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FEATURES 30 EVENTS



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

Malden resident leads recovery

By Erin Endres - Intern

When tragedy struck Malden on Labor Day in 2020, resident Scott Hokonson, who is now executive director of the Pine Creek Community Restoration Group, began working to rebuild the place he once called home.

About five years ago, he had moved to the safe, quiet town of Malden, where people were friendly, humble and waved when they drove by. Living there offered opportunity to work part-time and be a full-time parent, spending time with and caring for his three boys.

Scott was home Sept. 7 when the Babb Road Fire started. He helped people evacuate the area and alerted residents on the status of their homes. He later helped set up traffic cones and caution tape.

All residents survived the fire, although that was uncertain at first. Weeks following were spent searching for bodies and calling registers to account for residents.

His family asked why he helped day after day.

“Somebody needed to go, somebody needed to be there. So, I did not see it as my job. I did not feel it was my responsibility. I just thought I could help and went to



Scott Hokonson said his faith has helps him as he shifts to help community rebuild.

help,” Scott said.

He previously worked in construction, labor and facilities management, and with the nonprofit Spokane Housing Ventures, which laid groundwork for his lead recovery role. He was weeks away from starting a master’s program in urban planning and social work, which is now on hold.

Scott works in Malden five or six days a week, often 16-hour days. His recovery office is in a trailer. He has a poster board for ideas or suggestions he is unsure about or unable to answer.

He follows the best business advice he received when problem solving: “Do not tell people what you do not know. Tell them you do not know. Then write it down and find out.”

Scott was raised Lutheran, the son and grandson of Lutheran ministers. He misses worshipping at church, singing hymns and saying, “Peace be with you” to strangers.

As the physical stress takes its toll, his faith has helped in these months, staying calm and collected during recovery.

“I feel that God is putting me in place to help others because that

Continued on page 6

Desire to heal and help others heal led mother to start homeless outreach

Jewels Helping Hands grew from a single mother’s desire to heal others after healing from traumas in her life, having stayed 16 years in an abusive marriage.

“I started doing this because I was hurt and broken. I knew I had hurt people in the process,” said Julie Garcia. “It took years for me to reverse the trauma I caused and help my children heal so my grandchildren do not experience trauma.

Although she did not experience homelessness, she empathizes with people on the street. So in the winter of 2017, she

started handing out peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in front of the House of Charity.

Julie continued the next winter and, when it was cold, she recruited friends, family and neighbors to give coats, blankets, clothing and shoes to hand out. Reaching out on social media, she was amazed by the community support.

“One carload of clothes became two carloads and then three truck loads,” Julie said. “People kept donating.”

The group who helped hand out food and clothing called

themselves Jewels Helping Hands.

In 2018, they opened a warming center and delivered hot, home-cooked meals that volunteers served every night on the streets and by bridges. They served 100,000 meals.

In 2019, Jewels Helping Hands became a nonprofit so it could apply for the City of Spokane’s Request for Proposal (RFP) to open a shelter in the old Grocery Outlet at Havana and Sprague. They did not get the contract, but continued to feed people.

Because Jewels Helping Hands served meals in 2018 at three warming shelters run by the Guardian Foundation, that agency gave Jewels a four-stall shower trailer.

“We raised \$2,000 to make it functional over the summer, when we ran two cooling centers at 215 W. Second,” Julie said. “In October 2019, we gained a \$740,000 city contract to open a warming center at Cannon St.”

When COVID hit in January
Continued on page 4

Planning is underway for 2021 Benefit events

The Fig Tree is in the process of recruiting group leaders—rather than table hosts—to assist in inviting groups of friends, family, colleagues and neighbors to join them in attending the 2021 Lunch-Time Benefit on Friday, March 5, and the Breakfast-Time Benefit on Wednesday, March 10. Both events are offered on Zoom as people eat in their own homes.

Each event begins with leaders hosting Zoom gatherings with their guests 20 minutes before the hour and then join the main program. There will be slides of the year of stories and resources for five minutes and the programs begin at noon for the Lunch-Time Benefit and 8 a.m. for the Breakfast-Time Benefit. There will be live and pre-recorded speakers—four each time—plus the annual video with input from additional supporters.

Guests will be invited to donate to support the \$34,000 goal for income from the event. Group leaders or hosts are encouraged as usual to donate \$100 to \$125 to provide seed money to support the event. Unlike events in person with eight guests per table, group leaders may invite eight to 15 to join them to hear The Fig Tree story and share in supporting the monthly newspaper and the annual Resource Directory, as well as the annual Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Under the 2021 theme of “Beyond Words: Doing Justice” the benefits are an opportunity to learn about The Fig Tree’s unique model of solutions journalism and its efforts to connect people to resources and to each other through the directory.

For information, call 535-1813, email event@thefigtree.org or sign up at <https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/2021-fig-tree-march-benefits/breakfast-time-benefit> or the same URL ending with lunch-time-benefit.

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Religion News Briefs

Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100
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WCC expressed solidarity with U.S. churches

In a Jan. 11 letter to World Council of Churches (WCC) member churches in the United States, interim general secretary Ioan Sauca expressed the solidarity of the WCC as they raise “prophetic voices” in the midst of a crisis of violence and lawlessness challenging the United States.

“We witnessed scenes few expected to see,” he wrote. “Sadly however, when division, confrontation, denigration and misinformation become the primary modalities of political discourse, and when the pursuit of power supersedes the common good as the main objective of political leaders, such outcomes or worse are inevitable.”

Ioan said the global ecumenical fellowship is inspired by the witness many U.S. faith leaders have given through the years, including after the attack on the U.S. Capitol.

He conveyed solidarity of WCC member churches as they hope and pray for “a peaceful transition of power respecting the will of the people.”

“You are called to be the shepherds of a deeply divided, distrusting and frightened flock, whose fears and differences have been played upon by those seeking to secure and maintain political power for themselves,” he said, recognizing that great harm was done in the process.

“The burden of rebuilding trust and promoting reconciliation in such a widely polarized society is a heavy one for you to carry alone,” Ioan wrote. “We pray that God will gift each of you and all of us a special measure of wisdom and strength to work together to meet this challenge.”

He assured U.S. churches of the accompaniment and support of sister churches.

“May your churches and country find the peace and joy assured to us in the scriptures,” Ioan concluded. “We pray God will lead us all together and be our guide on the path of understanding and compassion, towards justice and peace.”

NCC in US expresses concerns about motives

Jim Winkler, president and general secretary of the National Council of Churches (USA), released a statement on Jan. 6 about the “Mob Attack of the U.S. Capitol”: “Chaos reigned, guns were drawn, and our democracy was under siege. This was outrageous, unacceptable, shameful and disgraceful,” he said.

The National Council of Churches (USA) (NCC) has long supported nonviolent protests—often organizing and participating in them—but Jim said demonstrators desecrating the U.S. Capitol were disrupting the democratic process. “All who have been involved in the riots, those who participated as well as those who have incited this violence, must be held accountable,” he said. “We are keenly aware from our experience that what is taking place is a profound breakdown in security and is beyond anything we have seen before.”

He expressed concern for the role the former President played in provoking the situation by encouraging and attending a ‘Stop the Steal’ rally, continuing to lie about the results of the election, and refusing to concede and accept the election’s outcome.”

The votes were carefully counted and withstood more than 60 legal challenges, he said, adding that “elected officials can’t be allowed to pick and choose the votes they want to be counted,” he said. “All votes count.”

Jim and the NCC expressed concern that the votes contested are those legally cast by Black and Brown people in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia.

“These actions have proven once again that the vestiges of racism and white supremacy are still affecting and infecting our democracy,” he said. “We must increase our efforts to end the scourge on our society, which not only impacts people of color but is detrimental to democracy itself.”

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Legislative signups are still possible

Those interested in attending the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:50 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 30, on Zoom may still sign up by calling 535-1813 or at <https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/beyond-words-doing-justice/virtual-2021-eastern-washington-legislative-conference>.

The keynote, panel, workshops and legislative briefings will be recorded and available for sharing with congregations, nonprofits and friends to learn about issues coming before the 2021 Washington State Legislature.

Lecturer offers an overview on ecumenism

“The Past, Present and Future of Ecumenism” is the theme philosopher, theologian, apologist and author Peter Kreeft will address in the Simpson Duvall Lecture Series sponsored by the Whitworth University Department of History.

It will be held from 5 to 6:30 p.m., Monday, March 8, on Live Zoom followed by discussion.

Peter, who is author of more than 80 books and professor of philosophy at Boston College, will discuss the dynamics of global Christian ecumenism in

the 21st century.

He has also taught at Villanova University, Fordham University, St. Peter’s College, Haverford College, and St. Joseph’s College.

Peter’s books include *C.S. Lewis for the third Millennium*, *The Shadowlands of C.S. Lewis*, *Back to Virtue: Traditional Moral Wisdom for Modern Moral Confusion*, and *Between Heaven and Hell: A Dialog Somewhere Beyond Death with John F. Kennedy, C. S. Lewis, and Aldous Huxley*.

After graduating from Calvin College, he earned his master’s and doctoral degrees from Fordham University before doing postgraduate studies at Yale University.

He has received the Yale-Sterling Fellowship, the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, the Danforth Asian Religions Fellowship and the Newman Alumni Scholarship.

For the Zoom link, call Nancy Casady at 777-4739 or Anthony Clark at 777-4368, or email aclark@whitworth.edu.

Flannery Lecture looks at COVID issues

The Spring 2021 Flannery Webinar from 5 to 6:30 p.m., Monday, Feb. 8, is a virtual event on “COVID-19: Perspectives from Theology, Bioethics and Population Health.”

John Sheveland, professor of religious studies and Gonzaga’s Flannery Chair of Catholic Theology, will moderate discussion by three speakers.

Aline Kalbian, professor of religion at Florida State University, will discuss some of the implications of COVID-19 from the perspective of bioethics.

Rhonda Meadows, a physician who is president of Population Health Management from Providence St. Joseph Health in New York City, will discuss population health, an interdisciplinary, customizable approach that allows health departments to connect practice to policy for change to happen locally.

Andrea Vicini, SJ, is the Michael Walsh professor of bioethics at Boston College. The Jesuit priest, who holds doctorates in medicine, ethics and theology, will speak about the theological

and bioethical implications of COVID-19.

The endowed Flannery Chair of Roman Catholic Theology is supported by a gift of the late Maud and Milo Flannery of Spokane to further the excellence of theological study and teaching at Gonzaga. The university invites an outstanding theologian to deliver the Flannery Lecture, presented through its Religious Studies Department.

For information, call 313-6782 or email religiousstudies@gonzaga.edu.

Restaurant distributed one million meals

The Women and Children’s Free Restaurant (WCFR) distributed one million meals in 2020.

In March, the nonprofit pivoted its in-house dining to curbside meal and grocery distribution to support women, children and families experiencing poverty and food insecurity during this time. Nine months into the pandemic, the organization distributed its millionth meal to a family in need, said Lisa Duffley, WCFR executive director.

With food insecurity a central issue in the pandemic, the

WCFR quickly shored up resources, volunteers and donors to meet community needs, she said, because feeding the community during a pandemic required commitment and creativity.

WCFR operates its centrally located commercial kitchen to prepare meals for families and dozens of nonprofits.

“Although necessary for public health, business and school closures have hit women and children particularly hard,” Lisa said. “We support these families by offering consistent, low barrier food resources, treating families in need with dignity.”

WCFR provides free meals and groceries to hundreds of families each week, along with meals to homeless shelters,

COVID isolation housing and other social service programs. It’s weekly meal count grew from 2,000 a week in 2019 to a record of 58,500 meals the first week of December.

The Women and Children’s Free Restaurant and Community Kitchen has been a safety net for women and children since 1988, filling nutritional gaps and fostering dignity and respect.

The restaurant at 1408 N. Washington St. currently offers curbside pickup of chef-prepared meals and fresh and shelf-stable groceries on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and provides healthy meals to nonprofit partners in the community.

For information, call 324-1995 or visit wcfrspokane.org.

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Food Security Coalition delves into gaps that limit access to food

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

When Natalie Tausin of the Spokane Regional Health District (SRH) looks at food insecurity in Spokane County from a public health perspective, she observes systems and policies that drive gaps in access that lead to food security.

Barriers could be minimized by understanding that food insecurity is about survival for hungry people, she said.

Natalie, a registered dietitian with a master's degree in public health, assists the SRHD's Health Promotion/Healthy Communities efforts related to food security.

Food security concerns led her to help the SRHD form the Spokane County Food Security Coalition in March 2020 to bring together organizations in the county aware of the increase in food insecurity and its impact on children.

Natalie outlined definitions and data:

- Food insecurity means that households have limited or uncertain access to adequate food as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

- According to a WAFOOD survey done in June and July 2020, 30 percent of households in most Washington Counties—59 percent of which have children—experience food insecurity. The University of Washington Population Health Initiative funded the study.

- According to the Feed America Project, in 2018 there were roughly 65,000 food insecure people in Spokane County. This



Natalie Tausin of the SRHD coordinates coalition.

represented a 13 percent food insecurity rate, a rate that has now been estimated to have risen to 17.3 percent in 2020 because of the increased poverty and unemployment because of the pandemic.

- A research brief presented by WAFOOD, entitled "Economic Security and Food Access in Washington State during the COVID-19 Pandemic," reported that food insecurity ranged from 12 to 44 percent depending on education; that respondents of color were more than 1.5 times as likely to be food insecure than white respondents, and that the food insecurity was higher among single or divorced adults.

Organizations in Spokane County are aware of the increase in food insecurity and also aware that more than half of the households experiencing this trauma have children, she said

Natalie explained that the Spokane County Food Security Coalition formed out of the COVID Emergency Operations Center to

assure, among other things, that CARES funding would be utilized effectively to combat food insecurity in the county.

It includes 45 diverse nonprofit organizations, health workers, direct service providers and citizens collaborating in this effort.

A glance at a few of the organizations involved in the coalition gives an idea of the different perspectives of those collaborating to solve the problem of food insecurity: The Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels, Refugee Connections, World Relief, the Zone and the Educational Service District 101 Nutrition Services.

Natalie has been addressing food security for the last 20 years.

She received a nutrition degree from the University of California Davis, then attended the University of California Los Angeles for her work in dietetics and her studies leading to a master's in public health.

Natalie then moved to the

Cheney area and has been involved in various food programs, both as a service provider and from the perspective of public health.

For her and many others concerned about the situation, the basic underlying question is why, in a nation that is one of the richest in the world, so much hunger should prevail.

Natalie asserted that it is not because there is not enough food to go around.

Speaking for the coalition, she said, "We believe that with policy and systems changes, along with compassion, everyone should have enough to eat. As an integrated, multi-sector effort, we envision increased food security and improved health outcomes for the people in our community in need of food assistance."

Natalie said that part of the systemic problem relates to aspects of the culture of poverty, which deepens as unemployment increases in the pandemic. Poverty is impacted by issues of unreliable transportation, high rates of chronic diseases, limited grocery deliveries in rural areas, culturally inappropriate food donations, and limited access to food banks and meal sites.

The Food Security Coalition seeks to bridge food access gaps for food-insecure people by 1) trying to coordinate distribution to the homeless, home-bound elderly, individuals and families with children; 2) collecting data on gaps; 3) informing the community about food distribution

sites and delivery options; 4) providing language translation and identifying the cultural-appropriateness of food offered; 5) fostering equitable food distribution, and 6) reducing stigma around those who need food assistance.

In approaching solutions to some of these systemic issues, Natalie emphasizes: "We need to listen to what people need—and understand the historic trauma. We need to be willing to be introspective about what we hear and not be defensive."

Natalie has praise for many who are directly involved in trying to solve the food access crisis in Spokane County.

For further information and discussion, Natalie suggests several resources:

- Northwest Harvest's May 2020 "Addressing the Food Security Crisis in Washington" at northwestharvest.org.

- Feeding America, the national organization in which Second Harvest participates, updated "The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity" in October 2020. It is at feedingamerica.org.

- "Map the Meal Gap" to improve understanding of food insecurity and food costs is also found at the Feeding America website.

The Spokane County Food Security Coalition meets virtually from 1 to 2:30 p.m., second Thursdays. Natalie said new participants may ask for the link.

For information, call 324-1659 or email ntauzin@srhd.org.

Corbin Senior Center engages community

In 2021, Corbin Senior Activity Center plans to engage community members to enrich and empower their lives through wellness, social, recreational and educational programs while breaking through the pandemic, said Heide Wehr, executive director.

"While our doors are closed, we are still open and have temporarily revised what Corbin is and how we reach our members," she said. "We are working on overcoming the barriers brought on by the pandemic and social isolation by bringing digital resources, education and social fun to those in our community. Corbin Senior

Center is bringing the digital world to members."

The center has applied for a grant to buy tablets and Wi-Fi ability to share with members at no cost to give them the opportunity to participate in classes, social hour discussions and more.

Plans include 1) a to-go Free Soup and Social Hour—since Jan. 19—from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. Those wearing masks can say "hi" and pick up a bowl of soup in Phase I. In Phase II, they will begin a safe, socially distanced, in-person social hour.

2) With other senior commu-

nity centers in the area they are setting up an online Zoom bingo.

3) As travel resumes, Corbin will bring people out of their houses to see the world with Kermit Shaul in an adventure to the Thermopolis Hot Springs and a tour through Yellowstone National Park or with Jan Charbonneau to Minot, N.D., to see the Norsk Høstfest, or with Heide to cruise down the Danube.

For information, call 327-1584.

COVID-19: Perspectives from Theology, Bioethics, and Human Population

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Panelists include:

Aline Kalbian, Ph.D.,
Professor of Religion, Florida State University

Rhonda Medows, M.D.,
President, Population Health, Providence

Andrea Vicini, S.J.,
Michael P. Walsh Professor of Bioethics, Boston College

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BE A GROUP LEADER - INVITE FRIENDS

Jewels Helping Hands runs with volunteers on 'staff' learning job skills

Continued from page 1
 ary 2020, Jewels sought to be fiscally responsible, using the \$740,000 to run COVID shelters at both Cannon St. and the Downtown Public Library, serving 15,899 unique individuals 159 days. Of those, 49 found permanent housing.

Jewels Helping Hands' 95 employees are homeless or formerly homeless people who gain job skills so they can move out of homelessness.

"People need a second chance and a patient employer to teach them skills to move into other jobs as they overcome barriers from addiction and criminal behaviors," Julie said. "Most move to other jobs in homeless work, such as with the Salvation Army, the Guardians, City Gate and CHAS.

"We give them stability and experience for their resumes," she said.

Julie grew up in Grand Junction, Colo., the daughter of the pastor of a Hispanic church. From her mother, she learned to do community service.

After marrying, Julie moved to Spokane when her husband came for a job.

"I had experienced eight of 10 ACES (adverse childhood experiences). I made some bad choices," she said.

She began feeling sick in 2014, when she was 44. In 2015, she had two heart attacks.

"I decided to fix my life, heal and be productive. I looked up trauma based healing on the internet and learned from House of Charities' trauma informed care," Julie said.

"My goal is to help more people than I had hurt. I wanted to give people hope by using my life experiences," she said. "I'm not a counselor, drug therapist or housing specialist. I just apply what worked for me."

"I succeeded because people loved me, believed in me, said I was worthy and knew I could succeed. Even though I did not struggle with addiction or homelessness, I believe in others. I tell them they are worthy and will succeed," she said.

Jewels Helping Hands is "just a group of folks" who began providing shelter and connected with people who were good at doing that, Julie said.

"We do not try to reinvent what is being done, but refer people," she said. "We work in the community with anyone assisting homeless people, regardless of their approach.

"People need one-on-one personal connections to overcome addiction or criminal behavior



Julie Garcia spends many hours a day with homeless folks.

which may come from being homeless," she said.

"Eliminating trauma is a slow process of teaching people to *respond* rather than *react* to their situations," Julie said.

"We can put people into housing, but unless we address their trauma, they may lose the housing again," she explained. "They need to feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves, that they are part of a community and have a support system.

"We will not fix their issues, but listen, give advice and refer people to resources so they emerge from survival mode," Julie said. "We also believe people need accountability."

People cannot move ahead unless their basic needs are met. Many in poverty struggle to feed, clothe and house their family. They feel threatened every day.

"Many live one paycheck away from being homeless. It's scary," she said. "The mental health struggles are horrible. The homeless do not have doors to shut to hide their indiscretions."

"Spokane struggles to provide

basic needs. We lack low barrier shelter space," she said. "The city still lacks warming centers. On cold nights, we bring people inside at night without expensive programs.

Now Jewels Helping Hands runs a 24-hour, non-city-funded warming center for 30 persons at City Church, 3816 N. Madison. It is open until Feb. 28. With volunteers and community funding, Julie said, they can provide 30 beds for \$26,000 a month.

Every night it's full with 20 regulars and 10 who vary.

Jewels Helping Hands also distributes food boxes—50,000 pounds of food a week with its mobile food bank.

At their mobile clothing bank from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sundays, at the Monroe Service Center, 2003 N. Monroe St., they provide showers, hot meals, haircuts, a laundry card and a bus pass, along with clothing.

They also offer free showers in six locations each week.

Jewels Helping Hands has a nightly outreach to those outside when shelters are full or closed. Four nights a week, they ac-

company Street Medicine on its rounds to assess people and provide minor medical treatment.

"We serve homeless people from Coeur d'Alene to Cheney, in camps and on streets," said Julie, who volunteers with it. "We are on the street 24/7, because we know crises happen at 2 a.m."

Julie said Jewels Helping Hands doubled its case load in the last six months and hopes the eviction moratorium will be extended.

"People need housing, stabilization, and places to stay without being criminalized for sitting on the streets. Police still sweep homeless people off streets even though it's against the law if there are no shelter beds," she added.

Jason Green, her husband of four years who helped start Jewels Helping Hands, is CFO of the Eat Good Food Group, which serves 11 restaurants.

From working with four downtown restaurants, he knows Jewels Helping Hands shares common ground with them: not wanting homeless people to have to sleep on streets.

In Jason and Julie's home, they have up to nine people experiencing homelessness stay at a time.

Each person living there has to have an exit plan and agrees not

to use drugs or alcohol.

Fourteen families who have stayed with them now work and have their own homes, Julie pointed out.

While her belief in God motivates her commitment, Jewels Helping Hands does not require that homeless people believe in God for them to help.

"Where would Jesus be? Jesus would not be in a church but would be where the least are, places we venture every day," she said.

"The world needs more helpers, people who roll up their sleeves and help. What better way to show my God than to live God's love," she added.

Jewels Helping Hands receives support and volunteers from many churches who share that belief.

Believing that "how we see people is how we treat people," Julie appreciates that board member Maurice Smith helps Jewels Helping Hands change the conversation and overcome misunderstandings about people experiencing homelessness by sharing individuals' stories in video documentaries.

For information, call 263-5502, email jewelshelpinghandsspokane@gmail.com or visit jewelshelpinghandsspokane.org.

Directory mailings now going out request listing updates and ads

Mailings and emails have been going out by mail and email to organizations that are listed in the annual Resource Directory: Guide to Congregations and Community Resources to invite updated information for the 2021-22 edition.

Mailings and emails are also going to advertisers and community partners to invite renewal of their support of this comprehensive compilation of data on nonprofits, human services, health care providers, senior services, advocacy groups and government programs to meet people's needs in crises, in transition and

instability, and to offer ways to give back.

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Othello church members 'go' on pilgrimage to Colombia in Othello

By Mary Stamp

Two members of Othello Christian Church recently joined 14 people from the Northwest for a virtual peace pilgrimage in Colombia through their regional Global Ministries Committee.

The team from the Northern Lights Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) spent Sept. 21 to 26 on the pilgrimage—four days for the virtual visit and two days of debriefing among the U.S. team.

The joint regional UCC-Disciples Global Ministries Committee has been searching for a global partnership. Members have been in monthly Zoom conversations with two Colombian organizations, JustaPaz, a Mennonite peace organization, and CIEDERPAZ, an ecumenical peace organization.

Janet Larson, a 20-year member of Othello Christian and member of the regional Global Ministries Committee, invited her pastor, Adam Janes, to join the team.

She was at home, and he was in the church office, "traveling" by video and Zoom, meeting people, hearing their stories and learning of their struggles trying to farm, fish and survive as paramilitary groups disrupt their lives.

Because both relate with some of Othello's growing Hispanic community—now 85 percent—they wanted to learn more about the cultures and circumstances that are the roots of residents, many of whom have been in Othello one, two, three or four generations.

"When our regional committee discussed having a global partnership, I never thought I'd be able to travel to another country because of my age and health. I was interested in the virtual pilgrimage via computer," Janet said.

The "pilgrimage" consisted of two hours a day viewing video prepared by JustaPaz on a boat trip taking bundles of humanitarian aid to six villages along the San Miguel River, unloading it, distributing it and spending time listening to people's stories, translated in captions on the screen. They also talked with staff of the organizations.

Each participant donated \$395, less than the \$1,500 it would cost to travel there. The funds were used to purchase and prepare bags of humanitarian aid for 700 people in 200 vulnerable families, and to have the technology to make videos to share the visits.

"It was eye-opening to know people living with pressure from drug growers and traders, lacking



Janet Larson and her pastor Adam Janes joined in virtual visit to Colombia.

food and facing threats. Virtually I met people living through these struggles," said Janet, who has lived in Othello 23 years.

She grew up in Western Washington, first near Longview and later near Mt. Vernon, where she raised her children. She and her first husband moved to Prosser to work on dairy farms. After his death, the potato processing plant where she worked closed, so she moved with the company to Othello. She remarried 17 years ago and is now retired.

"I was blown over. It makes me rethink what is going on in our world. We need to pay more attention," Janet said, pleased with the interpreters who helped her understand.

"We had a communion service in one village, led by a Mennonite pastor and Catholic priest together," she said.

Sharing the experience with the church was put on the back burner because of COVID.

"Learning about different cultures and religions makes it easier to relate to someone from another culture or religion," said Janet, who is friends with Hispanic families at the church.

In Othello, she shares recipes, customs and life stories with a friend who is in a quilting group with her.

"Hispanic people are involved in the community," she said, "and we get along."

Adam, who grew up in Coos Bay, Tillamook and Salem, Ore., graduated from Northwest Christian College in Eugene in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in music and ministry. He was youth minister at First Christian in Hermiston before going to Emmanuel Christian Seminary in Johnson City, Tenn., where he earned a master of divinity in 2007.

While there, he served a historically black congregation in Rogersville, Tenn. He also served First Christian in Dover, Tenn., eight years before coming to Othello in 2016 to be closer to

family in Oregon.

"I was instantly drawn to the church by its desire to embrace being multi-cultural," he said. "We call ourselves a polka-dotted church. Everyone is different but by God's grace we can connect the dots. While we are still a multi-generational, predominantly Euro-centric church, we have some Hispanic families.

"We are not there yet, but our community has evolved to be predominantly Hispanic with some Asian, African and Native Americans," said Adam.

Othello was settled as a railroad watering station. In the 1950s, canal projects led to a shift to agriculture in labor-intensive crops such as apple and cherry orchards, asparagus and strawberry fields. Other crops are mint, alfalfa, corn, potatoes and wheat. It also has food processing plants.

The community of 7,600 people, surrounded by about 13,000 more, has 10 churches.

The Christian Church, founded in 1913, is a community fixture, Adam said. In 1978, it moved to 915 E Rainier St.

For a while, members struggled to stay homogeneous, but now they want to change with the community.

"Until COVID, our building was open for dialogues and groups serving migrants," Adam said.

"We seek to build relationships with the community. Our two yard sales for outreach draw Hispanic neighbors, who come and converse," Adam said.

While there are two large Spanish speaking congregations in Othello, a small Spanish-speaking congregation meets at Othello Christian Friday evenings.

"Our leaders do not speak Spanish. I need to learn Spanish to minister here, but the majority are second-, third- and fourth-generation Hispanics who speak English," Adam said.

Many Hispanics came to Othello as farm migrant work-

ers or to join family members.

Five pastors form the Ministers Association. One is an English-speaking Hispanic. They do joint worship services and serve the community with food and other aid.

Before COVID, 45 came to worship Sundays, in contrast with 100 about 30 years ago.

Since COVID, Adam has led Bible studies on Zoom, recorded church school lessons on YouTube and livestreamed worship to share on YouTube and Facebook.

"We invested in technology and upgraded our internet, video and sound equipment to have quality streaming. All but two members have access," he said. "One comes to the church Sundays, when I record the service, and I visit the other by phone."

Adam thinks the church can reach more people through technology. By recording services and studies, anyone can watch. He estimates 40 participate.

The new equipment meant he had the connections and equipment needed for the virtual Colombia Peace Pilgrimage.

"It seemed an appropriate way to gain understanding of a culture and place with conditions similar to those many in Othello left in South America, Central America and Mexico.

"It was a way to learn about daily struggles, and social and political realities of people in the Chocó region of Northwest

Colombia, where escaped and freed Afro-Colombian slaves settled with indigenous people along the San Miguel River," he said, adding that U.S. Hispanics come from many areas.

"There is diversity in the Hispanic population, as in all U.S. populations," he said.

"The pilgrimage was a chance to learn about people I didn't know existed, issues they face and the role the U.S. plays in their suffering," he said. "It was eye-opening and disappointing—incredible to see and hear what is happening there, but hard not to be with the people."

He was surprised to learn about the U.S. role in destroying crops as they spray coca plants in the war on drugs.

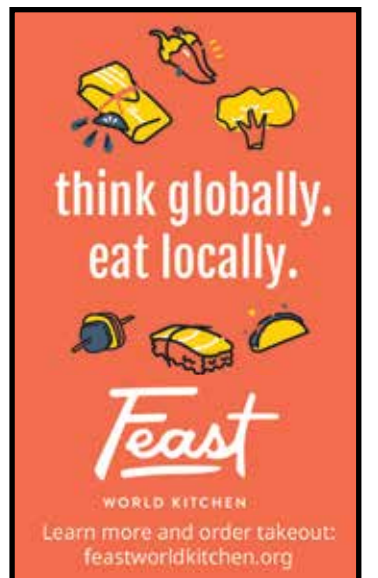
As their rice, corn, plantain and cassava plants are killed by herbicide spray drift, and as fish are killed in the river polluted with mining toxins, the people struggle to survive, Adam said.

JustaPaz has sports and other programs to involve boys and young men so they are not drawn into the paramilitary groups or drug trade.

"People want reparations and protection of human rights. They also want the 2016 Peace Accords to be implemented after years of guerrilla warfare," he said.

Adam plans to show the videos before worship and then hold conversations about them.

For information, call 350-6852 or 302-8395 or email pastor@othellochristianchurch.com.



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After four months, Malden still waits for FEMA response to request

Continued from page 1
is what helps me. Selfish, but it does. It makes me feel better. I feel like I am accomplishing something," Scott said.

Scott felt God work through him as he comforted a resident struggling to cope one Sunday evening. It was a humbling and proud experience.

"If that is not God, I do not know what that is," he said.

"Listening to someone else's immense pain, being happy to be able to listen to them, even if I cannot offer any answers. Just to be there for another human being, that is what I think God is—connection between people and others," he said.

Religious organizations of all faiths in surrounding communities have helped. Some help was turned away as the recovery effort determined where groups could best aid.

"Sometimes they show up knocking on the door, saying we can help but we do not know what to do," Scott said.

At a lunch Facebook sponsored during the early recovery period, he met a leader in the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane, which now provides hundreds of boxed lunches at noon on Wednesdays.

Most religious partnerships started this way. In the future, he hopes to connect and cultivate relationships with more religious groups as recovery moves forward.

Scott has stayed hopeful and

optimistic and is looking toward "victory." He wants the Pine Creek Community Restoration Long-term Recovery board of directors "to walk around town, look at the ground, smell the smells, watch the sun come up, and think of themselves as generals in a battlefield looking towards victory."

Doing this, they can brainstorm goals and milestones to reach in the future. He wants the community to sit down, as a family, and discuss "how much money do we have to get through this, what do we need, what are our resources, can we throw a party, can we rebuild?" he suggested.

His vision is taking the best of the past, leaving the worst behind, to rebuild the future of the rural West moving forward, he said.

Hope persists for those who lost their homes.

"I would like to build the best that we can, as much as we can, with a real caring, compassionate heart," he said.

If the long-term recovery is successful, Scott hopes residents can find reasonably priced homes with little to no interest so they can be rehoused in the community.

Lack of home insurance is a significant barrier to recovery. Many Malden homes were inherited and required updates and repairs. Insurance costs exceeded home values.

Many residents choose to

forgo insurance. Scott is sympathetic as he once lived in his home uninsured.

"I had bought insurance again on my home, and made sure it was good insurance because it meant so much to me as a home, and it would be so hard to replace," he added.

Local and state agencies have helped, including the Spokane and Whitman Counties Emergency Management, State Emergency Management and the State Commerce Department.

"There are so many moving parts to this that I have had to delegate quite a bit, and we have had amazing partners helping in every way," Scott said.

Surrounding communities have been helpful. The Lions Club of Rosalia started a program and distributed more than \$50,000 in funds to those who applied, often those most in need in the Malden community.

Along with local help, the Babb Road Fire recovery is waiting on federal help.

Governor Jay Inslee applied for federal relief Sept. 16. Over four months later—in contrast with some disasters drawing response in two weeks—the city has yet to receive any response.

"We can't get started on so many things. Once we receive that 'yes or no,' then we can start moving forward on so many things that it changes our recovery picture," he said.

Within each challenge, the city has found joy.

Following a town meeting Dec. 5, Malden held a tree lighting ceremony.

"We leave the tree on all the time. It was the first annual tree lighting. We have never had a tree lighting in Malden before," he said.

Scott hopes to shift the mindset on the fire in a positive direction. The recovery group is focused on moving forward with #PineCreekPositive.

The hashtag is an idea, part of a social media campaign to gain exposure and spread positivity when posting about the Malden fire recovery.

Residents hear about monetary donations, but most money is for long term recovery and rebuilding the town, not direct payments for individuals.

For direct payments, an organization, committee and board need to form and hold meetings. As a leader, keeping residents' spirits up, staying positive and not attacking each other is paramount, he said.

He urges others to keep those affected by the fire and the recovery in their thoughts and prayers, remembering #PineCreekPositive.

For those interested in direct help for Babb Road fire victims, the Innovia Foundation and United Way of Whitman County are assisting with long term recovery.

Innovia is the official organization redistributing funds for recovery tailored to meet individual needs. United Way is doing more general distribution of funds.

For information, call Innovia at 654-2606 and United Way of Whitman County at 332-369.

To contact Scott, email babbroadfirerecovery@gmail.com or visit the recovery website, pinecreekcommunityrestoration.org.



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Jewish Film Festival presents nine films

The 17th Annual Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival, "Hope in a Broken World," will be held online March 3 to 12 and will feature seven full-length feature films and two shorts.

Neal Schindler, director of Spokane Area Jewish Family services, said in selecting films for the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival 2021, the selection committee was asked to choose movies that convey a sense of hope.

Considering the 2020 unresolved concerns about the pandemic and political anxieties, they chose films that inspire and illustrate how hope can emerge even in demoralizing situations.

"We don't select films solely based on a theme or tone, because we want to ensure diversity by choosing outstanding films in multiple languages from different parts of the world that highlight many aspects of the historical and present-day Jewish experience," Neal said.

In the nine films being presented, the languages are English, Hebrew, German, Norwegian and Hungarian. There are stories about Israel/Palestine, Israeli culture and society, social justice, politics, Jewish identity, the power of art and the Holocaust. There are documentaries on the present moment and the recent past, as well as narrative films about World War II and its aftermath, Israeli political turmoil in the mid-1990s, and the tension between Israelis and Palestinians that continues to this day.

With the convenience of a virtual festival, they will present more than the usual number of films. The films are available for different windows of time, with most up for 72 hours and one for 48 hours staggered throughout the festival run. The schedule is posted on the festival home page

Since 2005, the Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival has brought to Spokane international films that show the diversity of Jewish life, experiences and culture.

Details on the films are at <https://sjcfff.eventive.org/>. For information, call 747-7394 or email director@sajfs.org.

SAVE THE DATE for 2021 Advocacy Days

Interfaith Advocacy Day in Olympia February 11

Central Washington Advocacy Day February 20

All events will be held virtually!

FAITH ACTION NETWORK
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Multi-Ethnic Business Assn. helps businesses start, grow, succeed

Ben Cabildo engages with 300 businesses through the Multi-Ethnic Business Association (MEBA)—aka AHANA (African Hispanic Asian Native American)—to help businesses start, grow, secure grants and loans, and access counseling to strengthen their place in the economy.

“With COVID, it has been a busy year helping businesses navigate the many applications for federal, state, local and private grants and loans,” he said. “We have successfully helped about 200 businesses receive grants and loans, and distributed to them PPE like masks, sanitizer and thermometers. With a grant from the Department of Health, we are providing COVID-related safety instructions and information.”

Collaborating with the Hispanic Business Professional Association, Refugee Connections, the Filipino American Association and the Vietnamese Association, MEBA has also informed businesses on employment mandates to protect customers and employers.

AHANA started in 1998 and 10 years later merged with Community-Minded Enterprises when Ben was on staff there. He retired last year and restarted AHANA as the MEBA, nurturing leaders who can carry it on.

Restarting AHANA as the Multi-Ethnic Business Association, his goal is to help start and build the capacity of businesses, give workshops, offer one-on-one counsel and advocate for access to capital and contracting opportunities.

Over the early years, he had previously worked with about 100 businesses, but expanded this year, especially with opportunities and funding available because of COVID.

“We are also working to have banks change their guidelines for lending to small businesses, so they are less strict and more equitable and accessible to minority businesses,” Ben said.

He is exploring a new model with an organization in Seattle called Credit Lab to help multi-ethnic communities access capital with low or no interest.

“I am working to establish a lending program for multi-ethnic businesses to start up with no interest or low interest,” he said. “Several banks are interested in exploring the idea.”

MEBA also urges private businesses, and city, county and state governments to hire minority contractors for services in technology, plumbing, engineering, electrical, marketing and other fields.

“Government and private in-



Seven of MEBA-AHANA's 14 board members include Yvonne Montoya Zamora, Ben Cabildo, Marvo Reguindin, Sandy Williams, Victor Vera, Dennis Mitchell and seated Camilo Madero.

Photo at 2019 meeting courtesy of Ben Cabildo

dustry with contract opportunities need to open their doors and diversify their contracts and suppliers,” he said. “Previously, I’ve known contractors who had to move to Seattle to have enough business. We are talking with various leaders from Avista and the City of Spokane to diversify their suppliers and vendors.”

Ben is grooming others to lead MEBA so he can continue nurturing it, but step back a bit. He works from his home and visits people in their offices.

Ben immigrated from the Philippines where he worked from the ages of seven to 14, after his mother left in 1957 to come to Seattle to work and save money to bring her children. He, his older sister and older brother stayed with a friend and continued in school. Their father had died when Ben was a baby.

At seven, Ben started three businesses to have enough money to eat. Mornings before school, he went to the bakery and picked up bread, which he sold house to house and on the streets. After school, he sold cigarettes and chewing gum to some of the thousands of jeepney drivers who transported people in Manila. He also worked in the fields, riding water buffalos and hauling coconuts to the market.

In 1963, he and his sister came to Seattle. His brother stayed in the Philippines because of health problems. Ben started at junior high in West Seattle. After graduating from West Seattle High School, he joined the army, served two years in Vietnam and was honorably discharged.

While he was studying political science at the University of Washington, he began organizing in Chinatown. In 1970, he started an international drop-in center to help neglected Asian seniors who lived and died alone in hotels. Filipinos had come to the U.S. in the 1930s to work in farm fields, but women were not permitted to come, so the men lived alone.

The men could come to the senior center to socialize and connect with city services. He recruited medical and social service students to visit seniors in hotels, and recruited student journalists to connect them and share their stories.

After four years, he left that program, which continues today, and helped at a center for Asian youth to divert them from getting in trouble. He volunteered there for three years in the 1970s. Ben did this volunteer work while going to college, working as a diesel mechanic at Burlington Northern, then working at Providence Hospital and organizing a service employees union.

“I didn’t sleep much,” he said of youthful years working, organizing and volunteering.

Two other experiences informed his commitment to social justice: 1) In 1975 when he was involved in challenging white supremacists who opposed busing, he was arrested and beaten by Seattle police and required to do 30 days of community service. 2) In the 1980s, he went back to the Philippines and participated in the student movement against the Ferdinand

Marcos dictatorship.

In the late 1980s, Ben moved to Oakland, Calif., to work with Kaiser Permanente as a litigation examiner and union leader, before moving in 1992 to Spokane, where his sister had bought some rental houses. She wanted him to live there to manage them.

“**At first, I was hesitant** about Spokane, but I fell in love with it because it was spacious, clean and had little traffic,” Ben said.

“We could buy a house for \$20,000 on contract. I did renovations and sold houses to buy more houses. I could buy the houses with no money down, because the houses needed repairs and people wanted to get out of them. We just wrote a contract.”

Ben helped a woman by selling one of his houses on contract without a downpayment so she could open a day care for older people. She was successful and now owns a retreat center. He and AHANA helped others start businesses, like Victor Azar’s restaurant business, Williams Seafood and Warrior Electric.

“**Before AHANA**, I did anti-discrimination work, building Unity in Action, which brought together human rights advocates

to create a response to any violence against multi-ethnic community members,” he said.

“We intervened when an African American youth was criminalized for being in a fight at the Fairgrounds, organizing an informational picket in front of City Hall in 1994,” he added.

Unity in Action liquidated and joined anti-racism efforts at Gonzaga University that led to the Congress on Race Relations.

Committed to start an economic justice movement, Ben formed AHANA to help businesses start, get licenses, build websites and find funding. The Sacred Heart Foundation liked what he was doing. It funded AHANA for five years and provided office space, first at the former Maryknoll School and then at Fifth and Browne.

Ben was a volunteer director with AHANA at first, earning a living by managing rental apartments and houses. With the funding from Sacred Heart Foundation, the board hired him as the paid executive director.

“I was also involved with the NAACP Spokane, which was active in social justice under Eileen Thomas’ leadership. She was a strong voice for black people and other minorities,” he said. “Spokane has had many progressives working for justice.”

Ben then began working with Community-Minded Enterprises (CME) on a Department of Health grant, traveling statewide to enroll children in the state children’s health program. He managed Community-Minded TV for two years, expanding the media voice to bring in more minorities, before retiring and reviving AHANA, which he did sporadically under CME.

For information, call 999-5365, email bencabildo@gmail.com or visit ahana-meba.org.

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Documentary producer asks who counts in count of homeless

Sunday morning, Jan 10, Maurice Smith of Rising River Media received a call from a homeless outreach worker who told him police were investigating the death of a homeless man whose body was found in the morning wrapped in a blanket near the bottom of the Monroe Street hill. The apparent cause of death was exposure.

“He froze to death on our city streets,” said Maurice, asking: “Does this person count? Not in 2021.”

In recent years, the City of Spokane’s annual homeless Point-In-Time count theme has been “Everybody Counts.”

Two years ago, Maurice did his first documentary on the

count called “On Any Given Night.” For 2021, the city announced unsheltered individuals would not be contacted by outreach staff or volunteers

If only people at a local shelter are counted, are homeless individuals dying of exposure on the streets not worth counting, Maurice wondered.

He’s aware the approach is because of COVID restrictions but said it guarantees an undercount of the homeless population, which has grown in COVID.

“Why should COVID restrictions stop a thorough count when the same restrictions do not stop local enforcement from doing ‘Sit-and-Lie’ sweeps of homeless people downtown, forcing them

to ‘move on’ when there are no shelter beds to access?” he asked.

He said the city’s website says its outreach is to track contacts and demographic information, and caseworkers are to refer encounters to the Spokane City and County Continuum of Care’s Coordinated Entry/Assessment project for assessment and housing placement.

First, he said that if that happened there would be no need for a Point-In-Time Count, because outreach workers and caseworkers do that.

Second, he said it isn’t the job of outreach workers to report and in COVID, many agencies have restricted staff from outreach.

As a documentary filmmaker

on homelessness, he has accompanied outreach teams to homeless camps and under bridges in recent months. No one reported the contacts, because doing so leads to a follow-up visit by a sweep team, Maurice said.

One service provider expressed concern that the undercount will be used as reason to cut services.

“Cooperation between the city and service providers to address homelessness requires transparency and trust,” he said. The 2021 Point-In-Time plan guarantees a truncated count and an undercount, in the midst of “a swelling homeless population.”

Christmas night, after celebrating Christmas with guests at the City Church Warming

Center, Maurice went with an outreach team from Jewels Helping Hands to distribute food, blankets and gifts on the street.

“It was snowing. We encountered an intoxicated man who was nearly naked in the snow. We got him into some warm clothes when someone noticed he had no shoes (only wet socks),” he said.

The call went out, “Does anyone have size 11 shoes?”

“I did. I took off my shoes and gave them to the team who helped the man put on dry socks and shoes. I had more shoes at home. He needed shoes to prevent frostbite. Maurice asked: “Does this man count?”

For information, visit myroadleadshome.org.

COVID-19 & Mental Health

Events over the last year have caused many people, especially young people, to feel more depressed and anxious than usual. This is normal and if you feel this way, you are not the only one. Here are ways to support yourself or others when things feel overwhelming.



Look for Signs

Changes in mood, sleep, appetite, or the ability to concentrate are all things that could signal that somebody needs support.



Check-In

It is OK to ask somebody if they are struggling. You could even set up a weekly check-in with your kids or other loved ones to make sure everybody is feeling supported.



Listen

Listen. Listen. Listen. It is important for a person who is struggling to feel heard. Let them know it is normal to feel sad or anxious and that it is OK to ask for help.



covid.srhd.org/mental-health-and-coping

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Cousins collaborate to rehabilitate homes for affordable housing

Chauncey Jones is branching out with his cousin Jerry Jones through A Better Way JJJ, a real estate investment company, rehabilitating single family and multi-family homes to provide affordable housing for rental and ownership.

Along with this project, he continues his work as master control operator responsible for the quality of what is aired at KHQ-TV, where he has also been a sports producer and on-air sports reporter for more than 20 years.

Growing up in Southern California, he often visited his grandmother, Hanna "Mama" Jones in Spokane, staying summers and other times of year. He spent his senior year with her, graduating from Lewis and Clark High School in 1995. He was one of six black youth in his class.

"I felt out of place. I didn't see many people like me," Chauncey said.

His grandmother's house on E. Pacific was the center for family life. He and his cousin, Jerry Jones, with whom he has started A Better Way, once dreamed of the family buying the 2500 block of E. Pacific.

"Grandma was the matriarch and inspiration, making me feel at home and feel special. She would prepare food and invite people to join the family. Her hospitality and counseling people were part of her ministry, along with her intercessory prayer ministry," he said, telling how she inspired him. "She was always praying and leading by her example of giving and giving."

Hanna came to Spokane and met his grandfather, Jesse Jones, who started what is now the New Hope Baptist Church. After Jesse died, Hanna raised their seven children alone, working as a caregiver and in other jobs to avoid going on welfare.

When Chauncey came to live with Hanna, he looked up to her. "My mother and aunts also wanted to see me succeed. Strong women have been part of my life," he said.

Another mentor was Denise Osei at Spokane Community College (SCC). She helped him enroll, apply for financial aid, pick classes and kept him on an academic road. He studied journalism, earning an associate degree in 1998 at SCC and a bachelor's degree in journalism in 2000 at Eastern Washington University.

He began working at KHQ, where he has also been sports producer for the Gonzaga University men's basketball team for 17 of those years.

After Hanna died in Decem-



Chauncey Jones is outside a W. Dean house he is rehabilitating.

ber 2015, Chauncey and Jerry wanted to carry on her legacy of giving to people, mentoring them to stability.

They decided to do that by promoting home ownership. They began their effort to start A Better Way with the goal of flipping houses and building capital so they could buy more, holding some as rentals and selling others. They formed it as an LLC in 2017.

They flipped one house in 2018, another one in 2019 along with two rentals, and two more in 2020, turning zombie homes into attractive places to live, Chauncey said.

With the help of another mentor, Jim Frank, they decided to focus more on investing in affordable housing. Their target areas are East Central Spokane where they have a duplex and single family house, West Central where they have another duplex and single family house, Chief Garry where they have a single family house and Spokane Valley, where they have a duplex.

Through nonprofits and neighbors, they receive recommendations of families who need housing. Nonprofits also help by educating families on finances and holding them accountable so they can keep working and move to next steps.

He said they have worked with Habitat for Humanity, Greenstone Homes, Catholic Charities, SNAP Spokane Alliance and Family Promise.

"We want to reach people in areas where they may lose homes and be displaced because of gentrification," Chauncey said. "We are making money by improving the community, stopping gentrification and helping people with education and jobs so they can stay in the area. We want people to move from being long-term

renters living month to month to building up their income and investing so they can own their own home.

"We are focusing on areas where people of color have lost their homes as investors fix their property and price them out. We are focusing on offering affordable housing" he said.

"My grandma would say, you don't need to be the whole staircase, you just need to help someone take the first step out of the mindset of poverty—depression, desperation and despair—to begin to dream and feel they may have another destiny," Chauncey said.

He knows that the people who believed in him helped him do that.

"My grandma told me to smile and hold my head up. Denise helped me see who I could become," he said.

"I didn't need anyone to move my mountains, just give me the strength to crawl over hurdles," he said. "Many in the community want help. They don't want to be

left behind in the cold, but 70 percent of Americans live paycheck to paycheck.

"It will take more than Chauncey's and Jerry's vision, but we can be a model," he said.

With A Better Way, he said they collaborate with nonprofits to help people who are homeless in a shelter move into stable, dignified housing where they will not be kicked out.

"We want homeless people to become renters and renters to think of home ownership. Too many renters have slum landlords and live in houses with rodents, pests and leaks," Chauncey said.

Some build housing complexes for the poor in the same areas with other people who are poor.

His vision is to have people live in mixed housing so a lawyer lives beside a grocery bagger, a nursing student lives beside an Amazon worker, and everyone thrives because they own their own place and build equity, rather than moving and having their children change schools every three months.

"Spokane is a hot market in real estate with prices rising 15 percent or more. We need to make it possible for people to buy a home they can afford. Three years ago, we might have been able to buy a house to fix up for \$100,000. Now where can one buy a house even for \$160,000?"

"We arrange to buy and fix houses, using city or private funds to subsidize about \$50,000 so we can sell it and keep it affordable," said Chauncey. "We are not a nonprofit. We are in it to make money while building wealth for families to buy houses."

Faith is important in Chauncey's life. While his cousin Regan Watkins, is first lady of New Hope Baptist, he attends Full Gospel Mission for All Nations

on East First, where his uncle Jerry Jones was pastor and has been overseer since he retired. Steve Cannon is now the pastor.

Chauncey's grandmother's faith is reinforced by his wife Aimee, the daughter of William Sterling, "a former Rev" at Calvary Baptist.

They connected while working at Hamp's Camp in summers at Zephyr Lodge on Liberty Lake. C.E. Hamp was a former pastor at Full Gospel Mission.

To inspire him, Aimee provides him with a notebook where he writes a different Bible verse each day. Phil. 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" reminds him to keep humble, as does Chron. 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven."

"Grandma always prayed for me. Prayer works," he said. "Aimee and I hold the values of the six F's: faith first, family, finance, friends, fitness and freedom."

"We are to be led by God and be stewards of God's money we are blessed to have," he said.

As a sports broadcaster with Gonzaga's team, Chauncey tells stories of players and their families—where they are from and where they are going—to humanize them.

Chauncey also volunteers with the Spokane Public Schools Office of Family and Community Engagement mentoring youth. Many boys lack a male in their lives, especially men who look like them.

"I hope to inspire them to know there is a better way," he said.

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After an election, it's time to rebuild unity undone by election politics

Building unity in the nation after an election cycle and time of traumatic divisions can be informed by the ecumenical understanding of unity in diversity.

Unity is not uniformity of belief or thought. Ecumenical dialogue goes beyond the either/or mindset some media promote to cover “both sides.” In reality, there are multiple perspectives, not just two opposite views.

It's true in political parties. Democrats include conservatives, centrists, moderates, center-left, progressives, liberals, democratic socialists and more. Republicans include Trump loyalists, Christian right, libertarians, neoconservatives, QAnon, the Tea Party movement, conservatives, moderates, the Lincoln Project and more.

Christians also have a range of Catholics, Protestants, non-denominational, inter-denominational, evangelical, pentecostal, orthodox, charismatic and spiritual congregations, parishes and centers, with

divisions even within those groupings, as do many faiths—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and more.

Many people of faith have learned that when they allow their differences to divide, rather than holding to the basic tenet they espouse—love—they discredit their faith.

It's hard to listen and love beyond disagreements, but ecumenical and interfaith organizations connect people of faith to engage in dialogue to seek common ground—like caring for the vulnerable, improving communities, protecting creation, making peace, doing justice, praying together and joining in worship.

In his inaugural address, President Joe Biden said: “History, faith and reason show the way of unity. We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors. We can treat each other with dignity and respect. We can join forces, stop the shouting and lower the temperature. Without unity, there is no peace, no progress,

no nation.”

Vice President Kamala Harris has also said: “Our unity is our strength and diversity is our power.”

We face divisions about masking, distancing and vaccines to overcome the pandemic; about finding alternatives to carbon-emitting fuels of the oil industry; about police use force against nonviolent protestors; about including people across the racial, gender, LGBTQ divides in a just economy—to name a few.

“We can disagree, but need to recognize our common humanity,” former President Barack Obama said on Jan. 20.

Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, 22, also uplifted the need to bridge divisions:

- “Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.
- “We lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us.
- “We lay down our arms so we can

reach out our arms to one another.”

Her words move us to create a nation that continually is working on healing and caring, seeking justice and equality, and living freedom and democracy.

While some may feel relief from ongoing anxiety, culminating in an insurrection, it's never time to sit back when an election is decided. Democracy takes continual work. It requires accountability. It requires laws, traditions and ethics. It requires listening, finding common ground and focusing on that, not just garnering power for the next election cycle.

We elect people to represent us to make laws, set taxes, build infrastructure and establish programs to benefit all people.

Believing unity in diversity is possible, there's always work to do to assure we have a government of the people, by the people and for the people—the myriad of diverse people who are the USA.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Area faith leaders call for people to stand united against violence

As Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience of Eastern Washington and North Idaho, we reach out to our fellow citizens to stand united against the violence that took place at the United States Capitol on Jan. 6. We call upon all Republican and Democratic public servants, politicians, and religious authorities to courageously speak out and condemn this attack on democracy and its institutions.

Our nation's healing requires that all those involved, regardless of their office, religion, or skin color, stand before a court of law to be held accountable for their actions. This includes [former] President Trump, the 12 Republican Senators and 126 Republican Representatives who enabled him, and the thousands in the mob who caused harm, terror, and destruction. Find your elected officials at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials> and contact them.

Furthermore, we must challenge the media outlets that wittingly and unwittingly repeated the extremists' and the [former] President's lies. Their audiences

sincerely believed that the election was stolen. This moved citizens to violence. Our nation will continue to be devastated if we tolerate the further repetition of unsubstantiated accusations and assertions. At the same time, we recognize the reporters who put their lives in danger to provide accurate coverage.

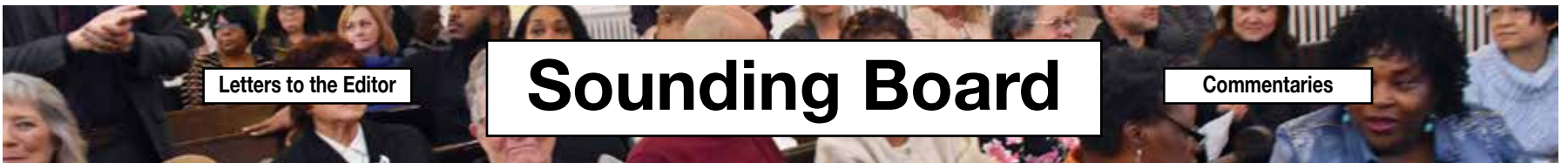
To heal our nation, a full investigation into why the capital police were left unable to maintain order must be made and those responsible must be held accountable. Noting that the police presence was far more substantial during the March for Science, the Women's March, and all Black Lives Matters events, we seek answers to the questions about the role of the [former] President and law makers in the lack of security. Further, we join with all people of conscience in recognizing that systemic racism played a major role as did the cultural tolerance of radicalized “Christian” whites. We must face this and commit ourselves to the dismantling of systemic racism and religious extremism of every kind.

Wherever you live and work, let that be the place where you are the change. Join with us, as people of all spiritual practices and political parties, in strengthening our democracy. Demand verifiable facts from ourselves, every leader, and all media outlets. Contact those in power and demand that we refocus ourselves and our nation on the common good which begins with holding accountable those who were part of the attack.

The Rev. Gen Heywood, Convener, Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience of Eastern Washington and North Idaho.

- The Rev. Scott Starbuck, Ph.D., pastor, and The Rev. Pamela Starbuck, Manito Presbyterian Church
Naghmana Sherazi, Chair, Muslims for Community, Action & Support
Lynne H. Williams, MD for Baraka Sufi community
The Rev. Joan Broeckling, One Peace, Many Paths
The Rev. Debra L. Conklin, St. Paul's and Liberty Park United Methodist Churches and The Grove Community

- William Aal, Principal Associate
Tools for Change
Pam Silverstein MD
member of the Jewish community
Don Young, Life Deacon, and Jan Young, Music Minister, Veradale UCC
The Rev. Heather Tadlock
Bethany Presbyterian Church
Patrick T. McCormick, S.T.D.
Professor of Religious Studies
Lani DeLong, RN, Retired
The Rev. Rick Matters
Episcopal Priest
Sr. Pat Millen, OSF,
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Luke Lavin, Director of Mission and Ministry, Gonzaga University
Diana Koorikian-Sauders, Board President Congregation Emanu-El
The Rev. Paul Benz and
Elise DeGooyer, co-directors,
Faith Action Network
The Rev. Jim CastroLang
Board Member, Faith Action Network
Larry A. Weiser, member of the Jewish Community



Region's human rights groups write letter to offer perspectives

Open Letter to Fellow Americans

The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations has spent the past 40 years promoting civil and human rights as enshrined in the ideals of democracy that encompasses promoting freedom, equality, equity and justice for each individual.

Over the past 250 years, the United States has made progress toward the goal of fulfilling democracy's great benefits for all people. As that work continues, we face a growing serious threat from domestic terrorists to that evolving democracy.

Over the past 25 years in the U.S, we have witnessed an increase in domestic terrorism with deadly consequences. The purpose of this open letter is to discuss four of these anti-democratic domestic terrorists' acts including the occupation of our National Capitol on Jan. 6 and suggest future ways to combat such threats.

On April 19, 1995 anti-government white supremacist Timothy McVeigh placed a truck loaded with explosives in front of a Federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 innocent victims, including children, and wounding 680 people.

On Aug. 12, 2017, an angry mob of anti-government white nationalists, neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klansmen, and other terrorists under the banner of “Unite the

Right,” marched through Charlottesville, Va. They displayed Swastika flags, Confederate flags, the Nazi slogan “Blood and Soil” (Jews will not replace us), and carried torches symbolizing the marches that took place during Hitler's Third Reich. The tragic result was the death of a peaceful counter demonstrator and two Virginia state police officers in a crash of their helicopter. Thirty other individuals were injured.

On Feb. 5, 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray during testimony before the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House stated that 2019 was the deadliest year for domestic terrorism since the Oklahoma City truck bombing in 1995. The year 2019 saw 29 Americans killed in five separate terrorists' attacks including the deadliest attack on Latinos in American history when a 21-year-old white supremacist allegedly killed 22 and injured 24 other Latinos in El Paso, Texas.

Americans across the nation were horrified and shocked on Jan. 6, 2021 when a violent mob attempted an insurrection by an assault on our democracy as they desecrated the National Capitol building, the citadel of our democracy and home of the legislative branch of our democratic republic. There are indications that part

of the plan was to kidnap Vice-President Mike Pence and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and kill them. Also pipe bombs were placed in front of the national headquarters of the Republican and Democratic parties.

The attack on our National Capitol resulted in the direct deaths of five individuals.

Our National Capitol had not experienced an attack overrunning and occupying the Capitol by an invading force since the War of 1812 when the British army did so.

The aftermath of the Jan. 6 assault has seen members of Congress harassed and verbally threatened in public.

This attack on our National Capitol reminds us of an excerpt from Yale University Professor Timothy Snyder's book “On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century” when Snyder describes the burning of the German parliament, the Reichstag, on Feb. 27, 1933 thus destroying the last democratic institution in Germany as Hitler said: “This fire is just the beginning”.

We should take the good advice of former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley from a speech she gave on Jan. 7, 2021 when she said: “But we must stop

turning American people against each other.”

We call on our fellow citizens of good will in communities across America to unite in a bi-partisan coalition to confront and combat terrorism in all its manifestations by supporting: strict federal, state and local anti-terrorism laws; aggressive police investigations and prosecutions of all perpetrators; assist the victims of these heinous crimes, and hold elected officials responsible for developing, adopting and enforcing public policies that protect the civil and human rights for each individual.

We close this letter by reminding each of you with the wisdom shared by Edmund Burke in a letter addressed to Thomas Mercer when he wrote: “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

**Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations Board of Directors
Gonzaga University Provost
Associate Provost and the Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies
Bonner County Human Rights Task Force
Boundary County Human Rights Task Force
Spokane County Human Rights Task Force**

Calendar of Events

- Feb 2 • **"Who Was Chief Seattle?"** David Buerge, biographer and historian to Duwamish Tribe, 12 noon, online speakers bureau, <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 3 • **"Black Activism: Our Local Ecosystem,"** Eastern Washington University (EWU) Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, llogan83@ewu.edu
- Feb 3 • **Webinar Wednesday: "Countering White Nationalism in 2021 and Beyond, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane,** on Zoom, 7 to 8 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org
- Feb 4 • **Fig Tree Benefit Planning and Board Meetings,** Benefit at noon, Board 1 to 3 p.m., both on Zoom, 535-1813 or mary@thefigtree.org
- Feb 4 • **Drive Through Party Celebrating Rosa Parks' 108th Birthday,** 5 to 6 p.m., Veradale United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., gifts for Martin Luther King Jr Center—toothpaste, toothbrush, socks, hats, gloves, face masks, protein bars, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, canned goods, toilet paper and paper towels, genheywood@gmail.com
- Feb 5 • **Peace and Justice Action Committee,** 5:30 p.m., videoconference, 838-7870, slichty@pjals.org
- Feb 5 • **Deadline to order Cinn-A-Grams** for delivery by Feb. 12 for Valentine's Day gift and to raise funds so Mid-City Concerns Meals on Wheels can provide seven senior meals for each cinnagram, 862-6367, mowspokane.org/cinnagram
- Feb 6-9 • **Annual national Catholic Social Ministry Gathering,** U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, virtual conference, "Make Justice Your Aim: Rebuilding Together," <https://web.cvent.com/event/b25a3d2e-387a-4c33-8203-a3506a14b501/summary>
- Feb 8 • **COVID-19: Perspectives** from Theology, Bioethics and Population Health, Spring 2021 Flannery Webinar Sponsored by the Religious Studies department at Gonzaga University, online zoom webinar 5 to 6:30 p.m., Faith & Mission, 313-6782, email religioustudies@gonzaga.edu
- Feb 8 • **"Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion,"** noon, <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 9 • **"How to Fight Fake News** about Climate Change," John Cook, research assistant at Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, 5 to 6:30 p.m., Zoom, Environmental Studies, Gonzaga University, environmentalstudies@gonzaga.edu
- Feb 9 • **Truthful Tuesday Climate Action Plan** for Spokane, Karen Odegard, manager of sustainability initiatives for City of Spokane, "Climate Sustainability Plan, 5 to 6 p.m., Facebook Live and Zoom, genheywood@gmail.com.
- Feb 10 • **Citizen and Beyond:** An Evening with Claudia Rankine," professor of poetry at Yale, Center for Civil and Human Rights at Gonzaga School of Law, 6 to 8 p.m., Zoom, civilrightscenter@gonzaga.edu
- Feb 10 • **Planning the Fight:** The Basics of an Activist Campaign," EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, llogan83@ewu.edu
- Feb 11, 25 • **Showing Up for Racial Justice,** 5:30 p.m., videoconference, 838-7870, slichty@pjals.org
- Feb 11, 25 • **"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Principal's Office?"** 6 p.m., <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 15 • **NAACP General Membership Meeting,** 7 p.m., 209-2425, naacpspokane@gmail.com
- Feb 16 • **"She Traveled Solo: Strong Women in the Early 20th Century,"** 2 p.m., <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 17 • **Ash Wednesday**
- Feb 17 • **"Zooming In: Exploring Activist Campaigns in Spokane,"** EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, llogan83@ewu.edu
- Feb 18 • **"Who Was Chief Seattle?"** 1 p.m., <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 19 • **"Black History Month** presents Jasiri X," hip hop artist, emcee, bloggerknown for politically engaged lyrics and music videos, 3 to 4 on Zoom Meeting ID 925 5611 4958 passcode 007222
- Feb 22-28 • **Northwest Bachfest,** "Across the Times" Pay to View, nwbachfest.com, 326-4942
- Feb 24 • **"Heating Up: The Ethics of Climate Change,"** 2:30 p.m., <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 24 • **"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal's Office?"** 3 p.m. <https://www.humanities.org/events/2021-02/>
- Feb 24 • **"Campaign Tactics: How to Plan an Action,"** EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, llogan83@ewu.edu
- Feb 24 • **Fig Tree Mailing and Deliveries,** pick up letters or bulk deliveries, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 10 to 1 p.m., wear masks
- Feb 25 • **Fig Tree Benefit Planning and Board Meetings,** Benefit at noon, Board 1 to 3 p.m., both on Zoom, 535-1813 or mary@thefigtree.org
- Feb 26 • **Gospel Zoompllosion!** Celebrating 26 Years of Gospel Worship, Zoom, Stephy Nobles Beans, 7 to 9 p.m., 777-4568, sbeans@whitworth.edu
- Feb 26 • **"Race and Racism in the Nonprofit Sector,"** Nick Bayard, antiracism educator in Tacoma, with LaMont Gree, of the Racial Equity Action Lab, Korbett Mosesly adult education consultant, Antoinett Atkins of Atkins Consultant Group and Klarissa Monteros, a small business trainer, offered by Washington Nonprofits webinar, noon to 1:30 p.m., online, <https://washingtonnonprofits.org/learning/learning-calendar/>
- Mar 5 • **Fig Tree Lunch-Time Benefit,** 11:40 a.m. gather, noon program, Zoom, <https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/2021-fig-tree-march-benefits/lunch-time-benefit>
- Mar 5 • **2021 Greater Spokane County March** for Meals, walk virtually or in-person at the Northtown and Spokane Valley Malls from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Register at www.GSCMealsOnWheels.org or at 12101 E. Sprague Ave.
- Mar 10 • **Fig Tree Breakfast-Time Benefit,** 7:40 a.m. gather, 8 a.m. program, Zoom, <https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-fig-tree/2021-fig-tree-march-benefits/breakfast-time-benefit>

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League of Women Voters organizes Speak Up Schools on redistricting

By Kaye Hult

As part of a push by the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) to encourage and empower people to testify at open meetings held by the Washington State Commission on Redistricting later in 2021, the League of Women Voters Spokane Area will host two Speak Up Schools Feb. 15 and 20 on Zoom.

“Redistricting—redrawing district lines for legislative and congressional districts—occurs every 10 years following the Census,” said April May, organizer for the Spokane Speak Up Schools.

“This process impacts all voters by determining who they can vote for to represent them in their state and national governments,” she said.

“In the past, public testimony at these hearings has not been effective at compelling commissioners to take action,” she continued. “The LWV would like to change this in 2021 to ensure all voices are heard regarding this critical state action.”

The Speak Up Schools will help individuals prepare to find their own voice to speak up before the redistricting commission, said April.

The first session for the Spokane area is from 1 to 5 p.m., Monday, Feb. 15. Alison McCaffree, the issue team chair for LWV of Washington and creator of the Speak Up Schools, will teach “Redistricting 101” to help participants understand why their speaking up will make a difference.

She will be joined by Vicky Dalton, Spokane County auditor and LWV member, who will talk about redistricting in the past, giving real-world examples. There will be time for people to interact in breakout sessions.

For the second session from 1 to 5:30 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 20, the training is on testimony and testifying. Participants will come away with skills that will allow them to speak about their own convictions in their own voices. Coaches will be there to answer their questions.

Follow-up coaching is also available, April said. People will



April May invites people to learn to speak on redistricting.

have the chance to come back and practice what they have come to say.

“As part of its mission to ‘Empower Voters: Defend Democracy,’ the League strongly supports active civic engagement,” she said. “It believes the skills gained in this training will provide long-term benefit to the public when they testify to different municipal and state government committees and commissions,” she added.

Those attending the schools will learn effective ways to speak in front of large audiences, how to present themselves well. The skills will stand them in good stead in a variety of situations beyond their speaking out about redistricting, she said.

April used herself as an example.

“I’ve been an introvert and have not been comfortable speaking in front of large groups,” she said. “I can use these skills in my professional field of health.”

April, who was born and grew up in Spokane, earned a bachelor’s degree in 2016 at Eastern Washington University. Her major was informatics, which relates to the use of electronic medical records. She helps medical providers communicate with end users. She describes herself as a translator because the two groups use different languages.

April had trouble with the presidential election process in 2016. She came away feeling the need to get involved, but not knowing how. She looked

on Google for ideas, which was when she discovered the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area. She had never heard of them before.

“The thing that attracted me to LWV is that they are nonpartisan,” she said. “I wasn’t signing up for a team, I was signing up for improved policy and government for everyone.”

“National politics has turned us against each other,” she continued. “We are all complicated, we are not good or bad, Republican or Democratic, going to heaven or hell. All of us can be any of these things and have possibilities throughout our lives.”

“I have personal views about different actions of politicians, but the work of the league resonates with Providence Health Care’s promise: ‘Know me, care for me, ease my way.’”

“I believe that. Knowing people allows us to care for them and make it easier for them. It makes me passionate to care for others,” April said.

“The core value of the league is the care and concern for others,” she said pointing out that the LWV works to make sure all have a voice and there’s accep-

countable to the people of Wash-

ington by publicly documenting the desires of the residents of the state for voting districts that represent them.

LWV membership is open to people 16 years and older of all gender identities. With 100 years of experience, the League is one of America’s oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations, April said. The league is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging individuals, households, communities and policy makers in “creating a more perfect democracy,” she said.

A Speak Up School was held Jan. 27 in Yakima. In addition, a “Redistricting 101 Overview” is planned by the Kitsap County LWV at 10 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 27. Other sessions are being held in Western Washington. Spokane registration is at www.lwvspokane.org.

For information, call 638-6192 or email aprilmay.627@gmail.com.

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February 9, 2021

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