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

Food banks receive garden produce

By Kaye Hult

Shared Harvest Community Garden in Coeur d'Alene began with a pumpkin seed, said its new president, Sherilyn Long.

Since 2008, the people who have gardened there have donated 57,000 pounds of produce to about 17 food banks. As its name implies, sharing the garden's harvest is part of the mission taken on by this community of gardeners.

In 2008, Kim Normand wanted to have a pumpkin growing contest with friends, Sherilyn said. She found an unused field belonging to realtor Marshall Mend and approached him about using it.

While Kim was broaching the idea to Marshall, she surprised herself by saying, "I want to have a community garden and donate half of the produce to food banks." Marshall agreed.

With the love, generosity and hard work of many individuals and agencies, Sherilyn said, Kim and her husband Mike put the garden together. They provided leadership until at the end of the 2019 season, Kim stepped down as president. Sherilyn replaced her in February.

Produce from the donation plot in the garden at 10th St. and Foster Ave. is given to food banks.



Sherilyn Long helps community garden adjust to COVID-19 precautions.

Among the individual plots are some with raised beds, allowing those with disabilities and/or vision issues to participate. Half of the produce from individual plots, which are rented for \$25, is also given to food banks.

A demonstration plot dedicated to xeriscape—requiring little or no irrigation—helps people learn about water-wise planting.

"We grow herbs and have a house for mason bees," Sherilyn said. "We also need bee people to help if we want to have honey bees again."

Compost bins, planting barrels and arbors are available to use.

Sherilyn said there are raspberry bushes, and apple, maple and 100-year-old oak trees, as well as the benches and picnic tables inviting people in to sit and absorb the garden's peace and beauty.

Children come there, not only as part of gardening families, but also from the neighborhood. She said they help with weeding or other projects. They also turn over rocks to find out what lives underneath. A children's plot provides a place to learn about nature and grow and explore, to learn more about life.

The community garden offers workshops on such topics as or-

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Bystander intervention training focuses on anti-Asian discrimination

By Mary Stamp

To help people challenge anti-Asian bullying arising because COVID-19 was first identified in China, Pui-Yan Lam, co-chair of the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) Spokane Chapter, and Liz Moore, co-director of the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS), facilitated Bystander Intervention Training April 14 on Zoom.

While there have not been any specific anti-Asian hate crimes reported in Spokane, APIC wants to keep it that way. The lessons will teach people how to speak

up when they hear racist bullying. "We hope to change minds and hearts," Pui-Yan said.

As a PJALS member, she knew PJALS offered Bystander Training for "compassionate people to learn strategies to speak out against discrimination and hate in safe, effective ways so they, along people targeted and those expressing hate, will not be hurt.

"Often well-meaning people disapprove, but heated arguments are not effective. They may put a person on the defensive and strengthen their hate," she said. "We want people to engage in

ways that bring inner change of beliefs and behavior."

Pui-Yan, who grew up in Hong Kong, came to the United States in the early 1990s to study sociology, earning a bachelor's at San Jose State, where an Asian-American studies class introduced her to Asian-American discrimination and experiences.

After earning master's and doctoral degrees in sociology in 2001 at Washington State University in Pullman, she moved to Spokane and began as professor of sociology at Eastern Washington University.

A column in a Hong Kong newspaper, written by someone who studied sociology in the United States, had inspired her interest in sociology.

"I was curious about why people behave as they do, not from a psychological level, but as human beings in societal contexts," she said. "I wanted to understand how societal structures influence what people do.

"For me, it's easy to look at human behavior on social and
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Census contacts continue through faith communities

Jim CastroLang, coordinator for The Fig Tree's census project to reach hard-to-count communities, reported that the efforts are still underway to connect with congregations and to invite them to reach out to neighbors to encourage participation in the 2020 census.

Working through the contacts with congregations that have food banks and meal distribution, The Fig Tree has made connections and is distributing fliers in the May issue to locations that agree to give them out to people who come for food.

The Fig Tree is also connecting with the regional leaders and bishops of denominational and faith community networks to ask them what they have done to promote participation in the census, to include reminders in their newsletters and to host Zoom meetings with area clergy and laity.

The Fig Tree will email a letter to congregations asking them to encourage members to fill out the census and connect with neighbors to invite participation.

Jim is preparing a phone list to make contacts and offering to hold Zoom events with pastors and congregational leaders to build energy for how they can reach out to their neighbors and members.

"On recent calls, including with the Faith Action Network, Washington Nonprofits and the Census Bureau, I have realized how many are struggling in the COVID-19 environment to make connections with faith communities," Jim said. "Many are not responding to phone calls or don't have the 'bandwidth' to do much right now.

"Our strategy with food banks is happening in other areas of the state," he said, pointing to a recent Second Harvest food
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WCC webinar shares practices for church online

A one hour video webinar is available to replay with examples of "best practices" from churches across the world that are taking their ministry and services online because of COVID-19.

"New Ways of Being the Church" explores what it means to be church in this time. The World Council of Churches (WCC) webinar on April 29, brought inspiration and knowledge to churches who want to develop their ministry online, discovering how churches continue to pray and worship together. About 200 attended across the globe.

Pastors and communication experts from around the world explored new challenges and opportunities for churches, sharing the good practices for online ministry.

The keynote speaker was Heidi Campbell, professor of communication at Texas A&M University and director of the Network of New Media, Religion and Digital Culture Studies. She shared insights from her research on the topic and the recent publication, "The Distanced Church: Doing Church Online in a time of Pandemic."

The webinar was organized by the World Council of Churches in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Global Christian Forum, World Association for Christian Communication and European Christian Internet Conference.

Topics included the online experience of churches during lockdown, achieving participation online, planning the churches' interactive digital presence and Orthodox perspectives on the ministry online.

Ivars Kupcis, WCC communication officer, said it was exciting to hear the speakers' insights and practices that led to successful and inspiring online ministry, often reaching even more people than usual.

"As churches have adapted quickly in the COVID-19 pandemic, they have proven genuine connection between people matters more than physical church building in their ministry," said Ivars. He hopes the webinar inspires more churches to create meaningful online services and creative ministry practices that can be sustained beyond the pandemic.

For information, visit oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/webinar-on-churches-ministry-online.

Thursdays in Black urges protection from violence

WCC ambassadors of the Thursdays in Black campaign affirm a statement that urges awareness of and protection from the "dual pandemics" of COVID-19 and gender-based violence.

"As countries respond to COVID-19 with restrictions on movements and activities, more people are calling violence hotlines and crying for help in other ways," the statement says. "The effects of lockdown, job losses and the vulnerability of people who were already on the margins of society are serious concerns."

The ambassadors for Thursdays in Black, a global campaign for a world free from rape and violence, are featured in a video, speaking on the higher incidences of violence during quarantines.

"Conflicts and crises nearly always carry gender-based burdens, which can be compounded by other factors such as race and ethnicity, ability and economics," it says. "We urge everyone to care for persons in their homes, personal relationships and workplaces."

"We encourage churches to help create physical and virtual safe spaces for those who are not safe in their homes," the statement says. "This can include support to local professionals and caregivers in the field of sexual and gender-based violence through prayer, space, materials and money."

In preventing the spread of COVID-19, it is important not to victimize or stigmatize people, the statement concludes, calling for looking beyond the current crisis and renewing resolve to address root causes of sexual and gender-based violence that are exacerbated during conflicts and crises.

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Census project contacts hard-to-reach folks

Continued from page 1
 distribution event that included census information in census tote bags.

Contacts Jim is making in the upcoming weeks will seek to identify what faith leaders have done and are doing to promote the census, encourage those faith leaders to be trusted messengers on the importance of the census, provide resources to promote it and ask them to record a short video with their comments on

the census or quotes to share with others.

"We will use the maps we have and the census has of congregations in vulnerable areas to target them with phone calls," said Jim, "and we will connect with ethnic congregations and nonprofits relating to ethnic communities and refugees."

"Some pastors are doing livestream and Zoom worship and may be able to make announcements to invite and remind people

to fill out census forms online or request paper copies," he said.

Jim will also ask faith communities what they have done and invite them to share comments on video to invite other faith leaders to participate.

Given the COVID-19 crisis, the deadline for the census has been extended, but April 1 is the reference date for reporting how many people are living in a home then.

For information, call 998-7203 or email jcastrolang@gmail.com.

PJALS meetings, webinars are now online

Along with holding meetings on Zoom, the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane (PJALS) plans in May and June to hold Webinar Wednesdays twice a month.

The first one, on April 22, featured Zach Norris, who was to speak at the cancelled Peace Justice Action Conference in March. He spoke on "We Keep Us Safe," about investing in communities experiencing systemic racism and oppression to create thriving, inclusive communities.

PJALS will offer a second "Anti-Asian Racism: Bystander Intervention Training" at 7 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, on Zoom to address the upsurge in racist at-

tacks on Asian Americans.

Another Wednesday Webinar will be at 7 p.m., May 13 on Zoom on "Understanding and Preventing Online Recruitment of Youth into Hate Movements." Because children and youth spend hours a day online, especially under quarantine, many are exposed to neo-Nazi propaganda presented as "edgy humor" or to adults forming friendships to help them with isolation, loneliness and trauma.

A panel will discuss tactics, support for youth and mental health challenges. Panelists are Joan Braune, lecturer in philosophy at Gonzaga University; Eric Warwick, an autistic/disabled paraeducator in Spokane, and Lupe

Wolfe, a social worker at Spokane Valley Elementary School.

The Showing Up for Racial Justice group meets from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on second and fourth Thursdays for a book discussion on Zach Norris' book, *We Keep Us Safe*.

PJALS is working with Smart Justice Spokane on release of incarcerated people to avoid spread of COVID-19 in jail.

It is working with the Spokane Immigrant Rights Coalition to raise funds to support families of undocumented or mixed documented families who are excluded from the federal stimulus support.

For information, call 838-7870 or email liz@pjals.org.

Jewish Family Services holds virtual benefit

The Spokane Area Jewish Family Service's annual benefit will be virtual this spring.

They are busy providing food to clients, calling to schedule a drop off, delivering it to their doorsteps but not having contact and calling right after they leave it.

"We're accepting food donations at the temple," said director Neal Schindler.

Drop-off can be arranged with him and happens outside the building, but with no contact.

"We're helping clients negotiate the landscape of ongoing and emerging resources, and we're doing reassurance calls to vulnerable clients. We have disbursed some emergency funds but are running low and awaiting possible financial aid from the Small Business Association Paycheck Protection Plan," Neal said.

The Virtual Benefit Event 2020: "Our Attitude is Gratitude," is from 2 to 3 p.m., Sunday, May 17, on Zoom Video.

The guest speaker is Karen

Treiger, author of the memoir, *My Soul Is Filled with Joy: A Holocaust Story*, who will share how discovering the Holocaust story of her in-laws, Sam and Esther Goldberg, compelled her "to live a life of conviction, kindness, and gratitude."

Jewish Family Services will honor Carla Peperzak and Drs. Bill and Berdine Bender with the Outstanding Service Award.

"Our goal for this campaign is \$30,000," said Neal. "Our suggested donation to attend the

virtual event is \$54 per person, but contributions of any size will be appreciated and will help us meet our goal."

While the pandemic required JFS to suspend home visits with seniors and nonessential transportation services, the program continues its work. Community support ensures that JFS can continue to do so.

For information, call 737-7394 or 413-8254, email schindler@sajfs.org or visit <http://sajfs.org/virtualbenefitevent/>.

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SNAP collaborates to address food, shelter, medical and financial needs

During the coronavirus outbreak, SNAP has coordinated efforts to provide food, shelter, medical and financial services.

On April 3, its homeless services coordinator, Arielle Anderson, called for assistance in feeding homeless neighbors. By April 4, she had many food sources.

"We have been doing homeless outreach," she said, "but these folks are hungry. It's hard to assess what services they qualify for if they are hungry."

Arielle sees an increase in food need among homeless people. Traditional food sources are less available, and many who have no house—cautious about catching COVID-19—avoid places handing out food, she said.

SNAP's team called local grocery stores, vendors and common sources that deal with food insecurity. Most were tapped out.

So SNAP forged partnerships with area nonprofits. Blessings Under the Bridge founder Jessica Kovac accepted non-perishable food items that Arielle collected and immediately gave to clients on the streets.

SNAP partnered with Transitions' New Leaf Bakery to provide food to distribute.

"This was a double win, as New Leaf Bakery, a small business, has felt the financial crunch of the shelter-in-place order," she said.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, SNAP has been assessing needs, while assisting the one in 10 Spokane County neighbors they serve annually.

In March, SNAP's homeless services team housed 17 clients, while working remotely, social distancing and dealing with increased fear among those served.

Through three nonprofits, Arielle's team supplied foods like fruit, granola, pretzels, trail mix and non-perishable sack lunches for homeless people.

"Spokane embodies a collaborative spirit," she said.

"As many homeless neighbors shelter in place under freeway overpasses, in vehicles, under tents or plastic tarps during this time without a reliable source of nutrition, this food provides not only vital calories, but also knowledge that the community



SNAP street medicine team goes to people where they are.

Photo courtesy of SNAP

has not forgotten them," she said.

Arielle is also working with homeless services providers, medical staff and organizers to implement street medicine.

Inadequate shelter combined with poor access to hygiene, medical treatment and information means the homeless community have the potential for spreading COVID-19, she said.

Physician assistant TJ Byrne Pa-C, who previously did street medicine for homeless in Northern Idaho, volunteered on four outings since street medicine with homeless outreach teams began in April. He joined Bob Peeler of SNAP on his normal street rounds and saw 17 people, offering help from providing socks or a bandaid to screening vital signs

and blood pressure, and testing for COVID-19.

Street medicine efforts underscore barriers homeless individuals face in finding medical attention, and the importance of offering medical services where they are. TJ has shared information with them on social distancing, symptoms and the quarantine.

The need for street medicine predates COVID-19, but the outbreak provided an opportunity to expedite efforts begun in conversations with Washington State University's Elson Floyd College of Medicine, the Spokane Regional Health District, CHAS, Jewels Helping Hands and the Spokane Alliance.

Street medicine helps with minor issues—blisters and calluses that often go untreated—and

builds trust and relationships.

Now that the street medicine program is going, volunteers like TJ and other service providers will continue it past COVID-19.

SNAP's new director of financial stability, Renee LaRocca, learned that things move quickly at SNAP and "being resourceful is a premium" as SNAP seeks to provide pathways for more than 40,000 neighbors to move out of poverty through its subsidiary, SNAP Financial Access.

In response to a need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), SNAP partnered with World Relief to provide masks made by graduates of its WEAVE sewing class, many of whom have been laid off during COVID-19.

SNAP covered material costs to produce masks and relied on donations to provide wages for World Relief's sewing artisans.

For information, call 701-3515 or communications@snapwa.org.



Spokane Food Fighters find niche for helping feed people

Spokane Food Fighters came about out of a desire to feed people in this food emergency.

In response to coronavirus, State Representative and Spokane resident Marcus Riccelli founded and leads the nonprofit. Robbi Katherine Anthony and Patrick McHugh do the technology.

Local philanthropist-activist Sharon Smith represents the fiscal sponsor, the Smith-Barbieri Progressive Fund.

They rally restaurants and volunteer deliverers to bring meals to neighbors in need.

"We are partnering with local restaurants to help their bottom line a bit. Restaurants are paid unless they want to donate," said Marcus. "We knew in these days there would be more people struggling with food insecurity."

He said the Spokane group adopted the name "Food Fighters" from a group of state legislators who promoted food policy, such as Breakfast After the Bell for students.

The Spokane Food Fighters serve people with emergency needs, people who cannot afford food and/or are place bound. It does not replace food from schools, food banks, Meals on Wheels or grocery stores.

Meals are free for city residents, with a maximum of five meals per household.

Volunteers deliver the microwave-ready meals prepared at different restaurants.

Spokane Food Fighters can serve up to 35 households a day, and households may order no more than once a week. Deliver-

ies include a community food resource guide.

Meals are ordered at <https://spokanefoodfighters.org/request> between noon and midnight for next day delivery. Volunteers pick up meals from the restaurant(s) and deliver from 4 to 6 p.m. Emergency food boxes are delivered from noon to 8 p.m.

Meals are left at the front door unless other instructions are given.

The delivery person knocks on the door or rings the bell to alert the household the food is there. To keep everyone safe, volunteers and household members do not interact.

Restaurants use best practices and have limited interaction with deliverers.

Each delivery volunteer has a

safety kit with gloves and hand sanitizer. Those receiving food are to wipe down the food containers with alcohol and wash their hands after.

Volunteers may sign up at <https://spokanefoodfighters.org/volunteer>.

The effort is funded by donations made at <http://bit.ly/SpokaneFF>.

Immigrant groups raise funds for those left out

A partnership of the Spokane Immigrants' Rights Coalition (SIRC), Hispanic Business and Professional Association (HBPA), Latinos en Spokane (LES), Mujeres en Action (M.i.A.) and Raiz will provide undocumented families grants for rent.

This effort seeks to minimize a housing and domestic violence crisis in the LatinX community in Spokane, said Hannel Sanchez, director of M.i.A. Priority is given

to families with children under 18, with COVID-19 positive members, with victims of domestic violence or with no other options for relief.

"Even though undocumented immigrants pay sales taxes and file tax returns," she said, "they are left out of the stimulus package. Undocumented immigrants in the state pay more than \$300 million in state and local taxes a year."

Some serve as essential workers in health care, the food industry,

meat processing and crop production.

"We especially need to help survivors of intimate partner violence," she said.

Donations can be made to the Spokane Relief Fund For Undocumented Families. Grant applications are at: en Espanol- <https://bit.ly/3aMf5xw> or in English- <https://bit.ly/3cXdsOT>.

For information, call 869-00876 or visit miaspokane.org.

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Coeur d'Alene community garden supplies both food and respite

Continued from page 1

ganic gardening, composting, mulching and water conservation. It provides a venue for artists and musicians to show and perform.

Beyond growing food to share, the garden builds community as a variety of individuals meet and work together. It's a place to learn new and old ideas about planting, composting and wise water use. It brings beauty and nourishment to the wider community.

"People in the community are mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually healthier because of this place," she said. "We need places where we can be real, laugh and pause. It's an oasis. Deer come here because it's peaceful."

She and the board have dreams for the garden.

"We want to build worm compost to help with soil regeneration," she explained. "We need to build the soil in order to maximize this growing place."

"We want to incorporate more permaculture to create a sustainable ecosystem. We hope to use our resources to reduce our footprint," she said. "We want to mimic how nature does it, such as no-till gardening, building resiliency."

Sherilyn mentioned some practical goals: They seek ways

to preserve the place for future generations. They need to replace the tool shed. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, they will have a hand-washing station built.

In a recent letter to members, she outlined other changes, "Because we are unable to gather in large groups, we are going to do our spring clean-up family style."

The letter asks families to sign up for tasks. Leaders will inform them when the tasks will be done.

"We are starting our clean up and registrations early this year because of the need for more food this year and to accommodate the need for minimizing the number of people in our garden at the same time," she said.

Sherilyn asks gardeners to wear gloves and use their own tools. For those needing to stay home due to illness, she said their plots will be cared for in their absence.

Because of need for more food, gardeners are to increase their harvest this year. That includes learning to do succession planting, as well as donating canned goods and produce from home gardens or fruit trees.

"Our garden is also a drop off spot for other gardeners and neighbors throughout the Coeur d'Alene area," Sherilyn said. "To-

gether we can make a difference and show those who are anxious, sad, lonely or afraid that they are loved, valued and not alone."

Produce and canned goods will be collected from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on first and third Wednesdays beginning on June 17. It will continue through the end of September.

Sherilyn added the garden also meets the mental health needs of people, as they come into the garden not only to work, but also to find a place of peace.

Her passion for creating community began early. Her parents were missionaries in the Philippines.

"I became interested in belonging," Sherilyn said. "My mom was a nurse. I lived in a foreign country where belonging mattered. I learned home was where parents and family are."

When she was in the eighth grade, her father died. She and her mother moved to Fresno, Calif., to live near aunts and uncles. After she graduated from high school, her mother died.

In 2003, she earned a bachelor's degree in cultural anthropology at Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, Calif.

Sherilyn returned to Fresno, an angry, disconnected, grieving, faith-questioning young woman.

She began studying marriage and family therapy, but developed chronic fatigue syndrome and stopped studying.

Deciding she needed a sabbatical, she moved to Oregon and went on a 10-day adventure to Antarctica.

Then she moved to Sandpoint, where she led whitewater rafting trips and worked in a wilderness therapy program.

Realizing that was not for her, Sherilyn began working with developmentally disabled people. "I liked connecting with clients," she said. "My experiences of living in different cultures helped me understand them. I also liked doing the research."

Because of health issues, she met an herbalist, who led her to attend the School of Natural Healing in Utah, where in 2015 she earned a master's in herbology. During her studies, she worked in Hayden in community development. Now she works at Coeur d'Alene Acupuncture and Holistic Healing.

Sherilyn joined the Inland Northwest Food Network's book club. Its director asked her to teach a class on cooking with wild edibles four years ago.

Wanting to use weeds in the

Community Garden's compost pile for the class, she called Kim.

Then she signed up for a plot herself. For three years, she has been on the board.

"We need gardens in our communities. This is not just a garden for me, it's connected to my faith," said Sherilyn, who attends Real Life Ministries. "Having a plot of land to love and tend is an answer to prayer."

"People and gardens are worth fighting for and protecting. Loving anything makes us vulnerable, because there's a risk of losing it. I want this to be a place where people feel they belong," she said.

"I love when we can make things better together. We can do so much more together than one person can do alone," she said.

"This place belongs to our community. I want us to preserve it for future generations. We can be part of something where we can connect with each other while being caught up in something greater than ourselves, as we create a wider culture of meaning. The motivation here is to help foster community, sharing lives as we share our harvest," Sherilyn said.

For information, call 208-597-3584 or email sharedharvestcommunity@gmail.com.

Salvation Army recruits new volunteers to respond to increased need

Because of coronavirus, the Salvation Army in Spokane has seen a 50 percent increase in the number of clients, so it has needed to have 40 volunteers a day to serve everyone, said Cassandra Cram, the Salvation Army Family Resource Center program director.

The daughter of Salvation Army officers, Cassandra has worked in Spokane since 2013, overseeing the food bank and the transitional center that are part of the Family Resource Center. Before she came to Spokane, she was a youth worker, a lay leader and then an officer-pastor serving in Montana and Colorado.

"Since COVID-19, I have seen the community come together and be more giving," she said. "Everyone wants to know how to help by donating items, giving time or saying hello."

"Many new clients have never sought help before," she said. "We are giving them more food than before."

Clients line up outside, standing six feet apart and coming alone.



Cassandra Cram and Albert Rendon practice distancing.

They give information at the door and then are given a food box with canned, frozen and fresh food and protein.

In addition, because more seniors are staying home, volunteers recently delivered 72 food boxes to seniors living on their own.

Volunteer coordinator Joshua Schultz screens volunteers for symptoms and provides personal protective equipment and

gloves. Volunteers bring their own masks—from bandanas to creative homemade masks.

One of the new volunteers is Albert Rendon.

Furloughed from a used car dealer in Spokane Valley, he began volunteering with The Salvation Army March 8.

"I figured I had time on my hands and could help. The Salvation Army responded first to

my offer to volunteer. I do the morning shift from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.," said Albert, who helps move pallets of groceries, stocks the freezer and hands out donations.

He signed up for unemployment and decided he could volunteer while waiting for that.

Albert first came to Spokane in February 2019, from Stockton, Calif., where he worked in car parts until that work in the area dried up and he began living in a hotel and then in his car.

The food donations he works with in the warehouse and packs in boxes for clients come from Second Harvest and Northwest Harvest, from food drives and from the Salvation Army supplies in their warehouse—where they have enough to last two months, Cassandra said.

For information on volunteer-

ing, call 325-6810 or visit makingspokanebetter.org.

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Creators' Table is a new ecumenical congregation serving West Central area

Third article in series started in April on West Central ministries.

Katy Shedlock, a United Methodist pastor, and Jonathan Myers, an Episcopal priest, appreciate the opportunity to experiment in developing a new ecumenical congregation, Creators' Table.

"It's different from other Methodist and Episcopal churches in Spokane, but connected to the denominations, said Katy. "We call it Creators' Table to say all who worship co-create with God."

Until closing for COVID-19, about 30 to 35 of a community of about 50 gathered at 5 p.m. Sundays. They included people from the neighborhood, Dinner Table guests, Whitworth and Gonzaga folks, plus some pastors from North and South Spokane and Spokane Valley. It's a mix of ages, social and economic statuses.

Jonathan and Katy met at a Spokane Alliance training session in November 2017 after he moved to Spokane in the summer. They began developing the worshiping community in spring 2018, collaborating on a Good Friday liturgy.

"We saw potential. In the summer of 2018, we started holding some conversations with about 12 people. We had monthly liturgies Sept. 1, Oct. 2 and Nov. 3, before gathering weekly during Advent," said Jonathan.

Small planning groups are conversing about a leadership structure beyond the church planting board, which operates with two denominations and polities. There is also a liturgy guild.

"Worship is a blended experience of Episcopal and Methodist traditions. Both have the same rhythm and liturgy, but they look and sound unique," he said.

"Worship mixes slam poetry, oral storytelling, secular music, tactile prayer stations, hymns, traditional prayers, holy communion, Scripture, preaching and marking of the liturgical seasons of the church year," said Katy.

The service opens with a poem and song, accompanied by piano or guitar, or a capella. After a welcome, there are traditional and experimental elements—a talk on the seasonal theme, people from the community sharing stories, the lectionary scripture reading and sermon, called "Reverb" for "reverberation"—a sound spread out, reflected and absorbed.

For 12 minutes of "open space," people reflect on the liturgy of the Word, and go to prayer stations. Some are tangible/tactile—poetry writing, a desert box with sand and rocks, icon painting—and some are reflective, with candles or people sitting quietly in the



Jonathan Myers leading worship for Creators' Table. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Myers

pews and listening to music.

The liturgy of the table, prayers of the people, communion and announcements draw people together before a closing song.

Katy, who grew up in Manito United Methodist Church (UMC), graduated from Drew University in theatre and anthropology in 2008, and completed online study with Iliff School of Theology in Denver while working part-time at Rockford UMC. She was concerned that several United Methodist Churches closed in recent years in poor neighborhoods—Central downtown, Trinity in Northeast—and St. Paul's in West Central became a shared ministry with Liberty Park.

She joined the staff at Audubon Park UMC in 2017 to start a new church in West Central Spokane.

"It's important to have a Methodist presence in proximity to people below the poverty line," said Katy, who gathered a group of folks and began talking about how to be church in a different way. They were looking for a place to gather when she met Jonathan.

The Episcopal Diocese continued the free Wednesday community meals as part of the West Central Episcopal Mission in one of the buildings of the former Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. The parish had closed in 2016. Volunteers from St. John's, St. David's and St. Andrew's Episcopal churches and Bethany Presbyterian have kept the weekly dinner going.

Jonathan, who supervises the program, said about 40 people come early each month with 75 later in the month when income is running out.

He serves as part-time priest at St. Andrew's Episcopal and the West Central Episcopal Mission. His position was created as a yoked ministry of the congregations beginning in fall of 2017. He started at St Andrew's in late December, after his predecessor retired.

Katy learned the West Central Mission chapel was not being

used and was a possible location for the group to worship.

She and Jonathan found they had a similar interest in ecumenical liturgy, so they formed a Methodist-Episcopal worshiping community with the blessing of their bishops, Episcopal Bishop Gretchen Rehberg and United Methodist Bishop Elaine Stanovsky, who support the joint effort even though the denominations are not yet in full communion.

Katy said the Methodist movement started in the 1700s and its founder, John Wesley, was an Anglican priest, so there are few theological differences, but there are differences in worship style and formality.

"Creators' Table is wholly Episcopal in its celebrating Eucharist every week, honoring its historic liturgical practices, and offering contemplative, sacramental space inviting people to feel God's presence," said Katy.

"It is also wholly Methodist in that we sing with gusto and let our music carry our theology," she said. "We are poets who dare to dream, inviting people to testify every week about how God's grace is present in their lives and contemporary experiences."

Katy's involvement with the Spokane Alliance and Creators' Table is about "the church's job to love and include neighbors. The church loses credibility when it is too far from the poor and people who live the injustices of our time," she said. "A credibility check is that any church plant has no meaning if neighbors have no roof over their heads."

The worship space is open. Snacks are available throughout the worship. Usually a few homeless people enter the worship space. Some come, eat snacks, sit a while and go on their way, she said.

Many go to both Dinner Table and Creators' Table.

Jonathan helped assess the West Central Episcopal Ministry before adding the worshiping community to balance the outreach and action

base with prayer and worship.

He lives in the West Central Mission parish house, which was previously used as a resource center.

Jonathan grew up in small towns near Dayton, Ohio, attending a United Methodist Church. Feeling called to ministry from his involvement in the youth group, he went to Indiana Wesleyan College and had a full time job in youth ministry near Kansas City, Mo., after graduating in 2002.

He started at St. Paul School of Theology but moved to Seattle, went to the Seattle School of Theology and Psychology and began attending the Church of the Apostles, an Episcopal-Lutheran church plant.

"I found my home in the Episcopal Church, began the ordination process in 2009, finished seminary and was ordained a priest in 2013," said Jonathan.

During those years, he did youth ministry, consulting, congregational development and graphic design, and worked at a coffee shop as a bi-vocational minister.

In 2015, he moved to Asheville, N.C., to do youth and young adult ministry on the bishop's staff and start a brewery with a friend, until the opportunity opened in Spokane.

The pandemic has changed his ministry. At first, there was anxiety about precautions for doing communion—juice in individual containers as in the Methodist tradition and wine in a common cup as in the Episcopal tradition. Now that decision is on hold, along with

gathering for worship.

"We need to be careful and compassionate," said Jonathan, "because many who come are older, immune compromised people, people who live under stress and people who are homeless. So we will figure out how to feed people who rely on Dinner Table."

For now, Dinner Table is giving out boxed meals to go at the door.

He has discovered what community looks like and how community can function.

"I am less tied to my phone," he said. "People who live on the margins may not have cell phones. I communicate mostly by word of mouth. People come early and late to meetings. I have learned to be flexible about schedules. I see how people watch out for each other, the church and me."

Katy said most mainline Protestant churches can afford only one pastor at a time, but she finds it a gift to work with Jonathan, each of them bringing different gifts in terms of personality, vocations and ways they bear their denominational traditions.

Since the churches closed because of the pandemic, Creators' Table has gathered online by Zoom. Links to daily morning and evening prayers, and to the 5 p.m. Sunday liturgy are at ourcreatorstable.org.

For information, call Katy at 496-3541 or email katy@audubonparkumc.org, or call Jonathan at 309-6168 or email rev.jonathanmyers@gmail.com.

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For Earth Day Live, local youth urge inclusion of climate change in studies

On behalf of Sunrise Spokane and 350 Spokane, high school students Rosie Zhou and Jaydn Malone hosted a livestream local event as part of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.

Jaydn said the first Earth Day was held to increase environmental awareness and it led to the Clean Water, Clean Air and Endangered Species Acts.

In opening, Rosie noted there has been progress, but more needs to be done “or our generation will live with the effects.”

The Sunrise Movement gathers students to build millions of jobs while stopping climate change.

“The challenge is to influence corporations and politicians,” Rosie said, “looking forward, not right or left.”

The livestream included comments by several students:

Ali wants the climate damage to be reversed for future generations.

Emma said students need to know about what is happening.

Gloria calls for the Green New Deal.

Maggie wants that to include Medicare and housing for all.

One said friends think summer wildfires and smoke are normal.

Nora felt empowered by seeing thousands gather for the climate strike last September.

Locally, Sunrise joined the Sept. 20 global climate strike and held a die-in on Dec. 6 to challenge leaders to stand up to the fossil fuel industry.

Nationally, the Sunrise Movement promotes the Green New Deal to save America as the New Deal brought the U.S. out of the Great Depression.

It proposes decarbonizing the planet and moving to renewable energy to create a livable future.

Jaydn said “voices of youth inspire us to make change.”

A video quoted Greta Thunberg of Sweden speaking to the United Nations and calling for immediate action because people are suffering, the eco-system is dying and dreams of the young are stolen. She said cutting emissions by just 50 percent is not enough.

“How dare you continue to do business as usual and seek technical solutions,” she said expressing the betrayal many youth feel.

Locally, Sunrise Spokane has a petition asking the Spokane School Board do three things:

1) Adopt a K-12 climate literacy curriculum;

2) Transition to electric school buses to cut fossil fuel use;

3) Install solar panels on remodeled and new school rooftops.

Information on the petition is at <https://tinyurl.com/Climate-Education>.

Calling for listening to voices of young people, Rosie and Jaydn are pleased some Spokane leaders are listening.

• In a video, City Council member Lori Kinnear said she supports advocating for a healthy Earth as a moral, social justice issue, the “defining issue of our time.”

• In another clip, City Council President Breean Beggs expressed support for K-12 climate literacy curricula, electric school buses and solar on school roofs. He said the city is partnering with Avista and schools for renewable electricity buses and solar on roofs.

• Mike Peterson of the Lands Council supports advocacy, education and engagement to demand clean energy and climate science.

Rosie and Jaydn led a virtual town hall with Spokane School District Board of Directors president Jerrall Haines and director Nikki Lockwood.

Jerrall said he is awed that so many youth are promoting sustainable environmental changes. Nikki said she ran for the board to help students reach their potential, and a sustainable environment is part of that.

On the three proposals, Nikki said climate topics already are part of K through 12 classes, and she believes it’s important.

Jerrall said it’s hard to keep curriculum current, adding climate change is in high school biology, which is required, plus there are classes in environmental chemistry and environmental science.

“We could do better,” he said.

When Rosie said she didn’t learn about climate change until high school, Nikki and Jerrall said there have been changes in recent years, so climate change is introduced earlier.

Jaydn asked them to review Portland’s climate curriculum.

Jerrall said they review curricula every few months, and are committed to climate literacy. Nikki said the curriculum adoption process is ongoing.

Asked about it being in required classes, not just electives, Jerrall and Nikki agreed it should be in history, English, current events, social studies and other classes, not just science.

“With student-directed learning,” Jerrall said, “students can push for what they need for quality learning in their education.”

On installing solar on the 10 acres of school rooftops, Jerrall said the state requires schools to install more solar and encourages partnering with cities, libraries and others to create group rates to lower costs so schools can afford to install solar and benefit from long term savings in energy costs.

“We will put up solar as soon as we can,” he said.

Nikki believes there is the political will to install solar panels, and the city and schools will seek grants so costs are reasonable.

Asked for a timeline to install solar, Jerrall said it will be part of new schools and remodeling in the next six years, because of state mandates for sustainable buildings.

Along with solar, Nikki and Jerrall said other sustainable building improvements to reduce the carbon footprint are lighting, construction materials, energy efficient windows, eco-friendly paint, along with reducing irrigation, construction wastes and energy costs, and installing lead-free pipes, recycling materials, improving air quality in buildings, and having more outdoor views and operable windows.

Nikki said the board planned a survey on community priorities in May, but with coronavirus, it may take place in the fall. Believing input is important, board meetings are open to the public on Zoom.

Jerrall invited high school students to be student advisors to the board and superintendent.

On transitioning to electric buses, Jerrall and Nikki committed to do that, because state law requires a transition to electric vehicles, including 117 school district vehicles, as well as buses.

The district contracts with Durham for buses, so Durham needs to transition vehicles or the district needs to find a new contractor.

Jerrall and Nikki said three votes are needed for changes to

happen. Both will put the issues on the agenda, and invite the public to email school board members and staff, and attend meetings so the proposals become priorities.

Summarizing, Jerrall said human impacts of climate change should be not just be in biology—where different teachers address it in differing degrees—because it’s about more than science.

Nikki said reports from all over the world of clear skies replacing smog with the economic shutdowns from the pandemic, “let us see the impact of changing patterns in a small time.”

Rosie and Jaydn, along with Sunrise, hope to move millions from being passive supporters to active allies in achieving environmental awareness, connecting humanity and amplifying voices.

For information, email sunriseawa@gmail.com, info@350spokane.org, nikkilockwood@spokaneschools.org or jerrallhaines@spokaneschools.org.

See 350spokane.org/get-involved/spokaneearthdaylive. A recap of national and global Earth Day is at <https://www.earthday.org/50th-anniversary-recap-digital-earth-day-global-calls-to-action>.

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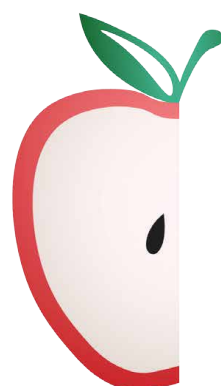
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Food program organizer sees that God led him into feeding kids

Jim Dodd believes that God set out stepping stones for him to follow, leading him to form a Food for Kidz satellite in Spokane.

The organization packages food for children, people in need and homeless people in Spokane and nationwide. Food also goes to schools (for back packs), shelters and food banks. It also goes worldwide to refugee camps and schools.

Jim and his family moved to Spokane Valley from Santa Ana, Calif., in 1970 when Jim was 10. His father, a Scout master, attended the 1969 Jamboree at Farragut Park and decided to move here. Jim was a Boy Scout in grade school and in 1975 joined the Spokane County Search and Rescue Unit, staying until he was 18.

His began his career as a mechanic and then went to work in his father's construction business.

In 1992, he began work as an electrician and in 2001 started Streetfire Engineering which sells and installs security systems.

"That gives me income that keeps me afloat, so I started volunteering," Jim said.

Using his search-and-rescue and construction skills, he volunteered after the 1996 ice storm, fires in Wellpinit, and hurricanes Irma, Harvey and Michael.

To find a local place to volunteer, he visited local nonprofits, including Partners International and Helping Reach Communities (HRC) Ministries.

When he said he had construction skills and helped during disasters, HRC Ministries first asked him to fix the doorknob.

"I had wanted to connect with people in medical outreach, food distribution or disaster response. I smiled as I adjusted the door knob with a screw driver," he said.

He learned HRC is also an acronym for Hank, Randy and Caleb, three generations of Altemeyers.

Jim began going with Pastor Randy to Catholic Charities, taking coolers of sandwiches for homeless people.

The HRC warehouse in the former Grocery Outlet by the old K-Mart on E. Sprague stores food for schools and small food banks.

One day, Caleb asked him to help find more food. Jim went on the internet to find places that would give food to HRC, thinking he could pick it up in his van.

In his internet searches, he learned about funnel packing, a process using a funnel to pour ingredients into food storage bags that are then vacuum sealed.

He talked with several firms that wanted upfront funding. The seventh was Food for Kidz, which has a warehouse in an old schoolhouse in Stewart, Minn., a town of 567.

"The owner, John Neilsen,

answered. He said it was funny I called. Two days before he and a colleague talked about expanding to the West Coast," Jim said. "I told him I was a volunteer for HRC, an organization with a warehouse, box truck and forklift, that takes food to those in need."

When Jim talked with HRC, they were not interested because of a previous experience packing a lentil soup mix they couldn't give to homeless people, because it had to be soaked overnight and prepared in a kitchen.

When Jim told John that concern, John said the food was pre-cooked and dehydrated. The rice and beans put in boiling water are ready in 15 minutes. The cinnamon oatmeal is ready in five minutes.

"We could be a satellite office," Jim said.

John told Jim to gather eight to 10 volunteers. He would bring 21 pallets with equipment and ingredients for 300,000 meals. On May 28, 2018, John came.

"My parents, friends and relatives packed 1,297 meals in an hour. We took pictures standing by the completed meal packets. HRC took the packets to schools the next day to go in backpacks for children to take home.

The Food for Kidz mission is to bring awareness to hunger by involving communities and volunteers to pack meals to distribute.

After leaving Spokane, John drove his truck to Portland for a load of truck tires to haul to Indiana. That paid for bringing the pallets to Spokane. John and other truck drivers spend many days in trucks delivering ingredients and equipment all over the U.S.

Food for Kidz returns to pick up packets that are not staying in a community because a donor wants them to go elsewhere. Food for Kidz fills shipping containers to send them abroad.

Realizing it needed a smaller warehouse, HRC Ministries told Jim, who agreed Food for Kidz would relocate in four months.

Jim scheduled packing events and used a box truck to go to churches and agencies where volunteers packed meals. The first place he went to hand out meals was Eastpoint Church in an old K-Mart at 15303 E. Sprague Ave., where Jim had shopped as a teen.

He told the director he was looking for a warehouse.

"They opened the back end and showed me the loading docks," Jim said. "A month later in August 2018, we moved there."

Since then, Food for Kidz has packed more than 2.5 million meals, including 40,000 at Sun City Church, 41,000 at the Yakima Convention Center, 10,000

at Valley Christian School, 8,000 at Broadway Court Estates and thousands more.

Nationally, Food for Kidz hosts about 150 events to pack about 10 million meals for needy children "around the corner and around the world." With volunteers and donations, it costs 25 cents a meal.

Locally, Food for Kidz operates out of Eastpoint Church, packing meals and delivering them in a box truck. Two months ago, Jim received 17 more pallets.

Because of coronavirus, they are rescheduling events, including a March event for 100 volunteers at Gonzaga University.

Jim has talked with churches, foundations, businesses and service clubs who donate funds and recruit volunteers. Donors decide where the food goes.

Jim has been twice to Adjumani, Uganda, a town near a refugee camp where Food for Kidz has a warehouse so local pastors can take meals to people in need.

Food for Kidz partners with Nourish Uganda based in Spokane. They recently filled a shipping container with 44,000 pounds of food, 285,000 meals to go to a school district north of Kampala, Uganda. The food at school is the only food the children have, he said.

The second place he took samples was Partners International, where he connected with Scott Steinlouski, now director of Refugee Relief, which took meals to refugee camps and schools in Uganda in October. Jim went then and in March with Nourish Uganda—helping cook for 250 children.

Jim has met with Jewels Helping Hands, Blessings Under the Bridge and Northwest Harvest to deliver meals. Three Food for Kidz distribution points are at Valley Real Life Church on Barker and at the Otis Orchards Campus, along with Eastpoint Church.

Jim said people who lost jobs in COVID-19 began volunteering, but then it had to cancel packing events. Since then he has automated the packaging process, so he can do it with five volunteers, rather than 50 to 100. Now he seeks donors to give money so he can continue to pack and ship meals.

Along with his journey into volunteering with Food for Kidz, Jim had a spiritual awakening.

He said his wife, MaryLynn, who grew up in Grand Coulee and graduated from Northwest Christian in Spokane, shares his commitment to Food for Kidz.

Although he was baptized, he said his parents, who had been pushed to go to church, wanted nothing to do with it. So he had little exposure to church other than a Bible study in fifth grade.

Jim's first wife's family was Greek Orthodox. He converted but they didn't go to church much in their 23-year-marriage. Five years after they divorced, he met MaryLynn at a hiking club.

Before he met her, Jim woke up one night with a vision of God in his bedroom. He asked, "God why are you not talking with me or telling me what to do?"

"Later, looking back, I saw that the Lord threw stepping stones in front of me," Jim said.

MaryLynn wanted a husband who had the Lord in his life, so she asked him to go with her to Mirabeau Chapel. The third time, there was a program on Compassion

International. They began donating to support children. He felt that was a stepping stone. They later went to Sun City, Valleypoint and then Real Life churches. Now they attend Eastpoint Church.

Jim is amazed how his life has changed from having little religious guidance and focusing on himself, to reading the Bible daily and focusing his life on giving "every way I can."

When delivering food to an orphanage in Uganda a second time he looked to the sky and said, "Lord, slow down," and then quickly, "No don't."

For information, call 868-9262 or email jim@foodforkidz.org.

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It seems like a dizzying maze as modes of operation and protocols continuously change and as people in the faith and nonprofit communities become adept at live-streaming encounters and doing Zoom meetings, prayer gatherings, Bible studies, worship services, breakout groups, training sessions and even regional annual meetings.

In a pastoral letter April 30, Episcopal Bishop Gretchen Rehberg said she has been asked many times “when can we return to church,” She emphasized, “We are the church! We are currently away from the our buildings and physically distant from one another, but we are being the church in remarkable ways” via streaming and recordings from living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms and patios. She said it is the incarnational ministry of Jesus coming to us.

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane cancelled its annual conference in-person and is now presenting the keynote speaker and workshops online.

The Lands Council, Habitat for Humanity Spokane, Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW), Second Harvest, the Spokane Symphony and others shifted to

online fund raisers in April. Like with The Fig Tree benefits, the videos of speakers are available online for people to view and donate on their own time. Habitat had raised \$82,500 of \$200,000 by press time.

Someone proposed a May 5 “Giving Tuesday” as a way for nonprofits to gain the funds they need.

Meanwhile, friends share updates online.

Twa-le Abrahamson reports that Diné and Spokane tribes’ legacies of inadequate health care, historical pollution and lack of clean water are worsened in the pandemic. “We were sacrificed then and continue to be sacrificed,” as most states leave tribes out of assistance, she said. So the SHAWL Society has a fund raiser to help out.

Kiantha Duncan of the Spokane NAACP shared on Facebook about the need for hope: “This pandemic does not have to rob us of our dreams and futures, does not have permission to deplete us of our hope and humanity. It does have permission to unify us as a human race and ignite our collective creativity, offer opportunities to create the relationships, communities, businesses, organizations, corporations and

world we desire.” She hopes it will help dismantle systems that “have been broken far too long and no longer serve our local and global communities.”

Terri Anderson, co-executive director of the Tenants Union of Washington in Spokane, has joined with the Spokane Alliance, Spokane Low-Income Housing Coalition and Greater Spokane Progress to protect tenants who have lost hourly employment and income. They called the state, county and city to establish a moratorium on evictions and to establish rental assistance. They propose allowing renters 12 months to pay back rent with no penalties or interest.

“The racial divide in home ownership, which is greater in Spokane than the state of Washington and nation means that people of color disproportionately rent their homes and live at greater risk of housing instability in the health crisis,” she said.

Drew Meuer of Second Harvest said they are providing more food in more locations. Mobile Market buses, trucks and semi-trailers are distributing boxes of food with little contact by drive-thrus in vacant parking lots. Spokane Packaging donated 34,000 boxes to

make that possible. In one week, they did 21 distributions to more than 4,000 families.

“I appreciate everything everyone is doing for everybody,” said one woman who was picking up food. That sums it up.

The pandemic has a heavier toll on communities of color, poor, homeless and hungry people, so our call is to speak up against racism, to create more equity, to assure people stay housed and to feed people.

Many leaders remind us to take a deep breath, to bring in the oxygen we need to empower us to think and act.

In another act of ingenuity, local artists are doing that with a drive by art show. Check on Facebook for Spokanes-Art-on-the-Go-Art-Show, and take a breather.

It’s hard to keep up with the incredible ingenuity we see. The Fig Tree could well have been twice as many pages. It’s a challenge to keep the COVID-19 directory supplement online updated every few days.

We also rejoice that so many other media are seeing news in the kinds of stories we normally cover. We hope that will continue, because such stories help us breathe and act.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Commentary

Sounding Board

Benefit Speakers

Supporters share reasons to appreciate and give to The Fig Tree

Ever since social distancing restrictions were put into place, Spokane Area Jewish Family Services has had to adjust the way it serves the community. In-person client contact was replaced almost entirely by phone or email contact, and helping clients find and use both long-standing and new, emerging resources became a crucial part of our work.



The Fig Tree’s regularly updated guide to local resources during the pandemic has been and continues to be a key resource, in turn, for us. I’ve pointed many clients to the guide, or went through it for them because they lacked internet access, and it has saved them and me much time and stress and has made a clear positive difference in how my agency and its clients are coping with the pandemic.

Neal Schindler - Director
Spokane Area Jewish Family Services

Mary and I met 38 years ago in a clergy wives support group. Over the years, Mary has given the Greater Spokane Area a continuous gift of The Fig Tree.

I’ve been reading it off and on for more than 35 years. I love that this publication is non-denominational, non-theological, and non-political. It is the stories of many area people who chose to be involved bringing God’s love to all creation.

It can be confusing living in the United States, as a woman of faith, attempting to stay informed and be active in many issues. The great thing about The Fig Tree is that I learn about many others who are doing the same thing and I can relax knowing I will continue to do my best and others are taking care of other issues.

There are so many political, cultural and social justice issues: indigenous, climate change, environment, homelessness, poverty, legislative, immigration, natural disasters and health to name a few. Often, when I’m feeling overwhelmed, it is reassuring to stop and read of all the positive actions going on in the Spokane area.

As I was thinking about what to share in my three minutes at the March 9th Benefit Breakfast, I realized that Mary has covered three of my trips to assist others in their life journeys. In 2007, I went to Biloxi assisting in Katrina clean-up with a Lutheran/Epis-

copian group. It was so life changing that I made a second trip the following month.

In 2016, Eric Henningsen and I visited Standing Rock Pipeline Protectors and became connected to the Cannon Ball District. Again, it was life changing and we returned five times over a nine-month period, enabling volunteers to work on the community center.

The March issue of The Fig Tree had the story of my trip to Tijuana which led me to be the sponsor of three legal asylum-seeking men from Nicaragua. Alberto and Silvio were in detention 391 days in Mississippi and Louisiana. It is sad as this virus brings much sorrow to families dealing with immigration issues. Lewis, from Cameroon, was granted bond and has been living with Eric for three months.



Now that I am receiving The Fig Tree in the mail, I read it every month and encourage others to sign up and to give a gift subscription to friends and family who would appreciate knowing more of what is taking place in the Spokane area.

Thank you, Mary, the board and all of the volunteers that continue to work so that The Fig Tree is available free to all of us.

Suzi Hokonson
Asylum Activist

The Hutton Settlement has been committed to serving the needs of children and families for more than a century. This effort has not been one we have done alone. Many organizations throughout Spokane have been silent partners in our effort to transform young lives, helping them move from tragedy to triumph.

One such partner in this effort has been The Fig Tree. The Fig Tree publication is one of only a few publications that is distributed internally among our organization and for good reason.

Although we are a non-sectarian organization without religious affiliation, we share the commitment towards connected relationships, stirring compassion and staying apprised on the deeper issues of our community.

Turning the pages of each new Fig Tree publication provides staff and youth at the Hutton Settlement a glimmer of hope

and a peak into what people and groups are doing to bring peace to our immediate world. Whether it be an inspiring story of a church supporting food insecurities or a community member giving decades of selfless service to those on the margins, The Fig Tree provides a different sort of news, one of hope and possibility.

Stories in The Fig Tree do have an impact. Over the years, various stories have been shared with our youth service and leadership club on campus. For a group of young teens now committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals here in Spokane, The Fig Tree continues to serve as an important connector. In recent years, we were able to forge local partnerships with service providers in Spokane after learning about them through the Fig Tree stories and links.

Most recently, we became the beneficiary of such a story. The Fig Tree’s highlight of Hutton Settlement’s century of service and interviews with a couple of us who are committed to carry it forward, led to connections with local donors who now contribute to our cause.

In addition to sharing and receiving inspiring stories, the Hutton Settlement actively advertises our organization and employment opportunities in the publication because we feel strongly that the readership shares our values and vision of hope and possibility for all people.

As one of the oldest nonprofits in our community, the Hutton Settlement wholeheartedly advocates for this glimmer of hope that is The Fig Tree and encourages strong community and financial support of its mission.

David Milliken - Campus Director
The Hutton Settlement

We work to end the cycle of homelessness for families with children. I had the good fortune to meet Mary Stamp the day I was hired on at Family Promise. We were creating a new shelter for homeless families at the time, which would eventually become the Open Doors Emergency Family Shelter. She thought it was a worthwhile story and wrote about us at the time in The Fig Tree.

This gave us instant access and recognition by other groups and organizations that

read The Fig Tree and allowed us to create great partnerships quickly, including with Feed Spokane, which ended up supporting our food needs for the past three years.

Not only that, but also our shelter is strictly families with children. They are often in need and not just in need of housing, but child care, medical care, resources and assistance.

Therefore, they use the directory non-stop, quite literally until they are falling apart in their hands. In part due to the resources our guests are able to locate in the guide and with support from our case managers, who also use the guide, we have been able to move more than 1,000 people into permanent housing in the past three years.

Personally I believe Mary and The Fig Tree are treasures in our community and I would like to see both the newspaper and the resource guide last well into the future.

So I ask that you would provide your support to them, so that they can continue on helping our community to be better informed.

Joe Ader - Executive Director
Family Promise of Spokane

The Fig Tree continues raising funds to meet the goal of the Benefit Lunch and Benefit Breakfast that were cancelled in March as the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning.

As of April 30, The Fig Tree had raised \$23,400 toward the initial goal of \$28,000, leaving \$4,600 to raise.

“We still are recruiting ads for the Resource Directory, having confirmed \$16,135 of \$29,000 needed. We have begun our process late to recruit community partners to provide \$14,000 for Resource Directory expenses,” said Mary Stamp, editor.

Beyond that The Fig Tree has been keeping a COVID-19 supplement to the Resource Directory focusing on food banks, meal sites and changes in services. Directory editor Malcolm Haworth updates that every few days.

Donations may be made online through the Facebook Fundraiser at <https://www.facebook.com/donate/611050986413388/>
Checks may be sent to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202.



Farmers' Markets

Farmers markets in the region will look different and operate in new ways to keep vendors and customers safe. Market managers are working with the Spokane Regional Health District on best practices.

Diane Reuter, who manages the Spokane Farmers' Market, said she has been driving in and out of the canyon where Tolstoy Farm is located so she can have cell phone connection to join in conference calls and figure out what other markets are doing.

"A friend in West Virginia said they are setting up six-foot distances with vegetable stencils to mark the spots," she said.

The Inland Northwest Farmers' Market Association received a \$15,000 grant from Avista.

The Spokane Farmers' Market has used those funds to set up hand washing stations and hire extra people at the entrance and exit. The market will be roped off. People won't be able to wander freely.

They also have a \$7,500 grant from the Spokane Farm Credit Bureau to buy cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, gloves and masks. They are on a waiting list from Dry Fly for hand sanitizer.

Diane said they are also asking if they can extend 10 feet further onto the open area to the east, which is an emergency hospital helicopter landing pad. That would give them more space between the rows of vendors.

"We are encouraging vendors to take pre-orders by phone or email, as we do at the pre-Thanksgiving market," she said.

A list of their 27 vendors and contact information is on their website, spokanefarmersmarket.org.

Along with providing cloth masks for vendors, they will have extra masks for customers who don't bring masks. The vendors can wear the masks one day and then wash and reuse them.

"Some things we will figure out as we go, such as whether two or three will be allowed to wait at a vendor," Diane said.

Vendors will keep tables wiped down and keep their hands washed or sanitized.

While there are some things she does not know about how things will work out, she does know that the farmers are having a good growing season and that when she announced the market would open on Saturday, May 9, she had emails from 400 customers excited they were opening.

Tolstoy Farm, an intentional community north of Davenport, was started in 1963 and has sold its produce locally for 35 years, first at a booth on the street, then at the Spokane Public Market, until other vendors began to buy their produce from markets rather than farms. They then relocated.

Tolstoy offers Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which provides members a weekly supply of certified organic produce that they pick up at the market.

Diane has been at Tolstoy Farm 26 years. She was the face of their stand market for many years and has been market manager for eight years.

"I'll be there to give customers air hugs. My booth will be at the front, not the back, to take credit and debit cards and to have more control of crowds," she said.

The Spokane Farmers Market opens May 9 for Saturdays and June 15 on Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., at E. Fifth Ave. and S. Browne.

For information, call 509-725-3276 or visit spokanefarmersmarket.org.

The Urban Eden Farm's Saturday Farmstand in Vinegar Flats opened the first Saturday of April. Jim Schrock, the owner, grew up farming south of Grand Coulee Dam. In addition to being a vendor at the Spokane Farmers' Market and offering CSA, they supply produce to restaurants. CSA is a partnership between farmers and customers whose \$400 annual membership pays for seeds, water, equipment and labor throughout the season, while they share in the risk and bounty of the farm.

"We operate with one customer paying while the next is being served by farm stand staff, so customers do not touch the food and one person handles the payment," said Jim. "In the three hours we are open, we have not had crowds, just two people at the stand and six to eight in line."

"At the farmstand, we like that we eliminate many extra handlings of the produce. We harvest, wash and then hand it to the customer. It travels, maybe, a quarter of a mile to the stand, avoiding produce going through many hands with trucking, refrigeration, packing, unloading, stocking shelves

and a store cashier."

Jim said that the workers have been learning the protocols, learning one new thing and finding three new things pop up.

Urban Eden Farm also uses volunteers who learn about growing, weeding, harvesting and washing vegetables and receive "workshares" of produce.

At the farmers market and stand, they share produce left over with food banks.

For information, call 534-1638, email urbanedenfarm@gmail.com or visit urbanedenfarm.com.

The Emerson-Garfield Farmers' Market opens from 3 to 7 p.m., Friday, June 5 to run through Sept. 25, at the IEL Adult Education Center, 2310 N. Monroe. It features about 25 regional and local vendors, bringing fresh, affordable goods and locally grown produce, and serving as a "community hub."

It started in May 2013 through the Emerson-Garfield Neighborhood Council with the support of Catholic Charities, Project Hope and Knox Presbyterian Church.

Market manager Taylor Phillips listed changes: service animals but no pets; no arts and crafts vendors; fewer farms, bakeries and prepared food vendors; no public tables or benches for seating; no extra children's activities; no sampling or eating on-site. They will follow guidelines being used by other members of the Inland Northwest Farmers' Market Association for safety of patrons and vendors.

He also suggested washing the food on returning home and sharing photos of the market with online reviews.

For information, call 255-3072 or email market@emersongarfield.org.

The Fairwood Farmers' Market opens from 3 to 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 12 at 319 W. Hastings Rd. in the Fairwood District of North Spokane. It has 35 vendors listed on its website. For information, call 466-0682, email fairwood.market@gmail.com or visit fairwoodfarmersmarket.org.

The Hillyard Farmers' Market opens from 5 to 7 p.m., Mondays, beginning June 22, at 5102 N. Market St. For information, call 993-2104 or email brandyshine27@yahoo.com.

Kendall Night Market will be open from 5 to 8 p.m., Wednesdays, at 1335 W. Summit Parkway, providing outdoor shopping in a farmers' market operating with COVID-19 sensitivity—no dogs or animals allowed, a limited number of farms and food vendors to allow for distanced booths and customer lines, and no music or activities, according to the website.

Vendors will set up on the north side of Summit Parkway to give more spacing. Shoppers, market staff, volunteers and vendors will be required to use hand-washing stations.

Vendors wearing gloves and masks will offer pre-bagged food and will pick up items. Customers may not touch food. Vendors clean surfaces once an hour. At booths, one person will handle money and another the food.

The market advises people to come with lists, limit attendance to one person per household, and purchase for friends and neighbors.

The Liberty Lake Farmers Market will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, June 6 to Oct. 10, at 1421 N. Meadowood Ln. It will observe Department of Health and Center for Disease Control protocols, opening late because of the social distancing order. For information, call 290-3839 or visit libertylakefarmersmarket.com.

The Millwood Farmers' Market opens in mid-May in the parking lot of Millwood Presbyterian Church. For information, call 924-2350.

Gary and So Angell of Rocky Ridge Farm north of Reardan deliver CSA and Farm Store orders from 3 to 6 p.m., Thursdays, from March through November at 3204 E. 17th in Spokane. Membership is required for meat orders.

Orders are at rockyridgeranchspokane.org.

The South Perry Thursday Market will be open from 3 to 7 p.m., Thursdays, beginning May 7, at 924 S. Perry. It is in its 12th season. Its website lists 11 vendors. For information call 720-8449 or visit thursdaymarket.org.

The Spokane Valley Farmers' Market will be open from 5 to 8 p.m., Fridays from June 5 to Sept. 18, at the Spokane Valley CenterPlace parking lot, 2426 N. Discovery Pl.

For information, call 208-619-9916 or visit spokanevalleyfarmersmarket.org.

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Educator and KSPS offer timely programs to meet for students, families

As the education director at KSPS-PBS in Spokane, Bukola Breczinski applies her background in teaching and curriculum development to offer educational resources during COVID-19 school closures and to support at home and distance learning any time.

Bukola and the KSPS team have been working with the Spokane School District on teacher-produced lessons, which are aired on the WORLD Channel (on air 7.2 and Comcast 313), “Keep Learning,” April 27 through June 12 from 7 to 9 a.m. This learning block is repeated from 2 to 4 p.m. These classes are also on the school district’s channel 17.

Mondays and Tuesdays, local K-5 teachers do 20-minute math programs with the district curriculum. Wednesdays and Thursdays are on literacy, and Fridays on art, music and PE.

Along with the teacher lessons, KSPS is broadcasting grades 6-12 educational programs from PBS on the WORLD Channel from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. KSPS knows many families lack regular access to the internet. With the Keep Learning Initiative and the PBS educational programming on WORLD, families have access to free educational content on air seven hours a day from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To access WORLD, families need a TV and antenna, which they can pick up at an Ace Hardware.

“It means children can see and connect with teachers through the end of the year,” Bukola said.

KSPS is also providing families and educators free preK-12 daily educational resources from PBS and KSPS during school closures.

“We are posting resources on our website at ksp.org under home learning and sending daily newsletters to more than 1,000 families who signed up,” she said.

“Quality education is an equalizer,” she said. “Giving all children access to quality learning experiences improves lives.

“As we support children, we strengthen society. We also help parents be part of their children’s education, giving them self-confidence by increasing their access to resources so they can support their children’s learning,” she said.

A major focus of her work is to create curricula for KSPS’ archive

of 30 documentaries on regional history, such as the Mount St. Helens eruption, the women’s movement in Washington, survivors of Japanese internment camps, three local photographers who captured area history, and attorney Carl Maxey’s fight for civil rights.

Her goal is to help educators teach regional history through visual and personalized storytelling found in KSPS’ documentaries.

Bukola has also developed curricula for Northwest Profiles, a lifestyle news program that covers local events, people and programs. She is working on a series of lessons on local Native American history, art and culture, from Northwest Profiles to help students learn about native history in an immediate, engaging, personal way.

“My goal is to interest local children and teens in area history so they connect what they learn in class with their own settings,” she said. “There are many resources from the national perspective, but the local perspective helps personalize topics.

“Video documentaries use storytelling that engages children and draws their attention visually to address challenging topics they might not understand just by reading a text,” she said.

Bukola’s passion for teaching and designing curricula began when teaching English as a second language to new immigrants at the international high school at Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. Her work helped students settle in, communicate with peers and gain the language and literacy skills needed to graduate.

Born in Lagos, Nigeria, she immigrated with her family to Minnesota in 1992 when she was seven, and her father, an engineer, was recruited by Siemens. In Lagos, English is the primary language.

Living in Plymouth, a suburb of Minneapolis, she realized that, other than two other Nigerian families, people did not look like her. “I did not fit in American culture or African-American culture, and coming so young, I was fully African,” she said. “I felt culturally and racially fluid. It’s why I value equity.”

Despite the challenge of integrating and making friends, she had the support of a high school French



Bukola Breczinski
Photo courtesy of KSPS

teacher who arranged a week-long trip to Paris with her class. The visit sparked her interest in living in a big city and in language learning.

Bukola began studies at New York University’s STERN School of Business in 2001, when 9/11 changed life in the city.

During college, she helped low-income second and third graders in Harlem with reading and writing, and then had a work-study experience teaching at an elementary school in the Bronx solidifying her interest in education. She joined the New York Teaching Fellows program, specializing in English language learners.

From 2003 to 2004, she did marketing with Scholastic, the children’s book publisher. From 2005 to 2006, she was a marketing assistant with Oxford University Press. From 2006 to 2009, she worked with the Wallace Foundation funding educational leadership, arts and after-school programs.

There, Bukola met her husband Dan, who grew up in Coeur d’Alene, and is now an independent web developer.

In 2010, itching to travel internationally and gain teaching

experience, she obtained a teaching English as a foreign language degree and spent the year in Prague, Czech Republic, teaching English to children and adults. She returned to start a master’s degree in 2011 at Long Island University in Brooklyn.

At the Brooklyn high school, she built relationships with students and tailored instruction to their needs, helping support their dreams of attending college.

In 2016, she applied for the newly created position at KSPS of director of the education department. She started in August 2016.

With a background in culturally-responsive teaching and curriculum development, she creates resources for local educators and families to make education more equitable, especially for vulnerable communities because KSPS removes financial barriers and puts resources in the hands of educators, parents and children.

Bukola worked with two Gonzaga University master’s interns in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages) to segment KSPS’ 30-year archive of documentaries and develop learning guides. Each guide helps students gain background on a topic, explore it through the documentary segments, and engage in peer discussions and projects to deepen their understanding.

The lessons are posted on pbs-learningmedia.org, which is visited by about a million educators each month, she said.

Bukola also leads professional development workshops for teachers. On Feb. 20, middle and high school social studies teachers came to watch segments of “Injustice at Home” on the Japanese internment, and learn about KSPS’ documentary curricular and PBS learning media resources.

KSPS has two grants from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

to present stories of local Japanese Americans in the “Injustice at Home” series, sharing their experiences of discrimination before World War II, being relocated to and incarcerated in camps, growing up in camps in Idaho and California, and returning to Washington, where they faced discrimination in finding jobs and housing.

“Most never told their children, because their focus was to rebuild their lives,” Bukola said.

She also uses national PBS resources for community programs, such as “Every Child Reads,” a first Monday pre-K story-time literacy program at the station with a local storyteller reading stories to 10 to 15 children who also do a craft. She also did the program third Wednesdays at the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center for 40 children.

“With social distancing, we are doing it virtually on first and third Fridays,” Bukola said.

KSPS is also working with county librarians, public school teachers and community members to record read-alouds at home. These are being shared daily on KSPS’ website and by social media.

In pre-distancing days, Bukola organized field trips at the station for nearly 200 groups from schools, scout groups, the YMCA and child care centers. They toured the station, learned about cameras and lighting, interviewed staff and filmed a little scene.

In January at the Spokane Homeless Connect, KSPS had a table to introduce an online program, “Sesame Street in Communities,” and printable resources on social and emotional issues related to homelessness.

She continues to share those resources on family bonding, literacy, math, trauma and building resilience with local families, educators and child care providers.

For information, call 443-7748 or email bbreczinski@ksp.org.

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