

36TH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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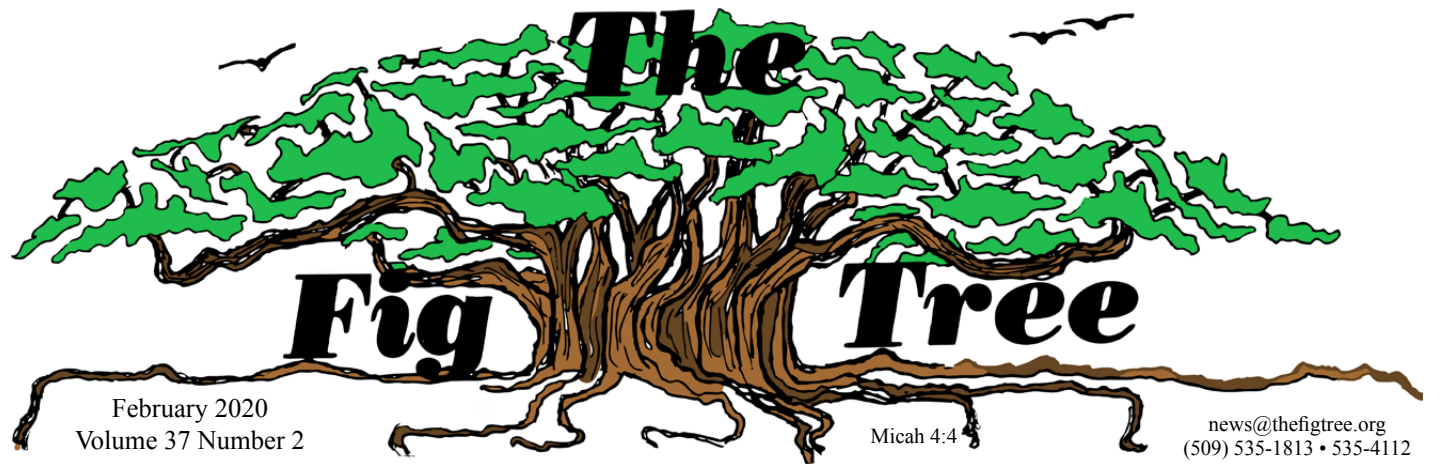
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Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest online at www.thefigtree.org • check The Fig Tree Facebook page daily for news and links

Vision of equality is crucial every day

By Mary Stamp

Stephy Nobles Beans combined song and words to invite several thousand people gathered Jan. 20 at the Spokane Convention Center for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally and March to “keep your eyes on the prize”—the prize being the gift to dream and keep dreaming the vision that everyone will be judged by the content of their character, not the color of their skin.

“Freedom’s name is mighty sweet, and soon we’re gonna meet,” she sang. “Only chain a man can stand is that chain of hand in hand.”

She clarified that the national holiday is for “the Rev. Dr. King, a man of God, a husband, father, friend, comrade and dreamer.”

Stephy, who is associate chaplain for diversity, equity and inclusion ministry at Whitworth University, said, “his name is historical. Many recognize it. Some remember bits and pieces of facts. Some have forgotten. Some say the dreamer’s vision has been lulled to sleep and only awakened during the holiday.”

Speaking recently on King to several thousand students, she was touched that they want to make a difference. She thought of the legacy she wants to leave her children, grandchildren and great-



Stephy Nobles Beans urges people to keep dreaming the dream.

grandchildren. She wants them to know the sacrifices their ancestors and others made when they became allies of King, who left a legacy to his children, grandchildren, their children and the world.

“He kept his eyes on the prize, the gift that everyone is created equal,” she said, wondering how he would feel with there still being injustice.

Stephy wants young people to know it’s not just about a holiday to march hand-in-hand today, but for “our community to march every day in our hearts, workplaces, schools, health care and housing—to keep marching every day” to challenge injustices in the community and country.

It’s not for tomorrow, Stephy said, but as King said, “The time is always right to do what is right”—today, tomorrow and in the future.

“We need to tell young people to strive every day to uncover hidden prejudices that shape what we see, think and do,” she said. “The dream is bigger than King. He didn’t do it in a day, but every day strived to make a difference, risking his life for a better life for his children and others.

“Some say we have not lived up
Continued on page 6

Nursing professors at Gonzaga seek to overcome stigma, improve care

By Marilyn Urness
EWU intern

With one in five Americans diagnosed with mental illness and more health care providers needed as access to care improved under the 2010 Affordable Care Act, two Gonzaga faculty members seek to improve care for those mental health patients.

Jeff Ramirez, associate professor of nursing at Gonzaga University and doctor of nursing practice program director and Carol Kottwitz, assistant professor of nursing and the program director for GU’s psychiatric nurse prac-

itioner program, believe that part of improving care is to end the negative stigma of mental illness in the medical field and society.

Their work has taken them from changing the lives of students and patients one at a time, to advocating for changes in legislation.

Mental illness has always held a negative stigma in the health care industry. Only in the last two decades has mental health been considered a legitimate health condition. In 2010, the passage and enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) gave access for treatment to people with mental

illness who didn’t have it before, according to a 2016 report of the Washington State Nurses Association calling for mandatory suicide prevention education.

With access to treatment, the number of patients has outweighed the number of qualified caregivers, the report said.

In addition, emergency room staff often lack training to treat patients who are mentally ill and may not understand the seriousness of a situation, Jeff explained.

“**Emergency room staff are** burned out in dealing with overdoses and suicide attempts. They don’t understand why patients don’t just take their medication and stop using substances,” he said. “It’s a complex situation. We just need to fix the system and help people understand why some people overdose on heroin, attempt suicide or have other crises.”

According to a Catholic journal article Jeff wrote in 2016, the consequences of untreated mental illness affects society and the community as a whole. The high

Continued on page 4

MLK Center asks city to vote on its new name

Freda Gandy, executive director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center, invited those who gathered for the 2020 Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally and March at the Spokane Convention Center to come to the Spokane City Council meeting on Monday, Feb. 3, when the council will vote on renaming the center at the East Central Community Center the “Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center.”

She needs voices to challenge some who have said the name is “too ethnic” or sounds like it “targets a certain population.” She asserted that King stood for everyone, and the center serves everyone.

“It’s 2020,” she said. “We need to move forward, not backward.”

The center, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020, provides early childhood education, children’s enrichment programs, a summer youth academy and family support from the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Program plus programs that were at the East Central Community Center, including a food bank, senior services, SNAP, W.I.C., Police Athletic League and Early Head Start Daycare with Community Colleges of Spokane.

These programs are made possible by 7,000 volunteer hours, as the center provided 800 backpacks and 1,300 coats for children and 600,000 pounds of food in 2019.

Before the march, Mayor Nadine Woodward said: “The civil rights movement arose so that people would live the creed that all are created equal. We believe in equality, in unity and in community. We are not immune to racism, but our community will not tolerate division.”

She called for bringing a better tomorrow by standing with people in need and being leaders in justice and compassion.

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Pacific gathering looks for islands of hope

The WCC's Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace Reference Group and Theological Study Group met in January at the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji, to reflect on issues in the Pacific related to climate change and cooperation with churches, national councils of churches and the Pacific Conference of Churches.

James Bhagwan, Pacific Conference of Churches general secretary, spoke the "island of hope" concept in a 2001 WCC document, "Island of Hope - a Pacific Church Response to Globalization."

"The island of hope proposes a way of life based on principles that do not exclude or marginalize, and on values commonly found in the Pacific cultures," he said. "It is visionary in its view of the future of our region, and we want to share this vision with the global ecumenical family." It resonates with the proposed theme for the Pilgrimage in 2020: "Caring for People, Water and Earth," framing social justice and political issues facing the Pacific today.

Before the meeting, four WCC teams visited in Fiji, looking at climate displacement, indigenous land rights, extractive industries, gender justice, people with disabilities, interfaith dialogue, climate change, ecological justice, ocean health and creation care.

Faith and Order groups seek further unity

Through three study groups, the WCC Faith and Order Commission proposes a world conference to map common ground among churches. Its work is done groups focusing on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, ecclesiology and moral discernment.

The first group follows up on the commission's proposal for a Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025, the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea. It hopes a conference will excite churches today, and rekindle the desire for visible unity of the church in the midst of deep diversity.

The second group analyzed responses to "The Church: Towards a Common Vision," identifying 16 key theological themes. Papers on the themes will be shared at the WCC 11th Assembly in 2021 at Karlsruhe, Germany.

The third group, on moral discernment, recognizes that churches respond differently to ethical questions, risking either divisions within themselves or preventing them from witnessing with one voice. It affirmed common ground churches from different traditions hold in engaging in ethical reasoning.

Lay Catholics help broker South Sudan peace

New South Sudan peace declaration brokered by Sant'Egidio comes into force. Amid persistent worldwide spiritual and moral appeals for peace, reconciliation and support, the government of South Sudan and holdout opposition groups recommitted to cessation of hostilities in a peace declaration brokered by the Sant'Egidio, a Rome-based lay Catholic movement.

Churches prepare to respond to food shortages

Church groups ready as Zambia faces food shortages in chronic drought. Victoria Falls is known locally as Mosi-oa Tunya, "The Smoke that Thunders," because of the power of the water from the Zambezi River that often flows across one of the great wonders of the world. Today it is a mere trickle.

WCC reaffirms condemnation of anti-semitism

The World Council of Churches (WCC) stands firm in viewing "antisemitism as irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith." At its founding Assembly in 1948, antisemitism was declared a sin against God and humanity.

Since then, the WCC has a history working for justice and peace for all peoples in the Middle East, affirming the right of the State of Israel to exist," said WCC general secretary Olav Fykse Tveit. "We denounce all violence based on religion, ethnicity, race or any other dimension of a person's identity or belonging." Recently, he met with the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations work towards restored relationships under the theme, "The normalization of hatred: challenges for Jews and Christians today."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Campaign generates funds to add staff

Because of The Fig Tree's success in raising nearly \$36,000 in the Branching Out Campaign in the fall, it will be able to hire a development associate to further its ability to generate income for building its capacity to serve through the newspaper and Resource Directory in print and online.

"We seek someone committed to our mission and vision to help us build more relationships to secure more advertising, sponsors,

partners and online donations," said editor Mary Stamp.

Part of the funds from the campaign will be used over three years to help support the position while the person raises additional funds to secure ongoing support for the position.

"Our effort relies on staff with an entrepreneurial spirit to generate funds to underwrite their salaries and those of others," she said.

The person will also assist with the benefit lunch and breakfast, as

well as a new fall online fundraising campaign. She or he will also have administrative responsibilities, assist with the database and increase and improve use of social media and The Fig Tree's online presence.

"We seek someone who can multi-task, work independently, be persuasive, take initiative, problem solve and have flexible hours," added Mary.

For information, email mary@thefigtree.org.

Fig Tree benefits coming up in early March

"Connects People, Inspires Action" is the theme for the 2020 Benefit Lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Friday, March 6, and the Benefit Breakfast from 7 to 8:30 a.m., Monday, March 9. Both events are at Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The Fig Tree is currently recruiting people to host tables that seat eight, donating \$125 to cover the cost of food and inviting guests to fill their table, coming

with the expectation of donating to The Fig Tree.

Speakers are Margo Hill, Mark Finney, Linda Hunt and Jeanette Laster, sharing three minutes each at the lunch, and Joe Ader, David Milliken, Dainen Penta and one more will share at the breakfast about the value of The Fig Tree and Resource Directory.

Nathan Slabaugh, who prepared the 2019 video, will prepare the promotional video.

Mary Stamp, editor, said the goal is to raise \$32,500, the amount raised in 2019.

The events not only raise funds but also are a time to educate people about The Fig Tree and Resource Directory, and to celebrate their contribution to the community, region and world.

Persons interested in hosting tables, underwriting costs and attending may call 535-1813 or email event@thefigtree.org.

Fig Tree will help the census reach people

To learn about the census, why it matters, how to respond and ways to be involved, there will be a Census 2020 Public Forum 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 6, at Shadle Park High School, 4327 N. Ash St., with a presentation and panel discussion, and a live stream video on KSPS,

Among the nonprofits and others assisting with the census is The Fig Tree, which has received a \$10,000 grant from Innovia to do a project called, Faith Community Leaders' Outreach to Hard-to-Count Communities in Eastern Washington.

Every 10 years, every household in America is surveyed on demographics such as race and age, giving a portrait of America.

This year, people will be asked to respond online. In mid-March, households will be mailed an invitation with a unique code. Although invitations come by mail, people are asked to access and complete the questionnaire online using the code.

Paper copies can be requested or the questionnaire can be completed over the phone.

April 1, 2020, is the official Census Day.

Census data determines where

federal dollars are spent for services and the number of seats a state has in Congress.

The 2020 Census is a short survey that takes only about 10 minutes, but has impact for the next 10 years. A state may lose more than \$30,000 per person missed.

Everyone living in the United States as of April 1, 2020 counts—a baby born April 1 to the oldest senior; indigenous people, citizens for generations, foreign exchange students, refugee residents and undocumented folks; people who live in mansions and people who have no home.

The Faith Action Network has also received funding in other parts of the state to work on the census, so Jim CastroLang, pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Colville and a member of the Faith Action Network Board, approached The Fig Tree to apply for this area.

The project will engage congregations to reach out to racial and ethnic minorities, persons experiencing homelessness/houselessness, LGBTQ persons and others.

It will combine maps of local faith communities with maps of hard-to-count communities.

"We will send a mailing to faith communities with information and the 2020 Census Faith Toolkit, prepared by Faith in Public Life," said Jim, who will work on contract with The Fig Tree as project coordinator.

"We will help faith communities ensure people in their neighborhoods are counted and understand why it is important," he said.

The Fig Tree included a workshop on faith community involvement in the census at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Jan. 25.

For census information, call 624-2606. For project information on, call 998-7203 or 535-1813.

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SNAP ombuds program needs volunteers

SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners) seeks and trains volunteers for its Long Term Care Ombudsman program.

As a volunteer with the SNAP program, Linda Howe relishes visiting residents of long term care facilities who may feel forgotten. As she offers them hope, encouragement and support, she said the people she befriends and serves have become "like extended family."

"I like visiting these places and meeting with people," Linda said. "I like being able to resolve problems."

The Older Americans Act stipulates that every state facilitate a Long Term Care Ombudsman program. Sometimes the issues she and other volunteers address are simple, such as finding a suitable mattress or making sure a resident has a proper reading light.

Often, volunteers serve a critical purpose just by providing a listening ear. Linda said people are happy to see her.

Volunteers mediate resident concerns by working with facility administration and social workers. More serious issues like neglect, abuse and financial fraud are reported and referred to agencies like Adult Protective Services and Residential Care Services.

SNAP's program relies on volunteers like Linda, who signed on in 2004. Three staff members, led by regional ombuds leader Aaron Riley, provide support and training.

The program serves residents in Spokane, Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens and Whitman counties, a region with 27 nursing homes, 71 assisted living facilities and nearly 200 adult family homes. The facilities account for more than 7,100 long-term care beds. With a broad area to cover, they constantly need more volunteers.

"The program's success hinges on volunteer support," he said. "We have a great group on board, but we could use more."

The next four-day training begins Thursday, Feb. 20, at SNAP's Mission Support Center, 3102 W. Fort Wright Dr. The training will continue on Friday, Feb. 21, and Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 25 and 26.

For information, call 456-7133 or email riley@snapwa.org.

Individuals, groups can plan Mardi Bras parties

Individuals, congregations and organizations can host a Mardi Bras Party as a way to celebrate Fat Tuesday on Feb. 25, while collecting money, bras, underwear, pads, tampons and bus passes for some of more than 1,800 homeless women whose struggle to meet basic needs brings them to Hope House and the Women's Hearth.

Hope House, run by Volunteers of America of the Inland Northwest, offers an environment of dignity, respect and compassion that honors the intrinsic value and unique experience of every woman and creates a safe space at their overnight shelter in downtown Spokane.

Transitions' Women's Hearth as a safe space for women in a "hearth" of welcome, respect, and community in a daytime drop-in center in downtown Spokane.

Persons and organizations interested may sign up at voaspokane.org/mardibras, invite friends to a party and share information on Hope House and the Women's Hearth with guests.

VOA has ideas for the parties, including feather masks, boas, strings of beads and door prizes.

Donations may be dropped off at 525 W 2nd Ave., at the VOA's administrative office on the second floor above Crosswalk Youth Shelter only between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Fridays from Feb. 10 to March 13.

For information, call 688-1117 or email development@voaspokane.org.

Gonzaga hosts Holocaust Museum exhibit

Gonzaga University is one of 50 sites for an exhibit of the American Holocaust Museum and the American Library Association, "Americans and the Holocaust," from March 16 to April 27 in Gonzaga University's Foley Library Rare Books Room.

Gonzaga's Institute for Hate Studies, its Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force are planning three public events related to the exhibit. They are free, but will require tickets for security, said Kristine Hoover, associate professor of organizational leadership and director of the Institute for Hate Studies.

The opening reception and panel on "Hate Reflections and Action" will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Sunday, March 17, in Hemmingson Auditorium.

Panelists George Critchlow, Michael DeLand and Shannon Dunn, who are on the Gonzaga faculty, will examine hate from

Grant helps LCS 24-hour crisis line

LCS Northwest has received a \$29,600 award from the Providence Health Care Community Investment Fund to help support LCS Northwest's 24 hour crisis line for sexual abuse, assault, harassment and other crimes.

Victim Advocates provide support over the phone and at area emergency rooms during forensic medical examinations in conjunction with LCS's certified sexual assault nurse examiner.

LCS Northwest's district director Erin Williams Hueter said, "The award came at a crucial time to help support our team on the front lines respond to crime victims and help them through the most traumatic moments of their lives."

In a recent client survey, a crime victim who worked with a LCS Northwest certified crime victim advocate, said, "Everyone from the first call to meeting with an advocate were kind, understanding, helpful and willing to help you feel comfortable and at ease."

For information, call 747-8224.

legal, sociological and religious perspectives. They will discuss collective memory, understanding the violence of the Holocaust and America's role in it.

"Many Americans labor under the illusion that they would have done the right thing in similar circumstances and would not have tolerated or supported the Nazis," said Kristine.

She said museums and exhibits are essential for maintaining history and encouraging people to reflect on what they would have done, what they are doing and what they will do related to current U.S. divisiveness.

Holocaust survivors Cora der Koorkanian and Carla Peperzak will share their insights for today in a "story court" from 6:30 to 8 p.m., Sunday, March 31, in Hemmingson Ballroom.

Cora, whose name at birth was Cora Clara Moscovici, survived the Holocaust with her immediate family. Two brothers, taken to labor camps, were released in August 1944, but half of her extended family from northern Romania and France did not survive.

Carla, who was born in 1923 in Holland, grew up in Amsterdam dreaming of becoming a doctor. When the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, she was required to have an ID with a large "J" on it and later to wear the Star of David. She

became active in the Resistance, hiding about 40 people, helping them obtain IDs, food and medical supplies. About 75 percent of her extended family were killed in the Holocaust. Carla has been sharing her story with students since 1992 and is active in the Seattle Holocaust Center for Humanity's Speakers Bureau.

She was recently named Washington State Person of the year for her dedication to calling for people to respect each other. She will receive the award at 2 p.m., Feb. 20, at the Governor's Mansion in Olympia.

A panel with Ken Stern, Barbara Perry, Brian Levin and Kristine, directors from the consortium of academic centers for the study of hate, will discuss "Hate: Documenting It, Understanding It and Countering It" at 7 p.m., Monday, April 22, in Cataldo Hall, with a live webinar.

They will address why hate has always been a problem, the value of shining light on it, how current events help students understand the human capacity to hate, effective ways to counter it and how lessons from the past shape understanding of hate today.

Kristine hopes participants will leave considering "What would I have done?" and "What can I do?"

For information, visit www.gonzaga.edu/holocaustexhibit.



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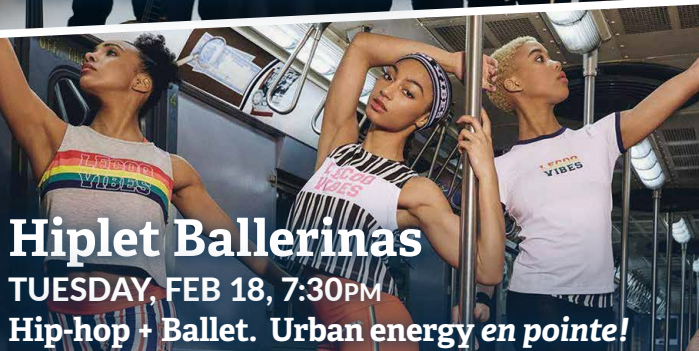
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Improving access to treatment, reducing suicide are among pair's goals

Continued from page 1

rate of incarceration, homelessness, overdoses, drug and alcohol addiction, and high suicide rate are all symptoms of untreated mental illness.

Gonzaga University's program for psychiatric nurses strives to address these issues. Students in this program can earn either a master's or doctoral degrees.

The program is now mostly online courses with some on-campus immersions to give students more time to focus on their in-field training.

To keep the professors up to date, they are required to stay in practice.

"They can't just teach in a classroom. They have to be part of delivering care," Carol explained.

Students often come with experience in the medical field, see how patients with mental illness are treated and want to learn more in order to help.

"We have students who have worked in the emergency room and are driven here to earn their psychiatric nurse practitioner degree because they didn't like the way patients with mental illness were being treated," Jeff said.

A focus of this program is to eliminate the stigma for mental health. Gonzaga has two strategies to do this.

First, students have to reflect on themselves. By addressing their biases, they gain clarity so they can focus on the patient instead of their own problems.

Second, students are required to complete volunteer hours at nonprofits or charities, such as homeless shelters or free clinics, where they can see how serious untreated mental illness is.

Students are to look past the stigma and see the human being hidden by their illness, said Jeff.

"I tell students, when looking into the eyes of somebody who is mentally ill, psychotic or depressed, to see how the person is struggling," he said.

Carol grew up in Othello, a small farming community. She graduated from Eastern Washington University with a nursing degree before attending the University of Washington and earning her master of psychiatric nursing and doctor of psychiatric nursing practice degrees.

She had always had a passion for psychiatric nursing. While working for Sacred Heart Medical Center, she was assigned to patients with mental illness because she was able to connect with them.

"I asked questions to understand how they were feeling. I



Carol Kottwitz and Jeff Ramirez build sensitivity in students.

was supposed to focus on medical conditions, but I was talking to folks to find out about their lives," she said.

Carol began working at Eastern State Hospital, which funded her master's degree. While she was there from 1984 until 2015, she witnessed changes in treating patients with mental illness. She said there was a major change in the community perceptions about mental illness and approaches to care within the system.

Since joining the GU faculty, she has started her own private practice. Her passion is to change one life at a time, whether it be her students or her patients.

Seeing strict rules at state hospitals increased Carol's understanding of challenges people with mental illness face. In her private practice, she can connect with patients more and align business practices to favor patients' wellbeing.

Many think private practices are cash pay, but she sees Medicare and Medicaid patients, who may have challenges with access to care and are grateful the bus stop is right outside.

Often state funded practices limit patient sessions to 15 minutes, not allowing enough time to connect and treat the patient. Some clinic policies may result in denial of care because of cancellations or missing appointments, effectively "firing" them from care.

Carol finds this frustrating, considering the challenges her patients face just to make it to an appointment. She is aware that mental illness may impair a patient's ability to make and keep appointments, many patients do not have their own vehicle or reliable transportation, and they face other hurdles in making appointments.

She doesn't believe in "firing" clients because they miss

two appointments, knowing they may struggle to get out of bed, be thinking about killing themselves or lack access to transportation. She reaches out and checks up on patients to make sure they're okay.

Jeff shared his background, growing up in a Catholic family in the Tri-Cities, where he attended a Catholic elementary school before public high school and community college for a nursing degree and continued his education earning a doctorate in nursing science.

He started in cardiac care at Sacred Heart Medical Center, later working in management. He soon found his passion was treating and connecting with patients with mental illness.

When he went to Eastern State Hospital, where he first met Carol, he found few families were around to be involved with the patients, and there were fewer services.

Although he never served in the military, Jeff saw the high suicide rate in returning veterans when his niece came back from Afghanistan. He wondered how he could help. This led him to work with patients with PTSD at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Spokane.

Jeff learned to reflect on himself to keep from falling into negative stigmas about mental illness.

"I have to understand my own problems in order to see what's going on. What is going on may

be my issue, not the patient's," he said.

"It's not fair to a patient when I have a bad day from having a flat tire or being late to work," he said.

He knows to be aware of his bad day and separate himself from it when he is dealing with a patient who just attempted suicide.

"As I have matured and had exposure to folks who live different lives from my 'house jazz,' I realize that some of the strongest, most courageous people I've ever met are some of my clients," he said.

Carol and Jeff, who both seek to lower suicide rates, had the

chance to affect thousands of lives in 2014 by being appointed to serve on a committee to carry out Washington State House Bill 1424.

The Washington State Legislative passed a law requiring nurses and other health practitioners to complete six hours of continuing education in suicide assessment in order to combat rising suicide rates.

They were on the team assigned to evaluate state programs to determine if they complied.

For information, call 313-6484 or email kottwitz@gonzaga.edu or ramirez@gonzaga.edu.

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Intern understands discrimination people seeking housing face

Rachel Shomali's work as an intern at the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance is an opportunity for her to talk with people experiencing discrimination as they seek housing in Spokane.

As a dual citizen of the United States and Palestine, she identifies with the struggle of people facing discrimination,

"I talk with people who phone to figure if the discrimination is based on one of seven classes—race, color, national origin, religion/creed, disability, family status or gender/sex—protected by federal and state fair housing laws," she said.

Because she speaks Arabic, as well as English, she takes some of the calls from Arab speakers.

Rachel has been in Spokane since August 2019 as one of four young adult interns participating in the second year of the Disciples of Christ's XPLOR program, which also has sites in St. Louis, Dallas, Hiram, Ohio and Bloomington, Ind.

The interns live in community and serve local nonprofits: Family Promise, the Women's Hearth and the Marilee Apartments.

"Based on my interests, I was matched with the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance," she said. "I applied to seek opportunities, because jobs in Palestine are limited."

Born in Michigan, she moved with her family to Beit Sahour in the Bethlehem district of Palestine when she was 12. She graduated from an American high school and studied at Birzeit University north of Jerusalem, graduating in December 2018 with a degree in marketing. She spent fall semester of 2017 in Bilbao, Spain, so she knows some Spanish, too.

Through her affiliation with the YWCA and YMCA in Palestine, and a partnership through the Disciples Global Ministries, she learned of the Disciples Peace Fellowship peace internship in the summer of 2016. That program takes college students to speak at several Disciples camps in the U.S. She and another woman shared stories about daily life in terms of culture, food and music, and also about life in Palestine, Israel and under occupation.

They told of Palestinians having limited rights and restricted movement, encountering the wall through the West Bank and checkpoints every day.

"The West Bank is like Swiss cheese, with Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements cut by some roads that are only for Israelis," Rachel said.

Birzeit University, north of Jerusalem, should be 30 minutes away, but often took her an hour or



Rachel Shomali works with Northwest Fair Housing Alliance.

more, because she was stopped at checkpoints where Israeli soldiers might search the car, check her ID and question her.

In the summer of 2017, she accepted the invitation of a pastor in La Mesa, Calif., near San Diego, to lead adult book discussions and volunteer at a summer camp.

After graduating, Rachel applied for XPLOR, another Disciples program, and worked temporarily in sales at a hotel art gallery and bookshop in Bethlehem.

Visiting U.S. camps and in San Diego, she found most Americans open and receptive.

"When a man in an adult class said all Palestinians are involved in Hamas and are terrorists, I told him that was not true," Rachel said. "I said Hamas is a political faction that started after occupation in resistance to the conflict and denial of human rights. She pointed out that not all Palestinians are associated with it.

"I told him I believe in nonviolent civil disobedience," she said.

At Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Rachel is on staff with several from other countries. Fair housing specialist Abdella Abdella from Sudan handles most of the Arabic callers. Another fair housing specialist, Christina Mitma, is half Peruvian. She and assistant director Shahrokh Nikfar, who immigrated from Iran, have both been there 16 years.

Others on the staff are Marley Hochendormer, executive director, Shannon Bedard, fair housing specialist, and Peggy Rolando,

finance manager.

Marley said the XPLOR intern last year, Emily Newsom from Virginia, is working with a fair housing organization in Chicago.

In contrast with other volunteers and interns, XPLOR interns work 30 hours a week with the agency for 10 months.

"That amount of time gives continuity and develops skills so the intern can contribute," said Marley, who has been with the agency since April 2005.

She had been an attorney in Idaho and Washington, working with Idaho Legal Services and with the Nez Perce tribe. Her son was born in 2004. After her husband found a job in Spokane, the position opened.

"I wanted to practice non-traditional social justice law. Fair housing with a civil rights mission fit," Marley said.

"As a small agency director, it's easy to take the ball and run, but I need to be organized enough to delegate work," she said.

Rachel then discussed ways

the alliance helps people facing discrimination in housing.

"For example, if someone faces discrimination because of a disability, the alliance asks the landlord to make reasonable accommodation or modifications, like adding a grab bar in the bathroom," she said.

Staff analyze impediments to fair housing based on laws, gathering data on barriers impeding a person from finding housing in any of 17 counties the agencies serves.

When Rachel came, the alliance had completed a survey in Spokane on impediments. She has helped do the survey for Snohomish County and Everett.

She also organizes files and events, like an April 23 Annual Fair Housing Conference at the Spokane Convention Center. The conference will draw about 500 property managers, social workers, attorneys, real estate sales people, policy workers and civic leaders.

She helps write Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants and uses her skills in marketing to design posters and PR materials, and to organize community forums.

"I previously had no idea how Fair Housing Law protected people to prevent homelessness," she said.

Part of XPLOR involves interns living together in a house near

North Hill Christian Church and connecting to Disciples churches—North Hill and Country Homes Christian churches.

The interns have their own rooms and share meals three times a week, taking turns with cooking.

"We dedicate time each week to the churches, helping organize events and leading study programs," said Rachel, who began in January an adult Bible study discussion telling of daily life in Palestine under military occupation.

She helped in October with the church's "Trunk or Treat" Halloween outreach and will participate in a regional youth retreat in March.

Disciples pastor Tiffany De-Tienne is the interns' spiritual advisor, meeting with the four on Fridays, inviting them to reflect on their internships, discuss current issues such as racism and violence, and share how they relate to Christianity.

Rachel, who grew up Catholic and has connected with different churches over the years, finds that the Disciples' focus on social justice relates to her faith roots.

She especially liked the Peace Fellowship platform to talk about social justice and work with different NGOs on justice.

For information, call 209-2670 or email rachelsho328@gmail.com.



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Ferris student calls for seeing King's dream 20/20 through a new lens

Saron Legesse Zemedkun, president of the Black Student Union and student at Ferris High School, read an original essay, "The Dream Through a New Lens" during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally Jan. 20. She moved to Spokane from Ethiopia in East Africa when she was four years old.

With this year being 2020, "the numerical expression for healthy vision," she asked, "Through what lens do we see America?"

Saron said King dreamed in 1963 of a day when former slaves and former slave owners would sit together in brotherhood, and people would be judged by character, not skin color.

In the America he saw, blacks were denied equal rights, civil

liberties, a seat on a bus, fair housing, employment opportunities and voting rights.

Has his dream "become blurred or do we need new lenses to see that change has come, disguised as equality with no equity?" Saron asked, noting that "we are not equal" until there is equal value to minority businesses, equal pay for women, and government hiring reflects demographics—"as simple as school teachers and administrators who look like me."

As a young black woman, she is troubled by African Americans experiencing deprivation and despair because of being labeled by mainstream society.

"Black Americans have to work twice as hard to get half as far as



Saron Zemedkun

white colleagues," she said.

"Internalized colorism and systemic racism" affect status and create assumptions so being black means to some being a criminal, she said, pointing out that King believed "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Blacks are "the most unprotected race in America," resulting in a high mortality rate for black males ages 15 to 34, who are nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by law enforcement.

"We are constantly told how to walk, talk and dress so we don't draw suspicious advances," Saron said.

King was not silent about the killings of Emmett Till or Medgar Evers, or about lynchings or Jim Crow laws.

Her generation is frowned on for challenging the killings of Trayvon Martin, Eric Gardner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Botham Jean or At-

tiana Jefferson.

"Social injustice is a threat to us and the fabric of the U.S. Constitution when we ignore it," she said, challenging those who are silent and inviting America into a future where "peace and love overpower evil and hatred" and where all people regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or political belief "can stand united and honor the creed that all are created equal."

Saron said the expression that Black Lives Matter will not be offensive when there is equal value to expressions that white lives, blue lives, brown, yellow and red lives matter.

"All lives matter," she said, calling for marching for freedom, looking through lenses with "20/20 vision of an America where everyone has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

NAACP leader calls people to link arms

Kiantha Duncan spoke at the 2020 MLK Day rally on behalf of the NAACP Spokane, making a point that it's not just an organization for poor people or black people.

"It's your organization whoever you are," she said, inviting people to become involved.

She invited people in the Convention Center to connect elbows or join hands to symbolize the connection of each person in the room as they honor King.

"I hope we live his beliefs and dreams every day," said Kiantha, who is program manager with Empire Health. "If not, we need to check ourselves. We need to look out for others, including people we do not know."

Linking arms, she said, demonstrates what connectedness in the community looks like for all humankind—"everybody in here and everybody not in here. It's about our shared goal for every

person in the world.

"That means we are to care for those who are homeless and those who are housed. We are to care for immigrants seeking refuge and those who were born here. We are to care for all members of the LGBTQ community. We are to care for people in prisons, even those who committed crimes," Kiantha said.

"King did not exclude anyone. He was for all of us," she said, inviting people to look at those sitting beside them and say, "You are important to the world, to the Spokane community and the global community."

Kiantha advised for people to care about their brothers and sisters, not just themselves because the times may change, and the one they do not care about "may one day be the one to care about us."

Some are conservative and some are liberal, she said.

"We may disagree with some-



Kiantha Duncan

one, and it may be hard to come together, but if we do that, if we stay connected and care about all individuals in the community and world, Spokane can change the world," Kiantha said.

Chaplain says past informs young for present

Continued from page 1

to the vision of a land where each person is judged by the content of their character not the color of their skin," she said. "We need to tell young people to have courageous conversations about discrimination, racism and inequality.

"As the next generation, they will carry the mantle. If we don't teach them about the past, it will repeat itself. We need to use the past to inform young people how they talk about the present and the future," Stephy continued. "We

need to show the next generation of leaders what it means to be a 'Beloved Community,' not just marching hand-in-hand today, but when the day is over. We need to show them we will take action against racial injustice, not just today, but the next day and the next day and the next.

"Will we make it more than just one day on? Make every day a day to make a difference in our community. We need to do something different today, tomorrow and in the future for

the betterment of humankind. We need to involve young people in our community and show them there is love and kindness today, tomorrow and in the future."

Stephy quoted King: "Tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now and if we are waiting, the right time is NOW."

She closed saying, "That's why we need to keep our eyes on the prize."

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MLK Day is a chance to pass on the legacy and history of civil rights

Since he was a boy, Martin Luther King Jr. Day was James Watkins' favorite time of year.

"It has been one time a year when the city goes color blind and greets everyone in love as we celebrate the Rev. Dr. King," he said, speaking for the annual Commemoration Celebration Jan. 19 at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

James is pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, along with serving as a lieutenant at Airway Heights Correction Center.

In introducing him at the service, Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morningstar Baptist Church and president of the Spokane Ministers Alliance—which co-sponsored the service with the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center—said he admired James for filling the shoes of a legend, his father Happy Watkins, who is now pastor emeritus.

Every year, Happy has recited King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which instilled in James the importance of the holiday for passing on the legacy and history of civil rights to the next generation.

Now it's James' turn as father and grandfather to tell the story, which he shared in the context of a Scripture lesson.

James read from Luke 10 the story of the Good Samaritan. A lawyer asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what the law said. He said to love God with all "your strength, soul and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself." When he asked Jesus who his neighbor was, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, helping a man robbed, stripped and left to die on the road to Jericho. A priest and Levite passed by, but a Samaritan—an outsider despised by Jews—acted in mercy.

"The underlying issues we face today are hostility, racism and classism, almost more than in the time of King," James said, commenting that "the priest and deacon passed by the man who was robbed, but the Samaritan—one not liked in society—one whose heart is filled with sympathy and pity. He bound his wounds, pouring wine and oil, and took the man to the inn, paying two denarii, enough for 24 days, so the man could recuperate.

"How many of us would do that? How many of us see folks



The Rev. James Watkins told of the need to educate youth.

who do not look like us to be our neighbor and step out of their comfort zone?" he said.

James believes King heard that scripture as a boy. The son of college-educated parents, King at 15 graduated from high school and entered Morehouse College, graduating in 1948 at 19. He earned a master of divinity degree in 1951, married Coretta Scott in 1953 in Alabama, and earned a doctoral degree from Boston University in 1955, when he became pastor at Dexter Ave. Baptist Church.

Soon after that Rosa Parks sat in the bus, "so King would march so Obama would run," he quipped.

King rallied pastors to act—to start the Montgomery bus boycott to improve society. The work for civil rights led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

"King believed in agitating and legislating," said James, telling of him sitting beside Ralph Abernathy on a plane one day, looking out the window and saying, "We can never forget the ground crew"—all who came before."

So James listed some of the "ground crew" for the civil rights movement, saying "we need to know about them."

- Ella Baker helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

- James Baldwin was an American novelist, playwright and activist exploring racial, sexual and class differences.

- Daisy Bates played a leading role in the Little Rock Integration Crisis of 1957.

- Julian Bond, a civil rights leader, NAACP leader, politician, professor and writer, helped found the SNCC and Southern Poverty Law Center.

"How many of our children know about them?" James asked. "Do we know our history?"

He continued listing names.

- Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Ture, a militant socialist organizer of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and the global Pan-African movement.

- Malcolm X, an American Muslim minister and human rights activist, described the choice between King and himself as the choice "between the ballot or the bullet."

Going back in history, James listed some other examples:

- Frederick Douglas went from being a slave to being an abolitionist.

- W.E.B. Dubois, who was the first African American to earn a doctoral degree from Harvard, led the Niagara Movement and later helped form the NAACP.

- Medgar Evers, a civil rights leader in Mississippi who was shot by a sniper bullet in his driveway for his voter-registration

efforts and economic boycotts.

- Fanny Lou Hamer was a champion of civil rights and women's rights.

- John Lewis, who led the Bloody Sunday march from Selma to Montgomery, said he carried four books, an apple and an orange, because he expected to go to jail. He has represented Georgia 17 terms in the House of Representatives. He recently announced he has pancreatic cancer.

- Another civil rights leader, U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, died in October.

"They understood the need to take the message of civil rights to the culture," said James.

"The Rev. Dr. King had a prayer life second to none," he added. "He was close to God. For Christ he lived. For Christ he died. Nothing could separate Dr. King from Christ. His church was bombed. His house was bombed. He did

not waiver or change course because of fear. God gave him the Spirit to live.

"I do not separate King and Christ. We honor King. We honor Christ," he said.

"I look to the ground crew for civil rights who have been around for a long time," he said, turning to name some local civil rights heroes, the Rev. James and Lydia Sims, and Carl Maxey.

"As long as I stand, I continue to do the work they started," he said.

"The next generation is falling behind. They need to hear the message about civil rights," he said. "I stand on the shoulders of giants who passed the message to my generation. We need to be true to King's message to love one another as we love ourselves. We are the ground crew."

For information, call 868-0856 or visit mlkspokane.org.

Councilwoman sworn in at celebration

Opening the service, Lonnie Mitchell, pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church asserted that the bullet that killed King did not destroy the movement, because on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, folks across America hold hands and celebrate King's life and work, and celebrate our diversity and unity in the community.

Lonnie expressed gratitude for Spokane celebrating diversity and meaning it. An example was that Spokane City Council recently choose Betsy Wilkerson to fill the vacant seat of Council President Breean Beggs. She is the first African American in 20 years—following Roberta Greene—to serve on City Council. As part of the service, the Honorable George Fearing swore her into her new role.

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Holocaust survivor recognizes witness of a survivor who died recently

As Holocaust survivors die, Cora der Koorkanian of Congregation Emanu-El in Spokane believes it's important to recognize witness they have given.

This summer, Cora learned that Eva Mozes Kor, one of the "Mengele twins," had died July 4 in Krakow, Poland, at the age of 85.

After learning of Eva's death, Cora spoke about her friendship and memories of Eva at a luncheon at Temple Beth Shalom.

"I had wanted to bring Eva to Spokane to speak, so sharing her story in a memorial was one way I could bring her here," she said.

Eva died while leading an educational trip with Children of Auschwitz Nazi Death Lab Experiments Survivors (CANDLES), which she founded in 1984.

She made the trip annually to share her experiences and her perspectives as a Holocaust survivor, which she wrote about in her book, *Surviving the Angel of Death*.

Cora said that Eva, who forgave Mengele, explained in her book and a 2006 documentary, "Forgiving Dr. Mengele," that she found it better to forgive than to live with hate, because "hate is like a cancer."

"She had realized that for her to live a healthy life, she had to forgive," Cora said.

"I do not hate people who harmed me and my family in Bucharest," Cora said. "They took our assets and house. Half of my family who lived in Northern Romania died.

"Eva's positive attitude spoke to me. She was given lemons, so she made lemonade," Cora said. "There is no room in our lives for bitterness. We need to walk forward positively. She forgave for her suffering. So do I."

"Eva was a powerhouse with a sheer will to live and make the best of life. She inspired me. I want to keep her memory alive," she said.

Aware that genocide continues around the world, Cora learned to forgive without forgetting or hating.

While living in Israel and studying to be a nurse in the army from 1953 to 1956, one of her classmates was Miriam Mozes Zeiger, Eva's twin sister, who had also been involved in Mengele's experiments in Auschwitz.

"I didn't know Miriam's story until one day she became very sick and told me," Cora said, noting that many Holocaust survivors just wanted to live "normal lives" and did not want to speak about the horrors they experienced.

Cora realizes some survivors cannot forgive. She remembers



Cora der Koorkanian finds photo of her nursing class in Israel.

that Eva's sister Miriam often smiled, but a classmate from Belgium never smiled. Her mood was always "like foul weather," Cora said.

During their studies, Cora met Eva, who served in a different branch of the military.

"I felt close to both of them, because I was born in 1934, three days before they were born. Like me, they were also born in Romania, but in Transylvania. We joked that we were almost triplets," said Cora, whose great grandparents had fled pogroms persecuting Jews in Russia in the 1840s and had settled in Romania.

Through World War II and the Holocaust, her family lived in Bucharest, bribing local officials in order to survive. Two brothers were sent to labor camps in 1942.

In 1950, after Communists took power in Romania, she left to live in Israel where she met Miriam and Eva.

Cora later worked with the World Health Organization in Brazil before marrying an American foreign service officer. They settled in Manchester, N.H.

Cora last saw Eva in April 2014 at Manchester, where Eva had spoken at Cora's invitation at an interfaith gathering with two Jewish synagogues and a Presbyterian church.

"The room was packed. As she spoke for an hour, it was so silent you could hear a pin drop," Cora said.

The year after she spoke, Cora bought 18 copies of Eva's book, *Surviving the Angel of Death*, to take with her to a reunion of classmates in Israel. Eva had signed every book with the names of her sister's classmates, half of whom were also Holocaust survivors.

Cora told Eva's story.

Eva and Miriam were 10 when they were taken to Auschwitz. Dressed alike, they were identified as twins. They were separated from their parents and two older sisters, whom they never saw again.

They were among 1,500 sets

of twins Josef Mengele used in doing genetic medical experiments. He changed the color of eyes, transplanted uteruses, did experiments without anesthesia and more. Many died as a result of the experiments.

At first, Eva was chosen as the "control" and Miriam underwent experiments on her kidneys. Then Miriam was the control when they inoculated Eva with a bacteria or virus that made her very ill for several months.

Eva survived "by sheer will power," Cora said, and helped Miriam survive.

When the Soviet Army liberated the camp on Jan. 12, 1945, only 180 children, most of them twins, were alive. Many had died from experiments.

Miriam became a nurse, lived in Israel and had three children. Later, when her kidneys were giving out, Eva gave Miriam one of her kidneys, so she could live longer. Miriam died in 1993 at the age of 59.

For many years, Cora did not know where Eva was.

Eva married Michael Kor, an American citizen and Holocaust survivor, and came to the United States in 1960. In 1965, she became a U.S. citizen.

In 1978, after an NBC miniseries, "The Holocaust," Eva and Miriam, who were living in Israel, began locating other twins. They located 170 surviving twins living around the world.

In 1984, Eva, who has two children, founded the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, Ind.

The center, which her son now runs, educates people about eugenics, the Holocaust and the power of forgiving.

In 2007, Eva persuaded Indiana state legislators to require Holocaust education in secondary schools.

She was featured in a 2015 CNN documentary, "Voices of Auschwitz," and a 2016 production, "Incredible Survivors."

In 2015, she testified in Germany at the trial of former Nazi Oskar Gröning, 93. He admitted his complicity in the mass extermination of Jews and asked for

"forgiveness from the Lord."

Eva appreciated that he testified truthfully about what had happened, and she thanked him.

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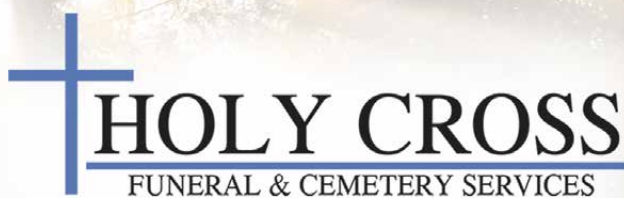
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Center for Justice responds to vulnerable people, community's needs

After 15 years in Seattle as a bankruptcy, consumer, debtor/creditor, foreclosure, real estate and tax attorney, Dainen Penta came to head the Center for Justice in Spokane in January 2019 to address the "sea of need" he met in those cases.

"I wanted to have impact on the bigger world as a 'community' lawyer to resolve community problems," he said. "Legal work should be led and informed by the community."

The Center for Justice both provides free legal services for people living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or struggling with mental health or addiction, and advocates for changes in the criminal justice system.

"The pressing issue in Spokane and the U.S. is for criminal justice reform, which involves both helping people return to society after incarceration, and working for police and government accountability," Dainen said.

A 2013 state survey found that only one in 10 low-income people have help when they have legal problems.

"It's not just low-income people. Few realize there are legal components to problems they face, and a lawyer can help," he said. "We serve people from 0 to 400 percent of the poverty level."

In 1994, Dainen, the Korean-born son of a Longview attorney, first came to Spokane to study at Whitworth on recommendation of a friend in a non-denominational church he attended. While majoring in international studies and French, he studied for a semester in southern France.

Being open with friends at the Christian university about being gay, he valued the acceptance he experienced.

After graduating in 1997, Dainen worked with the Oregon Health Sciences University while applying to Lewis and Clark Law School. He graduated in 2001 and completed a master's in tax law in 2002 at the University of Washington.

He went home to Longview to work as a lawyer with his father, passed the bar exam and started to practice there.

In 2004, he moved to Seattle, where he had his own practice and worked with several small firms. Along with practicing bankruptcy law, foreclosure defense, defending people against debt collectors and protecting consumers, he did real estate work representing condominium and home-owner associations, often using mediation.

"I went to law school with the idea of helping people and doing good work to make a living," he said. "In work with the Center for Justice, I am in touch with



Dainen Penta guides efforts for criminal justice reform.

my own humanity as I work with clients. I believe every individual is of infinite worth.

"Many people grow up in churches and the values are woven into their fabric. I see biblical leaders as humanitarians," he said. "A Franciscan friar taught me that 'the Divine in me is to recognize the Divine in you.'"

"At the Center for Justice, we address imbalances with corporations and wealthy people having immense access to courts and lawyers. Too often it's about how much justice a person can afford. We want to level the playing field. If someone can't afford a lawyer, the impact may be permanent and damaging."

Dainen said the center's services and staff help people resolve housing disputes, restore their driver's licenses, clear their criminal records, reduce legal financial obligations and protect the Spokane River.

- **The housing justice program** holds legal clinics on landlord-tenant relations and tenants' right to safe, healthy, affordable housing.

Housing attorney Matthew Larsen serves about 60 people a week. He helps tenants avoid evictions and negotiates with landlords to resolve problems—like doing repairs to meet health and safety standards to avoid going to court.

- **The relicensing program** resolves unpaid tickets to end indefinite suspension of licenses for failure to pay traffic fines people can't afford.

"It's hard to live in Spokane without a driver's license," said Dainen. "People need to drive to go to work, pick up their children and shop for groceries. When people drive with a suspended license and are pulled over, they are ticketed for driving with a suspended license, compounding fines. Suspended licenses add to poverty, unemployment and incarceration."

For 10 years, Virla Spencer, a non-lawyer advocate, has worked with courts to set payments of \$25 to \$50 a month so people can have their licenses restored. She also helps drivers find insurance and understand what they need to do to keep their licenses. She serves more than 500 people a year.

Other groups around the U.S. see this Center for Justice program as a model they want to replicate.

- **The Smart Justice Coalition** believes jail is an expensive, ineffective way to reduce crime and make the community safe, said Cam Zorrozuza, who heads the Smart Justice and Criminal Justice Reform Programs. They work for a just, effective regional criminal justice system with alternatives to incarceration, including treatment and support services to break the cycle of crime, save money and meet victims' needs.

The center helps people erase—vacate or expunge—past convictions, and reduce legal financial obligations because laws let people overcome their past, Dainen said. "People are amazed that's possible after they have been prosecuted, convicted and served time. It opens doors to jobs and housing."

The Spokane City Council in 2017 and Washington state in 2018 passed ban-the-box laws, prohibiting employers from asking job applicants about past arrests or convictions until it's determined if the person is qualified. Employers and landlords would not first see a person's record.

"We keep an eye on police related to use of force and the number of people of color stopped and in jail," Dainen said. "African Americans are over-represented in jails compared to their proportion in Spokane's population."

The center also monitors disparities of discipline in public school students with disabilities and students of color.

"Use of force incidents are rela-

tively few nationwide, but when they happen, we want the police department to be forthcoming about their use of force and policies," he said.

Dainen realizes that even when police and schools change policies, education is needed to change the culture and people's hearts.

He respects that police officers and first responders put their lives on the line every day as they encounter people struggling with mental health and addiction. He knows that many officers want accountability spelled out, so he urges the Police Guild to work with the Police Ombuds Office and participate in implicit bias training.

"Just because someone is a suspect or accused of a crime does not mean his/her rights go away," he said.

The center includes Spokane Riverkeeper, which protects the river's health through education, river cleanup and trash pickups, and advocacy to hold polluters and governments accountable.

"We pick up trash for homeless people camping by the river, going with representatives of SNAP and Frontier Behavioral Health to connect them to services."

Dainen told of two cases the Center for Justice recently litigated.

Representing homeless groups and nonprofits, it took the case of Camp Hope, the tent city on the sidewalk outside Spokane City Hall in December 2018. The Ninth Circuit Court in Boise had ruled if there were no shelters open, police could not tear down such camps.

"In that case, we ask the City of Spokane to be sensitive when

clearing encampments," Dainen said. "Usually they pick up all personal belongings and throw them in a trash truck, as they did with Camp Hope. That practice raises issues about due process."

The second case challenged the city not to put Proposition 1 on the ballot. The measure said city employees or police were to ask people for their immigration or citizenship status, and report to immigration authorities.

The center won in Spokane Superior Court in 2017. The State Appeals Court ruled it was unjust and should be kept off the ballot. The State Supreme Court decided not to hear the case, upholding the appeals court.

"That underscores how courts are a check on illegal actions," Dainen said.

The center, unlike some nonprofits, accepts no federal and little or no state funding, so it is "free to respond to community needs quickly and can sue the government," said Dainen, whose role includes securing grants and donations.

In 1999, Jim Sheehan founded the Center for Justice to help people falling through the cracks. It began as legal services for those who could not afford an attorney. Many know it for challenging police in the 2006 fatal beating of Otto Zehm, bringing changes in police policy.

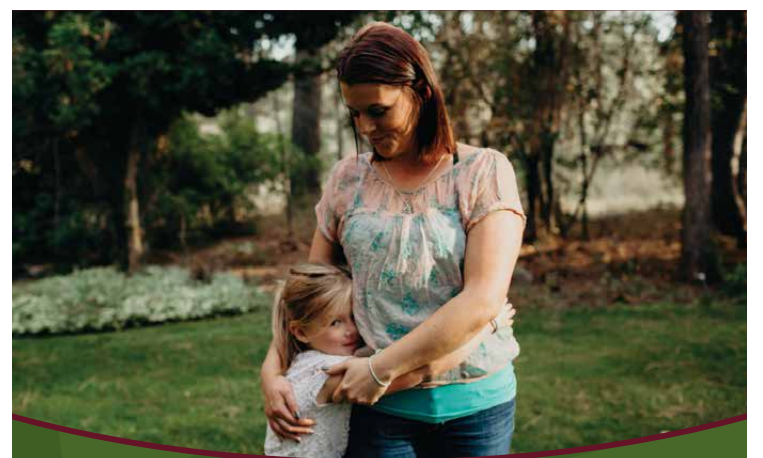
"Every day, we ask, 'What can we do to help make Spokane a better place?' We do not lose hope, because we know we help people and make a difference for the community," he said.

For information, call 835-5211 or email dpenta@cfjforjustice.org.

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Celebrate Fat Tuesday



Jazz Mass

by Dan Keberle - Jazz Orchestra and St. Mark's Choir

Preacher: Rabbi Tamar Malino
Temple Beth Shalom Spokane

Tuesday, Feb. 25 - 7 p.m.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church
24th & Grand Blvd.

The tradition of Fat Tuesday (Shrove Tuesday) is to feast on fat things before the lean weeks of Lent.

Who will challenge injustices, inequities? Our neighbors right here!

Who's going to step out of their comfort zones and speak out for justice and equality as Martin Luther King Jr. did? Who's going to be the voice for freedom in these times? Who's going to challenge corruption, deceit and hegemony?

Who is going to step out and step up? Who in God's name will God raise up?

Are you ready when God does that?

Will we be too confused by the slanderous name calling, belittling and bickering? Will we be able to see truth in the midst of the deluge of information?

Australia is burning. Indonesia is flooding. Hurricanes are raging. Earthquakes compound hurricane damage in Puerto

Rico. There were gunshots outside the Richard Allen Apartments next to The Fig Tree office. Troubles are not just far away. They are right outside our doors and inside our doors.

The news rages with more breaking news, more bad weather, more crime reports, more troubles. How can we take any more? Remember, the news happens, but it is often about the unusual, the conflict, the celebrity, the sensation.

The news is crucial as it covers economic, political, social, religious and cultural realities. We need to be informed so we care, voice concerns, protest, act and vote. What would have done in the Holocaust?

What are we doing? What will we do? Questions from the upcoming Holocaust exhibit are relevant today.

Martin Luther King Jr. risked his life to speak the truth to win civil rights, as have many others through the centuries. We need movement leaders, educators and advocates?

Who will challenge pipelines, polluters and plastic to stand up for climate justice?

Who will challenge racial inequities in our community?

Who will challenge stigma on mental illness and reach out to care?

Who will challenge housing discrimination and open doors?

Who will challenge us to see with clear vision so we respect all lives?

Who will challenge us to link arms and act together for justice every day?

Who will challenge us to learn from the past so we make life better?

Who will call us to speak out when we see hate and genocide?

Who will make sure the vulnerable have legal protections?

Who will challenge white supremacy and educate their communities on human rights?

We are not alone. Those who shared their stories and efforts in this issue are among the many people who do care and act.

Mary Stamp - editor

Faith community shares hope for creation leading to Expo '74's 50th

Just after Easter this year, Whitworth University's Office of Church Engagement and St. John's Episcopal Cathedral will host a conference called "Hope for Creation." It is designed to share a vision of hope for creation; showcase local caretakers of land, water and air, and renew Spokane's leadership on environmental care.

As we near the 50th anniversary of Expo '74, we now live with daily news about climate change. We wonder what we can do to preserve the natural environment for our children and their children.

Spokane's Expo '74 was the first world's fair dedicated to the environment. It called attention to environmental issues and helped to shape the consciousness of the Spokane community.

The Hope for Creation Conference on Friday and Saturday, April 17 and 18, at the cathedral, 127 E. 12th Ave., opens with information sharing by local groups who are actively working for harmonious living in our environment.

It's amazing what is happening to clean up the Spokane River, protect backyard pollinators, compost with worms, plant new trees, develop cooperative businesses, expand community gardens, manage wildlife habitat, reduce food waste, turn waste into energy, restore salmon migration and reduce our plastic footprint. There's also

a purchaser's guide to environmentally friendly companies.

As part of an Evensong contemplative service on Friday, the Spokane Tribe and Dean Heather VanDeventer will open the program. That evening, Bill Youngs, professor of history at Eastern Washington University and author of *The Fair and the Falls*, will speak on "Expo '74: The Environment Then and Now." Expo set foundations for care of the air, land and water.

The event will include theological reflection on Saturday with Whitworth theology professor Jonathan Moo speaking on "Creation Care: Bridging Science and Faith." He has written a book cataloguing biblical teachings about care for creation and he has a doctorate in wildlife biology, living the a balance of faith and science he will discuss.

After lunch, co-author Kara Odegard will present "A Report on the Spokane Community Adaptation Project." The just-completed study commissioned by the City of Spokane used a program developed at Oregon State University and input from climate scientists at University of Washington and University of Idaho to predict effects of climate change on Spokane.

Saturday sessions address technologies to put us back into harmony with nature; social actions to take, and how faith helps us face the environmental challenges.

Area resource leaders will help us ask: How will we adapt our agriculture practices as climate changes? How will Avista manage new patterns of run-off? How does living under the cloud of climate change affect psychological wellbeing? What are effects of climate change on health? What species in our area are at risk? What technologies are available today to draw down the CO2 in the air?

Can Spokane build a circular economy to minimize waste? How is the water quality of Lake Coeur d'Alene changing? Can we capture methane from waste treatment facilities? What needs to be done to clean up the tailings of the Midnight uranium mine?

High school students and young adults will discuss the future natural environment they will live in—their hopes, priorities and expectations when they take the reins.

The last session is for the faith community: What does faith teach about care for the environment? How does faith give us hope and direction? How does faith call us into action? Leaders from Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Native American and Islamic faith communities will share on the centrality of faith to uphold Hope for Creation. The formal program ends Saturday afternoon with sharing ideas and proposals for consideration by elected leaders. Throughout the Conference, the Cath-

edral art guild will host an environmental art exhibit of works by Spokane area artists.

The event is for civic leaders, nonprofit organizations, faith communities, business people and engaged citizens, young and old, conservative and liberal—all points of view are needed, and the dignity of each person will be respected.

The Hope for Creation Conference starts the four-year lead up to renew Spokane's leadership on the environment to celebrate Expo '74's 50th anniversary. The Conference provides a venue to develop networks of persons with common interests for subsequent work.

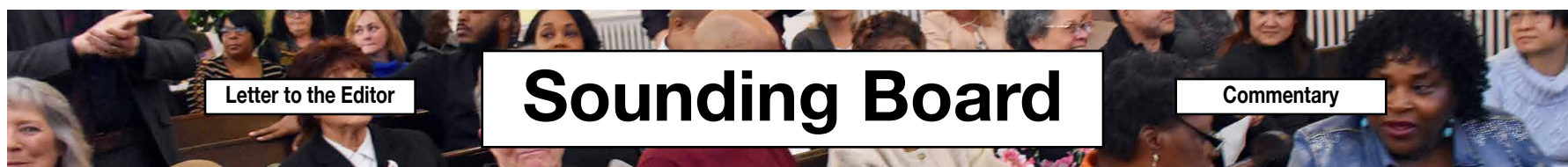
The steering committee includes Elizabeth Abbey of Whitworth University; Breean Beggs and Lori Kinnear of Spokane City Council; Pat Munts, WSU extension specialist and Spokesman Review columnist; Jennifer Ogden, Spokane Park Board vice president and St. John's parishioner; Mike Petersen, Lands Council executive director; Lenore Three Stars (Oglala Lakota), Reconciliation Calling Community, Native Tribes; Heather VanDeventer, Dean of St. John's Cathedral, and Joe Wittwer, pastor Life Center Church.

John Wallingford

Cathedral of St. John

whitworth.edu/hopeforcreation

jwallingford@gmail.com



Comments offered on indigenous women, Australia's fires, open doors, Methodist unity

I enjoyed reading the article in the January edition of the Fig Tree highlighting the efforts of Margo Hill with the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. The Fig Tree's reporting was more extensive than an earlier article in the Inlander. Through it, I gained a better appreciation of the gravity of the circumstances indigenous women face.

I have known Margo for several years through her work with Eastern Washington University's Urban and Regional Planning program and have always admired her dedication to her profession and the students at the university.

The Fig Tree did an outstanding job giving me insight in Margo's powerful contributions to her tribe, her people and the greater community. We should all be proud to have her serving this region.

Karl Otterstrom, Spokane

As part of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) National Response Team, I've been asked about assistance to Australia. Australia is a highly developed country and is currently mobilizing its own resources. With so many disasters around the world every dollar must be managed wisely so we do not send help until churches involved make specific requests. Working through the churches, we make

sure any assistance is put to best use. A good channel exists with Australia when requests were made.

The PDA is a member of the ACT Alliance, (Action by Churches Together), which consists of some 150 international faith-based organizations who coordinate international assistance. The Australian Lutheran World Service, a member of ACT, knows they will ask for assistance.

As we await their requests, we can pray constantly for our sisters and brothers there, in California and in so many other places that are having horrific experiences.

Mike Bullard

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
National Response Team

Due to very cold weather recently in Spokane, the management of the apartment complex where I live distributed notices to each tenant concerning steps to be taken to prevent freezing pipes in the apartments. In each apartment, every faucet needed to be slightly opened in order to drip water, and sink cabinet doors were to be left open at all times to bring in more warmth for the pipes. So I complied. The faucets were always set to drip, and the appropriate doors are left ajar.

As I took part in this maintenance ritual, I noticed how unusual the apartment looked

with several doors left open all the time. A thought came to mind: "Frozen pipes and open doors. Frozen hearts and open doors. Hearts of sadness, turmoil, fear, loneliness and open doors and open hearts."

There are certainly a number of ways to say and imagine this as we consider those in need physically, spiritually and emotionally. There are a number of ways to consider how we might bring more warmth to the world—the same warmth brought to us over 2,000 years ago. To paraphrase local utility companies, "Let's share the warmth!"

Pastor Dolores Ford, interim pastor
Country Homes Christian Church

News released about the United Methodist Church on Friday, Jan. 3 has raised questions among pastors and laypersons in the Inland District or the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference.

The shorthand for the plan that was released is "The Protocol," in which a group of 16 theologically diverse United Methodists from around the world privately gathered and negotiated some terms that may have an impact the future of our denomination.

At charge conferences throughout the fall, I spoke with district churches about how we are going to need to figure out

a way to either walk more loosely with each other—and accepting our theological diversity at some level—or part ways with a blessing for those unable to "walk with" those they disagree with on these issues.

This proposal was an attempt to negotiate some of the terms of what it might look like to "part ways with a blessing."

Some national and local news articles made it sound like an actual split in the UMC was announced, leading to many misunderstandings, but this is merely one more plan that will need to go before the General Conference in May 2020, where our future will hopefully become clearer.

I encourage folks to stay informed by United Methodist sources of news. A conference newsletter detailed many resources pertaining to the plan.

The newsletter can be requested at inland@pnwumc.org.

The article on the protocol is at umnews.org/en/news/diverse-leaders-group-offers-separation-plan. The website has links to the test and FAQs.

All in all, I encourage us to continue to pray for our world, our church and our vital ministries that we don't want to see damaged in a transitional period.

Gregg Sealey, Inland District
of the Pacific Northwest United
Methodist Church

Calendar of Events

- Jan 30 • **Homeless Connect**, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., spokanehc.com
- **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- Jan 31-Feb 9 • **"Dancing at Lughnasa**, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, 211 E. DeSmet Ave, 6 p.m., reception, 7:30 p.m.; Jan 30 - benefit performance for Our Place, 326-7267, office@ourplacespokane.org
- Feb 1 • **To Shalimar**: Art Inspired by Toni Morrison's Literature, Spokane Public Library, 524 S. Stone, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **"Building Community by Dialoguing** Through Difference," Spokane FAVs Coffee Talk, Scott Starbuck of Manito Presbyterian and Gonzaga Religious Studies, 5115 S. Freya, 11:30 a.m.
- **Annual Viva Vino & Brew Scholarship Fundraiser**, Shriner's Event Center, 7217 W. Westbow Blvd., 6 p.m., hbaspokane.net
- **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "The Light of Hope," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- Feb 2 • **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival**, "The Unorthodox," Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 2 p.m., sajfs.org/our-programs/sjcff
- Feb 3-7 • **"Exploring the Mystery** of the Creative Experience," a cohort program Spirit Center, Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, ID, 208-965-2000, spirit-center.org
- Feb 4 • **Tommy Orange**, Pulitzer-nominated novel *There, There* on plight of urban Native Americans, Gonzaga Visiting Writers Series, Hemmingson Ballroom at Gonzaga, 7:30 p.m., 313-6671, ciesla@gonzaga.edu
- Feb 5 • **Day of Reflection on Mary**, "Miriam of Nazareth: Homemaker, Disciple, Apostle," Fr. Mike Savelesky, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Ben Popp**, filmmaker and educator on filmmaking in the Pacific Northwest, Jundt Art Museum Auditorium, Gonzaga, 7 to 9 p.m.,
- Feb 6 • **"Living Faithfully**: A Practical Look at Faith, Hope and Love," First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, 6:30 to 8 p.m., 747-1058
- **"Through a Lens Darkly"** film on African American communities using cameras as a tool for social change, Spokane Downtown Library, 906 W. Main St., 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- **"Breaking Barriers**: Understanding and Responding to Diversity in Student Potential, presenters include Del Siegle, Susan Baum and Robin Schader, Whitworth University, 9 to 4 p.m., 777-4703
- **Nigeria and its Culture**, Sanya Ala presenter, Northtown Mall near Kohl's, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., spokanelibrary.org
- Feb 6, 13, 20 • **"Diverse Voices** Writing Group," Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit, 5:30 p.m., 279-0299, sparkcentral.org
- Feb 6, 20 • **Peace and Justice Action** Committee, 35 W. Main, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Feb 7 • **Meals on Wheels** of Spokane Cinn-A-Gram, order online deadline, mowspokane.org
- **Fig Tree Benefit/Board Meetings**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon for benefit / development, and 1 to 3 p.m., board, 535-1813
- Feb 7-8 • **Celebrating the Miracle of Freedom**, Shabbat of Study, Song, Prayer and Community with Cantor Dorothy Goldberg on Friday, Providence chaplain in Portland and disaster spiritual care for the Red Cross, Temple Beth Shalom, 747-3304, spokanetbs.org
- Feb 8 • **"Being Muslim in Spokane**, learn their story, their faith and struggles with racism, East Side Library, 524 E. Stone, 11 a.m. to noon
- **"Culture of the Maasai**, with Nicholas Sironka, South Hill Library, 3326 S. Perry, 11 a.m.
- **Native American Spirituality**, Donell Barlow, presenter, South Hill Library, 3 to 4 p.m.
- **"Malawi and the Warm Heart of Africa**," Christina Kamkosi on her culture and being black in America, Northtown Mall near Kohls, 3:30 p.m.
- **The Lonely** - Celebrating The Music of Roy Orbison, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W Sprague Ave., 7:30 p.m., thelonely.ca
- Feb 9 • **Choral Evensong**, St. John's Cathedral with Solis Cantoris, featuring music of Tallis and Palestrina, 127 E. 12th Ave., 5 to 6 p.m. service of Scripture, prayers and music,
- Feb 11 • **The Black Lens 5th Anniversary**, The Gathering House, 733 W. Garland, 6 to 8 p.m.
- **Truthful Tuesday Vigil** on Rosa Parks' Birthday, Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., 5 to 7 p.m., 926-7173
- Feb 12 • **"Black Panther"** film, Spokane Downtown Library, 906 W. Main, 5:35 to 7:49 p.m.
- **Hispanic Business/Professional Assn.** Monthly Luncheon, Mexicana Fiesta, 1227 S. Grand, 6 to 8 p.m., hbaspokane.net
- **"Cabin Fever Series: An African Safari,"** Sportsman and photographer Nick Ogden, Northtown Mall near Kohls, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Feb 13 • **Showing Up for Racial Justice** (SURJ) book discussion of Chapter 12 from *White Fragility*, 35 W. Main, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Feb 14 • **Dallas String Quartet Electric**, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts, Gonzaga, 7:30 p.m., 313-2787
- Feb 15 • **"The Soul of Soul Food,"** Douglas Williams owner of Dot's Soul Food, Northtown Mall near Kohls, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.
- **"Views of the Divinity of Christ,"** Garrett Kenney of Eastern Washington University religious studies program, Northtown Mall near Kohls, 3 to 4 p.m.
- Nov 17 • **NAACP General Membership Meeting**, Community Building 35 W. Main, 7 p.m., spkncpbr@gmail.com
- Feb 18 • **"Higher Power: The History of Evangelicals in America,"** Washington State University professor Matthew Sutton traces the religious right in America, Indian Trail Library, 4909 W. Barnes, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- Feb 18 • **"The History of the Civil Rights Movement in America,"** Devon Wilson, criminal justice chair of the Spokane NAACP, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.,
- Feb 18 • **"Hiulet Ballerinas,"** Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- Feb 20 • **"Behind the Hashtag: An evening with Patrisse Cullors**, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7 to 8:30 p.m., tickets
- Feb 21 • **American Exceptionalism** of Climate Change Denial, Vinai Norasakkunkit, Hemmingson Center Room 312, Gonzaga, noon to 1 p.m.
- **Go Red for Women Luncheon**, Spokane Convention Center, 10:30 a.m., ahaspokane.ejoinme.org
- **Native Project Healthy Heart Pow Wow** and Dinner, blood pressure and blood sugar screening, Rogers High School, 1622 E. Wellesley, 5 p.m., nativeproject.org
- Feb 23-Mar 1 • **BachFest**, Beethoven's 250th Birthday, 800-838-3006, nwbachfest.com
- Feb 24 • **Introduction to Judaism**, Elizabeth Goldstein, associate professor at Gonzaga, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 6:30 p.m.
- Feb 25 • **"Letter to Masanjia,"** documentary, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 1 to 3 p.m.
- **Jazz Mass**, Dan Keberle Jazz Orchestra and St. Mark's Choir; Rabbi Tamar Malino of Temple Beth Shalom preaching, St. Mark's Lutheran, 24th and Grand, 7 p.m.
- **"Finding York** of the Lewis and Clark Expedition," Bob Bartlett of EWU, South Hill Library, 3324 S. Perry, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- **Envisioning a Just Response** to the Catholic Clergy Abuse Crisis, Flannery Lecture of Catholic Theology with Jennifer Beste, Hemming Center Ballroom, Gonzaga 5:30 to 7 p.m., 313-6782
- Feb 26 • **Fig Tree mailing and distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 24th and Grand, 9:15 a.m., 535-1813
- **"I Am Not Your Negro,"** film, Spokane Downtown Library, 906 W. Main, 6 to 7:33 p.m.
- **Ash Wednesday**, Silent Day of Prayer, "The Lenten 40 Days and 40 Nights: Preparing to Celebrate the Passover of the Lord," Msgr. John Steiner, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., ihrc.net
- Feb 27 • **Showing Up for Racial Justice**, 35 W. Main, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- **The Fig Tree Benefit / Board**, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon for benefit/development, 1 to 3 p.m., board, 535-1813
- Feb 27-28 • **WSU College of Education**, 169th International Globalization, Diversity and Education Conference, "Reimagining Education for Liberation," Northern Quest Casino and Resort, 100 N. Hayford Rd., Airway Heights, education.wsu.edu/globalization/
- Feb 28 • **"The 19th: For Her For All"** Concert featuring choral activist Melissa Dunphy, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7:30 to 9 p.m.
- **Gospel Explosion**, "O Give Thanks Unto the Lord, for He Is Good," Beeksma Family Theology Center Chapel, Whitworth, 777-4568, sbeans@whitworth.edu
- Feb 29 • **St. Lucy's Breakfast**, Shalom Ministries Benefit, Rockwood Event Center, 2093 E. 25th, 9 a.m., 710-0204, healingpen@comcast.net
- Feb 29, Mar 3 • **Appalachian Spring**, Spokane Symphony, Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox, 29th at 8 p.m., 1st at 3 p.m., spokanesymphony.org
- Mar 6 • **Fig Tree Benefit Lunch**, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-1813
- **March for Meals**, Meals on Wheels Greater Spokane County, Spokane Valley Mall and Northtown Mall, 924-6976, gscmealsnwheels.org/events
- **"Winter Waters,"** Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. 2nd, 6 to 9 p.m., 270-6995, waltsoe@gmail.com
- Mar 9 • **The Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast**, Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University, 7 to 8:30 a.m., 535-1813

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Thank you Spokane.



Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.
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St. Lucy's Breakfast
Shalom Ministries Benefit

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Institute's educational exhibits elicit conversations on human rights

By Kaye Hult

If the walls of the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) in Coeur d'Alene could talk, executive director Jeanette Laster believes they would have much to share about the joy, pain, challenge, tears, emotions, grief and—most of all—hope they have seen through conversations elicited by exhibits they have held.

Educational exhibits invite people to engage in tough conversations about justice, equality, human rights, race and more,” she said. “Out of conversations come hope, strength and belief that all people belong. Conversations encourage humility, kindness and acceptance. HREI is a place for safe conversations.”

Jeanette, who became executive director in December 2018, continues what she had been doing for four years as administrative program manager.

“I’ve spent much time team-building and building capacity for our longevity,” she said.

HREI’s vision comes from the board of directors in collaboration with staff, said Jeanette, who focuses on raising funds to keep the doors open.

HREI’s doors first opened in 1998. It began as an outgrowth of the Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations’ work to counter white supremacist activities in the area.

While the task force primarily focuses on advocacy, HREI was formed to educate. They work closely, sharing information and many members.

“It’s vital to HREI for all human rights groups have a unified voice,” she said.

She enumerated goals that have guided the institute’s work.

First, HREI wants to maintain its presence in the community to build awareness of human rights for all and the value of diversity. Many visitors feel its presence shows that this is a diverse community, she said.

The second goal is education. HREI offers programs for K-12 students and supports opportunities for college students through internships and work study.

“Each day, we usually have 12 people in the building,” she said. Students can gain experience in accounting, marketing, program development, event planning and administrative work as they sup-



Jeanette Laster beside a wall painting of Martin Luther King Jr.

port HREI’s mission.

“We provide a variety of experiences,” she said, “and they help us maximize our K-12 programs.”

The K-12 program focuses on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations in response to the experience of World War II.

HREI partners with the diversity program at North Idaho College (NIC) and with the Idaho Commission on Human Rights.

They offer cultural education around such themes as Asian American and Pacific Islander Month in May, Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Month in the fall. HREI also offers a multicultural summer camp. Elementary students attend the “Around the World” camp. Middle schoolers focus on advocacy.

On Tuesday, April 14, the annual North Idaho College Diversity Symposium for NIC students has a cultural identity theme. HREI partners with NIC to support a variety of opportunities that day.

“Each year, we also bring students, volunteers and others to the Hate Studies Conference at Gonzaga University,” she added.

HREI’s third goal is to facilitate challenging conversations in the community.

When CdA2030 and Envision CdA joined and held panel discussions on the city’s future, they asked Jeanette for suggestions to include people not generally seen as part of the conversation.

HREI will partner with Safe Passage and North Idaho Now to bring awareness to the rape kit backlog, providing a safe space for this community conversation. HREI will host the video “I Am

Evidence” on Thursday, April 23.

The fourth goal is funding sustainability. The biggest challenge is to maintain operations, pay salaries and cover the building costs.

Despite the overhead of renting from the city, the building is relevant to HREI’s work.

In 2002, the Greg C. Carr Foundation awarded HREI a \$1,000,000 grant as seed money to establish a human rights center. This allowed HREI to move in 2005 into its present space, a former railroad substation. The grant was not endowed, so that money is now gone.

“People and foundations love to give money to programs, not sustainability,” she said.

HREI has previously had no long-term vision for an endowment, making meeting the \$115,000 budget each year a challenge.

“The time is right for an endowment campaign,” she said. “We hope to raise \$20,000. We can do much more if we can continue operations. Then we can concentrate programs.”

Jeanette’s passion for working on human rights stems from her

upbringing in the diverse population of the San Fernando Valley. It had year-round schools with many extracurricular cultural programs. Her friends came from many different cultural backgrounds.

California State University at Northridge, where she studied on a swimming and diving scholarship, was a melting pot.

“I never thought about differences. The people were my sisters, brothers and friends,” she said.

In college, she worked in the Camarillo Parks and Recreation Department, running programs at different elementary schools. After college, she returned to that program to teach aquatics and manage a park with an aquatic center, a Boys and Girls Club and a baseball park. She values mentoring teens to college age, because they say what they think and accept responsibility.”

When the housing market fell, her husband, who was a builder, lost his job, then found work in Coeur d’Alene. After moving from California, she became aquatics director at the Kroc Center.

“It was a God thing,” she said.

“It filled me spiritually and mentally to work for an organization that cared about and community.”

Needing time to herself, she left Kroc and signed up for Leadership CdA, which helped her learn about the community and build connections. During that process, she realized there was a lack of understanding in the community about ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, and around LGBTQ issues, bullying and homelessness.

She began working as community impact coordinator for United Way in Coeur d’Alene, her first exposure to community organizing with nonprofits. For two years, she volunteered at HREI to help with events and review grants before becoming administrative program manager.

“I consider myself a connector and mentor,” she said. “I champion diversity. I want to lift people to better places.

“At HREI, I take steps to assure its success and longevity, while we serve our community with the resources we have,” Jeanette said.

For information, call 208-292-2359 or email info@hrei.org.

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