Malden resident leads recovery

By Erin Endres - Intern

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

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

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

All residents survived the fire, although that was uncertain at first. Weeks following were spent searching for bodies and calling registers to account for residents. His family asked why he helped day after day.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I feel that God is putting me in place to help others because that is what I do,” Scott said.

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

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

Although she did not experience homelessness, she empathizes with people on the street. So in the winter of 2017, she started handing out peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in front of the House of Charity.

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

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

The group who helped hand out food and clothing called themselves Jewels Helping Hands.

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

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

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

“We raised $2,000 to make it functional over the summer, when we ran two cooling centers at 215 W. Second,” Julie said.

In October 2019, we gained a $740,000 city contract to open a warming center at Cannon St.”

When COVID hit in Janus...

Planning is underway for 2021 Benefit events

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

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

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

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

For information, call 535-1813, email event@thefigtree.org or sign up at https://secure.givelively.org/event/the-figtree/2021-fig-tree-march-benefits/breakfast-time-benefit or the same URL ending with lunch-time-benefit.
Those interested in attending the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 30, on Zoom may still sign up by calling 535-1813 or at https://secure.givelify.org/event/the-fig-tree-beyond-words-doing-justice-virtual-2021-eastern-washington-legislative-conference. The keynote, panel, workshops and legislative briefings will be recorded and available for viewing and sharing with congregations, nonprofits and friends to learn about issues coming before the 2021 Washington State Legislature.

**Lecture offers an overview on ecumenism**

The Spring 2021 Flannery Webinar Series will begin at 5 to 6:30 p.m., Monday, Feb. 8, is a virtual event on "COVID-19: Perspectives from the Perspective of Bioethics and Population Health." John Sheveland, professor of religious studies and Gonzaga’s Flannery Chair of Catholic Theology, will moderate discussion by three speakers.

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

Rhonda Meadows, a physician and in the Department of Population Health Management from Providence St. Joseph Health in Washington, population health, an interdisciplinary, customizable approach that allows health departments to more effectively reach communities and foster change to happen locally.

Andrea Vicini, SJ, is the McCarrick Professor of Bioethics at Boston College. The Jesuit priest, who holds doctorates in medical ethics, theology and law, will speak about the theological and bioethical implications of COVID-19.

The endowed Flannery Chair of Roman Catholic Theology is now held by the Rev. John M. Kane, S.J., who is president of Population Health.

**Restaurant distributed one million meals**

The Women and Children’s Free Restaurant (WCFR) distributed one million meals in 2020. In March, the nonprofit pivoted its in-house dining to curbside meal and grocery distribution to support families and children experiencing poverty and food insecurity during this time. Nine months into the pandemic, the organization distributed its millionth meal to a family in need, said Lisa DiFelfy, WCFR executive director.

With food insecurity a central issue in the pandemic, the WCFR quickly shifted up resources, volunteers and donors to meet community needs, she said, because feeding the community during a pandemic required committed help and resources.

WCFR operates its centrally located commercial kitchen to prepare meals for families and dozens of nonprofits. “Although necessary for public health, business and school closures have hit women and children particularly hard,” Lisa said. “We support these families by offering consistent, low barrier food resources, treating families in need with dignity.”

WCFR provides free meals daily to hundreds of families each week, along with meals to homeless shelters, and bioethical implications of COVID-19.

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

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

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

For information, call 324-1995 or visit wcfwspokane.org.
Food Security Coalition delves into gaps that limit access to food

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

When Natalie Tazuin of the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) looks at food insecurity in Spokane County from a public health perspective, she observes systems and policies that drive gaps in access that lead to food security. Barriers could be minimized by understanding that food insecurity is about survival for hungry people, she said.

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

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

Natalie outlined definitions and facts:

• Food insecurity means that households have limited or uncertain access to adequate food as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
• According to a WAFOOD survey done in June and July 2020, 30 percent of households in most Washington Counties—59 percent of which have children—experience food insecurity. The University of Washington Population Health Initiative funded the study.
• According to the Feed America Project, in 2018 there were roughly 65,000 food insecure people in Spokane County. This represented a 13 percent food insecurity rate, a rate that has now been estimated to have risen to 17.3 percent in 2020 because of the increased poverty and unemployment because of the pandemic.
• Aresarch brief presented by WAFOOD, entitled “Economic Security and Food Access in Washington State during the COVID-19 Pandemic,” reported that food insecurity ranged from 12 to 44 percent depending on education; that respondents of color were more than 1.5 times as likely to be food insecure than white respondents, and that the food insecurity was higher among single or divorced adults.

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

Natalie explained that the Spokane County Food Security Coalition was formed out of the COVID Emergency Operations Center to bring people out of their homes and into a world to members. “While our doors are closed, those wearing masks can say hello,” Natalie said. “We need to be willing to be in-trospective about what we hear and not be defensive.”

Natalie has been addressing food security for the last 20 years. She received a nutrition degree from the University of California Davis, then attended the University of California Los Angeles for her work in dietetics and her studies leading to a master’s in public health.

Natalie then moved to the Chuney area and has been involved in various food programs, both as a service provider and from the perspective of public health.

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

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

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

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

The Food Security Coalition seeks to bridge food access gaps for food-insecure people by 1) trying to coordinate distribution to the homeless, home-bound individuals, and families with children; 2) collecting data on gaps; 3) informing the community about food distribution sites and delivery options; 4) providing language translation and identifying the cultural-appropriateness of food offered; 5) fostering equitable food distribution, and 6) reducing stigma around those who need food assistance.

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

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

For further information and discussion, Natalie suggests several resources:
• Northwest Harvest’s May 2020 “Addressing the Food Security Crisis in Washington” at northwestharvest.org.
• Feeding America, the national organization in which Second Harvest of Northwest Washington is involved.
• “The Impact of Coronavirus on Food Insecurity” in October 2020 at feedingamerica.org.
• “Map the Meal Gap” to improve understanding of food insecurity and food costs is also found at the Feeding America website.
• The Spokane County Food Security Coalition meets virtually from 1 to 2:30 p.m., second Thursdays. Natalie said new participants may ask for the link.

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

Corbin Senior Center engages community

In 2021, Corbin Senior Activity Center plans to engage community members to enrich and empower their lives through well-being, social, recreational and educational programs.

Corbin Center is bringing the digital world to members. The center has applied for a grant to buy tablets and Wi-Fi ability to share with members at no cost to give them the opportunity to participate in classes, so- cial hour discussions and more.

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Beyond Words: Doing Justice

Deepening Our Roots
Lunch-time Virtual Benefit
Friday, March 5, 2021
Group Gatherings 11:40 a.m. • Slides 11:50 a.m. • Program 12-12:40 p.m. on Zoom

Breakfast-time Virtual Benefit
Wednesday, March 10, 2021
Group Gatherings 7:40 a.m. • Slides 7:50 a.m. • Program 8 to 8:40 a.m. on Zoom

CALL 535-4112 or 535-1813
email mary@thefigtree.org

For further information and discussion, Natalie suggests several resources:
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• Feeding America, the national organization in which Second Harvest of Northwest Washington is involved.
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Jewels Helping Hands runs with volunteers on ‘staff’ learning job skills

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Jewels Helping Hands' 95 employees are homeless or formerly homeless people who gain job skills so they can move out of homelessness. “People need a second chance and a patient employer to teach them skills to move into other jobs as they overcome barriers from addiction and criminal behaviors,” Julie said. “Most move to other jobs in homeless work, such as with the Salvation Army, the Guardians, City Gate and CHAS.”

“We give them stability and experience for their resumes,” she said. Julie grew up in Grand Junction, Colo., the daughter of the pastorate. From her mother, she learned to do community service. After marrying, Julie moved to Spokane when her husband came for a job.

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

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

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

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

“I succeeded because people loved me, believed in me, said I was worthy and knew I could. They also believed in me, said I was worthy and knew I could.”

Julie said Jewels Helping Hands is “just a group of folks” who began providing shelter and connected with people who were good at doing that, Julie said. “We do not try to reinvent what is being done, but refer people,” she said. “We work in the community with anyone assisting homeless people, regardless of their approach.”

People need one-on-one personal connections to overcome addiction or criminal behavior which may come from being homeless,” she said. “Eliminating trauma is a slow process of teaching people to respond rather than react to their situations,” Julie said.

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

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

People cannot move ahead unless their basic needs are met. Many in poverty struggle to feed, clothe and house their family. They feel threatened every day. “Many live one paycheck away from being homeless. It’s scary,” she said. “The mental health struggles are horrible. The homeless do not have doors to shut to hide their indiscretions.”

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

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

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

Julie Garcia spends many hours a day with homeless folks.

Jewels Helping Hands also distributes food boxes—50,000 pounds of food a week with its mobile food bank. At their mobile clothing bank from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sundays, at the Monroe Service Center, 2003 N Monroe St., they provide showers, hot meals, haircuts, a laundry card and a bus pass, along with clothing. They also offer free showers in six locations each week.

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

Directory mailings now go out request listing updates and ads

Mailings and emails have been going out by mail and email to organizations that are listed in the annual Resource Directory: Guide to Congregations and Community Resources to invite updated information for the 2021-22 edition. Mailings and emails are also going to advertisers and community partners to invite renewal of their support of this comprehensive compilation of data on non-profits, human services, health care providers, senior services, advocacy groups and government programs to meet people’s needs in crises, in transition and instability, and to offer ways to give back.

For information, call 535-1813 or email mary@thefigtree.org.
Othello church members ‘go’ on pilgrimage to Colombia in Othello

By Mary Stamp

Two members of Othello Christian Church recently joined 14 people from the Northwest for a virtual peace pilgrimage in Colombia through their regional Global Ministries Committee. The team from the Northern Lights Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) spent Sept. 21 to 26 on the pilgrimage—for days for the virtual visit and two days of debriefing among the U.S. team.

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

Janet Larson, a 20-year member of Othello Christian and member of the regional Global Ministries Committee, invited her pastor, Adam Janes, to join the team. She was at home, and he was in the church office, “traveling” by Zoom. They talked with people, hearing their stories and learning of their struggles trying to farm, fish and survive as paramilitary groups disrupt their lives.

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

“When our regional committee discussed having a global partnership, I thought I’d be able to travel to another country because of my age and health. We were invited to join the virtual pilgrimage via computer,” Janet said.

The “pilgrimage” consisted of two hours a day viewing video prepared by JustaPaz on a boat trip along the San Miguel River, unloading supplies, servicing the boats and spending time with people in six villages along the river.

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

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

“I was instantly drawn to the church by its desire to embrace being multi-cultural,” he said.

“We call ourselves a polka-dotted church. Everyone is different but by God’s grace we can connect. We believe we are still a multi-generational, predominantly Euro-centric church, we have some Hispanic families.

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

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

It also has food processing plants. The community of 7,600 people, surrounded by about 13,000 more, has 10 churches.

The Christian Church, founded in 1913, is a community fixture, Adam said. In 1978, it moved to 915 E Rainier St. For a while, members struggled to stay homogeneous, but now they want to change with the community.

“Since COVID, our building was open for dialogues and groups serving migrants,” Adam said.

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

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

“Our leaders do not speak Spanish. I was the only English speaker to minister here, but the majority are second-, third- and fourth-generation Hispanics who speak English,” Adam said.

Many Hispanics came to Othello as farm migrant workers or to join family members. Five pastors form the Ministers Association. One is an English-speaking Hispanic. They do joint worship services and serve the community with food and other aid.

Before COVID, 45 came to worship Sundays, in contrast with about 100 with 30 years ago. Since COVID, Adam has led Bible studies on Zoom, recorded church school lessons on YouTube and livestreamed worship to share on YouTube and Facebook.

“We invested in technology and upgraded our internet, video and sound equipment to have quality streaming. All but two members have access,” he said.

“One comes to the church Sundays, when I record the service, and another in Othello,” Adam said.

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

The new equipment meant he had to purchase equipment needed for the virtual Colombia Peace Pilgrimage.

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

“It was a way to learn about daily struggles, and social and political realities of people in the Choco region of Northwest Colombia, where escaped and freed Afro-Colombian slaves settled with indigenous people along the San Miguel River,” he said, adding that U.S. Hispanics come from many areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For information, call 350-2378 or 302-8395 or email pastor@othellochristianchurch.com.

Janet Larson and her pastor Adam Janes joined in virtual visit to Colombia.
After four months, Malden still waits for FEMA request to respond

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hope persists for those who lost their homes.

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

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

Lack of home insurance is a significant barrier to recovery. Many Malden homes were inherited and required updates that it changes our recovery story," he said.

Lack of home insurance is a significant barrier to recovery. Many Malden homes were inherited and required updates.

Many residents choose to forgo insurance. Scott is sympathetic as he once lived in his home uninsured.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Within each challenge, the city has found joy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

While COVID-19 spreads despair, we prioritize HOPE for homeless families.
Brent Cabildo engages with 300 businesses through Multi-Ethnic Business Association (MEBA) – aka AHANA (African Hispanic Asian Native American) – to help businesses start, grow, secure grants and loans, and access counseling to strengthen their place in the economy.

“With COVID, it has been a busy year helping businesses navigate the many applications for federal, state, local and private grants and loans,” he said. 

“We have successfully helped about 200 businesses receive grants and loans, and distributed to them PPE like masks, sanitizer and thermometers. With a grant from the Department of Health, we are providing COVID-related safety instructions and information.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I am working to establish a lending program for multi-ethnic businesses to start up with no interest or low interest,” he said.

“Several banks are interested in exploring the idea.”

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

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

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

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

At seven, Ben started three businesses to have enough money to eat. During school before school, he went to the bakery around the corner, and bought bread, which he sold to house to house and on the streets.

After school, he sold cigarettes and chewing gum to the thousands of drivers who transported people in Manila. He also worked in the fields, riding water buffalos and hauling coconuts to the market.

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

While he was studying political science at the University of Washington, he began organizing in Chinatown. In 1970, he started an international drop-in center to help neglected Asian seniors who lived and died alone in hotels. Filipinos had come to the U.S. in the 1930s to work in farm fields, riding water buffalos and hauling coconuts to the market.

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

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

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

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

“Before AHANA, I did anti-discrimination work, building Unity in Action, which brought together human rights advocates to create a response to any violence against multi-ethnic community members,” he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seven of MEBA-AHANA’s 14 board members include Yvonne Montoya Zamora, Ben Cabildo, Marvo Reguindin, Sandy Williams, Victor Vera, Dennis Mitchell and seated Camilo Madero.
Documentary producer asks who counts in count of homeless

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

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

In recent years, the City of Spokane’s annual homeless Point-In-Time count theme has been “Everybody Counts.” Two years ago, Maurice did his first documentary on the count called “On Any Given Night.” For 2021, the city announced unsheltered individuals would not be contacted by outreach staff or volunteers if only people at a local shelter are counted, are homeless individuals dying of exposure on the streets not worth counting, Maurice wondered. He’s aware the approach is because of COVID restrictions but said it guarantees an undercount of the homeless population, which has grown in COVID.

“Why should COVID restrictions stop a thorough count when the same restrictions do not stop local enforcement from doing ‘ Sit-and-Lie’ sweeps of homeless people downtown, forcing them to ‘move on’ when there are no shelter beds to access?” he asked. He said the city’s website says its outreach is to track contacts and demographic information, and caseworkers are to refer encounters to the Spokane City and County Continuum of Care’s Coordinated Entry/Assessment project for assessment and housing placement.

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

Second, he said it isn’t the job of outreach workers to report and in COVID, many agencies have restricted staff from outreach. As a documentary filmmaker on homelessness, he has accompanied outreach teams to homeless camps and under bridges in recent months. No one reported the contacts, because doing so leads to a follow-up visit by a sweep team, Maurice said. One service provider expressed concern that the undercount will be used as reason to cut services. “Cooperation between the city and service providers to address homelessness requires transparency and trust,” he said. The 2021 Point-In-Time plan guarantees a truncated count and an undercount, in the midst of “a swelling homeless population.”

“Does this person count? Not in 2021.” said it guarantees an undercount and transparency and trust, he said. The 2021 Point-In-Time plan guarantees a truncated count and an undercount, in the midst of “a swelling homeless population.”

Christmas night, after celebrating Christmas with guests at the City Church Warming Center, Maurice went with an outreach team from Jewels Helping Hands to distribute food, blankets and gifts on the street. “It was snowing. We encountered an intoxicated man who was nearly naked in the snow. We got him into some warm clothes when someone noticed he had no shoes (only wet socks),” he said.

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

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

COVID-19 & Mental Health

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

Look for Signs

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

Check-In

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

Listen

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

Washington Listens

833.681.0211

24/7 Regional Crisis Line

877.266.1818

A free, anonymous service for people who feel sad, anxious, or stressed due to the events of this year.

Connects people to services for and on behalf of individuals whose health or safety is in danger because of a mental health or substance use condition.
Cousins collaborate to rehabilitate homes for affordable housing

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

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

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

“I felt out of place. I didn’t see many people like me,” Chauncey said.

His grandmother’s house on E. Pacific was the center for family.-energy, she said, telling each child to “try your best. You are at home and feel special. She would prepare food and invite people to join in the fun. Her hospitality and counseling people were part of her ministry, along with her intercessory prayer ministry,” he said, telling how she inspired him. “She was always praying and leading by example of giving and going.”

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

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

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

He began working at KQV, where he has also been sport producer for the Gonzaga University men’s basketball team for 17 of those years. After Hanna died in December 2015, Chauncey and Jerry wanted to carry on her legacy of giving to people, mentoring them to stability.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The Washington State Department of Transportation recognizes the importance of supporting new apprenticeships and has made funds available specifically for STP students. This funding may pay for:
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• Minor car repair
• Tool replacement
• Program testing

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

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

Unity is not uniformity of belief or thought. Ecumenical dialogue goes beyond the either/or mindset some media promote as a binary choice. As a matter of fact, there are multiple perspectives, not just two opposite views. It is true in political parties. Democrats include conservatives, centrist, moderates, center-left, progressives, liberals, democratic socialists and more. Republicans include Trump loyalists, Christian right, libertarians, neconservatives, QAnon, the Tea Party movement, conservatives, moderates and some libertarians.

Christians also have a range of Catothes, Protestants, non-denominational, inter-denominational, evangelical, penticostal, orthodox, charismatics and spiritual congregations, parishes and centers, with divisions even within those groupings, as do many faiths—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and more.

Many people have learned that when they allow their differences to divide, rather than holding to the basic tenet they espouse—love—they discredit their faith. It’s not to say love and long beyond disagreements, but ecumenical and interfaith organizations connect people of faith to build common ground—like caring for the vulnerable, improving communities, protecting creation, making peace, doing justice, praying together and joining in worship.

In his inaugural address, President Joe Biden said: “History, faith and reason tell us the way forward. Namely, we’re going to have to walk the path together. We must unite with those who seek to stand against the violence that we witnessed a nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished.”

We can treat each other with dignity and mutual respect. We can lift our voices not to what stands between us but what stands before us. “We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.”

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

While some may feel relief from ongoing anxiety, culminating in an insurrection of unenlightened civic acts, during an election is decided. Democracy takes continual work. It requires accountability. It requires listening, finding common ground and focusing on that, not just garnering power for the next election cycle.

We elect people to represent us to make laws, set taxes, build infrastructure and establish programs to benefit all people. We believe liberty is of equal importance. There’s always work to do to assure we have a government of the people, by the people and for the people—-the myriad of diverse people who are the USA.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Region’s human rights groups write letter to offer perspectives

Open Letter to Fellow Americans

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

Over the past 25 years, the United States has made progress toward the goal of ending discrimination and oppression for all people. As that work continues, we face a growing serious threat from domestic terrorists to that evolving democracy. Over the past 25 years, the U.S. has witnessed an increase in domestic terrorism with deadly consequences. The purveyors of four of these anti-democratic domestic terrorists’ acts including the occupation of our National Capitol on Jan. 6 is a serious and urgent future ways to combat such threats.

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

On Aug. 17, 2012, an angry mob of anti-government white nationalists, neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan, Nazi sympathizers and terrorist under the banner of “Unite the Right,” marched through Charlottesville, Va. They displayed Swastika flags, Confederate flags, the Nazi slogan “Blood and Soil” (Jews will not replace us), and carried torches symbolizing the marches that took place during Hitler’s Third Reich. The tragic result was the death of a peaceful counter demonstrator and two Virginia state police officers in a crash of their police helicopter. Thirty other individuals were injured.

On Feb. 5, 2020, FBI Director Christopher Wray during testimony before the City Council of the U.S. House stated that 2019 was the deadliest year for domestic terrorism since the Oklahoma City bombing. The tragic result was the death of a peaceful counter demonstrator and two Virginia state police officers in a crash of their police helicopter. Thirty other individuals were injured.

On Jan. 6, 2021 an angry mob of pro-Trump loyalists, Christian right, and White supremacists attacked our National Capitol building, occupying our democracy and home of the legislative branch of our democratic government.

We respectfully write this letter to call for people to stand united against violence.

Sounding Board

Area faith leaders call for people to stand united against violence

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

Our nation’s healing requires that all those involved, regardless of their political affiliations and positions on the executive branch of government, be held to a court of law to be held accountable for their actions. This includes [former] President Donald Trump, his administration, aides, and Republicans who enabled him, and the thousands in his legislative branch of our democratic government.

Furthermore, we must challenge the media outlets that unwittingly and unwittingly repeated the extremists’ and the former President’s lies. Their audiences sincerely believed that the election was stolen. This moved citizens to violence.

Our nation was unable to engage in productive conversations and work together to understand that systemic racism played a major role in the election, and that the extremist’s and the former President’s lies were malicious and not just the beginning.

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


The Rev. Scott Starbuck, Ph.D., pastor, and The Rev. Pamela Starbuck, Manito Presbyterian Church.


The Rev. Dr. Glenn, Convener, The Grove Community Churches and The Grove County Council.

The Rev. Gen Heywood, Convener, Many Paths.

The Rev. Deb L. Conkin, St. Paul’s and Liberty Park United Methodist Churches and The Grove County Council.


The Rev. Jim Castor, Lang Board Member, Faith Action Network.

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Reflections

William Aal, Principal Associate

Tools for Change

Pam Silverstein, MD

member of the Jewish community

Don Young, Life Deacon, and Jan Haley from a speech she gave on Jan. 7, 2021 in Spokane County Human Rights Task Force.

Sounding Board

Mary Stamp - Editor

Kootenai County Task Force on Human Rights

Board of Directors

Gonzaga University Provost

Associate Professor of Human Rights

Institute for Hate Studies

Bonner County Human Rights

Task Force

Sounding Board

Letters to the Editor

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Comments
Calendar of Events

Feb 2 • "Who Was Chief Seattle?" David Buergi, biographer and historian to Duwamish Tribe, 12 noon, online speakers bureau, https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 3 • "Black Activism: Our Local Ecosystem." Eastern Washington University (EWU) Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 3 • Webinar Wednesday: “Countering White Nationalism in 2021 and Beyond, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane, on Zoom, 7 to 8 p.m., 838-7870, sjasl.org

Feb 4 • Fig Tree Benefit Planning and Board Meetings, Benefit at noon, Board 1 to 3 p.m., both on Zoom, 535-1813 or mary@thefigtree.org

Feb 4 • Drive Through Party Celebrating Rosa Parks’ 108th Birthday, 5 to 6 p.m., Veradeal United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., gifts for Martin Luther King Jr. Center—toothpaste, toothbrush, socks, hats, gloves, face masks, protein bars, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, canned goods, toilet paper and paper towels, genheywood@gmail.com

Feb 5 • Peace and Justice Action Committee, 5:30 p.m., videocference, 838-7870, slichty@pjals.org

Feb 5 • Deadline to order Cinn-A-Grams: 8:30 a.m. gather, 8 a.m. program, Zoom, 509-536-6650, mowspokane.org/cinnagram


Feb 6 • "The Basics of Good Health," Environmentstudies@ Gonzaga.edu, 5 to 6:30 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 7 • “How to Plan an Event," EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 7 • “Zooming In: Exploring Activist Campaigns in Spokane," EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 8 • "Who Was Chief Seattle?" 1 p.m., https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 8 • "Who Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal’s Office?" 3 p.m. https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 8 • "Campaign Tactics: How to Plan an Action," EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 9 • "Fig Tree Mailing and Deliveries, Benefit at noon, Board 1 to 3 p.m., both on Zoom, 535-1813 or mary@thefigtree.org

Feb 9 • "Race and Racism in the Nonprofit Sector," Nick Bayard, antiracism speaker bureau, https://www.speakersbureau.org, 12 noon, online

Feb 9 • "Gospel Zoomlosion! Celebrating 28 Years of Gospel Worship, Zoom, Stephy Nobles Beans, 7 to 9 p.m., 777-4568, sbbeans@whitworth.edu

Feb 9 • "Citizen and Beyond: An Evening with Claudia Rankine," professor of poetry at Yale, Center for Civil and Human Rights at Gonzaga School of Law, 6 to 8 p.m., Zoom, civilrighscenter@ Gonzaga.edu

Feb 9 • "Planning the Fight: The Basics of an Activist Campaign," EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom,

Feb 10 • "How to Fight Fake News: Lessons at Gonzaga School of Law, 6 to 8 p.m., Zoom, yale.centercivilhumanrights.org

Feb 10 • “Campaign Tactics: How to Plan an Action,” EWU Gender Education Center, 3:30 to 5 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 10 • "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal’s Office?" 3 p.m. https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 11, 23 • "Kegan A": Lessons, "Planning the Fight: An Evening with Jasiri X," hip hop artist, emcee, blogger known for politically engaged lyrics and music videos, 3 to 4 on Zoom, Zoom Meeting ID 925 5611 4956 passcode 007222

Feb 12 • "Peace and Justice Action Committee," 6 p.m., Zoom, ewu.edu/air2021, foganb@ewu.edu

Feb 13 • "Handing Up: The Ethics of Climate Change," 2:30 p.m., https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 14 • "Who Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal’s Office?" 3 p.m. https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 14 • "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal’s Office?" 3 p.m. https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 15 • "NAACP General Membership Meeting," 7 p.m., 206-3444, naacbspokanepresident@gmail.com

Feb 16 • "She Traveled SoLE: Strong Women in the Early 20th Century," 7 p.m., https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 17 • "Drive Through Party Celebrating Rosa Parks’ 108th Birthday, 5 to 6 p.m., Veradeal United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., gifts for Martin Luther King Jr. Center—toothpaste, toothbrush, socks, hats, gloves, face masks, protein bars, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, canned goods, toilet paper and paper towels, genheywood@gmail.com

Feb 18 • "Black History Month presents Jasiri X," hip hop artist, emcee, blogger known for politically engaged lyrics and music videos, 3 to 4 on Zoom, Zoom Meeting ID 925 5611 4956 passcode 007222

Feb 19 • "Northwest Bachfest, “Across the Times” Pay to View, mabachfest.com, 326-8492

Feb 19 • "Heating Up: The Ethics of Climate Change," 2:30 p.m., https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 19 • "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting in the Principal’s Office?" 3 p.m. https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 20 • Gaza 108th Birthday, 5 p.m., https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 20 • "Drive Through Party Celebrating Rosa Parks’ 108th Birthday, 5 to 6 p.m., Veradeal United Church of Christ, 611 N. Progress Rd., gifts for Martin Luther King Jr. Center—toothpaste, toothbrush, socks, hats, gloves, face masks, protein bars, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, canned goods, toilet paper and paper towels, genheywood@gmail.com

Feb 21 • "Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion," noon, https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 21 • "How to Fight Fake News about Climate Change," John Cook, research assistant at Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, online zoom webinar 5 to 6:30 p.m., Zoom, Faith & Mission, 313-6782, email religioustudies@ gonzaga.edu

Feb 22 • "Citizen and Beyond: An Evening with Claudia Rankine," professor of poetry at Yale, Center for Civil and Human Rights at Gonzaga School of Law, 6 to 8 p.m., Zoom, civilrighscenter@ Gonzaga.edu

Feb 22 • "Let It Not Happen Again: Lessons of the Japanese American Exclusion," noon, https://www.humanties.org/events/2021/02/02

Feb 23 • "How to Fight Fake News about Climate Change," John Cook, research assistant at Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, online zoom webinar 5 to 6:30 p.m., Zoom, Environmental Studies, Gonzaga University, environmentalstudies@ gonzaga.edu

Feb 24 • "Truthful Tuesday Climate Action Plan for Spokane," Karen Odegard, executive director of sustainability initiatives for City of Spokane, "Climate Sustainability Plan, 5 to 6:30 p.m., Facebook Live and Zoom, genheywood@gmail.com

Mar 5 • "Race and Racism in the Nonprofit Sector," Nick Bayard, antiracism educator in Tucson, with La Mondre Gee, of the Racial Equity Action Lab, Korbett Mossly adult education consultant, Antoinett Atkins of Atkins Consultant Group and Karissa Montes, research business trainer, offered by Washington Nonprofits webinar, noon to 1:30 p.m., online, https://washingtonnonprofits.org/ learning/learning-calendar/

Mar 5 • "Fig Tree Lunch-Time Benefit, 11:40 a.m. gather, noon program, Zoom, https://secure.givelify.com/event/the-fig-tree-2021-fg-tree-march-benefits/ lunch-time-benefit

Mar 10 • "Fig Tree Breakfast-Time Benefit, 7:40 a.m. gather, 8 a.m. program, Zoom, https://secure.givelify.com/event/the-fig-tree-2021-fg-tree-march-benefits/ breakfast-time-benefit

Mar 10 • "Fig Tree Lunch-Time Benefit, 11:40 a.m. gather, noon program, Zoom, https://secure.givelify.com/event/the-fig-tree-2021-fg-tree-march-benefits/ lunch-time-benefit

Mar 10 • "Fig Tree Breakfast-Time Benefit, 7:40 a.m. gather, 8 a.m. program, Zoom, https://secure.givelify.com/event/the-fig-
By Kaye Hult

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

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

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

“In the past, public testimony at these hearings has not been effective at compelling commissioners to take action,” she continued. “The LWV would like to change this in 2021 to ensure all voters have the chance to speak up about redistricting in a critical state action.”

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

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

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

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

Follow-up coaching is also available, April said. People will have the chance to come back and practice what they have come to say.

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

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

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

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

April had trouble with the presidential election process in 2016. She came away feeling the need to get involved, but not knowing how. She looked on Google for ideas, which was when she discovered the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area. She had never heard of them before.

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

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

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

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

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

“I believe in that. Knowing people allows us to care for them and make it easier for them. Even from my childhood, I was always looking out for others,” April said.

She joined the LWV because it is a nonpartisan, grassroots civic organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. It works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The Speak Up Schools of LWV of Washington are their answer to the nationwide redistricting campaign of the LWV of the United States, called People Powered Fair Maps. It focuses on creating fair voting districts in all 50 states.

The goals of the Speak Up Schools in Washington are to put 10 to 15 Speak Up Schools all over the state between February and April 2021, to have more than 2,000 people testify to the state Redistricting Commission during the public meetings in mid-2021, and to hold the 2021 Redistricting Commission accountable to the people of Washington by publicly documenting the desires of the residents of the state for voting districts that represent them.

LWV membership is open to people 16 years old and older of all gender identities. With 100 years of experience, the League is one of America’s oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations, April said.

The League is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging individuals, households, communities and policy makers in “creating a more perfect democracy,” she said.

A Speak Up School will be held Jan. 27 in Yakima. In addition, a “Redistricting 101 Overview” is planned by the Kitsap County LWV at 10 a.m., Feb. 27. Other sessions are being held in Western Washington. For more information, visit www.lwvspokane.org.

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

April May invites people to learn to speak on redistricting.

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

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

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

Follow-up coaching is also available, April said. People will have the chance to come back and practice what they have come to say.

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

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

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

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

April had trouble with the presidential election process in 2016. She came away feeling the need to get involved, but not knowing how. She looked on Google for ideas, which was when she discovered the League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area. She had never heard of them before.

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

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

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

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

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

“I believe in that. Knowing people allows us to care for them and make it easier for them. Even from my childhood, I was always looking out for others,” April said.

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