

31 YEARS OF PUBLICATION

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Monthly newspaper and website covering Inland Northwest people who make a difference because of their faith & values online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Letters, relief, dialogue build peace

By Mary Stamp

Sarah Ahmed, a young Muslim peacemaker, founded Because I Love Peace, a U.S.-Iraq letter writing campaign to build bridges across a media-generated "sea of hate."

In her peacemaking visits to the United States, she learned about and began working with the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East to bring healing in her homeland.

During recent presentations at Gonzaga University and the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, she expressed hope about building reconciliation through dialogue among religious leaders.

"We have been taught to hate Americans and Israelis as enemies. Some also hate people of other faiths," she said. "Media and politicians promote those ideas. People start to hate people, but the letter-writing project shows that people are the same and have the same values."

As part of her presentation at Gonzaga, Mustafa Mahmood, a Gonzaga engineering student who is also from Iraq, painted a picture of Iraq as more than a war-torn country.

Growing up there, he learned of



Mustafa Mahmood and Sarah Ahmed tell about life in Iraq.

the culture and history of the region of Mesopotamia, through which the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow. Its 33 million people are diverse—Arabic, Kurdish and Assyrian.

Ancient Iraq was the home of Sumerians and Babylonians who developed cuneiform writing, and advancements in math, algebra and medicine, Mustafa added.

After the Ottoman Empire fell, Iraq was colonized by Great Britain from 1917 to the 1940s. There was relative stability from the 1950s to 1970s when the Baath Era of Saddam Hussein began. It ended with the U.S. invasion in 2003, he said.

Iraq has had hard times since then. Baghdad is in ruins. There were many casualties. More than 2 million refugees, including Mustafa's and Sarah's families, fled to Syria and Jordan.

Committed to peace and justice, Mustafa volunteered one month last summer in Iraq and worked with Sarah to provide food and supplies to thousands of displaced minority Christian families.

"The new government," he said, "is weak and corrupt. That led to the emergence of extremism and ISIS."

Sarah, also a human rights and *Continued on page 4*

Benefit Breakfast, Lunch speakers tell how Fig Tree stories inspire people

Speakers for The Fig Tree's 2015 Benefit Breakfast and Benefit Lunch will tell how the newspaper, resource directory and online media empower people by sharing stories that "inform, inspire and involve" people.

The Fig Tree is celebrating its 31st year of publication, covering stories of people who make a difference because of their faith and values. Its print and online media connect people to work together to serve individuals in need and to promote justice. Its annual Resource Directory is a comprehensive guide to congregations

and community resources, helping people network and find services they need.

The breakfast buffet begins at 7:15 a.m. and the program at 7:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 11, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The lunch buffet begins at 11:45 a.m. and the program at noon, Friday, March 13, also in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

Breakfast speakers include the Rev. Happy Watkins, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church and advocate for civil rights and racial equality; Dawn Bayman, director

of member services at Friends of KSPS Public Television and member of the Northwest Alliance for Responsible Media Board; Fr. Michael Savelesky, administrator for the Catholic Diocese of Spokane and long-time Fig Tree advocate; Diane Sanderson, member of the Spokane Valley Tri-Parish ecumenical partnership of St. Mary's Catholic, Resurrection Episcopal and Advent Lutheran churches.

The lunch speakers are Happy Watkins, who is also a Fig Tree Board Member; Pia Hallenberg, Spokesman-Review writer; Bob Lawrence of KSPS-TV, who prepared the Northwest Profiles program on The Fig Tree, and Norm Gissel, a Coeur d'Alene attorney active in the Kootenai County Task Force for Human Relations and the Human Rights Education Institute.

The Northwest Profiles (KSPS) video on The Fig Tree from last May will be shown as part of the program. A slide show reviewing stories of the past year will run before the event. Editor and *Continued on page 2*

38 years of local CROP Walks raise \$698,000

According to Church World Service's official records this will be the 38th year that Spokane has hosted a CROP Hunger Walk.

Locally over those years, there have been nearly 14,000 participants and nearly \$698,000 raised, said Randy Goss, chair of the local planning committee.

The 2015 CROP Hunger Walk begins with registration at noon on Sunday, April 26, at the Spokane Community College Lair. At 1:30 p.m., walkers will then proceed along the Centennial Trail and back.

This year the Spokane CROP Walk will share 25 percent of its proceeds with Family Promise of Spokane and Greater Spokane Meals on Wheels.

"This helps these two agencies, because much of their funding depends upon the generosity of the people of Spokane," he said.

CROP Walk was started in 1946, born from a grassroots movement after World War II to provide wheat for hungry people, eventually forming Church World Service (CWS). Today CWS is a cooperative ministry of 35 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican denominations that provide self-help development, disaster relief and refugee assistance worldwide.

"I have heard some people say that although this is a worthy cause they prefer to support events where all the monies raised stay in Spokane," Randy said. "I believe it is up to every one of us to do what we can to help our brothers and sisters not only locally but also nationally and internationally."

"So much can be accomplished if many people do just a *Continued on page 3*

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100
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WCC commission addresses religion and violence

Violence perpetrated in the name of religion is "a defining issue of our generation," said Canon David Porter, speaking Feb. 17 to the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

David, who is director for reconciliation at Lambeth Palace in London, joined the meeting via Skype. He said that religiously sanctified violence is a global challenge, and not just an issue of the Arab world.

"The reality is that those promoting such violence are looking into their own religious traditions, attempting to find justifications for their actions," he said. "It isn't just a façade. For many, it comes with a deep ideological commitment from their tradition, as they understand it. The challenge for us is to look into all religious traditions and see how traditions and texts are used to justify violence."

David stressed the need to delve into what instigates young people to be attracted to views articulated by extremists. He said for many it is an ideological issue with economic and socio-political reasons behind their anger and violence. He stressed the need for a safe space for religious leaders openly and honestly to address why people are seduced by extremist narratives.

Audeh Quawas, a CCIA member from Jordan, said religion is not the sole reason behind violence rampant around the world. "Injustice, corruption and dictatorships are major reasons that incite violence in communities and societies," he said.

The Rev. Elenie Poulos from Australia, another CCIA member, identified religiously motivated violence as one of the key priorities of the commission's work: "Churches need to come up with a new language to deal with religiously motivated violence, especially in the Middle East. We have to address these complex issues carefully, taking into consideration all aspects, as they are not black and white in nature. It is also important that we speak about the rights of the children caught in conflict zones."

Holland Sikou, a CCIA member from the Solomon Islands, said it is necessary for churches and civil society organizations to meet needs of communities directly affected by climate change, and focus more on issues of concern for women, young people and children.

Peter Prove, CCIA director, highlighted the historical role of the churches in international affairs, as manifested by the CCIA's work since its foundation: "The role of the churches in international affairs has been a significant part of the agenda of the ecumenical movement at least since the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference."

Recognizing this, the International Missionary Council and the WCC in Process of Formation created the CCIA in 1946, two years before the first assembly of the WCC in 1948.

"From the outset, the CCIA played an important role for the churches, especially in forming the United Nations and drafting of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights," Peter explained.

"Our responsibility is to grasp such opportunities and enhance the CCIA's impact in guiding the ecumenical response to the threats to justice and peace in our generation," Peter said.

Sudan church offers resource on reconciliation

The Episcopal Church of South Sudan and Sudan's diocese of Wau have developed a course titled "Reconcile - Moving Forward in Peace," inviting people to be peace-builders this Lenten season.

This initiative comes amidst the conflict in South Sudan, which has affected communities since the country's independence from Sudan in 2011. The course engages the community in discussion and prayer. It stimulates participation and discovery, and tackles faith-related issues, looking at tribalism, causes of friction, domestic violence and understandings of peace.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Benefits support the power of sharing stories

Continued from page 1
 founder Mary Stamp will also offer an overview of The Fig Tree's media approach.

"Like public broadcasting, The Fig Tree is available free but is supported by the sponsorships of readers and by the support of advertisers/underwriters," Mary said. "Our benefits are like public broadcasting pledge drives, opportunities to celebrate our model of journalism and invite support."

"As people are informed, they are inspired and become involved in direct service and advocacy to care for others and explore poli-

cies that improve their lives," she said. "For example, whenever media focus attention on disasters, projects or issues, readers and viewers are motivated to give and to help. As general media attention wanes, our media continue to tell stories of how faith and nonprofit communities work over the long-term to restore lives, reach out in creative ways and overcome divisions to bring reconciliation."

"People who live their faith and values provide a plethora of stories to share," Mary said.

The Sisters of Providence

Mother Joseph Province in Renton and Advent Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley each recently donated \$1,000 to help underwrite the events. The Fig Tree seeks other underwriters to help cover the costs, along with table hosts who donate to cover the costs of meals for their seven guests.

"Last year, we raised nearly \$30,000. To meet expenses and move into the future, we need to grow to raise \$48,000 at these events," said Mary.

To RSVP by March 6 for the breakfast and March 9 for the lunch, call 535-1813, email mary@thefig-

Jeannine Hill Fletcher gives Flannery Lecture

Jeannine Hill Fletcher, professor of theology at Fordham University in Bronx, N.Y., is the 2015 Flannery Lecturer for the Religious Studies Department at Gonzaga University.

She will speak at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 19, at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University on "Love in a Weighted World: The Broken Heart of Catholic Identity."

The presentation looks at Catholic identity in a fractured world and at disagreement in the Catholic community on what should bind it.

In the wider world, competing forces of religious diversity

and secularization sometimes lead people to question whether holding particular religious commitments is useful, especially when they see how religious identities can create divisions and perpetuate injustice.

Using research in interfaith studies, feminist theology, critical theory and Catholic tradition, Jeannine proposes the possibility of "cosmopolitan religious identities" and considers the broken-heart at the heart of Catholic identity.

Her books include *Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism* (2005) and *Motherhood as Metaphor:*

Engendering Interreligious Dialogue (2013).

She has served two terms as co-chair of the Roman Catholic Studies group of the American Academy of Religion. Her current work is on the relationship between religious diversity and racism, and the need for actively anti-racist theologies.

Jeannine is faculty director of the service-learning program with Fordham's Dorothy Day Center for Service and Justice, and works with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, a grassroots social justice collaborative program.

For information, call 313-6782.

Center plans March retreats, gatherings

Andi McGoran, who has been a pilgrim to Taizé Community in France four times, will lead the Coffee and Contemplation ecumenical spiritual discussion and prayer from 9 to 11 a.m., Wednesday, March 18, at the Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd.

Her topic is "Taizé Prayer: An Invitation to Intimacy." A high school teacher for 30 years and spiritual director for three, she met the late Brother Roger at Taizé.

Fr. David Kuttner, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Tekoa and St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish in Oakesdale, and a spiritual director at IHRC, will lead an Evening of Prayer on "The Paschal Mystery: 'I Thirst'" from 5 to 8:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 10 at the center.

Beginning at 9 a.m., Wednesday, March 25, IHRC will host a Day of Prayer on "Mary, Model of Perfect

Discipleship," led by Fr. Jeff Lewis of parishes in Chewelah, Springdale and Valley, and St. Joseph Mission at Jump Off Joe Lake. Ordained in 2011, he was parochial vicar at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Bishop Emeritus William Skylstad will lead 2015 Holy Week Retreats. The Women's Retreat is

from 4:30 p.m., Monday, March 30 to 1 p.m., Wednesday, April 1. The Men's Retreat is from 2:30 p.m., Thursday, April 2 to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 4. Participants will reflect on God's love and the meaning of Divine Presence.

For information, call 448-1224, ext 102 or email programs@ihrc.net.

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Journalist speaks on war, world issues

Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Chris Hedges will speak at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 10, at the Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague. His presentation is sponsored by the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS). Chris, a graduate of Harvard Divinity School and a war correspondent for 20 years, is author of several bestselling books including *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* and *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*.

Now an ordained Presbyterian minister, he writes for the Truthdig website. For information, call 838-7870.

Parent Project classes build healthy families

The Parent Project is an initiative of St. Joseph Family Center to support building healthy families. It is a 10-week series of classes beginning at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 12, and meeting on consecutive Thursdays through May 14. Parents may wonder what to do as their teens deal with substance abuse, school and behavioral issues, brushes with the law. The project provides parents with the skills and strategies to bring about healthy changes in their teens. For information, call 483-6495.

Young adults will lead Novena at St. Aloysius

Young adults from Spokane's Catholic community offer reflections on "Why I Have Hope" for Nine Days of Grace, the 2015 Novena from Wednesday, March 18 to Thursday, March 26, at St. Aloysius Catholic Church, Boone & Astor. There will be a daily prayer service at 12:15 p.m. (12:30 p.m. on Sunday) and a daily Mass at 5:15 p.m. For information, call 313-5896.

Peace and Economic Justice Conference is March 20-21

The PJALS annual Peace and Economic Justice Conference is Friday and Saturday, March 20 and 21, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr. Keynote speaker Judith LaBlanc, a Caddo Indian from Harlem, N.Y., is an organizer at the Alliance for a Just Society. She also coordinates Move to Money Campaign to change U.S. spending priorities from wars and weapons to jobs and public services. The event includes three workshop sessions with a total of 24 workshop choices. For information, call 838-7870 or visit pjals.org/2015conference.

Beginning Experience classes offered

Two Beginning Experience events for people alone because of separation, divorce or being widowed are underway and planned for this spring. A six-week "Coping with Being Alone Again" class continues through March 24 at 7 p.m., Tuesdays, at St. Aloysius Church's parish center. A Beginning Experience Weekend will be held Friday through Sunday, May 15 to 17, at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd. For information, call 534-1797.

Plans underway for Yom HaShoah April 19

Spokane's Yom HaShoah Committee has begun plans for the commemoration at 7 p.m., Sunday, April 19, at Temple Beth Shalom. This year, there is an art competition, as well as a writing contest for middle and high school students. The theme is "Words That Kill: Nazi Use of Propaganda to Justify Genocide." The speaker is Bob Herschowitz, a Holocaust survivor from Seattle. For information, call 747-3304.

Eastern Washington Legislative Conference - Raising Prophetic Voices: Faith Communities Advocate for Justice



Video of some speakers is at <https://www.youtube.com/user/thefigtree1323/videos>

About 120 people attended the 2015 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

19 congregations participated in 2014 Walk

Continued from page 1

small part," he said. Spokane's walk is one of 2,000 held in communities around the United States.

This year's Spokane CROP Walk has some additions.

Along with local talent performing before the walk, there will be prizes offered in gift baskets from local businesses.

CWS has been helping people in the United States and worldwide to fight hunger, deal with the need

for clean drinking water and help with natural disasters.

Susan Heitstumen of Family Promise reported that 18 congregations participated in the 2014 CROP Hunger Walk in Spokane, raising \$12,734.

Those congregations are St. Stephen's Episcopal and the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection; Audubon Park, Moran, Spokane Valley and Trinity United Methodist; Westminster Congregational United Church

of Christ (UCC) and Shalom Mennonite/UCC; Country Homes and North Hill Christian; Colbert, Hamblen Park, Millwood and Northwood Presbyterian, and Messiah, Peace, Prince of Peace and St. Mark's Lutheran.

For information, call 468-4099 or email goss301@gmail.com.

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BY FRIDAY, MARCH 6 FOR THE BREAKFAST • BY MONDAY MARCH 9 FOR THE LUNCH

Peace advocate hopes dialogue of religious leaders will stop violence

Continued from page 1
women's rights activist, said that what is happening to people in Iraq, "from persecution to starvation to killing, affects the people in more ways than the rest of the world can imagine.

"The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein was bad, but now there are many 'Saddams' competing for power," she said. "Before the war, we were not free, and I don't think we are free now."

Along with aiding Iraqis displaced by ISIS, she serves as a volunteer dentist in a medical center in Baghdad. Her parents left Bagdad and went to Jordan when she was 19, but she stayed to finish her studies in dentistry.

Sarah's commitment to peace led her to visit the United States several times.

In 2009, a U.S. summer study program in public policy stirred her interest in activism. On returning, she organized Iraqi friends.

After earning her degree in dentistry, she went to study at the University of Rochester, but left early to visit her family in Jordan. She was frustrated to find that her father, who had taught science, had begun to hate Americans.

That sparked her interest in

challenging misunderstandings between Americans and Iraqis.

Visiting in Chicago, Sarah led workshops in schools and churches, talking about the war and post-war experiences, and the need for people to educate themselves and others.

Sarah asked Americans to write letters to tell about their lives and thoughts on the war. Many wrote that they had protested against the war, but were not heard. She gave the letters to people in Iraq. Many Iraqis have written the Americans.

Later, at a Peace Action Conference in New York, she met Canon Andrew White, who had come to St. George's Anglican Church in Baghdad in 1998. He restored the church and started a clinic, school and the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRRME).

After they talked half an hour, he invited her to come and work with the foundation. She first came as a volunteer, and now is its director of operations.

In Baghdad, the foundation helps protect Christians, a persecuted minority, but because it is in a Muslim country, 90 percent of those they serve are Muslim.

It primarily is a charity doing

relief work—offering food, shelter, clothing, health care, financial assistance, bedding and other necessities. It also does job training and helps people start businesses, and serves refugees in Jordan, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey.

Its other task is to promote reconciliation and interreligious dialogue.

After the war, Sunni and Shia Muslim groups began to express their hatred, which had been controlled under Saddam.

Because the foundation employs Sunni, Shia, Christian and Jewish people on its program staff, they have contact with leaders of these religions.

Believing that when religious leaders in the Middle East speak and teach, followers will follow them, the FRRME brings religious leaders together to share a meal and stories about their lives and experiences. The goal is for them to come to know and respect each other, even as they continue to have different beliefs.

Muslim-Muslim and Christian-Christian divisions and violence are the hardest to address, said Sarah, who is hopeful, because most Christians and Muslims are moderate, not extremist.

Their faiths teach against violence, she said, so dialogue leaders encourage the religious leaders to discuss violence, and then write and sign a document that calls people to stop the violence.

"Reconciliation is about loving the enemy," Sarah said. "We do not want the religious leaders to change their beliefs or agree, but to come to accept and love each other."

The hope is for religious leaders to become friends, understand their similarities and differences, and then accept their differences.

"We expect the public will follow them," Sarah repeated.

The foundation believes that "without genuine reconciliation, there can never be lasting peace," because "religion and politics are intimately linked in the Middle East." So "if religion is part of the problem, it must be part of the solution.

"While we have contact with some religious leaders, we do not know ISIS leaders. They have no defined leaders and do not want a solution. The more mysterious they are, the more powerful they are by making people fear them," Sarah said. "ISIS is media savvy. Media show what they want the world to see to create fear.

"If media stop showing what they do, ISIS will lose power,"

she said. "Similarly, media do not show real Americans to Iraqis. That's why I take letters."

From her U.S. visits, Sarah has much support from Americans, so she does not blame them for the war.

"American air strikes do nothing to ISIS, but they kill children and more innocent people," she said. "War does not work. Justice works. We need to win people who hate and espouse eye-for-eye living that blinds everyone."

Sarah shares stories to invite letters and support, noting, "There is no reconciliation or relief without help."

She challenged people "to embrace awareness as a lifestyle, so if I touch you, then you will touch others," she said.

"Iraqis have lost so much. Many people who lost someone may have no heart for reconciling or forgiving, but it's the only way," Sarah said. "If we change attitudes, however, action will follow."

Believing prayer is important, she invites Americans to be in solidarity with brothers and sisters in Iraq by being aware and by praying.

For information, call Scott Cooper of Pax Christi Spokane, which hosted her in Spokane, at 358-7342 or visit firme.org.

Speakers tell of ways to address wealth inequality

Even though wealth is generated by labor, Dan Morrissey, who teaches corporate law at the Gonzaga University Law School, said wealth has gone to capitalists/owners since the beginning of industrial society.

He was speaking on "Wealth Inequality" at the Jan. 31 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Working people earned more of a fair share for about 30 years after World War II, from the late 1940s to the 1970s, he said, telling of the widespread prosperity he observed growing up in Chicago because of the work of unions.

In those years, corporate executives made 30 times what their workers did. In the last two years, they have earned an average of 350 times what workers earn.

"In the 1990s, there was also growth in medium-income households, peaking at \$57,000, but now it's down to \$52,000. There is false prosperity in terms of household incomes," Dan said. "In Spokane, the average household income is \$42,000."

He said that wealth distribution is back where it was in the 1920s before the Great Depression with the top one percent controlling 40 percent of the wealth, the next nine percent controlling 35 percent of wealth, so the top 10 percent control 75 percent of the wealth, and the top 25 percent control 90 percent of the wealth.

When two major tool companies recently merged, they laid off several thousand workers, while the co-CEOs continued to

earn \$30 million and \$40 million, Dan reported.

Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network of Washington (FAN), said that in advocacy statewide, "We talk of reducing the wealth inequality. Income inequality is wide enough, but when we deal with wealth inequality we also deal with racial inequities."

FAN is supporting four bills that address wage theft, two bills on minimum wage and one bill on increasing jobs in the African-American community.

"Wage theft" he said refers to various ways employers avoid paying what an employee is owed.

"The vast majority of businesses do an excellent job, but still, too many are getting away with wage theft," he said.

Examples include misclassifying independent contractors or unreported wages, such as for undocumented workers.

On minimum wage, Paul said that even though Washington has the highest one in the United States, a family with an adult and child needs to earn \$22,000 a year

to make a basic living.

Dan suggested that businesses that do not pay a large enough minimum wage, especially while corporate executives earn so much, should not be in business.

Asked about how the state government contributes to income inequality related to the sales tax and regressive taxes, Paul said that FAN has long supported reforming the state tax structure. The way to move toward an income tax is by electing more legislators who favor it.

Dan pointed out that the top U.S. tax rate is 39.6 percent on incomes above \$457,000. In Great Britain and Canada, the top rate is 50 percent.

Paul called for educating people in congregations about why taxes are important.

Dan talked of a movement for corporate responsibility, in which there is a triple "bottom line" considered that includes environment and social responsibility, as well as profit.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or email dmorrissey@lawschool.gonzaga.edu.

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Faith communities need to nurture role of elders to nurture youth activism

Because people in communities of faith start at different points in terms of faith, service and involvement in social justice, the Rev. Mike Denton, conference minister serving 83 congregations in the Pacific Northwest Conference United Church of Christ, said it's important for people to share their personal contexts.

He also spoke of the need for faith communities, which increasingly have five generations, to redevelop the role of elder in nurturing youth to listen and act.

In his opening reflections on the Jan. 31 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference theme, "Raising Prophetic Voices: Faith Communities Advocate for Justice," he pointed out that all speech and action are biography.

So he shared some of his background as a sixth-generation pastor who grew up in the racially diverse Midwest in a United Methodist family with a tradition of involvement with social justice as an expression of faith.

Now, as a parent of a two-year-old, he has found his world and worldview changed.

"In raising prophetic voices, we, like my son Leo, need to be sure we know we are loved, our basic needs are cared for and we care for others," said Mike, expressing his pride when Leo shared his first book. "We need to set boundaries, encourage and then step out of the way.

"Our goal is to have an ongoing relationship with Leo, not necessarily having him fulfill our



The Rev. Mike Denton

dreams for him," he said.

That's an insight into Mike's call for congregations to nurture their elders and for elders to nurture youth.

Along with people having different starting points, he suggested that they may experience a "holy tweak or nudge" from something in the news or in their life experience. Then it may sit there for a while.

For some, the interest in social justice may have started with a petition, maybe from taking a listening position or taking time to pray.

"It may stop there, but at a time of a holy tweak, it may become bigger. Some form of charity begins when we are in relationship with people involved in an issue. We give what is needed—maybe money or a can of black beans we have not used in three years.

Maybe we sign a petition. Sometimes, it stops there," he said.

Sometimes charity is a part of a bigger delivery network that has structure.

"That's service. We make time for it. It's not excess. We build a relationship within the faith community," Mike said. "In service, something else happens. We recognize what is happening around an individual life and also what is happening because of a systemic issue."

All along, he says it's necessary to pray, study and listen. Some are called to service and some are called to advocacy, which means an intentional increase in risk.

"Each step is not a clear progression," he said.

Most recognize a call to give to a charity. The next largest group participates in a service.

The smallest number are in-

involved in advocacy.

In the process, friendships emerge, and involvement shifts from time to mutual support.

"Then, once in a while, we glimpse what the church community is called to build: the Kingdom of God, a world filled with love, care, mutuality and more," Mike said.

With the increasing amount of gray in faith communities, Mike said, comes the opportunity to "do the role of elder" and to "encourage the younger generations to listen carefully."

Today, most congregations are intergenerational, with up to five generations involved.

"Most U.S. institutions, however, are set up for two-and-a-half or three generations. Then people retire and die," he said. "Fifty years ago, we did not expect to retire and be helping our parents."

After being leaders, elders need to have respect.

"Relinquishment is a gift for elders, especially when they have less energy," he said.

Part of relinquishment is for elders to respect, honor and listen to youth as a way to pass on leadership and prophetic witness.

In recent years, Mike has seen significant moves by adults to listen to ideas of younger people.

The Occupy movement, part of movements around the world, put economic inequality on the front burners for leaders, who are talking of taxes in a different way.

"We refuse to accept abuse of the poor," Mike said.

The environment movement grew from young people who are now graying. Because sustaining the world calls for change, younger generations are carrying on the movement.

GLBT concerns and violent conflict have led to changes in the social system, such as marriage equality, which the United Church of Christ supports.

Black Lives Matter has led black youth to expose racial and sexual inequality; expose police brutality, and expose the anger of those who mourn for lives lost too soon. They challenge that the racist criminal justice industrial complex is based on slavery and oppression, he said.

Native Americans have also experienced many deaths through genocide, abuse of their rights and neglect, Mike said.

On these issues and more, we need to listen and wisely join when we are invited to lay our lives on the line so prophetic voices emerge," Mike said.

"We offer our facts, speak and listen. We join voices and call others to join. We keep our eyes on the local and bigger picture. We speak out when we see something is wrong. It's a call and gift to recognize the need to be challenged on racism," he said.

"We need to look for ways to raise our prophetic voices and look for ways we need to be challenged to be better helpers," he said.

For information, call 206-725-8383 or email revdenton@gmail.com.

History lends insights into relationship of African Americans with police

Rachel Dolezal, who is Spokane NAACP president, teaches Africana history at Eastern Washington University and chairs the Spokane Police Ombudsman Commission, connects statistical concerns, insights from history and attitudes towards police.

Her insights lead her to put in many unpaid hours to work for civil rights and social justice.

"There is much to be done, and my two black sons, 13 and 20, are at a high risk of experiencing police brutality just because they are young black males," she said, clarifying her motivation.

The NAACP seeks to bridge the gap between the community and police so there are safer communities and justice, and the police system works hand-in-hand with the community.

Statistics raise questions for her about criminal justice in America: One in four black boys will be incarcerated, one in two if they do not graduate from high school. Meanshile, one in 23 white men

are incarcerated.

"The same number of black males are killed today as were lynched at the height of lynching," she reported.

"Black Americans were forcibly migrated to the U.S. in the slave trade. More than 200 million died in the African holocaust, including people kidnapped in Africa, one-third to one-half dying on ships in transit, plus the death toll of slavery," Rachel said.

She suggested some reasons African Americans distrust police:

- Their first encounter with police was with plantation police who caught and returned runaway slaves.

- With the promise of 40 acres revoked under Reconstruction, many blacks were homeless and jobless. Soon loitering laws in the South meant black men without jobs were arrested and imprisoned.

- In a period "of domestic terrorism," the KKK grew to 3 million members, infiltrated

police departments and were often involved in lynchings, she said.

"We have a sense of urgency and hopelessness, wondering if things will ever change. Even when there is change, another era of repression dawns," she said.

Rachel listed some examples of rights being revoked:

- Despite Civil Rights era gains, voting rights and freedom from slavery are being revoked through incarceration. Some states prohibit released prisoners from voting. In prisons, people work for five to 30 cents an hour.

- Rights are being revoked by re-segregation of schools as school district boundaries are redrawn.

- Rights are also being revoked by police brutality that targets black boys 15 to 19.

- Rights are being revoked as some Jim Crow laws, which did not end until the 1960s, are returning in new ways.

"To maintain a status of liberty and equality, we need to resist the

pull of apathy," Rachel said.

The NAACP also prioritizes economic development. Along with a disproportionate number of African American students not graduating from high school or going to college, those with college degrees earn \$15,000 to \$30,000, not \$50,000 or more, she said.

It took time for blacks to own their own businesses, but in 1921, when there were 40 blocks of prosperous black businesses in Tulsa, charges were trumped up against one resident, and more than 600 businesses were

destroyed, she said.

Incarceration removes many black men from households leaving many single mothers at risk of poverty, Rachel added.

She is concerned by data that reveals that prison planners decide the number of prison beds they will need based on fourth-grade reading scores.

"The connection between education and incarceration rates is known as the school-to-prison pipeline," she said.

For information, call 209-2425, email spokanenaacp@gmail.com or visit spokanenaacp.com.



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Founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative



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Bryan Stevenson is the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative, in Montgomery, Ala. Under his leadership, EJI has won major legal challenges eliminating excessive and unfair sentencing, exonerating innocent death-row prisoners, confronting abuse of the incarcerated and the mentally ill, and aiding children prosecuted as adults. Stevenson has successfully argued several cases before the United States Supreme Court, where he recently won an historic ruling which holds that mandatory life-without-parole sentences for children 17 and younger are unconstitutional. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Just Mercy*, released by Random House in October 2014.

Panel examines Columbia River Treaty progress, role for faith communities

Four speakers in a workshop at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference reviewed different aspects of advocacy related to the upcoming renewal of the Columbia River Treaty.

Using the 2001 Catholic bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Columbia River Watershed to frame their remarks, they spoke on "Rivers of Our Moment," "Rivers Through Our Memory," "Rivers of Our Vision" and "Rivers as Our Responsibility."

Bishop William Skylstad said the region's 12 bishops in 2001 sought to address environment related to the Columbia River. He noted that Pope Francis I's next encyclical will be on environment and how concern about it is a "challenge to our world and cultures."

The retired bishop spoke of the expanse of the Columbia River watershed partly in Canada, flowing through Washington and the Columbia Gorge to the Pacific. Its complexity includes salmon, irrigation, recreation and wildlife, as well as cultures, he said.

Growing up in the Methow Valley, 15 miles above the river, he remembers seeing salmon runs in the river, so he was eager to serve on the committee that prepared the letter as an expression of hope that both integrates social and ecological concerns, and promotes justice and stewardship.

"It was a highly consultative process with public forums, reading assignments, listening sessions and ecumenical input," he said. "There was much pressure about what we would say."

"In the pastoral letter, our focus is care of creation, creation of community, care of our common home and commitment to creation and the common good," Bishop Skylstad said.

Matt Wynne, a member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians, secretary elect of the Spokane Tribal Business Council and chair of The Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), shared memories of his grandmother taking him at the age of seven to Oregon City. They climbed down rock cliffs by the falls. She reached into the wall of water, pulled out lamprey eels and put them in burlap bags.

"How did you know they were there," he asked, amazed. She told him of the time when the fish were plentiful from Little Falls to Kettle Falls.

"That inspired me to bring back what is lost, so the Spokane Tribe can pass on lessons to our children. It has been 75 years since salmon reached the upper reaches of the Columbia River. We need to teach our children



Matt Wynne, Bishop Martin Wells and John Osborn

that we are salmon people," Matt said. "I hope the Higher Power will keep us strong to bring back the salmon."

Fifteen tribes have formed the Columbia River Coalition to work together as the Columbia River Treaty is renegotiated.

"The river is our life," he said. "Originally, the only considerations of the Columbia River Treaty were to build dams for flood control and hydropower generation. Now we need also to consider the damage through the ecosystem."

Matt is hopeful that changes can be made.

Physician and conservationist John Osborn called for considering the vision of the river.

"Looking back 200 years ago, Lewis and Clark stepped into the Columbia River watershed in 1805. Over 200 years, there have been profound changes to the river, partly as a result of dam building," he said.

In 1964, the United States and Canada ratified the Columbia River Treaty, which set in motion construction of four dams—one in Montana and three "treaty dams" in British Columbia. The Arrow Lakes Dam forced 2,300 people from their homes, farms and businesses. In negotiating the treaty, neither Canada nor the

U.S. consulted with tribes or local communities.

Since the Columbia River Treaty Conference last May at Gonzaga University, 21 religious and indigenous leaders representing nearly all tribes and First Nations in the Columbia Basin sent a letter to Canadian Prime Minister Harper and U.S. President Obama requesting that the treaty be modernized based on principles of justice and stewardship, John said.

Bishop Martin Wells said the Eastern Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that he serves covers the same territory as the Columbia River watershed. He feels a call to share his sense of responsibility among his constituents and ecumenical partners.

He told of the power of stories and his own experience of seeing the Kenai River in Alaska teeming with salmon.

"Stewardship is the language we use in the Christian community to talk of our responsibility for creation," he said. "Scriptures have stories of water and of stewardship for a gift that has been given to us."

"The gift of water has been entrusted to us. We are to treat water as a treasure that is basic to life itself. Our bodies are 80 percent water. We are walking

columns of water," Martin said.

He has signed the Pastoral Letter on the Columbia River Watershed and joined other Northwest religious leaders in signing a letter of apology to the region's tribes for the way settlers decimated tribal lands. He and other religious leaders also signed a document expressing opposition to coal transport and export, especially at Cherry Point, a sacred area for Lummi Indians.

With the renegotiation of the Columbia River Treaty, he believes it's possible to consider more than flood control and power production.

Another tool, he said is the Public Trust Doctrine, which says natural resources belong to the public, so public rights take precedence over private rights.

"As Christians, we share aesthetic and sacred values of the rivers as the tribes' land. We have a sacred trust to be stewards," Martin said. "The Catholic letter gives a beginning place for dealing with the public trust and the need not to allow political influences to privatize the river."

Since the Gonzaga conference, UCUT has taken a lead on the effort to restore salmon, said John.

"Your opinion matters," Matt added, inviting people to go to

the UCUT website and comment. "We hope to keep our voices heard with the U.S. State Department, which is not letting us in to the renegotiation process yet."

For information, call 838-1057 or visit ucut.org.

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Equal access, opportunity will help undo the school-to-prison pipeline

Even though the United States is growing more diverse, Roberta Wilburn told participants at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference that racial segregation is growing.

As associate dean of graduate studies in education and diversity initiatives and professor at Whitworth University for eight years, she knows that black preschoolers face more discipline than their peers, 56 percent of African American fifth graders are held back, and one in four African American males experience suspension during school years.

About half of African American high school graduates cannot read at grade level. Those who can't fill out job applications to have jobs are more likely to fall into crime, she said, calling the faith community to challenge the school-to-prison pipeline proactively through legislation.

Achievement and accessibility gaps continue through schools with more suspensions and expulsions of black students, she said.

Spokane has the fourth highest suspension-expulsion rate in the state, 7.2 percent, compared to Seattle's average of 4.2 percent

"If marginalized students are suspended for three, five or 10 days, it puts them that many days behind, keeping the student from being successful," Roberta said. "Sending students home where they may be unsupervised should be the exception, not the rule."

"Research shows that suspension and expulsion do not change behavior," she said. "It's better to keep students in school and practice restorative justice to help the students understand the impact of their behavior. Discipline should

be about changing behavior."

Roberta pointed to cultural disparities in defining "disrespectful behavior," often about a student looking at a teacher the "wrong way."

An educator may say, "Look into my eyes when I talk to you," expecting that's a sign of paying attention. In another culture, for a child to look into the eyes of an adult is disrespectful. In California gang culture, looking someone in the eye is an invitation to fight.

"Teachers need to understand different ways of looking at behavior," Roberta said. "They need to know who they are working with or they lose students."

"Often, young people of color are not treated the same as white students," she said. "When they experience bullying and racial discrimination, it is overlooked."

For example, an African-American cheerleader was threatened with the KKK and called the "N" word. Nothing was done to the bullies. When the girl's older sister asked others not to treat her sister that way, she was suspended, while officials let the bullying slide, Roberta said

The "achievement gap" comes from a disparity in educational opportunities for people of color.

Statistically, African Americans are over-represented in special education and underrepresented in gifted programs, Roberta said. Talented students of color are usually not identified as gifted.

"My husband, James, as supervisor of youth initiatives and community/parent involvement at Spokane Public Schools, talks with honors high school students about college. When he encouraged some to apply to



Roberta Wilburn calls for changes in state education policies.

Harvard University, which has scholarships for first-generation, low-income students who meet academic requirements, he was told he was building false expectations," said Roberta.

In contrast, her bishop in Memphis had told her to "reach for the moon because if you missed, you would still be among the stars."

"We need equal opportunity and equal access for all children," said Roberta, adding that Spokane schools lack teachers, administrators and faculty of color. Teachers and the curriculum do not reflect that 20 percent of students in Spokane schools are children of color.

When African American, Native American and Hispanic American students take honors class, they study European history. The curriculum does not represent their cultural or racial history beyond Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks and Black History Month in February.

"Curriculum needs to be relevant to students or they turn off,"

said Roberta. "Teachers need to be sensitive to culture as the country becomes more diverse."

Some education students who come to Whitworth have never gone to school with a person of color, nor have they had a teacher of color. When they graduate, they will teach classes with Hispanic, biracial and African American students, so they need to know how to work with them.

"Spokane is a refugee city, with 600 refugees being resettled each year, people speaking 30 languages. If these students have teachers who lack experience of cultural differences, they may not understand how these children receive information," she added.

"Spokane also has a large biracial population," she said.

"What can we do as Christians to let people of color know they are welcome?" she asked. "From my work at a historically black college, I know there are teachers looking for jobs. We need to recruit them to come here."

"Whitworth is the best place I have worked because it's the body of Christ acting like the body of Christ. I feel I'm a valued member of the family," she said.

Give-and-take is part of cross-cultural relations, breaking barriers and helping people know they are valued.

"Whitworth is ready to work with Spokane schools to infuse civil rights curriculum, starting in second grade," she offered. "I'm hopeful, but we have a long way to go. Pouring money into an outmoded system will not work. We need reform."

Roberta, who is also president of the Spokane Ministers Fellowship, pledged to work with the Faith Action Network of Washington and African Americans around the state to take on social justice issues.

She wrote the education proposals to help the state better meet needs of African American and biracial students. The Washington Christian Leadership Coalition presented to Governor Jay Inslee on Feb. 16, African American Legislation Day.

"We need funding to close the achievement gap. We need more school counselors who look at behavior in the context of culture and trauma, understanding students' struggles," she said. "We need to hire more teachers who will do appropriate discipline and fund in-school suspension to separate students for discipline but allow them to keep up."

Roberta hopes churches will help advocate for such changes to meet the challenges related to education.

For information, call 777-4603 or email rwilburn@whitworth.edu.

Without changes in some laws, people released from prison serve 'life sentences'

Layne Pavey, who founded "I Did the Time" to promote ex-offenders' re-entry after incarceration, and Rachel Dolezal, president of Spokane NAACP, explored their perspectives on criminal justice in a workshop at the recent Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Of the 70 million Americans who have "done a crime and done the time," Layne said many have taken responsibility and want to move forward with their lives, but are blocked by their past.

"People continue to judge them no matter what the crime or how long ago," she said. "Many end up serving a 'life sentence.'"

Layne, who earned a master's degree in social work at Eastern Washington University and is a peer counselor and mental health clinician, organizes people disenfranchised as they try to follow values and the law, but may return to crime if they cannot find jobs.

Serving on the executive committee of Smart Justice Spokane, Layne helps people share personal stories to promote legislation to change policies.

Her experiences relate to several proposals before the state legislature.

Even though she's white, middle-class, from the South Hill and had six years experience in sales, Layne applied for many types of jobs but was not hired.

People who have served time and are on track to contribute to society find it hard to find work,

because job applications have a box to check if the applicant was ever convicted of a felony.

"Finally, I was hired because my father knew someone. White privilege helped me," said Layne, who had studied with no guarantee she could use the degree.

The Fair Chance Act before the state legislature and the Smart Hiring Ordinance before the Spokane City Council require employers to look at qualifications, not throw applications away because the box is checked. It calls for case-by-case evaluation.

Employers can do criminal background checks. The box is still on applications for the police department and work with vulnerable people, Layne said.

"I was hired in private practice mental health because my boss

liked my story. He saw that because I had 'been there,' I would likely understand and engage with people needing help in recovery," she said.

Serving 20 months in prison for a nonviolent offense, she saw conditions in prison that are counterproductive to people using their time there to review their lives so they make sure they do not end up there again.

"We need to help people turn around when they leave prison," she said. "The Fair Chance Act lets people tell how they have turned their lives around."

Another bill is the Certification Restoration of Opportunity. Layne is a certified clinical social worker, but 84 licenses are denied to people with criminal backgrounds, such as real estate,

cosmetology or bartending.

A third bill addresses Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs). When someone is sentenced, the court may set LFOs for restitution to a victim. LFOs are often so high most cannot make payments.

The 12 percent compounded interest begins to accrue the first day in prison. After four years, someone with a LFO of \$4,000 may owe \$20,000. A court can

order the person to pay \$150 a month regardless of ability to pay. Those who can't pay are sent back to jail, costing taxpayers \$140 a day, Layne said.

Under the LFO bill, the LFO can be waived unless there is a victim, the interest rate can drop, the amount must be fairly assessed, and a person cannot be put in jail for not paying.

For information, call 835-5211.

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Involvement of people of faith can cut coal, oil transport, support renewables

Two Eastern Washington Legislative Conference workshops reported on progress related to coal and oil transport and export, and to shifting from coal burning to sustainable energy.

Jace Bylenga, organizer for the Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign, gave an update on efforts to stop coal transport and export terminals, and on work with Avista in Eastern Washington to reduce its reliance generating 20 percent of its power at a coal-fired plant in Montana.

Laura Ackerman, the Oil and Coal Campaign coordinator with the Lands Council in Spokane, said oil transport issues and expansion of refineries have been helped by successes on coal issues from grassroots advocacy and support of Northwest bishops.

Supporting these issues, said Jessie Dye of the statewide Earth Ministry/WA Interfaith Power and Light are examples of faith communities having "a strong sense of what's right and a willingness to work for it."

Jace said strong grassroots participation in Department of Ecology hearings on the environmental impact of coal transport and export mean that four of six terminals proposed six years ago have been dropped.

In addition to turnout at hearings, hundreds of thousands of people sent in public comments.

The terminals at Longview and Cherry Point, which are still under consideration, would export about 100 million tons of coal. If they were built, Jace said, about 50 more trains a day would be added to the 40 to 60 trains—five are coal trains—a day that go through Spokane and Spokane Valley.

The Power Past Coal Coalition of 100 groups continues to raise concerns about health and safety impacts of the rail traffic.

Already, Washington and Oregon have legislated closure of the last two coal-fired power plants in the region in the next few years.

Jessie said the Powder River Basin Coal Field in Montana and Wyoming is one of the world's largest. Because coal is "the dirtiest form of power generation," activism in the state has stopped building new coal-fired plants and closed existing ones, she said.

"We show every negative environmental impact of coal transport and export, and require mitigation of each. The expense of studies and mitigation will eventually turn off investors, making coal less profitable," Jace said. "Up to now, the coal industry has not been held accountable for mine safety, ground water contamination or air pollution."

As a result of hearings, the Department of Ecology will consider climate change impacts and impacts of rail transport on communities, he said.

Support from local govern-



Jace Bylenga impressed by impact of testimony in hearings.

ments has added pressure.

Laura said concern about oil transport has risen with train explosions in Alberta, Ontario, West Virginia and California.

"If oil is developed, it will have more negative impact on climate change," she said.

"With tracks so close to thousands of Eastern Washingtonians, we are not safe from oil train explosions," she said. "Oil trains from Bakken Oil Fields in North Dakota and Tar Sands in Alberta come through Spokane and go along the Columbia Gorge.

"We don't know for certain, but about four unit trains of 100 cars go through Spokane each day. Each car holds about 30,000 gallons of oil. Coal trains destabilize tracks, making oil train accidents more likely," Laura added.

The oil is shipped to two refineries in Ferndale, two in Anacortes, one in Tacoma. Three exporting facilities are proposed in Grays Harbor and the biggest for Vancouver, Wash. Environmental impact statements on proposals for expansion will be out in the spring. Faith community leaders are concerned the draft statements include major threats to God's creation, Jessie said.

Two bills before the legislature, the Carbon Pollution Accountability Act (HB1314) and Oil Transport Safety Now (HB1449), would add safety measures, such as inspections of tracks.

There are already nine freight train derailments a month in the state, Laura said. In January, a grain train derailed in Cheney.

Many first responders across the state want to know what types of oil are coming when and where, Laura said.

There are also several bills before the legislature that address railroad workers' safety.

Interstate commerce laws say a state cannot stop products coming through, but can adopt spill prevention, public disclosure and financial disclosure measures, plus carriers of oil must demonstrate they have insurance to cover worst-case scenarios.

Jace then told of the Sierra Club's participation in Avista's 20 year planning process to ensure that the true cost of coal is realized. Avista's partial ownership of the Colstrip, Mont., coal-fired plant could be more expensive for its customers when environmental clean up of the site is considered.

"Burning coal is the largest contributor to global warming and mercury in fish," he said. "Carbon from coal burning dissolves in oceans, killing coral reefs and the fishing industry. Heavy metals in ash left after burning coal contains contaminants."

The Sierra Club has petitioned Avista to move from coal to clean energy. Jace invited customers to let Avista know they want change.

"Coal-fired power is not cheap when its costs include cleaning up the pollution," Jace said.

"We can replace coal with wind, solar and energy efficiency, which create family-wage jobs," said Jace, aware of the coal industry's political clout in funding politicians.

"We need to organize people so

we can have greater influence than organized money," he said.

Jessie urged people of faith to be stewards of earth's ecosystems.

"We want a better world for all God's children," she said.

For information, call 209-2395 for Jace, 209-2404 for Laura, or visit CoalFreeAvista.org, Power-PastCoal.org and landscouncil.org/oil_trains/crude_oil_trains.asp or www.earthministry.org.

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Relationship of Spokane and Solala dioceses enriches lives and faith

By Sr. Sue Orłowski, SP

Support from Catholics in Eastern Washington helps finance ministry, health care and education in the Guatemala Highlands.

A simple request of a dying Pope and a listening ear of a bishop started a relationship between the Catholic Diocese of Spokane and the Diocese of Solola in western Guatemala.

After 55 years, the mission is still going strong, and the number of parishes involved and their giving has increased, said Donna Connell, who has been chair of the Spokane Diocesan Commission on Guatemala since 2008.

She sees her role as helping educate the next generation to follow the Catholic social teaching “on the preferential option for the poor,” especially in the Solola Diocese.

“Although poor, the Guatemalan people have much to teach the people of the United States because they have a deep faith, know how to celebrate and show great hospitality despite their economic plight,” she said.

Donna said that the people were poor because the country was in a civil war from 1960 to 1996. About 200,000 Guatemalans were killed or disappeared. Eighty-three percent were indigenous Mayan and the United Nations considered this genocide.

“Social justice is the core for what we do as a commission,” she said. “I have been given much so I need to give much to help others.”

Because she has been “gifted by the people of Guatemala,” she now shares those gifts with the people of Spokane.

In 1958, Bishop Bernard Topel visited the dying Pope Pius XII who told him to “remember Latin America.” Later that same year, Pope John XXIII said, “It is my desire that every First World Diocese will form a bond of prayer and help with a Third World Diocese.”

Bishop Topel took those words to heart and in 1959 sent two priests for work in the Guatemalan Mission with the “second Guatemala” made up of 60 percent Quiche Indians who were illiterate, impoverished people.

The Catholic Diocese of Spokane assumed responsibility for the parishes of Nahuala, Santa Lucia, Santa Maria, Santa Clara and Ixtahuacan in the Province of Solola, where the people lived and worked in the mountains.

“There the people lived in huts with dirt floors, 50 percent of the children died by the age of five, and the average life span was 30



Donna Connell meets with Guatemalan woman. Photo courtesy of Donna Connell

years of age,” Donna said.

The Guatemalan programs the diocese sponsors have been “designed to enhance the religious, healthcare, economic, social and educational status of those who are in the most need, spreading the Gospel to its fullest extent while addressing the whole person, body and soul,” she said.

Since sending the first priest to Guatemala in 1959 until today, the Diocese of Spokane has helped the people work their way out of poverty, gain employment and “dig out” from natural disasters and civil war.

With the assistance of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the Daughters of Mary Health of the Sick, the relationship expanded to include starting a radio station, a primary school, and a high school seminary and a post high school seminary.

In addition, the diocese helped form a farm cooperative, open a fisheries project, develop projects to help women in poverty, build a spirituality center and open a bakery-training center. Other projects include organizing a catechist program and youth program, expanding midwifery services, and beginning the Family-to-Family Program, a scholarship fund, medical clinics and health programs.

Throughout the Diocese of Spokane, many churches are involved with programs in Guatemala by helping sponsor an individual program, sending money for the general fund, making visits to the

country or praying for the success of programs and those who minister there.

In 1985, the diocese, through Clara and Jerry Monks of St. Thomas More Parish and Sr. Barbara Ford of the Sisters of Charity of New York, began the Adopt-A-Family Program, now called Family-to-Family Program.

Every three years, the diocese sponsors 130 families in Solola to help the poorest families learn skills to become self-sufficient. Family members take classes to learn a skill, such as weaving, sewing, embroidery, bee keeping or coffee growing, so they will have a way to support themselves and their families. Each family has help to build a new cement house after they complete the program.

Donna, who is from St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Spokane Valley, became involved with her church’s Guatemalan Committee before going on the diocesan commission.

Raised Catholic in Colfax, Donna said her interests in teaching, cooking, baking and sewing led her to earn a degree in home economics at Washington State University.

At St. Mary’s, she was involved with the youth group and led youth retreats for her parish and the Diocesan Retreat Team. She was president of the St. Mary’s School Parent’s Club, and has

worked as the school development director and librarian for seven years.

Later she earned a library endorsement at Eastern Washington University and a master’s in education in creative arts from Leslie College in New York. She worked 21 years as an elementary school teacher and librarian in the public schools.

In addition to their five children, she and her husband Ron cared for two foster children, including one from South Korea. **“The Scriptural call to welcome the stranger among us—including immigrants seeking work, homes, education and a decent life for their children—has been the foundation for my work with the homeless, the poor and youth,”** said Donna, who is also involved with St. Mary’s hosting homeless families in the church through Family Promise.

When the Diocesan Program in Guatemala asked the church to become involved with its four medical clinics 14 years ago, Donna was in a small group at St. Mary’s that responded.

Parishioners sent funds each month to support clinics and a native doctor, Jose Miguel Vasquez, who became the first native medical doctor for the clinics in 1985.

In 2000, he was appointed health director for the Diocese of Solola.

Recently his son, Robinsón, who is in medical school in Guatemala, spent a month observing cardiologists at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane.

Before Donna became chair of the Spokane Diocesan Commission on Guatemala, she and her husband visited the Solola Diocese, saw the work first hand and fell in love with the people.

At first, she didn’t feel she had the speaking skills needed, but she said that she felt like the Prophet Jeremiah and trusted that God would give her the words.

She gave presentations as a teacher and librarian, and gained organizing skills from work with St. Mary’s School and Church, and Family Promise.

Her first visit to Guatemala and five other visits have not only strengthened her desire to help the people, but also gave her the words for presentations to parishes and groups in the diocese on the Guatemala Mission.

The result has been an increase in the number of parishes in the Spokane Diocese involved in the mission and in contributing to programs in Guatemala.

For information, visit dioceseofspokane.org/guatemala.php



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People of faith can make a difference through advocacy for justice

What do faith values of loving neighbors, even enemies, mean we are to do? What does proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, setting the oppressed free and proclaiming the favorable year of the Lord call us to do as people of faith?

What does the call to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give a drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, care for the sick and visit prisoners require of us?

Issues before a state legislature are often about people's rights, dignity and wellbeing. Faith communities set priorities each year based on their values and educate members to engage in loving and caring for people, serving people who are poor and suffering, and engaging in advocacy

as citizens to bring healing and justice to communities, societies and the world.

There are issues related to wealth inequality, criminal justice, environmental threats and reconciling people across faith lines. There are also issues of assuring affordable, decent, safe housing, providing a safety net for vulnerable people and dismantling the culture of violence

People of faith concerned about issues can have an impact as citizens.

Reports on the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference offer opportunities for people to inform themselves, be inspired and become involved.

Participants learned that the many people who testified at public hearings and wrote statements related to coal and oil transport

have had an impact in halting four of six proposed coal export terminals.

They learned, too, of the need to persist as they heard the history of African Americans' relationship with police through the years, of progress in civil rights and continual efforts to undo that progress. It's why the communities of faith need to be vigilant and continue to challenge every new outcropping of injustice.

Another example of the impact of pressure from the faith community joining with unions and the wider community is the recent decision by Walmart to spend \$1 billion to pay nearly 500,000 of its 1.3 million U.S. workers \$9 an hour for starting workers, more than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25. Across Washington, there

were 60 actions at Walmart stores on Black Friday, the big pre-Christmas-shopping day. They called for workers to earn \$15 an hour, a living wage. Since Walmart's announcement in February, other retailers are also acting based on economic pressures to increase their minimum wages.

Discussions continue about the right of workers to share in and receive incentives from the wealth they help create.

The need to educate people in faith communities is ongoing in the need to draw in new generations to continue the pressure to build healthy, equal, just, reconciled, peace-filled communities: shalom.

In face of fears stirred today, faith moves people from apathy to action.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Catholic, interfaith lobbyists bring values-based insights to legislation

With about 1,500 bills introduced in the Washington State Legislature as of the Jan. 31 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Spokane, both the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) and the Faith Action Network (FAN) of Washington have faith-based advocacy priorities.

Most of the priorities of the WSCC and FAN are in common, but a few are not.

With a good mix of Democrats and Republicans in the State Senate and State House of Representatives, there may be more chance of legislators agreeing on some action, commented Sr. Sharon Park, OP, director of the WSCC.

"Faith-based advocacy is value-based advocacy on behalf of others," she said. "We cannot do all issues, but we do what is important out of our values. Our advocacy is nonpartisan, based on information and grassroots involvement."

The last four quarters, there has been an increase in income that is expected to carry forward for two years.

After the passage of Initiative 1351, reducing class sizes without funding, Sr. Sharon said, there is a proposal that future initiatives cannot be passed without funding sources, because the state has to have a balanced budget.

"We support adequate revenue to cover the safety net," she said.

Sr. Sharon and Paul Benz, co-director of FAN listed several bills the WSCC and

FAN are supporting based on faith values and their priorities:

- One major criminal justice reform is to challenge legal financial obligations (LFOs) people must pay with 12 percent compounded interest when they are released from prison.

Someone who has done time should not be put back in jail because of not having money to pay the fees, Sr. Sharon said. There's no sense for someone to be homeless or poor because of LFOs.

- Another bill proposes that inmates have post-secondary educational opportunities while in prison.

Paul said that the late 1980s and early 1990s was a tough-on-crime period in an effort to dismantle the culture of violence. In contrast, he said restorative justice would reduce recidivism—repeat offenses—by restoring people to the state and society.

- The Family Unity Act sets a distinct relationship with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement.

- FAN and the WSCC both support the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) fund, formerly General Assistance to Unemployable.

- The Emergency Food Assistance Programs (EFAP) allows farmers markets to continue to accept food stamps and strengthens programs that provide access to food for struggling families.

- Breakfast After the Bell allows children

in high-risk public schools to eat breakfast even if they arrive late.

- Support for housing farm workers, disabled people and low-income people comes from faith values to decrease homelessness.

- A health care proposal would cover for mental and physical health on par.

- The Toxic Free Kids and Families Act calls for children to inherit a safe, healthy world. It requires the chemical industry to stop using PBDEs, cancer-causing toxic flame-retardants in couches, changing pads, car seats and other children's products, and preventing equally harmful chemicals from being used as replacements.

On life issues, Sr. Sharon said the Catholic Church is promoting a bill that requires parental notification before a girl under 18 has an abortion, similar to what 37 states have. There is provision for judicial bypass in case of incest or abuse.

Work continues on abolishing the death penalty, along with efforts in other states. The governor's moratorium on it, she said, allows time to look at how costly it is, and its disparate use with 35 counties not doing it because they can't afford it. There is also concern about the disproportionate number of blacks, other people of color, and poor people on death row. It's a case of poverty, racism and costs for the state, she said.

She encouraged people expressing their support or opposition on issues to avoid partisan comments, because

advocacy requires building relationships with legislators.

"For us as lobbyists, involvement by members of the faith community is important," she said. "They have the most power with legislators."

The Catholic Conference's advocacy network has weekly alerts informing people what they can do and urging them to contact legislators by phone, email and letter, to be polite, kind and brief, and to share stories of people affected. People can write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor, and can take part in local legislative forums and civic events, as well as making personal visits.

Its website at thewsc.org offers advocacy bulletins on issues, an overview of the legislative session, and its 2015 legislative priorities.

For information, call 206-301-0556 or email wsc@thewsc.org.

"Each person can make a difference by keeping up on one or two issues," Paul said.

The Faith Action Network also sends alerts. Its Network of Advocating Faith Communities, which involves 90 communities in Washington, provides resources, training and strategies for effective advocacy.

Its website at fanwa.org offers information on the legislative agenda, a bill tracker, an advocacy toolkit and information on how to be involved.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or email benz@fanwa.org.

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

I have had occasion to live with adults over 21 with medical and/or physical disabilities for nine years. What I don't understand is, we mainstream these individuals in school and then once they become adults, we segregate them.

These people as well as those of different nationalities and colors should not be discriminated against for any reason. Having them live together can compound their inherent problems.

I realize this is not yet a perfect world, and that it is something we can continue to work on. I also realize how easy it is to discriminate against anyone for any reason, and that it is something we must all fight at all times.

Sandra Joe - Spokane Valley

Over a few years, I have been starting a think-tank called Arm-Chair Institute dedicated to new, different and better ways to counter aggression, hostility, violence, war and fighting.

Our mission is to have people look at whether they can afford violence in their life. The key word, "afford," leads to using an accounting approach, with assets and liabilities.

Assets include appreciation, connectedness, forgiveness, gratitude,

harmony, neighborliness, peace, tranquility, self respect and respect for others.

Liabilities include aggression, battle, fighting, hostility, violence and war.

Liabilities seem to draw people's attention to stories, movies, video games, sports and even sermons. Our humanness calls the liabilities fun, exciting and thus bring the marketability to many activities.

The average individual has a healthy amount of assets in their livelihood and their world. Most people have created ways to replenish those assets on a daily, weekly, monthly and even yearly basis through music, worship, reading, sharing stories and even enjoying and sharing myths. The average healthy person also respects other people's stories and myths. Having a healthy balance of assets enables people to enjoy some liabilities without creating unhealthy, embarrassing or dangerous situations they may later regret.

Some people do not have enough healthy assets and cannot afford to engage in forms of entertainment that involve aggression, hostility and violence without the risk of confusing their real world with their virtual world. This happens today, when people have not maintained or never had a balance.

When they encounter a conflict in the real world, they only know to destroy their

opponent. That's what they've learned in their virtual world of video games, movies and even in the name of religion.

Those who make monetary gains from the excitement and marketability of liabilities need to recognize the necessity to give back and help maintain the emotional health of people and communities, who make up their customer base.

We invite producers of violent movies, video games, guns and even sports leagues to take responsibility. We encourage religions, if they use words like battle, fighting and war in reference to evil, Satan or anything in the name of their god, to take responsibility, too.

Jay Larsen - Arm Chair Institute

Pastors need to work from their congregation's strengths. Churches don't need to do everything well, but can do some things really well. My first church was upset that it didn't have a youth group, because it didn't have any youth even remotely connected to the congregation. There were no parents in the congregation whose children were youth, but the congregation felt bad because of what they perceived as a glaring lack in their ministry. How could they succeed in their community, they wondered, without a youth group?

They did, however, have many young children. One way to get a youth group is to start with kids. I encouraged the congregation to refocus on what they did have, and by the time I left six years later, we not only had a terrific ministry with young children, we also had a youth group! We didn't create it from scratch. We grew it from what we already had.

There's a name for this. It's called, by some, "appreciative inquiry," and by others "Asset-Based Ministry."

Appreciative inquiry asks what we do well, what we are known for in the community in a good way. Asset-based ministry challenges us to work from the abilities of people in our church, the strengths of the congregation, rather than focus on what people can't do or what someone thinks a congregation should do.

This approach to ministry takes seriously that the church is the body of Christ, and the unique and varied gifts and talents of our people. Most of us can't be all things to all people. It would be more accurate to say no one can. I challenge congregations to build a great ministry on what the people in the church can do well.

The Rev. Dale Cockrum -
Inland United Methodist District
Superintendent

Institute speakers will include Walter Brueggemann

Speakers for the Whitworth Institute of Ministry 2015, which will be held July 20 to 24 at Whitworth University, will include Bible interpreter Walter Brueggemann, *Playing God* author Andy Crouch and Egyptian seminary teacher Anne Zaki.

They will guide conversation on Jer. 29:7 and the theme, "Pursuing the Common Good: Engaging Culture with the Gospel."

The week includes worship, instruction, renewal and rest for participants.

Walter, author of more than 100 books and many scholarly articles, served on the faculty of Eden Seminary from 1961 to 1986 and at Columbia Theological Seminary from 1986 to 2003. He is currently professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia.

Since 1982, Walter has been writing commentaries about the Psalms. He just published a commentary in 2014.

An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, he is also known for his book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, published in 1978.

Andy's book, *Playing God: Redeeming the Gift of Power*, was published in 2013. His 2009 book, *Recovering Our Creative Calling*, won recognition by Publishers Weekly.

In 2012, he became executive editor of *Christianity Today* and is also executive producer of "This Is Our City," a multi-year documentary project on Christians seeking ways for their cities to flourish. From 1998 to 2003, he edited *re:generation* quarterly. For 10 years he was campus minister with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at Harvard University.

Anne, who was born in Cairo where her father was a pastor, attended an international school in Western Canada focused on peace and international understanding. At Calvin College, she learned to integrate her faith and social justice.

Married to a Canadian-Syrian pastor and mother of four boys, she holds master's degrees in psychology and divinity, and worked as a research and development specialist for global worship at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship from 2003 to 2013.

She teaches at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo and continues to serve the Calvin Institute.

Anne is preparing for ordination in the Presbyterian Church of Egypt, and would be the first woman ordained in North Africa and the Middle East.

For information, call 777-3275 or email oce@whitworth.edu.

Calendar of Events

- Mar 5** • **Approaches to Activism:** Making the Road by Walking, 205 Monroe Hall, Eastern Washington University (EWU) Cheney, 3:30 p.m., 359-2898, cvines@ewu.edu
- **"Not a New Cold War,"** Anthony Rodin, visiting political science professor, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7:30 p.m., 777-3834
- Mar 6** • **"HIV 2015 State-of-the-Art Update,"** David Spach, University of Washington professor of medicine, 4 p.m., Washington State University Spokane, PBS Building Room 101, 4 p.m., 358-7837
- Mar 6, 7, 13, 14** • **"These Shining Lives"** on the 1920s "Radium Girls," Whitworth Cowles Auditorium, 7:30 p.m., Mar 8, 2 p.m., 777-4374, kdawson@whitworth.edu
- Mar 7** • **"Make It Happen,"** International Women's Conference, Bipasha Biswas, EWU professor of social work, EWU/ WSU Riverpoint Campus, Academic Center, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., diazs@gonzaga.edu
- **Leonard A. Oakland Film Festival:** Calvary (2014), RTT Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth 7 p.m., 777-4605, kbumgarner@whitworth.edu
- Mar 8** • **Kosher Dinner,** Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., 747-3304, www.spokanetbs.org
- Mar 10** • **"Wages of Rebellion,"** journalist Chris Hedges, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 7 p.m., 227-7638
- **Unity in the Community Committee Meeting,** Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 5:30 p.m., mahenderson@west.com
- Mar 10, 17, 24, 31** • **Thomas Merton's Bridges to Contemplative Living Series,** The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 6 p.m., 483-6496, sjfconline.org.
- Mar 11** • **Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast,** "Sharing Stories That Inform, Inspire and Involve," Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m., buffet, 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., program, 535-1813, info@thefigtree.org
- Mar 12** • **"Race: The Power of an Illusion,"** film series from PBS documentary, Greater Spokane Progress and Win/Win Network, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Mar 12-14** • **A City Revival:** Christ Only, Always, Inland NW Ministers Wives and Widows Fellowship, 7 p.m. Thursday, the Rev. Earon Davis at Morning Star Missionary Baptist; 7 p.m., Friday, the Rev. Dwayne Washington, Holy Temple Church of God in Christ; 6 p.m., Saturday, the Rev. Boris Rhodes, Mt. Olive Baptist, at Morning Star Missionary Baptist, 3909 W. Rowan Ave. 244-3237
- Mar 12-May 14** • **Parenting Project Classes,** St. Joseph Family Center, 1016 N. Superior 7 p.m., Thursdays, 483-6495
- Mar 13** • **Fig Tree Benefit Lunch,** "Sharing Stories That Inform, Inspire and Involve," Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 11:45 a.m., buffet, noon to 1 p.m., program, 535-1813, info@thefigtree.org
- Mar 14** • **Inland District Training—**Eden 99185, Preparing a New Generation of Pastoral Leaders and Shalom Ministries, Spokane Valley United Methodist Church, 115 N. Raymond, 9 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., 924-7262
- **Lenten Reflection Day,** The Franciscan Place, 1016 N. Superior, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 483-6495, sjfconline.org
- Mar 15** • **"She's Beautiful When She's Angry,"** film on women's movement from 1966 to 1970, Magic Lantern, 25 W. Main, 7 p.m., 359-2897
- Mar 17** • **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG),** Bethany Presbyterian, 2607 S. Ray St., 6:30 p.m., spokaneplag.org
- Mar 18-26** • **Nine Days of Grace - Novena,** "Why I Have Hope," St. Aloysius Catholic Church, Boone & Astor, daily prayer service 12:15 p.m., Mass service, 5:15 p.m., 313-5890
- Mar 19, 20, 21** • **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival,** The Magic Lantern, 25 W. Main, www.sajfs.org
- Mar 20-21** • **Peace and Economic Justice Action Conference,** Unitarian Universalist Church, 4340 W. Ft. Wright Dr., Friday 6 p.m., Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., 838-7870
- Mar 20-22** • **The Annunciation Listing with the Artists,** Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, 208-962-2000, spirit-center@stgertrudes.org
- Mar 26** • **Diversity Monologues,** Jepsen Wolff Auditorium, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., 313-5836, unityhouse@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 27** • **My Father's House Dessert Fundraiser,** Rock of Ages, 2131 W. Woodson, 6:30 p.m., 292-9685, dgrether@gmail.com
- Mar 28** • **Benefit Spaghetti Dinner & Bluegrass Gospel Concert** at Green Bluff United Methodist, 9908 E. Green Bluff Rd., 5:30 p.m., 979-2607
- Mar 29** • **Ecumenical Taizé Evening Prayer Service,** Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr, 7 p.m., 448-9736
- Mar 30-Apr 5** • **Spokane Ministers Fellowship Holy Week,** Good Friday and Easter Sunrise services, 777-4603
- Apr 1** • **The Fig Tree Mailing and Distribution,** St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave., 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Apr 2** • **The Fig Tree Development/Benefit and Board meetings,** Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 12 Development, 1 Board, 535-1813

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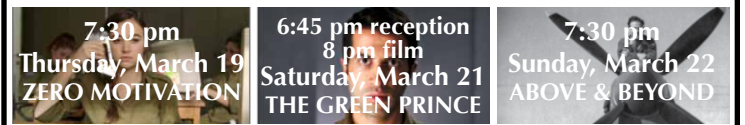
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Children's Village gives children stable residence, maintains ties to school

By Kaye Hult

Children's Village in Coeur d'Alene is reopening its Miller Home in mid-March, doubling its capacity from 12 to 24 children, said its development director Christina Hull.

Miller Home was open as a residential treatment center for children with severe mental health and behavior issues from 1996 through 2010. It relied on funding from the State of Idaho. When that funding dried up, Miller Home closed.

Miller Home will be the second of two group foster homes on its 15-acre campus at 1350 W. Hanley.

The first is Moyer Home.

Each home accommodates 12 children.

Anne Fox-Clarkson founded Children's Village with two other parents, Carol Rankin and Kathy Curran, from Winton Elementary School, where she was principal.

Anne saw that foster children bounced from home to home to school to school. She realized this was not healthy or stable for them. She promised two students at her school, Donald and Becky, who suffered child abuse, that she would create a home for children like them.

With Carol and Kathy, she set out to create a home that would transport children to their schools, whether in Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, Rathdrum, Athol or Hayden.

They founded Children's Village in 1983 to serve girls from birth to 18 and boys from birth to 14, Christina said. After several years of preparation, Moyer Home was opened in 1990.

Becky, the first resident, still returns to visit with her daughter.

"As much as possible, Children's Village offers children a stable residence, as well as maintaining their connection with their school and extracurricular activities," she said.

Staff provide transportation in their four vans.

Christina said the village makes sure the children have medical check-ups soon after arriving. They receive treatment for medical, dental, vision or hearing issues as needed.

Children's Village provides necessities—clothing, food, books, toys and games. They do not keep pets, but therapy animals are allowed.

On a typical day, school-age children from preschool up attend class. Volunteers come in the morning to spend time with younger residents.

Those at home rest in the middle of the day. Volunteers come again between 2 p.m. and supper.



Christina Hull raises support for Children's Village.

Therapists and caseworkers spend time with clients. Mentors help students catch up to their expected learning levels.

During the summer, said Christina, the community makes activities available to the children—theater, concerts, parades, swimming and Silverwood. At Christmas, the Hagadone Corporation takes them on the Christmas cruise to greet Santa.

About half the children come to this group foster home as state placements. They may stay for years.

The state may give parents a plan for their children to return home, said Christina. It may include mandates for anger management training or family counseling. If the parents follow through, their children can rejoin the family. If not, the goal is for the children to be adopted.

While awaiting adoption, the state and caseworker seek the best placement. It might be to remain at Children's Village or a long-term foster family. Some children want to stay at Children's Village rather than go to foster care. The

average stay is three months.

In 2014, the average stay was longer. Generally, Children's Village serves 75 to 100 children a year, but in 2014 they served 50.

When parents realize they cannot care for their children, they bring them to Children's Village as private placements. Generally this is because a family is homeless, but there can be other reasons as well.

A grandmother was raising her grandson. When she needed to have treatments for cancer, Children's Village took her grandson until she was well enough to care for him again.

Private placements most often come as referrals from a church, school or hospital. Children's Village works with parents to calm their fears that they are about to lose their child(ren).

"It's hard for a family to leave a child," said Christina. "We invite them for a tour and explain that 'we're here to help while they handle what needs to be handled.' Then the children go back."

This facility is often at capacity, so they are excited to re-open

Miller Home as a group home.

When they turn private-placement clients away, they send them with a bag of necessities to help them until they can find another solution.

Christina became development director in July 2014, but has volunteered there since 2004.

She traveled for a corporate job, but volunteered when she could.

"I fell in love with these kids!" said Christina, who grew up in Colville. Her father's family is from Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene, so they knew of Children's Village.

In Colville, she volunteered at a local nursing home.

"I have always had a heart for the vulnerable," she said.

After high school, she moved to Spokane to manage Crossroads Catering for eight years. Then she came to Coeur d'Alene to work as a product development specialist at Pita Pit Corporate headquarters, negotiating with food vendors and creating new products.

"About a year and a half ago, I felt called to do something closer to my heart," she said.

She prayed about it.

A friend told her that Children's Village was looking for a development director. Two weeks later she applied and was hired, bringing skills with fund raising and building relationships.

"What I have lost in salary, I have made up in hugs," she said.

"Jesus says, 'Look after the orphans of the world.' I feel like it's our responsibility to do that," said Christina whose faith has

been active since she was saved at the age of eight at an Assembly of God camp in Colville.

"I was blessed with loving, generous parents in a functional family, and I have a heart for those who do not have them," said Christina, who now attends the Altar Church in Coeur d'Alene.

She fosters relationships with area churches to build support.

"One church a month partners with us," she said. "I speak at their worship on the first Sunday. They put our list of 12 grocery items in their bulletins every Sunday that month.

That provides specific food and helps people in the community learn more about the village.

More than 95 percent of their \$827,000 2015 budget is raised through grants, fund-raisers and private donations. Less than five percent comes from the State.

The staff are mostly women who have a history with Children's Village.

Sheilah Stone-Dorame, agency director for Moyer Home, has been there the longest at 23 years.

Janet Davis recently became executive director with Children's Village.

Past residents stay in touch. The facility recently gave a former resident a baby shower.

"To some of the children who come here, we're their family," said Christina.

Many past residents volunteer. The village needs volunteers.

For information, call 208-667-1189 or email cvfoundation@thechildrensvillage.org.

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