

33ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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Micah 4:4

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(509) 535-1813 • 535-4112

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

Propaganda can twist truth or teach

By Mary Stamp

Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp and American Bosnian Muslim refugee Admir Rasic shared their perspectives on propaganda and media responsibility in a Jan. 28 workshop at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

Mary presented an overview from her perspective as a journalist on what constitutes propaganda. Admir offered his personal experiences living under repression.

Both recognize that totalitarian regimes want media to be a “compliant state propaganda unit.”

Admir, who was born in Yugoslavia, in the republic that became Bosnia, shared his experiences with propaganda tools used in another place and time, and what lessons can be learned from them.

“My family immigrated to Spokane as refugees in 2000. I studied English literature at the University of Washington,” he remarked.

Now he works as a technical trainer and is a volunteer with the Spokane Interfaith Council and the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force.

“My hope is for the United States to be as it was when I came, welcoming refugees and offering equal opportunity for all,” said



Admir Rasic reflects on his experiences of propaganda in Bosnia and the U.S.

Admir, who wants his three-year-old daughter to grow up in *that* America.

In the 1990s, the socialist, communist country of Yugoslavia went through massive changes.

“Along with democratization, there were problems with the economy and political parties vying for power,” he said.

Nationalism grew in Serbia as a vehicle for expressing economic and political frustrations, said Admir. It was used to rally people.

“Leaders turned to nationalism, rather than talking about the real problems,” he said.

Admir said that a 1990 quote of Slobodan Milosevic, a Serbian war criminal, seems to fit the U.S. today: “Serbia is being forced into submission, diminished and emasculated,” he said, seeking to convince the Serbian population—like white working-class U.S. people today—they were victims.

“The victimization theory means everything that happens is the fault of someone else. In Yugoslavia, all the problems were caused by Bosnian Muslims,” said Admir. “The Serbian government owned the media and it was easy to disseminate blatant lies. They said

Continued on page 4

World Relief’s Spokane office remains open, raises funds, resettles fewer refugees in 2017

The Rally for Refugees on Sunday, Feb. 12, at Gonzaga and the Benefit Concert for World Relief (WR) at the Cathedral of St. John on Friday, Feb. 17, raised \$10,000 for World Relief’s work in Spokane with refugees.

Mark Finney, who was named the new director of World Relief on Feb. 16, said that while World Relief nationally is closing five of its 26 offices, the Spokane office will stay open.

To be viable, he said, they will need to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to make up for the loss of federal funding and have

to do some layoffs.

In other fund raising, World Relief will be the featured nonprofit for Bloomsday in 2017.

Because the President has capped the number of refugees at 50,000 to come from Oct. 1, 2016 to Sept. 31, 2017, with 40,000 received so far, just 10,000 more can be resettled, which will be about 60 for Spokane. In 2017, 110,000 refugees were to have been received nationwide.

Mark said 70 refugees came in January and nearly 60 in February, so that will leave the number for one month to be resettled over the

next seven months.

Mark grew up in Coeur d’Alene and graduated from Whitworth University. He spent 10 years in Pasadena, including a year volunteering in Thailand. He returned to Spokane in December 2015. He came on the WR board in June. Mark also teaches a master’s of theology class as adjunct faculty at Whitworth.

Whitworth’s Office of Church Engagement, Gonzaga University, Moody Bible Institute and World Relief partnered to host the “Rally with Refugees.” The rally, attended by about 1,500, was an opportunity to share about refugee resettlement, the vetting process and personal stories of some refugees in Spokane.

Mark said World Relief has resettled refugees in Spokane for 25 years with “no big deal.”

Prior to World Relief resettling refugees in Spokane, there were refugees from Europe and Eastern Europe resettled in the 1950s.

Both Catholic Charities Immigration and Refugee Resettlement and a Spokane office of

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Fig Tree Benefit events are time to celebrate, learn

“Beyond the News: Creating Community” is the theme for The Fig Tree’s 2017 Benefit Lunch starting at 11:30 a.m., Friday, March 10, and Benefit Breakfast starting at 7:15 a.m. Wednesday, March 15, in Cataldo Hall at Gonzaga University.

The Fig Tree marks 34 years of publishing this year, sharing news of people who are making a difference because of their faith and values, and connecting people in the caring community through the annual Resource Directory.

Lunch speakers are Dia Maurer, who has been associated with The Fig Tree over the years in her roles with Partnering 4 Progress, Transitions and Habitat for Humanity; Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries with Catholic Charities of Spokane; Anne Salisbury, a long-time Fig Tree volunteer in Coeur d’Alene, and Pat Millen OSF, former director of St. Joseph Family Center and a Fig Tree Board member.

Breakfast speakers are Mable Dunbar, director of the Women’s Healing and Empowerment Network; Rusty Nelson, retired director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane; Dean Lynch, the president of the new Spokane County Human Rights Task Force, and Freda Gandy, executive director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center.

The speakers will share their insights on the value of The Fig Tree in their roles and experiences in the community.

The planning committee has only four breakfast tables left for hosts to sponsor. Hosts donate \$100 to cover the cost of the meals for their seven guests, who are invited to come and hear The Fig Tree story and donate to help cover the costs of publishing the newspaper and directory.

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Rauha. Paix. Friede. Paghidait. Paz.

How do you say "peace?"

In observing International Mother Language Day on Feb. 21, the World Council of Churches (WCC) asked staff and visitors to the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva to share words of peace in their mother tongues. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organizes the day each year to promote global citizenship education. This year, the theme is "Towards Sustainable Futures through Multilingual Education."

This is an opportunity for the WCC fellowship to focus on language as a bridge building tool for peace, said Marianne Ejdersten, WCC director of Communication, and the WCC is uniquely poised to celebrate the spiritual aspects of International Mother Language Day.

"We at the WCC wrote words of peace on a dove," she explained. "A dove was sent out by Noah to look for a place where human beings and fellow creatures could have a sustainable future. The olive branch, which it brought back, has become the symbol of peace." The dove is also a symbol for the Holy Spirit, who at Pentecost gave the disciples the ability to speak in tongues that touched the hearts of strangers beyond language boundaries.

The WCC shared diverse expressions of peace with people globally on social media. Then the dove was at a session on peace communication at the WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

Honouring local languages and cultures, particularly among indigenous people, is integral to WCC's pilgrimage of justice and peace. Preservation of languages, and understanding their contexts, is key to the future of peace and reconciliation the WCC envisions.

Pamela Valdés, WCC Language Service coordinator, said that WCC is aware of the gift and indispensability of native languages, even in an era of globalization, in which use of English prevails.

"Our work is more relevant than ever, because of the many cross-cultural challenges the world is facing," she said. "By providing translations in mother tongues, we enable members to participate fully in the ecumenical movement."

Among the WCC's 348 member churches, representing more than 560 million persons of Christian faith, and partners, there are many languages and dialects. The WCC produces most of its resources in English, Spanish, French and German, and other languages when needed.

The WCC invites people to share words of peace in their mother tongue via Facebook, via Instagram, or via Twitter!

WCC head invites people to build bridges

World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, speaking at a convention of union members and political leaders in Oslo, Norway on Feb. 17, invited people to take action and start building bridges.

"Looking back at our past climate engagement as a community of faith," Olav said, "I can say we have taken many steps together, and it is clear that we strongly believe in efforts to stop climate change. We also believe strongly in the work for climate justice, and in shared responsibility in addressing these issues."

His speech followed a debate between political party leaders on approaches to climate issues, employment, sustainability and development. He stressed the importance of continuing to hope, and to dare to lead by example.

"Norway is scarcely populated," said Olav, "but it has an important role to play in climate justice. To show that it is possible to make wise use of resources, democracy and our values to create something new. Sometimes we need to look not only to avoid what damages our environment, but to also think actively and creatively on what the best solutions are."

"We sometimes look at others as our opponents," he added. "I believe we should acknowledge investors, businesses, individuals, youth and women, who have worked for the same thing."

"Our greatest task as people of faith is to say 'we have the right to hope,'" Olav concluded.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Resource Directory seeks 2017-18 partners

Advertising commitments for the 2017-18 Resource Directory are coming in and directory editor Malcolm Haworth is seeking new partners to help sponsor the publication, which is the most comprehensive directory of resources in the Inland Northwest.

This will be the 44th year of production of the directory, which started as a directory of congregations and ecumenical ministries.

It now also includes human services, multi-service agencies,

medical and health care, children and family resources, senior and retirement resources, justice and action resources, environment and sustainability resources, arts and culture, civic services and emergency contacts.

"We continually receive calls from people seeking services and we refer them to appropriate agencies for assistance," said Malcolm, who has been editing it since 2007, beginning by working two years through AmeriCorps.

"Advertisers have been responding quickly this year to reserve their spaces. They are the primary underwriters for the directory," he said.

This year Spokane County Head Start/ECEAP/Early Head Start has withdrawn its partnership because of funding shifts at Community Colleges of Spokane.

"We have appreciated our long-term partnership and look for others to step up," said Malcolm. For information, call 535-1813.

Christ Clinic closes, Christ Kitchen continues

Roger Chase, interim executive director for Christ Clinic and Christ Kitchen, said the board closed the clinic as of Feb. 28 but will keep Christ Kitchen open.

They transferred patients to other providers and seek to rent to another health care provider.

"We faced a combination of challenges, including reimbursement levels and demands for a small clinic to compete for providers in a tight market," he said.

The clinic was founded in 1991 with four volunteer doctors to care for uninsured people.

"It's hard to recruit medical

providers, because fewer doctors and nurses volunteer," he said, "but the clinic had grown to have eight paid staff and volunteers."

"In addition, there have been fewer patients, because patients gained more choices," Roger said.

"Changes in insurance and Medicaid affected reimbursement," he said. "Patients who could pay paid on a sliding scale, and the clinic covered care for those who could not pay."

Many clinics are consolidating, and we needed to upgrade electronic medical records, said Roger, who was on the board four years

and became interim in August.

The board will continue Christ Kitchen, which remodeled and moved into a Taco Time at 2410 N. Monroe in 2006. After a capital campaign in 2008, the clinic built on that site. Both started in space provided by Westminster Presbyterian at 2705 W. Boone.

The kitchen is an outreach for women coming out of drug addiction, abuse or prison. About 20 women join in a Bible study and develop job skills as they cater and package products.

For information, call 209-7540 or email roger@christclinic.org.

International Women's Day event is March 4

Spokane's International Women's Day features Favianna Rodriguez, an interdisciplinary artist, cultural organizer and activist from Oakland, as speaker for the event from 12:30 to 5 p.m., Saturday, March 4, at the Spokane Women's Club, 1428 W. 9th Ave.

Favianna uses art as a tool for social activism. Involved with Presente.org and executive director of Culture Strike, she was recently featured in a documentary series, "Migration Is Beautiful." It addressed how artists respond

to failed U.S. immigrant policies.

The event includes displays of resources from community agencies and three workshops: "Applying Mindfulness" with Dori Langevin, "Bollywood Dance" with Naghmana Sherazi, and "Activism 101" with Liz Moore.

Favianna will also present "Reproduce and Revolt," a social justice poster workshop on how art spurs the imagination. Social justice posters, she said, "are powerful living reminders of struggles for peace and justice through art

prints, street art, clothing and interactive experiences that replace images of fear with visions of shared humanity."

International Women's Day has promoted progress among women for more than 100 years, said Lisa Logan, manager of Eastern Washington University's Women's Studies Center, one of the organizers, with other universities, businesses and agencies.

For information, call 359-2898, email llogan83@ewu.edu or see facebook.com/IWDSpokane.

Coeur d'Alene to receive Watershed Hero Award

Winter Waters 2017 on the theme "Restoring Lake Coeur d'Alene," will honor the Coeur d'Alene Tribe as the 2017 Watershed Heroes for their leadership in cleaning up the Coeur d'Alene Basin from mining and smelting waste.

The event that benefits the Sierra Club's Upper Columbia River Group and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy will

be held from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., Friday, March 10, at Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. Second Ave.

With the Environmental Protection Agency in the "crosshairs" of the current President, John Osborn, conservation chair of the Upper Columbia River Group of the Sierra Club, said that it will be a greater struggle to find funding to protect the health of the lake.

In the Coeur d'Alene tribe's homeland, nearly a century of

hard-rock mining in the Coeur d'Alene Mining District led to extensive release of mining and smelting wastes into streams and rivers, said John.

There is some hope for cleanup because of the Tribe's work to protect and restore their homeland. A video is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNW_AIYFril&t=177s

For information, call 939-1290 or email john@waterplanet.ws.

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More information at <https://www.facebook.com/KosherDinner>

Three generations of a family help with Temple Beth Shalom's Kosher Dinner

Three generations of the Morris family will help Temple Beth Shalom set up and clean up for the 75th annual Kosher Dinner on Sunday, March 5.

The dinner is served from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Temple Beth Shalom at 1322 E. 30th Ave.

Scott Morris, his parents Julie and Jeff Morris, his wife Jennifer and their children Payton, 16, Jaxon, 15, and Morgan, 12, will be among hundreds of volunteers who will serve 2,000 meals to members of the Jewish and wider community.

Julie and Jeff began helping with the Kosher Dinner soon after they moved to Spokane in 1970 and became active with Temple Beth Shalom.

About 150 people help set up, work in the kitchen, greet, entertain, serve, pour beverages, wrap silver, set tables, plate the food, refill relish trays, clear tables, wash dishes or sell homemade baked goods in the del bar.

Scott said he has followed the traditional progression of involvement.

When he was five years, he rode with his father, who drove a shuttle from parking to the Temple.

Next, he worked in the coat room, taking a ticket, looking for the number and bringing a coat out to return to a guest.

"Then I was a dishwasher, the typical job at the time for junior high students," he said, "but now



Scott Morris again helps with Kosher Dinner setup and clean up.

that's the task of the high school students."

Scott then moved into clearing and setting tables, and has stayed with that task. He's now the team leader for clearing and setup.

"I've stayed with that role by choice, while others move on to the kitchen and greeting. I love the clearing and setting role because it's a great workout," he said.

"I also like to move and interact with people," he said. "I work on the dirty side, clearing the tables, and Jennifer works on the clean

side, setting the tables."

While Payton and Jaxon will also help their peers with dishes and Morgan will be with her peers in the coat room, they will each also work one shift on clearing and setting tables, as will Scott's mother Julie.

"The Kosher Dinner creates a great sense of community, both from the in-reach perspective with Temple members working together and from the sense of it being a service to the community," said Scott, who has been TBS

president for a year and a half.

It's a service because people enjoy the food, have a chance to see the Temple and learn about Jewish culture through the entertainment.

When people come in and are seated, they sit next to people they may not know. They strike up a conversation and socialize while they eat, he said.

While some families at TBS practice kosher at home, his family does not. He said kosher food preparation is another level of observance.

The Morrisses, however, have their lives immersed in the Jewish faith and the Temple Beth Shalom community.

Just as Scott's children have attended Sunday school, Hebrew school, were Bar and Bat Mitzvahed, and have gone to Camp Solomon Schechter, the Jewish camp in Tumwater for children in the Pacific Northwest, Scott also participated in those educational and community building activities. He went to camp eight years, as has his older son.

Scott earned his undergraduate degree in 1994 in business finance from the University of Washington in Seattle. He then graduated from Law School there in 1997 and has lived in Spokane since then.

For 12 years, he was in private practice and now is general counsel for the Inland Group, focusing on entitlement and financing of

their properties, primarily apartments.

Scott, who has been on the TBS board for 14 years, said that role is about the day-to-day operation of TBS. He has also been youth group advisor.

"Faith is an important part of my life. I was born into this Temple, learned about Judaism and share with my children," he said.

He has been to Israel twice with his mother, who travels there often because of her involvement in Hadassah, a nonprofit which has two hospitals in Israel. Julie has been involved with that work for 35 years.

Scott visited once before he was married and once with Jennifer.

"Visiting Israel is an important part of any Jewish person's life. Once I visited Israel, it brought greater meaning to my practice of Judaism," he said.

Temple Beth Shalom adds to the community's diversity of faiths.

"We, as people of different faiths in Spokane, support one another," he said. "It's important that we work together."

The 2017 Kosher Dinner is the 75th dinner since it was founded in 1941 as a fund raiser. Last year was set to be the 75th, but the meat was not properly packaged when it arrived, so they had to cancel the dinner.

For information, call 747-3304 or visit spokanetbs.org.

The Fig Tree seeks to raise \$50,000 at its 2017 annual benefit events

Continued from page 1

"Last year we raised \$30,400 through these benefits. This year we seek to reach a goal of \$50,000 to help us build our capacity and involve additional writers, editors and online communicators," said editor Mary Stamp.

This year, Austriauna Brooks, an intern from Whitworth Uni-

versity, is helping prepare the promotional video, writing articles and assisting with online and social media.

"We continue to train writers and editors as a way to involve new people," said Mary.

The Fig Tree began publication in 1984 to cover religion in the region. Its mission includes con-

necting diverse people, sharing stories to build understanding and see how lives intersect with justice and ethics issues, she added.

Being published monthly gives writers and editors time to offer

reflection and encourage dialogue, she said. The goal is also to help individuals and groups network, pool ideas and resources, and join in common action locally and globally.

The Resource Directory connects people and builds awareness of the many ways the faith, nonprofit and civic communities serve.

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Awareness of propaganda methods reduces susceptibility to its influence

Continued from page 1

Kosovoans were executing Serbs on the street. Propaganda was a driving force to mobilize people to start a war.”

Media spread the idea that the majority ethnic group, the Serbs, contributed more than other ethnic groups but got less from the state. Serbs blamed others for their problems.

“The portrayal of Muslims here today scares me and other Bosnian Muslims. The propaganda machine in Serbia claimed Muslims wanted to subvert the new democracy and build an Islamic state. Many believe in a Muslim conspiracy to subvert the U.S.,” Admir said.

“It was the same rhetoric. It made people fear their neighbors they had lived with for decades.”

A long-time neighbor turned in Admir’s father, who spent time in a slave labor camp.

“Media are powerful tools. Even though people knew their neighbors, media convinced them Muslims were evil. The idea of a conflict between Western culture and Islam is scary for me here,” he said.

The evening after the legislative conference, Admir went out to dinner with his neighbor, who voted for Trump and said after the election he wanted to get to know Admir and his family.

Admir suggested: “Go out and meet your neighbors. It’s a powerful tool. The strongest tool to combat hate is human relationships.”

Mary warned that press freedom enshrined in the First Amendment is at stake with the onslaught of fake news, alternative facts, and the disinformation, double speak and deception that are used to hide a dictatorship.

“It’s new, but not new,” she said. “U.S. media have been partisan for centuries, and people choose media that back their beliefs.”

The idea of “objective” news in professional journalism meant “credible” media were to be neutral and cover “both sides” of issues.

Peace journalism developed, aware that there are multiple perspectives, not just two. Playing on two polarizes people and undoes democracy, Mary said. It makes people susceptible for dictators to divide and conquer them.

Now some journalism schools teach “solutions journalism” featuring ways people are working to solve problems or “make a difference.”

In 1978, she took a class on women in media seeing images of women—sexy and slender—and the invisibility of women’s voices on issues because there were few



Mary Stamp, Fig Tree editor, dissects power of propaganda.

women reporters and spokespeople. The result is stereotypes that women are less smart, capable and trustworthy than men.

“News” is what is unusual or reflects conflict, violence, controversy, sensation, sex, celebrity or problems. These foster addictive consumption of media by people seeking solutions, Mary said.

“In the campaign, I was appalled that media followed the audacious tweets, giving undo coverage to the male, ignoring his dishonesty, but dwelling on the woman’s phony email scandal. It was good for ratings and profits, but media failed to cover issues and gave “attention to unprecedented hate,” said Mary.

The celebrity of the GOP candidate rose every time his name was mentioned, she said. Media gave him free publicity, because it made good ratings with his rantings, name calling and narcissism. There was no “equal time” for other candidates.

“We have been subjected to propaganda through the years in advertising that tells us what we want and value. We may think we ignore it, but it permeates who we are,” she said. “Constant, instantaneous access to media can consume us as we consume it, making us unable to act,” she said.

Understanding propaganda as a tool of politicians, advertising and dictators is important. News on the propagandist made money for media and for liberal candidates and causes. Email advocacy groups played on fear to

raise money,” she said. “Let’s hope media resume their role of watchdog.”

Mary described some propaganda techniques.

- Bandwagon plays on popularity, polls and winning.
- Repetition of lies makes them seem true.
- Repetition of simple messages helps people learn them.
- Name calling and labeling create enemy images.
- Scapegoating blames others to divert attention.
- Fear builds anxiety and distrust, and creates an enemy.
- Celebrity makes a personality cult to appeal to plain folks and populism.
- Authority says someone has the answers.
- Superlatives exaggerate reality.
- Disinformation twists truth to create false history and fake statistics.
- Dehumanization makes an opponent subhuman.
- A bombardment of questions, misinformation and thought-stopping clichés confuses.
- Glittering generalities use emotionally loaded language, often appealing to patriotism.
- Stretching boundaries of what is usually accepted makes undesirable policies and actions seem

to be acceptable.

• Isolation cuts people off from their support systems.

• Bait and switch deflects attention from issues so they disappear.

“We must remember that propaganda does not always achieve its goals. Backlash may bring its demise,” Mary added, calling for people of faith to stand up and be counted, to talk with each other, and to persevere in promoting human rights, human decency, social justice, a free press, racial respect and free speech.

“We have no time to be fatigued. We must stand up and speak out, because even if they come for Muslims and immigrants now, we are next. Our lives are intertwined,” she said.

Mary noted that “propaganda” can challenge propaganda.

“Propaganda can be used to educate citizens. Repetition can be a positive tool for teaching and learning. Educators can foster independent thinking and reflection,” she said.

Mary suggested being media literate, respecting diverse opinions, and continuing work to overcome gender, religious and racial bias.

She said for people to look at their own use of media: “How many hours do we spend on screens or checking news? Are

we drowning in media consumption?”

“Relationships, resistance, protests, solidarity, divestment, boycotts and a war helped end Nazi rule in Germany, communist rule in East Germany and apartheid in South Africa,” she said.

Mary also recommends using age-old advocacy techniques—phoning representatives, writing letters and emails, joining protests, boycotting products, building coalitions, nurturing relationships and speaking up.

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org or rasicadmir@gmail.com.

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2017 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference

Conference empowers participants with prayer, reflections, insights on issues

In his opening prayer for the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Jan. 28, the Rev. Walter Kendricks of Morning Star Baptist Church reminded those gathered to do God's will, that "pure, undefiled religion is to take care of the widow and orphan, to take care of those who can't take care of themselves, to be the voice for those whose voices are neglected and to stand in unison for what is right."

He prayed not only for the brokenhearted, lost, lonely, sick, shut in and those unjustly in prisons, but also for those "who would divide us by race, class and gender."

He prayed for mercy, vision, understanding, patience, forgiveness and love "so we may serve and make this earth you created your kingdom."

In theological reflections, the Rev. Gregg Sealey, the superintendent for the Inland District of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church, said that as he traveled to visit 47 congregations in area towns during the election season, he witnessed the divisions.

Driving into towns, he saw many Trump/Pence, "I'm with Her" and Bernie signs. He found much passion and much fear as election day arrived and passed.

"In post-election fall out, some were elated and some were devastated," Gregg said.

The day after the election, he was in a small town in a church where many were elated, but some were devastated.

"It became clear we were not doing a good job of listening to one another. Then someone who was elated said, 'We have not listened to them.'"

That gave Gregg hope. "Government has never and will never bring the realm of God into this world," he said. "We as people of faith have a higher calling than what our government can deliver," he said.

"Before we take responsibility and act together in faith, our theme for the day, we need to take time to reflect and listen to the still small voice of God within," he said.

Gregg invited reading and reflecting on James 1:19-21, that calls people to "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the Word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls."

"We should listen twice as much as we speak. It helps internalize the struggle of what is happening to others," he said, recognizing room for "righteous anger," because it is energy.

"The Word made flesh has power to change us," Gregg said. "We are each vessels for the Word."



The Rev. Walter Kendricks

To listen to God is to enter a holy conversation and be transformed by God's Word."

Panelists look at poverty and neighbors.

In a Panel on Poverty, Scott Cooper, director of parish social ministries with Catholic Charities Spokane, and Ashley Beck, senior research scientist with the Spokane Regional Health District, presented information on poverty from recent publications.

Scott showed a five-minute video on the Northwest Bishop's pastoral letter on poverty, "Who Is My Neighbor?" It includes a three-session study guide.

One inspiration for the bishops' pastoral letter is Pope Francis saying the church is for the poor and "we are to allow ourselves to be evangelized by them," Scott said. "The Pope wants us to be a culture of encounter."

The video shows the face of the poor in everyday people, the neighbors people of faith are to love. Those neighbors include homeless people and immigrants, whose children may lose their parents.

"All God's children have struggles in life. To have compassion, we need to know what a person has gone through," said Scott, naming three issues causing poverty: unaddressed and under addressed mental illness, substance abuse and adverse childhood experiences.



The Rev. Gregg Sealey

"All of those are hard to prevent completely. There will always be some poverty and some response needed," he said.

To develop the letter, the bishops held listening sessions throughout the state. Clients told their stories and struggles.

After describing who the poor are, the pastoral letter defines the roles and responsibilities of the faith community and the government "to alleviate the suffering that has become epidemic in every city, town and community in our state," the bishops wrote.

"We are to learn from those living in poverty. How do we encounter and accompany those who do not share in the state's economic wealth? How will we be challenged by what we learn, hear and see?" Scott asked.

The faith community, he said, is called to reflection and recognition of "who our neighbors are," to respond as a faith community and to act in partnership with government.

The letter asserts that "our relationship with God brings us into relationship with every other person. As sisters and brothers of the poor and marginalized, we journey with them as they seek solutions to their problems, address their challenges and take their place in our communities," said Scott.

"We in faith communities are just part of the answer," he said. "We are to work in partnership



Scott Cooper

with governments on all levels to ensure adequate funding of social services."

It means challenging public officials to care about the common good.

"Governments have a role in hashing out policies," Scott said. "We pledge to bring our voices to hold representatives accountable, so we need to be in healthy relationships with them. We need to pray and then to act in the public arena."

Ashley Beck, the senior research scientist with the Spokane Public Health District (SRHD), related health with poverty.

She presented statistics compiled in 2015 by the Spokane Regional Health District.

She said in Washington one in 17 are at 50 percent of the federal poverty level—in deep poverty—while one in 12 in Spokane County are at that level.

"The data helps us see who is impacted by poverty. Nearly one in five families with children live at or below 100 percent of the poverty level. Forty percent are single mothers," she said.

The Catholic bishops call for awareness of the cost of meeting basic needs for food, housing, utilities, transportation, child care, health care and personal household expenses. A family of four in Spokane County needs more than \$3,600 a month—an income at 180 percent of the poverty level.



Ashley Beck

"We miss people who are low income and don't qualify for services," Ashley said. "Where are there gaps in services? One in three county households do not have enough income to support their basic needs."

Ashley said about 50 percent of the population pay more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing. Of households earning \$25,000 to \$30,000, 92 percent pay 50 percent or more on housing.

The Spokane Regional Health District report, "Odds Against Tomorrow," reveals health stakes related to inequities. As income and education rise, health improves and chronic illnesses drop.

Poverty and education levels are interrelated. As health improves, poverty goes down and education rises.

"We also see differences by neighborhood," Ashley said. "For example, teen pregnancy is

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Stories of people help agencies understand dynamics behind poverty

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24 times higher in the highest-poverty neighborhood than the lowest-poverty neighborhood.

“What’s going on in that neighborhood?” Ashley said.

A SRHD report on quality of life and life expectancy in Spokane shows differences based on zip code.

“There is an 18-year difference in life expectancy between the highest- and lowest-income zip codes,” Ashley said. “What’s going on in those areas that contributes to the difference?”

Homelessness also reflects levels of poverty, she added. In the regional health district, there were 3,000 homeless youth in schools in 2014. The number is declining, but is still higher than earlier years.

To work on poverty, she suggests “going upstream from noticing the problems, behaviors and outcomes to seeing how beliefs influence policies.

There’s much work responding to poverty, housing and homelessness—what is happening “downstream,” she said, “but we also want the community to move ‘upstream’ to see how beliefs of people in power, individuals and



Neal Schindler, Ashley Beck and Julie Honekamp share experiences.

the community influence policies, practices and procedures.”

Ashley pointed to inequity based on race, ethnicity and gender.

“How can we do things upstream to prevent behaviors and outcomes downstream? How can we reach children early in life?” Ashley asked.

Neal Schindler, director of Spokane Area Jewish Family Services (SAJFS) since 2014, read the pastoral letter through the lens of that program and Jewish values that are behind providing the services.

One passage stood out: “I couldn’t understand how someone who came from where I come

from could be homeless.”

With clients of middle-class or upper-middle-class backgrounds, Neal finds that one turn of events can mean they are in a socio-economic place they never anticipated being.

“Because there’s a stereotype that to be Jewish means to be relatively affluent, there is an added sense of shame when clients find themselves needing services they used to donate to provide,” Neal said. “It’s hard to ask for and receive help. Beyond practical aspects of poverty, there’s a blow to identity from an internalized stigma about the poor being at fault.

“People who live in poverty

work hard to survive,” he said. “It requires persistence and can be demoralizing.”

While Jewish Family Services provides only a little help, people tell Neal it makes a difference.

“Despite our small size, even a small amount of food or help with an energy bill, plus our support and advocacy to help them navigate the bureaucracy, can make a difference with their morale, giving them hope. Even a little help matters,” he said.

For example, just knowing that not all landlords require applicant fees means people will look further to find housing rather than moving to a motel, which is less stable.

“Most families don’t know what options they have,” he said.

With his background in counseling, Neal finds that just being with families through hardship can be the most important thing for service providers to do.

Julie Honekamp said SNAP, the local community action agency, just celebrated its 50th anniversary of aiding people in poverty. In a year, SNAP serves 4,800 individuals—counted just once—in Spokane.

She said poverty comes primarily from housing costs and lack of living-wage jobs. “Why is there

poverty?” she asked. People with disabilities, mental illness, substance abuse and criminal records have a hard time finding work and housing.

Julie and SNAP staff often go to sit in a branch office and listen to stories of clients so they can base help on people’s real needs.

Recently, she heard from one woman who had been unemployed just three weeks and couldn’t pay her energy bill of \$400 in the cold snap.

Contrary to misperceptions, 60 percent of people who come to SNAP for help are *employed*, many working under 30 hours a week because employers want to avoid paying benefits required for full-time employees.

“They work hard and are resilient. They are our neighbors,” she said.

For service providers, Julie uses a metaphor of political yoga for how she “walks in the world.”

“I wake up sore and stiff. I need to listen to and stretch my muscles,” she said.

When she meets with someone who doesn’t see what she sees, she meets resistance, so she needs to listen to them and stretch their vision. “That’s political yoga,” she said.

For information, call 358-4273.

Advocates introduce priorities and issues, suggest ways to act on specific legislation

Paul Benz, co-director of the Faith Action Network, shared about bills for which he is advocating in the Washington State Legislature.

Given that the status of bills changes quickly, FAN has a legislative agenda online at fanwa.org.

That agenda calls for building a more humane and sustainable biennial budget, increasing support for human services and reducing wealth inequality, dismantling the culture of violence, protecting housing and preventing homelessness, and sustaining Washington’s environment.

Details of actions pursued under each priority are listed at <http://fanwa.org/legislative-agenda>.

FAN also has a bill tracker to help people keep up with the current status of legislation and the most current recommended action. That information is at <http://fanwa.org/advocacy/2017-bill-tracker>.

There are also fact sheets on issues and an advocacy toolkit to share with congregations.

FAN has a diverse coalition of people of faith partnering state-



Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry and Elise DeGooyer of FAN visit.

wide for a just, compassionate and sustainable world.

- Senator Andy Billig and Rep. Marcus Ricelli from Spokane reported on bills they are pursuing in the legislature.

- City Councilwoman Amber Waldref gave an overview of issues the Spokane City Council is addressing.

- Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry and Inland Power and Light encouraged participants to write letters and make phone calls to connect their faith to environmental issues, including efforts to build a

clean energy infrastructure.

Its 2017 priorities for Earth Ministries are for energy choices to be healthy for the air and climate, to look at power options past coal, to stand up to big oil and challenge oil-by-rail transport and fossil fuel terminals, to expand efforts to free products and the environment from toxic chemicals to protect children and families, to promote study of Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the Environment, and to protect public lands.

For information, visit earthministry.org/advocacy.

Closing words move attendees to pursue solutions and to hope

Closing the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Anastasia Wendlinger of The Fig Tree Board and faculty member at Gonzaga University, called for pausing to let the material of the day “sink into our being.”

“May we clear the thoughts and emotions evoked by many problems of these times and the many solutions evoked in this gathering,” she said.

Anastasia then quoted from a prayer from author John Jacob Gardner of Seattle University calling for commitment to “build a new earth, a place of wholeness and diversity, so we can transform our organizations into communities, places of compassion and care.”

He calls for leaders to affirm and renew values to release new possibilities, so “connection, not acquisition, is the primary motivator.”

He envisions a leadership circle in which people find their niche to help.

“Fill the space in our hearts with hope, energy, resolve and mercy as we move into the world to do this work,” she said.

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Programs help Spokane schools succeed in improving the graduation rate

Bridget Cannon, director of youth services at Volunteers of America (VOA) for the Inland Northwest since 2008, and James Wilburn, Student/Family Re-Engagement and Assessment Project manager for Spokane School District, work with at-risk youth to help them graduate so they have better jobs. They spoke in a workshop on education at the Jan. 28 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.



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Bridget said statewide there were 35,000 homeless youth last year, up from 29,000 in 2009, because the recession lingers and providers can better identify the homeless. Of the total, 6,000 are unaccompanied youth. In 2014-15, there were 1,364 homeless youth in K-12 in Spokane, 413 in Central Valley and 399 in Mead.

“The 2015 state graduation rate for homeless youth was 57 percent, but for Spokane it was at 75 percent because of interventions. The overall graduation rate is 87 percent,” said Bridget. **“We are doing better because of systems such as the Community Truancy Board and Restorative Justice responding to absences early.**

The 1987 federal McKinney-

Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act identifies services to keep homeless children in their school of origin, where they know teachers and counselors, and have friends and a support system. Unaccompanied youth can enroll in neighborhood schools, she said.

The HEART program (Homeless Education Advocates Resource Team) in all districts under McKinney-Vento enhances support services to stabilize homeless families. In Spokane, there are three staff.

“When kindergarteners are in unstable housing, it has impact on their learning,” said Bridget.

James said the truancy board helps prevent detention from

many absences, which mean students can’t keep up in a class.

The board sits with parents and students to find why the student is missing—illness or a death—and provides services or food through HEART and SNAP, he said.

“When I started in 2009, there was a 51 percent on-time graduation rate for African Americans,” said James, whose internship for a masters’ degree was researching the achievement gap.

He started the achievement gap intervention model in schools. Based on his success, he believes there is also need for intervention specialists to meet with Hispanic and Native American high school students to address cultural issues

and poverty.

Upper-middle-class families may sit down for dinner at 5 p.m., but that may not happen in poor families, where the mother works two jobs and struggles to provide food and housing. The children may lack access to computers at home, putting them behind because technology is needed for studies, James said. Older students may not be able to access computers after school because they have to watch younger siblings, so their mother can work.

“People growing up in poverty don’t know they are stressed. From my experiences growing up in a low-to-moderate-income family, I can relate to their experience,” James said.

“We need more intervention specialists who can relate with students,” he said. **“What seems to be a small problem to us is huge to a student. I’m available to give students a chance to talk. A teacher with 32 students can’t listen to a disruptive student.**

“Those students can come to me with their work. I take time to listen to what they are feeling as they go to six 45-minute classes, boom, boom, boom and struggle

through each,” he said. **“Perhaps one can’t see the blackboard or hear the teacher. If a student’s stomach is growling, it’s hard to pay attention. I build relationships with students so they feel comfortable sharing.”**

Bridget talks with children who drop out and finds that what makes a difference is their having a relationship with at least one adult—an algebra teacher, a coach or a pastor.

While mentoring programs help, James said students need consistent relationships. He prefers students having “sponsors” who want to see a return in their investment in a student. He started a Black Student Union so adults can meet with students to share why education is important.

James also invites neighborhood churches to adopt schools and invest in students.

“Misinformation leads to the wrong formation,” he said. **“We are building lives. I want the whole school system to achieve. If we raise the graduation rate for African-American students, we raise the overall graduation rate.”**

For information, call 624-2378 for Bridget or 354-4644 for James.

Consortium keeps up with issues affecting affordable housing opportunities

Kay Murano, executive director of the Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (SLIHC), said in a workshop at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference that SLIHC member organizations are involved in developing, owning, managing or supporting low-income housing.

With Spokane’s vacancy rate of 1.2 percent in 2016, finding a place to live was difficult, she said, so 1,345 children in Spokane Public Schools and 867 in Spokane Valley schools experienced homelessness.

While the collaboration of agencies can bring results, she expects that work to be difficult in today’s political climate.

On the national level, the President said in his campaign he would cancel a planned Federal Housing Administration mortgage fee reduction for first-time home buyers.

The 2011, the U.S. Budget Control Act established low spending caps for defense and non-defense spending.

“Each year since, Congress passed short-term agreements to raise spending above those caps. The President wants to lift the cap on defense spending, but keep the non-defense spending cap. This could be devastating to housing programs,” she explained.

In addition, he proposes a one-percent cut in non-defense spending each year for the next 10 years. So spending is reduced by the cap and by one percent more each year.

“We need legislators to raise non-defense spending caps the same amount defense spending is raised, or much federal funding we receive through HUD, FEMA, HOME and CDBG will be reduced so drastically that some programs will close,” Kay said.

A Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program gives businesses tax credits to invest in low-income construction projects, such as Fr. Bach Haven, Buder Haven and the Marilee.

“The President’s proposed tax reform for businesses may reduce their interest in buying tax credits, which they won’t need if their taxes are reduced,” she said. **“That source of funding is already decreasing based on speculation.”**

Kay said Senator Maria Cantwell has introduced a bill to expand the LIHTC program by 50 percent over five years.

“At the state level, one of the largest sources of funding for homeless services is document recording fees paid through real estate transactions,” she said.

The current fee is \$60, whether a house is worth \$200,000 or \$200 million. The fees will sunset in three years, so legislators need to revisit the issue and retain the fees. **“In 2016, Spokane served 4,758 homeless individuals, according to the state’s Homeless Management Information System. Document recording fees were 35 percent of regional funding for homeless services,”** Kay said.

Opponents of the fees say it’s not a consistent source of funds. In an economic downturn, fewer people buy homes, so less funding is available, but she said that is the case with every source of state revenue: sales tax revenue decreases if people buy fewer things, and property tax levies generate less if property tax values

decrease, she said.

SLIHC supports HB1570. It would permanently remove the sunset, increase the fee by \$50 and broaden flexibility of the 45 percent mandate for private landlords to include nonprofits and landlord liaison projects. It would reduce reporting requirements so funding is used for homeless services, not audits.

SB5254, backed by the real estate industry, extends the sunset eight years, allowing time for reforms to the Growth Management Act, but it does not increase the amount or amend the 45 percent mandate.

In 2015, the legislature passed HB2263 that allows a region to impose a sales or property tax to fund services for those with mental illness, developmental disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

Funding could be used for mental health services, evaluation and treatment facilities, housing and other services, Kay said.

Counties were given priority to enact this. If Spokane County raised the sales tax, it would generate \$8 to 9 million a year, but **“an increased sales tax puts a greater burden on those we’re trying to help, so a property tax may be a better choice,”** Kay said.

Spokane County has until Octo-

ber 2017 to put a measure on the ballot to implement a sales or property tax, she said.

Kay also reported on Source of Income Discrimination. Some landlords won’t rent to tenants who pay for their housing with a voucher.

“The federal voucher program assists very low-income families, the elderly and the disabled so they can afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market,” she said. **“The voucher pays the difference between what a tenant can afford (30 percent of their income) and the market rate.”**

When multiple apartment complexes in Renton said they would no longer accept rent payments from the local housing authority that uses vouchers, the story made the news. Then landlords reversed their decision and let

voucher tenants stay, Kay said.

HB 1633, banning source of income discrimination, passed out of the Judiciary Committee and was headed to the House floor in late February.

Some landlords say tenants on vouchers often do more damage, she explained. So last year, the state enacted legislation that landlords can be reimbursed \$500 to \$5,000 per instance for damages if they are in a jurisdiction that has passed source of income discrimination legislation, but Spokane city and county do not have such legislation in place.

Given daily changes to the status of bills, the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance has a bill tracker for the state legislature at www.wliha.org/bill-and-budget-tracker

For information, call 325-3235 or visit slihc.org.

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People in prisons need jobs and opportunities when they return to society

Three workshop speakers at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference offered insights on issues that have impact on criminal justice, racial justice and police accountability.

Kurtis Robinson of the NAACP Spokane Criminal Justice Committee presented statistics on what the community, state and nation face with the costs of mass incarceration and the need to reduce recidivism—reoffending—through jobs.

Gloria Ochoa Bruck, director of multi-cultural affairs for the City of Spokane, called for changing laws to hold police accountable to a “reasonable officer’s standard” when they use violence.

Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich said stable housing, education and jobs will reduce recidivism.

Given that 97 percent of the 2.4 million people in U.S. prisons



Participants engage in discussion during conference.



will re-enter society—with the average length of sentences 15 to 24 months—700,000 are released every year.

That means 70 million Ameri-

cans have a criminal record that impedes their ability to find a job.

“Recidivism in that group is 50 to 80 percent,” Kurtis said. “Of 8,000 released from Washington

jails, only 25 percent have a job a year after release.”

“Social conditions contributing to criminal activity include homelessness, poverty, addiction, mental illness and dysfunctional families,” he said, adding that the stigma of a criminal record is a barrier to finding jobs and stable housing, re-traumatizing those released.

The Sentencing Project, which has worked 30 years for a fair, effective U.S. criminal justice system, points to racial disparities in mass incarceration.

“More than 60 percent in prison are people of color. Black men are six times and Hispanic men are 2.5 as likely to be in prison as white men,” he said, “and one-tenth of the U.S. population is incarcerated.”

“One in nine of all men are likely to be incarcerated, with one in 17 white, one in three black and one in six Latino,” Kurtis reported. “One in 56 women are incarcerated with one in 111 white women, one in 18 black and one in 45 Latina.”

He said the prisoner class is further alienated because job applications ask if the applicant was “ever incarcerated” for a crime. A “yes” answer leaves people with substandard housing, employment and education.

“The number of Americans with arrest records could be the 18th largest nation in the world,” Kurtis said. “Those in U.S. prisons are 5 percent of the world’s population and 25 percent of the world’s prison population.”

He said that recognizing the cost to American society can bring bipartisan solutions.

Mass incarceration costs \$80 billion a year and is a major driver of the U.S. poverty rate, he said. The cost per inmate in the State of Washington is \$37,300 a year, he said, funds that could be used for education, drug treatment and vocational training.

Kurtis said the NAACP Spokane advocates a measure on the city and state level to “ban the box,” meaning applicants do not need to say if they ever committed a crime or were in jail on applications. It can come up after the applicant pool has narrowed, in a background check or interview.

Gloria said that the report of the Task Force on the Use of Force by law enforcement officers has resulted in two bills before the legislature.

She said the police shooting a mentally ill man in Pasco was not “a reasonable way” to de-escalate the situation.

In the death of Otto Zehm, she said, the officer used his baton vertically, rather than horizontally, which police are trained to do.

“When we send officers into volatile situations, their lives are at risk, so they should be able to defend themselves,” Gloria said.

The proposed law on use of force would change the standard from using force in malice or bad faith, which are hard to prove, to be based on “a reasonable officer’s standard.”

Was the officer’s action a deviation from training or a mistake? HB 1529 and SB 5073 address this issue.

Another bill, HB 1769, would restore cuts to training budgets, Gloria said, so police departments can afford to send officers for crisis intervention training.

“As a community advocate, I believe we need a law that is fair and just, and holds police to be accountable, but is not anti-police,” Gloria said.

Sheriff Ozzie reinforced the need for housing, education and jobs to reduce recidivism.

“Without stable housing, we can’t accomplish the others. When people are stabilized, they can find jobs and improve their skills,” he said.

In 10 to 15 years, many police will be retiring, and there will be many job openings.

Ozzie calls for training young people so they have the skill sets to fill the openings.

He and other sheriffs in the state are focusing on early childhood education so more students graduate. Students struggle, he believes, because so many families are broken.

Because he believes it’s important to provide more training for trades, Ozzie, the Rev. Happy Watkins and others met with the construction industry to develop an apprentice program to teach at-risk youth construction trades.

For information, call 209-2425.

Speakers say that Spokane seeks to be a compassionate and welcoming city

By Austriauna Brooks

Intern from Whitworth University

The Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, held at St. Mark’s Lutheran on Jan. 28, brought together about 120 people to discuss how they can improve lives of persecuted, discriminated against and oppressed individuals.

The idea of this year’s theme of “Taking Responsibility: Acting Together” stems from how to lead and act in faith in today’s political climate. One workshop reflected on “Immigration Initiatives.”

• John Lemus, chair of the Spokane Human Rights Commission, said that according to a decade-old city ordinance, no police officer can question anyone about his or her immigration status.

Author, small business owner and member of No Discrimination Spokane Kris Dinnison dove into what citizens can do to help undocumented immigrants stay safe in Spokane.

• Kris said that Initiative No. 2015-1, which has been proposed in Spokane, would establish police obligation to ask immigration status without removing opposition to targeting people based on racial bias. However, police could target people of color, people with accents, as well as people who wear religious apparel to ask about their immigration status.

“We want Spokane to be a compassionate, safe city. This initiative does not support that,” she said.

• Calling Spokane a compassionate and safe city is more correct than calling it a sanctuary city, according to City Council Member Breean Beggs.

While there is no strict definition of a sanctuary city, Breean, a civil rights lawyer, said a sanctuary city is one that declares itself to be a sanctuary city and acts to protect those who are in danger because of their immigration status.

The U.S. government may redefine what a sanctuary city is now that the President has issued an executive order related to Muslims and other immigrants.

Breean said Spokane does not have a status to protect immigrants with an Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE) warrant.

• Statistics cannot be understood unless there are stories behind them, said Mabel Elsom, the anti-human trafficking coordinator at Lutheran Community Services Northwest in Spokane.

She is an immigrant, having come from El Salvador. She shares her story about sacrifices her family made and risks she took to come to the United States.

Mabel explains how lucky she is to have been able to leave her country because her uncle was high in the military and her mother lived in the United States already.

She was able to come to the United States, go to school, get a job and call 911 if she was in danger.

The people with whom Mabel works, however, think that if they call law enforcement for help, they will go to jail or face deportation.

“The message we send is that there is justice and help for women who are assaulted or abused but not for immigrants who are victims of assault or abuse,” she said. “Too often the system sides with the perpetrator and does not listen to the victim. Every victim has the right to get help.”

The clients Mabel works with come from dangerous situations and often try to hide from their perpetrators. Because perpetrators know the trafficked person is an immigrant, they may abuse the person by holding her visa and threatening deportation. Traffickers use that leverage to make the immigrants do what they want them to do.

• The workshop speakers urged people of faith to find ways to work with local organizations to assure safety for undocumented immigrants. This action cannot come from a single person but it takes an entire community to come together to promote positive change, Mabel said.

“Alone, we might feel like a drop in the ocean,” she said, “but that ocean wouldn’t happen if it wasn’t for our individual efforts.”

For information, call 416-2876 or email at bbeggs@spokaneccity.org.



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Village at Orchard Ridge offers workshop for 'P.E.A.C.E. of Mind'

By Kaye Hult

The Village at Orchard Ridge in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, will offer a workshop on resources for aging people several times in 2017 at area churches, beginning with one from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, March 11, at St. Pius X Catholic Church.

Featured presenter Susan Melchiorre is a local physician and co-founder of OnSite for Seniors, a Christian program helping meet needs of elderly people in life transitions. She will speak about "Strategies for Successful Aging." A panel of local professionals will offer guidance in managing life transitions and levels of care; making informed health-care, estate and end-of-life decisions, and holistic approaches to care.

The P.E.A.C.E. of Mind workshop has evolved from an idea of Mary Stewart, the church engagement coordinator for this faith-based nonprofit home, formerly called Heritage Place/ Coeur d'Alene Homes.

The Village at Orchard Ridge honors older adults by providing independent living, assisted living and a memory-care unit, she said.

P.E.A.C.E. stands for Professionals Easing Aging Concerns through Education. Orchard Ridge offers the educational workshop to its 20 member churches and the wider community.

Two other workshops planned this spring: 1) from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, March 18, at Peace Lutheran Church in Post Falls, and 2) from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, May 6, at Lake City Church in Coeur d'Alene.

The idea for the workshop evolved over the years, stemming from a need Mary observed while she participated in a focus group for at-home caregivers at the Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho in about 2011.

"Most were spouses," she said. "I was a daughter caring for my mother."

It tore at her heartstrings when participants cried as they shared things like, "My loved one was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and was left to his/her own devices."

She realized people faced with dilemmas of aging didn't know how to access resources. Before her mother moved from New Jersey to live with her in 2008, she began to show signs of memory loss, so Mary researched resources for herself and her mother.

"I had two teens at home, needed to care for my mother and knew I would need respite. How could I go to my daughter's play and be a wife to my husband?" she wondered.

"Knowledge is power," she said of her research before her mother

moved in. She went to the Area Agency on Aging and other agencies to learn what they offered.

Her mother lived with her for about four years before she moved to what was then Coeur d'Alene Homes, where she lived for a year before she died in 2013.

Mary sees God's hand in how the idea grew.

The Toolbox of Community Resources for the Aging Population, the original seedling from her idea, was a project for Servant School, the four-year Diaconate and Lay Ministry Formation Program of the Catholic Diocese of Boise, where she and husband Chris have been studying.

At that time, Mary was also serving on the Orchard Ridge board, which was engaged in a long range planning process.

"The board of directors wanted to nurture relationships with member churches and offer resources they could use both before and after members needed to move to a campus like Orchard Ridge," Mary said.

She later introduced her toolbox idea to the board president, executive director Ann Johnson and the long-range planning committee. The board decided to create a church engagement coordinator to help carry out the idea.

In 2014, she left the board to take that position, because she felt "passionate about church relations and carrying the idea forward."

"I could have created a toolbox at my parish for my internship, but Orchard Ridge's willingness to carry out the project provided an avenue to reach more churches and people than would have happened otherwise," she said.

Orchard Ridge developed the toolbox and has given it to date to 17 member congregations.

Twenty churches govern Orchard Ridge, with each congregation having two members as voting delegates.

The toolbox provides information on such things as adult day care, advocacy for the aged, Alzheimer's/dementia residential care, companionship, caregiver respite, grief and loss, handyman projects, legal and financial issues, and more.

In May 2016, Orchard Ridge facilitated a Pastor Summit, "The Toolbox Comes Alive," for member church pastors and other ministers in the community. They asked what other resources pastors could use in their ministries.

From that list, the Village at Orchard Ridge's planning team identified three issues: finances, mobility/independence, and en-



Mary Stewart

couragement/support.

Admissions coordinator Connie Wills suggested that Orchard Ridge develop their own group of presenters, which led to the P.E.A.C.E. of Mind concept.

At a second Pastor Summit in October 2016, they presented a mini-version of the workshop. With feedback from that, the planning panel put the workshop into final form.

"Orchard Ridge is funding P.E.A.C.E.," she said. "I applaud their commitment to providing these resources."

Mary grew up in Hamilton, N.J. She had four brothers and eventually, two orphaned cousins moved in with them.

After graduating from high school in 1975, she attended Rider College in Lawrenceville, N.J., and then worked as a legal assistant.

When she was in her early 20s, Mary moved to San Diego, where she worked for a political consulting and fund raising firm.

She met her husband Chris there. Once they married and their daughter was born, they moved in 1991 to Coeur d'Alene, where Chris has family.

Since then, Mary took part in the grass roots effort that started Holy Family School. She was capital campaign manager for building the current building and later became its first development director.

Before becoming involved with Orchard Ridge, she stayed at home for about 10 years, first to be available to her children and then to care for her mother.

"My mother's nature was to minister to others," Mary said. "She was always concerned about what more to do with a situation. She was a godly woman."

Following in her mother's footsteps, she volunteers with women on Mondays, in addition to her work.

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Meaningless superlatives stop thinking as a tool to control thinking

Use of unsubstantiated comparisons and superlatives is more than a matter of grammar. Superlatives used to confuse and stymie us are rhetorical, and are not grammatically correct.

In training for writers and editors for The Fig Tree, one rule is to avoid “very,” which is among the meaningless superlatives commonly used. “Very,” “wonderful” and “beautiful” have no quantifiable meanings.

We also warn writers to avoid use of “all,” “always” and other unverifiable quantifications. If it’s significant, readers need to know exactly how many. Otherwise, the word can be omitted, avoiding confusion about the quantity or quality.

For articles to be concise, writers need to avoid empty, unclear words, so we encourage them to ask people they interview to be specific: “What was wonderful or beautiful?” We ask them to describe it with nouns and verbs, not adjectives and adverbs.

Given that principle I drum into writers, I’ve been cringing with the many unclear,

nonspecific superlatives during the campaign and now.

We hear “biggest,” “best,” “worst,” “largest crowd,” “wonderful,” “fantastic,” “greatest,” and even “disaster,” “horrible,” “disgusting” and can be duped or will tune out because they are unclear.

We have heard the President claim recently to be “the least racist” or “the least anti-Semitic” person there has even been.

What does that mean? It fills the talking space, airwaves and tweets, but we are left pondering what it means, while it falsely claims to be substantive. Media still are seeking to find how to respond to the bombardment of superlatives and meaningless adjectives that push the extremes.

“Stymie” means to prevent or hinder the progress of meaning, to thwart or stump, to stop someone or stop something from happening or to discourage attempts to deal with and resolve a problem.

The rapid-fire use of superlatives is geared to end discussions, to require te-

dious fact checks and to seem to be doing something or divert attention from what is being done.

Superlatives are generally exaggerations of praise—often self praise—or put-downs of an opponent to create prejudice and enemy images that slay with words.

Superlatives are adjectives that suggest the greatest degree of some quality. Usually they end with “-est,” but the President has a way of turning adjectives by implication into superlatives, such as “making America great” implies “making America the greatest.”

Superlatives are opinions that may turn into “sound and fury signifying nothing.”

In political speech and advertising, relative comparison is used to invite comparison, according to Wikipedia, “and yet the basis of comparison is not established.” Rhetorically, it implies “significance where [significance] may not be present” or there is no established basis for comparison.

The Fig Tree also teaches writers and

editors that some qualities are either present or absent, so talking about the ungradable degrees is irrelevant.

It’s important for us to be informed about language, so we are not deceived by rhetoric that is, in fact, propaganda to persuade, to change hearts and minds, to twist truth.

It’s important to have tools to identify these tricks so we can begin to listen to those who hold opinions swayed by these tools, and so we can converse with our communities, neighbors and families locally and globally.

Trickster language that changes policies may isolate us from the rest of the world. As people of faith, we must be attuned to precise use of words so we can be the Word made flesh, loving, caring, serving and bringing justice, reconciliation, hope and peace that dispel confusion.

A superlative action is Muslims raising \$90,000+ in a day to repair damage at a Jewish cemetery and Jewish centers.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Sharing and savoring each others stories is a way to health in these times

How do I hold myself in these times?

When I was a very young Sister, I saw a quote that holds much wisdom, I try to live within it these days.

“That the birds of worry and care fly about your head, this you cannot prevent. That they build nests in your hair, this you can prevent.”

Today, I have to be so much more mindful of living what I say I believe, of maintaining my authenticity.

I believe that I am connected to a part of all creation, and that every bit of creation tells me something about the Divine.

I believe that people are wired for good and that we all do the best we can.

Sometimes I ask myself, “Why would a good, rational person say, do, act in this way?”

Usually, I can find an answer, even for myself!

So how do I live in today’s climate and stay true to the person I am and am working to become? How indeed?!

I pray for our leaders.

I pray for the followers and the protesters (of which I am one).

I try not to gobble up every bad thing that

is said about or done by the administration, rejoice in their failings or hope they fail.

I try to limit my conversations to at least ambiguous if not positive comments.

If I am true to myself, I have to own my connection with every person.

I have to know my boundaries but keep them permeable—light and love and peace in, light and love and peace out.

I try, but I still watch MSNBC, not Fox news.

It does occur to me that watching commentaries from another viewpoint may help me to strengthen my resolve to open my

heart and mind. That seems a risk worth considering.

It also seems important to savor good stories of people doing good things, just things, kind and inclusive things.

I have heard that holding a thought or idea for 15 seconds increases the likelihood that it will be retained, so I do take time to savor the good stories.

Perhaps the important thing is to be a good story. In imitation of a long ago itinerant preacher of Good News in the midst of political unrest, I try.

Mary Ann Farley, SNJM- Contributor

Reflections

Sounding Board

For Advocacy

Lutheran bishop explores need for self care for activists, advocates to persevere

In closing reflections for the Jan. 28 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference, Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells quoted from and commented on lawyer, feminist, photographer and blogger Mirah Curzer, writing on “How to #StayOutraged without losing your mind.”

She recently offered self-care lessons for the resistance and Martin interspersed his own support for those engaged in the work of addressing human need.

Since the election, many people not previously involved in activism have jumped in with both feet, he said. The ACLU and Planned Parenthood have been inundated with donations, mostly from first-time givers.

Martin, who is bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Eastern Washington Idaho Synod, said the election was a wake-up call for many who are “joining in an outpouring of support and enthusiasm for action.”

Mirah said it won’t be easy given the “ferocious multi-front attack on the progressive agenda” and watching “institutions we care about and depend on be destroyed.”

It will be emotionally exhausting and traumatic for those dedicated “to protecting the vulnerable and preserving democracy,” she said, because many are not ready to be in resistance and the ranks will thin out with time unless care is taken.

Martin told attendees that organizers and activists need strategies to stay sane and not burn out during long struggles.

When Mirah wakes up and checks her phone, she said, a cloud of sadness and anxiety settles over her. So when it’s too much, she advises unplugging and stop reading the news for a week, day or even an hour. To avoid being overwhelmed and adapting to the outrage, she encouraged



Bishop Martin Wells

people to watch a movie, play with a dog or go to yoga.

According to family systems theory, Martin said living things need a degree of separateness from one another to thrive. They need to separate the sympathy of walking beside someone from the empathy of entering into someone’s skin, which is unhealthy.

“We need to take a break and seek balance through separation,” he said. “Those with spiritual motivation, need to pay attention to our spiritual formation and our differentiation as a way to stay whole when in contact with those who need our help. We risk coming apart by empathy, instead of the more helpful ‘walking alongside’ that will keep us intact.

“What does your tradition offer you in terms of forms of prayer? Do you have a spiritual director? Mirah suggests a therapist,” said Martin, reminding the group that St. Gertrude Monastery three

hours south of Spokane has wonderful guest quarters. “Who is sitting beside you today that you can ask for help or offer help, when these days get too difficult?”

“What is the shape of your soul these days and how will you attend to your soul as preparation for the difficult work ahead?” he asked.

The risk, he said, is adapting to “the horrible realities we face or fleeing.”

Mirah said: “People can get used to anything. If you don’t take steps to prevent it, you will get used to the new reality. You will stop being shocked by the latest scandal or horrified by the latest attack on civil rights. Adapting to a new normal is the worst thing that could happen, because *this is not normal*. Democracies fall when their people stop resisting.”

Martin said it’s important to stay engaged rather than adapting.

“This will not make you a bad activist or a weak person. You will do more good if you make time for other conversations and non-political activities. It’s like taking a vacation from your job, which research shows dramatically boosts productivity. Take a long break, then come back refreshed and ready to work,” Martin said. “Not every job has to be done by you.”

Another suggestion is to focus energy on one or two issues, not show up to every march or donate to every cause. People will work on different issues. If many people focus on many issues, important issues are covered.

Martin said, “Here we can turn to the beautiful reality of the Body of Christ,” which calls us, as Sr. Joan Chittester says, to be leaders “at the point of our giftedness” and followers “at the point of another’s giftedness.”

He calls people to be aware of their gifts and to turn to others who have other gifts.

Mirah suggests making activism

fun, have a contest with friends to call representatives or go out with friends after volunteering.

She believes humor has a role, too.

As Saul Alinsky wrote in *Rules for Radicals*, “If you’re not enjoying yourself, you’re doing it wrong.”

Mirah calls for basic self-care—therapy, physical and dental checkups, sleeping enough, exercising, being with friends, taking me-time, eating well and going outside.

“As people of faith, we can go a step further,” said Martin, referring to the story in Luke 18 of the persistent widow who wears down the judge to grant her justice. He also suggests spending a day in Olympia with Paul Benz, director of the Faith Action Network and remembering the Jesuit theology of “being contemplatives in action.”

Out of his Lutheran tradition, Martin adds a theology of the cross, not in terms of someone suffering having “a cross to bear,” but being aware that “whatever suffering we have is suffering we can bear in confidence that God is with us.”

Jesus faced the cross, because he chose to face it, Martin said. It was not like a sickness that strikes without explanation or a continuing difficulty, accident or catastrophe. Paraphrasing John Howard Yoder, he said, “Jesus’ cross was the price to pay for being the kind of person he was in the kind of world he was in, representing a new way of life in a world that did not want a new way of life,” he said.

Martin said Jesus calls his followers “to announce with him, a kingdom that is foreign” but “breaks in every time someone loves someone who is unlovable and who lays down a penultimate goal for the ultimate reality of the new kingdom.”

He is at the Lutheran Synod Office in Spokane at 838-9871.

Calendar of Events

- | | |
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| <p>Mar 1 • Ash Wednesday Silent Day of Prayer, Fr. Philip Garcia, OFM, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net</p> <p>Mar 2 • "Are Vaccinations Everybody's Business," Community Conversation, Northwest Association for Biomedical Research, O'Doherty's Irish Grille, 525 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., 5:45 to 7:45 p.m., nwabr.org</p> <p>• Chase Youth Awards, Martin Woldson Theater, 1001 W. Sprague, 6 p.m., 822-7905</p> <p>Mar 2, 16 • Peace and Justice Action Committee, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org</p> <p>Mar 3 • "New Theory of Religious Violence: From Abraham to Trump, James Wellman Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth University, 7 p.m., 777-3270, anitalewis@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Mar 4 • International Women's Day Spokane Celebration, "Be Bold for a Change," cultural organizer Favianna Rodriguez, 12:30 to 5 p.m., Spokane Women's Club, 1428 W. 9th Ave., 359-2898</p> <p>Mar 4-12 • Novena: Nine Days of Grace, "Companions in Reconciliation and Justice," St. Aloysius Church, Boone and Astor, 313-5896</p> <p>Mar 5 • 75th Annual Kosher Dinner, Temple Beth Shalom, 1322 E. 30th Ave., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., 747-3304, spokanetbs.org</p> <p>Mar 8 • Washington State University Women's Recognition Luncheon, "Honoring Resilient Women," Noel Schulz speaker, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Senior Ballroom, WSU, 335-6849</p> <p>• Inland Northwest Death Penalty Abolition Group, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870</p> <p>• Veterans for Peace, 35 W. Main, 6:45 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org</p> <p>• "Finding Our Way: Thomas Merton, John Wu and the Christian Dialogue with Early China," Anthony Clark Lecture, The Crow's Nest, Hixson Union Building, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-3270, anitalewis@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Mar 9 • "Justice and Our Calling: From Genesis to Revelation," Staley Distinguished Christian Scholar Kristen Deede Johnson, Sealey Mudd Chapel, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-4345, cmcknight@whitworth.edu</p> <p>• YWCA Women Spa Night, La Rive Spa at Northern Quest Casino, 100 N. Hayford Rd., Airway Heights, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., 789-9307</p> <p>Mar 10 • The Fig Tree Benefit Lunch, "Beyond the News: Revealing Community," Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., 535-4112 or 535-1813, thefigtree.org</p> <p>• Winter Waters 2017, "Restoring Lake Coeur d'Alene," Watershed Hero Award and benefit for Sierra Club's Upper Columbia River Group and the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. Second Ave., 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., 939-1290, john@waterplanet.ws</p> <p>Mar 10-12 • "Go, Dog. Go!" Whitworth Theatre Production, Bing Crosby Theater, 901 W. Sprague, 6 p.m., Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, 777-4374, kdawson@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Mar 11 • "P.E.A.C.E. of Mind" workshop, St. Pius X Church, Coeur d'Alene, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 208-664-8119</p> | <p>Mar 14 • "Central Asia/The Wholistic Gospel," Mission Discussion with Southeast Asian leader, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-3275, mpace@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Mar 14, 28 • Showing Up for Racial Justice, 35 W. Main, 6:30 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org</p> <p>Mar 15 • The Fig Tree Benefit Breakfast, "Beyond the News: Revealing Community," Cataldo Hall, Gonzaga University, 7:15 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., 535-4112, 535-1813 or mary@thefigtree.org</p> <p>• Coffee and Contemplation, "Heat, Light and Smoke: Speaking Truth in Love," Charlie Finck, IHRC, 6910 S. Ben Burr Rd., 9 to 11:30 a.m., 448-1224, ihrc.net</p> <p>• Women Lead Spokane, Sara Jordan-Bloch speaker, Hemmingson Center, Gonzaga, 702 E. DeSmet, 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.</p> <p>Mar 16 • Women's History Month: Diversity Monologues, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m. 777-4572, dgarcia@whitworth.edu, yazminmonetwatkins.com</p> <p>Mar 17 • Bishop Jim Waggoner Jr.'s Celebration Banquet, The Lincoln Center, 5 to 8:30 p.m., RSVP at 624-3191, spokanediocese.org</p> <p>Mar 18 • Ordination and Consecration of the Rt. Rev. Gretchen Rehberg, and Ordination Reception, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave., 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 624-3191, stjohns-cathedral.org</p> <p>• "P.E.A.C.E. of Mind" workshop, Peace Lutheran Church, Post Falls, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 208-664-8119</p> <p>Mar 19 • Women in Agriculture Conference, "Power up Your Communications – Power up Your Farm!" 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., multiple locations, including Colville, Nespelem, Pasco, Pullman, Republic, Spokane, Walla Walla, Wenatchee and Yakima, Bonners Ferry and Sandpoint, 509-745-8531, womeninag.wsu.edu</p> <p>Mar 20 • NAACP General Membership Meeting, Community Building, 35 W. Main, 7 p.m., spokanenaacp@gmail.com</p> <p>Mar 21 • "Why Women's and Gender Studies Matters at a Christian University," Philip Payne Lecture, Weyerhaeuser Hall, Whitworth, 7 p.m., 777-4299, kheller@whitworth.edu</p> <p>Mar 22 • Spokane Police Accountability and Reform Coalition, 35 W. Main, 5:30 p.m., 838-7870, pjals.org</p> <p>• Spokane Public Radio "Health Forum: Suicide," Spokane City Council Chambers, 6:30 p.m., 328-5729, kpbx.org</p> <p>Mar 23 • Spring Flannery Lecture with Patrick McCormick, Gonzaga professor of religious studies, "American Religious Violence: Examining the Beam in Our National Eye," Hemmingson Center, 702 E. DeSmet Ave., 313-6782, gonzaga.edu/religious-studies</p> <p>Mar 25 • "Priceless and Purposed," 2017 Women's Conference, Southside Christian Church, 2934 E. 27th Ave., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., ashleyp@southsidespokane.org</p> <p>Apr 5 • Fig Tree Distribution, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th Ave., 9 a.m., 535-1813</p> <p>Apr 6 • Fig Tree Benefit Evaluation, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., noon, 535-4112</p> <p>• Fig Tree Board, Emmanuel Family Life Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 to 3 p.m., 535-1813</p> |
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Refugees resettled in Spokane since the 1950s

Continued from page 1 the Washington Association of Churches working with Church World Service resettled refugees in Spokane, particularly Vietnamese, Hmong and Cambodians after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

By 1979, Spokane's Hmong community was 300. The Spokane office closed in the early 1990s as World Relief came in.


It needed to resettle at least 30 refugees a year to be viable.

Greg Cunningham, who was director of the Catholic Charities Spokane (CCS) immigration office, said they also resettled people from the Soviet republics and Bosnia in the 1990s. After Sept. 11, 2001, the number of refugees dropped, and CCS focused on immigration services.

Currently, Lutheran Community Services (LCS) in Spokane has a foster care program for unaccompanied refugee minors. The LCS in Tacoma has been resettling Syrian and other refugees.

For information, call 484-9829, email mfinney@wr.org and see the full article on the Rally for Refugees with photos at thefigtree.org.

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Spokane Public Radio Presents



SPR Health Forum: Suicide
 March 22, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 – FREE at the Spokane City Council Chambers

Steve Jackson hosts a panel discussion to learn warning signs, prevention steps, and doctor-assisted end of life.



SPR Presents Tom Ashbrook
 May 12, 7:30 p.m. at the Bing

The host of *On Point* visits Spokane as part of his national listening tour. Tickets available at TicketsWest.



SPR Presents Paula Poundstone
 June 22, 7:30 p.m. at the Bing

The comedian and frequent *Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me!* panelist returns to Spokane! Tickets available at TicketsWest.

Details at SpokanePublicRadio.org

Michele Vazquez served in Peace Corps in Ukraine and returned on Fulbright

Michele Vazquez is one of several Peace Corps returnees who will be available at a First Friday Exhibit from 5 to 8 p.m., March 3, at Express Employment Professionals, 331 W. Main. The owner, Ira Amstadter, is also a Peace Corps returnee.

It's an opportunity for people to share their stories, exhibit memorabilia and tell others what it means to be a Peace Corps volunteer.

The exhibit will continue to be up through March during the business hours.

Michele Vazquez began traveling internationally in 1993, taking three- to four-week trips to Romania, Hungary, Turkey, Europe, South America and Asia.

In 1996, when she was 33, she decided she wanted to spend her 50th birthday somewhere memorable and she wanted to live and work in another country, not just travel. When she was 48, friends suggested the Peace Corps.

Michele was working with the State of Washington, whose labor agreement allows, in some cases, permanent employees to take a leave of absence for the Peace Corps and return to a similar position. She decided the Peace Corps was a good choice, because it would "be safe and fascinating."

From 2011 to 2013, she served in the Peace Corps in Lviv, Ukraine, working with an association of Ukrainian cities to strengthen energy security and energy efficiency systems. She also worked with other nonprofits to build organizational capacity.

Michele grew up west of Spokane in Marshall and still lives in the area. She earned a bachelor's degree in urban planning in 1990 at Eastern Washington University (EWU), a master's in public administration in 2001 from EWU and a PhD in leadership studies in 2014 from Gonzaga University.

She had started studies at EWU, but began working with the State of Washington public assistance office as a clerk in Othello in 1983. She worked in various jobs with the state through 2014. She was at the public assistance office in Moses Lake when she decided to return to school part time. She worked in Spokane and Olympia as a data and computer analyst.



Michele Vazquez shares stories of Peace Corps at exhibit.

After completing a bachelor's degree, she worked with the Department of Ecology on water and then with local government land use planning. In 2005, she began to work in the governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance in Spokane on an environmental program helping project participants navigate environmental regulations.

In 2011, she joined the Peace Corps and learned she would go to Eastern Europe. She was assigned to go to Ukraine, because an opening could use her skills.

"I knew nothing about Ukraine and I was afraid, even though I pretended to be excited," she said.

Michele trained in northern Ukraine near Chernobyl and the Russian border. It was cold when she arrived in March. The former Soviet-era buildings seemed stark, but once there, "I immediately knew I'd be okay," she said.

"Ukraine prior to the annexation of Crimea, I found to be a safe country," she said. "It's not a culture where people have hand guns, so my biggest safety concern was to watch for open holes in the road or sidewalk."

"I could readily relate with the people. People took care of me, whether I was lost on a bus or had other needs," she said. "I spoke travel-level Ukrainian, but many people in Lviv spoke English."

Michele was in Lviv, which is Ukraine's most European feeling city. Although thousands of people died in World War II,

most of its old buildings were not destroyed. It had an opera and symphony, plus many social service nonprofits and a progressive Catholic university.

She was community development volunteer for a nonprofit, Energy Efficient Cities of Ukraine, which focused on Ukrainian cities and also had influence in many post-Soviet countries, such as Slovenia and Georgia.

Working with mayors and small NGOs, she helped cities lower their energy consumption and change energy systems. She trained groups, developed grants, designed programs and advised management on communication and organizational development.

Michele also trained leaders at the Catholic university's master's in management and leadership program and encouraged public access to official documents that could be used in decision making.

Before the end of her term, she was part of a team that won a \$800,000 grant and began to train people in understanding European energy efficiency methods,

construction and development of systems to collect energy use data.

Michele spent her 50th birthday with Ukrainian and Russian speaking friends in a basement apartment, singing with a guitarist who remains a close friend.

She keeps strong connections with people in "this fascinating, unexpected country" where people find creative ways to do things. On a road trip with seven friends, they followed a cow path until they came to a stream. They all got out of the car, carried it over the stream and continued on.

"Ukrainians who had nothing for so long had to figure out how to do things in creative ways. They might not have been motivated to do them if they had had more money," she said.

After Michele returned to her job, she completed studies at Gonzaga in 2014. Then she spent a year with the Red Cross in Abilene, Texas, helping FEMA with disaster relief in Albany, N.Y., and in Kentucky.

She spent the 2015-16 academic year on a Fulbright scholarship teaching "ethical" (servant) leadership, primarily with the Ukrainian Diplomatic Academy in Kyiv and giving special presentations to university students at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, the National Public Administration Academy at Kharkiv and Kyiv.

Michele also taught university

professors in conjunction with the Ministry of Education in the communications they needed to do and the relationships needed to have their research published.

In addition, she taught internally displaced persons on leadership and communication in Lviv and Kyiv, and gave leadership presentations for the Banking Academy at Sumy in Eastern Ukraine. During that time, there was war in Southeast Ukraine.

Now Michele is back in Spokane looking for the right fit.

In Texas, she had joined a Unitarian Universalist Church and now has joined the Unitarian Universalist Church in Spokane, drawn by its commitment to social justice. She volunteers with Second Harvest, 501 Commons and the Washington Trail Association.

"From my travels, I have learned not to make assumptions about any group of people or culture. To do that without meeting people is a mistake," Michele said.

While she found Ukrainians she met initially reserved and private, once Michele came to know people she found them "welcoming and inclusive at a deep level."

Now her community of Ukrainian friends is part of who she is as a human being.

For information, call 747-6011 or email inpca.spokane@gmail.com.

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