

Young Activists program series begins

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appeal nearly at goal by press time

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

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

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

Conservatory sets events

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

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

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International Conference on Hate Studies at Gonzaga University

Take Action Against Hate Awards presented during conference

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

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

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

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

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



Pui-Yan Lam and Rowena Pineda accept the recognition.

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

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

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

“I decided to speak up and do

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

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

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

Both are members of the advisory board, welcoming a new



Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Scheppe give award to student.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For information, email jjjohnsonhome@msn.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Scottie Nash

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

types, bias and racism they hear in the video.

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

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

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

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

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

ferent from her.

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

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

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

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

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Human rights groups bring cumulative experience to counter extremism

By Kaye Hult, Mary Stamp

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Tony Stewart



Dean Lynch



Brenda Hammond



Travis McAdam

to advocate.”

For information, visit idaho-humanrights.org.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

crimes may be reported at www.reporthathebias.org.

For information, visit spokane-countyhumanrightstaskforce.org.

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

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

The task force now has more than 500 members.

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

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

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

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

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

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

instead of walls,” she said.

For information, visit bchrtf.org.

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

They research and monitor extremist groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For information, see mhrn.org.

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Global Neighborhood provides training, employment for refugees

By Marijke Fakasiieiki

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

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

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

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

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

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

So they pivoted the organization’s focus to employment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Global Neighborhood work also includes how to use a clock-



Brent Hendricks runs Global Neighborhood Thrift Store.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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NAACP seeks to change the narrative

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

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

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

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

Tree display benefits Symphony

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

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

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

IHRC invites people for retreats

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

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

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

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

Walk-through funds UGM camps

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

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

Christmas story to Revelation.

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

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

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

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

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

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EWU's Multicultural Center creates welcoming, safe environment

By Marilyn Urness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The MCC has two main functions.

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

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

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

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



Vanessa Delgado gathers multicultural students at EWU. Photo courtesy of Vanessa Delgado

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

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

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

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

"It's important for vulnerable

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

place of belonging," she said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

indignity about injustice and oppression awakened?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mary Stamp - Editor

Letters to the Editor

Sounding Board

Commentaries

Faith-based organizations challenge climate change

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

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

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

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

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

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

Faith-based organizations made significant contributions to the meeting.

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

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

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

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

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) brought 32 youth, 16 women and 16 men from 25 countries and 28 member churches to promote their climate justice work.

“Never before have we had such a broad representation of young people across the communion,” said Elena Cedillo, LWF’s program executive for climate justice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

What did they get?

Some progress, but not enough to satisfy them:

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

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

1.8° C instead of the targeted 1.5°.

- Promise of money by 2023 instead of 2020.

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

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

None of this is obligatory under the convention.

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

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

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

Is anything happening in Spokane related to climate change?

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

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

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

Episcopal bishop shares learnings during COVID

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bishop Gretchen Rehberg
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

Calendar of Events

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

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Women's Hearth creates compassionate space for women downtown

By Catherine Ferguson, SNJM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Susan Tyler-Babkirk creates environment conducive to hope.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

accepted for who we are."

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

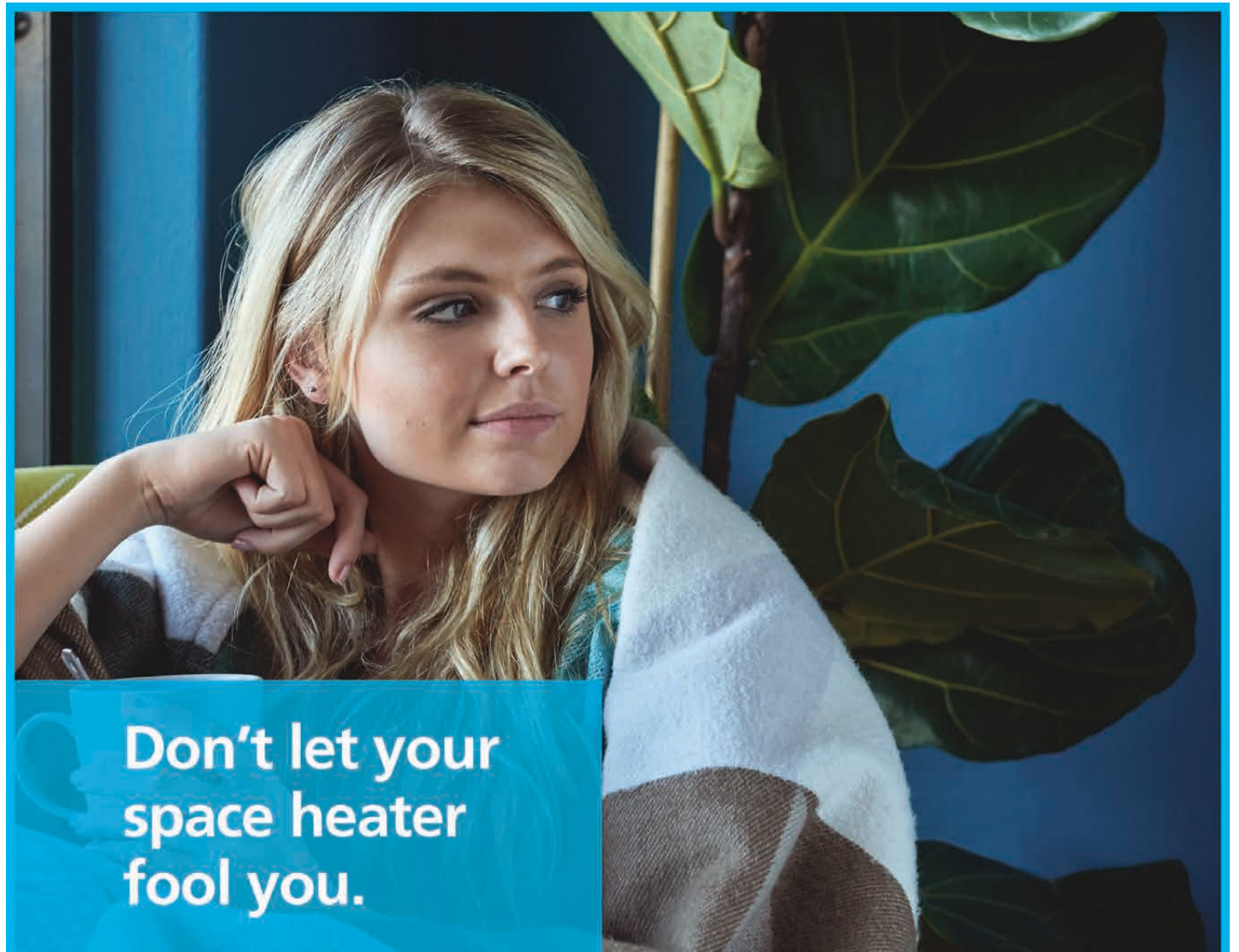
At the fundraiser there were also women and staff from the Hearth who gave their first-hand testimony about what the Hearth meant to them and how it empowered them to live out the ideal that "the fullness of each person is realized in relation to others."

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

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

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

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



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Space heaters can actually increase your winter bill if used improperly. Only use them to heat a single, occupied room, and be sure to lower the temperature setting on your furnace while the space heater's in use.

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