

42ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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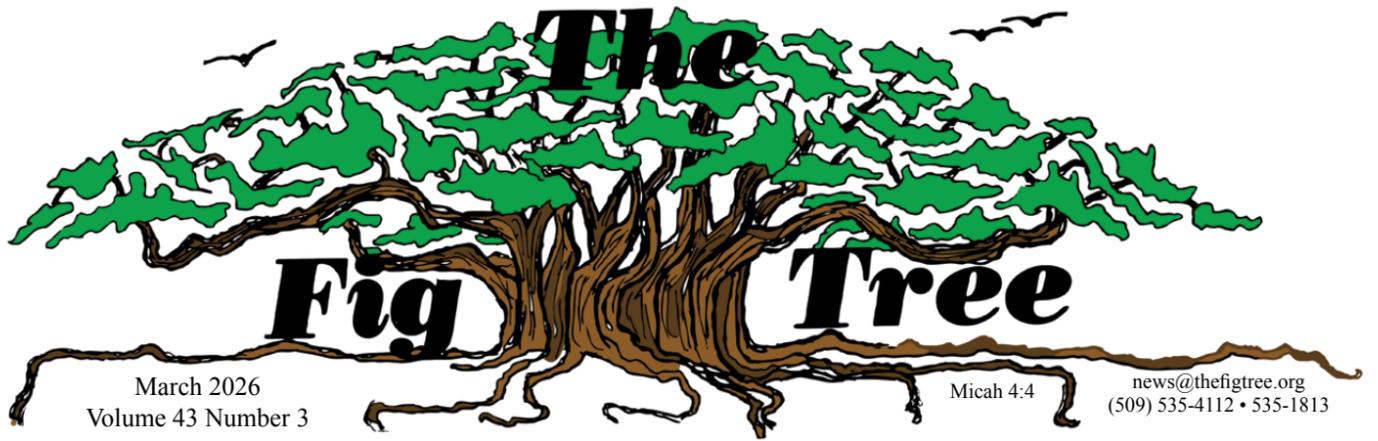
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

SNAP marks 60th year of serving

By Mary Stamp

Known for enabling people to weatherize their homes, access energy assistance, start businesses and prevent homelessness, Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) has helped people, businesses and nonprofits weather many storms since it was founded as one of the Community Action Agencies started during the War on Poverty in 1966.

Today it is one of 1,000 Community Action Agencies in the U.S. and 30 in the state.

“We serve 39,000 people each year, making life better for roughly 10 percent of the community in small and big ways,” said Julie Honenkamp, who is SNAP’s third CEO, following Tom Pleas, who served from 1985 to 1992, and Larry Stuckart, who worked with SNAP from 1973 to 2013 and was director from 1992 to 2011.

Over its 60 years, SNAP has built a resilient infrastructure that is critical to its ability to survive.

“In the uncertainties of the past 15 years—the 2008 to 2009 recession, the COVID pandemic and current crisis—SNAP has built a solid infrastructure. As a result, the county turned to SNAP during the pandemic to help distribute



Julie Honenkamp, who has served SNAP 27 years, will retire at the end of 2026.

more than \$40 million in COVID rental assistance funds to keep people in their homes,” she said.

“In today’s federal uncertainty, we are resilient and work to weather shutdowns as a stable partner for our fellow nonprofits,” she explained. “So, we have helped support Manzanita House, champion Spectrum and Latinos en Spokane to do their services.”

Over its 60 years, SNAP programs have helped many county residents build stability, expand opportunity and strengthen neighborhoods, said Julie.

SNAP began as a Community Action Council that formed three neighborhood centers in Hillyard, East Central and West Central Spokane and then added a fourth in Elk.

Initially, Fr. Frank Bach, who was the director of Catholic Charities, invited St. Vincent de Paul Society to help him establish the community centers to help low-income people with emergency needs and other services.

The programs were so successful that when federal funds for the Spokane Community Action Council ended in 1973, local leaders secured funds and Catholic

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Faith leaders discuss ‘Spiritual Ramifications of Persistence’

Fig Tree Board moderator and Mennonite pastor Gary Jewell introduced four faith leaders to discuss “Spiritual Ramifications of Persistence” at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Jan 31.

The panelists were Bishop Gretchen Rehberg of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane; Liv Larson Andrews, director of evangelical mission for the Northwest Intermountain Synod of the Evangelical Church in America; Max Oliva, a Jesuit priest work-

ing for social justice in Las Vegas and Spokane, and Karen Stromgren, executive director of Muslims for Community Action and Support (MCAS).

“Persistence is a spiritual virtue that rarely looks heroic,” said Gretchen. “It is the decision to remain, continue, pray, listen and show up again, when the work is slow, the results are not seen and the outcome is uncertain. It is about faithfulness.

“Our baptismal covenant is to persevere in resisting evil, seeing

and serving Christ in all persons, striving for justice and peace and respecting everyone’s dignity,” she said, adding that church wedding vows are “will you” not “do you,” emphasizing the long term.

Jesus’ parables are about holy tenacity—the woman who keeps going to the unjust judge and the sower who scatters the seeds on rocky soil, Gretchen said.

“In churches, it’s evident in elders who show up year after year, teachers who never give up on a child,” she said. “In the interfaith context, it’s about covenant, Dharma, submitting to God, walking the path or repairing the world.

“Transformation is not instant but comes through sustained practice and disciplined compassion,” she said, contrasting it to the culture shaped by instant gratification and quick fixes.

In this culture, Gretchen pointed out that politically, people despair when progress stalls or reverses and personally, people abandon relationships, communities and institutions when

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The Fig Tree 2026 Spring Benefit offers time to connect and share

Four 2026 Spring Benefit speakers will reflect on how The Fig Tree stories and resource sharing express the theme, “Persist Together: Inspire Miracles.”

For the Benefit Lunch, the buffet will be open from 10:45 a.m. until the program begins at noon, Saturday, March 14, in the Hemmingson Ballroom at Gonzaga University. Guests may come early to network with each other.

The speakers are David Gortner, pastor at St. Luke’s Lutheran in Coeur d’Alene and a Fig Tree Board member; LaRae Wiley, founder and elder at the Spokane Salish School; Luc Jasmin III, Eastern Washington representative of the Governor’s office, and Laurel Fish, organizer with the Spokane Alliance, sharing how their efforts intersect with The Fig Tree.

Comments of seven other community leaders—Pat Castaneda, Jennifer Compau, Andre Dove, Jeff Ferguson, Jillian Joseph, Rob McCann, Rusty Nelson and Katie Thompson—are included in a promotional video Hamilton Studio has prepared to tell The Fig Tree story as it intersects with their efforts to overcome hate and to promote peace, fair trade, multicultural ministry, human services, refugee lives and river health.

The livestream is available during the Benefit Lunch and the promotional video will be shared during the Breakfast-Time Benefit from 7:30 to 9 a.m., Wednesday, March 18, on Zoom, along with opportunity to chat online.

The events are the major fundraisers to support The Fig Tree’s monthly newspaper and the annual Resource Directory.

“Last year we raised more than \$73,500 from sponsors, including about \$50,000 from the benefits,” said Mary Stamp, editor. “To meet rising costs, our goal is to raise \$78,000.”

For information, call 535-1813 or visit thefigtree.org/donate.html to sign up by March 6.

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WCC honors the Rev. Jesse Jackson

The World Council of Churches (WCC) mourned the death of U.S. civil rights leader, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, during the U.S. Black History Month, and WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay commended Jackson's prophetic role, passionate advocacy and drive for justice.

"He was a gift to all those who believed and acted for justice, equality, and love," said Jerry. "As he advocated for freedom and democracy around the world, he served humanity in a way that showed his belief that we are all children of God. We give thanks for his life and contributions to make his country and the world a better place, striving for justice, equality and liberation."

"He was not only an iconic civil rights leader of our time and presidential hopeful, serving with global leaders like Martin Luther King Jr, he was also a pastor and priest to and with the people," said the Rev. Angelique Walker-Smith of the National Baptist Convention USA and a WCC president from North America. "His messages and actions of hope recognized the *imago Dei* in all of us and were uniquely expressed in his preaching cadence of mantras stating, 'I am Somebody!' and 'Keep hope alive!' which ran contrary to systematic and systemic messages of dehumanization of marginalized people."

Jackson inspired and encouraged generations to live their calling when structural adversity beset them, she said.

Jackson's family said, "Our father was a servant leader—not only to our family, but also to the oppressed, the voiceless and the overlooked around the world." The WCC prays that God's strength and peace will surround the Jackson family, friends and all who mourn his passing in the U.S. and the world over. May what he stood for and fought for continue to inspire people to proclaim justice and peace in a broken and suffering world.

WCC invites Global Systemic Carbon Fast in Lent

The WCC invites faith communities to join a Global Systemic Carbon Fast during Lent 2026, a six-week journey examining how extractive industries drive both climate breakdown and economic inequality.

From Feb. 18 to April 1, there are weekly biblical reflections and actions on extractive industries—oil and gas drilling, mining, fishing, logging, agro-industrial farming and deep-sea mining. The fast reframes the prayer "Give us today our daily bread" as a spiritual practice and structural critique, asking churches to name hidden systems—classism, racism and exploitation—that determine who has enough and who goes without.

"When we pray for our daily bread, we are not asking for endless accumulation, but for what sustains life today," said WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay. "This Lenten journey invites churches to examine our personal choices and the economic structures that deny daily bread to millions and threaten the planet itself. Participants will consider the theology of enough." The resource "True Freedom" is at oikoumene.org/resources/publications/true-freedom.

WCC launches Seven Weeks for Water

During Lent from Feb. 28 to April 1, the WCC also launches Seven Weeks for Water, on women's water justice. Since 2008, the WCC Ecumenical Water Network has invited reflection on water justice. In 2026, the campaign highlights gender equality in water and sanitation access.

"Women and girls walk hours for water but are excluded from decisions on water management. It is a violation of dignity that the church cannot ignore," said Dinesh Suna, WCC program executive for Land, Water and Food and coordinator of the WCC Ecumenical Water Network. "The Seven Weeks for Water invites us to reflect, pray and act—to ensure access to clean water is reality for all God's children."

The program is available at oikoumene.org/what-we-do/care-for-creation-and-climate-justice/ecumenical-decade-of-climate-justice-action#resources.

Staff recruit directory ads and partners

The Fig Tree staff is connecting with the annual Resource Directory advertisers and community partners to support its publication in 2026.

Directory editor Malcolm Haworth works all year to research the listings and keep the information current. That work makes it a reliable resource for the region's organizations that link people to services, for people in need and for people seeking opportunities to share their skills as volunteers.

"Because it is continually updated and because it is comprehensive, it remains the primary guide used by caregivers, professionals and advocates in health-care and senior services, job training and education, children and family resources, housing and homeless outreach, cultural awareness and interconnections, racial and social justice, environmental and sustainability programs, ecumenical and interfaith ministries, the arts and civic services," said Malcolm.

Its value is that it is both in print and online, readily accessible to people.

"We hope to publish 22,500 copies again this year, depending on support. While many advertisers are facing uncertain times, we are reaching out to more so we can continue our outreach," he said.

Staff invite agencies interested in advertising and donors interested in supporting to contact them.

For information, call 509-535-4112 or email ads@thefigtree.org.

PJALS Action Conference is March 21

The Peace and Justice Action League annual Action Conference will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 21.

The theme "From Survival to Vision: Crafting the Future We Deserve" will focus on going beyond reaction into response. Attendees will explore how care, creativity, strategy and solidarity shape futures rooted in dignity, justice and collective well-being.

The Action Conference invites participants to ask, "What are

we moving toward? What does collective liberation look like in practice? How do we build it together?"

Conference Tracks include "Visioning the Possible," "Rest, Joy and Revolutionary Care," "Issues at the Frontlines" and "Skill-Building for Organizers."

Visioning will introduce an indigenous vision of community building, solidarity and strengthening analysis.

Revolutionary care includes self-care, reclaiming power and

printmaking.

Frontline issue sessions are on critical race theory, social justice, universal healthcare and rapid response to immigration enforcement.

A session on organizing provides nuts-and-bolts ideas on the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions Movement, 10 things activists should know, Spokane for All, everyday resistance to authoritarianism and leading with liberation in mind.

For information, visit pjals.org/2026conference/#top.

Students, families may apply for exchange

Applications for the 2026 Spokane-Cagli Italy Sister City Exchange Trip are available for Spokane high school students who want to join an intercultural learning experience from July 1 to 17.

The cultural immersion will involve 17 days in Cagli, Italy, with day trips to Rome and Florence, stays with Italian families, studying Italian language and culture and developing multimedia skills. Scholarships are available.

The Sister City Exchange also seeks host families for students coming from Cagli from July 21 to Aug. 5. Students who are 16 or 17 years old will join daily English lessons at Gonzaga University, group activities and cultural experiences. Host families provide light breakfasts, family dinners and transportation to GU.

Weekends may involve group activities or host families taking students on short trips.

This is a short-term, meaning-

ful way to be involved with the Sister City program. Families with high school students make a first step in engaging with a cultural exchange program, inspiring them to travel to Cagli.

The program is coordinated through the Sister Cities Association of Spokane, the Chase Youth Commission and the American-Italian Club of Spokane.

For information, call 220-5582, email jcaputo1@mac.com or visit chaseyouthspokane.org.

Wildfire resiliency training is planned

Responsible Growth NE Washington and Selkirk Alliance for Science are partnering to offer a training, "From Wildfire Risk to Building Wildfire Resiliency," from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 7, at the Camas Center, 1821 N. LeClerc Rd. in Cusick.

This is the second in a series of wildfire programs for people in

Pend Oreille, Bonner, Idaho and Spokane counties and beyond to raise public awareness about the need to prepare and protect homes and families in the event of a catastrophic wildfire.

The U.S. Forest Service, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Pend Oreille Conservation District, Public Utilities District #1, Newport Hospital and Health Services, South Pend Oreille Fire Rescue, Pend Oreille County Emergency Management/911, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Girl Scout Troops and

others will provide fire preparedness materials and presentations.

It has been three years since the Oregon Road wildfire swept near the Pend Oreille County lines, burning more than 10,817 acres of forest and timberland in neighboring Spokane County and destroying 100 homes before it was brought under control. Combustion, winds and dry conditions played a role in that fire.

The Kalispel Tribe of Indians Charitable Fund and Inatai Foundation are sponsors.

For information, call 447-7958.

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IRC plans International Women's Day

The International Refugee Committee (IRC) will gather local refugee and immigrant women for the annual International Women's Day from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Friday, March 13, at Spokane Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave.

With partners, volunteers and neighbors, they will celebrate the courage of refugee women rebuilding their lives in the U.S. and will highlight their contributions to Spokane.

There will be a meal, story sharing and information on how to support refugee women.

Because many refugee women do not feel safe gathering to celebrate in a visible way, the IRC will also host several smaller, less publicized pop-up events throughout March. In addition, IRC is hosting an educational brunch for women to show support and strengthen services and resources for refugee women.

For information, visit events.rescue.org/en/0XtU956/international-womens-day-brunch-5a5Dav1Imob/overview.

Church stakes host 'Walk with Christ'

The fifth annual "Walk with Christ," hosted by Mt. Spokane and Spokane North Stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, will be held on Palm Sunday weekend—from 6 to 9 p.m., Friday, March 27, and from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday, March 28, at 401 W. Regina Ave.

The open-house-style event will feature immersive activities to help visitors contemplate Holy Week as they follow in Christ's footsteps, leading to Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. The event will include a Jerusalem market with snacks, crafts and music. There will be walk-through rooms depicting Christ's experiences and videos on Jesus' life and mission.

For information, call 953-2073 or email mgrasser@gmail.com.

Spokane River Forum benefit is March 31

Spokane River Forum's H2O Breakfast benefit will be held 7:30 to 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 31, at Centerplace, 426 N. Discovery Pl., Spokane Valley. The breakfast raises funds for Spokane River Forum's initiatives and presents a program on the future of water in the region related to use, conservation and aquifer protection in drought and expanding population.

The featured speaker, Lisa Seales, is a regional expert on water-saving infrastructure, water quality and recreational access with Oregon's Deschutes River Conservancy. She will describe efforts to restore streamflow and improve water quality in the Deschutes Basin.

For information, visit spokaneriver.net/main-h2o-landing-page.

April Showers raises funds for Lands Council

The Lands Council's 31st annual April Showers auction on Saturday, April 11, will gather community members, local businesses and conservation supporters for a dinner, an auction and a mission-focused program supporting conservation and environmental education across the Inland Northwest.

This year's auction features experiences and community generosity, with a paddle raise to support The Lands Council's work restoring forests and watersheds, protecting wildlife habitat and connecting the community to nature.

Local businesses offer sponsorships and host tables.

For information, email jvilar@landscouncil.org or visit landscouncil.org/april-showers-auction.

Fall Folk Festival seeks designs for promotions

The Spokane Fall Folk Festival invites graphic design proposals for online and print promotional materials and merchandise, including programs, posters, T-shirts, buttons and other advertising for the 2026 Fall Folk Festival.

Designs should capture the festival's theme: "31 Years of Celebrating Spokane's Cultural Diversity" and incorporate elements of Spokane's diversity, history and landmarks.

Submissions are due on June 1. They will be assessed based on design quality, color, originality and adaptability in various graphic formats.

This year's Fall Folk Festival will take place on Nov. 14 and 15 at Spokane Community College.

For information, call 828-3683, email designcontest@spokanefolkfestival.org or visit spokanefolkfestival.org/design-contest-2026.html.

Advocates inform attendees on bills

Kristin Ang, policy engagement director with the Faith Action Network (FAN), and Jean Welch Hill, executive director of the Washington State Catholic Conference, provided overviews of their 2026 legislative priorities and bills before the 2026 Washington State Legislature at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Jan. 31 in Spokane.

They led a morning plenary session and an afternoon workshop on issues and proposals.

The FAN agenda includes promoting economic justice to ensure basic needs, advancing immigrant and refugee rights, cultivating climate and environmental justice, reforming the state carceral system and strengthening police accountability, and fostering rights, inclusion and pluralism.

Details on the agenda, ways to take action, the FAN bill tracker, issue fact sheets, advocacy toolkit and voting and civic engagement opportunities are at fanwa.org under "Advocacy" in the menu.

The Washington State Catholic Conference priorities are poverty reduction—to assure everyone has access to resources for a life of dignity, including adequate food, clean water, safe



Kristin Ang and Jean Welch Hill

and stable housing, health care, education and meaningful employment. The second and third priorities are immigrant rights and the sanctity of life.

Information on what they do, how to be an advocate and join the Catholic Advocacy Network is online at wacatholics.org.

Luc Jasmin III, the Eastern Washington representative for the governor's office, reported on the anticipated \$2.3 billion deficit biennium and \$15 billion in the next, noting causes in the drop of federal funds for health care, child care and housing, in particular.

He also spoke of the wealth tax on millionaires and the need to balance the tax code related to sales, gas and B & O taxes.

"I'm here to hear what you



Luc Jasmin III

want and don't want," he said, giving his email to invite contacts at luc.jasmin@gov.wa.gov.

Feb. 17 was the cutoff date for bills to move forward.

For information on what bills are still viable and needing advocacy, visit <https://fanwa.org/advocacy/take-action>.

End the Violence Event supports survivors

The Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition's 2026 End the Violence Conference will be held from Tuesday to Thursday, March 17 to 19, at the Spokane Community College Lair, 1810 N. Greene St.

The conference seeks to empower domestic violence professionals with presentations, resources and collaboration to prevent, interrupt and address domestic violence.

Experts will share research, strategies for intervention and prevention. Networking with colleagues will help foster community to support survivors.

The March 17 program includes "The Power of We: Work-

ing Together to Change the World" with Casey Gwinn, of Alliance for Hope International.

Casey will lead another session with Bill Smock, medical director of the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention, on "Hope Rising: How the Science of HOPE can Change Your Life."

Breakout sessions include trauma-informed care, empowerment strategies, community resources, youth violence prevention, law enforcement and the judicial role.

On March 18, Jeffrey Edleson of the University of California, Berkeley, will lead a session on "Developing Comprehensive Supports for Children Exposed

to Domestic Violence and Their Families." There will also be a Department of Corrections simulation and breakout sessions.

The March 19 morning keynote is Carla Ritz, managing director of the Montana Institute, and the closing keynote is Ginger Johnson, consultant/supervisor with Relationship Advantage.

There will also be a Family Justice Center information session and eight breakout sessions.

In addition, Marijke Fakasiieiki of The Fig Tree will lead an interfaith panel discussion on domestic violence.

For information, visit endtheviolencespokane.org/etv-conference.

**SAVE the dates • Host a group
2026 Benefit Events**



**Lunch
Saturday, March 14**

Buffet opens 10:45 a.m.

Program 12-1

Hemmingson Ballroom
at Gonzaga University

**Breakfast-Time
Wednesday, March 18**

Gather 7:30 • Slides 7:50

Program 8 to 9 a.m. - Zoom

There is no charge to attend. Guests are asked to donate

**To RSVP email event@thefigtree.org
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SNAP infrastructure is resilient through ebbs and flows of funding

Continued from page 1
Charities resumed management.

In the late 1970s energy crisis, it launched energy assistance and weatherization programs.

In 1985, it incorporated as a nonprofit, Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners, with a more than \$4 million budget to collaborate in the county to address neighborhood needs.

In 1991, it was renamed Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs (SNAP) and, in 2008, returned to Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners.

In the late 1990s, SNAP expanded to do long-term financial empowerment through SNAP Financial Access (SFA), a certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) that provides loans and coaching to those excluded from bank loans.

Julie, who grew up in Chicago and moved with her family in the 1980s to the Tri-Cities, earned a bachelor's degree in public administration in 1984 at Washington State University. She moved to Spokane in 1987 and began working with Youth Health Connections as an office manager and grant writer to build a youth center.

Wanting to help people transform their lives, she completed a master's degree in organizational leadership in 1993 at Gonzaga. Then she worked with Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium from 1994 to 1996, when she first worked at SNAP to help build affordable housing.

From 2004 to 2007, she was executive director at Transitions.

Julie returned to SNAP from 2007 to 2011 as deputy director, because Larry was looking to retire as director. He transitioned

to run the energy program until 2013. Julie became CEO in 2011.

Julie added that 2026 is her last year as CEO. In the summer, the board will hire a new leader, SNAP's fourth, who will overlap with Julie until she retires at the end of the year.

"SNAP's values of community, respect, justice and equity hold me," she said. "I have learned over the years that funding comes and goes with the pandemic, the economy and presidents, but those values anchor our board and staff to do the work we do. Many staff have been here 30 to 40 years."

SNAP was founded to respond to community needs, so it does community needs assessments every three years by interviewing clients and partners.

The 2025 to 2027 assessment found the needs to be affordable housing, food insecurity, financial stability, transportation access and mental health services.

"If other partners are doing a good job, SNAP supports them instead of duplicating efforts," Julie said. "For example, food insecurity is the top need. We align with partners such as Second Harvest to meet that need."

"We partner with CHAS and others to support people living with chronic illness," she said. "Our role is to recruit volunteers to transport people to medical appointments or pick up food boxes."

Affordable housing is a priority for SNAP clients, so SNAP helps people build their credit scores and increase their savings.

"Unique to us is energy assistance, home repairs, weatherization and small business lending," Julie said. "Under home repairs,

we build wheelchair ramps."

SNAP's homeless work focuses primarily on single people. Catholic Charities serves families. Volunteers of America assists young people, she said.

SNAP Financial Access handles small business microloans targeting people who try to get a loan but need more technical assistance. They have ideas but lack a business plan or collateral.

SNAP's 140 employees include three staff in small business lending, 3.5 in housing consulting to prevent foreclosures and educate home buyers, 35 in energy and water bill assistance, 15 in homeless services and transportation, 40 in housing services, weatherizing and repairs, 10 in property management and the rest in accounting human resources, communication, technology and administration.

Julie added that employees use Fig Tree Resource Directory as the handbook to help people find resources.

"I work in the office, so I hear what clients are saying and know the challenges staff face," said Julie.

"With age comes battle scars, so we share our experience with others to help them weather tough times," she said.

Historically, half of SNAP's funding is from public funds—federal, state, city and county—which ebbs and flows.

"Along with a financial reserve, we have diverse funding to weather storms. Donors who sell assets provide funds we set aside to help build a reserve," she said. "We build resiliency to walk through uncertainty. We know what fund sources are strong, what are likely to continue and what funds may be shut down."

"In 2024, COVID rental assistance ended and we reduced our staff by 30 we hired during the pandemic," she explained.

Julie also attributes SNAP's resilience to its 15-member, volunteer board that represents the private sector, government officials and low-income people.

Along with staff, volunteers make programs possible. For example, staff and volunteers provided 8,294 hours of transportation in 2025.

Volunteer coordinator Addy Dodd is working with higher education and reaching out to faith communities to recruit volunteers.

In 2010, SNAP moved its administrative offices to the former Dominican Convent at 3102 W. Whistalks Way and bought it in 2011. Along with administration, that office provides foreclosure prevention, housing counseling, energy assistance, business development, financial education, business lending and a long-term care ombudsman.

The office at the SNAP Armory, 212 W. 2nd, does weatherization, housing improvements, minor home repairs and energy conservation.

SNAP Northeast in the Northeast Community Center at 4001 N. Cook offers energy assistance.

SNAP Pacific at 124 E. Pacific provides resource rides, homeless services and energy assistance.

SNAP Valley at 10814 E. Broadway offers energy assistance seasonally.

For information, call 456-SNAP or visit snapwa.org.

SNAP celebrates 60 years

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) will celebrate "The Power of Connection" and its 60th Anniversary, from noon to 1 p.m., Wednesday, April 29, at Spokane Central Library, 906 W. Main Ave., in downtown Spokane.

This event is SNAP's largest fundraiser of the year and officially kicks off Community Action Month in May.

It will be the first major opportunity to gather as a community to celebrate 60 years of impact and fuel the next chapter of SNAP's work.

For six decades, SNAP has been opening doors to opportunity for families, entrepreneurs and

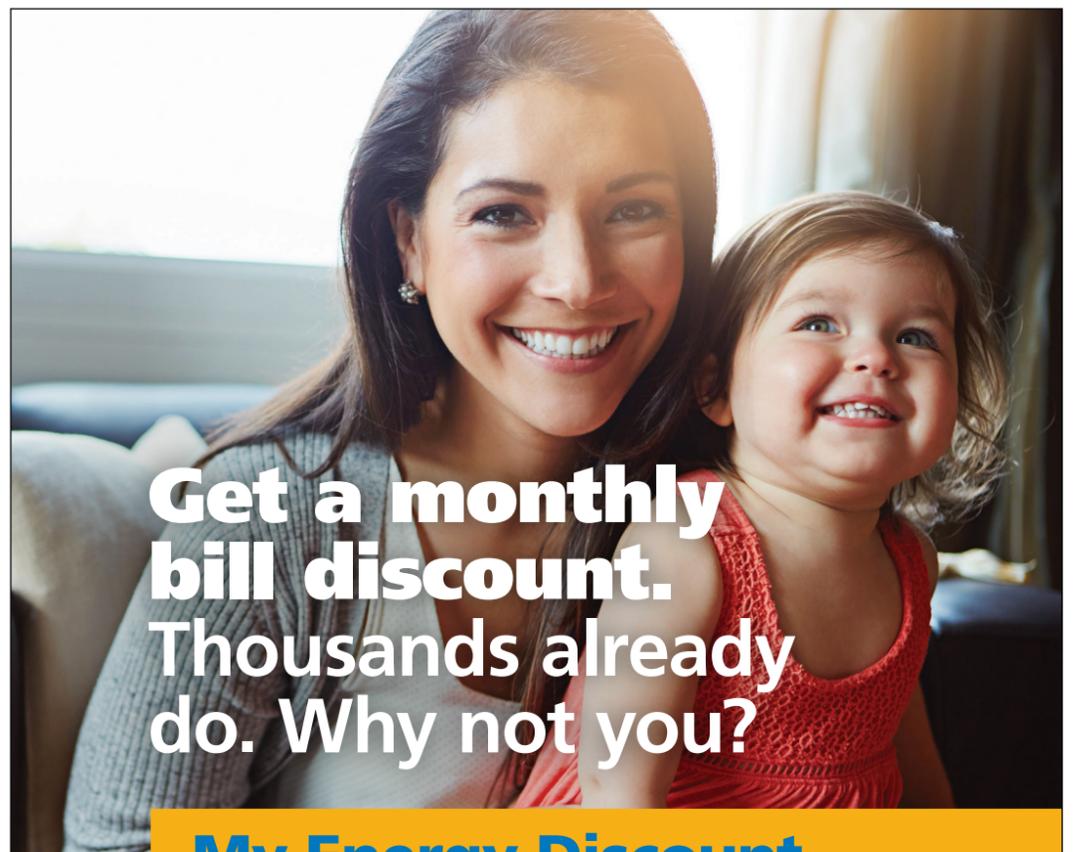
individuals across the region.

Guests who want to connect before the program begins may arrive at 11:30 a.m.

For information, call 456-4111 or visit snapwa.org.

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Young adults reflect on political climate, social media and inclusion

A panel of young adult advocates at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference discussed some of the motivations of youth advocates in community organizations, the impact of the current political environment, the inclusion of diverse voices, the role of social media, their visions for community and the need for accessibility at protests.

Fenrir Close, organizer with the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), moderated the discussion.

Panelists were Bella Rossi, a Western Washington University senior studying social justice and climate change; Jada Richardson, a senior social work major at Eastern Washington University (EWU) and member of NAACP Spokane's Youth Council, and Li Velasco, director of education and manager of Nuestras Raíces' youth engagement program, L.U.N.A.A (Latinos Unidos en Acción Alianza).

Fenrir: In the current political climate, what are the biggest hurdles for building community with young adults?

Bella sees a lack of equity and diversity in accepting all kinds of people in community spaces. Given that many spaces she is in are predominantly white youth, she called for talking about issues with the people they affect.

Aware that many fear sharing feelings and being vulnerable, she invited courage to have authentic discussions.

Fenrir: How do groups incorporate diversity?

"We need to be okay with being uncomfortable, so other voices are heard," Bella said. "It's possible to make choices different from those our ancestors made."

Jada said diverse spaces do exist across Washington, pointing out that they are intentional.

"It's a choice not to invite people to diversify a group in 2026," she said. "When it comes to creating community, Gen Z is a spectrum, yet some believe they must fend for themselves."

Jada said her generation discusses the importance of community and what it looks like, aware that for past generations, community was where some experienced the greatest harm.

"How do we redefine community? What are our expectations of each other and ourselves?" Jada asked.

From her work with students and their families, Li, who is Mexican American, finds community interrupted in today's political climate.

Many wonder if it is safe to be just anywhere or to speak Spanish in public. Students who want to be part of movements wonder if it is safe for them or their families.

Fenrir: Has social media activism helped or hindered in person organizing?



Bella Rossi, Jada Richardson, Li Velasco and Fenrir Close describe their efforts to advocate on issues and involve others.

Photos by Gen Heywood

Bella, who uses social media in running a club, said social media is not a marketing tactic that reliably draws people to an in-person space. She finds that the lack of in-person interactions in social media may mean some feel discomfort or fear being together in person.

Despite that, Bella hopes "for collective action in which we all come together."

Jada loves social media, especially TikTok.

"It allows us to curate our feed to choose our issues," she said. "There are many social justice issues in our country and world, but on social media we can decide which we will engage in."

She said it makes it easy for young people to organize and draw a large crowd of like-minded people.

"If it went away, it would be like organizing in the civil rights era without social media," she said. "Our ancestors did not have it and look at what they did. We should not rely on it as the only way to connect with others. Organizing on social media needs to be partnered with organizing in real life, because social media might not be forever, but people are forever."

Li said word of mouth is important and "how we make things happen." In announcing events, organizers today post a flier but do not give the location except to those who sign up.

"We need to converse with people who may feel threatened. It may be uncomfortable," Li said, "but we need to think of how issues affect people."

Jada is cautious because of how social media drowned the public with stories of Black people during the height of the Black Lives Matter in 2020 and 2021.

"In 2026, Black stories are watered down, so I'm wary of sharing my story," she said, explaining that she will express her values by voting and in conversations.

Fenrir: What is your vision for the community you want to build and what is needed to work towards it?

Bella said, "I want to see a world that is safe and healthy for everyone no matter the color of your skin, your culture or how you were raised."

As an educator, she wants to teach youth to connect to nature and each other, and to "understand our role in this world and lead with our hearts to make change possible. We need to go out and be uncomfortable."

Jada realizes that "beloved community" is a theory.

"In reality, it's hard to be in community with people who are anti-Black, anti-Indigenous or hate immigrants and gay people," she said. "To build community, we must deconstruct and decolonize our own minds. We all have biases. To be in space together, we need to recognize our flaws. It starts with self-reflection and internal work. We need to be in spaces together, to be in relationships with one another and to challenge one another. No one can exist alone."

Jada is uncertain about where the world is going or how to share spaces.

"There is a lot to do to get to where we need to be," she added, "but I believe we have the tools to get there."

Li said it's hard for people to consider what they want community to look like when they are surviving day to day.

"I want community. It can't happen when we leave people out, but it happens in Spokane and all over the world," Li said.

Jada added that to have community people and families need to thrive not just survive. "When we are thinking about how to make it to the next day, we do not think about how to be family together."

Fenrir: "How do youth know who is being left out?"

Li called for looking at what groups people are reaching out to and to make a conscious effort to be open to everyone.

Fenrir: What are concrete

first steps for involving young people in their community?

Bella believes community is necessary for survival.

"When we are disconnected from our body and mind, we need to go outside and walk, be with community, hug trees and love people around us. Life is ours to protect, honor and harvest. I tell young people not to give up."

Jada said, "Showing up is a great first step. I see people here I see everywhere, at the MLK rally and service. Go to meetings, rallies, city council meetings, connect with people on social media or in person or talk over coffee. The biggest thing is to show up even if it's inconvenient. Go in person or online. Make your voice heard."

Li advised youth to join the youth groups at NAACP Spokane, Nuestras Raíces or PJALS and ask how they can help the community or be advocates.

"There are many different

ways to help. They can create social media or go to protests," Li said. "Find what you can do at this moment."

Jada said, "We all have different roles in the revolution. Some march, some write, some make infographics, some can speak well in a crowd. We do not have to do the same thing as long as we all do something."

Bella said, "Organizing is an act of grace and love and a way to influence the world."

Questions from the audience led to discussion of making spaces and protests accessible for people who have disabilities or want to avoid getting sick.

"Activism spaces are often for the able-bodied," said Jada. "We need to look at where we hold events and talk with the communities affected."

Fenrir noted "we won't be able-bodied forever, so we need to make events accessible for everyone."

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Faith leaders explore the power of persistence to impact faith lives

Continued from page 1
difficulties arise.

She added that to build a beloved community, a phrase rooted in faith, requires persistence, truth telling, repentance, forgiveness and commitment.

“Racial justice and reconciliation call for more than swift transformation moments of national awakening. They require time and persistence,” Gretchen continued. “Similarly cultural change—changing hearts, structures and habits—requires slow, persistent listening across differences, sustained education and courage to stay in relationships when conversations are uncomfortable. They call for respecting the dignity of every human being, over and over regardless of the cost.

In today’s epidemic of loneliness, building community requires people to gather with each other and with God to pray, eat and care for neighbors, she said, adding, “God works sacramentally through ordinary things—bread, wine, oil, water and time. Persistence honors the sacramental, trusting that God works in slow, steady, faithful, action and love.”

Gretchen explained that persisting spiritually means what people do repeatedly in love matters. Persistence is to keep choosing dialogue over dismissal and hope over cynicism. In a world hungry for quick answers, persistence is a form of resistance, resisting the temptation to give up, thinking nothing will change.

“It is trusting that God is faithful and never gives up on us,” she concluded.

While Liv appreciates the persistence of relationships she experiences in the community gathered at the conference, her first reaction to the topic was to feel exhausted, even despair, that “we have to keep showing up and working for change.”

The theme, “We Shall Overcome,” however, reminded her of the ongoing beauty in the natural world.

“Perhaps a spiritual approach to persistence is ‘we shall undergo,’ not so much overcome with our own gumption but be received by the holy to undergo transformation,” she observed. “The spiritual practice of persistence for me in recent years has been to put my body in touch with creation and with my creaturely and human neighbors.”

She quoted church reformer Martin Luther, who said, “God writes the gospel not only in our holy book but also in every tree, mountain and river, so we can



Episcopal Bishop Gretchen Rehberg, Lutheran Synod leader Liv Larson Andrews, Jesuit Max Oliva and Karen Stromgren, director of Muslims for Community Action and Support.

watch nature persist.”

Liv shared that her older son had counted 44 banana slugs on a recent three-day trip to the Olympic peninsula. That reminded her how creatures persist in nature.

Both from living within two blocks of the Spokane River and from the words of the prophet Amos, Liv knows that just as rivers persist, God’s vision of shalom persists. The witness of Lutheran colleagues in Minnesota kneeling in prayer and advocating for neighbors and immigrants was another reminder.

“There’s a lot of persistence—things seen and unseen,” Liv said. “We are called to persist in prayer, advocacy, making sandwiches for families and lovingly raising children in this time. Persistence is an invitation to receive the divine beauty that’s all around us.”

Fr. Max read on Google that “persistence is the steadfast continuation of a course of action despite difficulty, opposition or failure to build inner strength, endurance, character necessary for personal growth and success.”

As a Jesuit and Catholic, he considers persistence a virtue based on God’s unconditional love. That has given him inner strength to persist in working for peace and justice for 57 years.

After the election, Fr. Max chose to focus on immigration, educating himself, evaluating his gifts and seeking like-minded people to work with.

Early in his ministry, he left California to start an ethics and spirituality ministry with oil and gas corporations in Calgary, Alberta. Needing to know about that culture, he formed a nine-person advisory team. Similarly, for the last 16 years in Las Vegas, where there were no Jesuits, he formed a committee to help him understand that culture.

Two elements that help him persist in working for social justice are balancing work and play and having a sense of humor in the midst of adversity.

Three models inform Fr. Max

on persistence.

First, in the 1970s, he worked with Cesar Chavez, Delores Huerta and the United Farm Workers Union on the grape boycott.

Second, Martin Luther King Jr’s persistence in the Civil Rights movement in the mid-1960s led Fr. Max to a ministry in San Francisco helping black men find work.

Third, he was inspired when 2026 Heisman Trophy winner and Indiana Hoosiers quarterback Fernando Mendoza called his mother, Elsa, his hero because, despite having MS since 2007, she went to all his games in a wheelchair to cheer for him.

In Islam, Karen said, spirituality is not passive waiting but proactive patience, steadfastness, endurance and resolution in the face of the kind of adversity immigrants and refugees face.

That adversity impacts her family.

“We are scared like everyone else who are immigrants, refugees and people of color,” she said. “I have children and many friends of color.”

While many are scared, the Muslim community is also filled with hope because “the core of Islamic teachings is unwavering belief in Allah’s mercy,” she said. “Muslims facing persecution anchor their hope in the promises and belief that despite trials, mercy prevails and believers will triumph.

“This hope is a source of strength, resilience, resistance and advocacy. Patience is a virtue. The Quran instructs believers facing injustice to support each other and to right what is wrong,” Karen said. “In divine wisdom, we are to surrender to Allah’s will and carry the Quran with us, not just physically, but by memorizing key verses and practicing them every day.”

Karen, a revert to Islam, was amazed by the outpouring of community support when a Spokane Valley City Council member in January said Islam has no place in Spokane Valley.

Many testified on behalf of the Muslim community.

“The Quran is our daily guide, calling believers to morality, empathy and love—not to hate,” said Karen, noting that before she became Muslim, she didn’t have a community, but now “I have all of you who support our Muslim community.”

Discussion on how to engage youth was a segue to the young

adult panel. The leaders, recognizing that young people are already speaking out and protesting, said the question is how to support them.

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Two women point out faiths' Golden Rule as impetus for advocacy

For the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference workshop, "Faithful Organizing: Spokane to Minneapolis," Karen Stromgren, executive director of Muslims for Community Action and Support (MCAS), and Gen Heywood, pastor of Veradale United Church of Christ and convener for Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience, presented the work they do in the community as organizers.

Both pointed out that faiths share the Golden Rule, "to do to others as we would want done to us." They said that rule conveys the importance of compassion for neighbors and strangers. This compassion moves them to live that love through organizing their communities to faithful witness to counter hate in neighborhoods and nations.



Karen Stromgren and Gen Heywood lead workshop.

Karen, a Muslim revert and a member of the Islamic community, shared about the Islamic faith and its teachings of living in peace. She spoke of her journey to the faith and struggles of living faithfully in the U.S. because of hatred of Muslims fueled by misinformation.

MCAS seeks to educate and reach out to the public about teachings of Islam to correct misinformation.

Karen described barriers to

building trusting relationships caused by the misrepresentation of the Muslim faith. This makes organizing difficult for local Muslims who fear it is not safe for them to be involved in the community.

"Misconceptions and hatred have no place in any community. Our lives should be led by education so that we understand others and their religious beliefs," she said.

As a pastor and convener of an

interfaith group, Gen presented learnings from her days joining 650 to 1,000 faith leaders going to Minneapolis from around the U.S. in January in response to faith leaders there calling for support from around the country during ICE activity.

Staying with seven other Washington State UCC clergy allowed her to learn and reflect with them about their experiences.

The collaboration of faith organizations there exemplified what can be done when people give up the requirement of only working with groups "in perfect agreement" with each other, she said.

"We have to learn to work with people who may have previously hurt us," said Gen, adding that there is need to find on ramps for those who turn around from hate and hurting others, "This means we need to move from shaming people to including them."

"We need to build on the lessons learned," said Gen.

"The people of Minneapolis were uniquely ready because of their experience of the violence

during and after the murder of George Floyd," she observed.

Gen listed ideas for people in the Inland Northwest to respond to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) tactics coming and already in the region.

1) Training sessions offer people an organized, planned response, rather than them waiting and having to improvise.

2) Involvement in neighborhoods puts people in communication and solidarity, so they can respond together more quickly to threats.

3) Unions need to be involved with the resistance. Studies show that when unions resist authoritarianism, the chance to restore a democracy rises to 89 percent.

For information, email fll-conscience@gmail.com or visit mcasspokane.org, [facebook.com/SpokaneMCAS](https://www.facebook.com/SpokaneMCAS) or VeradaleUCC.org.



NAACP offers March events

The NAACP Spokane Branch Initiative on Building Restorative Communities (BRC) is offering several events in March.

A Book Conversation on The Power of Bridging by John Powell will be held from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m., Mondays, March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, online. It will focus on how to bridge divisions and heal fragmentation to "belong without othering" and to open people to a shared future by expanding a sense of "we."

A Circle Centering Hope event from 4:30 to 6 p.m., Tuesday, March 17, at The Hive, Spokane Library, 2904 E. Sprague, is for those who feel alone and isolated in the winter to connect with others around hope.

Practice the Future We Want will show the documentary, "How to Love Your Enemy: A Restorative Justice Story" by Free the People from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 31, at The Hive.

After the film, there will be a conversation about a Colorado city's approach for a different kind of justice system to transform the broken system of mass incarceration in the U.S.

A Language of Life – Non-Violent Communication (NVC) Practice Group meets from 10 to 11:30 a.m., Tuesdays, at Liberty Park Library or from 12:30 to 2 p.m., Fridays, on Zoom to foster connection, compassion and understanding by shifting from blame to shared human needs to improve relationships and create collaborative solutions.

For information, email BRC-spokane@gmail.com.



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Musicians present hymns and camp songs bearing call to advocacy

Singing welcoming and closing songs, LaRae Wiley of the Salish School of Spokane opened the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Jan. 31 saying that “when we gather, we sing as a way to honor each other and the work we will do.”

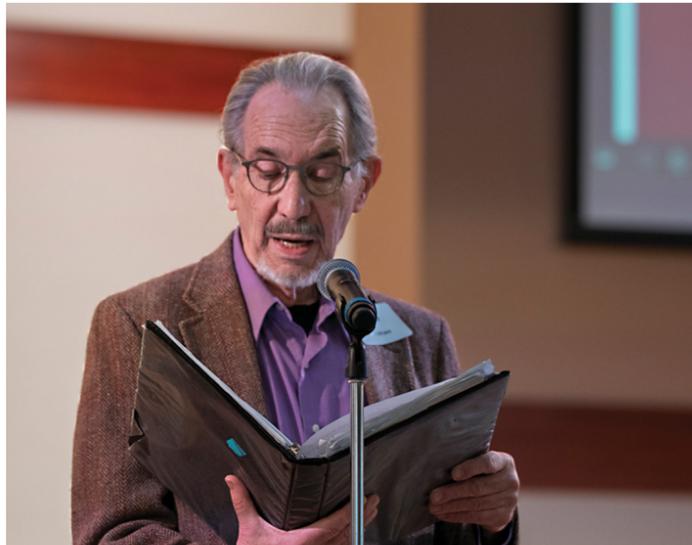
In addition to the musical opening for the interfaith gathering, a workshop focused on the power of music and songs in advocacy movements, related to the theme, “We Shall Overcome: Building the Beloved Community Today.”

Jadrian Tarver, music professor at Gonzaga University, invited those gathered to begin with singing together “This Little Light of Mine, I’m Gonna Let It Shine” as a song that he said was about spreading justice.

“Remember that you are the light when darkness overtakes,” he said, inviting participants to clap, rock and sway if the spirit allows.

“This Little Light of Mine” is a Black spiritual that was often sung during the civil rights movement, Jadrian said.

Verne Windham, music director at Westminster United Church of Christ (UCC), said many hymns link faith and justice and invite singers both to be “agents of joyful rebellion” and to call out to God when “their



Verne Windham sings several hymns. Photo by Gen Heywood

soul is sore and troubled.”

Many hymns deal with issues of current times, such as ones by Ben Brody, composer and head of Whitworth’s music department, who accompanied Verne. Before singing one of those hymns, “Gracious Gardener of Creation,” Verne said the first verse speaks of God as the creator, the second asks, “what have we done to creation” and the third verse calls for reconciliation: “God, unite us until we make creation whole.”

John Hubbe, who has led singing for 30 years at N-Sid-Sen,

the UCC camp and retreat center on Lake Coeur d’Alene, quoted a Sept. 22 YouTube interview with Joan Baez, who said social change cannot happen until somebody is willing to take a risk, and she is hopeful because there are many people taking risks now.

Recalling the movement in the 1960s, she said, “We had the glue. I don’t know how you create it.” Then she added, “If we’re not going to find the glue in the politicians then maybe we’ll find it in the comedians.”

John also mentioned a 2007 PBS documentary on “Pete



John Hubbe sings selections from camp.

Seeger: The Power of Song,” telling of Pete meeting Martin Luther King Jr. in 1957 and singing, “We Shall Overcome.”

John then sang a song with lyrics by Philip Labes, “It’s the Guns,” expressing Philip’s heartbreak and exasperation about the ongoing gun violence today.

Janet Farness of the Raging Grannies told how the group uses humor and songs to make people think about civil rights, education, poverty and peace.

“Music has power to change minds,” she said. “In the tradition of wise women elders, Spokane’s

Raging Grannies raise awareness of human rights, gender, equity, education, democracy, racial equality, environmental health, poverty, peace and the issues of the day. We keep in step with current issues and participate in social action.”

Pointing out that a group of grannies is called a “gaggle,” the grannies sang a song, “Gaggle against Hate,” calling for “no more hate.”

In an afternoon workshop, the musicians sang more songs and offered more insights on the power of songs.

Raging Grannies share their approach and sing advocacy songs

Before singing several songs during their workshop at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, three Raging Grannies described what they do with their music, words, humor and garb.

Pat Foster spoke about the effect of music on the brain, saying, “If music is the bread of life, humor is the marmalade on top.”

“Music has the power to affect the soul. Music and rhythm come before language,” she said, noting that brain scans show the right—nonverbal—side is activated by music. Some of her friends with Parkinson’s have had brain surgery while they played music to restore their ability to play.

“There is a relationship between music and emotion. Major chords and fast music are happy. Minor chords and slow music are sad,” Pat pointed out, adding that humor and laughter relieve pain and stress.

The grannies, who wear comical, attention-grabbing clothing, then sang to the tune of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” the words, “Raging grannies are conspiring to make people laugh...It’s a terrorist act...They’re about a peace and



Raging Grannies sing humorous advocacy words to familiar tunes.

justice conspiracy...singing for justice...for peace forevermore.”

Janet Farness explained that lyrics are written by grannies around the world, including here.

“Songs are perpetually in revision as our political scene changes and we need to address local and world events,” she said.

“The eye-catching, disruptive clothing draws attention, so we are not invisible older women who are seeking justice,” she said, noting, “we make fun of powers and suggest more loving, equitable ways.”

Their next song to counter

apathy was “Get Off Your Ass, America.”

Diane Lloyd said that after raising awareness, they want to move people to act, so they provide information on how people can be involved with groups grannies are in. The grannies converse and listen to people who differ to deepen understand-

ing and build connections.

“We encourage those who are white to recognize Black and Brown people have long been engaged in the struggle and to

work with them as partners,” she said, reading a letter from a Black woman encouraging white people not to “wallow in a sense of helplessness,” but to “do something.”

Then they sang “What Shall we Do with the Corporate Fat Cats.”

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Gonzaga music professor describes history of 'We Shall Overcome'

Gonzaga University music professor Jadrian Tarver explained the background of "We Shall Overcome," pointing out that its creation was a communal effort and it was developed over many years.

Jadrian, who teaches a freshman seminar Music and Social Justice on spirituals, raps and different genres of Black music, introduced the history of "We Shall Overcome" as "a song of justice, healing and collective experience with multiple composers."

It emerged from a 19th century spiritual about endurance, "I'll Overcome Someday," first published in 1901 by Charles Albert Tindley, a Methodist minister and hymn writer. Much of the text comes from that song of faith and hope.

"In 1945 in Charleston, S.C., striking black and white men and women tobacco workers adopted that song, changing its pronouns from individual to collective and its purpose as a tool for organizing and solidarity," Jadrian said.

"The song we know was birthed out of this strike," he said.

Zilphia Horton, music director at Highlander Folk School, popularized it in activist circles. Guy Carawan introduced it to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizers in 1960, and Pete



Jadrian Tarver

Photo by Gen Heywood

Seeger standardized the lyrics and spread it nationally through performances and recordings.

The words shifted from "we will" to "we shall" overcome.

"The Freedom Singers sang it with SNCC and Dr. King heard it when visiting the Highlander Folk School. He believed it

could be an anthem for the movement.

"The Black women musicians were often overlooked in telling the story," Jadrian said. "When we talk of resilience and reconciliation, it's time to recognize the influence of Black women in the structure of 'We Shall

Overcome." Lucille Simmons, who helped lead the 1945 strike, used gospel songs and spirituals. At the folk school, Zilphia taught it to students.

"We Shall Overcome" belongs to everyone, Jadrian said.

Roberta Martin, gospel singer and composer, published it as Faye Brown, with the text, "I'll be like him some day, if in my heart, I do not yield." Jadrian played the tune that is the chorus.

"We need to pay homage to all who are part of this song," he added.

Jadrian said today's song came from 1956, when gospel songwriter Louise Shropshire, a friend of Dr. King, used the tune in her song, "If My Jesus Wills, I'll Overcome Someday."

While she believed music created for solace and healing should be used freely without financial barriers, in 1960, Zilphia, Guy, Pete and Frank Hamilton copyrighted "We Shall Overcome" as a derivative work.

Jadrian said they acknowledged they did not compose the original song but cited their arrangement, phrasing and lyrics as new elements added to a traditional song.

"As a community-created song entered an ownership-based legal system, there were tensions between legal authority and cultural stewardship. The law required naming indi-

viduals even when creation was collective," Jadrian said.

Pete and Guy were trying to preserve it, not own it. Any proceeds from the song go to the We Shall Overcome Foundation for use to fund grassroots efforts.

Jadrian said that "We Shall Overcome" became the moral anthem of sit-ins, jailings, funerals and voter drives. It was embraced by SNCC and sung at marches by Dr. King.

"Music as restorative justice recognizes the people who helped create the song," he said. "It is about sharing songs that create mutual support, soothe people in trauma and restore dignity when systems deny it."

"Music creates shared humanity and allows collective grief and hope," he said. "Justice begins when voices are heard."

Jadrian added that the song is "a promise carried forward, sung from Charleston to Johannesburg, from Selma to Hong Kong for anti-apartheid, democracy, racial justice, labor and LGBTQ+ movements, protests and advocacy."

"It is part of the fabric of America," he added. "I see it as one of the stitches for the quilters that keep the fabric of justice together here in America."

"As it appears to unravel, we can mend, sew, bond, glue, hot glue, super glue or duct tape it back together," he affirmed.

Songs are a way tribes have communicated through the generations

In the afternoon workshop on music and advocacy, LaRae Wiley, founder and leader at the Salish School of Spokane, pointed out that music is an important way to communicate.

"In our tradition, we do not write down songs but pass them down orally in families, who share then with other families," she said. "Songs are important in our culture."

"At powwows, some groups use a version of the same songs, shared through family ties," said LaRae. "As Native people, our songs carry power and blessings."

LaRae said that in 1858, when the army hanged Chief Qualchan, they asked him for his final words, and he sang his song. His wife carried that song, and the Spokane Tribe still sings that song when they open powwows. It's a sacred song because he used it as a protest and call for his tribe to persevere through the generations.

"At the Salish School of Spokane, music is central to what we do and is a way we stay connected to each other," LaRae



LaRae Wiley says music is central at the Salish School.

explained.

One song is the national anthem for the Sinixt people, who were declared extinct by the Canadian government and pushed into the U.S. That happened to her family. Her grandmother was 20 years old when a settler setting trap lines shot her first husband. The settler was cleared in a hearing, so there was no justice for her grandmother, who was held

in jail for three months during the trial.

"When I think of perseverance and the power of song, I think of my song. It came to

me from the last summer camp where my great-grandmother lived," LaRae said. "The Sinixt won a battle in court to hunt for ceremonial purposes in Canada, but we are still not recognized."

When I think of all my grand-

mother and great-grandmother went through and all of the songs they sang as a way to say we are still here, it's powerful," LaRae asserted, and then sang a song from her grandmother and great-grandmother.

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ALTCEW forums elicit priorities

Aging & Long Term Care's (ALTCEW) Community Feedback Forums will be held virtually and in person in March in Spokane, Whitman, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties.

At them, community members will guide the future of aging and long-term care services across Eastern Washington.

Every four years, Area Agencies on Aging develop an Area Plan of service priorities as a roadmap to coordinate resources and support for older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers and families. It includes demographics, services, trends, budgets and emerging needs. Plans inform the Washington

State Plan on Aging.

As ALTCEW develops the 2027 to 2030 Area Plan, forums are a way for residents to learn about existing services, identify gaps and share what is needed.

Meetings offer an overview of services and discussion to gather input. Dates, locations and registration details are available at altcew.org/area-plan-community-feedback-forum-registration.

"Community planning is strongest when it reflects real experiences and local priorities," said Lynn Kimball, executive director.

For information, call 458-2509, email action@altcew.org or visit altcew.org.

Riverkeeper's upcoming meetings introduce projects

Spokane Riverkeeper and partners are planning several upcoming events—a Virtual Tour of Hangman Creek, a Community Science Information Session, the International Fly Fishing Film Festival and a River Cleanup.

The Virtual Tour of Hangman Creek will explore current restoration efforts at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 5, online.

"Hangman Creek has some of the worst water quality in the state. Its sediment, high temperatures, bacteria and pollutants exceed standards," said Katie Thompson, water protector. "The tour shows riparian plantings along Rock Creek after the 2016 Ford Fire and projects to recon-

nect floodplains, restore meanders and improve fish habitat.

Spokane Riverkeeper has created a partnership with local universities, Tribes and community organizations to generate quality data that scientists and decision-makers can use to guide efforts.

Riverkeeper is also presenting a virtual presentation on its Community Science program at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 19.

"Volunteers commit up to two hours a month to collect water quality data and samples, they deliver to Gonzaga University the same day," Katie said. "We'll walk through how the study works, what data we're collecting and what participation involves.

The International Fly Fishing Film Festival begins at 5 p.m., with films at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 31, at the Garland Theater, 924 W Garland.

It presents a lineup of films on conservation, adventure, family and culture. One is on chef and cultural storyteller David Chang.

Sponsored by Silver Bow Fly Shop, proceeds benefit Spokane Riverkeeper.

Spokane Riverkeeper will also sponsor an Earth Day River Cleanup from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 18, at High Bridge Park on the Spokane River.

For information, visit spokaneriverkeeper.org and click on events.

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This program is supported in part by funding from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. // Spokane Regional Health District assures nondiscrimination in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. To file a complaint or to request more information, reasonable accommodations, or language translations, contact 509.324.1501 or visit srhd.org. Created: March '26

Artist aims to foster dialogue to build bridges with multidisciplinary art

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

At the 2026 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference (EWLC), Shantell Jackson, a community organizer at the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), led a workshop titled “Art as Liberation” to explore the intersection of art, healing and activism.

In reality, the title of the workshop reflects the flow of her life journey much more than her job title at PJALS.

“I am creative and expressive. I have been that way ever since I was little. I embody what I feel,” she said. “My family worshipped in a tight Black church community with many ministries. The Black church was a space of healing.”

As long as Shantell can remember, being creative was in her bones and largely self-taught. She has expressed herself in many forms—singing Christian songs, writing poetry and creating visual arts with acrylics, watercolor and ink.

“I tried oils, but I wasn’t patient enough to wait for it to dry before wanting to do more,” she explained.

Shantell grew up in the predominantly Black community on the east side of Buffalo, N.Y. An only child, she was raised by a village. The close community there and a large extended family with 50 first cousins, and nine aunts and uncles still have an impact on her, even though she now resides in Spokane.

Her activism also has roots in what happens in Buffalo.

She vividly recalls the traumatic event in 2022 when there was a mass shooting at the Tops Market in the community where she grew up.

“It was a big deal to have a chain grocery store in a Black neighborhood, and my community shopped there,” Shantell said.

In 2022, apparently having planned the attack for months, an 18-year-old white supremacist from a town a three-hour drive away came to the store and shot 13 people. Ten died. Eleven of the victims were Black and two were white. That grocery store continues, but the trauma caused is still part of the everyday experience of shopping there.

It also remains part of Shantell’s vision of “artivism” as not only protest but also healing, empowerment and resistance.

In her EWLC workshop, she described what activism means to her.

“Activism is central to caring about having a good life. It happens out of a vision of a world community and doing something to make the world a better place,” she said.

For her, it is acting to disrupt harmful systems that combine prejudice with institutional power.



Shantell Jackson is surrounded by art on PJALS office walls.

In her life, art is key to activism and a path to the healing necessary for liberation.

“Healing is not ignoring the past and expecting to arrive at liberation,” she explained.

With that as background, Shantell asked the participants in the EWLC workshop to form small groups of two or three to share their experiences on the truth she had shared.

“What are two places of healing ground for you?” she asked.

In her own life, her art—in whatever medium—flowed out of her experiences into her creative expression. It has become healing ground that has further impelled her to create art.

Although Shantell always thought of herself as creative, she didn’t always envision herself working as a creative, in spite of her growing love of expressing herself through poetry, art and music.

She remembers that her mother had her do projects during summer vacations. One of those projects introduced her to Langston Hughes, a poet-novelist-playwright-columnist leader in the Harlem Renaissance.

Shantell fell in love with poetry.

During her school years, she considered herself an okay student. At one point she thought she might even go into the military.

In high school, Shantell tried an art class to learn more art techniques.

“I hated that class. They tried to tell me how to do art,” she commented, explaining how she

has resisted formal art classes, except to learn a new technique like how to do a digital graphic.

After high school, she attended Keuka College in upstate New York, where she studied political science and history with plans of becoming a lawyer.

“I had fun in college. I enjoyed the social life more than the classes, but I was practical, too, and I wanted to be able to pay the bills,” she said.

Shantell graduated in 2004 and by November 2004 had found a job as a hall director at Eastern Washington University (EWU), so she left her tight-knit community in Buffalo and came out west.

She worked at EWU for about 15 years in their residential life program, student leadership and as an activist in residence. During that time, she developed academic and multicultural programming and created programs to help students understand themselves and others.

Meanwhile, her desire to focus on an art career was growing, and she left EWU in February 2020. That year, she collaborated with 16 other artists to paint the “K” in the Black Lives Matter Mural at 244 W. Main in downtown Spokane.

By October 2021, she and another local artist, Tracy Poindecker-Canton, presented a joint multimedia exhibition at the Terrain Gallery called “Her Words to Life,” which featured visual art inspired by Black American literary prose from women like American novelist Toni Morrison.

At the same time, she became the program director for Spokane Arts, a curatorial role to support the artistic scene in other than monetary ways.

“It’s the perfect landing spot for someone with a multidisciplinary approach to art,” Shantell pointed out.

Focusing on her art career led to several joint exhibitions.

In January 2023, her art was featured in a show called “Colors of Life” at the Northwest African American Museum in Seattle and a show called “Nightwatch” at Gallery One in Bellingham.

The descriptions of Shantell’s work often refer to her as a multidisciplinary artist who creates in process, each piece or creative journey starting internally and flowing outward to result in colorful, rhythmic, textural work.

Her installations and performance art pieces explore the human condition by embodying feelings in her work.

In the winter of 2024, her career added another dimension when she joined PJALS as a community organizer.

There she has responsibilities to coordinate events, provide training and help lead the youth

activist leadership program.

In all her work, Shantell is first of all a multidisciplinary artist, as she says, “a vessel to the work,” aiming to foster dialogue across differences to build bridges, promote acceptance and encourage healing.

In her vision for her future, she would like to develop a small creative enterprise to provide liberating and healing experiences through art—perhaps traveling in a bus with an Art Space.

At the moment, Shantell has developed the beginning stages of this dream, which she shares in a workshop.

For information, email sjackson@pjals.org.

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More than 450 gathered for prayer service in solidarity with refugees

More than 450 people from 64 faith and nonprofit communities attended a Feb. 1 prayer service at First Presbyterian Church to express their concern for Haitian refugees whose Temporary Protected Status (TPS) was expected to end Tuesday, Feb. 3.

The service, coordinated by the church, the Spokane Alliance, Spokane Immigrant Rights Coalition and the recently formed Clergy Immigration Table provided solidarity through prayer, songs, messages and stories to uplift the work of Creole Resource and Jasmin Ministries, call for the continuation of TPS, stand in solidarity with Haitian and other immigrant neighbors, and learn ways to provide ongoing support.

Speakers included Haitians Luc Jasmin III and Katia Jasmin, Jasmin Ministries pastor Luc Jasmin Jr., Grace Commons Spokane pastor Emily Kuenker, First Presbyterian pastors John Sowers and Brad Hauge, and storytellers from the community.

Emily preached on the Good Samaritan. Mayor Lisa Brown issued a public statement, calling Congress to extend TPS and highlighting the role of immigrants as healthcare workers, small business owners, faith leaders and friends who contribute to the local economy.

Jer Swigart of Global Immersion listed some action steps:

- Add Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) Deportation

Defense Hotline to phone contacts at 844-724-3737 to call if ICE or CBP are in the community.

- Attend Rapid Response Training on what people should do if they see ICE trying to detain someone.

- Attend Accompaniment Training to walk with immigrant and refugee neighbors to ICE check-ins, hearings and appointments.

- Ask Senators and Representatives to extend TPS for Haiti and allow all people in a legal immigration process to stay in the U.S.

- Donate to Creole Resources and Jasmin Ministries to fund emergency housing, food, transportation and legal needs.

- Volunteer to provide transportation,

groceries and basic needs through Creole Resources.

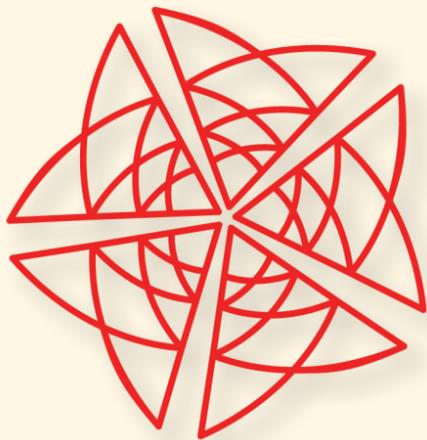
- Join a Supportive Friends Team through Feast World Kitchen to be paired with an immigrant family.

- Engage with faith leaders in the Clergy Immigration Table.

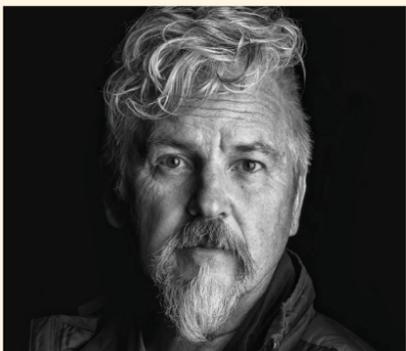
On Feb. 2, a federal judge blocked the Trump administration from ending TPS protections for Haitians, temporarily preserving work authorization and deportation protections while a legal challenge moves forward.

During the temporary reprieve, there is still a need to continue to build support as a community.

For information, visit spokanealliance.org, creoleresources.org, jasminministries.org and spokaneifpc.org.



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John Noltner
Author and Founder and Executive Director of *A Peace of My Mind*

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Maryam Banikarim

Host of *The Messy Parts* Podcast, Co-founder of The Longest Table, and Chair of the WSJ Institutes CMO Council



Terry Kylo
Author and Executive Director of *Paths to Understanding*



building trust. building community.

200 in Spokane celebrate Buddhist monk's national Walk for Peace

About 200 people gathered Feb. 12 in Spokane and walked a 10-block route from Riverfront Park through downtown in solidarity with 19 Buddhist monks as they completed their 2,300-mile, months-long Walk for Peace from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., by 19 Buddhist monks.

Denise Attwood and Kim Harmson, who are active in fair trade, organized the local event. They wanted to carry forward the message of the Monk's Walk for Peace in a physical way by bringing together people in Spokane who wanted to physically take a step together for peace.

"They made it an intentional walk together into the heartfelt, compassionate place where we all want to live," said Denise.

Venerable Thubten Chonyi was one of two nuns who came from Sravasti Abbey near Newport.

Kim, Chonyi and Denise spoke at the beginning of the walk, inviting everyone to Walk for Peace and carry in their hearts the words and actions of the monks who walked.

Kim spoke of how inspirational the monks' walk was.

Denise led a meditation of gratitude and read from the 10 vows of Venerable Bhikkhu Pañnakara, a Theravada Buddhist monk from the Hmong Dao Vipassana Bhavana Center of Fort Worth, who led the Walk for Peace.

- May every nation live in safety, stability and dignity, free from fear, chaos and unnecessary



Denise Attwood and Kim Harmson organize walk.

suffering.

- May every person be heard, respected and protected, regardless of their race, their background, their faith or language.

- May fear be replaced with understanding and may misunderstanding never again become a reason for violence.

- May hatred be transformed into compassion, so pain is met with care instead of blame.

- May peace exist, not only in words and speeches, but also in laws, policies, communities and daily life.

- May true strength be measured, not by control, force or weapons, but by how we protect one another, especially our children and the vulnerable.

- May progress always walk together with morality and may growth never be built on human suffering.

- May dialogue be chosen over confrontation and listening over judgment in families, societies, and nations.

- May people find peace within their own hearts, so that the world no longer needs violence

to survive.

- May the path to peace require no enemies, only human beings, returning to morality, to responsibility and to one another.

Chonyi set the intention for the walk.

Denise, Kim and Chonyi asked people to bring a flower as they walked so they could place the flower, along with their intentions for walking forward in peace, into an offering that they made in the form of a heart in front of Spokane City Hall.

"That was just beautiful to witness. People came as they ended the walk with tears in their eyes,

saying thank you for this, I really needed this, how amazing to feel us all together holding hearts and a vision of peace," said Denise. "The offering grew and grew. We could feel the presence of a community that wanted to bring compassion and hope to the world."

The offering sat in front of city hall for 24 hours, where it gathered more flowers and a balloon. Then Kim and Denise took the flowers and offered them to nature so that the energy of love collected in them could be spread throughout the world.

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Idaho Nonprofit Center summit is set

Idaho Nonprofit Center, a project of Idaho Community Foundation, holds its Regional Impact Summit on Tuesday and Wednesday, March 10 and 11, at Hospice of North Idaho, 2290 W. Prairie Ave., Coeur d'Alene.

A March 10 session on developing a 2026 fund development plan will explore donor motivation, messaging and fundraising methods to help participants develop their own funding plans.

Other sessions include tips for nonprofit leaders in navigating

change, and a panel of local nonprofit professionals discussing leadership and fund development.

A panel discussion on building relationships with local government to improve quality of life will include Amy Evans of Idaho Youth Ranch and the Coeur d'Alene City Council, Kiki Miller of the Coeur d'Alene City Council and Scott Ferguson of St. Vincent de Paul of North Idaho, moderated by Kent Fogg of The Idaho Community Foundation.

March 11 sessions include a

presentation, "A Board Member's Guide to Fair and Compliant CEO Compensation," to ensure legal compliance and retain leadership. Another session is on how well a Form 990 tells a nonprofit's story.

A third presentation on pitching nonprofit stories to local media will be led by Devin Weeks of the Coeur d'Alene Press, Eliza Billingham of Spokane Public Radio, and Marijke Fakasiieiki of The Fig Tree.

For information, visit idahononprofits.org/regionals.html.

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Launch NW hosts 'Collective Impact'

Launch NW/Our Kids Our Business will host "Collective Impact: Cultivating a Flourishing Community" with Christina Bethell, a Johns Hopkins University researcher, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Thursday, March 26, at the Hive, 2904 E. Sprague.

Christina will discuss the science on flourishing. Other presenters will share local data and

strategies to improve child flourishing, school success and life-long health outcomes. They will introduce initiatives contributing to a thriving Spokane, local health data and volunteer opportunities.

For information, see launchnw.org/event/collective-impact-cultivating-a-flourishing-community.

In addition, Launch NW/OKOB will host a breakfast for

local business leaders to learn how Launch NW is building a healthier workforce. It is from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Friday, March 27 at The Spokane Club, 1002 W. Riverside Ave. Christina will discuss how to help children and families flourish.

For information, visit launchnw.org/event/business-breakfast-launchnw-okob.

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Editorial Reflections

John Alder always showed up to volunteer, to protest, to protect

Fig Tree volunteer John Alder, 68, showed up consistently to help plan the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference (EWLC), the annual Spring Benefit and Fall Fund Drive.

“We could count on him when we needed a helping hand,” said Kaye Hult, volunteer coordinator. “His death on Feb. 22 leaves a hole that will be hard to fill.”

John’s ideas were behind themes for the 2026 EWLC and Spring Benefit. He helped refine themes for the EWLC faith leaders’ panel on “Spiritual Ramifications of Persistence” and for the Spring Benefit on “Persist Together: Inspire Miracles.” John embodied persistence.

Some volunteers have a specialty, but John was versatile. He was the quintessential volunteer, as another volunteer said. He did mailings, set up displays, registered people for events and cleaned up afterwards. He also recruited the speakers for the Legislative Conference workshop on affordable housing, tenant issues and homelessness. He began donating and volunteering in 2015.

John attended worship at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ,

where he played in the bell choir, served as a trustee, participated in the Serving Our Neighbors team, helped with tech services for worship, and much more.

John was also engaged with the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane conferences, fundraisers, protests and Peacekeepers. He was involved with the Dorothy Day Labor Forum, Fall Folk Fest, Spokane Alliance, Spokane Coalition Against Racism, Spokane Homeless Coalition, Tenants Union and Veterans for Peace. He was vice chair of the City of Spokane Equity Subcommittee. He was active politically and testified at City Council and Spokane Transit meetings. He went places by bus.

John was not just present, he was everywhere, smiling and ready to help.

As Pastor Bob Feeny said in announcing John’s passing to Westminster UCC members, John was deeply and broadly connected throughout Spokane.

“It was almost a recurring joke, any event I went to that felt like it was worth my time, there was John Alder,” said Bob. “John wasn’t just there, he was volunteering his time, greeting people with a smile and a joke. He seemed to know what was going

on in almost every arena of public life, and he was happy to share what he knew.

“John lived out a faith that reminded everyone that a better world is possible,” Bob commented. “His work in the community made a difference because he kept showing up. It feels impossible to list all of the campaigns, ballot initiatives and other community actions he participated in.

“From now on, when we find ourselves on the fence about showing up for something we care about, or something someone we care about cares about, let’s ask ourselves, what would John Alder do? You already know the answer: he’d show up,” Bob said. “So, let’s keep showing up for John and remember him fondly.

“We love you, John, and we miss you. You showed us how to show up. We’ll take it from here. Rest in peace,” he shared.

Showing up is a crucial trait, a sign of commitment and persistence.

“John Alder, Present!” said Rusty Nelson of Spokane Veterans for Peace, adding that John has been one of the most active associate members of Spokane Veterans For Peace and already is being missed in their nuclear weapons education project.

Program coordinator Hollis Higgins recalled him this way: “John Alder was always present, always conscious, always witty and always concerned for the well-being of others. With a great heart emoji, he worked for peace.”

Gary Jewell, moderator of The Fig Tree Board, commented, “John was an inspiring worker for the good of the world.”

Marijke Fakasiieiki, Fig Tree development and editorial associate, said “John was a quiet philanthropist, devoted to the betterment of the community. He was a person of integrity who didn’t shy away from expressing his views. He volunteered with and was a fearless supporter of The Fig Tree and other nonprofits.

“He was kind-hearted,” Marijke continued. “He was relentless about detail. He was a deeply committed person of faith who wanted politicians to stand for something and be concerned for the marginalized. He will be sorely missed by many and leaves a lasting impact on this community.”

To fill the gap, Spokane nonprofits are going to need a lot more volunteers.

Mary Stamp - Editor



Visits around Mediterranean, to Minneapolis stir questions, insights

We continue to carry questions from our sabbatical journey last summer through countries in Africa and Europe along the Mediterranean Sea. Touching the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and meeting current leaders of these faiths, we returned with awe for the beauty and endurance of these faiths rooted in the God of Abraham and Sarah.

We stepped back centuries, visiting churches, mosques and synagogues. We sensed the faith that shaped gatherings in each place. We saw the care of maintaining, restoring and renewing these places of worship and prayer, and we saw communities gather and pilgrims arrive to pray in places big and small.

In all these places, we asked a nagging question: “What difference did it make?” What difference did the practices of prayer and building houses of worship make in how people of different faiths treated and looked out for each other?

This question hit us as we read of pogroms against Jews in Spain in the 1300s and 1400s. It particularly struck us in countries where Nazis seized power and began systematically targeting Jews. What difference did the faith and practices of Christians and Muslims make for Jews?

In Spain, there were centuries of some harmonious coexistence in earlier Christian and later Muslim rule, but suspicion and prejudice took over as Christians fought for control and drove out Jews and Muslims in Ferdinand’s and Isabella’s Reconquista. The Catholic Church maintained an absolutist approach over the next centuries and in its cooperative relationship with Franco’s regime.

Spain has for decades now been in a process of reopening. Both Judaism and Islam find increased welcome, but progress is slow after trust was broken so severely.

Over the centuries, Morocco was a refuge for Jews. When Nazis sought to round up the Jews in Morocco, Sultan Mohammed V refused to identify them, saying, “There are only Moroccans here.” This saved 250,000 Jews. There is an enduring grieving sadness there, after most Jews left when Israel was founded. Old Jewish neighborhoods collapsed or remained empty, perhaps signs of grief mixed with resentment and hope.

Greece was another refuge for Jews for centuries. Thessaloniki was known as the “second Jerusalem” with one-third of the city’s population Jewish. Many Jews escaping pogroms in Russia found refuge here and in other Greek cities, but as Nazi control and power crept in and took hold, antisemitic propaganda and media campaigns tapped into resentments and fears. As other Greeks looked on, Nazis rounded up 50,000 Jews to be herded to concentration camps. Similar purges happened across northern Greece, including on the island of Korfu that still grieves this loss.

Kastoria was a small town where people sought to defend Jews from Nazi seizures but were unsuccessful. Archbishop Joachim Alexopoulos worked with rabbis and city officials to save 74 percent of the Jewish population of Volos from Nazi seizure. While Greek religious leaders took risks to defend Jewish people, the nagging question hit us as we visited Orthodox churches and joined Christians praying before icons of Christ and the saints. “Did any of this help? Why didn’t this prayer life make a difference?”

Albania was a small but bright light during the Nazi era terror. Albania sought to defend everyone, rooted in a cultural core value of *besa* (protection) embraced and practiced by Muslims and Christians. It is the only country where the Jewish population grew during World War II. Then the communist dictatorship obliterated all houses of worship, religious speech and cemeteries, seeking to wipe out any Christian, Muslim, Jewish or other faith and keep all minds captive to the state. There are few Jews today in Albania.

After the Holocaust, the Jewish people have renewed a practice of recognizing saintly, righteous people—the *hasidei ummot ha’olam* or “righteous among the nations”—who risked their lives and futures to help Jews. Many across different faiths are named for their efforts defending against the Nazis. Others are named from earlier eras in history.

Muslims, Jews and Christians have complex histories, especially in relationship with each other. In the countries we visited, there were—and now are—times and places of harmonious coexistence and intentional cooperation. We celebrate

these and hope for more, but there also were—and now are—many times and places of suspicion, prejudice, mistreatment and cruelty. They are agonizing to look at.

Christians and Muslims began their holy seasons of fasting, prayer and reflection—Lent and Ramadan—at the same time this year. We invite both to reflect on: “What difference does our faith make in our relationship with those of the Jewish faith, who are also children of Abraham?”

This is a challenging question, given the ongoing war, death and destruction in Gaza. No nation is without sin or wrongdoing. Mending relationships marred by cruelty and mistrust across centuries is incredibly difficult work and does not happen quickly.

However, we can all make steps where we live now. We can reach out to each other with letters of support and care. We can meet each other over coffee. We can learn more about each other’s faith practices and holy days. We can cooperate in support and care for people in need and under threat.

Let our prayers and practices make us more mindful of each other and more ready to step forward to support, care for and defend each other in the name of God.

The Rev. Dr. David Gortner and The Very Rev. Heather VanDeventer - Episcopal priests serving in Coeur d’Alene and Spokane.

Observations of the St. Paul community response to Operation Metro Surge from visiting in February with other faith leaders says we can love our neighbors.

Paul (name changed to protect the innocent, and yes, this protection is necessary) came in with a blast of cold air, wearing Carhart coveralls and one of those hats that has fold-down fur flaps to cover your ears. His beard completed the circle of fur. He spoke at a slow pace, pausing between phrases to think. He said he was really glad we were there and thanked us for coming.

Then he described his neighborhood, the chosen ground for his action. He monitored for ICE vehicles, provided food for immigrants too frightened to leave their houses. Some were in asylum programs

where the process ground along slowly. Some were undocumented. None were criminal. He had chosen to love them.

They were concerned that, like the Hmong grandfather, they might be dragged through the snow into the street.

Some had lost or given up their jobs. Paul worked with his brother to face mounting needs: another 36 requests for assistance in the last two weeks.

Some needed rent money to maintain their permanent residence, a requirement, and some were no longer living in that residence out of fear of deportation.

In contrast, the ICE financial support was immense, with military gear, black tinted-window SUVs, creating an economic war. I learned ICE agents receive bonuses of more than \$40,000 from tax dollars.

Paul’s brother dressed the same, Minnesota winter ready, but he was weary, worn down by carrying too heavy a load for too long.

He told of an ICE intrusion into a neighbor’s home, terrifying the family. The wife miscarried a couple of days later. It struck a nerve with him because his wife was due soon with twins.

It struck a nerve with me because we cared for our identical grand twin girls, now just over a year old, for many of their early months. He lacked money and had no time to rest. Only faith and love held him up.

Minneapolis loves their immigrants. The residents love their city. The citizens wonder what’s happened to the country they love. The whole community in St. Paul has answered the biblical question “Who is my neighbor?”

My observation is that ICE is the terror, and that the terror is felt indiscriminately throughout neighborhoods.

The clergy I was with often speak of seeking justice and mercy and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8). That is lived in the community in St. Paul every minute, night and day in the face of oppression. They yearn for peace.

My prayer is that we in Spokane can love our neighbors like they do in Minneapolis. We have seen a great light and the darkness will not overcome it.

**John Wallingford
Cathedral of St. John**

Calendar of Events

Area codes are (509) unless otherwise listed
Submit events to development@thefigtree.org by third Friday

- Ongoing • Second Harvest Food Sorting**, 1234 E. Front Ave., 252-6267, ekanally@2-harvest.org
- Mar 1, 8, 15, 22 • Intentional Community Gathering**, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 1 to 4 p.m., harmonywoods.org
- Mar 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 • Book Conversation** on The Power of Bridging, John Poell, NAACP Spokane Initiative – Building Restorative Communities, 5 online sessions, 6:30 to 7:45 p.m., register.BRCspokane@gmail.com
- Mar 3 • Flannery Lecture in Catholic Theology**: Strangers Still Longer: Comparative Lessons on Otherness from a Demon Devotee, Gonzaga, Hemmingson Ballroom, 4:30 to 6 p.m., 313-6127, gonzaga.edu/news-events/events/2026/3/3/flannery
- Purim in Africa**, drum circle, food, reading, Chabad of Spokane, 3151 E. 27th, 5:30 p.m., jewishspokane.com
- Environmental Law and Policy** in Inland Northwest, Institute for Climate, Water and the Environment and Gonzaga School of Law, Law School, Rm 143, 6 p.m., gonzaga.edu/news-events/events
- Virtual Tour of Hangman Creek**, Spokane Riverkeeper, 7 p.m., spokaneriverkeeper.org/calendar/2026/3/5/virtual-tour-of-hangman-creek
- Mar 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 • The Resourced Nonprofit**: Fundamental Attributes of a Sustainable Community Organization, 4 Sessions, Nonprofit Association of Washington (NAWA), online 10 to 11:30 a.m., nonprofitwa.org/
- A Language of Life – Nonviolent Communication**, Liberty Park Library, Mon 10 to 11:30 a.m., Zoom Fri 12:30 to 2 p.m., BRCspokane@gmail.com
- Heartistry: Artistic Wellbeing**, environment for self-discovery, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 3 to 5 p.m., 279-0299
- Mar 3, 6, 11, 13, 16, 17 • ALTCEW Community Feedback Forum**, five counties, hybrid, 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., altcew.org
- Mar 4 • Legal Clinic**, MIA Spokane, Immigration, family bilingual advocates, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., miaspokane.org
- Mar 4, 11, 18, 25 • Practical Centering Yoga** with Larkin Braun, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 2316 E. First, 1:30 p.m., sales.northwestmuseum.org
- Beginning Buddhism with Sravasti Abbey** monastics, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry, 6 to 7:30 p.m., sravastiabbey.org
- Mar 5 • The Fig Tree Development/Benefit and Board meetings**, noon, Benefit, 1 to 3 p.m. Board, Zoom, 535-4112, kaye@thefigtree.org
- From Theory to Impact: Evaluating and Visualizing Program Success**, NAWA, online 12 p.m., info@nonprofitwa.org, nonprofitwa.org
- Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers**, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Spokane Community College Hagan Speaker Series, SCC, 1810 N. Greene, Bldg 16, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- Mar 5, 12, 19, 26 • Taizé Prayer**, Zoom, 4:15 p.m., bartletts@gonzaga.edu
- Mar 6 • March for Meals**, Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels Walkathon, Spokane Valley Mall, 8 to 10 a.m., 924-6976, mowgsc.org
- Women of Achievement Awards Luncheon**, YWCA Spokane, Davenport Grand Hotel, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., ywcaspokane.org
- Adam Bodhi Meet & Greet**, Artisans Guild, Northtown Mall, 4750 N. Division, 1 to 4 p.m., 808-2694
- Mar 6, 19 • Let's Go Legal**, 900 W. 4th, Newport, NAWA, Mar 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mar 19, online 3 to 5 p.m., nonprofitwa.org/event/online-lets-go-legal-03-2026/
- Mar 6-8 • Spokane International Film Festival**, spiff.org
- Mar 6-21 • Sacred Stories**, Uziel Gonzalez and Sara Windisch, Terrain Gallery, 628 N. Monroe, reception on 6th 5 to 8 p.m., Th-Sat 4 to 7 p.m., (619) 813-5520
- Mar 7 • Homestead Wildfire Protection & Prevention**, 1821 N. LeClerc, Cusick, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., rgnew.org/event/homestead-wildfire-protection-prevention-event
- Eco Anxiety Café**, 350 Spokane, Manito United Methodist, 3220 S. Grand, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- Mend-It Café**, Spokane Zero Waste, North Spokane Public Library, 44 E. Hawthorne, 12 to 3 p.m.,
- Romantic Echoes – Schubert and Mendelssohn**, Classics Northwest, 5 to 7 p.m., classicsnw.com
- Sweets Before Supper**, fundraiser, Girl Scouts of Eastern Washington North Idaho, Davenport Grand Hotel, 333 W. Spokane Falls, 6 to 9 p.m., gsewni.org
- All Things Equal – The Life and Trials of Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, First Interstate Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls, 7:30 to 9 p.m., 279-7000
- POTUS**, Spokane Civic Theatre, 1020 N. Howard, Th-Sat 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., spokanecivictheatre.com
- Mar 10 • Burnout and Secondary Stress**, NAWA, online, 3 to 4:40 p.m., nonprofitwa.org
- Smart Tech Systems for Future-Ready Businesses**, SIMBA and Live Local INW, Shadle Park Library, 2111 W. Wellesley, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., 251-8858, spokaneindependent.org
- Mar 10-11 • Regional Impact Summit**, Idaho Nonprofit Center, Hospice of North Idaho, 2290 W. Prairie, Coeur d'Alene, web.idahononprofits.org
- Mar 11 • Nonprofit Innovation Summit: Innovation in the Arts**, NAWA, online, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., info@nonprofit.org, nonprofitwa.org
- Mar 11 • Women Lead Spring Conference**, Gonzaga Women LEAD and Leadership Studies, Hemmingson, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 313-3684, gonzaga.edu/WomenLead

- Mar 11-13 • Celebrating Salish Conference**, Northern Quest Resort and Casino, Airway Heights, 2026 Celebrating-Salish-Conference.eventbrite.com
- Mar 12 • Arte y Cafecito**, Community-building for Spanish-speaking women, 4:45 to 6 p.m., 994-9840
- Employment for Empowerment Reception**, The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., 6405 N. Addison, 2 to 3:30 p.m., (206) 407-7471, Engage@LHBlind.org
- Mar 12, 26 • Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 p.m., 818-6733
- Mar 13 • International Women's Day Brunch**, International Rescue Committee, Spokane Central Library, 906 W. Main, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- Eat for a Cause**, Nourish Spokane benefit, Filipino American Northwest Association, Feast World Kitchen, 1321 W. 3rd, 11 a.m., feastworldkitchen.org
- Mar 14 • "Lean on Me"**, St. Lucy's Breakfast, benefit, Shalom Ministries, Rockwood Retirement Event Center, 2903 E. 25th, 9 to 10:15 a.m., shalommeal.org/st-lucy
- Mar 14, 18 • "Persist Together, Inspire Miracles"**, The Fig Tree Spring Benefit, Hemmingson Ballroom, Gonzaga University, Lunch in person on Sat 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Breakfast-Time on Zoom on Wed 7:30 to 9 a.m., 535-4112, thefigtree.org/donate.html
- Mar 15 • Fireside Chat on Immigration**, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., eventbrite.com/e/fireside-chat-on-immigration-tickets-1983043180535?aff=oddttdcreator
- Spokane Youth Symphony: The Power of Persistence**, The Fox Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, 4 p.m., 624-1200, foxtheaterspokane.org
- Red Ribbon Gala**, Spokane AIDS Network benefit, The Centennial Hotel, 4 p.m., spokaneaisannw.org
- Mar 16-17 • Innovia Summit**, innovia.org
- Mar 17-19 • End the Violence Conference**, srdoc.org
- Mar 17 • A Circle Centering Hope**, NAACP Spokane – Building Restorative Communities, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague, 4:30 to 6 p.m., BRCspokane@gmail.com
- Mar 18 • Riverview Retirement Lunch and Presentation**, 3 p.m., 482-9588
- Mar 19 • NAACP Spokane Branch**, General Meeting, SCC Lair, 6:30 p.m., naacpspokane.com
- Community Science Info Session on Spokane River Watershed**, Spokane Riverkeeper, 7 to 8 p.m., spokaneriverkeeper.org/calendar
- Mar 20 • Spring Equinox Celebration**, St. David's Episcopal, 7315 N. Wall, 7 p.m., 466-3100, stdavidsspokane.org
- Mar 21 • Garden Connections**, visit local gardens, 10 to 11:30 a.m., program 11:45 to 2:45 at local libraries, growingneighbors.org
- World Water Day Celebration**, Doris Morrison Learning Center, 1330 S. Henry, Spokane Valley, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 477-7258, lgoff@spokanecounty.gov
- "From Survival to Vision: Crafting the Future We Deserve"**, PJALS Action Conference, 9 to 5, pjals.org
- Mar 22 • Bachathon**, Celebrate Bach's 341st Birthday American Guild of Organists, Whitworth Presbyterian, 312 W. Hawthorne, 1 p.m., St. Augustine, 428 W. 19th., 2:30 p.m., Trinity Lutheran, 812 N. 5th, Coeur d'Alene, 4 p.m., 402-319-1716, spokaneago.org/bachathon/
- Taizé Sunday Evening Hour of Prayer**, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 5 p.m., 995-0987, ihrc.net
- Ballet Hispanico New York**, Carmen, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 E. Desmet, 7:30 p.m.
- Mar 23 • Housing Affordability and Homelessness** in Spokane, Gonzaga School of Business Administration, Jepson Center, 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- Mar 25 • Silent Day of Prayer on the Annunciation**, "Preparing for the Unknown: Mary's Interior Prayer and Peace," Sr. Mary Eucharista, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 26 • Collective Impact: Cultivating a Flourishing Community**, Launch NW, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., launchnw.org
- Mar 27 • Business Breakfast**, Launch NW, Our Kids, Our Business, Spokane Club, 1002 W. Riverside, 7 to 8:30 a.m., launchnw.org
- Lenten Fish Fry and Stations of the Cross**, IHRC, Stations 5:30 p.m., Fish Fry 6:30 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 27-28 • Walk with Christ**, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints North Stake, 401 W. Regina, Fri 6 to 9 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., mgraesser@gmail.com
- Mar 28 • Remembering Fr. Nigro**, guest speaker, Fr. Michael Maher, SJ, IHRC, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- "Honoring Women – A Celebration of Strength, Heritage, and Culture"**, Moda Con Orgullo, Raices Cultural Fashion Show, Nuestras Raices, 1214 E. Sprague, 5:30 p.m., 557-0566, office@raiceswa.org
- Mar 30-Apr 1 • Women's Holy Week Retreat**, Fr. Michael Maher, IHRC, 4:30 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- Mar 31 • Spokane River Forum's H2O Breakfast**, 426 Discovery Pl., 7:30 to 9:30 a.m., spokaneriver.net
- Practice the Future We Want**, "How to Love Your Enemy: Restorative Justice Story," film, The Hive, 2904 E. Sprague, 5:30 to 7, BRCspokane@gmail.com
- International Fly Fishing Film Festival**, The Garland Theater, 7 to 9 p.m., spokaneriverkeeper.org
- Apr 1 • The Fig Tree Development/Benefit and Board meetings**, noon, Benefit, 1 to 3 p.m., Board, Zoom, 535-4112, kaye@thefigtree.org
- Apr 2-4 • Men's Holy Week Retreat**, Fr. Michael Maher, IHRC, 4:30 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- Apr 5 • Easter Sunrise Services**, Greenwood Memorial Terrace, 211 N. Government Way, 6:30 a.m., 326-3800, fairmountmemorial.com

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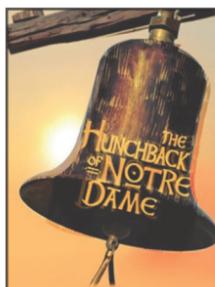
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Center teaches about the Holocaust so people interrupt hate, violence

As the director of education with the Holocaust Center for Humanity in Seattle, Paul Regelbrugge engages with educators across the state to offer resources and training on how to teach about the Holocaust, hate and systems of oppression.

In 1989, a small group of survivors started the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center to connect teachers with survivors who were willing to speak in schools to address Holocaust denial and counter antisemitism by sharing their stories.

In 2015, when it opened its museum, it changed its name to the Holocaust Center for Humanity.

“The Holocaust Center for Humanity is not only about the Holocaust but also for humanity, teaching why and how Holocaust education matters for vulnerable groups and all of us today,” Paul said. “Holocaust education is not just for European or Jewish kids. It’s for everyone to learn from the Holocaust how to challenge what is happening today.

“History without action is futile. History needs teeth, so we partner with tribes and organizations representing African Americans, Latinx Americans, Indigenous Americans and Japanese Americans. It’s about the impact of hate and what is happening today, so people do better, interrupting hatred and discrimination to prevent violence and worse,” he said.

For example, in November, in conjunction with the Spokane Tribe, Spokane Falls Community College and Temple Beth Shalom, Paul created and led a workshop for 45 educators who discussed the Holocaust, Indigenous history and genocide. Historian Warren Seyler of the Spokane Tribe led them to sites of historic and current significance for the tribe.

“Because what we offer is about all genocides, not just about the Holocaust, it matters for all of us,” he asserted. “All genocides and mass atrocities are uniquely and equally evil. We must avoid comparing suffering as if there is a scale, prioritizing the interests of some groups and not others. For example, antisemitism must be addressed on an equal plane as we would confront any and all forms of hatred, with zero tolerance, no more and certainly no less.”

The center teaches teachers and students about the Holocaust and other genocides, so they ask questions, take responsibility and do more than disapprove of the violence.

“We want people to speak out, because silence also harms. We teach history so people question and confront systems of oppression that enable hatred, violence and mass atrocities,”



Paul Regelbrugge resources teachers across the state.

he emphasized. “Our goal is for people to act.”

Paul believes hatred and antisemitism alone were not the cause of the Holocaust.

“The cause was that education, business, corporate and government institutions had allowed it to happen. In many instances, they weaponized hate, enabling it to progress to genocide, and all the while, too few people stood up to interrupt what was occurring all around them,” he said.

Paul also believes in the power of storytelling and dialogue to create communities where people value each other and see what they have in common.

“Educators can create inclusive, brave spaces for every student,” he affirmed.

Paul shared his journey into this role.

He grew up in Detroit, the son of immigrants. His father came from Belgium and his mother from Italy. After graduating from Michigan State University College of Law in 1990, Paul practiced law in Detroit and Chicago until 2005, when he completed a teachers’ program at Northwest University and began teaching.

In his second year of teaching, he taught Mexican American eighth graders in inner city Chicago and wanted something to engage them. A colleague recommended *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

Paul read *Night* over the summer, connecting with it as the story of a father and son with European roots.

“I wasn’t sure it would work for Mexican American students, but a week into it, the students began to teach me that it was about something beyond the European and Jewish context,” he said. “As members of a different marginalized group and pre-judged for their skin color, accents and appearances, they made connections to some of Elie Wiesel’s—and Jewish people’s experiences that I couldn’t

or didn’t.”

When he taught African American high schoolers in Buffalo, NY, they also identified with the experiences of persecution and othering.

In Spokane, he taught sixth graders at Finch and Moran Prairie Elementary schools from 2009 to 2015.

Then, for two years in Kent, he taught students who were refugees from different countries, including Arab Muslims, where genocide had happened.

“They saw commonalities in how people treat one another based on perceived differences and not what we share in common. They also tied it in with their obligations to others,” Paul said.

Throughout his teaching career and work at the center, he has seen the particular impact that survivor testimony has had on students of all ages.

The first survivor he worked with at the center was Robert Holczer, a Hungarian. Paul was so taken by his story that in 2019 he wrote a book about him, *The Yellow Star House*.

Even though he loved teaching, Paul joined the Holocaust Center for Humanity because he realized that he could have an impact on potentially thousands of students and hundreds of teachers.

“One reason they hired me was because of my successful work with Holocaust education in so many places and with different demographics,” he said. “As a teacher, I would reach a certain number of students, but at the center we develop resources and training to reach many thousands of students—31,000 in 2025. We now reach more than 2,000 educators a year.”

The Holocaust Center for Humanity offers four programs with free resources.

- The Speakers Bureau includes survivors and legacy

speakers—children and grandchildren of survivors—sharing their stories.

- Teaching Trunks are available for schools to borrow for four weeks when they teach the Holocaust. Each trunk includes books for high schoolers, middle schoolers and upper elementary students, books that schools might not have the budget to purchase. The trunks also contain replica artifacts and the stories of survivors whose families donated the artifacts to the center.

- Field Trips to the center’s museum are taken by people in the Seattle area and even by one private school in Spokane. Holding History is an extension bringing the museum to classrooms, using personal artifacts to address why it matters to learn about the Holocaust.

- Professional Development Teacher Training is the largest program for teachers. It is given in person and by Zoom.

The nonprofit Holocaust Center for Humanity is funded by grants and donations to serve in Washington or any Northwest state—Montana and Alaska—that does not have a similar Holocaust center. Boise has one, but sometimes teachers in Coeur d’Alene request a Teaching Trunk or speaker.

Paul finds that because he had previously worked for Spokane Public Schools and knows people, they are particularly responsive to the center’s education programs.

“Knowing people in the district helps open doors, leading to a wonderful, reciprocal relationship of dialogue and support,” he commented.

In Eastern and Central Washington, the center also provides resources to East Valley School District, Freeman High School, Central Valley, Mead, Deer Park and Grandview school districts.

“For years, we sponsored a writing and an art contest, but this is the third year we are offering just an art contest. It affords students a wonderful opportunity to engage creatively with historical stories of resistance and resilience, connecting those stories to their own lives,” Paul said.

The Holocaust Center for

Humanity is collaborating with Temple Beth Shalom (TBS) and the Spokane Yom Hashoah Committee. They will use the same prompt and resources for the 2026 art contest on “The Art of Courage and Resistance.”

The center and TBS both have art contests. Those who enter the Spokane contest can also enter the center’s contest.

“This year we created the prompt, suggestions and resources for both. The TBS deadline is mid-March. Our deadline is the end of March, connecting with several synagogues in Seattle, as well as Spokane’s,” he said.

The Yom Hashoah Committee plans the 2026 Commemoration of the Holocaust at 7 p.m., Tuesday, April 14, at Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th. It will feature Raymond Sun, a Washington State University history professor, interviewing Dutch Holocaust survivor and Holocaust educator Carla Peperzak.

For information, call 206-582-3000 or email paul@holocaust-centerseattle.org.

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