrimination claims in Washington, Oregon and Alaska.

When her daughter, now 18, experienced discrimination at school, Kiondra first learned about VOICES. She gathered 200 parents in March 2005 to share their stories of discrimination and organized classes to help them understand school policies on discrimination.

"My goal was to help parents be strong and powerful, armed with knowledge," she said.

Now she transfers that commitment to VOICES.

Financial independence courses help people understand credit and know they can ask creditors to accept payments they can afford—even \$10 a month. The classes teach budgeting and limiting use of credit cards.

The Adolescent Women Actively Learning Life's Lessons (AWALL) course began Feb. 16, teaching 10 teen girls each six-week session, with a goal of preparing 70 girls a year for life beyond high school.

Women leaders teach self-esteem, self-care and dressing for success; college, vocational school and job readiness; nutrition and health; financial planning, and how to advocate for oneself.

The program includes a two-week job shadow with a woman in a career the participant wants to pursue. The girl job shadows two hours a day after school four days a week. The fifth day, the professional woman life-shadows the girl to see how she lives, what she does and what she eats.

Participants prepare three-year plans, outlining steps they need to take to reach their goals.

Graduates are matched with mentors, who guide girls to achieve their goals.

"Mentoring programs have a high turnover and drop out rates, because most mentees are not ready for mentoring, so they need a voice in how they want to be mentored," Kiondra said.

VOICES seeks more volunteer mentors to have a large enough pool for effective matches. It will



Kiondra Bullock seeks to give voice to people in poverty.

train the mentors.

Mentors meet the girls once a week for a year to guide them to make good choices and to introduce them to cultural and recreational activities, Kiondra said.

Through Teen-Aid, Whitworth students will tutor the girls twice a week, and the girls will spend one day a week helping a nonprofit organization as a way to give back to the community.

"We don't need to be wealthy to give. Time is valuable," she said.

"We hope this program breaks barriers of generations living in poverty—helping reduce teen dropout, pregnancy and delinquency rates," she said. "We want to teach the next generation of young women to dream so they will teach their children and their children's children to dream, so they move beyond poverty."

Kiondra is writing grants and VOICES is planning a Benefit Luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Thursday, April 29, at the Spokane Masonic Center, 1108 W. Riverside, to raise money for AWALL.

Concerned that policy changes in recent years have undermined safety nets for low-income people, Kiondra said that VOICES' only

paid staff member, Cheryl Amann, has worked part time for five years, starting as a public policy advocate and education intern. Since earning a master's degree in social work at Eastern Washington University in June 2009, she continues to work part time with her salary supplemented by disability payments.

She helps train the speakers, who give presentations to colleges, businesses, congregations and conferences.

"Empowering people to tell their stories empowers them to learn about the codes related to their benefits and how to advocate for themselves when they are denied benefits," Cheryl said.

Kiondra said VOICES' constituency is changing and growing because of the economy. It has about 500 supporters and 40 active core members.

"People who had traditionally not used low-income services are now unemployed, using food stamps and going to the Department of Social and Health Services," she said. "They are realizing the struggle of people in poverty. They had no idea how much advocacy low-income people need until they experienced it."

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"Most poor people who go to organizations for help need an ear," said Kiondra, who often stays after meetings end at 7 p.m., talking with people until 10 p.m.

"When I give time, it's the time I would want if I were in need," she said. "I want to know someone cares about me, where I'm going, what I want to become and how I can get there."

"I can't pray about something and ask God to change it unless I am willing to help do it," she said. "So I ask God to help me do what I can. I put my life in God's hands to mold me and tell me what to do to make it happen."

For example, aware that many people who do not have money are depressed because they lack options, she is challenging greedy banks that received billions of stimulus dollars, but are not loaning to low-income people.

Because credit unions and local banks invest in their communities and give loans to lower-income people, she likes the Move Your Money Movement, inviting people to move their money from big mainstream banks to credit unions and community banks.

She moved her money to send a message to the big banks by her boycott, a method that worked in the civil rights movement.

"Why would we invest in a bank that puts our money into its executives' pockets?" she asked. "If everyone moved their money, it would make a difference."

"Proverbs 22:22 and 18:23 warn the rich not to rob the poor," she said, noting that payday lenders charging 391 percent interest rob the poor, as do banks that charge high interest for the poor and low interest for the wealthy.

While many wealthy people want to do right, she said, too many have lost their ideals and succumb to greed. Kiondra challenges people to become informed, organize, speak out and act.

For information, call 326-4135, email kiondra@spokanevoices.org or visit spokanevoices.org.

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With sustainable model

Farmer seeks to attract more young farmers

Seeking to draw more people into farming, Seth Williams' sustainable agriculture project is converting 1,100 acres of his family's W-7—for Williams Seven—farmland near Edwall into a permaculture farm that complements natural ecology.

Believing a sustainable food system is key to a sustainable society, he said food affects health, which affects social and economic wellbeing.

Seth, 40, said sustainable agriculture integrates natural biological cycles, protects soil fertility and animal health, optimizes use of renewable resources, provides dependable farm income, enhances family farming and farm communities, and reduces the adverse impact of conventional farming on health, safety, wildlife, water quality and the environment.

Seth, a second-generation organic farmer and grandson of conventional wheat farmers, is transforming a dryland grain farm and pine-sage forest, leaving half in natural forest and using the other half for organic wheat, cattle and produce. He is also using green building and energy techniques to rebuild the homestead, and will create more green homesteads and an intentional community.

Although he is the third generation of his family on the land, he lived in Spokane with his mother until he was 15, spending summers, vacations and holidays at the farm. In his sophomore year at Lewis and Clark High School, he saw his future in farming and living in an intentional community, so he moved to Edwall and finished high school at Cheney High School.

In 1992 after farming a few years, he went to the Evergreen State College in Olympia three years, focusing on Native American studies and sustainable agriculture. Not seeing a major emerge, he returned to the farm.

His father, Huw Williams, one of the founders of Tolstoy farm on family land near Reardan, returned from that project to his family farm to start another intentional, alternative farm, called Earth Cyclers. It includes cattle in community-based organic and experimental agriculture.

Seth said his grandmother's large, organic vegetable garden inspired "his passion for good food and self-reliance."

In the 1960s and 1970s, his father began to reduce his use of fossil fuel, pesticides and fertilizers, and started an intentional community to bring more people onto the land.

Four years ago, Seth was part of Earth Cyclers, but with a change in ownership, some land came back from a lease at the Appel farm, part of W-7 Farms five miles down the road. There he is developing his own model, working 575 acres and managing 520 acres nearby in pine forest.



Seth Williams is the only one of 18 grandchildren farming.

Permaculture, he explained further, is permanent agriculture that uses perennial crops that do not require tilling or disturbing the soil. His commitment to sustainable agriculture includes improving wildlife habitat.

"It's a holistic approach to self-sustaining agriculture with permanent plants and systems. I believe use of toxic sprays goes against principles of working with nature," he said contrasting his approach to farmers who seek to kill every weed.

In the last 10 years, Seth said federal and state governments began supporting more incentives for organic and sustainable farms, encouraging wildlife habitat and practices that cut chemical use.

He has planted 200 acres in native grass and alfalfa in a 10-year contract with the Conservation Reserve Program.

"I can't take a crop from it or disturb it," he said. "I leave it wild, but I can graze or hay it once in the 10 years. I put up perch poles for hawks and owls that keep rodents down and put in wildlife watering devices to catch and hold water for critters."

"I rotate grain into 20 to 40 acres to sell," he said. "Much of the W-7 Farms was already organic, because we were managing it for hay and pasture."

Last year was the first year the whole farm was certified by Washington State as organic. It takes three years to transition land from non-organic to organic.

As an organic farmer, he is responsible not to let weeds spread—go to seed—to his neighbors' land, just as his neighbors have to take care that their spray does not drift. In the 1990s, there was drift on an organic alfalfa field and it had to be decertified for three years, he said.

Seth also raises grass-fed beef he sells directly to people in quarters or halves. He grows a small amount of wheat straw, plus oats, barley and rye, and hay

for cows.

He sells most of his produce, grains and beef through direct contacts with long-term customers and to consumers through Main Market and listings in organic directories and Craig's list.

He lives simply, growing and preserving much of his food, including fruits, vegetables, goat milk and yogurt.

Having learned mechanical and building skills growing up, he does repairs on equipment and is restoring the farmhouse and farm buildings.

There are few organic farmers on the land around Edwall, which has a chemical company, a church and now a Christian school, using the former public school building when the Edwall school merged with Reardan in the 1980s.

"Church gave me a good foundation for being part of a rural community with many people living outside town on their farms, spread out with their work all week and seeing each other once a week at church," said Seth, who attends Edwall United Methodist Church, where his grandparents were active.

"They set an example by practicing their faith every day, helping others to make the world a better place," he said.

"Most people are independent, but farm the way they have for years, following chemical company formulas and government guidelines for treating the soil," he said, noting that some conventional farmers, like his grandparents, now have organic vegetable gardens.

"My goal is to heal the planet with better farming practices that reduce greenhouse gasses and increase native biodiversity for future generations," he said.

To connect people with their sources, Seth will host tours and bring children on his farm when the buildings are done.

For information, call 236-2402 or email earthcyc@mindspring.com.

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Teenager organizes diaper drives to help low-income families

By Brenda Velasco

To provide diapers for babies from low-income or homeless families, Spokane Valley teen Jesse Sheldon is organizing diaper drives and hopes to start a nonprofit organization.

The Central Valley High School freshman was inspired to start the project by an article last spring in *Time* magazine about a Connecticut social worker, Joanne Goldblum, who researched risks for babies who don't have access to clean diapers. She told of walking into a restroom and seeing a poor woman clean a soiled diaper and put it back on her child.

"I was disturbed when I read that," said Jesse, 15. "I knew if it was happening in Connecticut it was likely happening in Spokane. Every baby has a right to clean, dry diapers."

He was also displeased to learn most day-care centers require families to provide their own diapers.

"If a family can't afford diapers then the baby can't attend daycare and the parents may not be able to go to work or school," he said.

Jesse decided to do what Joanne had done. She started a diaper drive to help homeless and low-income families with babies. He did research and found that the Spokane area does not have a central diaper bank that serves needy families.

"Food banks and community centers have limited resources for diapers, and Catholic Charities has some programs," he said, "but there is not one main place where families or agencies can access free diapers all the time, and most local resources give only 10 diapers a month."

"I know WIC and food stamp programs don't cover diapers, which can cost \$70 to \$100 or more a month depending on how many children a family has," Jesse said.

He first named his project: Spokane Diaper Drive, but recently changed it to Inland Northwest Baby to include the region. With a name and a vision, he had to find how to make it happen.

"I approached my church," said Jesse, who attends Valley Bible Church in Spokane Valley. "I told them my idea, and my youth pastor, Nick Morgan, supported me and helped me start it."

During summer 2009, Jesse set up barrels, fliers and messages to inspire his church, family and friends to donate diapers. He told them that babies suffer when their



Jesse Sheldon's diaper drive may become a nonprofit center.

Photo by Brenda Velasco

parents can't afford diapers.

"There are health risks," said Jesse, who has given up his allowance to buy diapers.

"I felt God was leading me down this path," he said.

His family encouraged him to pursue it, helping as they could.

"When he first told me his plan. I wondered if it was a fleeting idea or if it would become a passion," said Julie Sheldon, his mother.

From the summer church diaper drive and donations of family and friends, Jesse collected 3,500 diapers and training pants. He donated them to St. Ann's Children and Family Center and St. Margaret's Shelter to distribute.

"I met some families who benefited, and they shared with me the struggles they've been through and how grateful they were for the diapers," Jesse said.

The first drop off in July was featured in a two-minute segment on KSPS-TV's Kid's Incorporated, which showcases teens who make a difference.

"Words can't describe the feeling I had about delivering the diapers. So many babies are benefiting," he said. "I am doing something that matters. It went from a good idea to, wow, I really did it! I made it happen and am doing something that is going to help many people."

Jesse's mother agrees and is inspired by his perseverance.

"I am blessed to have a son with a servant's heart," Julie said. "I'm so proud of him. He was driven to do this. It was all him."

Jesse hopes to expand the diaper drive and set up collection barrels in other area churches and locations. He plans to have another drop off at St. Anne's soon.

This month, he will meet with

Ben Small, superintendent for the Central Valley School District to discuss ways to involve other schools in the diaper drives.

"My plan is to have a 'stuff the bus' diaper project this spring and make it a district-wide event," said Jesse. "I envision a head-to-head competition with my school and University High School to see who can collect the most diapers. It would inspire students to be involved. I want my classmates to know that anyone can make a difference in their community."

Jesse, who serves on the Washington State Legislative Youth Advisory Council and is active in the Central Valley High School band, said his teachers and classmates support the drive.

"My teachers encourage me and help me find donations," he said. "I sometimes get odd looks from some friends, especially when I show them my business card with a baby on it, but many are impressed and know how important this is."

Jesse plans to start a local nonprofit organization and open a Spokane diaper bank that would be accessible to families in need and charitable agencies. He is working to find funding and applying for grants. He also is establishing a board of directors that will include four adults.

"I want to work with adults who have a passion to help teens," Jesse said. "Networking is key. I hope people who support it will open doors so it can progress."

He also plans to have a youth

advisory board and volunteers to organize diaper drives, and to collect and distribute the diapers.

Jesse sent an email to Joanne in Connecticut thanking her for inspiring him and motivating him to pursue this project. "She wrote me, and we have been in touch ever since," he said.

In January, Jesse and his mother met Joanne in Seattle, when she was a guest at a fund raiser for West Side Baby, a nonprofit that provides diapers, hygiene products, toys and clothes.

"When she first saw me, we made eye contact and she immediately knew who I was," he said. "She gave me hug and told me she couldn't believe how her story touched someone on the other side of the country."

Jesse also met the director of West Side Baby and saw their facility, which has served more

than 30,000 children since 2001. He gained ideas and wants to use it as a model.

Balancing his project, high school studies and extracurricular activities is not easy, but he is committed to each.

"I'm making it work," said Jesse, who wants to study business administration. "I'm developing a budget and timeline for long term to expand beyond Spokane to neighboring counties."

For information, call 413-1007 or visit spokanediaperdrive.com.

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Hope evident in persistence to confront hate, injustice in everyday life

Often persistent voices can change systems, but the road is hard.

Changes alone are not enough. Vigilance is needed so innovation and justice are not turned back.

An example is commitment in our region to identify hate and resist a visible re-rooting of hate-makers here. Recently, folks wishing to restart an Aryan Nations group in the Northwest have found North Idaho resistant to a resurgence of hate activities.

So folks of that persuasion in Oregon, Washington and Idaho were looking to locate a headquarters in John Day, Ore. Residents invited experts from the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations to come and offer advice.

How great to have such expertise to offer!

With the task force, the Human Rights Education Institute, the Institute for Action Against Hate and many other organizations and programs in the Inland Northwest seasoned in halting hate and ending dis-

crimination, we see the importance of an ongoing commitment.

Once folks relax, new hate groups—stirred by fears that foster hate—will emerge. We have a gift to support people who challenge hate and nurture their ways of expressing the same truth.

One John Day resident's protest sign asked those wanting to locate there: "God can love everyone. Why can't you?"

Kudos, too, to Gonzaga University's School of Business for inviting a new generation of students to learn from the past, to identify hate and bullying as counter-productive to healthy business and community, and to be empowered to challenge hate as they enter the business world.

It's easy in a culture of disempowered consumers and employees to assume—fearing we will lose our jobs—we must accept misconduct, abuse, intolerance, competition, fraud and profiteering.

How many new treatments for cancer or heart disease are pushed from consideration by the mega-billion-dollar investments in

what are now considered conventional treatments in the medical business world? How many alternative, sustainable ways of living, eating, consuming, producing and farming do we inhibit under the conventional business of farming with chemicals? How many alternative voices are dumped because they lack the corporate or personal funding to be heard in the business of politics?

We easily lose the ability to speak and think for ourselves in face of subtle hate at play in our everyday lives.

The Fig Tree persists in reporting voices of those bringing solutions to problems and conflicts, nurturing them from birth through growth to make a difference in lives of people.

Hopeful folks believe it is possible to see the big picture of God's covenant with us and our covenant with God—the infinite starry heaven God pointed out to Abram as exemplifying the number of descendants the hopeless, old man would have from his promised but yet-to-be conceived son.

Hopeful folks know we need not fear, because we are God's children, who can work miracles if we put our lives in God's hands and agree to be servants, prophets, ministers, musicians, guides and friends.

Hopeful folks see beyond the way things are, lament what is not yet and challenge the already-now ways of doing things that keep us stuck in the mud of enriching and enthroning a few experts, while casting aside many creative ideas and people who are thought not to deserve "top dollar" for their efforts or insights.

Hopeful people know a resurrection of new life lies beyond the death of wintry days, the entrenchment of injustice, the habits of hate and the ways of war.

Buds sprout each year from barren branches. Babies are born and grow. Young people enter the work world with ideals. Seasoned folks share their wisdom and persist in their witness. Stories of hope abound, flowing through our lives like refreshing spring streams.

Mary Stamp - Editor

The phrase, 'moral hazard,' can support injustice or justice

On first hearing, the phrase "moral hazard" seems straightforward enough, but it grows murkier as more people use the term to explain why some measures could not be used to help solve problems connected with our current financial mess.

It has become a buzz phrase: one of those terms used to impress hearers without conveying any real information.

On one news program, an interviewer asked a banker about foreclosures on homes. Because foreclosure is a costly procedure for everyone involved, and banks are having to sell foreclosed houses on the current depressed market, why not re-negotiate the mortgage with the people being foreclosed on if they meet the requirements for a mortgage at the new price?

"Moral hazard," was the grave reply. Because these people had already failed to carry through on a contract, it would be a moral hazard for the bank to negotiate a new contract with them, the banker said.

The term becomes murkier as more interviewees take refuge in it.

Some prefaced their remarks with a variation on, "Let me be perfectly clear about this." As soon as we hear that we can be pretty sure that we won't be hearing any useful information.

A trip to the dictionary resulted in actual information.

There "moral hazard" is defined as "risk (to an insurance company) arising from the possible dishonesty or imprudence of the insured."

Further digging, especially in Paul Solman's online business column with PBS' Newshour, revealed that the term has been around since the 1600s, and is primarily concerned with the idea that the behavior of the insured may change in a way that raises risk and cost for the insurer.

The idea is that the "don't-worry-it's-insured" type of thinking might result in a person's being careless about locking his

car because it's insured against theft.

However, that kind of thinking can go both ways.

Credit default swaps that seem to have been understood by only three or four people in the financial industry were meant to insure those who granted mortgages by passing the risk on to the buyers of the swaps. Their success depended on the market's never going down, just as the Dot-Com bubble depended on the stock market's never going down during the 1980s.

Were the credit default swaps a moral hazard?

They were if we take the term literally. What if we adopt the term? How might we use it?

It has a solid ring to it that carries implications of evildoing.

What if we take the term literally and apply it liberally to situations that do violence to compassion, social justice and the greater

good? Here are some examples:

- Genocide is a moral hazard no matter where it is practiced, against a minority in Darfur or gays and lesbians in Uganda.

- Usury is a moral hazard whether it is practiced by a loan shark or by a credit card issuer.

- Using public office for private gain is a moral hazard on any level of government.

- Propagating widespread fear that interferes with making decisions on reforms to improve life for the average people is a moral hazard.

- Creating roadblocks and polarity that interfere with civilized discourse is a moral hazard.

How do we avoid moral hazards? How can we use words to support justice?

We go back to looking at what we need to do to nurture and protect compassion, social justice and the greater good.

Nancy Minard
Editorial Team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

With recent events such as the earthquakes in Haiti, we may think we don't need to be reminded of our mortality. They are estimating some 200,000 dead—too much death.

While a few Christians said it was punishing Haitians for their pagan and voodoo practices, my view was summed up by the sign at a local Nazarene church. It said, "Pray for the people of Haiti, it could have been you."

We don't understand why bad things happen. What we understand is that death is part of life and that suffering is as much a part of our human journey as the joys that accompany our life.

The Rev. Eric Dull
St. Mark's Lutheran

We live in a fast paced culture, one in which instant communication has become a necessity for many. We also live in a "throw away" culture in which we plug the landfills with items that are designed to last a short time and then discarded, with little thought to recycling. A cell phone three years old is an antique; a computer five years old is out of date. We live in a "what's in it for me" culture that encourages self-centered attitudes and actions rather than a sense of community.

One spiritual practice is "beauty." Think about all the art developed in the life of the church over the centuries. Think about

the paintings, sculptures, stained-glass windows and music. All are expressions of beauty, expressions of heart and soul that give God glory. Let's take the time to pause and appreciate the beauty around us and experience it as a moment of praise.

The Rev. David Helseth
Englewood Christian Church
Yakima

Lent is here again. Every year, I think back on Wednesday nights of Lent as a child, coming to church and entering that dim, quiet space. We would sing somber, steady hymns that slowed me down. You would think it would be a child's torture. Oddly enough, the feelings attached to those nights are all good.

There was a peace in the church those evenings that still washes over me. I found a place where I could release all the childish hurt and struggles that I faced. The hymns spoke gently to my own sadness. I could rest there in the ultimate and amazing love Jesus showed for us on the cross.

In this Lenten season, may we find a still quiet space where we can release our hurt and our struggle.

The Rev. Janine Goodrich
American Lutheran - Newport

Some years ago a friend said to me, "You and I look at life in different ways. You see life as a journey unfolding,

and I see it as a series of problems to be solved." He was partially joking with me and also quite serious, and he was right about me.

My experience of life is that it is indeed a journey, and it is a journey that takes us to different paths. To journey is to be in relationships with others, with the world, with God and with ourselves. The act of journeying involves not only speaking but also listening.

The season of Lent is a time for us to pause and listen to the moving of the Holy Spirit among us. May our Lenten journey be intentional time that we spend together with our Lord, sharing the riches of our lives in faith.

The Rev. Anne Barton
St. Paul's Episcopal - Kennewick

I remember a summer Michigan lightning storm with wind blowing hard and the hail feeling like a million tiny bombs on the metal roof of my cousin's trailer as my first brush with my own mortality. I cried for my dad, for God, for someone to rescue me. There that I began my theological inquiry. Where was God? I was in a dark night. Even though it was August, I had entered Lent.

As we begin Lent, we begin it as Jesus did, wondering, Where is God? Jesus is tempted to turn away when God's presence was only felt by God's absence. The road to

Easter lies through the desert of Lent.

Only out of our embracing our own mortality can we find ourselves a people prepared for Easter. Since those days in Michigan, I have come to appreciate and respect lightning storms. Hail and rain often give way to rainbows. Each storm in our life makes us realize that at the end of the journey is a garden where God works miracles.

The Rev. Joyce O'Connor Magee
Manito United Methodist

The word Lent comes from the word meaning "lengthen," probably referring to the lengthening daylight of this season. During Lent, the church suggests that we engage our death and that we go about it as a community or as a family. We have the company of the rest of the family or community to take this pilgrimage with us, because we are in this together. We pray for strength for the journey and endurance to wrestle a blessing from these days.

Too often in history the church has viewed the cross of Christ as the only location of God's saving activity. If we only focus on the cross, we ignore God's saving activity in God's birth, life, teaching and healing. During Lent, we are invited to be made whole and to take a holistic journey into reality.

The Rev. Joan Yetter
All Saints Episcopal - Richland

Peace group plans two educational events

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) is presenting two events in March.

Author Ali Abunimah will speak on "Ending the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse" at 7 p.m., Saturday, March 6, at All Saints Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce.

He is the author of *One Country: a Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* and *Behind the Wall: Life, Love and the Struggle in Palestine*. Co-sponsors are Auntie's Bookstore, Progressive Democrats of America-Spokane, United Nations Association and Gonzaga University Justice Club.

Rotary, abbey plan to invite Dalai Lama

Downtown Rotary Club 21 and Sravasti Abbey are building a multi-faith coalition to extend an invitation for a three-day visit to Spokane by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in two or three years.

Compassion in public policy and practice, not just in private and family life, is the theme, said John Hancock, an organizer from Rotary. Interested people may contact him by March 15.

For information, email johnhancock@earthlink.net

Community center holds ribbon cutting

Emmanuel Family Life Center held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Feb. 12, and tenants are beginning to move in. It is a place where people can access resources to help build our community in the Liberty Park neighborhood," said Spencer Grainger, interim director of the center at 631 S. Richard Allen Ct.

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PJALS will also host the Peace and Economic Justice Action Conference from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday, March 13, at 35 W. Main, for people to discuss ways to work together in the region to support democracy, peace, economic justice and human rights.

This event will feature workshops on immigration, low-cost organizing, veterans, police accountability, tax reform, non-

violence, Palestine, social change songs, Iraq and Afghanistan, corporate campaign financing, rural organizing and community organizing.

Marcy Westerling, who organizes Northwest rural communities to respond to violence, bigotry and injustice through Oregon's Rural Organizing Project, will be the keynote speaker.

For information, call 838-7870.

Calendar of Events

- Mar 4** • "A CUP of Ethical Leadership: Compassion, Understanding and Pursuit," Gonzaga's Aram Lecture on business ethics, Jepson Center, 7 p.m., 313-5991
- Mar 5-7** • **Lenten Retreat**, Nancy Copeland-Payton, St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior, 7 p.m. Friday to 1 p.m., Sunday, 483-6495
- Mar 6** • **Kathleen Norris**, author, Auntie's Bookstore, 402 W. Main, 2 p.m., 838-0206
- "Ending the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse," Ali Abunimah, All Saints Lutheran, 314 S. Spruce St., 7 p.m., 838-4409
- Mar 6-14** • **Novena of Grace**, St. Aloysius Catholic, 330 E. Boone
- Mar 7** • **Kosher Dinner**, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., 747-3304
- **International Women's Day Brunch**, Sholeh Patrick, Greenbriar Inn, 315 Wallace Ave., Coeur d'Alene, noon, 208-664-5659
- **Anti-trafficking efforts**, Azra Grunic, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, WSU Spokane Academic Center, noon, 358-7554
- **International Women's Day Celebration**, Spokane Women's Club, 1428 W. 9th Ave., 3 p.m., lcater@peoplepc.com
- **Haiti Aid Concert**, All Saints Lutheran, 314 S. Spruce, 2 p.m.
- Mar 8** • **CROP Walk Recruiter Rally**, Mission Community Presbyterian, 7 p.m.
- Mar 10** • **Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast**, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m., 599-1177 or 535-1813
- Mar 11** • **Great Decisions**, "Russia and the Near Abroad," Chris Marsh, Baylor University's Institute of Church State Studies, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7:30 p.m., 777-3270
- Mar 13** • **Peace and Economic Justice Conference**, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, Messiah Lutheran, 4202 N. Belt St., 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 838-7870
- "How Is God at Work in Our Life?" The Ministry Institute Lenten Retreat, 405 E. Sinto, 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 313-5765
- Mar 15** • "Friend, Enemy or Stranger: Are We All So Different," Venerable Geshe Thupten Plegye, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., 6:30 p.m.
- "Media Unlimited: Technology, Ethics and Life in the 21st Century," Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-3275
- Mar 16** • "Reading the Bible in an Age of Globalization," Joe Hastings, Catholic Relief Services West, Gonzaga's Coughlin Hall, noon, Cataldo Hall, 7 p.m., 358-4273
- "Religious Harmony and the Situation in Tibet," Geshe Phelgye, Whitworth University chapel, 11:45 a.m.
- Mar 17** • "The State of Tibet," Geshe Phelgye, Gonzaga Law School, noon to 3 p.m.
- Mar 18** • **Great Decisions**, "Seeing Ourselves in the Other: Life Lessons from the Rwanda Genocide," Carl Wilkens, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Weyerhaeuser Hall at Whitworth, 7:30 p.m., 777-3270
- **Flannery Lecture**, "Empty Religion: Islam's and Christianity's Common Peril," Luke Timothy Johnson of Emory University, Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:30 p.m., 313-6782
- Mar 20** • **Called to Care Conference**, "Organizing for the Work of Environmental Stewardship," Faith and Environment Network, Holy Trinity Episcopal, 1832 W. Dean Ave., 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 294-3944
- Mar 19-21** • "Tree of Life: Gift," Spiritual Renewal Retreat, N-Sid-Sen, 208-687-5255
- "The Call to Go Deeper," Teresa Jackson, OSB, Monastery of St. Gertrude's, Cottonwood, Idaho, 208-962-2000
- Mar 21** • **Compassion in Action Workshop**, Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 Ft. Wright Dr., 2:30 to 5 p.m.
- Mar 21-22** • "Finding God in the Busyness of Life," Benedictine Spirituality Retreat, St. Aloysius, 330 E. Boone, Sunday 5 to 7 p.m., Monday 10 a.m. to noon
- Mar 22** • "Economics and Human Rights," Geshe Phelgye, Jepson Center, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m.
- Mar 23** • **Unity in the Community Committee**, Community Minded Enterprises, 25 W. Main # 310, 5:30 p.m., 209-2602
- **Northwest Harvest Warehouse Warming**, 3808 N. Sullivan, 4 to 7 p.m.
- Mar 26-28** • "The Foundation of All Good Qualities," Sravasti Abby, Newport
- Mar 29-31** • **Women's Holy Week Retreat**, "The Journey of the Passion: A Closer Walk with Jesus," Father Santan Pinto, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 448-1224
- Mar 31** • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Apr 1** • **Fig Tree Board**, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 1 p.m., 535-1813
- Apr 3** • "Behold Jesus," Easter drama by Spokane Dream Center, INB Performing Arts Center, 1 and 6:30 p.m.

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Class prepares students to identify and challenge hate in future work

Given stories of fraud, greed and ruthlessness in the business world, Molly Pepper realizes it's easy to lose hope, but she believes the 24 students in Gonzaga University's "Hate Studies in Business" class this spring will make a difference when they become employers and employees.

Molly, associate professor of management, said the class is an outgrowth of a spring 2009 multidisciplinary hate studies class on "Why People Hate," related to Gonzaga's Institute for Action Against Hate.

Joining her, six professors, an adjunct faculty member and a graduate student bring perspectives from accounting, human resources, business administration, information systems, marketing, business ethics and economics.

Her field, management of human resources, draws on psychology and sociology, said Molly, who studied journalism at Texas A & M and worked 10 years for newspapers in Florida, Mississippi and Washington. She earned a master's in business administration in 1997 at the University of Southern Mississippi and a doctoral degree in 2004 at Arizona State.

Molly, who attends both Manito Presbyterian and the Spokane Buddhist Temple, appreciates the simplicity of her husband's Buddhist tradition, calling people to think pure and beautiful thoughts, speak pure and beautiful words and do pure and beautiful deeds.

She came to Gonzaga to teach at a university where she could connect students with values.

"It takes courage for our faculty to look at ways hate is manifest in business," she said.

Students will discuss the impact of socio-economic status, biracial employees, cross-race relationships, minorities, homosexuality and integrating challenged workers in the workplace.

They will also look at how financial fraud, betrayal, profit maximization, individualism, greed and financial market rules



Nancy Chase, Brian Steverson and Molly Pepper discuss plans before a recent class.

influence relationships.

In addition, they will consider how marketing may perpetuate stereotypes, target vulnerable consumer groups and encourage overconsumption.

Hate in the work place can stem from gender bias. Molly said businesses—through systems or bad bosses—may belittle women. Even women owners may follow the flawed business model of dominance and power.

For example, she said personnel policies can be inflexible and inconsistent about expectations for parents' relationships with their children. Women may be expected to downplay family ties, while men may be encouraged to display photos of their children.

"If a man leaves early for a child's soccer game, he's a good father. If a woman does it, she's a slacker. Women who work late are seen as bad mothers, while men doing that are good providers," she said. "Those stereotypes harm both men and women."

Rather than seeing family leave as an investment in an employee—mother or father—and community wellbeing, Molly said employers often question the benefit.

Sometimes family leave for childbirth leads to bullying among women: "I only took off a week," one may say, implying another is a wimp. "Women can be hard on

each other," she said of violence in organizations that set up women to compete.

Molly said there are healthy organizations that respect and honor their employees. With the economic downturn, some chose to reduce everyone's salaries, rather than firing people.

Two of the other faculty members teaching "Hate Studies in Business" are Brian Steverson and Nancy Chase.

Brian, associate professor of philosophy, studied at Tulane and Xavier universities in New Orleans, earning a PhD in 1991 before coming to Gonzaga in 1992. In 2008, he became the John Aram chair of business ethics.

Hate can surface in class divisions between owners and workers, he said.

In February, Brian told the class about the 1914 Ludlow Massacre at a Colorado mine when owners tried to break up employees' efforts to unionize.

"There was much violence related to attempts to unionize in the 19th and 20th century," he said. "Economic divisions among owners, management and workers fostered hate. Management and owners resorted to violence to preserve the class divisions."

"At the heart of the struggle between the powerful and powerless," he said, "is a tendency to

hate those who stand in the way of one's political or economic self-interest. Returning hatred for hatred is easy."

Nancy also finds a strong connection of faith and business at Gonzaga, with its emphasis on respect for human dignity.

"Many ugly things happen in the business world," said Nancy, who grew up Catholic in Missoula, studied music at Gonzaga and completed bachelor's and master's degrees in organ at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Finding it hard to earn a living playing organ at a Richmond, Va., church, she began working at a bank to implement a new budgeting system. Enjoying data systems, she earned a post-graduate data-processing certificate at Virginia Commonwealth University. She returned to Spokane in 1980 to work in programming and play organ at Catholic churches.

"I had to work hard as a woman in a male-dominated field," she said. "I saw how people treat people in dog-eat-dog office politics."

Overwork and competition can also foster hate.

Nancy also considers the fac-

ulty courageous to talk about hate, because "it's not normal" to discuss it. From texts and class, students learn to honor people, but find something else in the workplace, where many employers expect employees to overwork. She advises entry-level workers to set boundaries.

"Information technology can contribute to hate, magnifying it through cyber-terrorism; anti-social, hateful put-downs in social networking, and people without resources unable to cross the digital divide," she said.

Nancy pointed out that businesses often talk of roles, not of people with skills, so employees feel violated, not validated.

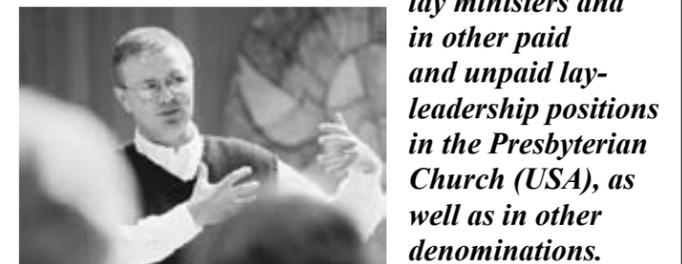
Outsourcing may seem to be a good short-term business solution, but does not build loyalty or expertise, said Nancy, who believes the business world needs creative, young idealistic employees.

She tells students not to let their frustration with systems that don't honor them make them cynical: "Your energy and fearlessness are needed so you can have impact one person at a time," she says.

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