Kroc Center diverts focus from fitness to help with food, services in pandemic

By Kaye Hult

As Wade Isley, corps ministry specialist with the Salvation Army Kroc Center in Coeur d’Alene, looked back at the recent months with COVID-19 at the center stage, he realized that the public has perceived it as a state-of-the-art fitness facility.

"As Wade is a member, the emergency management team, the advisory board and about 90 staff have participated in the effort to help the Coeur d’Alene community. In the emergency management team, he operates as the spiritual care officer. The catalysts for the outreach efforts are Majors Don and Ronda Gilger, he said. The Gilgers are the senior pastors of the Kroc Church and executive directors of the Kroc Center. As soon as the community began to set emergency operations in place, the Kroc team reached out to other local agencies and coalitions. They forged partnerships with Coeur d’Alene Backpack, Community Action Partnership and the Post Falls Food Bank. They loaned staff to the Panhandle Health District Emergency Call Center, both the Coeur d’Alene and Post Falls Food Banks and the Emergency Operations Command (EOC) of the Sheriff’s office. They joined the Homeless Coalition.

The Kroc Center building warehoused EOC supplies. Staff made cloth masks. The center participated in the Kootenai United Food Drive at the Silver Lake Mall, providing 500 100-pound or smaller boxes of food. They provided personal protective equipment (PPEs) and hand sanitizer, made dinners for volunteers, and provided hygiene kits for homeless people. Staff volunteered to make food distribution at the Salvation Army.

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Continued on page 3

Camps find creative ways to do camp

By Mary Stamp

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Continued on page 3

Agencies partner in COVID to serve women and children

Serving the community in a pandemic has brought creativity and partnership among Vanessa Behan, YWCA Spokane, and Women & Children’s Free Restaurant (WCFR). The nonprofits teamed up to support women, children and families experiencing poverty, food insecurity, family violence and trauma.

They are providing food, care and outreach with a grant from the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund of the Innovia Foundation and with other donations from the community.

The Women & Children’s Free Restaurant provides meals to Vanessa Behan and YWCA Spokane Safe Shelter residents. Vanessa Behan and YWCA refer clients to food services at WCFR, which provides information on resources available to families in crisis through YWCA and Vanessa Behan through pocket guides with lunches and other food distribution.

“Women, children and families in our community are facing stresses compounded in a health emergency that isolates them from their usual support systems,” said Regina Malveaux, YWCA Spokane CEO. “Working together, we are multiplying our effectiveness.”

“For us, the gift of food brings comfort and support,” said Lisa Diffley, WCFR executive director. “Always we use food to feed and lift up those in need, but through this partnership we also provide them clear pathways to seek other help.”

“Children in family violence situations are often the silent victims,” said Amy Knapton Vega, executive director of Vanessa Behan. “WCFR and YWCA Spokane help us touch victims from the COVID-19 Community Response and Recovery Fund of the Innovia Foundation and with other donations from the community.”

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Faith Action Network holds Spring Summits

During May and June, the Faith Action Network (FAN) held Regional Spring Summits around Washington State.

Advocates gather to talk about how the FAN legislative agenda fared in the past session and strategize for the rest of the year on issues facing-—or not facing—enough practical, effective steps to reduce our lethal dependence on fossil fuels.

The multi-faith announcement—from Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, Buddhists and more—includes British Jesuits, who divested its $57.5 million portfolio from fossil fuels in February. Illustrating the need for a just recovery, the Episcopal Commission for Justice has asked the bishop to divest his-—and Catholic organizations with $40 billion in assets committed to the Catholic Impact Investing Pledge. Tomás Insua of the Global Catholic Climate Movement said: “The decisions we make now will affect the future of the Catholic community,” he said.

Rev. Rowan Williams, said, “The current health crisis highlights the global threat of climate change. Governments should follow the faith institutions.”

The Catholic Impact Investing Pledge, supported by 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA 99202, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization. The Faith Traditions Network (FTN) has reported $360/year pledge for five years.

As of May 27, The Fig Tree’s Benefit fund raiser on Facebook raised $5,113, reaching its goal of $5,201 toward its goal of $28,000.

Fig Tree nears benefit goal, receives two grants

Brian Seppi, M.D., is the new medical director of Hospice of Spokane. He brings more than 25 years of experience in healthcare administration, team leadership and patient care from work as a chief medical officer and medical director, most recently as chief medical officer for Providence Medical Group.

Hospice of Spokane names medical director

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With a passion for end-of-life care, he served three years on the Hospice of Spokane Board of Trustees. Hospice of Spokane serves, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Stevens counties.

For information, call 456-0438 or visit hopspiscopalspokane.org.
Second Harvest responds to second wave of hungry people: hungry people

The second wave of the COVID-19 crisis is hunger among families who have suffered financial setbacks and are turning to food pantries to feed their families, said Jason Clark, president and CEO of Second Harvest, in a video presentation online. Second Harvest seeks to make a difference by meeting basic needs of families and individuals who are overwhelmed by the disruption caused by the coronavirus.

In addition to supplying partner food pantries in the region, it has increased direct distribution through its mobile market.

“Many people seek assistance at a mobile market for the first time,” said Clark, expressing the importance of making people feel welcome. “It’s hard with drive-through distributions that limit contact. We help people feel okay by offering smiles and waves, as we help them load their table.”

In this crisis, Second Harvest seeks to keep staff, volunteers and the food they handle safe.

“Donors, farmers and food industry partners help us find food,” said Clark. “Economic block is approaching and we need to continue responding even as we search for solutions to provide more food for the community.”

Unemployment in the 26 counties Second Harvest serves was near 60% in March before easing toward 16% in June, but labor market conditions were still weak as of July 8, 2020, when demand for food was double the normal amount. Jason said it will take four times the food distribution levels of 2019 for the next year.

Second Harvest is innovating to address this challenge to make sure vulnerable neighbors facing hunger have the food they need, he said.

Recently the National Guard helped Three Rivers Convention Center staff in Kennewick distribute food to 1,500 cars driving through the center’s parking lot over two days in mid-May. They gave out 180,000 pounds of food, Second Harvest’s largest mobile distribution ever. In late April, the Spokane warehouse distributed 170,000 pounds of food in its parking lot over six hours.

While some farmers grow under crops and pour milk because of disruptions in the supply chain, Second Harvest helped Washington farmers give away 100,000 pounds of potatoes in the Tri-Cities.

“We supplement donated food with purchased bulk food and re-package it as fast as we can. canned goods are hard to find and variety in the donated food supply is diminishing,” he said.

Second Harvest now partners with Spokane Food Fighters started by Marcus Riccelli to help restaurants prepare meals for shut-ins. They partnered to deliver more than 1.5 million emergency food boxes to families in April and May.

Second Harvest continues to partner with the Core and Spokane Public Schools to deliver mobile markets at schools with Bette to Go weekly, summer nutrition programs.

While supplying neighborhood pantries is the primary approach to delivering food, Second Harvest is empowering people to find the resources they need to progress.

Kroc Center in Coeur d’Alene forged partnerships to serve community

Continued from page 1 deliveries to food banks, the Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army Corps. They also assisted St. Vincent de Paul’s operation.

The Kroc Center at Coeur d’Alene School District used its building as a meal site. A video board near the theater in the building flasked statistics. In mid-May, the board said 633 local families fell into need and 3,762 masks were handed out. 3,762 individual participated in online give and 2,345 people participated in online worship.

Twenty-five Kroc employees assisted with 96,676 spiritual support calls with Kroc Center members, church members and others in the community. Wade said. Gift cards totaling $12,500 were purchased and supplied $5,000 to $6,000 worth of food and fuel to people in need. Wade is the executive director for the church, Wade reflected.

“Many things we were doing as a result of the pandemic have slowed or stopped,” he said.

The Kroc Center has transitioned into a recovery model. It also recently re-opened as a fitness facility, and is adding more activities and functions with each stage of recovery.

The Kroc Church has resumed in-person worship. Each week, the church that was once relaxed, Wade said the center is following Center for Disease Control (CDC), Panhandle Health District and Idaho governor’s guidelines. They take the pandemic seriously.

“IT is important to build relationships, he said. “People need to be involved and invested in what they seek to achieve their chronic need and bad choices. We help with emergencies, but we want to help clients change their mindsets and practices.”

The recovery services office at the Kroc Center is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. People may walk in or call 208-763-0777 for assistance. “I always wanted to be a missionary,” said Wade, who grew up in Eastern Oregon, graduating from Enterprise High School in 2017.

That fall, he moved to Coeur d’Alene to live with his mother. “I had medical issues with mold, he said, “but it became an excuse to do nothing.”

He had walked away from his faith, too. A conversation with his stepfather within a couple weeks of moving became a turning point. He told Wade, “Your life is off track. You need to 1) find a church, 2) make new friends, and 3) find a job. If you do these things, then 4) it will all come together.”

Wade played basketball so much at the Kroc Center that he was told he ought to be paid for it. In October 2017, he began working as an assistant to the manager.

“I was paid to play basketball with the kids here,” he said. “IT was a wonderful mission. IT’s all about building relationships with the kids.”

In six months, he became a personal trainer. A month later, he was promoted to wellness supervisor which he did for about a year and a half.

“When I started at the Kroc, I wanted this place to live up to its ministry potential, he said.

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The Kroc Church recently instituted a new program called The Well.

“IT expresses my vision for a spiritual fitness program for all ages—for everybody,” Wade explained.

It meets about an hour and a half. The Kroc Talk segment is moved. Table Talk Round Table Time is for community building. Then 45 minutes are for Pathway Choice, which is comprised of classes in subjects such as nutrition and financial help, but also dodgeball or journaling.

The Well program is guided. It provides membership benefits to the 85 people who have gone through the first six weeks. About 65 attend weekly to grow in physical and spiritual health (fitness).

Wade hopes monthly Saturday guided hikes will take place in June, July and August. The program has led to center memberships, church memberships and new-found Christian faith.

“We will continue to help people, Wade said. “That’s a key component of who we are.”

As Major Don said, “We will never go back to being just the Kroc Center. We will always be the Salvation Army.”

For information, call 508-1865 or visit www.krocdda.org.

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Distribution partners put directories into hands of more people, enabling staff and volunteers to reach and find resources for food, shelter and more, empowering people to find the resources they need to progress.

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In August/September
Volunteers with the Yakima Immigrant Response Network (YIRN) have been part of the Faith Action Network’s 2019 Justice Leadership Award, not only observe ICE flights out of Yakima but also now support workers striking in May at seven fruit packing plants in Yakima, Selah and Naches.

Members Danielle Sarkinaty and Mary Lopez told about YIRN’s efforts and their reasons for involvement. YIRN, which began in 2017 in response to the rise of the immigrant community of ICE raids, also documents and challenges raids. Danielle also talked about its role in building respect for people of different backgrounds.

YIRN supports immigrant communities through Know Your Rights presentations, Family Safety packets, workshops, employer outreach, rapid response in support of the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network Hotline, raid verification observer training, rapid response, accompaniment and advocacy, and helping parents set up a power of attorney for their children in case they (the parents) are deported.

YIRN responds to community needs that arise and members participate based on interest.

Members accompany immigrants when they go to court, because ICE has been ramping up its arrests outside courthouses.

Danielle gave an update on YIRN’s effort tracking flights that deport immigrants or transport them to detention. Their goal is to raise awareness, generate solidarity, advocate for change and let immigrants know they are not alone.

She is among the five members who continue to observe ICE flights daily. On May 19, the 64th flight transported 43 men and five women to the Mexican border for deportation.

Airport officials moved the observers to a smaller space so only five could come, not the previous 10 to 15 who observed regularly.

“We have counted 4,179 people transferred to the Tacoma Detention Center or deported to the border from the Yakima airport,” she said. “I have been there for all but four flights.”

She reported that only for the last month have ICE agents and their contractors with GEO Group and DIA Airways been wearing masks and doing medical checks before they put people on the plane.

“News reports say the people deported do not have COVID-19, but we do hear of people arriving in Guatemala and testing positive,” she said.

Danielle grew up in Yakima. In 1979 she went to college in Chicago and worked after graduation with the YMCA International Division in Central Java. She then worked with the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement program through the YMCA in Houston, after which she also worked with the Saudi oil company and the Indonesian consulate. After eight years in Houston, she returned to Indonesia, where she raised her three children for 14 years. She returned to Yakima in 2002.

Danielle brings to YIRN a strong commitment to social justice.

In Jakarta, she started her web design consulting firm and volunteered with a nonprofit publishing house, writing and selling guide books to foreigners. From 1989 to 1997, book sales raised $100,000 to $200,000 annually to fund projects in Indonesia for clean water, scholarships, tuberculosis education and development.

Danielle said living abroad and seeing the impact of poverty changed her outlook on life.

“I don’t take for granted the prosperity of living in America because I have lived in places where many struggle to survive,” she said.

This affects her outlook and relationships, and inspires her engagement with the immigrant community and her desire to be part of the solution.

“I want people to have a fair shake. The most vulnerable people are undocumented people, who are exploited and marginalized,” Danielle said. “They just come to the U.S. to make life better for their children.”

After working with people of different nationalities abroad and in Yakima, she finds “involvement with other cultures is the spice of life.”

Danielle currently works as a web developer with businesses, governments, schools and non-profits globally and in Washington.

She also helps coordinate community members who make masks for farm workers, fruit packing warehouse workers and grocery store workers.

They hope to collect more than 5,000 face masks to give to farm workers in the county, aware that the health of those who pick and pack food—often immigrants—is important for everyone’s survival.

“Despite Yakima having the highest rate of COVID-19 growth on the West Coast, few frontline retail workers wear masks,” Danielle noted. “Our cases have gone up with 75 to 110 new cases every day in the last two weeks.

“News reports and the health department say 63 percent of workers in the Yakima Valley are considered essential workers because they are in agriculture,” she said.

Thousands work on storage shelves at seven packing plants where there are strikes because of concern about working conditions, health precautions, disease spread and hazard pay.

Mary Lopez told about YIRN’s role in the pursuit of justice.

She said strikers are asking employers to provide better COVID-19 safety measures, such as masks, six feet of social distancing in buildings, a $2/hour hazard pay increase and protection from retaliation for protesting.

Mary has helped bring food and talks with them to hear their stories and build their confidence.

“One woman worked for the same company for 26 years and is still being paid minimum wage,” said Mary, who not only listens to their stories but also shares them on Facebook.

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Many are mothers with children to support, so they continue to work, but are scared for their health.

During a phone interview, she passed the phone to Jenny, a member of the Yakama Tribe from Goldendale who has worked at one warehouse more than two years, and to William, an African American who has been there since last August.

Both heard that someone in their warehouse tested positive, but they were not informed who it was or whether the person was in their section.

They said their employer has installed Plexiglas between them and the fruit, and thin plastic sheeting between each worker, but workers were not always able to be six feet apart.

Both said strikers want supervisors to respect workers and communicate better with employers.

William said the company provided too few masks, so most wore homemade masks. Often hand sanitizer and soap dispensers run out so they cannot wash their hands.

Despite regular site inspections by the Yakima Health District checking on social distancing and sanitizing surfaces, the district confirmed 29 COVID-19 cases among workers at one warehouse.

According to an article in the Yakima Herald, inspectors said measures employers have in place meet guidelines, but “employers could do more to reduce exposure and improve communication.”

By May 29, four of the seven resolved and the Governor announced new rules for agricultural industries as “essential” workers.

Mary said OneAmerica seeks a peaceful world where everyone’s human rights and dignity are respected, communities appreciate differences and work for justice and equality.

OneAmerica believes the pan- demic shows everyone’s health and wellbeing depends on their neighbor’s health, and “we are only as safe and healthy as the most vulnerable members of our communities, so ensuring their wellbeing is how we ensure our own.”

For more information on YIRN, call 509-966-1529 or email yakimas- respondenetwork@gmail.com. For information on the strike, call 509-386-3525 or email mary@ weareoneamerica.org.

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Thank you for supporting the Courage and Commitment Challenge! Because of you, we can continue to serve over 63,000 children, families, seniors and individuals throughout eastern Washington.
Lutheran is finding alternatives to traditional camps for summer

For the first time in 75 years, the Lutheran Ministries board of directors and management staff announced May 13 they would suspend its children’s and youth camps until the summer of 2021, with the promise of safe, alternative options in 2020 for families and day camps for local congregations.

“This was not an easy decision. We believe that summer camp is more than just a week away,” said Mark Scott, executive director of Lutheran Ministries. “This summer, we will redirect our energies to being ‘sure of what we hope for, pray, patience and wisdom that we can connect with campers around the nation—and businesses,' he said.

Lutheran offers options for families, groups, individuals.

“We consulted with health and camp experts around the nation. We came to this decision because we care about the wellbeing of children and families.”

Lutheran Ministries welcomes campers from across the region, nation and world,” Bob said. “Some will stay longer. This summer, we will campers coming from 18 states with different coronavirus restrictions, time- lines and re-opening schedules. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) and other healthcare guidelines for youth camps recommend programs for ‘locals’ only.

In recent survey of 350 camps, only 33 percent were opening as usual and 5 percent were opening with adjustments, he said.

The Lutheran Ministries Health Care Alliance was unanimous in their support of no tradi- tional youth camps at Luther- haven sites, he said. ‘The very nature of camp is closeness, the opposite of social distancing,’ said Bob. ‘Camp at Lutherhaven is close friends, face-to-face conversations, high fives, fist bumps, hugs, singing, stories around the campfire, bunk beds, tag on the ball field—physical contact. This season of COVID-19 complicates all that, beyond how we feel we can reason- ably keep kids and their fami- lies back home healthy and safe.

‘Camp has so many moving parts. How do we disinfect life- jackets between each use, and canoe paddles, golf putters, hosses and dozens of arrows launched into trees—not to mention bath- room sinks, door knobs and s'mores,’ he said.

Realizing traditional camps could not occur, Lutheran staff began to plan for new, creative ways to use the camps.

The Lutheran board and staff are creating alternative ways for families to enjoy camp. Plans are underway to open July 1 for fami- lies to rent individual campsites and cabins, and to enjoy water sports, campfire meals and the out- doors. The facilities are also available to small groups from local congregations and agencies with measures to ensure participants can practice safe social distancing.

‘Hebrews 12 says, ‘Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us... and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.’ That is exactly what we are trying to do in this new season,’ said Bob. ‘While this summer’s changed plans are not the race many intended, it’s a race that we that run with campers, staff, parents, pastors and grandparents.’

Families everywhere are planning for the summer to clean between contact between staff and families. ‘Camp in 2020 will still be a tough year for the summer to clean between contact between staff and families. ‘Camp in 2020 will still be a tough year for

N-Sid-Sen is offering ‘Families at Camp’ to give families a get-away

Continued from page 1

‘In the future, we will likely have a nurse on staff and have a medical check required for camp- ers before coming,’ he said of some suggestions being explored. ‘We need to look at how to do camps safely.’

Mark is grateful to have so many creative people thinking through the pandemic.

This summer, volunteer camp directors are also thinking how to connect with campers.

“We won’t be doing virtual camp, because we believe outdoor ministries need to be out- doors and people have already been online more than normal,” he said. ‘Ideas are being developed. “We have to change. Change is hard, but this has come so rap- idly,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to look at why we do what we do and whether what we do achieves what we want.”’

Conference Minister Mike Davenport has been challenging leaders and committees saying, ‘We do this so that...’ and urges leaders within the three state goals and ways to tweak them so they do to achieve them.

“We have incredible things happening across the conference, generating positive energy to look at a different future,” Mark said. “I would have thought of Families at Camp?” he mused. ‘Families who have been isolat- ing because of COVID-19 will come to stay on Thursday to Monday. They will be able to swim, hike, canoe, have camp-fires, dive into scripture and chal- lenge themselves.”

The camps started with pastors’ families coming May 8 and 15. Andy Castes, pastor at Westminster Congregational UCC, and her husband Jim, pas- tor at First Congregational in Colville, were looking for a chance to get away after Easter and learned about the Families at Camp, so they included their son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren who were isolating with them.

‘Going to camp was the perfect get away. We could walk all over, throw rocks in the lake, swing, canoe, go inside warm, dry cabins when it rained,’ she said. ‘Mark provided the gear ahead of time so we didn’t contaminate anything.’

Mark said each family is assigned a canoe, paddles and life jackets.

A family came each of the last two weeks of May, and three the first week of June. More are booked. There are also RV hookups for self-contained RVs.

‘We have following recommenda- tions from Idaho and Washington, the American Camping Asso- ciation and the Center for Disease Control, opting for the most strin- gent coronavirus restrictions. Year-round staff is at camp until July 14. Two volunteers will come for the summer to clean between families. There will be limited contact between staff and families.

On Mondays when families leave, they will open the windows and doors. The space sits open until Tuesday afternoon, when staff will begin intensive clean- ing, wipe all surfaces, wash linens and quilts all day Wednesday and Thursday morning.

Guests will bring their own food and take leftovers home. On spring and fall cancella- tions, along with no summer camps, it will be a tough year financially, but the Pacific North- west Conference received a Pay- check Protection Program loan/ grant and plans a fundraising campaign.

Staff are also exploring offering spaces in the fall for individual retreats to bring income.

Mica 6:8, “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” has been a theme for the Pacific Northwest UCC churches.

Those words were in Mark’s mind thinking of summer pro- grams. ‘Doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly led us to suspend 2020 summer programs we could not provide safely,” said Mark, “but we did not close the camp.

‘Camp in 2020 will still change lives,’ he said. ‘We will encourage people always to take the camper they are at camp into the bigger world that needs the jus- tice, kindness and humility they experience at camp.’” Mark said.

For information, call (208) 689- 3489 or visit www.n-sid-sen.org.
Camp Spalding is holding onsite option open while developing Plan B

In late May, Andy Sonneland, director of Camp Spalding near Newport, said the camp would work within restrictions of the four-phase reopening in Washington. With clarification of conditions for reopening still ongoing, the camp had not decided if it would offer onsite camp or alternative programming. So they are preparing for both.

Restrictions will determine if the camp plans to bring campers. Marta Walker, administrative assistant at Ross Point Camp & Conference Center at Post Falls, said that adding that another update will be made the week of June 15 to 19 giving the summer plans, calendar of sessions, with protocols and a registration link.

Plan may change at any time if restrictions are increased or lessened,” he said. “Adaptability is the theme for the summer.”

“We will wait as long as possible to allow for the best possible outcome,” he said. “If we can run onsite camps in any capacity, we will, even ramping up on a short notice if restrictions ease as the summer progresses,” Andy said. With Washington’s four-phase reopening plan, he is more optimistic about onsite camps, while considering virtual options, coming from the American Camping Association (ACA), the Center for Disease Control and state and county restrictions.

The ACA released a guidebook on how to do overnight camping. For more information, consultation with local or state health officials is to campers, summer staff and students who do community service. He told 42 college age summer staff members they could come for a one-week leadership camp with more than 70 campers to be capped at no more than 50 campers and counselors.

“We are working on protocols to meet regulations with cleaning, sanitizing and dining room service,” said, “We purchased four automated hand sanitizing stations.”

In the dining room, tables will be six feet apart and meals will be served by staff cafeteria style, not family style as usual. “We are still working on details,” she said.

Ross Point will offer three weeks of camp planned by the American Baptist Churches in the Northwest and will offer space for rental to groups.

In Idaho, Andy said, “We are at the end of stage four by then, with normal capacity of 50 to 75.”

“Our number of COVID-19 infections are less than in Spokane, but part of the issue is that we would draw from Washington State, which has more restrictions,” Marta said.

Ross Point hires summer staff and operates with volunteers leading the programs for senior and junior high youth the week of July 12, junior camp and children’s camp (second to sixth graders) the week of July 19, and family camp the week of July 26.

Expecting fewer campers, she said they can spread out in the cabins to be six feet apart.

“Ross Point has been in a healthy financial situation for quite some time, so we will do okay,” she said, “but we faced a huge loss for half of March, all of April and May, and most of June.”

“We have emailed those in our database to let them know of the change of pace and plans to keep camp safe,” she said. “Some are excited, but some are concerned about safety.”

“Most of the activities will be outdoor in the sun and fresh air,” Marta pointed out.

For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit rosspoint.org.

Ross Point plans to open with protocols

Marta Walker, administrative assistant at Ross Point Camp & Conference Center at Post Falls, said that with cancellations they will, even if it is safe to bring campers, but part of the issue is that perhaps using the CARES Act tax deduction of $300 per person or $600 per couple, even for those taking the standard deduction.

Those who registered can support Camp Spalding by contributing their payment as a credit for camp next summer, or receiving a full refund.

For information, call 909-731-4244, email andy@clearwater-lodge.org or visit campspalding.org.

The Kroec plans to run day camps

The Kroec Center in Coeur d’Alene will offer fee-based, half-day and full-day camps beginning June 15, said Colin Lynch, programs manager.

They will offer two age groups, one for ages four through five and another for ages five through eight.

With no revenue coming in, they will try to make the camp experience as normal as possible, within guidelines set by Idaho’s Governor Brad Little,” said Colin. Full-day camps will welcome children of all ages. Half-day camps are for ages four through five. The mini day camps will run for five days, two hours each day. They will focus on topics that are age specific for ages four through 14.

In July, the focus is on arts and dance.

While the camps are open to all children in the community, they also function as child care for parents who are working, only for those in jobs considered essential but not the other, making sure campers wash hands between activities, said Colin.

“We will practice social distancing, which will restrict some activities, such as contact sports. We have cancelled field trips for early sessions,” he said.

Anticipating Idaho to be in Phase 4 after July 4, he expects things to be normalized by then, but continue social distancing and increased cleaning measures.

For information, call 208-763-0641 or visit kroecda.org.

In late May, Andy Sonneland, director of Camp Spalding near Newport, said the camp would work within restrictions of the four-phase reopening in Washington. With clarification of conditions for reopening still ongoing, the camp had not decided if it would offer onsite camp or alternative programming. So they are preparing for both.

Restrictions will determine if the camp plans to bring campers, he said, adding that another update will be made the week of June 15 to 19 giving the summer plans, calendar of sessions, with protocols and a registration link.

“Plans may change at any time if restrictions are increased or lessened,” he said. “Adaptability is the theme for the summer.”

“We will wait as long as possible to allow for the best possible outcome,” he said. “If we can run onsite camps in any capacity, we will, even ramping up on a short notice if restrictions ease as the summer progresses,” Andy said. With Washington’s four-phase reopening plan, he is more optimistic about onsite camps, while considering virtual options, coming from the American Camping Association (ACA), the Center for Disease Control and state and county restrictions.

The ACA released a guidebook on how to do overnight camping. For more information, consultation with local or state health officials is to campers, summer staff and students who do community service. He told 42 college age summer staff members they could come for a one-week leadership camp with more than 70 campers to be capped at no more than 50 campers and counselors.

“We are working on protocols to meet regulations with cleaning, sanitizing and dining room service,” said, “We purchased four automated hand sanitizing stations.”

In the dining room, tables will be six feet apart and meals will be served by staff cafeteria style, not family style as usual. “We are still working on details,” she said.

Ross Point will offer three weeks of camp planned by the American Baptist Churches in the Northwest and will offer space for rental to groups.

In Idaho, Andy said, “We are at the end of stage four by then, with normal capacity of 50 to 75.”

“Our number of COVID-19 infections are less than in Spokane, but part of the issue is that we would draw from Washington State, which has more restrictions,” Marta said.

Ross Point hires summer staff and operates with volunteers leading the programs for senior and junior high youth the week of July 12, junior camp and children’s camp (second to sixth graders) the week of July 19, and family camp the week of July 26.

Expecting fewer campers, she said they can spread out in the cabins to be six feet apart.

“Ross Point has been in a healthy financial situation for quite some time, so we will do okay,” she said, “but we faced a huge loss for half of March, all of April and May, and most of June.”

“We have emailed those in our database to let them know of the change of pace and plans to keep camp safe,” she said. “Some are excited, but some are concerned about safety.”

“Most of the activities will be outdoor in the sun and fresh air,” Marta pointed out.

For information, call 208-773-1655 or visit rosspoint.org.

Ross Point plans to open with protocols

Marta Walker, administrative assistant at Ross Point Camp & Conference Center at Post Falls, said that with cancellations they will, even if it is safe to bring campers, but part of the issue is that perhaps using the CARES Act tax deduction of $300 per person or $600 per couple, even for those taking the standard deduction.

Those who registered can support Camp Spalding by contributing their payment as a credit for camp next summer, or receiving a full refund.

For information, call 909-731-4244, email andy@clearwater-lodge.org or visit campspalding.org.

The Kroec plans to run day camps

The Kroec Center in Coeur d’Alene will offer fee-based, half-day and full-day camps beginning June 15, said Colin Lynch, programs manager.

They will offer two age groups, one for ages four through five and another for ages five through eight.

With no revenue coming in, they will try to make the camp experience as normal as possible, within guidelines set by Idaho’s Governor Brad Little,” said Colin. Full-day camps will welcome children of all ages. Half-day camps are for ages four through five. The mini day camps will run for five days, two hours each day. They will focus on topics that are age specific for ages four through 14.

In July, the focus is on arts and dance.

While the camps are open to all children in the community, they also function as child care for parents who are working, only for those in jobs considered essential but not the other, making sure campers wash hands between activities, said Colin.

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In a May 19 video and letter to members of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane and Camp Cross alumni and registrants, Bishop Gretchen Roehrborn announced she had cancelled camp sessions at Camp Cross on the western shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene for the summer because of the pandemic. “Camp Cross has been a vital part of this diocese since its beginning in 1923, and it is a premier formation immersion opportunity, not only for our children and youth, but also for our adults,” she said in an earlier announcement.

While plans were underway for the summer’s programming and expanded offerings, leaders began discerning how to safely hold camp and what would happen if there was still a stay-at-home order. In conversations with Canon John Palantine, camp director, Skip Hubbard, business and facilities manager, the camp nurse, and camp teams around the country, the bishop had hoped to have a “robust” summer at camp.

Gretchen committed to follow Church demand to love one another while also following guidelines of local, state and federal health districts and officials. “We want to be part of the solution to this pandemic, not contribute to the problem,” she said.

The question of how to safely hold Camp Cross sessions came up many times. Information was ever changing. Initially, the diocese decided to delay the start of camp, hoping that by July the situation would be better.

On May 19, the bishop wrote: “Every generation has its seminal events, days and times that will never be forgotten, times with impact beyond a day or season. She remembers where she was when the Challenger exploded, the Berlin Wall came down, and the 9/11 terrorist attack took place.

“Every generation and person has times that are joyous, and times full of disappointment,” Gretchen said. “The question is how we respond.

“We are currently living in such a time, a global pandemic, and so much of what we experience as normal life has been disrupted. We are not in our congregations worshiping together,” she said.

There is much stress as families do school at home, people lose jobs, businesses close, medical personnel struggle and people are uncertain what is next.

“In the midst of this, we are followers of Jesus, called to continue to walk together in the way of love. Our call is to always act in ways that show love of God and love of neighbor,” she said.

“As bishop, the guiding principle behind my guidelines are that all of our actions be loving towards our neighbor.”

While the decision not to open Camp Cross this summer was “heartbreaking,” she said her times at the camp had been part of the happiest and most formative of her life, as is true for generations of campers from this diocese and beyond.

She and the other staff decided it was impossible to offer the programming and fellowship the camp experience entails.

Talking of health and safety changes, too many aspects central to campers’ experiences—sing, worship, connecting in community, sharing in sacred circles and small groups, playing games, enjoying the waterfront activities—were being stripped away and changed in ways that would negatively impact the experience. So Camp Cross joined other camps on Lake Coeur d’Alene and across the United States who made the hard but necessary decision to not open this summer.

Summer staff will still work on camp facilities and do leadership retreats and perhaps some limited programming. John and Nora said they are thinking about “what’s next.”

Gretchen invited prayers for the campers, counselors and staff who will have a different summer than they anticipated, including those from other camps on the lake and around our country.

Camp Cross Photo

Some times the soul needs space.

Sometimes the soul needs space.

The Spokane Salvation Army’s Camp Cross on Loon Lake began clean up in May with volunteers helping to clear the grounds, weed the property and pull necessary items out of storage.

In these uncertain times, The Salvation Army believes that hope is greater than fear and plans to open Camp Cross to give more than 1,000 children an outdoor camp experience.

About 80 percent of the children who attend the camp in Gonzaga on scholarships with sailboats, a rock wall and ziplines, Camp Gifford offers a chance for children to find themselves, make new friends and experience creation in all its beauty.

“While we’re hopeful of being able to operate summer programs there is still work to be done. Whether Camp Cross opens this year or not, the grounds must still be maintained,” said Marktien Perine of the Salvation Army of Spokane.

Camp Cross is not only a bright spot in Eastern Washington, he said, “but it’s also a bright spot in the lives of many children. It’s an experience they carry with them throughout their lives, so we hope to provide the experience. It was just this year, but for many years to come.”

For information, call Dan Tol- terud 325-6810 or email daniel.tollerud@ussalvationarmy.org.

Summer camps seek to find their way through pandemic

“The Camp Cross is not simply a location on McDonald Point, Lake Coeur d’Alene. It is a way of being, a way of offering the love of God to all, a way of creating a community of love. We might not have camp sessions this summer, but Camp Cross still exists and continues in new ways,” she said.

“This year will be a year we will never forget. It will change us,” she said. “Let us make sure that it is a change for the better, so all we do may be in service and show love of God and love of neighbor.”

This is the first season it has not operated a summer program for the diocese’s 32 churches from the Cascades of Washington through North Idaho. Those who registered will be contacted about their registration.

For information, call 624-3191 or visit campcross.org.

Methodists offer virtual campfire that keep up to 275 campers involved

A screen shot of a video shows Twillow staff singing for a virtual campfire.

Alan Rogstad, executive director of the camping program for the Pacific Northwest United Methodist Church (UMC) camps, said that leaders have made the hard decision to cancel the programs at its four camps: Camp Indiana on the Kitsap Peninsula, Ocean Park Camp at Long Beach, Lazy F Camp near Ellensburg and Twinlow Camp on Spirit Lake near Rathdrum, Idaho.

Virtual camps are already underway, however, on Youtube and Facebook, with campfires and singing at Indiana, Ocean Park and Twillow. Lazy F has an introduction of staff.

Twillow has also had virtual day camp stories and crafts for nine weeks.

Alan said that 50 to 275 campers followed the video—hoping to be singing along in isolation.

“It’s a way we can continue to connect. We send emails to our constituencies to let them know, and we hope families are watching them together online,” he said.

Alan said they had looked at opening with the American Camping Association guidelines, and following the local health departments, but realized the programs would have to be altered with groups not interacting much, mostly outdoor activities, limited housing capacity, small cabin groups and eating outside—all keeping social distancing in mind.

“It’s devastating that we can’t do what we usually do. We love camp, knowing its impact on kids, giving families a break, and offering spiritual growth,” Alan said.

Plans are still on for providing retreats and perhaps some limited programs later in the summer as restrictions allow.

“We are looking at safe alternatives to our traditional programs,” he said. “For now, we will continue to develop virtual camping experiences.

For information, call 206-384-1209 or email arogstad@pnwumc.org.
Funeral directors finding online platforms helpful in arranging services

CEO managing four of Spokane’s funeral home, cemetery and cremation networks recently discussed the impact of COVID-19 on their services and on families’ grieving processes.

Governor Jay Inslee and the State Department of Health limiting attendance at funeral services and interments to immediate family has been frustrating to both those offering services and to family members under stay-at-home restrictions.

Leila Bradish, general manager of the Dignity Memorial Funeral Homes in Spokane, said online platforms make it possible to arrange services for those who stay at home from far away. Those platforms are also being used for pre-planning.

The Dignity Memorial network she manages includes Hazen and Jaeger in Spokane and Spokane Valley, Thornhill Valley Chapel in Spokane Valley; Ball and Dods Funeral Home and Advantage Funeral and Cremation Services in Spokane, and Sarate Funeral Home in Davenport.

Leila said Dignity Memorial is North America’s largest provider of full-service funeral, cemetery and cremation services with a network of 2,000 funeral homes in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico.

Wohl is the primary platform they use. The funeral home sends email invitations and shares the computer screen and video for what Leila said is a “more dynamic presentation and way to connect” than phone or email.

“We also offer creative ways for friends to send messages,” she said. “We have put messages left by friends and family at the online obituaries on balloons and staged the balloons in seats during the service.

“Services are more modest, because few can travel or leave their homes to attend. We rotate visitation times so more people can gather and attending to a few at a time,” Leila said.

Leila Bradish

The Dignity funeral homes in the area have large chapels so social distancing will be possible when more can attend.

“Across the network, we experienced challenges,” she said.

Two local staff went to assist Dignity firms in New York for three weeks. They were in two-week quarantines upon returning. They helped the New York funeral homes answer phones, gather information and take decedents into care.

“We were blessed not to face the increased death rate that New York had,” she said. “My team are service-oriented people, so it was important for us to send supplies and people. With the number of cases stable, we will not send more.”

Dignity Funeral Homes in the area have cared for a few individuals who died from COVID-19. Leila recently did research on the number of deaths in the state and found only a modest increase in 2020 deaths compared to 2019, but not out of the normal range.

She grew up in Oregon and was in the restaurant industry 10 years before entering the funeral business 10 years ago. She attended the Dallas Institute of Funeral Services and Mortuary Studies, graduating in 2011. She served families in Dallas, and in Grants Pass and Portland, Ore., before moving to Spokane two years ago.

Final say. I do not fear death. I trust God is present. I pray for the end of the disease and for families who struggle without proper closure.”

For information, call 467-5496 or email rickjm@holycrossspokane.org.

Catholic Cemeteries do mostly graveside services for families

Rick McLean, executive director of the Holy Cross Funeral and Cemetery Services, sees his work with Bishop Thomas Daly, the Rev. Darin Connall, the Catholic Diocese of Spokane and the Holy Cross Board of Directors as a ministry.

At Holy Cross Cemetery, St. Joseph’s Cemetery, Queen of Peace at Immaculate Heart Retreat Center, Queen of Heaven in Sprague and assisting at St. Michael’s Cemetery, he knows his team has dealt with only one confirmed COVID-19 death.

“Two years ago, we did graveside commemittal services, looking out for the safety of staff, families and the community.

Most services in recent months have been graveside committals, but there have also been a few outside graveside funeral Masses for immediate family, standing six feet apart. At funeral Masses “only the priest receives the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ, while those in attendance pray and partake spiritually,” Rick said.

Staff sanitize the tent, chairs and equipment before and after the services. The ground crew wears appropriate PPE. Some family members wear masks, and the funeral homes make masks available for all family members, even though masks are not required when outside, six feet apart.

“We purchased video equipment so we could make videos available to families who were unable to come,” Rick said. “But many families take their own videos.”

He notes that his parish, St. Joseph’s in Otis Orchards, as well as others, has been doing worship online, plus encouraging people to watch the Catholic TV station EWTN, which broadcasts Mass, and Masses led by Bishop Daly.

Rick is concerned about the long-term impact for people suffering the loss of loved ones without a proper closure. At first gatherings were limited to 50, then 10, then zero. Currently, immediate family is allowed to attend.

“We encourage families to do a commemittal now and a proper memorial service later at their churches,” he said.

If they choose cremation, the family may keep the cremated remains in an urn for a future burial. Staff assist with families online, by phone or email. If families want to come in, staff sanitize the office and wear masks when requested.

“We respect that people need personal contact,” he said.

Rick, who grew up in Spokane attending St. Pascal’s and West Valley High School, graduated from Spokane Community College and went into the auto industry in 1984.

In 1994, he became owner of a new car dealership in Grandview, Wash. He sold the dealership in 2007 and returned to Spokane in 2010 with his business in sales training and motivational speaking, while seeking to find a ministry position.

Jim Falkner, his predecessor at Holy Cross, invited him to be an advisor, meeting with families at Holy Cross Cemetery. Rick was hesitant to do that, but after two weeks on the job, he knew it was his calling to meet and pray with families.

“It’s a wonderful vocation to talk with them about God and the mercy of Christ,” said Rick, whose focus now is administration. “The three significant times of life people remember most are births, weddings and deaths.”

Rick is concerned about the impact of the virus on people physically, emotionally and economically.

“I believe God is the author of life and death, regardless of whether it’s died a natural death or a heart attack,” he said. “God has the
David Ittner, CEO of Fairmount Memorial Association, oversees 350 acres of cemeteries including Fairmont, Greenwood, Woodlawn, Riverside, Pines, Pines South and Spokane Memorial Gardens, plus the Heritage Funeral Home. The association also owns Pacific Northwest Cremation.

The cemeteries are also sites of events. Greenwood’s Easter Sunrise Service was canceled but they recorded the message for social media. Fairmont, Greenwood and Riverside hold Memorial Day activities that have included a car show, concerts and a walk through flag-lined roads. This year, those events were can-celled and American Legion Rid- ers led a caravan of cars through the flag-lined roads.

David said Fairmont Memo- rial Association has handled the majority of the more than 30 COVID-19 deaths in Spokane County, with both cremations and burials.

“We learned early that the risk of staff getting infected by working with people who died of COVID-19 was low, but our

David Ittner

staff use PPE, such as face masks and gloves,” he said. “Aware of the danger of the virus, they have been cautious.”

When a family loses a loved one, it is often the worst day of their lives, but now there is added stress with decline in pandemic services are limited to immediate family, limiting their ability to celebrate the loved one’s life and say goodbye, he said. People are unable to begin the grieving process the way they want or need to,” he said. “Our task within restrictions is to provide the family a meaningful experience, learning about them by meeting on Zoom, a video conference or phone. David has learned two things:

1) It is important to have a service to celebrate a person’s life, and not doing so short changes families and impedes their griefing process. 2) The number of deaths because of COVID-19 has brought to mind the need for people to discuss their mortality, so Fairmont has had more people call or come to do pre-planning to save family members from mak- ing decisions after a death.

David said that over the last 30 years, more people choose cremation. While nationally 30 to 55 percent choose it, in Washington, more than 75 percent choose it.

“There seems to be a correlation between choosing cremation and experiencing loss during a virus afflication. Some choose it because they want simplicity and want to save costs,” he said.

David's path to the funeral in-
dustry was through landscaping. After earning a degree at Wash- ington State University in crop sci- ence and turf management, he was assistant grounds superintendent at the Spokane Country Club. Then he was offered the opportunity to be grounds superintendent at Fairmount in 2003 and transitioned through different roles to become CEO, learning in the process what to take to run a nonprofit cemetery that is like “a little city” with roads, grounds, monuments and buildings to maintain.

With COVID-19, most services are at the gravesider so David said it is particularly important to pro-
vide a nicely landscaped setting. Fairmont is also using a ser-
vise called One Room that allows it to livestream services for those who cannot come.

Because of his faith as a Chris-
tian, David said he believes it is important to create a good work-

ing environment for his staff.

“If our employees are thriving, their natural empathy and abilities will shine through, and they will take better care of the people we serve,” he said.

“From diving into God’s Word, I believe our role is to serve oth-
eres, love others and puts others’ interests before our own, along with loving God with all our heart,” he said. For information, call 326-6813 or email dittner@fairmountmemorial.com.
Faith Leaders group hears health perspectives of effects of COVID-19

In late March, the Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience of Eastern Washington and North Idaho (FFLC) saw a need to speak truthfully about the pandemic. They worked with facts and a commitment to “love our neighbors as ourselves.”

In April, Bob Lutz, M.D., Spokane Regional Health District Public Health Officer, spoke at the FFLC Truthful Tuesday Vigil on these challenging times, lifting up the care and compassion that everyone is doing disproportionately.

“The full extent of the impact on our marginalized communities is still being revealed,” he said. 

He urged people to come together with understanding and compassion.

“We are more the same than different,” he said, pointing to the need to recognize people’s common humanity.

The Rev. Mike Denton from the City of Spokane Valley reported on the daily connections between city and county elected officials as they work together to create solutions they can offer in one voice.

At 10 a.m. each day, they have virtual conferences open to the public. He said the city is helping its hungry and small businesses.

At the May Truthful Tuesday Vigil, participants learned about COVID-19 from Luis Manriquez, M.D., of Washington State University Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and the new street medicine team that the City of Spokane’s Mayor appointed to lead the city’s response to the pandemic. He said the pandemic spread in Washington has been less destructive than in other states, due in part to the Stay Home, Stay Healthy directives.

Because there is no medical intervention to stop this disease, when people are healthy, health care can only support them as they go through the experience, he commented. 

“’Whatever resources we have, we realize that the lack of cases is because we took action.’”

Luis was the Health Officer for the State of Washington even when no one was testing for COVID.

He said, reporting that in Wenatchee, 72 orchard workers were tested and half had coronavirus despite showing no symptoms.

Luis encouraged two actions: 1) Everyone must help each other stay safe by using good hygiene practices to slow the spread. 2) People need to be prepared for the increase of homelessness and hunger.

“Much of the fallout will not be medical, but social,” he said.

He challenged people to consider what that means for their neighbors, as well as for those in other communities, and for the world.

“Are we in this together in the same boat, or not all in the same boat,” he added.

While not a sailor, he said the maritime neighbors as ourselves.

“All neighbors as ourselves.”

The Governor’s announcement came early in the pandemic. While some were joyful to learn that 50 or fewer people in a church service could gather, the mandates and guidelines, until staff is trained to clean and disinfect, participants must follow social distancing and wear masks, even when singing. There is to be no sharing of food, beverages or hymnals.

“Let’s not let the number of 100,000 deaths, which will continue to mount, numb us to the reality of human suffering or blind us to the obvious inequities. Let’s be a summer of action—even if by virtual meetings and protests, letter writing, calling and phone calls. Our faith calls us to care for people’s lives and social justice. May we persevere through numbing clouds of disaster and death and connect, care and act.”

Mary Stamp - Editor

Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience shared words of encouragement at recent Truthful Tuesday Vigils.

In a message from the Jewish community and from her experience as a physician, Dr. Rose Silverstein called on everyone to act for those most vulnerable.

Naghma Ahmed-Sherezai spoke of the Muslim teachings to care for each person’s well-being.

Joan Berkowitz shared a poem from the Jewish community, and Lani Delong brought encouragement from the atheistic point of view, including that the wearing of a mask is an act of compassion for others.

The Governor’s announcement, on June 9, is on gun safety, because June is the second annual observance of National Gun Violence Awareness Month. It will now be on the agenda of Leaders and Leaders of Conscience Facebook page. Speakers are Roslie Zhou of Students Demand Action and Laurie Dwyer of Moms Demand Action.

The Rev. Mike Denton, conference minister of the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ, suggested encouraging one’s church to be extending in-person worship suspension and building closures to all but essential services through June 15.

“Early in the phased reopening process, data on the spread of the virus is inconsistent and inconclusive. This chart allows two more 14-day periods during which to assess whether COVID-19 cases are increasing or decreasing. Our churches will be on the leading edge of protecting public health, but not on the leading edge of reopening at the risk of increasing cases of infection.”

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Three nonprofits collaborate to serve

Continued from page 1

Three leaders decided to partner when Innovia announced funding to increase service for those impacted by the COVID-19 emergency and by needs in the community.

WCFR provides free meals and groceries to nearly 400 families a week, and meals to 19 homeless shelters and care centers. Its weekly food count exceeds 23,000, an increase of 20,000 meals since mid-March.

YWCA Spokane provides shelter for domestic violence victims. Women and children are full in some overflow space at local hotels.

Vanessa Behan adapted their new space to serve more school-aged children and increased capacity and social distancing that stressful times create increased family violence.

Because of the pandemic, more victims of domestic violence and their children are isolated at home with their abusers. The stress of the pandemic, with financial challenges, job losses and school closures, adds to an already dangerous environment, said Amy. Local law enforcement officials report they have not seen an increase in domestic violence, but worry that the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy”order has increased incidents and suppressed victims from reporting them, she said.

For children, Vanessa Behan provides unconditional love and attention from adults who hope to create lifetime memories of security. For parents overwhelmed and lacking support, it eliminates burden, she said. For information, call at 335-3155 or visit at www.vanessabehan.org.

For 117 years, YWCA Spokane has helped women and children overcome social, economic and personal barriers to accomplish goals and achieve the healthiest, most fulfilling lives. Today it supports victims of intimate partner domestic violence (DV), builds economic empowerment, promotes early childhood education, and confronts racial and social justice issues that negatively impact clients and the community, said Regina.

“We envision a community in which DV is no longer tolerated. We embrace this vision through our wrap-around services: our 24-hour Helpline, safe shelter, counseling center, mental health services, housing advocacy, child advocacy, civil legal assistance, legal advocacy, economic empowerment advocacy and free drop-in childcare,” she said. “In 2018, we impacted more than 16,000 survivors and their children. By working at the intersections of inequality, poverty and DV, we help disrupt longstanding societial patterns of trauma.”

For information, call 789-9303 or visit ywcaofspokane.org.

“Women & Children’s Free Restaurant & Community Kitchen has been a vital safety net for women and children since 1988,” said Lisa. It fills nutritional gaps while fostering dignity and respect, both in its restaurant and through partnerships with women and children focused nonprofits throughout Spokane, she said.

For information, call 340-0477 or visit www.wcfrspokane.org.

Unity in the Community will be Aug. 15

Unity in the Community is planning to hold the 26th annual multi-cultural celebration from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 15, at Riverfront Park.

Co-organizers April Anderson and Mareesa Henderson say it’s a time to celebrate the joy of similarities and differences that make people stronger and build community.

The event includes a Career, Education and Health Fair, a Cultural Village, a Senior Resource area, live entertainment, free K-8 school supplies, free bike helmets and other activities.

Unity in the Community began in 1994 as an event of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church to break down racial and cultural barriers. In 2004, AHANA (African American, Hispanic and Native American Association) continued it. In 2007, it was to Riverfront Park, where vendors included nonprofit organizations and others sharing information on their programs and services.

Believing that racial or cultural bigotry is about ignorance, April and Mareesa work to educate people about the diverse cultures in Spokane.

For information, email ivunuty@icloud.com.

CENSUS 2020: WHAT’S AT STAKE

Billions in public funds for education, housing, roads, fire stations & more

The number of seats we have in Congress

Your community. Your voice.

Got Counted: My2020Census.gov

PJALS plans youth art show and more

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane’s Young Activist Leaders Program (YALP) participants had planned Arts in Action for the spring.

With the COVID-19, the vision for a large in-person exhibition of video, performance, visual art and writing was displaced by plans to have a virtual gallery. It will open with a reception that is part of First Friday on June 5.

The event includes a show that grew out of a series of Wednes-day workshops in May to inspire youth to create and express their ideas in new ways.

Every week through the summer, YALP will meet virtually from 4 to 5:30 p.m., Tuesdays, to build activist skills through workshops, projects and speakers. For information, visit pjals.org/yalp.

The Peace & Justice Action Committee plans to meet from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Thursdays, June 4, July 2, Aug. 6 and Sept. 3 through videoconference.

Showering up for Racial Justice will meet for a book study at 5:30 p.m., Thursdays, June 11 and 25, July 9 and Aug. 13 and 27 on their videoconference.

PJALS is also holding Webinar Wednesdays to accomplish goals of its cancelled spring Peace and Justice Action Conference. Sessions will help participants deepen analysis, share skills, sharpen skills, improve strategies and strengthen relationships, said co-director Liz Moore.

They have included sessions on bystander training on anti-Asian racism and white supremacist efforts to influence youth online.

For information, call 838-7870 or visit pjals.org.

PHOTO SUBMITTED
Virtual conversation explores impact of pandemic on people of color

Roberta and James Wilburn hosted a virtual “Courageous Conversation” Memorial Day weekend, drawing more than 30 to a conversation on “The Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic Communities.”

Vivianne Griffiths, an adult nurse practitioner from Louisville, Ky., and Vicki Hines Martin, a psychiatric nursing professor and assistant dean at the University of Louisville, joined Walter Kendricks, a member of the Washington Commission on African American Affairs and pastor of Morning Star Baptist Church in Spokane, along with Roberta and James, co-founders of Wilburn and Associates.

Panelists told of the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on communities of color, and looked at health and safety issues that mean more risk in their communities.

Vivianne quoted journalist Zeeshan Aleem, who said “Coronavirus isn’t an equalizer but a magnifier of inequality.” Vivianne also quoted Dr. Fredrick Hahn, director of the COVID-19 Response Team for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) data: Blacks are 30 percent of COVID-19 patients, but 14 percent of the U.S. population. They are six percent of Wisconsin’s population but 40 percent of COVID-19 deaths there. They are 33 percent of Los Angeles’ population but 57 percent of deaths.

The reason for racial disparities in health care for minority populations is that African Americans with co-morbidities have an increased risk of complications from coronavirus. For example, those with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, vitamin D deficiency and other diseases are more at risk, as are older people, she said.

Vicki said that “the history of health disparities among ethnic groups has more influence on the risk than individual behaviors.” She spoke about “social determinants of health,” or conditions in which “people are born, grow, live, work and age.” Those factors include economic stability in terms of employment, income and debt; the neighborhood and physical environment in terms of housing, transportation, safety, parks and zip code; education in terms of literacy, early childhood education, or lack thereof; training and higher education; food in terms of hunger and access; community and social context in terms of social integration, community engagement and discrimination, and the health system and care in terms of quality, insurance coverage, provider availability and provider linguistic and cultural awareness.

In the pandemic, more minorities are in essential services but are lowest in home and community care.

“From the time we were in slavery through after we were freed, the country has been built on our sweat and labor, but since slaves were freed in 1863, we had no health care, social or safety net,” Vivianne said. “I don’t want to return to what was normal in January. The capitalist economic system does not support us. We need something better,” he said.

“Because of the high rates of poverty and incarceration, there are more cases, and many are not even counted,” Walter said, urging efforts to awaken people to deal with systemic inequities.

Walter added that many people of color are on the front lines working in grocery stores and as essential workers needing to ignore social distancing.

Walter said the Spokane Ministers Fellowship received a $15,000 Innovia grant, which he, as its president, has shared for African American pastors to give to members in need, because they know the needs.

“The crisis and virus show the inequities of the systems and systems of care,” he said.

“With COVID-19, we need to ask who and what we are. I do not want to go back to the normal we had, because everyone should have health care and enough food. As the richest country, we can do better,” he said.

He mentioned recent articles that have stirred his thinking about being in a “slaveholders’ republic,” about how much a human life is worth, about how many will die to reopen the economy and about living in a failed state.

“With COVID-19, we need to ask who and what we are. I do not want to go back to the normal we had, because everyone should have health care and enough food. As the richest country, we can do better,” he said.

Walter urges the state commissions on African-American and on Hispanic affairs to work together.

“African Americans have strength in numbers,” Walter said.

Connie said the ministry has a toolkit that “it’s time to come together and think of the bigger picture.”

She hoped the conversation makes participants more informed so they are better able to speak to the issues.

For information, call 542-7636, email wiburnassociatesllc@gmail.com or visit wiburnassociates.org.

The Latino Civic Alliance (LCA) talks faith, nonprofit and justice organizations, and tribes to protect farmworkers on strike in Yakima fruit warehouses.

The Faith Action Network (FAN) and Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) are among the organizations joining together to urge the Governor and State Legislature to protect workers by enforcing compliance with workplace standards and established protocols.

“As the pandemic spread in the ag industry, workers became sick or died, putting the food supply in danger,” said Nina Martinez of the LCA board. “In Washington, where 90 percent of the agricultural workforce is Latino, data shows COVID-19 spreading at an alarming rate among them.”

“The food industry has a responsibility to produce safe food in a safe workplace, and the government is responsible for setting safety standards, conducting inspections and ensuring that those standards are met,” Nina said.

“Food and ag workers are deemed essential, critical to the U.S. infrastructure, but have been excluded from benefits,” she said.

“Washington has one of the largest agriculture economies in the nation and ag workers contribute to local economies, but live below poverty levels, lack health benefits, sick leave and decent wages.”

“Many agricultural workers have an average life expectancy of 49 years because of the working conditions, diverse jobs in warehouses, homes, orchards, farms, and meat processing plants.”

On May 21, the alliance appealed for popular and organization-to-stand with agricultural workers so they have protections needed during the pandemic and beyond. Before COVID-19, farmworkers were vulnerable to illness from physical and poor working conditions, she said. The risk to the workers will continue into November. The LCA has a toolkit for congregations.

On May 28, the Rev. Connie Yost of the Farm Worker Ministry Northwest announced that four fruit packing companies in the Yakima strike have settled with their workers. Three others were still in talks.

Connie said the ministry has sought “to give these essential workers essential pay, essential safety, and essential dignity and justice.”

For information, call 206-661-0051, email nina@latinoecivilianciance.org or visit at www.latinocivicalliance.org.

Latino Civic Alliance calls for faith and other organizations to protect strikers

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