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Teen says Stop the Hate of Asians - p. 10
CALENDAR ON PAGE 11
FEATURES 40 EVENTS

Bookstore uplifts literacy, diversity

By Mary Stamp
A few months after Janelle Smith opened Wishing Tree Books in the South Perry District in November 2019, COVID led her to temporarily close the purple, 100-year-old house she remodeled as a bookstore.

Running a bookstore was her childhood dream, so she wouldn’t let COVID stop her from selling books to children and adults. At first, she was able to run the store temporarily out of her own home, because she had set up a website before COVID, but then she missed doing sales with a personal connection that allows her to match people to books, as she is again able to do.

Now the store is able to allow browsing customers, limiting the number of mask-wearing customers. She also offers porch pickups.

Janelle’s mission is to encourage literacy for children, to have families read together, to facilitate community cohesion and to promote diversity.

Matching people to books facilitates literacy and family involvement.

“Customers value our knowledge of the books. I’m always happy to help people find a treasure,” she said.

She wants children to be motivated to read books to themselves or have their parents read to them over and over.

Janelle likes to spend time with customers to learn about the stories, their lives and their children’s eccentricities. That helps her guide them to books that connect to their children’s interests.

“We are here for the community. I love asking questions and learning about customers. Talking with customers is the fun part,” she said.

Because Janelle also wants to create a community of readers through story times, book clubs and other groups, she renovated the garage in the back yard to be an event space. She was holding a few events—weekly yoga and mindfulness classes, family games and crafts, and even a creative monster making workshop for kids—when COVID closed those events. She plans pop-up shops in the garage and backyard family game nights and craft days in the summer (COVID-willing).

“I keep reviewing my inventory to be sure it represents the continued on page 4

Virtual event brings together people impacted by U.S. nuclear legacy

For the virtual Washington-Marshall Islands Nuclear Re- membrance Week March 15 to 20, organizers gathered many groups affected by U.S. nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands from 1946 to 1958, and survivors of other bombings and test sites, people impacted by mining, transportation, processing and cleanup, and young people.

Each day focused on different aspects of the history under the overall theme of “We Are Not Alone” to remind participants that their many voices together can have power. Participants told their stories to encourage healing, remember victims, honor survivors and protect future generations.

People joined on Zoom or on the Facebook page of the nonprofit Compact of Free Association (COFA) Alliance National Network (CANN) of Washington.

COFA is the international agreement establishing relationships between the United States and the sovereign states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau.

On Monday, an intergenerational panel from Spokane’s Marshallese community included two elders who survived nuclear testing, Bubu Erine Jitiam and Sam Levai, and two youth, Laura Daniel and Cath erine Lozac.

The elders told how U.S. nuclear tests vaporized several islands and atolls, and radiative contamination left some islands unfit for habitation. The tests dislocated people, destroyed their culture, damaged the land, sea and marine life, but few in the U.S. knew what took place.

Although they were in their 20s then and it is now 64 years since the testing, their fear and pain continue.

“People and animals kept dying,” said Bubu, who gave birth to three babies who died soon after birth with birth defects.

Catherine found only brief mention of the Bikini bomb in a history class. Through high school and college, she wrote about it and now uses social media to amplify messages.

Benefit nears 2021 goal, Directory is under way

From a month of benefit appeals, The Fig Tree now focuses on inviting support of advertisers and community partners for the Resource Directory.

“We raised more than $30,000 as of March 26 plus $1565 in pledges. We will continue appeals until we reach our goal of $34,000 for the virtual benefits,” said Mary Stamp, editor.

“We are pleased with the response and with the many comments of support and solidarity coming with the donations.”

The promotional video and Zoom recordings of speakers with the full comments of those in the video, plus the full Zoom recordings of the two events are online at thefigtree.org/Benefit2021videos.html. The videos, prepared by Nathan Slabaugh Media, may be viewed any time for inspiration or shared with friends, groups and congregations to inspire discussion and donations, fulfilling the benefit’s goals of educating and raising awareness.

Costs for printing the directory will be higher this year, and the printer notified us of a new page size, said Malcolm Haworth, directory editor. “It will be published in color, so advertisers may pay a little more to run their ads in color and the printer notified us of a new page size,” said Malcolm.

“We are here for the community. We are here for others to see the benefit is coming from the community,” said Mary.

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“We are here for the community. We are here for others to see the benefit is coming from the community,” said Mary.
WCC, faith leaders issue 10 points on climate
The World Council of Churches (WCC) joined grassroots religious activists and high-level faith leaders to issue 10 demands and condemn inadequate progress on climate action by governments and financial institutions. More than 400 groups and organizations–religious activists released demands to address the injustice and impacts the climate crisis is inflicting. They call governments and banks immediately to end, phase out and ban new fossil fuel infrastructure and tropical deforestation; commit to universal access to clean, affordable energy; enact policies creating green jobs with a just transition for informal workers and communities; secure policies and fund support those forced to migrate due to climate impacts.

The Greenfaith International Network said as the COVID-19 pandemic cost millions of people their jobs and health, the fossil fuel industry secured billions of dollars of emergency bailout funds and sources in COVID news is narrower than before 2015. just 30 percent of COVID news—despite a meteoric rise in TV and radio, with an over-representation of women as reporters in non-pandemic news. Latin America outperforms COVID. The gender gap in reporters on pandemic news is narrower than in non-pandemic news. Latin America performs better than the rest of the world, with an over-representation of women as reporters in non-pandemic news. Women are still shockingly absent from news, even as we “Women are still shockingly absent from news, even as we”... will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will sessions with classes for youth ages 13 to 17 and adults on pandemic response and script writing. CMTV14 staff and local professionals will teach it. For information, visit cmtvspokane.org. “Rethinking Place, Space and Time,” will examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the dominant ways thinking about space, place, and time in personal and professional spheres, as well as across communities. In the virtual conference from May 17 to 21, participants will
They eat what’s in front of them,” he said. “They’re living with existential dread and anxiety,” he said.

“He’s got money, it’s ‘good’ if it makes a profit,” Norm said. “That’s immoral. Our country is losing the battle to immorality.”

Tony took a different tack.

“I don’t think we’ve ever been in this situation before,” he said. “Deborah and Republicans could communicate once. But we are on the opposite side of the argument.

“I think that when you’re dealing with someone whose perception of reality is so opposite from yours, there is no starting point,” he said.

Tony reflected on the time that Butler and the Aryan Nations had a small following in Northern Idaho.

“A sociology professor from Eastern Idaho thought the task force should sit down with Butler and dialogue,” he said. “We couldn’t. One has to work with people who disagree, but we are realistic. If someone has lost touch with reality, there’s nothing one can do.”

Tony saw the insurrection at the Capitol as an attempted coup. Some participants have said they now realize it was wrong.

“I’m encouraged by those who said, ‘I can’t believe I did that,’” he said.

In seeking to heal the brokenness, Marshall said that the truth needs to be told to counter the lies. He also spoke of the challenge of speaking out because silence gives consent.

“If we don’t tell people the truth, they will believe the lies,” he said. “We all need to speak up and speak out. Sometimes it’s difficult, but we need to do it anyway. In Nazi Germany, they didn’t speak out. The United States is not Nazi Germany, but it could become that. That’s why we need to speak up and speak out.”

Tony believes it’s important to work with people who are open to conversation.

“I want to spend my time where I can help,” he said. “Why should I spend my time where I can’t make a difference? I’ve seen too much. I can see where one can be productive and where one can’t. Many need encouragement and help building confidence, so they can make a difference.”

He referred to practices of Martin Luther King, Jr. He said that Dr. King was in charge and set the agenda. He would not let those who opposed him change the conversation.

Tony then reflected on the years they were countering the work of the Aryan Nations.

“We would never attend Butler events. We had our own events, he said. “People yelling at each other is not productive.”

“We were never going to be confrontive with Butler. The horrible treatment of the racists by Dr. King actually grew their moral movement. He never yelled back,” Tony added.

“When working in human rights, it’s a mistake to remain silent, but we certainly must decide our own agenda,” he said.

Tony gave an example as the Aryan Nations’ first march down Sherman Ave. in Coeur d’Alene in 1998.

“At the same time as their march, we held a huge rally throughout Washington and Idaho. We raised $34,000 for teaching diversity. After giving $10,000 to other human rights groups, we gave a third of the remaining $24,000 away three different times to art teachers for their programs, receiving positive publicity each time,” he said.

NORM BELIEVES in the importance of fostering political and corporate entities to think about moral judgments by asking moral-based questions.

“Every time a discussion swerves away, we need to reiterate, ‘What are the moral underpinnings of your argument? Where do they come from?’” he said.

At this point, Norm said. “We can’t find agreed-upon objective facts. We can return to this by asking about the moral basis on which our political and corporate leaders make their votes and decisions. Everyone has to ask these philosophical questions.”

“If our former president is indicted or goes away, much of the populace will go through a grief process, like when a dearly loved person dies,” Norm continued.

“What comes out will be a new America,” he said. “Into that space, we must bring the conversation to moral judgments. We have to refuse to ask questions except about those.”

Tony summed up by quoting the late Fr. Bill Wattsmuth, a former leader of the task force:

“It takes time. Life is a process. It’s day-by-day.”

When Tony once joked about being tired from work with the task force at one point, Fr. Bill replied, “You’ve signed up for life. Get with it!”

Now Tony says, “That holds for all who wish to heal the brokenness between us today. It’s important to not walk away.”

The task force’s board has continued to meet each month since 1981, gathering representatives of Hispanic/Latino Coalition, NAACP, African American, religious, law enforcement, LGBTQ+, student, veteran and education communities, as well as the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, local governments and the Coeur d’Alene Chamber of Commerce. Their goal is to promote human rights in our region.

It played a major role in passing laws in Idaho to combat hate crimes and promote human rights in our region.

They continue efforts to educate the community and school children on hate and on the legacy of Dr. King and his challenge to white supremacy and hate, including a legal case that shut down the Aryan Nations compound and turned it into a peace park.

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**Organic Methods**

**Spokane's Urban Eden Farm**

Now signing up for weekly C.S.A. shares of fresh vegetables for the 2021 season.

VinegarFlatsFarm.com

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**Book store owner matches books with interests of readers, customers**

continued from page 1

mission, especially diversity. I strive to make sure that every Chines-

dren can see themselves, be it the
color of their skin, their gender,
their religion, their culture or
their dreams. Just as important,
is having these books available
to the community in hopes of
creating tolerance for others,”
Janelle said.

Growing up in a loving, sup-
portive family in Kent, Janelle
spent time in her closet reading,
and at 14 had lists of books she
wanted to include in her future bookstore.

While studying at Eastern Washington University earning her first degree, she was given
the assignment to interview someone doing a job she wanted to do. This led her to the Chil-
dren’s Corner Bookstore. She
bugged owners Judy Hamel and
Susan Durrie until they hired her.
There she learned about cus-
tomer service and the children’s book industry. That bookstore, which depended on its
windows, was since closed, but
Janelle keeps in touch with Judy and Susan.

In 1999, Janelle studied for a second degree, elementary edu-
cation with a major in reading. While
growing up, she also
managed the children’s section
of Auntie’s Bookstore.

After student teaching, Janelle
worked for three years with at-
risk fourth to sixth graders in an
after-school program funded by
a school district grant. She
taught kindergarten two years, but
raising a son on her own, needed a consistent position, and the
district was not offer-
ing continuing contracts at that
time, so she started teaching
in preschools, and then worked
again at Auntie’s.

Janelle then met and married
Ivan, a graphic artist. After their
son was born in 2007, she cared
for him and then returned to
Auntie’s for three years, respon-
sible for events and children’s
books.

Three years ago, with Ivan’s
support, she began her effort
to start a children’s bookstore.
They began looking for space
to rent in the Perry District,
where people came for the park,
pubs, and great restaurants, and
where there’s a school—Grant
Elementary. The single-family
house they liked was not avail-
able at first, but two weeks later,
it was for sale and was zoned for
commercial use.

“As luck would have it, a fellow bookseller from Seattle’s
Queen Anne Book Company stepped forward and offered
to invest in my dream,” said
Janelle. “Tegan Tigani and her
husband Jordan are avid sup-
porters of both the importance of independent bookstores and
a sense of community. They
purchased the house and shared the cost of renovat-
ing it into a viable business,” she
said.

As the new bookstore
opened, Janelle was not avail-
able at first, but two weeks later,
it was for sale and was zoned for
commercial use.

“We stand for anti-racism and
unite Asian and Pacific Islanders,
and all people in Spokane,” said
Ping, who spoke at the vigil as a
daughter, mother and immigrant.

“When I saw a video of 84-year-old Richa Ratanapak-
dee slammed on the ground, my
heart froze. I imagined that could
happen to me or simply due to a language
barrier,” Ping said. “It is a gorgeous neighbor-
hood store now with a pretty
outdoor windows. It stands
out.”

On Nov. 2, 2019, Janelle
opened Wishing Tree Bookstore at 1410 E. 11th Ave.

**Vigil organizers seek to stop hate of Asians**

Ping Ping, one of the organiz-
ers of Spokane’s March 20 Stop
the Hate rally, is a commissioner
for Asian and Pacific American (API) Affairs of Washington and
on the Spokane Falls Commu-
nity College sociology faculty.

Spokane’s United We Stand mem-
dered a rally. The event
was organized because
Community College sociology faculty.
Spokane’s United We Stand was
a Facebook group formed after
a young Vietnamese American,
Vina Cathcart, was called “Chi-
nese virus” in a grocery store,
said Ping. Charity (Filipino),
Vital (Pacific Islander), Aphiaj
(Palau) and Ping (Chinese) estab-
lished the group.

“We stand for anti-racism and
unite Asian and Pacific Islanders,
and all people in Spokane,” said
Ping, who spoke at the vigil as a
daughter, mother and immigrant.

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On Nov. 2, 2019, Janelle
opened Wishing Tree Bookstore at 1410 E. 11th Ave.

**What values drive her**

Believing literacy is impor-
tant, she wants children to be
able to read and be read to, to
read books that excite them, and
to read books with stories that
help them figure out life.

“A child’s connection with
a favorite book can carry on
through life,” she said.

Aware that some children do
not have access, such as
LeUyen Pham’s “Outside, Inside” picture book for children,
she expects more books will come
to help people make sense of
these times.

Another book with writings on
COVID, for adults, is by various
authors and is called Alone To-

Wishing Tree Books has a new
partnership with the Northwest
Passages to do a book group
aimed at a younger audience—
middle school through high school.
They have had two events.

The next is at 7 p.m., Monday,
April 19 with Sabina Khan, au-
thor of a new young adult novel,
Zara Hossain Is Here. It will be
live online through NW Passages
and the store’s website.

For information, call 315-
9815 or email books@wishing-
treebookstore.com.
Educating children and adults has a positive impact on air quality

Through her multifaceted work with the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, Stephanie May believes she and the agency have a direct, positive impact on Spokane’s air quality. Her roles as the public information specialist, the youth and education specialist and the communications and social media specialist allow her to use her skills and interests in communication and advocacy to help individuals and the community understand the impact they can have when they make good choices.

Stephanie’s work intersects with many other agencies to inform the public about air quality concerns, resources and actions. “I’m interested in having a clean environment so my child and other children can play outside safely,” Stephanie said. “With the Clean Air Agency, I have seen how much change can happen if we advocate,” she said.

Stephanie, who was an intern with the agency 16 years ago, was an intern with the Regional Clean Air Agency during her journalism and communication studies at Eastern Washington University, returned to the agency in 2016.

After graduating in 2007, she worked with Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington while living in the Portland, Ore., area for five years, and then in community outreach with a soccer club in Vancouver, B.C., while her husband completed a master’s degree. Back in Spokane, they started a family, and she pursued her interest in environmental advocacy with the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency.

Stephanie’s focus is on educational outreach for children and youth. The agency itself has been involved in air quality education with families for years, and they began their work more than 50 years ago.

During May, the agency is launching a “Clean Air Month” Poster Contest for children in K-6. The theme is: “Healthy Air Is Important to Everyone.”

She sent information to educators to invite participation. The agency did not do the poster contest last year because of COVID, but previously held the contest in 2018 and 2019.

Stephanie May worked with child in 2017 pre-COVID.

Stephanie is working through contacts at Spokane Public Schools and Mead City Public Schools. She sends newsletters to educators and it is also in the agency newsletter. “On the Air.”

The Clean Air Agency also partners with Spokane EnviRoKids, a cooperative program of Spokane County’s Regional Solid Waste Agency, Stormwater Utility and Water Resources, the Regional Clean Air Agency, the Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Aquifer Joint Board, the City of Spokane Solid Waste Department and Water Department, the National Weather Service, the Library District and more to explore the many aspects of the environment—air, water, weather, garbage, recycling, plants and animals.

“We have scheduled events and had to continually push them back because of COVID. Normally we do programs and activities at the public libraries with different agencies doing different activities,” she said.

For example, the Regional Solid Waste System did a project on recycled paper, and the Conservation District led a project on painting with soil.

“We had children make particle catchers they could take home to see the air quality in their homes,” Stephanie said.

“We made them by cutting circles out of paper and covering those holes with double-sided tape to catch things floating in the air that they might not otherwise see.

“It’s a good way for kids to grasp the concept of dust, pet hair and other things bigger than microscopic air particles,” she said.

“The kids observe themselves.

In October 2020, EnviroKids worked with the Spokane Joint Aquifer Board to offer a Virtual Science Fair Extravaganza with agencies offering “booths” with activities. Participants could go to different booths and do different activities.

“It filled a gap left when it was no longer possible to offer science fairs in elementary school gyms, where students would visit different tables and do activities,” she said.

“It is a way to continue to reach out to do environmental education,” Stephanie said.

The Virtual Science Fair Extravaganza continues as a resource at https://saiblearning.org with “booths” on Aqua Duck, building an aquifer at home, inspiring artists, meeting scientists on KS95-PBS, master composting, recycling, weather, conserva tion, water, EnviRoKids, clean air, solid waste, being water wise, the aquifer, science and food sense.

She said the Clean Air Agency also environs activities children can do on their own through the school year, uploading activities as the agency creates them.

There were no plans for a 2021 Earth Day as of mid-March.

Stephanie said the Clean Air Agency also reaches out to offer direct help to high school students, especially those doing senior projects. The agency has an on-street personal air monitor it shares with groups at schools to map the air quality in their homes and schools. It’s a hand-held sensor that connects to a smart phone. A laser tabulates the air quality to help students see if areas they monitor are clean or polluted.

Five students at Pride Prep are using it now, and a few at Central Valley High School have contacted the agency for information.

Stephanie has also promoted and run the “No-Idle Zone” Program for middle and elementary schools, setting up street signs designating areas where parents come to pick up students, as no-idle zones, to encourage them to turn off their vehicles. About 35 schools are signed up.

“We provide the materials at no cost. They send information home, telling why idling is not good for respiratory health.

“We have seen changes as families begin their vehicles, she said.

“Before recent summer forest fires, people didn’t always think about air quality,” she said. “Seeing smoke in the air, they realized air quality can quickly degrade. Many began to check the air quality index regularly. Education helps the community understand air quality concerns better.”

People understand that what they do can have a positive effect on air quality—not idling or biking to work one day a week.

Small changes can impact air quality,” she said.

Each year from November to March, wood heating has a major impact on air quality. The agency runs a wood stove change-out program to help people replace old wood stoves for something more efficient. The 2020-21 grant cycle ran out in February with the agency having replaced 161 wood stoves, Stephanie said, reducing small particles in the air by 6.45 tons.

The agency’s commitment to share the message about clean air includes community outreach to give presentations for faith communities.

With more working from home during COVID, the agency saw impact in what they were able to monitor with fewer cars on the road equating to better air quality.

While not downplaying detrimental effects of the pandemic, it “forced us to make many behavioral changes that can have a positive impact on the environment, many of which we might have thought were impossible or unreasonable—combining errands into fewer car trips, tele-working and using less disposable products,” Stephanie said. “These are behaviors we hope will continue once the pandemic is over.”

She urges people to reflect on behavioral changes to decide which ones are worth continuing and then do them.

For information, call 477-4272 or visit spokanecleanair.org.

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Stephanie worked with the Spokane Joint Aquifer Board to offer a Virtual Science Fair Extravaganza with agencies offering “booths” with activities.
The Black Lens independent newspaper and Terrain, a non-profit building community and opportunity for artists, collaborated from January to March to commission artists for “Create Health,” a project to raise awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on the Black community and other communities of color.

The Department of Health provided a grant to The Black Lens, said editor Sandy Williams, to develop new ways to reach the Black community and communities of color with health messages related to COVID. Artists created poetry, graphics, and visual op-eds published in The Black Lens, images that were projected on buildings around town and a “COVID Crusaders” comic book.

The culmination of the project on March 15 was an event that drew 100 masked people to the parking lot at 244 W. Main. There they viewed the Black Lives Matter mural that was painted during a few weeks in June and July on a downtown building.

The program included projections of visual art onto that building, including the published art and a review of the mural’s development, mixed with health messages.

“The art contained COVID-friendly messages targeting the Black community,” said Ginger Ewing, executive director of Terrain, which is both an art and events organization.

“We began with art in the January Black Lens, including a visual op-ed and a poem,” she said.

The February issue in Black History Month included more art and poetry, information on the website on resources and art events related to COVID, along with a “rack card,” created for the Black community by the Department of Health and distributed to Black community by the Department of Health and distributed to Black community businesses and were handed out in The Black Lens to subscribers, but also to businesses.

“Sarah embedded the images in the project,” Ginger said. The March 15 event used art to share the message in a new way. Other participating organizations were the NAACP Spokane, providing refreshments, and Spokane Community Against Racism, which projected images on another building to draw attention to “Our Stolen Sisters.”

“It gave me hope to feel there is momentum and that we can all work together to create the change we need,” said Ginger.

The comic books not only went to The Black Lens mail list, but also to businesses and were handed out at a vaccine clinic held March 13 by The NATIVE Project in collaboration with the NAACP Spokane, the Carl Maxey Center, the Martin Luther King Jr Center and the Emmanuel Family Life Center.

“Tackled by COVID-19. Ginger said Terrain and The Black Lens commissioned a digital artist who was in Spokane as an artist-in-residence with Laboratory Spokane. Sarah Turner from Portland, Ore., used her skill in “projection mapping and coding,” taking large-scale imagery and projecting it on buildings.

“We gave her imagery from the 16 artists who created the mural and from 10 other artists in the Create Health project,” Ginger said. The mural and from 16 artists and projecting it on buildings.

Small crowd watch projections on Black Lives Matter mural. Photo courtesy of The Black Lens.

For information, email sandy@blacklensnews.com or visit createhealthspokane.com to see the project components.
Week-long event provides overview of impact of nuclear weapons, waste

Continued from page 1

On Tuesday, three speakers—Twa-le Abrahamson-Swan of the SHAWL (Sovereignty Health Air Water Land) Society, Samantha Redheart of the Spokane Tribe and Emma Belcher, president of the Ploughshares Fund, connected concerns to the peace movement. 

Friday, the final day of the conference, was dedicated to the centennial of the Marshall Islands National Nuclear Commission connected to their suffering from the nuclear tests conducted by the United States in the Marshall Islands. People in those sites suffer from different cancers and illnesses.

Deb’s daughter Twa-le, Samantha and Trisha continue to tell their stories about the effects of nuclear radiation to people exposed to radiation and toxins from mining uranium through nuclear waste that contaminates the lands and waters of the Yakama Nation and affect the health of people of diverse skin colors.

Deb’s daughter Twa-le, former air quality specialist with the Spokane Tribe of Indian and a River Warrior, is committed to “telling stories and connect our communities.”

“When we started organizing it was only the survivors of our elders, so I went to meetings with my mother,” she said. “We knew we had to make changes. It’s important to have young people involved in organizing and keeping the pressure up while the government is in power.”

“In the last few years we saw some deregulation. The impact will be ongoing, so we need to stay in touch with each other,” she said.

Samantha, who has been on the technical staff of the Confederated Yakama Nation’s environmental program since 2009, not only keeps people informed on cleanup at Hanford but also encourages Yakama youth in science, law and STEM.

“Hanford is a multigenerational challenge,” she agreed. “Because we are impacted, the Yakama Nation has strict cleanup guidelines. The Columbia River must be protected. Our own children cannot be a sacrifice zone to nuclear waste. The Yakama Nation Treaty of 1855 cannot be abrogated by the Department of Energy (DOE).”

Local communities can participate virtually in public meetings, as well as testifies to protect Yakama cultural sites.

The DOE recently tried to recycle $1 billion worth of high-level waste at Hanford at low-level. That would contaminate the Columbia River. She summarized decades of progress removing millions of tons of contaminated soil, treating millions of gallons of contaminated water, decontaminating six reactors, demolishing hundreds of buildings and removing two old test reactors, but said there is more to do.


Transferring to the next speaker, Francine affirmed: “We stand with all who are affected by nuclear wastes.

Trisha, an attorney, has worked for more than 30 years for justice for those who, like her family, lived downwind from Hanford—and other Manhattan projects and Cold War nuclear weapons production and testing sites. Many suffer with or have died from radiogenic cancers and illnesses from exposure.

Her 2020 book, The Hanford Plaintiffs: Voices from the Fight for Atomic Justice, introduces the stories of personal injury plaintiffs in lawsuits filed by people injured because of Hanford’s decades of secret off-site radiation exposure. The stories provide real-life illustration of the devastation to health and life from uranium mining and nuclear waste.

“Ploughshares values equity and justice as we address humanitarian and environmental dangers caused by nuclear weapons but policy debate is dominated by abstract, technical ideas on strategy and systems,” she said. “It’s easy to overlook the human toll, especially on those disproportionately affected by nuclear dangers we faced,” she said.

“We have been disrespected, disregarded and mistrusted by the DOE. Hanford’s nuclear waste program has exposed us without regard for our welfare or notifying us of the dangers,” she said.

“Let’s tell our story,” she said, “so we can end the nuclear future, so our children can be assured the right to live and thrive in a world free from nuclear weapons, where we can rest easy knowing our children will be free of nuclear threats for generations.”


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Local farm renamed Vinegar Flats Farm

Local farm changes its name from Urban Eden to Vinegar Flats Farm to clearly state they are in the Spokane city limits.

The farm was named “Urban Eden Farm” 15 years ago by a woman who lived on the farm to say it was an “urban eden.” “In conversation with our customers at farmers’ markets, we were always explaining that the farm is located in the Vinegar Flats neighborhood of South-west Spokane,” said owner, Jim Schrock. “It only makes sense that we make the unique neighborhood name part of the farm’s name.”

In 2015, he registered the trade name, Vinegar Flats Farm, with the State of Washington’s Department of Licensing and claimed the website Vinegar-FlatsFarm.com, before then, anticipating a name change. Jim and the farm manager, Tarawyn Waters, decided to finalize the name change before the 2021 growing season. “We have some big things going on this year and wanted to cement that name before the transition,” Jim said. “We’re doubling the size of our CSA this year from last year’s record number.” CSA is shorthand for Community Supported Agriculture, which is typically a weekly or bi-weekly share of vegetables in season. For the third year, the farm will have its Saturday morning farmstand. It is also working on its organic certification. “While we’ve been using organic methods for years, we haven’t been certified,” he said. “We haven’t used herbicides, pesticides or other ‘cides.”’ he said. This year they will start a transition to a “no till” philosophy and practice which he and Tarawyn believe will improve the health of the soil so they can grow even better vegetables on the historic farmland. Jim invites people to become part of the farm’s community by visiting the farm, eating the food they grow and coming to volunteer. For information, visit VinegarFlatsFarm.com.

YWCA names new CEO

The YWCA Spokane’s board of directors announced in March that Jeanette Hauck, interim CEO since August 2020, would begin serving as the agency’s new chief executive officer immediately.

Jeanette has 10 years of experience as part of the agency’s executive team, starting in 2011 as director of finance and serving since 2014 as chief financial officer. In that role, she led the organization from a staff of 60 to a team of more than 90 employees. She is dedicated to advocating for women, youth and children. Her 30 years of nonprofit work include serving as director of finance for the Institute for Drug Development and the Cancer Therapy and Research Center in San Antonio.

A native of Colorado, Jeanette earned a bachelor’s degree in accounting from the University of Denver and is a certified public accountant. She has started a roundtable discussion series, “Pathways Forward,” discussing topics related to the YWCA Spokane’s work and mission.

For information, visit ywcaspokane.org.
James Lowe returns from Scotland to conduct concert series

Rather than traveling around the world to conduct concerts—from Osaka to Trondheim, Mos- cow to Indianapolis—Spokane Symphony’s music director and conductor James Lowe spent the pandemic year in Scotland living near the parents of his wife, Charlotte, in the hamlet of Bedrule in Southeast Scotland, where she has lived 40 years. The year included their wed- ding between lockdowns during August in a small garden gather- ing there.

“The Philippines, lockdowns were early, strict and long,” James said, noting that kept them in one place, reconnecting with nature and relating to her parents in the isolated village looking over green hillsides, an ancient church and castle ruins near the border with England.

“I spent a year in one place for the first time since I was 18,” he said. “It was a good place to be in the pandemic, because it’s in the least populated part of Scotland with a quiet, open and country side right outside.”

The first strawberry last spring was a triumph for his in-laws, wife and him to share and relish.

James grew up in Lowthian, outside Nottingham in central England. Since graduating from the University of Edinburgh, he has traveled and lived all over the world, including Boston and Berlin. He started with the Spok- ane Symphony in 2019 after serving Vaasa City Orchestra in Finland. The 75-year-old Spo- kane Symphony is his focus now.

In 2020, he virtually con- ducted the Spokane Sympho- ny’s New Year’s Eve Concert from Scotland—still available online—and guest conducted the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, with which he was previously associate conductor, for an online concert.

His interest in classical music came at the age of eight in a vil- lage primary school assembly, when he heard a recording of the William Tell Overture by Rossini—the “Lone Ranger” theme.

He bought a record and played it until it wore out, not realizing it was part of a whole genre of mu- sic—classical. He also sang in the choir at the village’s Anglican Church, that dated from 1154.

During lockdown, James sang with the virtual choir of the Episcopal Church of Scotland in Melrose 15 miles from his home. “I would record to a pre-re- cored click track, and someone would edit the singers’ record- ings together. It’s different from music making,” he said.

In a recent conversation with him, Kristina Ploger-Hekmatpa- nah, the Symphony Chorale’s di- rector, commented that “singing to a metronomic click track rather than being in a room and sensing how people are breathing is not the same as music-making.”

“Digital is better than nothing, but it does not replace live,” said James, appreciating now working with the live, smaller, distanced, masked Spokane Symphony to film music “audiences” can watch on their TV screens at home.

After flying to Seattle and spending two weeks quarantin- ing there, he is in Spokane on a National Interest Exemption that allowed his entry for eight weeks to record five digital concerts with five themes for a series of Spring Concerts.

“We are on the stage in small groups following strict COVID regulations related to the number on stage, six feet apart for strings and percussion and nine feet apart for woodwinds and brass players, who remove masks only to play. All are masked all the time,” James said. “We also have testing twice a week.”

The orchestra rehearses 45 minutes and then takes a half hour break—keeping social distance.

“At least we are making mu- sic in the same place, following many protocols. It’s great having the musicians back in the Fox and great to see our colleagues and friends on the stage,” James said.

While some have been vac- cinated, which will eventually change what is possible, it didn’t change things for the six weeks of recording, because some are not vaccinated.

“COVID is unpredictable,” James said. “Usually an or- chestra plans a year or two in advance. Now we have to build flexibility into what we do and be ready for curve balls. It’s hard to plan how soon people will feel comfortable coming back to a concert hall.”

“Musicians rely on two things that we haven’t been able to do: be in the same place and be in proximity. At least now we can do music together masked and distanced,” he said.

James said that while viola is his first and primary instrument, he has taken time in lockdown to learn the Scottish folk fiddle, which uses a bow in a different way than is ingrained in him from classical music.

“Folk music involves more improvisation, even changing notes and composing in the moment, while classical music seeks to produce a good repro- duction, so same music, he said. “Folk music tells a story.”

James said the first of the five concert series will be available on-demand, starting Friday, April 2, will examine folk roots of classical music. Themes of other concerts are “Classical Perfec- tion,” “Individualism,” “Light,” and “Heaven and Earth.”

James said the concerts are a mix of music and ideas as he chats with orchestra musicians and lo- cal experts from other disciplines on how the themes relate to their field and the music selections.

For example, for the first epi- sode, Spokane’s Poet Laureate and orchestra trumpeter Chris Cook will read a Czech folk tale to set the scene for Dvořák’s “Serenade for Winds,” and an Emily Dickinson poem that sets the atmosphere for the fourth episode on the theme of “Light.”

Anya Rasmussen of the Wash- ington State University physics department Britni Weaver, Pullman, will also talk in that episo- dle about the science of light.

In the second program, Mu- seum of Arts and Culture ex- ecutive director Wes Jessup will discuss how the meaning “classi- cal” is different in art and music. Spokane Falls Community College’s chair of the philoso- phy department Britni Weaver Forsman will talk with James on individualism.

The section of the music in each episode and how to listen are on the Spokane Symphony website. James returns to Scotland in May, and will return to Spokane later in 2021 to work with the symphony as state COVID phas- es advance to allow the orchestra to perform live in the Martin Woldson Theater at the Fox.

“I love Spokane. Pre-pandemic was it a rich, diverse musical landscape. In COVID, music was the first to shut down and last to open, so musicians have suffered. Many symphony members were furloughed. We have a skeleton office staff on reduced hours and the orchestra is back at a limited percentage of work,” James said.

“Orchestras have relied on patronage of donors since before Bach. Most rely 60 to 70 percent on donors, but because the Spo- kane Symphony owns The Fox, it relies 60 to 70 percent on earn- ing income by hiring out the Fox, booking other artists and people paying to attend symphonies,” he explained.

“It has been a blow. We lost $4 million, but took the first round of the PPP loan/grants and are looking at the second round,” James pointed out. “Donors have been phenomenal in sticking by us. People love the Spokane Symphony and want to keep the institution alive and thriving into the future. Donations are not far behind a normal year.”

At the start of the pandemic, the Spokane Symphony started the Musicians Emergency Relief Fund. Just two weeks. While some musicians play in other orchestras or teach, many have faced financial stress, James said.

For information, email infor- mation@spokanefirsttimetix.com or visit spokan symphony.org.

James Lowe will also return later in 2021. Photo courtesy of Spokane Symphony.
Asian-American high school teen speaks out at Stop the Hate Vigil

Rosie Zhou, a senior at Ferris High School and a local Asian-American activist and leader, helped to organize the Asian Hate Film Festival held in Spokane, Washington. She is involved in incorporating more Asian-American history into school curriculums.

In addition, Rosie is active in Survive Spokane, a youth-led organization working to end climate change and environmental justice issues. At Ferris, she is part of the Black Student Union and in the community; she is a student ambassador for the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area.

When I first learned about the shooting on Tuesday night in Atlanta, I felt numb. Like I couldn’t process what I was seeing on my phone screen, I couldn’t believe, or maybe didn’t want to believe, what I was seeing. I had trouble sleeping that night, I couldn’t stop picturing horrific images in my head and thinking about the fact that this happened, that eight people were now dead, eight lives lost—six of them being Asian American women. For what? For what sense would that make? I looked up my 8th grade History teacher, Mr. Thompson, and I found what they needed—they didn’t know me.

It is very hard for me, you who are, what ethnicity you are or what changes you need, to have faith, to go to The Fig Tree.

Carla Peperzak - Holocaust survivor

I was 16 when Germany invaded the Netherlands in 1940. I had an ID without a J for Jew. So I worked with the Dutch underground and helped 40 people find hiding places. After the war, I met my husband, came to the U.S. and worked for 33 years as a school nurse. I still do that on Zoom because I never talked about the Holocaust. It was too difficult. I still do that on Zoom because there is need in middle, high schools and universities. It is important to learn about the Holocaust.

I am grateful to talk about it so it will not happen again. I have been unusually get washed as they have been now. Germany was the most educated culturally advanced society, so it was amazing that it could happen. We need more education on this.

Mary interviewed me several times and wrote good articles in The Fig Tree. The Fig Tree shares stories effectively and affirms the credibility of experiences.

2021 Benefit speakers invite support for Fig Tree turning words to action

The Fig Tree is more than a place on pages, helping people connect and share, to see the interconnectedness of the world, family, communities and nature. It gives a holistic look at what is out of balance and tries to balance it.

Susanne Hansen - community activist

I have long recognized The Fig Tree’s role in bringing people together to create a community of respect and understanding. It makes the community more beautiful, moving people beyond words to action on what we experience.

When I worked with Refugees from the Middle East, I spoke in five languages to make resources accessible to more people could live better. I was grateful to work for that cause for justice. The Fig Tree continues to work for justice in many ways. Recently I did an article on my work with the League of Women Voters to translate the 2020 ballots into many languages that could use as they filled out their ballots.

Kurtis Robinson - NAACP Spokane first vice president

The Fig Tree is a vital partner to reach the community. The newspaper, resource guide and legislative caucus are critical tools for reaching out to the community. Providing meaningful interaction on issues is important in building relationships. It is the best cross-class, cross-racial partner.

Dale Soden, professor of history at Whitworth University

It’s a different newspaper with a range and depth. Stories reveal real fighting for justice for people on the margins, individuals active in faith to make the world a better place. It records the history of religious activism in the Northwest. Although we live in the beginning of the 21st century, the Fig Tree realizes so many are shaping the region.

In Fig Tree articles, Rosalie Park Pak Ho, to feel overwhelmed and lose sight of how important it is to maintain community. The newspaper, resource guide and legislative conference are all critical tools for reaching out to the community. Providing meaningful interaction on issues is important in building relationships. It is the best cross-class, cross-racial partner.
Calendar of Events

Mar 31  ♦ Build Back Fossil Free: Chase Bank, 350 Spokane and Sunrise, 601 W Main Ave. Ste 100, info@350spokane.org, 3 to 4 p.m., hactionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-chase-bank-2

Mar 31  ♦ Build Back Fossil Free: Oil Trains, 350 Spokane and Sunrise, University District Gateway Bridge, info@350spokane.org, 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-trains-2

Apr 1  ♦ Build Back Fossil Free: Wells Fargo, 601 W. 1st Ave., 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-wells-fargo-2

Apr 2  ♦ Spokane Symphony on-demand Spring Concerts start, spokanesymphony.org

Apr 3  ♦ Build Back Fossil Free: Bank of America, 601 W. 1st Ave., 3 to 4 p.m., actionnetwork.org/events/build-back-fossil-free-bank-of-america-2

Apr 5  ♦ “Sometimes Heroes: America’s Changing Relationship with Its Veterans,” Jed Wulfman, faculty at Seattle Central College examines America’s relationship to wars and veterans in the last century. Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 6  ♦ “Taking a Seat at the Table: Bridging the Network Gap,” Upi Multicultural Education Center, online event, gonzagac.edu/campuslife, 4-30 to 6 p.m., panel on bridging BPG-Counterrepresented students and the professional world on career options

Apr 7, 28  ♦ Crime to the Classroom: How Education Changes Lives,” Omari Amili, author and community leader, on the benefits of college education for formerly incarcerated people, 1 p.m. Tuesday or 7 p.m. Wednesday. Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 7  ♦ Morning Prayer, “Easter Reflections on Bishop Daly’s Pastoral Letter, The Most Holy Eucharist,” St. Mary’s Parish, 9 a.m. to noon, 448-1224 ext 100, ihrc.net

Apr 7  ♦ Civil Conversation in an Angry Age,” David Smith, religious studies at University of Washington, 7 p.m. on 7th and 1 p.m. 13th, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 7  ♦ “What’s Age Got to Do with It?” Doris Gillam, Northwest Center for Creative Aging, 6 p.m. on 7th, 10:30 a.m. on 27th, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 8  ♦ Showing up for Racial Justice, videoconference, 5:30 to 7 p.m., skitty@pals.org

Apr 8  ♦ “Resilience, Resistance and Renewal,” lectures 1 to 2 p.m. Wednesday. Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 9  ♦ “Higher Power Research: From Classroom to Community,” Mirenes in Action, noon, Zoom, liganon@ewu.edu, https://www.ewu.edu/campus-events/

Apr 10  ♦ “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” Daudi Abe, professor and historian, 1 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 12  ♦ “Tangled: Why Your Hair Matters to Wars and Veterans in the Last Century,” Steven Stehr, professor in civic education schools, links and details at https://insidebook Rohingyarebels.org

Apr 13  ♦ “Is Truth Really Dead in America?,” Steven Stahr, professor in civic education at Washington State University, 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, 1 p.m. Wednesday, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 14  ♦ “From Mexican to Mexican-American: A Family Immigration Story,” Cartes Gil, professor, 10:30 and 1 p.m. Spokane Community College, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 15  ♦ “From Mexican to Mexican-American: A Family Immigration Story,” Cartes Gil, professor, 10:30 and 1 p.m. Spokane Community College, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 17  ♦ “Tended: Why Your Hair Matters to Society,” University of Washington professor Anu Taranath, noon, humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 18  ♦ Peace and Justice Action Committee, Zoom, 7 p.m., aunil@pals.org

Apr 19  ♦ Virtual Spring Compost Fair, sign up at webwa.alsa.org/events/2021-04-07, 625-6600

Apr 20  ♦ Clean Air Month Poet Contest deadline, spokanecleanair.org

Apr 21  ♦ Symposium on Sino-Christian Architecture, Whitworth, 8 a.m.

Apr 21  ♦ “Heating Up: The Ethics of Climate Change,” Brian Henning, professor of philosophy and environmental studies at Gonzaga University, 11:15 a.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 22  ♦ “Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion,” Clarence Moriwaki, president of Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community. Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 22  ♦ “The Ethics of Climate Change,” Brian Henning, professor of philosophy and environmental studies at Gonzaga University, 11:15 a.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 23  ♦ “Contemporary Issues of Feminist Research: From Classroom to Community,” Mirenes in Action, noon, Zoom, liganon@ewu.edu, https://www.ewu.edu/campus-events/

Apr 24  ♦ “The Future Is Now: Creative Expressions of Church,” Ignite the Church, 2021 online, 11 a.m., IgniteChurch.net

Apr 27  ♦ Faith Action Network will be planting April 2021 - April 22, 2021

Apr 29  ♦ Habitat for Humanity-Spokane Hope Park, 11 a.m., http://webwa.alsa.org

Apr 29  ♦ “How Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?” Daudi Abe, professor and historian, 1 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

Apr 30  ♦ 2021 Northwest Intermountain Synod Assembly for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 9:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., on Zoom, mlatman@ewu.edu, 250-522-2675

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May 5  ♦ “Higher Power Research: From Classroom to Community,” Mirenes in Action, noon, Zoom, liganon@ewu.edu, https://www.ewu.edu/campus-events/

May 6  ♦ “The Ethics of Climate Change,” Brian Henning, professor of philosophy and environmental studies at Gonzaga University, 11:15 a.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

May 7  ♦ Earth Day Launch of Gonzaga’s Center for Climate, Society and the Environment Live Stream, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., gonzaga.edu/climatecenter

May 7  ♦ Earth Day Virtual Vigil for the Healing of the Earth, 6 to 7:30 p.m., FLLConscience@gmail.com Zoom link

May 7  ♦ “Higher Power: The History of Evangelicals in American Politics,” Matthew Sutton, professor of history at Washington State University, 6:30 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

May 11  ♦ “Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion,” Clarence Moriwaki, president of Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community. Thursday, 6:30 p.m., Humanities Washington, 7 p.m., humanities.org/events/2021-04-07

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Habitat Lunch-In raises support for rising number of future homeowners

Building on their 2020 effort to pivot quickly to a virtual, safe annual Hope Builders fundraising event, Habitat for Humanity Spokane is applying what they learned to their 2021 event to keep people’s attention and inform them of the unique needs in the COVID pandemic housing crisis. Michelle Girardot, executive director of Habitat-Spokane, said they appreciate the energy of gathering friends, but online is the safest way for now.

The Hope Builders Virtual Lunch-In will be at noon Thursday, April 29, accessible online at habitat-spokane.org.

Michelle outlined today’s crisis in affordable housing and homeownership. Pre-pandemic, Habitat-Spokane had 12 qualified families. Now there are 48, with three or four new families entering the homeownership program each month.

“A 400 percent increase of applications by families for homeownership makes it clear who needs us is more important now,” she said. “We hope to accommodate them.”

“There was a housing shortage and crisis before the pandemic, but the pandemic has added challenges with the volatility of the housing market, decrease in the number of houses available and the increase in costs of building in terms of both labor and materials, making it hard to provide affordable mortgages,” she said.

The Lunch-In seeks to raise $150,000 from individuals.

While that won’t build one home, it will leverage funds to provide down payments for 15 families, Michelle said.

It will also leverage funds from partners like the City of Spokane Community Block Grant Funds, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines through Han- ner Bank locally, the Self-Help Home Ownership Opportunity Program Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds, and private foundation grants, as well as individual donors.

Habitat-Spokane raises nearly 70 percent of its support from individual donors at the Hope Builders Virtual Lunch-In and giving throughout the year, Michelle said.

“We rely on the Lunch-In as we launch a heavy construction season,” she said.

While it may be more impressive to see family testimonies in person, she said families will share what success for them looks like living in Habitat homes during COVID.

“Many Habitat homeowners have said that while life has been hard, it’s been their best year because they live in a safe, decent, affordable home, which is a safe place to teach their children,” Michelle said.

“Affordable housing and home ownership are not simple,” she pointed out. “There are significant barriers to achieve them.”

Three leaders will speak at the Lunch-In. Ezra Eckhart, CEO of STCU, will speak on affordable home ownership. City Council Member Betsy Wilkerson will share her desire to provide the video links to those who pre-register. Those videos include family testimony, a tour of a Habitat home and a ride in a Habitat truck to pick up donations for them.

The Lunch-In itself will last under an hour. Last year’s event drew nearly 500 and Michelle expects more in 2021 because it is accessible.

“Those attending do not need to find parking or shift schedules. They can watch at noon or at their convenience,” she said. “We have seen more give in advance when they register.

“Spokane is a caring community with a strong philanthropic spirit,” she said. “They know problems exist, and they want to be part of the solution. Habitat is a beacon of hope and will need more when we emerge from the pandemic.”

Looking ahead, she said that in the current phases for vaccine access, construction workers are not listed, even though they are essential.

“Before we deploy volunteers, we want to be sure it is safe to do so,” Michelle said.

For information, call 534-2552 or visit habitat-spokane.org to register.