

Stories inside

Refugee agencies for  
coalition - p. 5

Camps nurture youth in  
faith lives - p. 7-11

School children release  
baby salmon - p. 13

Millwood Impact meets  
children's needs - p. 16

CALENDAR ON PAGE 15  
FEATURES 70 EVENTS



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# Tribe protects lands and waterways

By Mary Stamp

Caj Matheson's work as director of natural resources for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe (Schitsu'umsh) carries on the Tribe's responsibility for the Coeur d'Alene Lake and the land where they have lived from time immemorial. He also sees his work as part of his spiritual journey.

His overall role is to oversee the work of others who manage fisheries, wildlife, forestry, air quality, water quality, land management, wetland restoration, recreation, environment, energy efficiency, climate impact, pesticides and smoke management.

In the 1970s, however, little land within the reservation boundaries was owned. Now the Tribe owns nearly 50 percent because they bought it with funds from the Coeur d'Alene Casino and various settlements related to natural resources.

Caj facilitates policies and spends much of his time dealing with attorneys on two lawsuits and follow-up, delegating the programs to the managers.

A lawsuit over water rights has been going on for 15 years and takes much of his time.

On June 18, the Tribe will



Caj Matheson's t-shirt has Coeur d'Alene word for salmon designed to look like one.

rename Camp Larson, which it purchased in 2005 from Washington State University. The site at Cottonwood Bay east of Worley will be renamed "We Have Returned"—ch uLts'te'l'l—in the Coeur d'Alene Salishan language.

The day will also celebrate the Tribe winning the Coeur d'Alene Lake case in 2001. That lawsuit gave the Coeur d'Alene Tribe legal standing for other lawsuits over issues like runoff of contamination from the mines.

"We gained standing to be involved in cleanup with other settlements as a natural resource trustee for the Coeur d'Alene Lake and watershed," said Caj. "Now we work with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on cleanup and with the other natural resources trustees on restoration: 1) our Tribe, 2) the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 3) the U.S. Department of Interior and 4) the State of Idaho."

"For the Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration Plan, we are slowly spending the \$170 million settlement on natural resources restoration," he said, noting that there is still about \$135 million remaining in investments.

*Continued on page 4*

## Retired life and spiritual coach takes readers on her travel memoir trek

Susie Weller, a retired life and spiritual coach, takes readers on an "armchair" trek through her spiritual autobiography and travel memoir, sharing how travel transformed her perspectives, turning many ideas "upside down."

She offers these insights in *52 Global Reflections: A Pilgrim's Travel Memoir*, which will be published June 18 with Kindle Direct Publishing.

Susie's international pilgrimages began at age 12 when she

traveled with her 10-year-old brother to Mexico City. She is now in her 70s, savoring memories of her adventures.

Because of health issues, she says her trekking poles are now "stability sticks," as mobility challenges clip her travels. Nevertheless, she continues kayaking on Liberty Lake across the street from her home.

As she shares about 52 locations around the world, she tells of perspectives she gained over years of walking, hitchhiking,

snorkeling, kayaking, hot air ballooning, camel riding, and traveling by car, bus, train, plane, ferry and cruise ships.

Susie shares her journey through the lens of the directions on a compass and life's developmental stages. In each section, she offers three questions for readers to use for journaling personal reflections or for a book group to consider.

With insights from the Compass Rose and the Celtic Wheel of Life as tools, she talks about walking labyrinths in Ireland, France, Malta and the United States and finding that the endpoint can also become a new beginning.

Susie uses the directions of a compass to explore how foundational skills learned in early childhood "often recycle throughout life until we integrate their lessons."

The first section on East, spring and early childhood shares her growing years in California and travels to Alaska, Michigan and Arizona, Jerusalem.

*Continued on page 3*

## Resource Directory invites donations connect people

As The Fig Tree prepares to publish the 2025-26 edition of the Resource Directory, directory editor Malcolm Haworth finds that federal budget cuts have affected many programs.

An impact of the changes, cuts and uncertainty also means there is need to replace \$7,500 in advertising and \$5,000 from community partners with donations to fund the directory.

"To fill the gap, we are embarking on a special appeal to individuals and congregations that value the directory and agencies that use and share the copies to donate," said Malcolm. "We want to assure that people who need directories can have them, given the expected increase in needs."

Funds pay for the editor to gather data, input it and design the pages. They also cover editing, printing and distribution. That work has impact the lives of people, as caring partners share the information with clients or put directories directly into the hands of people who need the information.

The directory transforms from a publication into a lifegiving tool that connects people with assistance, resources and opportunities to move them from hunger, homelessness, illness, addiction, poverty, violence and loneliness to hope.

The directory comes off the pages to connect people with other people and networks to join in advocacy to improve life for themselves and others, to challenge systems and injustice, to educate themselves and engage in cultural enrichment.

The directory also becomes tangible as it connects people with opportunities for them to give back by volunteering their time to build a better community, society and world.

Donations that make the publication possible, make the changes in lives possible.

Donations may be made online at [thefigtree.org/donate.html](http://thefigtree.org/donate.html) or mailed to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane WA 99202.



## Religion News Briefs

# Around the World

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### Gathering affirms commitment to end racism

At an ecumenical gathering in May in Berlin for the 140th anniversary of the 1884/85 Berlin Conference that institutionalized colonial partitioning of Africa, former World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Konrad Raiser called for reaffirming and strengthening the ecumenical commitment to anti-racism. He spoke of the WCC’s long struggle against racial discrimination. Before its founding, Christian leaders grappled with the theological and ethical implications of racial injustice. The WCC established the Program to Combat Racism in 1969, catalyzed by the U.S. civil rights movement and anti-colonial liberation struggles across Africa.

**That program confronted** white, anti-Black racism and placed the issue on the WCC’s agenda. By the 1980s, it broadened its anti-racism mandate to include marginalized communities—Indigenous peoples, Dalits and women. This was crystallized at the 1990 World Convocation in Seoul, where churches committed to eradicating individual prejudice and the economic, political and social structures that perpetuate racism. The collapse of apartheid in South Africa and the end of colonial rule in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola added momentum, shifting the focus to reconstructing Africa and healing wounds from oppression. The 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban amplified global demands for reparations, justice and historical reckoning. The WCC’s 2002 statement, “Being Church and Overcoming Racism: It’s Time for Transformative Justice,” reaffirmed the urgency of sustained, systemic change.

**Noting that ecumenical attention** had drifted to economic injustice and violence, Konrad said the time is ripe to revisit racism—particularly as 2025 is the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea and the 100th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work. The conference renewed commitment to dismantling legacies of racism and was an opportunity for churches to own that history and model bold witness against racism, xenophobia and nationalist populism.

Dagmar Pruin, president of Bread for the World in Germany, said the relationship between churches and colonialism requires continual, honest, courageous examination: “Our institutions, ways of working and understanding of development are shaped by colonial legacies. Acknowledging this is not about blame—it is about responsibility.”

### WCC leaders recall start of Life and Work

On May 18, leaders of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs reviewed the history of the Conference on Life and Work and anticipated global trends at the “Life and Work” centenary conference in Athens. Moderator Mathews George Chunakara said the 1925 Stockholm Conference initiated the Life and Work movement, addressing post-World War I issues and the need for action by global church leaders.

Acknowledging divisions, mistrust and fragmentation in a multipolar global order today, he said the trend often “enforces rules created by powers for selfish goals. Commitments to be accountable to the rule of law and to international cooperation to address global challenges are being repudiated, as we face an unprecedented convergence of global crises, and climate change.”

### WCC commission prepares for COP 30

At the “World of Work, Place of Hope” event on May 2 in Rome, faith, economy and labor leaders addressed the intertwined challenges of climate justice and dignified work. Athena Peralta, director of the WCC Commission on Climate Justice and Sustainable Development, highlighted the upcoming COP30 and its focus on a just transition.

“The climate emergency and rising socioeconomic inequalities are the defining challenges of our time. As we prepare for the 30th UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in November at Belém, Brazil, churches worldwide are mobilizing to ensure the transition to a low-carbon economy prioritizes justice for the most vulnerable communities.”

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

# Fig Tree plans 2026 benefit, conference

The Fig Tree is involved in planning for upcoming events.

The Annual Meeting of The Fig Tree Board of Directors is from 1 to 3 p.m., Thursday, June 5, on Zoom. At the Annual Meeting, board members are elected to terms and new board members will be welcomed. Officers will be elected to new terms.

The board recently established a Sustainability Fund with Thrivent to receive legacy donations for long-term investment. It will soon announce more details on

how to participate in the fund.

The Development and Benefit Planning Committee, which meets at noon the same day, welcomes more volunteers to help with planning the 2026 Spring Benefits, which include a Benefit Lunch, Friday, March 6, at Hemmingson Ballroom at Gonzaga University, and a Breakfast-Time Benefit on Zoom on Wednesday, March 11.

The Fig Tree also convenes the planning team for the 2026 Eastern Washington Legislative

Conference (EWLC), which is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 31, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church.

The next planning meeting for the EWLC is 1 p.m., Tuesday, June 10, on Zoom. New ideas for speakers and the flow of the event are under consideration.

Themes for the 2026 events are being reviewed with decisions at the upcoming meetings.

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

# Habitat’s Blitz Build is June 3 to 13

Habitat for Humanity’s 24th annual Blitz Build starts at 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, June 3, at 212 N. Collins Ln. in Spokane Valley.

Community members volunteer, support and celebrate this event to build safe, healthy, permanently affordable homes.

Banner Bank sponsors Blitz Build as a two-week construction effort that brings together hundreds of supporters—volunteers, sponsors, businesses and leaders—to raise walls, build hope and address Spokane County’s growing housing crisis.

“Blitz Build is one of the most inspiring times of the year,” said Michelle Girardot, CEO of Habitat for Humanity. “Nearly one in three households in Spokane are cost-burdened—spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Habitat provides a path to stability through afford-

able homeownership, and Blitz Build brings that hope to life.”

While Habitat builds year-round, Blitz Build is a concentrated burst of community action. Each day, up to 60 volunteers—including future Habitat homeowners—work side by side on the construction site, building not only homes but also connections across neighborhoods and backgrounds.

This year’s build includes a Pride Build Day, highlighting Habitat’s commitment to inclusion, equity and dignity in housing all people, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

The event features a sustainable demonstration project using Insulated Concrete Forms—a noncombustible, energy-efficient building system that reduces construction time while

enhancing durability and performance. Volunteers will learn hands-on how this innovative method supports long-term affordability and environmental stewardship.

A \$50 registration fee for volunteers helps cover material costs and includes a Blitz Build T-shirt and lunch. Funds go to build homes for 45 families in partnership with Habitat’s Homeownership Program.

A closing celebration on Friday, June 13, will honor the legacy of the late President Jimmy Carter and the local volunteers. The community will gather, write messages on a framed door in his honor and join in a BBQ lunch and home tours at the build site.

For information, call 534-2552 or register at habitat-spokane.org/blitz-build.

# Catholic Charities gives land to Salish School

Community leaders, school children, dignitaries and well-wishers gathered on May 21 on the banks of the Spokane River to celebrate the land gift agreement between the Salish School of Spokane (SSOS) and Catholic Charities Eastern Washington (CCEW). The agreement grants the school ownership of the land, where their new facilities will include more classroom space, a cultural and recreational center and a sports field.

“We see the agreement as a small first step to acknowledge the history of the federal government and organized religion’s complicity in atrocities against

Indigenous Peoples in North America,” said Rob McCann, CEO and president of CCEW.

“This land gift ensures the school will own the 2+ acres, which originally belonged to their ancestors,” he said. “In addition, CCEW will give River Family Haven apartments to the school after it has met its 15-year tax credit obligations. Then, the housing can be an asset to support the Salish School.”

After years of working together on projects, SSOS and CCEW agreed to the \$32 million development. Construction begins in 2026. About \$7.7 million of the estimated \$10.7 million costs are in place.

“Rebuilding trust after generations of harm is an important step for our school community,” said LaRae Wiley, executive director of Salish School of Spokane. “We are excited to see

our children live and learn here in a natural setting by the river. We look forward to our language and culture being a regular, recognized part of civic and cultural life in Spokane.”

The new facilities will serve the broader Native community and West Hills neighborhood.

Through immersion learning, the Salish School preserves its language and culture to build a new community of Salish speakers and cultural practitioners.

CCEW will build 72 units of permanent affordable housing in River Family Haven at 2752 W Elliott Ct., for low-income households. It will connect them to counseling, employment, education, medical care, recovery, support and other services.

Salish School families will be eligible for those programs.

For information, call 358-4250 or visit housing.cceasternwa.org.

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‘Free for All’ documentary to be shown

The recent PBS Independent Lens documentary, “Free for All: The Public Library,” will be shown at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 4, at Central Library. Skyler Reep, KSPS PBS development director, and Denise Neujahr, Spokane Public Library youth services manager, and Mason Neil, youth environmental specialist, will lead a discussion afterwards. The film gives history on libraries. From pioneering women behind the “Free Library Movement” to today’s librarians who serve the public despite closures, censorship, threats and book bans, librarians created a civic institution where everything is free, and the doors are open to all.

“Libraries have always been vital places to celebrate our intellectual freedom, connect with each other, explore different perspectives, discover possibilities, escape and give us hope,” said Denise.

For information, call 444-5300 or visit spokanelibrary.org.

Concert raises funds for Thrive International

The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane and St. John’s Cathedral are hosting “Cultural Crossings,” a concert to raise funds and awareness for Thrive International’s refugee and immigrant services facing challenges to support for essential services because of reduced federal and state funding.

Performances held from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Sunday, June 22, at the Cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., will share and celebrate global traditions and music along with information on Thrive’s work to refugees move from surviving to thriving as they settle.

For information, call 934-8800 or visit thriveinternational.org.

Whitworth Ministry Summit is June 24 to 27

Whitworth University Ministry Summit from June 24 to 27 at Whitworth University explores the theme “Repairers of the Breach: Nurturing Faith Communities that Restore Hope and Peace.” based on Isaiah 58:12. Morning plenaries, seminars and evening worship will focus on discerning God’s calling for the church. The event, organized by Whitworth’s Office of Church Engagement, offers spiritual nourishment for pastors and leaders navigating the division, anger, apathy and violence today.

Questions for discernment in sessions include: How, in the face of division, apathy, anger and violence, do Christian leaders not grow weary? How do they remain awake to all that feels broken in their congregations, communities and world? How do they hold tension between the urgency of change and the slow pace of transformation? How do they nurture faith communities that restore hope and peace?

For information, visit whitworth.edu/summit.

MAC hosts program on stories of black families

The Northwest Museum of Art and Culture’s “Our Stories: Black Families in Spokane” will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday, June 27, at the Campbell House, 2316 W. First Ave., with storytelling by African American community members and from the MAC’s archives on Spokane. There will be poetry readings in the auditorium, a children’s art activity tent, children’s book readings, music, food and community booths.

For information, call 363-5337 or visit northwestmuseum.org.

Mission U United Methodist events are in July

With the theme, “Practicing Hope,” United Methodists across the Pacific Northwest Conference will prepare for faithful living and action by “engaging in transformative educational experiences at Mission U events,” said Jan Catrell, Mission U dean. Mission U runs from Thursday to Saturday, July 24 to 26, at Wesley United Methodist Church, 14 N. 48th Ave. in Yakima.

The program is centered around curricula designed to motivate, inform and enrich commitment to global ministry.

For information, email jcatrell@yahoo.com.

LCSNW plans fundraising event on Aug. 9

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) is introducing a new fundraising event, “Healing with Hope” at 5 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 9, at Trezzi Farm Winery and Vineyard, 17710 N. Dunn Rd. in Green Bluff. It shares how LCSNW serves people through advocacy, mental health and child welfare services. It will raise awareness and rally attendees around their work to bring healing and hope to those who need it most. LCSNW’s annual luncheon returns in October at Mukogawa’s U.S. Campus.

For information, visit lcsnw.org.

Unity in Community promotes understanding

For its 31st year, Unity in the Community (UIC), the region’s largest multicultural celebration, expects to expand booths into the Rotary Fountain area of Riverfront Park, where it will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 16.

Helping executive co-chairs April Anderson and Mareesa Henderson this year are two co-event chairs, Laura Carroll, a recent graduate of Whitworth University and April’s daughter, and Lindsey Shaw, who works at SNAP and is on the Spokane Parks and Recreation Board.

“With a grant from Better Health Together, we are purchasing 800 diverse books from Wishing Tree Books. We will

put them in them in 800 of the 1,000 bags of school supplies,” said April.

The Back-To-School Supply Drive for all types of school supplies is underway, with items due to be dropped off by Aug. 8, at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 645 S. Richard Allen Ct., and at the Fairchild Air Force Base Chapel at 300 E. Poplar Ave.

April anticipates that there will again be more than 150 vendors in the UIC Fairs: the Career and Education Fair, sponsored by CHAS; the Health Fair, sponsored by NAACP Spokane, and the Youth Fair, sponsored by Spokane Realtors. There are also Senior Resources and General Vendors.

For the Cultural Village, sponsored by Eastern Washington University, she expects 15 cultures to be represented.

There are also performers from different cultural groups on stage throughout the day.

Volunteers help with set up from noon to 6 p.m., Friday, Aug. 15, and 7 to 10 a.m., Saturday. They also take shifts during the day and assist with tear down from 3 to 6 p.m. after the event.

Unity in the Community seeks to enhance the lives of the diverse communities in the region, promoting unity, connection, education and awareness to foster equity and inclusion.

For information, call 599-8889 or visit nwunity.org.

Group plans 80th anniversary of bombings

A group organizing a Spokane observance of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan in August 1945 seek to look at the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the 21st century.

Planners from Spokane Veterans For Peace, Pax Christi Spokane and Dorothy Day Labor Forum invite others to join them—such as Spokane Reservation folks dealing with uranium mining impact, Marshallese who experience health effects explosions in the Pacific and other interested groups.

Spokane’s main commemoration will be on Saturday, Aug. 9, the anniversary of the attack on Nagasaki. The time and location will be set at a meeting at 1 p.m., Tuesday, June 10.

In recent years, commemora-

tion events were at Spokane River sites that may not accommodate this year’s ceremony, commented a spokesperson for Veterans For Peace.

Mary Naber, who has visited Hiroshima several times, is coordinating activities before Aug. 9. She is arranging for visitors connected to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and survivors to speak.

On July 28, Fumiaki Tosu, founder of an intentional community addressing social and climate issues, will be in Spokane to launch his “Fierce Nonviolence Pilgrimage of the Northwest.” Acknowledging the 80th anniversary, the pilgrimage will focus on people and places impacted by the nuclear arsenal.

The storytellers and teachers include Tosu’s father, Norimitsu,

who survived the bombing of Hiroshima as a small child.

In early August, Jim Thomas, a member of the Pax Christi USA Nuclear Disarmament Working Group, will be in Spokane to promote *Atomic Pilgrim*, a memoir on his experience with the Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage in 1982 and 1983.

Jim was a Spokane resident when he walked from Washington to West Bank, Palestinian Occupied Territories. He later worked in the Spokane Diocese peace and justice ministries. He has visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki twice, most recently with two archbishops in 2023.

Mary invites more community input in planning for August.

For information, email vfp-35spokane@riseup.net.

Church hosts concert with touring duo

Northgate Revival, a national touring duo, will be in concert at 7 p.m., Wednesday, June 11, at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2511 S. Pines in Spokane Valley.

Led by Luke Yates and Dillon Campbell, Northgate Revival seeks to inspire through worship nights to awaken hearts and unite communities. The group invites people to encounter God and carry revival into their lives, said Ed Backell, pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran.

For 25 years, Ed led national touring youth ministries fin Oregon, Nebraska and Washington. He created teen performance groups to help students use their talents to explore and share their faith as they traveled.

He said Holy Trinity Lutheran, a member of the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Congregations in Mission with

Christ, has almost doubled in size since he came in September.

“Our congregation reaches out into our community,” he said. “It might not be possible to change the whole world, but we can make a difference in our neighborhood.”

Ed said they minister to the community by serving at Union Gospel Mission, hosting recov-

ery groups in their building and doing food drives for the Spokane Valley Partners food bank.

The Northgate Revival concert connects to the church’s understanding of ministry in walking together to encourage each other in the next steps of faith, said Ed.

For information, call 926-7966, email office@holylutheranlmc.org or visit holylutheranlmc.org.

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# Caj Matheson explains intricacies of Lake Coeur d’Alene’s health

*Continued from page 1*

“The settlement funds for clean-up are significantly more and have been wisely invested, so they could be spread over many years. Those funds are already in accounts and not subject to federal freezes,” Caj said, adding that these remediation settlement funds went to the EPA to manage through the Coeur d’Alene Custodial Work Trust.

“**Federal cuts will still have** an impact, especially when it comes to administrative support at the regional level. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, for example, is facing 45 percent cuts, and they are responsible for supporting the tribe’s management of land, forests, fires and fields,” he clarified.

“Unfortunately, Coeur d’Alene Lake was not included in the EPA Superfund Site, because of significant public controversy,” he explained.

While the 2001 Supreme Court decision confirmed tribal ownership of the southern third of the lake, Caj said the entire lake is co-managed with the State of Idaho outside the Superfund Authority. This means the lake, although highly contaminated, does not have access to remediation funds.

“The lake is an interconnected system, so we pool funds to protect it,” he said. “Our job includes remediation, planting trees like willows along streams and restoring the channels to raise the water table in key tributaries.”

**One project was** for the Tribe and state to do an inventory of where nutrients enter the lake.

“The more nutrient loading there is, the more algae grow. As algae die, they sink to the bottom, which is covered by the lead, zinc, cadmium and other mining waste. When the dying algae suck up the oxygen at the bottom, a chemical process then can cause the heavy metals to be released into the water column,” Caj explained.

In 2018, certain lake health indicators reached a triggering point that had been identified in the lake management plan, he continued. The agreement in the plan was to take an alternate course of action.

The tribe pushed the EPA and state to do something different, but they did not reach an agreement. As a result, the tribe withdrew from the Lake Management Plan in 2019.

“It didn’t have any teeth, and we needed something different,” said Caj, noting that eventually they agreed on a review by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

“**Unfortunately, the review** fell short of the Tribe’s expectations. Some of the data in the report was used incorrectly and didn’t account for certain nuances, so the analysis was misleading,” Caj said, noting that the southern part of the lake is four to five shallow lakes that are hot and have a proclivity for algae.

The NAS report identified data gaps that needed to be filled, but the Tribe wanted something to be done in the meantime that would prevent a catastrophe, he said.

At this time, Idaho Governor Brad Little pledged \$33 million for nutrient-loading projects.

“Governor Little deserves credit for this effort,” said Caj. “We have a long way to go, but this is a good start.”

“**As cleanup reduces** the heavy metal contamination flowing down the Coeur d’Alene River, there is also less zinc. Its presence suppresses the harmful algae blooms. The less zinc we have, the more algae the lake will produce, resulting in less oxygen at the bottom. What is scary is that this relation seems to change at an exponential rate, meaning by the time we see it coming, we will not likely be able to stop it,” he said. “We know it will happen but cannot predict when the nutrients will create more algae blooms that will die, float to the bottom, deplete the oxygen and release the metals into the water.”

Most contamination now comes from the riverbanks, he observed.

Caj had hoped the National Academy of Science would say the lake was in peril. When they instead said it was cleaner because fewer contaminants were flowing into it, he challenged that as a mixed message.

**Over his years growing up** on the reservation, Caj’s inter-

est and skills in addressing the Tribe’s natural resources issues emerged. Now this work is also part of his spiritual journey.

He attended the Coeur d’Alene Tribal School at DeSmet, graduated from Plummer-Worley High School in 1992 and began studies in business and marketing that year at the University of Idaho (UI). As “a nontraditional student,” he worked in local smoke shops, sold fireworks, and bought and sold houses while studying.

Caj started working with the Tribe’s Department of Natural Resources in 2012 and graduated from the UI in 2014.

By then, his spiritual life shifted.

**In his early years,** he had rejected Christianity because churches’ different beliefs prevented people from working together locally and because of what some Christians did to Native people in the name of Jesus.

“I identified as a Native person and explored Native roots and traditions,” he said. “I did that until my mother wanted our family to read the Bible with her. Then I found that my ideas about Christianity were not from the Bible. Jesus taught about the impact of anger, sin and lust on

our hearts. Jesus said to love neighbors and enemies.

“Christianity is not about words or lighting candles, but is about what is happening in our hearts,” he said. “We need room to allow for differences and people being on different walks.”

**Caj began doing** Christian ministry—leading Bible studies and a youth group, counseling people, training leaders and teaching emotional and spiritual applications. While he did that, his wife, Kim, worked, teaching Coeur d’Alene language and culture. She now works in natural resources.

After meditating and praying about what God wanted him to do, Caj decided to look for a job to help support their family.

“I began applying to myself what I urged others to do. We helped people pay their rent or electricity bills, but the same people needed help over and over. Rather than giving funds, we gave opportunities to earn money,” he said.

“**We helped people change** attitudes, learn how to keep jobs we helped them find, and not to quit if they felt a supervisor treated them unfairly,” he added.

“I decided to see if the Tribe had a job in marketing and busi-

ness. There was an opening for a communication specialist for natural resources restoration. I applied and was hired to communicate among the four entities,” Caj said.

Knowing cultural stories related to natural resources, he moved to a cultural management position and then became director eight years ago.

Caj still leads a prayer group but now primarily sees his spiritual journey in his work.

“**I see how God relates** to us in our personal struggles,” he said. “I see the good people who support me in my journey as God opening doors. My job is to trust God. I find God relevant in every facet of what I do.

“I believe God created the ecosystem and us as human partners. We are to love and not hurt one another or creation,” he said.

“We are not just here to restore natural resources, like restoring a house as a museum where no one lives, but to restore natural resources so people can interact with, use and enjoy them,” he said. “We want to restore the salmon so we can fish and eat the fish.”

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Analessa Mason



# Seven groups collaborate to strengthen local response for refugees

In response to the executive order that suspended the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP), Manzanita House, Thrive International, Global Neighborhood, Feast World Kitchen, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Refugee and Immigrant Connection Spokane (RICS) and World Relief Spokane joined together to form the Eastern Washington Refugee Coalition (EWRC).

They stand together to support World Relief and IRC in their continued efforts to serve refugee families in the community.

Pat Castaneda, co-founder and director of Manzanita House, and Mark Finney, executive director of Thrive International, shared recently about the coalition and the work of their agencies.

**For quite a while**, Pat wanted to convene organizations working with immigrants and refugees. She began to invite groups last year to form a coalition to have a unified voice for immigration and refugee issues in the country, state and Spokane.

“I believed we could be stronger together,” she said.

Early this year, the U.S. resettlement process closed.

“We wrote letters to officials and asked our constituents to do the same,” Pat shared. “We raised funds to help our immigrant and refugee clients. We discussed better ways to support immigrants and refugees who are here. We let our clients know they are not alone.”

“Each organization offers niche services. Together, we are stronger and can do the services we can’t do alone, so we can provide the wrap-around services,” Pat explained.

For example, Manzanita House is the largest nonprofit immigrant legal aid team in Spokane County, offering affordable and pro bono immigration legal support and services.

**“We saw a rise** in hostile policies to refugees when refugee resettlement ended in January,” said Mark Finney, executive director of Thrive International. “That affects each organization in different ways.”

“The executive order suspending the USRAP meant that World Relief and IRC in Spokane had to let go of essential staff members,” Pat said. For example, World Relief let 15 staff go but still has 50 staff working with classes and services.

EWRC groups have had to adjust their service models with the decrease in refugees arriving in Spokane, especially given that in 2024, Spokane received the highest number of refugees, 1,010, in its history, said Margaret Hinson of IRC.

**“At Thrive**, we serve a broad population by providing housing in the Thrive Building on 4th and Cowley in Spokane. First, we set-



Christi Armstrong of World Relief, Margaret Hinson of IRC, Emily Ramirez of Global Neighborhood, Ross Carper and Maisa Abudayha of Feast, Pat Castaneda of Manzanita House and Kathryn Garras of RICS meet at Feast. Mark Finney of Thrive is not pictured.

tled those on Temporary Protective Status (TPS) from Ukraine, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America,” Mark explained.

“Previously we had a waiting list, but now we have some rooms open. Families still move out after six to eight months,” Mark said.

A federal subcontract with Episcopal Migration Ministries was canceled and Thrive lost funds for three part-time people, but fundraising helped them keep these employees.

“We have a staff of 40 in Spokane and Tacoma, where we recently opened a former motel and house 93 families,” he said.

**Manzanita House** lost \$152,000 for legal support for unaccompanied minors.

Pat said the community has had an increasing need for immigrant legal aid and Know Your Rights education. They also offer a free naturalization citizenship class.

The mission of Manzanita House, which started in 2021, is “rooted in welcome.” In 2024, they served more than 1,400 immigrants and refugees from more than 100 countries. The first quarter of 2025 saw an increase in needs from last year, said Pat.

“When we opened our doors for intakes, people line up at 4 a.m. for legal help related to removal or deportation in immigration court,” she said. “Our immigrant legal aid is pro bono as well as fee based. To lower barriers to access for immigrants, we help cover fees for our four attorneys and two Department of Justice accredited representatives.

**In March**, the EWRC came together to host the “World’s Most Expensive Bake Sale,” with an offer of a match of \$15,000 from the Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund and \$10,000 from First Presbyterian Church of Spokane.

Those matches continue with the goal to raise \$10,000 more. Donations can be made at [tinyurl.com/587xk44j](https://tinyurl.com/587xk44j).

Mark said that 20 percent of funds the EWRC receives are for education and advocacy in the community, and 80 percent goes to help each agency.

The EWRC also engages with media to raise awareness about the changing situation for immigrants and refugees.

**Mark reported** that some people in the community have been arrested by ICE and sent to ICE jails. Few of those arrested have criminal records, but they are treated as criminals, he said.

An African Swahili-speaking pastor who leads a church was taken to Tacoma for 45 days, Mark reported. The community raised \$10,000 and hired an attorney to secure his release.

There are also many disruptions in the Latino community, he said.

“We meet monthly to support each other and share experiences of our groups and how the situation is changing,” he said.

Because of efforts to rescind TPS, Mark said, many “are scared even though they have a right to be here.”

He said that offers of \$1,000 for people to self-deport show how little the administration understands the financial impacts and what assets immigrants bring to the country.

“Immigrants have a positive impact on the economy,” Mark affirmed.

“The U.S. has a declining birth rate, so it’s important to bring people to fill jobs. Health care services rely on people coming to fill job vacancies, pay taxes and start home health care services,” he said.

Mark counters misconceptions that immigrants take jobs from U.S. citizens and that there are a limited number of jobs and resources.

“It’s based on the idea that every American wants a job working in manufacturing,” he said. “Those jobs have been outsourced for 40 years. Few Americans want manufacturing jobs. Employers report that it is hard to find Americans to fill or stay in repetitive jobs. Most want meaningful careers.”

In contrast, most immigrants want stable incomes to support their families.

**“The reality** is that the economy grows bigger and is healthier with an influx of new participants,” he said.

“If there are fewer immigrants, there are fewer people to work in agriculture, restaurants and grocery stores, hospital and home health care, and construction,” Mark said.

“Immigrants create jobs and provide diverse food by starting restaurants and grocery stores,” he continued. “With fewer agricultural workers, food prices will rise.”

**Pat, who immigrated** from Venezuela in 2001, first to Florida and then North Carolina before coming to Spokane, also said immigrants and refugees add value, especially once they gain legal status and feel safer.

“Immigrants bring knowledge to communities,” she said. “Many Ukrainians are doctors and nurses filling vacancies in the health industry. Many Afghans are engineers and doctors. We help support them to become legal so they can strengthen our country.”

For example, Pat, who was a community organizer in Venezuela, now puts those skills into play here.

“I want to support others to be good U.S. citizens,” she said. “When people have support, they flourish and become assets to the community and economy, offering innovation, teaching resilience and bringing their cultures to enrich us.”

**For information**, contact the EWRC participants: for Pat, call 309-8404 or email [pcastaneda@mhspokane.org](mailto:pcastaneda@mhspokane.org); for Mark, call 818-0414 or visit [thriveint.org](https://thriveint.org); for Emily Ramirez at Global Neighborhood, call 610-8701 or email [emily@globalneighborhood.org](mailto:emily@globalneighborhood.org); for Ross Carper at Feast World Kitchen, call 279-8388 or visit [feastworldkitchen.org](https://feastworldkitchen.org); for Margaret Hinson at IRC, email [margaret.hinson@rescue.org](mailto:margaret.hinson@rescue.org); for Kathryn Garras of RICS, call 209-2384, or for Christi Armstrong of World Relief, call 484-9829.

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# Visit to Taizé gave Susie, as a young woman, hope for the church

*Continued from page 1*  
lem, Honolulu and London.

Her second section, on South, summer and youth/young adulthood, connects with experiences in the British Isles, Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and the U.S. and Canadian Pacific Northwest.

For West, fall and middle adulthood, she shares about national parks, the Caribbean, Switzerland, Spain, Mexico, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Bosnia, France, the Sahara Desert and British Columbia.

In the fourth section, she explores North, winter and elderhood, telling of times in South Korea, New Zealand, Australia, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Southern France, Malta, Egypt, Jordan, Türkiye and Greece.

In each section, Susie discusses such attributes of life as roots, freedom, nurturing, peace, perseverance, solitude, commitment, understanding, forgiveness, faith, friendship, love, home, surprise, bravery, healing, meaning, bridge-building, adventure, trust, awe, tenacity and mothering.

The table of contents presents an overview and explains that she uses the Compass Rose and the Celtic Wheel to describe tools for inward and outward journeys.

In 1976, Susie graduated with degrees in religion and communication from the University of California, Santa Barbara, followed by serving as an apostolic volunteer with Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters at a Catholic girls' school in Minnesota.

From 1978 to 1980, she served with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps as a campus minister at Seattle University. In 1984, she married Mark Weller, also a Jesuit volunteer, and in 1989, they and their two children moved to Spokane, where she taught at the Community Colleges of Spokane Institute of Extended Learning program for parents of children in Head Start/ECEAP.

As one example of the content, Susie described her experiences at Taizé in Burgundy, France, where she learned the power of silence.

In the 1940s, Brother Roger Schultz began Taizé as a Christian ecumenical monastic community. First, it was a hideaway for Jews in World War II. It now includes more than 80 Catholic and Protestant monks from 30 countries.

Sixty-five reside on-site, and others serve in global missions. Three groups of Roman Catholic Sisters assist in hosting 3,000 to



Susie Weller still uses her trekking poles.

6,000 pilgrims who visit each week. Many visitors are 18 to 35.

“As a 24-year-old solo traveler in 1978, I felt fortunate to join them for a week of daily chanting, reflection and discussion,” Susie said. “With my hostel sheet sleeping sack, I slept on a mat under a massive tent with other young people. To my knowledge, I was the only American staying there that week. Although I was embarrassed that I only spoke English compared to others my age, I felt grateful that many were multilingual and could easily communicate with me.”

While traveling in Europe, she saw most traditional Christian churches as dead museums, so she was elated to join other young people who wanted to discuss their faith.

“We gathered for prayer three times a day in a plain church decorated solely with candles in front of a few icons. The walls opened up, allowing those sitting outside to participate as well. Amazingly, the chattering immediately stopped when the prayer leaders called for silence in multiple languages. Each service included a few Bible passages read in English, French and German, followed by a period of extended silence.”

The monks' simple, repetitive chants helped bridge the language barrier.

“In contrast to my typically noisy interior life, the meditative music created an atmosphere that fostered deep reflection, ampli-

fied by the communal silence.

“Singing in other languages reminded me I was meditating as part of a global village. While repeating the simple chanting phrases 10 to 15 times, my breathing slowed, and my body relaxed into a contemplative state. I felt inspired and nurtured by these communal times for contemplative prayer with other young people.”

Susie felt Taizé offered a future for Christianity in Europe, with thousands of young people taking the “spark of Taizé with them.”

Returning to Washington, she noticed several churches offered monthly Taizé-style services. Sister Joy Milos, coordinator of a two-year spiritual direction training program at Gonzaga University, from which Susie graduated in 2009, described Taizé as “an oasis of peace that takes participants inward, moves them outward and calls us to reconciliation and inclusiveness. It gives us a vision beyond

sectarianism, to come together as Catholics and Protestants.” About 40 to 60 people regularly attend Taizé services in Spokane at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John in Spokane.

There are also monthly services at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center and weekly services on Zoom through Mater Dei Ministry Institute.

Susie said Brother Roger's vision continues. The Taizé community now organizes international meetings of young adults in cities of Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas.

“The Taizé Community recently enlarged its mission to promote ecumenical dialogue to include Eastern Orthodox Christians and Muslims,” she said. “It partners with organizations, such as Near Neighbors, to unite people in religiously and ethnically diverse communities. Their theme, ‘Journeying Together,’ builds trust-based relationships to improve local communities. “Praying together in silence can strengthen our unique bond

and communion with God and others,” said Susie, inviting readers to reflect on times they felt connected to others while singing or meditating.

In her conclusion related to elderhood, Susie said she hopes her travels will inspire others to explore the world and “serve it as a global citizen.”

“We are living in challenging times. The parallels of what I witnessed in Jerusalem, Corrymeela, Amsterdam, Dachau, Dresden, Berlin, Theresienstadt, Mostar and Vienna are distressing reminders of how quickly we can forget the devastating consequences of political policies that treat others as ‘them.’ May we follow the courageous leadership of individuals who have spoken up,” she said.

“Let us build bridges to increase our compassion and respect for others, recognizing that they are a part of us that we don't yet know,” Susie concluded.

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Summer Camps 2025

Interim director applies myriad of his skills at Ross Point Camp

Since Jan. 17, Adam Gustafson has been applying his skills as an aerospace machinist, nonprofit volunteer, associate pastor and camper in his role as interim executive director of Ross Point Camp and Conference Center at Post Falls.

After graduating from Ferris High School in 2006, he began doing precision hand machining to make dies for fasteners like airplane rivets. Two years ago, after 17 years in that work, he decided to focus on ministry.

At Engage, the South Spokane church he has attended for 25 years, he has been on staff for three years in youth ministry, audio-visual and multimedia communication, construction, administration and finances.

Realizing his call to ministry five years ago, he is now in a seminary program with Kairos, which trains clergy through mentorship.

At Ross Point, where Adam



Grade-school girls join in game at Ross Point.

Photos in this section are provided by the camps.

was a camper for many years, he coordinates a staff of managers responsible for food services, guest services, maintenance, administration and resource development. When the maintenance manager was away and a pipe broke, he fixed it. When equipment broke, he used his welding skills to repair it.

Ross Point is a camp in the

summer and conference center year-round, renting to faith groups and others.

The 2025 camps begin the first week of June with Veterinary Leadership Experience.

For the next two weeks St. Joan of Arc, a Catholic program, will use Ross Point for a one-week boys' camp and a one-week girls' camp.

Alderwood, a church in Lynwood, will then rent Ross Point for two weeks of youth camps.

Next is Camp Journey, which Ross Point once operated and is now an independent nonprofit for families and children whose lives are touched by cancer.

Heritage Baptist Church in Post Falls is planning a family camp in mid-July.

After those camps that run their own programs, Ross Point staff and volunteers, from July 20 to Aug. 9, will offer two weeks of youth camps and one week of family camp for churches of Mission Northwest, with which it is affiliated. Campers and volunteers come from those churches and many different denominations, Adam said.

From Aug. 14 to 17, Ross Point hosts "Beats and Rhythms," a cardio camp for youth with heart

problems.

In late August, small groups will use the camp simultaneously for short events such as family reunions, church retreats, a women's quilting group and silent men's and women's retreats by Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Post Falls.

"Our role is to show Christ's love through hospitality to people whose theological beliefs may differ," he said.

Campers experience Christian community through spiritual development, education, social groups and recreation, like swimming, canoeing, kayaking, high ropes, climbing, softball, basketball, volleyball, mini golf, horseshoes, crafts, campfires, singing and more.

For information, call 208-773-1655, email [rp@rosspoint.org](mailto:rp@rosspoint.org) or visit [rosspoint.org](http://rosspoint.org).

Volunteer helpers are an asset for camps

N-Sid-Sen, the camp and conference center of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC), has turned to volunteers to fill the gap during a transition in its staff management leadership.

For the summer and fall, former managing director Randy Crowe and his wife, Linda, a retired UCC minister, are volunteering to manage the facility.

In March and at a June work camp, volunteers recruited by the PNC Outdoor Ministries Committee did much-needed maintenance, repairs and cleanup to the buildings and grounds to prepare it for the summer's full program of youth and family camps.



John Hubbe and Randy Crowe do some deck repairs.

"N-Sid-Sen is a sacred place for community building, training up our children and adults in the faith, and providing an oasis and missional outpost of extravagant welcome in rural Idaho," said Phil Hodson, designated conference minister of the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference.

Randy, who first went there as a camper in 1951, served as managing director 22 years, from 1990 to 2012. From 1994 to 2012, Linda was pastor of Veradale UCC. They retired in 2012.

"I'll be doing what I know best, overseeing the operation, supervising staff and providing a warm dose of hospitality," said Randy. "In doing that over the years it was incredible to see how youth and adults, in church groups and nonprofit groups have powerful,

life-changing experiences here."

N-Sid-Sen, located on the eastern shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene, also relies on volunteers to lead its summer camps as directors and cabin counselors.

This summer the kitchen will be run by a catering service and there are four college-age youth coming to do the cleanup and grounds maintenance.

The 2025 schedule includes intermediate camp and junior high camp sharing the site from July 13 to 19, and senior high camp, which is July 20 to 26, sharing the site with You and Me camp for an adult and first-to-fourth grader July 20 to 23, and Kids Camp, July 23 to 26. Family Camp is July 27 to Aug. 2, and Camp Together is Aug. 2 to 8.

In addition, every week of the summer and into the fall is full.

Randy is collaborating with Mark Boyd, managing director at Pilgrim Firs, the PNC camp at Port Orchard, to invite groups to fill the camp year-round.

"Outside groups fill the camp and pay the bills," Randy said.


N-Sid-Sen opened as a camp in 1935, so 2025 is its 90th year. Randy said he will be announcing plans for a celebration.

For information, call 208-689-3489 or visit [n-sid-sen.org](http://n-sid-sen.org).

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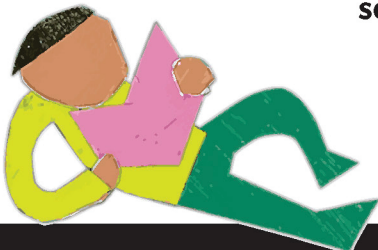
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# Lutherhaven celebrates 80th year of faith-filled summer camp fun

While the name of Camp Lutherhaven on Lake Coeur d’Alene’s Mica Bay suggests it is connected with Lutheran churches—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) branches—it also serves Christians from many denominations.

Nicole Vernengo, marketing manager, said the camp marks its 80th summer this year. It will kick off the celebration from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday, June 8, with worship, blessing bell tower renovations, thanking ministries partners and installing the camp’s summer staff.

“The event is free, but we accept donations and request reservations,” said Nicole.

Lutherhaven features four locations—Lutherhaven on the west shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene, and Shoshone Creek Ranch, Shoshone Mountain Retreat and McPherson Meadows on the western edge of the Bitterroot Mountains—that welcome more than 11,500 guests each year.



Camper takes a leap of faith.

This year, the five-day summer sessions at Lutherhaven begin on June 22 and continue to Aug. 15, with older campers at a session at Shoshone Mountain Retreat. There are also weekend camps in July and August.

The theme for this year, “The Story,” is based on Heb. 12:2: “looking unto Jesus, as the au-

thor and finisher of our faith.”

Among the 2025 offerings is the Champ Camp from June 22 to 25, a chance for children and youth with disabilities to experience camp.

There are several ranch camps at the Shoshone Creek Ranch that include daily horse time and other activities.

A new SALT Team (Service, Adventure, Leadership Team) for 10th to 12th graders is also at the Shoshone Creek Ranch.

A weekend Wild Women’s Retreat at Shoshone Mountain Retreat from July 1 to 7 and 18 to 20 includes a day of river rafting, horseback riding and climbing the natural rock wall.

After the summer season ends, there are two events to entice older folks who like the outdoors. They include a Fall Golden Ages Day Out on Sept. 23, a one-day retreat for retirees, seniors and older adults, and the new Creator’s Workshop from Oct. 24 to 26 at North Garden Lodge on Lake Coeur d’Alene, a weekend retreat to experience the Creator through the Word, creative outlets, community and creation.

As an example of the experience of Camp Lutherhaven, Nicole shared the story of a young woman named Lola, who spent three months in 2024 at Lutherhaven.

“Who knew it was just what I needed. I had thought it was

going to be a long vacation,” she said.

“The people I met, and their faith, were truly inspiring. They taught me to love church and the Word. They taught me to love communion, to love worship and to love everyone unconditionally, no matter what. They taught me I’m here for a reason,” Lola continued.

“I already knew and believed all of that, but they helped me understand faith in a new way,” she summarized.

During staff training, she went to Shoshone Mountain Retreat, where she felt she could “jump up and touch the clouds. It was the first time I had ever really felt God. God was literally moving me all summer,” she said. “The camp helped me decide to devote the rest of my life to God.

“I can’t imagine where I would be today if I had never said yes to going to camp. God helped me step out of my comfort zone. I hope others do, too,” Lola concluded.

For information, call 208-667-3459 or visit [lutherhaven.com](http://lutherhaven.com).

# ‘Called and Compelled by Love’ is 2025 theme for Camp Cross

In his second year as the canon for camp, youth and family ministry with the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, Alex Flannagan looks forward to another season of providing experiences that help youth and adults connect their daily lives to the Jesus of the Gospel and faith in God.

The 2025 theme at Camp Cross is “Called and Compelled by Love.” Last year’s theme was “Speak Lord, We Are Listening.”

“This year’s theme calls us to action, building on what we heard when we listened,” Alex explained.

Just as in previous years, the camp season started with Labor of Love on May 16, a week-long session to clean up the camp and prepare it for the summer. This is followed by Leaders in Training for the camp counselors, staff and resource teams who work during the rest of the sessions, which end on Sept. 21 with the Young Adult Camp.

Alex is looking forward to the second offering of the Queer Camp Session and groundbreaking for new construction, which will happen in July.

“Last year, we offered the Queer Camp session for the first time. It provided a discerning time for about 25 participants to experience God’s love in the Episcopalian family, coupled with more traditional outdoor

camping. In feedback, we heard initial skepticism over whether the group would walk the talk or just check off a box. At the end, the group affirmed the experience and said they would help promote it,” he said.

In July, Alex said they plan to break ground for a new facility at the camp, which will enable more older folks to participate in camp programs.

“Our fundraising with ‘Woven as One’ reached its goal. The new facility will provide 16 additional rooms with private bathrooms. We are excited to be able to welcome some who remember their experiences as young people here at camp but can no longer enjoy the same facilities as when they were children,” he commented.

Alex outlined the schedule for sessions at Camp Cross for this summer.



Camp Cross has a serene setting on Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Labor of Love is May 16 to 21; Leaders in Training, June 22 is 25; a Women’s and Men’s Weekend Retreat, is June 27 to 29, and Days at the Lake, July 3 to 6.

July 8 to 11 is Mini Camp; July 20 to 25, Senior High Camp; July 27 to Aug. 1, Arts and Music Camp; Aug. 4 to 8, Intermediate Camp; Aug. 11 to 16, Mid-High Camp; Aug. 28 to Sept. 1, Labor Day Family Camp; Sept. 4 to 7, Queer Camp, and Sept 18 to 21, Young Adult Camp.

For information, call 624-3151 or visit [campcross.org](http://campcross.org).



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Summer Camps 2025

Camp Spalding attendance has grown to record levels since COVID

Camp Spalding, founded by area Presbyterian churches in 1957 on Davis Lake, “remains faithful to its founders’ dream to be a place for people of all ages to hear the Gospel and grow in relationship with Jesus,” said Andy Sonneland, executive director.

This year, it begins its summer camping programs with an over-night camp experience on June 13 to 14 called Mom/Dad and Me for one parent and one child. Next are sessions through Aug. 13 for various age groups, plus a family camp from Aug. 13 to 17.

The camp has seen physical, program and management improvements over the years.

“This summer we will complete our Waterfront Expansion and Enhancement Project. We



Campfires are a time for conversations.

started raising the money pre-COVID,” Andy said. “It will significantly increase the usable square footage at the beach to accommodate our growing number of campers.”

The \$1 million project includes new gathering areas with an expanded sandy beach and a 5,000-square-foot cascading patio with a fire pit. That gives campers space beyond the existing beach

and docks. It includes restrooms and a covered snack bar in the beach pavilion. It also replaces the current boathouse with a larger, more functional one.

Camp Spalding has been experiencing record attendance since COVID.

“We’ve had a record attendance of about 1,700 campers a year since then,” Andy said. “Interestingly, our two high school camps—182 campers per week—are our most in-demand weeks. All spots sold out for high school girls within 24 hours of registration opening, and both camps were entirely full within 10 days.”

Camp Spalding still has room in some of the elementary camp sessions.

Andy believes the teen camps

are popular because “the life-giving presence of Jesus at camp draws them back.”

“The Gospel is still Good News,” he said.

The camp is staffed by 42 college and recent college graduates who have been hired to work at the camp. Seventeen come from outside the Pacific Northwest.

Andy asserts that word of mouth from past staff is their best recruiting tool.

The mission is for campers to come to know and grow in a relationship with Jesus, he said.

The biggest goal is to build additional cabins to accommodate their waiting lists and to replace older cabins.

For information, visit [www.campspalding.org](http://www.campspalding.org).

Camps’ community building creates lifelong friendships for campers

Northern Lights Christian Church Disciples of Christ (DOC) camps will use a curriculum called “The Gospel’s Greatest Hits,” because camp is an introduction to the Christian faith.

“Many youth who come to camps do not know the basics about Christian faith, so we offer an introduction to it through songs, music, crafts, science and more, as well as time outside in community,” said Paul Allen, regional minister of the Northern Lights Region of the DOC.

The two camps were previously owned by the DOC Northern Lights Region but are now separate nonprofits run by boards that provide staffing and maintenance. The Region’s Faith and Formation Committee organizes the camp programs and partners them now.

“That’s a pattern similar to other Disciples of Christ regions across the country,” Paul said.

The camps they have ties to are Grinwood near Lacey in Western Washington, run by Kate Ayers, executive director, and Cane Ridge West near Lincoln in Western Montana, overseen by Ruth Lindabury, caretaker.



Singing is a key to camp spirit and cohesion.

Beyond youth camps, Paul said every weekend of 2025 the camps are filled with church retreats and retreats by other organizations. The region is also planning some region-wide retreats—a pastors and partners retreat, a prayer retreat and a women’s retreat.

“We rely on pastors and lay people who come as volunteers to direct camps,” said Paul.

People who want to have retreats call to schedule their times. Groups come year-round from

around the region and beyond.

“Camp supports the growth of young people. I have been working at camps and retreat centers since I was 14, continuing as a counselor and chaplain,” he said.

The value of camps is that they focus on faith for young people who may not find their needs met in church worship services geared to meet the needs of large groups.

“For many, camp is the first experience away from home and the first experience in nature. It

is also a time for counselors to build relationships with campers,” Paul observed, telling of his own experiences with friendships from camps. “Community building is wonderful.”

Matthew Goodrich, who is pastor at First Christian Church in Missoula, Mont., is chair of the Faith Formation Committee, which plans the camps.

For information, call 406-702-9386 or email [minister@fccmissoula.org](mailto:minister@fccmissoula.org).

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# Camp Gifford draws youth who generally don't have access to camp

For more than 100 years, Camp Gifford on Deer Lake has provided an outdoor experience for youth who generally don't have access to camp, according to Captain David Cain of the Salvation Army.

This summer, four camp experiences are offered: 1) five five-day sessions of Discovery Camp from June 23 to Aug. 1 for ages 7 to 12; 2) four five-day sessions of Wilderness Camp from June 23 to July 27 for ages 13 to 17, and 3) two weeks of Sailing Camp for ages 13 to 17.

"I am excited we can offer the sailing camp this summer because we didn't have the leadership for it last year," said David. "It provides an opportunity for young kids to engage in adventure and develop skills with small boats, boat safety and sailing."

The Salvation Army camp



Sailing develops skills and is an adventure for campers.

experience aims to foster six values: 1) spiritual development to grow in faith and deepen their relationship with Jesus, 2) friendships, 3) discovering their potential, 4) social and emotional growth, 5) skill development through adventure and 6) being in a safe, secure environment.

One way they facilitate values is by requiring campers to leave electronics at home.

"This gives them the opportunity to learn to talk to each other and try new activities," said David.

Because their purpose is to provide camping experiences to

youth who aren't usually able to have them, "no one is turned away because of their circumstances," David explained.

The at-risk youth who come include those who are often don't go to camps because they live in poverty or are in foster care.

"We ask for a registration fee for all campers but offer scholarships as needed," he said.

Camp Gifford can accommodate about 1,000 kids every summer.

"Our numbers are still down from pre-COVID, but each year since then, they have gone up a little," David said. "I am not sure why, but I think this generation of parents weren't as regular about sending kids to camps

and, during COVID, got used to not planning for summer camp."

Camp Gifford invites older youth to participate in leadership training to become counselors. Some work in the kitchen or do maintenance.

Camp Gifford also partners with Camp America, which provides international students as counselors.

"Last year, we had students from Nigeria, England and Ireland," explained David. "Our campers were amazed by the different English accents and their different life experiences. This is just another way that Camp Gifford enriches our campers' lives."

For information, call 233-2511 or visit [campgifford.com](http://campgifford.com).

## I AM Alliance runs six-week day camps

I AM Alliance will run a six-week day program, Blue Sky Kids Camp with immersive, nature-based experiences to nurture creativity, confidence and connection from June 23 to August 8, at Harmony Woods Retreat Center.

Blue Sky Kids Camps focus on values of sovereignty, integrity, truth and love with weekly themed experiences from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, with family gatherings Friday afternoons.

Each week highlights a value: • "I AM Capable" offers hands-on projects and rock climbing, July 7 to 11 and July 28 to Aug. 1.

• "IAM Creative inspires artistic skills for self-expression, July 14 to 18 and Aug. 4 to 8.

• "I AM Connected" deepens bonds with nature in exploration, hiking and outdoor activities, June 23 to 27 and July 21 to 25.

"We believe in creating a space where children can explore their full potential, engage with the natural world and build meaningful connections," said Alyssa Agee, co-owner of I AM Alliance. "Blue Sky Kids Camp

is designed to inspire confidence, self-expression and a sense of wonder in children."

I AM Alliance focuses on spiritual development and ho-

listic wellness through retreats, camps, coaching and events.

For information, call 863-4150 or visit [iamalliance.me/blueskycamps](http://iamalliance.me/blueskycamps).



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## START *HERE*, TRANSFER *THERE*

Liam Paddack's story as a transfer student wasn't traditional, but it is one with results that most kids dream of. The left-handed pitcher first enrolled at Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC) in 2022 with plans to transfer to a university where he could continue his career in athletics. Being a student athlete at SFCC allowed him to create a solid routine and figure out what he really wanted out of his future.

With his associate degree, Paddack transferred to Gonzaga University in 2024 where he continued his education and decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in Sports Management.



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Summer Camps 2025

Two Methodist camps find day camps are popular for local children

The four United Methodist camps and retreat centers in the region show an increase in popularity, rebounding since the height of the COVID pandemic, said Alan Rogstad, executive director of camping and retreat ministries for the Pacific Northwest Conference.

At Twinlow on Spirit Lake near Rathdrum in North Idaho and at Lazy F Ranch in the Cascade Mountains, the day camps, which started during COVID, are full and have waiting lists.

“COVID restrictions made it hard to do overnight camps, so we did day camps,” Alan said. “It turned out to be something parents were looking for and wanted to continue.”

The onsite youth camps at those two locations—and at Camp Indianola in Western Washington and Ocean Park Camp and Retreat Center in Southwestern Washington—are rebounding but not yet back to



Water tower lends added adventure to swimming at Twinlow.

2019 levels, said Alan.

For the day camps, first-to-sixth-grade kids are on site for the morning, lunch and afternoon. They use the camps at the same time onsite campers do but have separate activities. Sometimes they may share the dining hall or beach.

Day campers sign up for at least one week, but many come for multiple weeks. Most live

in communities near the camps. About 60 come to Lazy F and up to 80 come to Twinlow.

COVID also led to Twinlow stopping the mission camps for youth coming to do local community service projects.

“We are still regrouping and deciding what camps we will do. It has been a chance to evaluate what works,” he said, noting that most summer camps are first

grade through high school, with a few intergenerational and family camps described on the website.

The theme for the summer is “Another Way,” using a curriculum prepared by the national United Methodist camp network to offer an overview of how Christian life leads people to make decisions that take them down another path, he explained.

Alan pointed out the importance of volunteers to the camps. This year many stepped up to help catch up with some deferred maintenance. Volunteers include pastors coming for a week to lead camps, counselors, resource people to teach the curriculum and food services workers. They now include volunteer therapy counselors and nurses, who come for a week.

There are more volunteers at Ocean Park and Indianola, which have fewer summer campers, than at Lazy F and Twinlow, where most of the summer youth camps

are held. The latter two camps hire 50 college-aged paid staff as cabin leaders, activity leaders, kitchen and maintenance staff.

The four sites are busy all year, open for retreats for 12-step programs, quilting, crafting and other groups, as well as church and community group retreats.

One area the UMC camps see for growth is to offer their facilities for outdoor schools for local school districts, usually fifth and sixth graders coming for overnight environmental education camps for several days in the spring and fall. State funding for those experiences was cut this year, so a coalition of camps and retreat centers are advocating for the Washington State Legislature to restore it.

“Seattle public schools did that for years when I was growing up. We went to a YMCA weekend program,” Alan said.

For information, call 206-870-6807 visit pnwcamps.org.

Camp manager is third generation of family in leadership at Camp Sanders

Christy Gallogly, the executive director and camp manager of Camp Sanders near Tensed, Idaho, has a message for those interested in using the camp.

“Camp Sanders is active and open for business in spite of an arson fire that destroyed the old dining hall and gathering space last October,” she said. “A new dining hall is ready.”

While the dining hall was being built, the kitchen in the Lakeside Chapel building was upgraded to a commercial kitchen.

This summer Camp Sanders will celebrate 90 years of providing camping experiences in the Palouse region of northern Idaho.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, July 5, during Homecoming at Family Camp, the camp will commemorate its 90 years and celebrate the rededication of the Tabernacle.

Christy explained that the historical, sacred Tabernacle had started leaning to the south and needed to be rebuilt on a firm foundation. Last year, the Sanders Christian Camp Board decided to rebuild this building, which most churches, youth camps and groups prefer to use for large gatherings. After raising the funds, the renovation has been completed.

“The building has always been a special place, and so many want to have their events there. It is a barn-style building, but we can really feel the spirit there,” Christy explained.

The celebration, which is open



Evening group gathers for conversation at Camp Sanders.

to the public, includes a meal, so reservations are needed.

Along with the offerings Camp Sanders sponsors through the summer, events planned by other groups at the camp allow it to fulfill its mission to provide a wholesome environment and affordable facilities for persons young and old to grow physically, emotionally and spiritually.

In addition to the Man Camp and Women’s Retreat held in April, Camp Sanders-sponsored events this summer include Family Camp, with the theme “Gathered Again” from July 3 to 6; Kid’s Camp, for children who have completed grades 4 to 6 from July 7 to 10, and 55+

Adult Christian Retreat from Sept. 16 to 18.

Sanders Christian Camp, Inc., also provides a venue for ministry camps, educational and training camps, retreats, family reunions, weddings, business

and leadership retreats.

As someone who attended summer camp there, whose grandfather opened the camp and whose father, Raymond Bates, served as the chair of the Friends of Camp Sanders, Christy looks

forward to the camp continuing to provide an outdoor experience for youth and adults of all denominations.

For information, call 208-892-4842 or visit campsanders@gmail.com.



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# Thrive International builds housing with public library

Thrive International, in partnership with Washington Trust Bank and the Spokane Public Library, broke ground May 22 for a new housing project in Spokane’s Hillyard neighborhood at 6980 N. Nevada St.

Spokane Mayor Lisa Brown called this \$10.5 million development a new model for affordable housing.

It features 1) 48 units with 51 percent for workforce and refugee housing, 2) financing that blends private social impact funding, commercial financing and public-private partnerships, 3) a 1,000+ square foot community center, geodesic dome, 24-7 library kiosk and community garden to be known as

“B,” which will be operated in partnership with Spokane Public Library, and 4) wraparound services to support refugee integration and community building.

“This is more than new housing. It’s a new approach to creating inclusive communities where everyone can thrive,” said Mark Finney, executive director of Thrive International.

“By combining housing with supportive services and community space, we’re building a foundation for integration and connection,” he added.

Collaborative funding includes a land contribution from the Spokane Public Library, investment from Washington Trust and private social impact capital.

“We are proud to contribute this land as part of our evolving mission,” said Andrew Chanse, executive director of Spokane Public Library.

“B at Thrive International apartments exemplifies our commitment to community engagement beyond traditional library services. It’s about creating a campus where people can build meaningful connections and a sense of belonging,” he explained.

The ceremony was also an opportunity for Thrive International to launch the \$10.5 capital campaign to raise funding needed for this affordable housing project.

“It marks the start of construc-

tion and an invitation for our community to invest in this housing solution and support Thrive’s operations,” said Connie Stark, director of philanthropy for Thrive and capital campaign lead.

The campaign will run through Spring 2026.

For information, call 688-4056 or email [connie@thriveinternational.org](mailto:connie@thriveinternational.org).

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# Children release baby salmon they grew from eggs into Hangman Creek

Children from the Plummer-Worley School District and from the Coeur d'Alene School in DeSmet gathered Wednesday, May 7, at the Coeur d'Alene Aviary near Hangman Creek south of Tensed for s'ya'(psqi'n'm ulsmitch). They released 400 juvenile Chinook salmon they had helped raise from eggs into Hangman Creek to swim to the ocean.

"We want to protect the earth and protect the salmon. Sometimes we do not know what to pray, so we do it through song to express the love in our hearts," said Caj Matheson, executive director of Natural Resources for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, in a ceremony for the event.



Aaron Penney gives baby salmon to children to release in creek.

He then introduced the Rose Creek Singers, who sang. Frank SiJohn then said he learned from his elders how to live in love. In Lovell Valley, where he grew up, his father told

of going in 1913 to see salmon in the main streams of Hangman Creek on the reservation. "That doesn't happen now, but we are releasing these small salmon and hope they will try to get back. We dream that in the future you kids will see the salmon come back," he said. "I am proud of what we have accomplished and will accomplish." He invited about 100 children to have fun, knowing that when they become the leaders and elders, they will continue to protect the land and the salmon. Elder Heme James told of his father's and uncles' stories of seeing salmon in Hangman Creek. "Listen today, because when

we are gone, some of you will push forth. The battle continues. We are trying to make the world better so, one day, fish will come here, and you will be here to catch them," he said. "The land, the trees and we scream. As we do that, we remember and yearn. Listen and take to heart what you hear so you can be part of the healing." Aaron Penney, who works at the hatchery, gave the salmon to the children in clear plastic bowls and cups. This spring the hatchery released 5,000 baby salmon around the region. For information, call 208-686-1800 or visit [cdatribe-nsn.gov/nr](http://cdatribe-nsn.gov/nr).

## Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners shares impact of funding cuts

Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP) is concerned about a proposed federal budget would eliminate the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, a funding source for low- and moderate-income households. Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), CDBG funding is a backbone of SNAP's work to support housing stability, emergency home repairs, small business development and economic mobility. In 2024, SNAP used CDBG dollars to do home repairs for 276 Spokane families. "This funding supports everything from keeping seniors safely housed to helping local entrepreneurs start small businesses. Without it, we risk unraveling a safety net that thousands of people depend on," said Julie Honekamp, CEO of SNAP. Home repairs done by Spokane contractors support local jobs and keep dollars circulating locally. CDBG helps SNAP provide

one-on-one financial and housing counseling and small business coaching with SNAP Financial Access, reaching people left out of traditional financial systems. If Congress passes the proposed budget without CDBG funding, low-income homeowners may be left in unsafe housing; more families could face homelessness; seniors and people with disabilities may lose access to financial counseling; entrepreneurs may be cut from essential tools and capital, and neighborhood improvement projects may be canceled or delayed. SNAP could also lose matching funds from other federal and state sources. "This is not just a funding cut—it's a blow to Spokane's

stability and economic health," Julie said. "CDBG gives us tools to meet people where they are." SNAP urges people to contact elected officials and for those benefiting from CDBG programs to share their stories with media to help protect this resource. For information, call 456-7627 x 5335 or email [henrich@snapwa.org](mailto:henrich@snapwa.org).

## NW Fair Housing seeks action

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance (NWFHA) faces funding losses and staff reductions. Unless funding is received by June 15, it will cut its six employees' hours by 50 percent, with full layoffs to follow within months. U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grants are 90 percent of NWFHA's annual budget. Its services have been free for 30 years under HUD funding. Two HUD grant agreements end on June 14, and HUD has indefinitely delayed a second-year agreement on already awarded three-year grants and action on three pending grant applications. Reducing staff hours will limit NWFHA's ability to support thousands of people in Washington who rely on its housing advocacy and counseling to access and stay in housing. "Our team assists people—mostly those below the poverty line—with pre-eviction advocacy and solutions to housing discrimination, inaccessibility, unaffordability, instability and unsafe/unhealthy conditions," said executive director Marley Hochendorner. She urges people to contact

HUD and elected officials to urge several actions. • HUD needs to award grants for fiscal year 2024 Fair Housing Initiative Program (FHIP) applications submitted in November. NWFHA has three pending applications that would have been awarded by now. HUD has not communicated about them. • HUD needs to agree to the second year of NWFHA's three-year FY23 PEI grant award. The first-year agreement ends June 14. It needs an agreement for year two to begin June 15. Congress appropriated the funds. • Congress did not include HUD FHIP grant funding in its FY26 budget. The Senate needs to add back FHIP grant funding. FHIP grants enable agencies around the U.S. to do fair housing advocacy, investigation, outreach and education under the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, disability, familial status and sex, and which, from 2020 until February 2025, was enforced by HUD to include sexual orientation and gender identity. For information, call 325-2665 or visit [nwfairhouse.org](http://nwfairhouse.org).



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# Pope Leo XIV fosters a spirit of bridgebuilding, dialogue, justice

Just as the world mourned the loss of Pope Francis—the kind of leader we so desperately need today—the May 8 announcement of “Habemus Papam” marked the election of Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV, who appears to share many of the same qualities that could also make him the kind of leader our world needs now.

I am a Catholic Sister who for more than 50 years has been motivated by a relationship with the Jesus of the Gospels who led by example in stories of responding in love to those in need and gave us an ideal to live by in texts like Matthew 25: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.”

In Catholicism, I find this pathway spelled out in Catholic social teaching themes: the recognition of the dignity of all humans with an emphasis on social conditions that allow all people to flourish; the fundamental option to support vulnerable people, especially those living in poverty; a recognition that work is fundamental to human dignity and workers have the right to fair wages, safe working conditions and

the opportunity to organize; the need to care for our common home, Earth, and the promotion of peace and justice.

Although I knew nothing about Leo XIV before his election, what I am finding out now fills me with gospel hope. He belongs to the Augustinian order, founded so its members live and promote the spirit of community lived by the first Christian communities. Twice he led the order, which has communities in 50 countries. So, he has experience as an international faith leader.

Although American by birth, he served as a missionary in Peru, becoming a Peruvian citizen and later the Bishop of Chiclayo. His brother bishops say he has had a special concern for the care of migrants and human trafficking, a complex problem in Chiclayo.

One of our Peruvian Sisters commented, “Bishop Prevost will definitely follow Pope Francis’ legacy, responding to today’s broken world and a Church suffering from division.”

He chose his name because he was “inspired by the most recent of his namesakes—Pope Leo XIII, who spent much

of his papacy advocating for rights of workers during the first industrial revolution.” He has said we are in a similar position in history with the AI revolution and moral challenges it raises.

In his first words and actions he has demonstrated his commitment to gospel values and the principles of Catholic social teachings. When first greeting the world from the balcony outside the conclave, he said, “We want to be a synodal church, a church that moves forward, a church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close above all to those who are suffering.”

Among his first actions was with representatives of ecumenical and interfaith groups, supporting Pope Francis’ advancement of Catholic-Muslim relations, affirming the importance of Christian-Jewish dialogue and urging humanitarian aid for Gaza and an end to the hostilities there.

He has said he will continue Pope Francis’ synodal process to reform the church structures to make them more inclusive and welcoming and will use his papacy to promote peace, both inside the church

and within the world.

One of his first appointments was to continue Francis’ practice and name a woman, Sr. Tiziana Merletti, a canon lawyer, to a top position in the Roman Curia.

From his first day, he has called on the church to foster a spirit of bridge-building and dialogue. On May 19, he exemplified this by meeting with the U.S. Vice President in spite of their public disagreements on immigration policy and the VP’s belief in a hierarchy for believers to share their love with others. Pope Leo prioritized conversation and understanding over division.

Our world cries out for leaders who, rather than seeking power and wealth for themselves, serve all people with humility, empathy, intelligence, integrity and vision. We need strong moral voices—leaders who work to heal divisions, ensure all people have what they need to survive and thrive, pursue peace and care for the Earth, our common home.

May the Holy Spirit grant Pope Leo the strength to be such a leader for our time.

**Catherine Ferguson SNJM**  
**Editorial Team**

# The question remains how to organize isolated, outraged individuals

Local organizing is key to national change. When Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and three peers called for a women’s rights convention in Seneca Falls in the winter of 1848, more than 200 women rallied. Delegates came, not as isolated individuals, but as representatives of a web of local movements—temperance groups, abolitionists and moral reformers.

The Seneca Falls Convention lit the spark that grew into the suffrage movement made up of hundreds of thousands of women, organizing for more than a decade. They eventually secured the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and made history by guaranteeing all women the right to vote.

This moment reminds us of a truth too often forgotten: the victories that have defined this country—women’s suffrage, civil rights, labor protections—weren’t handed down from Washington. They

were won by ordinary people who knew how to organize their communities. This is the organizing model we must revive today, not just for securing policy wins, but for restoring the practice of democracy and our role as citizens.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. framed this challenge: “Our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power so that the government cannot elude our demands. We must develop from strength a situation in which the government finds it wise and prudent to collaborate with us. It would be the height of naïveté to wait passively until the administration had somehow been infused with such blessings of goodwill that it implored us for our programs. The first course is grounded in mature realism. The other is childish fantasy.”

The good news is that, despite deep partisan divides, many Americans across

the political spectrum agree on the core issues: rising inequality, disappearing jobs and the power of Wall Street. This shared frustration demonstrates a massive potential for organizing. Evidence for the truth behind this statement can be seen in the record-breaking crowds that Bernie Sanders and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez have drawn to their “Fighting the Oligarchy” tour across liberal and conservative states.

Given the shared anger, the choice to re-elect a billionaire who cuts taxes for the rich and guts services for everyone else makes one observation crystal clear: there is confusion about who and which policies are culpable for the decline in many Americans’ quality of life in recent decades. As Washington Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal says: “Trans kids didn’t hike your rent. Billionaires did. Immigrants didn’t make your groceries more expensive. Billionaires did. Federal workers didn’t take

away your healthcare. Billionaires did.”

Given the widespread misdirected anger and confusion, the vital question is: how do we organize all the isolated individuals whose outrage stems from common issues to be a force that ensures those in power are held accountable to work for the public good, not their private interests.

In the words of the late labor leader Jane McAlevey: “To win big, we have to follow the methods of spending very little time engaging with people who already agree and devote most of our time to the harder work of helping people who do not agree come to understand who is really to blame for the pain in their lives.”

This is the key to effective organizing.

In sum, if we want to have a fighting chance at reviving our democracy, we must once again organize a broad base of people to work together in units of power.

**Cameron Conner – Columnist**



# Riverkeeper reflects on trash cleanup, bishop comments on words

In 10 years of river cleanup, we’ve found everything from 100-year-old wagon wheels to freshly dumped tires. We’ve removed about 225,000 pounds of trash with almost 10,000 volunteers. This effort by the community solidifies one thing: Spokane wants a clean river.

What surprises me, however, is that the river isn’t getting cleaner. Each year, we collect more trash—68,000 pounds in 2024. Other organizations and groups in Spokane find the same thing. Riverine trash is a growing problem that is not being solved by cleanup alone.

To solve the issue of litter, we’re working on identifying the types of trash. Plastic and textiles make up the bulk.

How litter gets there matters as well. We estimate that more than half of our trash comes from unsheltered individuals living along the river. That’s about 40,000 pounds this year, with many times that removed by the City of Spokane. We need to manage the impact of camps.

Spokane currently fields complaints about campers along the river and responds by removing the camps. The unsheltered individuals are asked to leave and, in some cases, cited for trespassing. The associated trash is bagged by a large team of employees.

Some camps exceed 10,000 pounds of trash that take days to remove. Where trash

cannot be hiked out, the Spokane Riverkeeper floats it out. However, as soon as the camps are gone, others grow in their place.

Spokane Riverkeeper’s policy is to not report camps, to avoid criminalizing homelessness. We float the river with outreach and medical service professionals, handing out empty trash bags and collecting full bags—acting like a floating medical clinic, resource center and garbage truck.

We collected 123 full bags of trash last year, the same number we distributed, showing that, if given the resources, campers want to keep the river clean.

This is successful at a small scale. We’re a small program and can’t be on the river everywhere.

Effective models exist that control solid waste from homeless camps without criminalizing unsheltered individuals. The Russian Riverkeeper in Sonoma, Calif., combines bagged trash removal, outreach and a clean camp program. They’ve employed individuals with lived experience to help clean up trash and communicate the need for a clean river. We can do this in Spokane. Ideally, camps would have constant visits from employees with lived experience who support clean camp principles and the values of a clean river. Trash could be removed and collected weekly. Abandoned camps could be cleaned up immediately. Using trained individuals

avoids the risk to volunteers dealing with difficult-to-manage waste while reducing costs associated with camper removal and cleanup by the city.

The community needs a new vision to clean up trash in Spokane, especially along the river. We need a vision that 1) better manages the impacts of unsheltered individuals, and 2) incorporates and organizes the efforts of clean-up and outreach teams already working locally.

**Waterkeeper Jule Schultz**  
**Spokane Riverkeeper**

**When I was a child,** I was taught a phrase: “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” ...I suspect the point of the saying was to teach us that we can decide how we will respond to the words of others.

The problem is that the saying is not true. While it might be true that we have capacity over how we respond to many things, it is also true that words have power to hurt, as well as to heal.

We can use words to lift up and tear down, inspire and incite, bring calm and bring rage. Words are powerful and words matter. When we use words to demean, denigrate or dismiss, when we with our words imply or say that some people are not worthy of respect or have no inherent dignity or worth, we speak in ways that are

against our values as followers of Jesus.

When we use words to bring peace, to offer love, respect and uplift, to seek understanding or to offer forgiveness, we are speaking as followers of Jesus.

I listen to words around me in our society today and I hear words that hurt. I can hear myself sometimes using words about others that are hurtful. This is not what I want from myself, and not what I want from my community. Fortunately, we do not have to stay stuck in the language of violence and hurt.

We are still in the great 50 days of Easter, a time to celebrate the reality of resurrection life. The resurrection is not simply something we hope for in our death, it is something we can live in our life. We have the gift of resurrection here and now. We can live love, live peace, live forgiveness, live justice, live mercy—we can live resurrection!

When we live resurrection, we offer a different way, a way not of hurt but of healing, not of violence but of peace, not of dismissing but of inclusion. This is the way of Jesus. In this increasingly divided and divisive time, let us claim resurrection, live resurrection, speak resurrection and be agents of healing and love in a hurting world.

**Bishop Gretchen Rehberg**  
**Episcopal Diocese of Spokane**



# Calendar of Events

Area codes are (509) unless otherwise listed  
Submit events to [development@thefigtree.org](mailto:development@thefigtree.org) by the third Friday before publication

- 1st Sun • Intentional Community Gathering**, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 1 to 4 p.m., 993-2968, [harmonywoods.com](http://harmonywoods.com)
- Sun • Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR)** Coffee, Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, 9 a.m., [scarspokane.org](http://scarspokane.org)
- Tues • Heartistry: Artistic Wellbeing**, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 3 to 5 p.m., 279-0299
- Tues-July 29 • Global Food & Art Market**, The Gathering House, 733 W. Garland Ave., 3 to 7 p.m., [market@gatheringhouse.org](mailto:market@gatheringhouse.org)
- 1st & 3rd Tues • Native Cultural Craft Nights**, American Indian Community Center, 1025 W. Indiana Ave., 5 p.m., [aicc.org](http://aicc.org)
- 2nd Tues • PJALS Action Committee**, Zoom, 5:30 p.m., [sjackson@pjals.org](mailto:sjackson@pjals.org)
- 1st Wed • Monthly Bird Walk**, Doris Morrison Learning Center, 1330 S. Henry, Greenacres, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., [spokanecounty.org/5360/Doris-Morrison-Learning-Center-DMLC](http://spokanecounty.org/5360/Doris-Morrison-Learning-Center-DMLC)
- The Expanse**, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 981-5698, [iamalliance.me](http://iamalliance.me)
- Weds • SCAR meeting**, Saranac Commons, 19 W. Main, 12 noon, [scarspokane.org](http://scarspokane.org)
- Weds to July 7 • Beginning Buddhism**, Sravasti Abbey Buddhist Nuns, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry St., 6 to 7:30, 447-549
- Thurs • Taize Prayer**, Zoom, 4:15 p.m., [bartletts@gonzaga.edu](mailto:bartletts@gonzaga.edu)
- 2nd Thurs • Reuse Workshop**, Mobius Discovery Center, 331 N. Post, 10 a.m., 321-7137, [artsalvagespokane.com](http://artsalvagespokane.com)
- Free Immigration Clinic**, Latinos En Spokane, 1502 N. Monroe, 5 to 7 p.m., [latinosenspokane.org](http://latinosenspokane.org)
- Dances of Universal Peace**, Unity Spiritual Center, 2900 S. Bernard, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. 714-1770
- 1st Fri • First Friday Spokane**, local artists an multiple locations, 5 to 8 p.m., [downtownspokane.org/first-friday](http://downtownspokane.org/first-friday)
- 2nd Fri • Second Friday Artwalk**, Sherman Ave., Downtown Coeur d'Alene, 5 to 8 p.m., (208) 415-0116, [artsandculturecda.org](http://artsandculturecda.org)
- 3rd Sat • Community Mutual Aid**, Downtown Spokane, Share clothing & food, State & Pacific, 7 to 8:30 p.m., 413-6955, [Instagram.com/lilacmutualaid](http://Instagram.com/lilacmutualaid)
- Last Sat • El Mercadito**, Latino cultural market, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., [latinosenspokane](http://latinosenspokane)
- June 3-13 • Habitat for Humanity Spokane Blitz Build** 212 N. Collins Ln, Spokane Valley, register at [habitat-spokane.org/blitz-build](http://habitat-spokane.org/blitz-build)
- June 4 • “Free for All: The Public Library,”** PBS documentary and panel, Central Library, 906 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., [spokanelibrary.org](http://spokanelibrary.org)
- June 5 • Fig Tree Development and Annual Board** meetings, Zoom, noon - Development, 1 to 3 p.m. - Board, 535-1813, [mary@thefigtree.org](mailto:mary@thefigtree.org)
- June 6 • Spring Market**, Northeast Youth and Family Services, 19 E. Queen, 2 to 5:30 p.m., 218-6416, [spokaneneysfs@gmail.com](mailto:spokaneneysfs@gmail.com), [neysfs.org](http://neysfs.org)
- Jun 6-7 • Zephyr Folk Festival**, Zephyr Lodge, 1900 S. Zephyr Rd., Liberty Lake, 4 p.m., 994-8262, [zephyrlibertylake.com/folk-festival](http://zephyrlibertylake.com/folk-festival)
- June 7 • June Community Volunteer Day at Cedar**, Jewels Helping Hands, 3923 N. Cedar, 9 to 11 a.m., 443-5104, [jewelshelpinghands.org](http://jewelshelpinghands.org)
- CdA4Pride 2025: PRIDE in the PARK**, North Idaho Pride Alliance, Coeur d'Alene City Park, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., [nipridealliance.com](http://nipridealliance.com)
- Born This Way Spring Concert**, Spectrum Singers, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 5720 S. Perry St., 7 p.m., [spokanespectrumsingers.com](http://spokanespectrumsingers.com)
- June 10 • Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** Planning, Zoom 1 to 3 p.m., [kaye@thefigtree.org](mailto:kaye@thefigtree.org)
- June 11 • Northgate Revival Concert**, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2511 S. Pines, 7 p.m., 926-7966 [office@holytrinitylmc.org](mailto:office@holytrinitylmc.org)
- June 11-13 • Post Falls Festival**, Post Falls Parks and Recreation, Q'Emiln Park, 12201 W. Parkway Dr., 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., (208) 773-0539, [postfalls.gov](http://postfalls.gov)
- Laura Ingalls Wilder: Voice of the Prairie**, Rex Theater, 7222 Main, Bonners Ferry, Fri-Sat 7 p.m., Sun 2 p.m., [rextheatergroup.com](http://rextheatergroup.com)
- June 13 • Together We Speak: A Celebration of Lived Experience**, Northeast Community Center, 4001 N. Cook St., 6 p.m., [allwellconsulting.com](http://allwellconsulting.com)
- June 13-14 • Spokane Pride**, Riverfront Park, 446 N. Howard, 5 to 9 p.m., 822-7190, [spokanepride.org](http://spokanepride.org)
- June 13-19 • Young Adults Explore Buddhism** retreat, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 447-5549, [sravastiabbey.org](http://sravastiabbey.org)
- June 14 • Dad's Day Dash**, SNAP fundraiser, Manito Park, 21 W. 18th, 9 a.m., [shapwa.org/ddd5k](http://shapwa.org/ddd5k)
- Two Spirit Powwow**, Riverfront Park, starts at 2 p.m., 631-0344, [conraccurgio@gmail.com](mailto:conraccurgio@gmail.com)
- June 15 • Free Yoga**, St. John's Cathedral with Eclipse Power Yoga, 101 E. 12th, 1 p.m., 598-8938, [eclipsepoweryoga.com](http://eclipsepoweryoga.com)
- June 16 • Spokane String Quartet**, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 3 to 4:45 p.m., 998-2261, [spokanestringquartet.org](http://spokanestringquartet.org)
- June 17 • Summer Parkways Spokane**, South Hill Parks Manito and Comstock, 6 to 9 p.m.,

[summerparkways.com](http://summerparkways.com)

- June 19 • 15th Annual Juneteenth**, Inland Northwest Juneteenth Coalition, Grant Park, 115 E. 11th Ave., 12 to 4 p.m., [INWJC.org](http://INWJC.org)
- June 20 • Summer Kickoff Night Market/Resource Fair**, Innovation High School, 811 E. Sprague, Ste B, 4 to 8 p.m., 309-7690, [innovationspokane.org](http://innovationspokane.org)
- June 21 • NAMI Walks Spokane**, Riverfront Park 507 N. Howard, fundraising walk, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 838-5515, [namispokane.org](http://namispokane.org)
- Taste of Asia**, Filipino American Northwest Assn, Riverfront Park, cuisine, music, dance and art, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 724-0048, [filamnw.org](http://filamnw.org)
- Terrain's Bazaar**, Terrain Gallery, 808 W. Main Ave., 130 + booths of art and handcrafts, 11 a.m., [terrainspokane.com](http://terrainspokane.com)
- Juneteenth Celebration**, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, 550 S. Stone St., 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. [mlkspokane.org](http://mlkspokane.org)
- June 21-22 • RAICES Summer Yard Sale**, Nuestras Raices Centro Comunitario, 1214 E. Sprague, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 557-0566, [nuestrasraiceswa.org](http://nuestrasraiceswa.org)
- June 22 • Cultural Crossings** Benefit Concert for Thrive International, St. John's Cathedral, 127 E, 12th Ave., 3 to 5 p.m., [thriveinternational.org](http://thriveinternational.org)
- June 24 • Sandlot Interactive Movie Night**, Spokane Regional Domestic Violence Coalition, Garland Theater, 924 W. Garland, 6 to 8 p.m., [srdvc.org](http://srdvc.org)
- June 24-27 • “Repairers of the Breach,”** Whitworth Ministry Summit, [whitworth.edu/summit](http://whitworth.edu/summit)
- June 26 • Day of Work & Prayer**, Fr. David Anderson SJ, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., [ihrc.net](http://ihrc.net)
- June 27 • “Our Stories: Black Families in Spokane,”** NW MAC Campbell House, 2315 W. First, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 363-5337, [northwestmuseum.org](http://northwestmuseum.org)
- Bridges of Giving**, Hillyard Senior Center Benefit, Northeast Community Center, 4001 N. Cook, 5:30 p.m., 482-0803, [hillyardseniorcenter.org](http://hillyardseniorcenter.org)
- July 1, 17, 24 • Concerts Under the Pines**, Audubon Park, 3405 N. Milton, 1 - 6 to 8 p.m., 17 & 24 - 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., 218-6428, [audubondownriver@gmail.com](mailto:audubondownriver@gmail.com)
- July 3-10 • Medicine Buddha Retreat**, Venerable Sanye Khadro, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 447-5549, [sravastiabbey.org](http://sravastiabbey.org)
- July 11-13 • Post Falls Festival**, Q'Emiln Park, 12201 W. Parkway Dr., Fri, Sat 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sun 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., (208) 773-0539, [postfalls.gov](http://postfalls.gov)
- July 12 • Ignatian Day of Prayer**, Fr. Dan Nevares SJ, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., [ihrc.net](http://ihrc.net)
- July 19 • Kids Fest 2025**, Guardians of the Children, Franklin Park, 302 W. Queen, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 998-2535, [goc.inw@mail.com](mailto:goc.inw@mail.com)
- July 23 • Kelly Hughes Band Christian Concert**, benefit for IHRC, 5 to 9 p.m., [ihrc.net](http://ihrc.net)
- July 25-Aug 13 • Exploring Monastic Life** with Venerable Thubten Chodron & the Sravasti Abbey Community, register, [sravastiabbey.org](http://sravastiabbey.org)
- July 26 • 33 Artists Market at the Pergola**, 2928 N. Madelia, indoor/outdoor market, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Bridging Community Celebration of ADA**, Disability Action Center, Riverfront Park, 466 W. Spokane Falls Blvd, 11 a.m., [dacnw.org/spokane-wa](http://dacnw.org/spokane-wa)
- July 26-Aug 3 • 8-Day Silent Ignatian Retreat**, Fr. Tom Lamanna SJ, IHRC, [ihrc.net](http://ihrc.net)
- Aug 1-3 • Taste of CdA**, Coeur d'Alene City Park and Beach, 416 W. Fort Grounds Dr., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., [tasteofcda@panhandlekiwanis.org](mailto:tasteofcda@panhandlekiwanis.org)
- Aug 3 • Festival at Sandpoint Grand Finale**: Sounds of Summer, War Memorial Field, 855 Ontario St., 7 p.m., [festivalatsandpoint.com/grand-finale](http://festivalatsandpoint.com/grand-finale)
- Aug 8 • Northeast Youth Center Lemonade Stand** Fundraiser, 3004 E. Queen, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., 482-0708, [spokaneneyc.org](http://spokaneneyc.org)
- Aug 9 • Community Celebration**, The Way to Justice, Spokane Eastside Reunion Association (SERA), Underhill Park, 700 S. Fiske St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 822-7514, [thewaytojustice.com](http://thewaytojustice.com)
- 80th Anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**, details TBA, [vfp35spokane@riseup.net](mailto:vfp35spokane@riseup.net)
- Aug 15-24 • Annie, Kroc Center**, 1765 W. Golf Course Rd., Coeur d'Alene, Fr-Sat 7 p.m., Sat-Sun 3 p.m., (208) 667-1865, [cynorthidaho.org](http://cynorthidaho.org)
- Aug 16 • Unity in the Community**, multicultural fair and performances, Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 625-6600, [nwunity.org](http://nwunity.org)
- Aug 20 • Curators of Sound Concert Series**, Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture, 2230 W. First, 5:30 p.m., 456-3931, [northwestmuseum.org](http://northwestmuseum.org)
- Aug 22-24 • Girls Growth & Empowerment**, Harmony Woods, 540-850-3936, [harmonywoods.org](http://harmonywoods.org)
- Aug 24 • Free Concert in Corbin Park**, 501 W. Park Pl, 4 to 6 p.m., [emerson.garfield@gmail.com](mailto:emerson.garfield@gmail.com), [emersongarfield.org](http://emersongarfield.org)
- Aug 28 to Sept 1 • Pig Out in the Park**, Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard, public market, food, free concerts, 12 to 10 p.m., [pigoutinthepark.com](http://pigoutinthepark.com)
- Aug 29-Sept 1 • In Praise of Dependent Arising** with Serkong Rinpoche, Labor Day Weekend Retreat, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, [sravastiabbey.org](http://sravastiabbey.org)
- Sept 1 • Spokane Symphony Concert in the Park**, Comstock Park, 3012 S. Howard, 6 p.m., 624-1200, [foxtheaterspokane.org](http://foxtheaterspokane.org)
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# Millwood Impact turns church outreach into neighborhood program

**By Emma Maple**  
A small nonprofit with big influence, Millwood Impact serves the Spokane West Valley community through after-school programs, shared meals and a community garden.

Millwood Impact is the brainchild of Brandon Comella, former youth director at Millwood Community Presbyterian Church.

Because he was also involved in the West Valley School District, he began dreaming of going bigger—after-school programs, interns and more. The church didn't have the funds to support that, so Brandon decided to find funding that could support the kinds of programs he envisioned.

**The first facet** of Millwood Impact, launched before the organization, was the STAR Club after-school mentoring program.

"It's been a great community partner because it provides support for the students after hours," said Kyle Rydell, West Valley School District superintendent. "It creates these cool mentors and additional support for students, outside of family or school structures."

At first, the club was only for a limited number of third-through-fifth graders at Orchard Center Elementary School, but the program was so successful that "other schools were jealous that only Orchard Center kids could participate," Kyle joked.

**After that, the idea** for a nonprofit began to take shape. Brandon assembled a board of directors, built a website and was approved by the IRS at the end of 2019. When someone gave Brandon a \$50,000 donation in January 2020, he was able to fully step into running Millwood Impact.

A few months later, COVID hit, and the largest part of Millwood Impact, the STAR Club, was shut down.

Brandon had to pivot quickly.

**The mission statement** of Millwood Impact is to address "unmet essential needs for the health and well-being of kids and families in the Millwood and West Valley Community," according to the website.

To make the needed shift, Millwood Impact began focusing on the second way of addressing this mission: tackling food insecurity.

During COVID, local schools, struggling to distribute weekend food bags for the kids, reached out to Brandon for help. Millwood Impact took over that program for all seven schools in the district.

"Brandon and his team partnered with the district to fill a gap," Kyle said.

After COVID ended, the meal



Matt Royston and Brandon Comella facilitate the program.

program dropped off and STAR Club restarted, later fueled by additional funding through a grant from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Now, there are more than 70 kids in the program, and about 75 percent of those come from one form of poverty or another, Brandon said.

**That club has been** a "huge benefit for kids," Matt Royston, senior pastor of Millwood Community Presbyterian Church, said. "One of the things we all see, especially with younger members of this community, is often a sense of needing to belong."

"It's tough to be a young person finding your way in the world," he added. "Millwood Impact provides some loving people who can give them a glimpse of what life can be as they strive to be the fullest version of themselves."

Millwood Impact runs with the help of 25 volunteers and support staff who live and work in the community. Another program it operates is monthly community meals, where people gather to

meet their neighbors and enjoy quality food on real plates with real silverware.

These community meals also include programming from community partners, such as libraries, on how they work and what resources are available. Brandon said about 30 to 170 people show up every month.

**"It's a connection point** for many neighbors who don't necessarily have regular connection points," Matt said.

The organization also delivers about 200 meals to families in need, usually identified through school counselors. It also manages the Millwood Community Garden, helping to educate people on how to grow healthy food.

"Millwood Impact has exploded in the last five years, and it's just been fun to watch," Matt said.

The organization, although a secular nonprofit, is aided by a partnership with Millwood Community Presbyterian Church, which allows Millwood Impact to use its offices and community center. In addition, a few members of the church are regular volunteers with Millwood Impact.

**"Each community,** I would hope, enhances the other," Matt said.

Millwood Community Presbyterian Church also houses another nonprofit, Project ID. This organization serves adults with special needs.

"What's been fun is seeing how Millwood Impact has connected with Project ID through

shared space," Matt said, noting that they will co-work on projects and help work together on the community garden, among other things.

In the future, Kyle said he would love to see Millwood Impact serve every school in the district and more volunteers help to support the organization.

While Brandon said that, in the short term, he wants to continue "to do what we're doing well," larger dreams include farming more land and providing fresh produce to the school district.

**"We have bigger dreams,"** Brandon said, "but we're trying to continue to build a good foundation for what we're doing and see who we are."

For information, call 481-5720, email millwoodimpact@gmail.com or visit millwoodimpact.org.

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