Nursing professors at Gonzaga seek to overcome stigma, improve care

By Marilyn Urness
EWU intern

With one in five Americans diagnosed with mental illness and more health care providers needed as access to care improved under the 2010 Affordable Care Act, two Gonzaga faculty members seek to improve care for those mental health patients.

Jeff Ramirez, associate professor of nursing at Gonzaga University and director of nursing practice program director and Carol Kottwitz, assistant professor of nursing and the program director for GU’s psychiatric nurse practitioner program, believe that part of improving care is to end the negative stigma of mental illness in the medical field and society.

Their work has taken them from changing the lives of students and patients one at a time, to advocating for changes in legislation.

Mental illness has always held a negative stigma in the health care industry. Only in the last two decades has mental health been considered a legitimate health condition. In 2010, the passage and enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) gave access for treatment to people with mental illness who didn’t have it before, according to a 2016 report of the Washington State Nurses Association calling for mandatory suicide prevention education.

With access to treatment, the number of patients has outweighed the number of qualified caregivers, the report said.

In addition, emergency room staff often lack training to treat patients who are mentally ill and may not understand the seriousness of a situation, Jeff explained.

“Emergency room staff are burned out in dealing with overdoses and suicide attempts. They don’t understand why patients don’t just take their medication and stop using substances,” he said.

“It’s a complex situation. We just need to fix the system and help people understand why some people overdose on heroin, attempt suicide or have other crises.”

According to a Catholic journal article Jeff wrote in 2016, the consequences of untreated mental illness affects society and the community as a whole. The high

grandchildren. She wants them to know the sacrifices their ancestors and others made when they became allies of King, who left to legacy to his children, grandchildren, their children and the world.

“He kept his eyes on the prize, the gift that everyone is created equal,” she said, wondering how he would feel with there still being injustices.

Stephy wants young people to know it’s not just about a holiday to march in hand-in-hand today, but for “our community to march every day in our hearts, workplaces, schools, health care and housing—to keep marching every day” to challenge injustices in the community and country.

“It’s not for tomorrow, Stephey said, but as King said, “The time is always right to do what is right”—today, tomorrow and in the future.

“We need to tell young people to strive every day to uncover hidden prejudices that shape what we see, think and do,” she said. “The dream is bigger than King. He didn’t do it in a day, but every day strived to make a difference, risk his life for a better life for his children.”

“Some say we have not lived up to the dream. Continue on page 6
The Fig Tree

“antisemitism as irreconcilable with the profession and practice of traditions hold in engaging in ethical reasoning. Divisions within themselves or preventing them from witnessing churches respond differently to ethical questions, risking either a Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025, the 1700th climate change, ecological justice, ocean health and creation care.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) stands firm in viewing normalization of hatred: challenges for Jews and Christians today.”

WCC reaffirms condemnation of anti-semitism

“Island of Hope” - a Pacific Church Response to Globalization.

“Connects People, Inspires Action”

Campaign generates funds to add staff

Fig Tree benefits coming up in early March

Fig Tree will help the census reach people

The Fig Tree is currently recruiting people to host tables that seat eight, donating $125 to cover the cost of food and inviting guests to fill their table, coming with the expectation of donating to The Fig Tree.

Mary Stamp, editor, said the goal is to raise $32,500, the amount raised in 2019. The events not only raise funds but also are a time to educate people about The Fig Tree and Resource Directory, and to celebrate their contribution to the community, region and world. Persons interested in hosting tables, underscoring costs and $20-48, call 535-1813 or email event@thefigtree.org.

To learn about the census, why it matters, how to respond and ways to be involved, there will be a Census 2020 Public Forum 5:30 to 7 p.m. Saturday, March 7 at Shadle Park High School, 4327 N. Ash St., with a presentation and public discussion, and a live stream video on KSBS.

Among the nonprofits and others assisting with the census is The Fig Tree, which has received a $10,000 grant from Innovia to do April 1, 2020 counts—

federal dollars are spent for services and the number of seats a state has in Congress. The 2020 Census is a short survey that takes only about 10 minutes, but has impact for the next 10 years. A state may lose more than $30,000 per person missed. Everyone living in the United States at April 1, 2020 counts—

a baby born April 1 to the oldest senior; indigenous people, citizens for generations, foreign exchange students, refugee residents and undocumented folks; people who live in mansions and people who have no home.

The Faith Action Network has also received funding in other parts of the state, and staff on the census, so Jim CastroLang, pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Colville and a member of the Faith Action Network board, approached The Fig Tree to apply for this area.

“The island of hope proposes a way through three study groups, the WCC Faith and Order Commission proposes a world conference to map common ground among churches. Its work is done focusing on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, ecclesiology and moral discernment.

The first group follows up on the commission’s proposal for the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in 2025, the 1700th anniversary of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea. It hopes a conference will excite churches today, and rekindle the desire for visible unity of the church in the midst of deep diversity.

The second group analyzed responses to “The Church: Towards a Common Vision,” identifying 16 key theological themes. Papers on the themes will be shared at the WCC 11th Assembly in 2022.

The third group, on moral discernment, recognizes that churches respond differently to ethical questions, risking either normalization of hatred: challenges for Jews and Christians today.”

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Gonzaga hosts Holocaust Museum exhibit

Gonzaga University is one of 50 sites for an exhibit of the American Holocaust Museum and the American Library Association, “Americans and the Holocaust,” from March 16 to April 27 in Gonzaga’s Foley Library Rare Books Room.

Gonzaga’s Institute for Hate Studies, its Office for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and the Spokane County Human Rights Task Force are planning three public events related to the exhibit. They are free, but will require tickets for security, said Kristine Hoover, associate professor of organizational leadership and director of the Institute for Hate Studies.

The opening reception and panel on “Hate Reflections and Action” will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Sunday, March 17, in Hemmingson Auditorium.

Panelists George Critchlow, Michael DeLand and Shannon Dunn, who are on the Gonzaga faculty, will examine hate from various perspectives. They will discuss collective memory, understanding the violence of the Holocaust and America’s role in it.

“We are embracing the exhibit’s message of never forgetting and recognizing there is still so much to do,” said Kristine.

She said museums and exhibits are essential for maintaining history and encouraging people to reflect on what they would have done, what they are doing and what they will do to related to current U.S. divisiveness.

Holocaust survivors Cora de Preston and Carla Peperzak will share their insights for today in a “story court” from 6:30 to 8 p.m., Sunday, March 31, in Hemmingson Ballroom.

Cora, whose name at birth was Cora Clara Moscovici, survived the Holocaust with her immediate family. Two brothers, taken to labor camps, were released in August 1944, but half of her extended family from northern Romania and France did not survive.

Carla, who was born in 1923 in Holland, grew up in Amsterdam dreaming of becoming a doctor. When the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, she was required to have an ID with a large “J” on it and later to wear the Star of David. She became active in the Resistance, hiding about 40 people, helping them obtain IDs, food and medical supplies. About 75 percent of her extended family were killed in the Holocaust. Carla has been sharing her story with students since 1992 and is active in the Seattle Holocaust Center for Humanity’s Speakers Bureau.

She was recently named Washington State Person of the year for her dedication to calling for people to respect each other. She will receive the award at 2 p.m., Feb. 20, at the Governor’s Mansion in Olympia.

A panel with Ken Stern, Barbara Perry, Brian Levin and Kristine, directors from the consortium of academic centers for the study of hate, will discuss “Hate: Documenting It, Understanding It and Countering It” at 7 p.m., Monday, April 22, in Cataldo Hall, with a live webinar.

They will address why hate has always been a problem, the value of shining light on it, how current events help students understand the human capacity to hate, effective ways to counter it and how lessons from the past shape understanding of hate today.

Kristine hopes participants will leave considering “What would I have done?” and “What can I do?”

For information, visit www.gonzaga.edu/holocaustexhibit.
Continued from page 3

rate of incarceration, homelessness, overdose, drug and alcohol addiction, and high suicide rate are all symptoms of untreated mental illness.

Gonzaga University’s program for psychiatric nurses strives to address these issues. Students in this program can earn either a master’s or doctoral degrees. The program is now mostly online courses with some on-campus immersions to give students more time to focus on their in-field training.

To keep the professors up to date, they are required to stay in practice. “They can’t just teach in a classroom. They have to be part of delivering care,” Carol explained. Students often come with experience in the medical field, see how patients with mental illness are treated and want to learn more in order to help.

“We have students who have worked in the emergency room and some have worked in the psychiatry department and are assigned to patients who have mental illness being treated,” Jeff said.

A focus of this program is to eliminate the stigma for mental health. Gonzaga has two strategies to do this.

First, students have to reflect on themselves. By addressing their biases, they gain clarity so they can focus on the patient instead of their own problems. Second, students are required to complete volunteer hours at nonprofits or charities, such as homeless shelters or free clinics, where they can see how serious untreated mental illness is.

Students are to look past the stigma and see the human being hidden by their illness, said Jeff.

“I tell students, when looking into the eyes of somebody who is mentally ill, psychotic or depressed, to see how the person is struggling,” he said.

Carol grew up in Othello, a small farming community. She had always had a passion for psychiatric nursing. While working for Sacred Heart Medical Center, she was assigned to patients with mental illness because she was able to connect with them.

“I asked questions to understand how they were feeling. I was supposed to focus on medical conditions, but I was talking to folks to find out about their lives,” she said.

Carol began working at Eastern Washington University Hospital, which funded her master’s degree. While she was there from 1984 until 2015, she witnessed changes in treating patients with mental illness. She said there was a major change in the community perceptions about mental illness and approaches to care within the system.

Since joining the GU faculty, she has started her own private practice. Her passion is to change one life at a time, whether it be her students or her patients.

Seeing strict rules at state hospitals increased Carol’s understanding of challenges people with mental illness face. In her private practice, she can connect with patients more and align business practices to favor patients’ wellbeing.

Many think private practices with pay are gaps, but she sees Medicaid and Medicare patients, who may have challenges with access and are grateful the bus stop is right outside.

Often state funded practices limit patient sessions to 15 minutes, not allowing enough time to connect and treat the patient. Some clinic policies may result in denial of care because of cancellations or missing appointments, effectively “firing” them from care.

Carol finds this frustrating, considering the challenges her patients face just to make it to an appointment. She is aware that mental illness may impair a patient’s ability to make and keep appointments, many patients do not have their own vehicle or reliable transportation, and they face other hurdles in making appointments.

She doesn’t believe in “firing” clients because they miss appointments, knowing they may struggle to get out of bed, be thinking about killing themselves or lack access to transportation. She reaches out and checks up on patients to make sure they’re okay.

Jeff shared his background, growing up in a Catholic family in the Tri-Cities, where he attended a Catholic elementary school before public high school and community college for a nursing degree and continued his education earning a doctorate in nursing science.

He started in cardiac care at Sacred Heart Medical Center, later working in management. He soon found his passion was treating and connecting with patients with mental illness.

When he went to Eastern State Hospital, where he first met Carol, he found few families were around to be involved with the patients, and there were fewer services.

Although he never served in the military, Jeff saw the high suicide rate in returning veterans when his niece came back from Afghanistan. He wondered how he could help. This led him to work with patients with PTSD at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Spokane.

Jeff learned to reflect on himself to keep from falling into negative stigmas about mental illness. “I have to understand my own problems in order to see what’s going on. What is going on may be my issue, not the patient’s,” he said.

“It’s not fair to a patient when I have a bad day from having a flat tire or being late to work,” he said.

He knows to be aware of his bad day and separate himself from it when he is dealing with a patient who just attempted suicide.

“I have matured and had exposure to folks who live different lives from my ‘house jazz,’ I realize that some of the strongest, most courageous people I’ve ever met are some of my clients,” he said.

Carol and Jeff, who both seek to lower suicide rates, had the chance to affect thousands of lives in 2014 by being appointed to serve on a committee to carry out Washington State House Bill 1424.

The Washington State Legislature passed a law requiring nurses and other health practitioners to complete six hours of continuing education in suicide assessment in order to combat rising suicide rates.

They were on the team assigned to evaluate state programs to determine if they complied. For information, call 313-6484 or email kottwitz@gonzaga.edu or ramirez@gonzaga.edu.
Intern understands discrimination people seeking housing face

Rachel Shomali’s work as an intern at the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance provided her an opportunity for her to talk with people experiencing discrimination as they seek housing in Spokane.

As a dual citizen of the United States and Palestine, she identifies with the struggle of people facing discrimination.

“I talk with people who phone to figure if the discrimination is based on one of seven classes—race, color, national origin, religion/creed, disability, family status or gender/sex—protected by federal and state fair housing laws,” she said.

Because she speaks Arabic, as well as English, she takes some of the calls from Arab speakers.

Rachel has been in Spokane since August 2019 as one of four young adult interns participating in the second year of the Disciples of Christ’s XPLOR program, which also has sites in St. Louis, Dallas, Hiram, Ohio and Bloomington, Ind.

“Based on my interests, I was matched with the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance,” she said. “I applied to seek opportunities, because jobs in Palestine are limited.

Born in Michigan, she moved with her family to Beit Sahour in the Bethlehem district of Palestine when she was 12. She graduated from an American high school and studied at Birzeit University north of Jerusalem, graduating in December 2018 with a degree in marketing. She spent fall semesters of 2017 in Bilbao, Spain, so she knows some Spanish, too.

Through her affiliation with the YWCA and YMCA in Palestine, and a partnership through the Disciples Global Ministries, she learned of the Disciples Peace Fellowship peace internship in the summer of 2016. That program takes college students to speak at several Disciples camps in the U.S. and she and another woman shared stories about daily life in terms of culture, food and music, and also about life in Palestine, Israeli and under occupation.

They told of Palestinians having limited rights and restricted movement, encountering the wall through the West Bank and checkpoints every day.

“The West Bank is like Swiss cheese, with Palestinian villages and Israeli settlements cut by some roads that are only for Israelis,” Rachel said.

At Birzeit University, north of Jerusalem, she should be 30 minutes away, but often took her an hour or more, because she was stopped at checkpoints where Israeli soldiers might search the car, check her ID and question her.

In the summer of 2017, she accepted the invitation of a pastor in La Mesa, Calif., near San Diego, to lead adult book discussions and volunteer at a summer camp.

After graduating, Rachel applied for XPLOR, another Disciples program, and worked temporarily in sales at a hotel art gallery and bookshop in Bethlehem.

Visiting U.S. camps and in San Diego, she found most Americans open and receptive.

“When a man in an adult class said all Palestinians are involved in Hamas and are terrorists, I told him that was not true,” Rachel said. “I said Hamas is a political faction that started after occupation in resistance to the conflict and denial of human rights. She pointed out that not all Palestinians are associated with it.

“I told him I believe in nonviolent civil disobedience,” she said.

At Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, Rachel is on staff with several from other countries. Fair housing specialist Abdella Abdelnasser from Sudan handles most of the Arabic callers. Another fair housing specialist, Christina Mitma, is half Palestinian. She and assistant director Shahrokh Nikfar, who immigrated from Iran, have both been there 16 years.

Others on the staff are Marley Hochendrner, executive director, Shannon Bedard, fair housing specialist, and Peggy Rotando, finance manager.

Marley said the XPLOR interns last year, Emily Newsom from Virginia, is working with a fair housing organization in Chicago.

In contrast with other volunteers and interns, XPLOR interns work 30 hours a week with the agency for 10 months.

“That amount of time gives continuity and develops skills so the intern can contribute,” said Marley, who has been with the agency since April 2005.

She had been an attorney in Idaho and Washington, working with Idaho Legal Services and with the Nez Perce tribe. Her son was born in 2004. After her husband found a job in Spokane, the position opened.

“I wanted to practice non-traditional social justice law. Fair housing with a civil rights mission fits,” she said.

Part of XPLOR involves interns living together in a house near the alliance helps people facing discrimination in housing.

“For example, if someonefaces discrimination because of a disability, the alliance asks the landlord to make reasonable accommodation or modifications, like adding a grab bar in the bathroom,” she said.

Staff analyze impediments to fair housing based on laws, gathering data on barriers impeding a person from finding housing in any of 17 counties the agencies serves.

When Rachel came, the alliance had completed a survey in Spokane on impediments. She has helped do the survey for Snohomish County and Everett.

She also organizes files and events, like an April 23 Annual Fair Housing Conference at the Spokane Convention Center. The conference will draw about 500 property managers, social workers, attorneys, real estate sales people, policy workers and civic leaders.

She helps run Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants and uses her skills in marketing to design posters and PR materials, and to organize community forums.

“I previously had no idea how Fair Housing Law protected people to prevent homelessness,” she said.

Part of XPLOR involves interns living together in a house near North Hill Christian Church and connecting to Disciples churches—North Hill and Country Homes Christian churches.

The interns have their own rooms and share meals three times a week, taking turns with cooking.

“We dedicate time each week to the churches, helping organize events and leading study programs,” said Rachel, who began in January an adult Bible study discussion telling of daily life in Palestine under military occupation.

She helped in October with the church’s “Trunk or Treat” Halloween outreach and will participate in a regional youth retreat in March.

Disciples pastor Tiffany DeTienne is the interns’ spiritual advisor, meeting with the four on Fridays, inviting them to reflect on their internships, discuss current issues such as racism and violence, and share how they relate to Christianity.

Rachel, who grew up Catholic and has connected with different churches over the years, finds that the Disciples’ focus on social justice relates to her faith.

She especially liked the Peace Fellowship platform to talk about social justice and work with different NGOs on justice.

For information, call 209-2670 or email rachelsho328@gmail.com.
Ferris student calls for seeing King’s dream 20/20 through a new lens

Saron Legesse Zemedkun, president of the Black Student Union and student at Ferris High School, read an original essay, “The Dream Through A New Lens” during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally Jan. 20. She moved to Spokane from Ethiopia in East Africa where she was four years old.

With this year being 2020, “the numerical expression for healthy vision,” she asked, “Through what lens do we see America?”

Saron said King dreamed in 1963 of a day when former slaves and former slave owners would sit together in brotherhood, and people would be judged by character, not skin color.

“In the America she saw, blacks were denied equal rights, civil liberties, a seat on a bus, fair housing, employment opportunities and voting rights,” Saron said.

Has his dream “become blurred or do we need new lenses to see that change has come, disguised as equality with no equity?” Saron asked, noting that “we are not equal until there is equal value to minority businesses, equal pay for women, and government hiring reflects demographics—as simple as school teachers and administrators who look like me.”

As a young black woman, she is troubled by African Americans experiencing deprivation and despair because of being labeled by mainstream society.

“Black Americans have to work twice as hard to get half as far as person in the world,” Saron said.

That means we are to care for those who are homeless and those who are housed. We are to care for the immigrants seeking refuge and those who were born here.

We are to care for all members of the LGBTQ community. We are to care for people in prisons, even those who committed crimes,” Saron said.

“I hope we live his beliefs and dreams every day,” said Kiantha Duncan, who is program manager with Empire Health.

“If not, we need to check ourselves. We need to look out for others, including people we do not know.”

Linking arms, she said, demonstrates what connectedness in the community looks like for all humankind—“everybody in here and everybody not in here. It’s about our shared goal for every community to thrive.”

Chaplain says past informs young for present

Continued from page 3 to the vision of a land where each person is judged by the content of their character not the color of their skin,” she said. “We need to tell young people to have courageous conversations about discrimination, racism and inequality.

“As the next generation, they will carry the mantle. If we don’t teach them about the past, it will repeat itself. We need to use the past to inform young people how they talk about the present and the future,” Stephy continued.

We need to show the next generation of leaders what it means to be a “Beloved Community,” not just marching hand-in-hand today, but when the day is over. We need to show them we will take action against racial injustice, not just today, but the next day and the next day and the next.

“Will we make it more than just one day on? Make every day a day to make a difference in our community. We need to do something different today, tomorrow and in the future for the betterment of humankind. We need to involve young people in our community and show them there is love and kindness today, tomorrow and in the future.”

Stephy quoted King: “Tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now and if we are waiting, the right time is NOW.”

She closed saying, “That’s why we need to keep our eyes on the prize.”

For information, call 777-4568 or email sbeans@whitworth.edu.

Saron Zemedkun

white colleagues,” she said.

“Internalized colorism and systemic racism” affect status and create assumptions so being black means to some being a criminal, she said, pointing out that King believed “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Blacks are “the most unprotected race in America,” resulting in a high mortality rate for black males ages 15 to 34, who are nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by law enforcement.

“We are constantly told how to walk, talk and dress so we don’t draw suspicious advances,” Saron said.

King was not silent about the killings of Trayvon Martin, Eric Gardner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice, Breonna Jean or Ahmaud Arbery.

“Social injustice is a threat to us and the fabric of the U.S. Constitution when we ignore it,” she said, challenging those who are silent and inviting America into a future where “peace and love overpower evil and hatred” and where all people regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or political belief “can stand united and honor the creed that all are created equal.”

Saron said the expression that Black Lives Matter will not be offensive when there is equal value to expressions that white lives, blue lives, brown, yellow and red lives matter.

“All lives matter,” she said, calling for marching for freedom, looking through lenses with “a 20/20 vision of an America where everyone has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

NAACP leaders calls people to link arms

Kiantha Duncan spoke at the 2020 MLK Day rally on behalf of the NAACP Spokane, making a point that it’s not just an organization for poor people or black people.

“It’s your organization whoever you are,” she said, inviting people to become involved.

She invited people in the Convention Center to connect elbows or join hands to symbolize the connection of each person in the room as they honor King.

“I hope we live his beliefs and dreams every day,” said Kiantha, who is program manager with Empire Health.

“If not, we need to check ourselves. We need to look out for others, including people we do not know.”

Linking arms, she said, demonstrates what connectedness in the community looks like for all humankind—“everybody in here and everybody not in here. It’s about our shared goal for every person in the world.”

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“Black Americans have to work twice as hard to get half as far as person in the world.”

That means we are to care for those who are homeless and those who are housed. We are to care for the immigrants seeking refuge and those who were born here.

We are to care for all members of the LGBTQ community. We are to care for people in prisons, even those who committed crimes,” Kiantha said.

“King did not exclude anyone. He was for all of us,” she said, inviting people to look at those sitting beside them and say, “You are important to the world, to the Spokane community and the global community.”

Kiantha advised for people to care about their brothers and sisters, not just themselves because the times may change, and the one they do not care about “may one day be the one to care about us.”

Some are conservative and some are liberal, she said.

“We may disagree with some people, but it may be hard to come together, but if we do that, if we stay connected and care about all individuals in the community and world, Spokane can change the world,” Kiantha said.

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MLK Day is a chance to pass on the legacy and history of civil rights

Since he was a boy, Martin Luther King Jr. was James Watkins’ favorite time of year. “It has been one time a year when the city goes color blind and greets everyone in love as we celebrate the Rev. Dr. King,” he said, speaking for the annual Commemoration Celebration Jan. 19 at Holy Temple Church of God in Christ.

James is pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, along with serving as a lieutenant at Airways Heights Correction Center.

In introducing him at the service, Walter Kendricks, pastor of Morningstar Baptist Church and president of the Spokane Ministers Alliance—which co-sponsored the service with the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center—said he admired James for filling the shoes of a legend, his father Happy Watkins, who is now pastor emeritus.

Every year, Happy has recited King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, which instilled in James the importance of looking forward for passing on the legacy and history of civil rights to the next generation.

Now it’s James’ turn as father and grandfather to tell the story, which he shared in the context of a Scripture lesson.

James read from Luke 10 the story of the Good Samaritan. A lawyer asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him what the law said. He said to love God with all “your strength, soul and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself.”

When he asked Jesus who his neighbor was, Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, helping a man robbed, stripped and left to die on the road to Jericho. A priest and Levite passed by, but a Samaritan—an outsider despised by Jews—acted in mercy.

“The underlying issues we face today are hostility, racism and classism, almost more than in the time of King,” James said, commenting that “the priest and deacon passed by the man who was robbed, but the Samaritan—one not liked in society—one whose heart is filled with sympathy and pity. He bound his wounds, pouring wine and oil, and took the man to the inn, paying two denarii, so the man could recuperate.

“How many of us would do that? How many of us see folks who do not look like us to be our neighbor and step out of their comfort zone?” he said.

James believes King heard that scripture as a boy. The son of college-educated parents, King at 15 graduated from high school and entered Morehouse College, graduating in 1948 at 19. He earned a master of divinity degree in 1951, married Coretta Scott in 1953 in Alabama, and earned a doctoral degree from Boston University in 1955, when he became pastor at Dexter Ave. Baptist Church.

Soon after that Rosa Parks sat in the bus, “so King would march so Obama would run,” he quipped. King rallied pastors to act—to start the Montgomery bus boycott to improve society. The work for civil rights led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

“King believed in agitating and legislating,” said James, telling of him sitting beside Ralph Abernathy on a plane one day, looking out the window and saying, “We can never forget the ground crew”—all the people behind. So James listed some of the “ground crew” for the civil rights movement, saying “we need to know about them.”

• Ella Baker helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

• James Baldwin was an American novelist, playwright and activist exploring racial, sexual and class differences.

• Daisy Bates played a leading role in the Little Rock Integration Crisis of 1957.

• Julian Bond, a civil rights leader, NAACP leader, politician, professor and writer, helped found the SNCC and Southern Poverty Law Center.

• How many of our children know about them?” James asked. “Do we know our history?” He continued listing names.

• Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Ture, a militant socialist organizer of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and the global Pan-African movement.

• Malcolm X, an American Muslim minister and human rights activist, described the choice between King and himself as the choice “between the ballot or the bullet.”

“Going back in history,” James listed some other examples:

• Frederick Douglas went from being a slave to being an abolitionist.

• W.E.B. DuBois, who was the first African American to earn a doctoral degree from Harvard, led the Niagara Movement and later helped form the NAACP.

• Medgar Evers, a civil rights leader in Mississippi who was shot by a sniper bullet in his driveway for his voter-registration efforts and economic boycotts.

• Fanny Lou Hamer was a champion of civil rights and women’s rights.

• John Lewis, who led the Bloody Sunday march from Selma to Montgomery, said he carried four books, an apple and an orange, because he expected to go to jail. He has represented Georgia 17 terms in the House of Representatives. He recently announced he has pancreatic cancer.

• Another civil rights leader, U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings of Maryland, died in October.

“They understood the need to take the message of civil rights to the culture,” said James.

“The Rev. Dr. King had a prayer life second to none,” he added. “He was close to God. For Christ he lived. For Christ he died. Nothing could separate Dr. King from Christ. His church was bombed. His house was bombed. He did not waiver or change course because of fear. God gave him the Spirit to live.

“I do not separate King and Christ. We honor King. We honor Christ,” he said.

“I look to the ground crew for civil rights who have been around for a long time,” he said, turning to name some local civil rights heroes, the Rev. James and Lydia Sims, and Carl Maxey.

“As long as I stand, I continue to do the work they started,” he said.

“The next generation is falling behind. They need to hear the message about civil rights,” he said. “I stand on the shoulders of giants who passed the message to my generation. We need to be true to King’s message to love one another as we love ourselves. We are the ground crew.”

For information, call 868-0856 or visit mlkspokane.org.

Councilwoman sworn in at celebration

Opening the service, Lonnie Mitchell, pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church asserted that the bullet that killed King did not destroy the movement, because on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, folks across America hold hands and celebrate King’s life and work, and celebrate our diversity and unity in the community.

Lonnie expressed gratitude for Spokane celebrating diversity and meaning it. An example was that Spokane City Council recently chose Betty Wilkerson to fill the vacant seat of Council President Breena Beggs. She is the first African American in 20 years—following Roberta Greene—to serve on City Council. As part of the service, the Honorable George Fearing swore her into her new role.

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— Janice Hughes and Becky Nappi
Cora der Koorkanian finds photo of her nursing class in Israel.

In 2015, she testified in Germany at the trial of former Nazi Oskar Gröning, 93. He admitted his complicity in the mass extermination of Jews and asked for “forgiveness from the Lord.” Eva appreciated that he testified truthfully about what had happened, and she thanked him. For information, call 838-3304.

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As Holocaust survivors die, Cora der Koorkanian of Congregation Emanu-El in Spokane believes it’s important to recognize witness they have given. This summer, Cora learned that Eva Mozes Kor, one of the “Mengele twins,” had died July 4 in Krakow, Poland, at the age of 85.

After learning of Eva’s death, Cora spoke about her friendship and memories of Eva at a luncheon at Temple Beth Shalom. “I had wanted to bring Eva to Spokane to speak, so sharing her story was one way I could bring her here,” she said.

Eva died while leading an educational trip with Children of Auschwitz Nazi Death Lab Experiments Survivors (CANDLES), which she founded in 1984. She made the trip annually to share her experiences and her perspectives as a Holocaust survivor, which she wrote about in her book, Surviving the Angel of Death.

Cora said that Eva, who forgave Mengele, explained in her book, “I do not hate people who harmed me and my family in Bucharest,” that she found it better to forgive than to live with hate, because “hate is like a poison.”

“Eva had a positive attitude toward life. She was given lemons, so she made lemonade,” Cora said.

She spoke for an hour, it was so silent you could hear a pin drop,” Cora said. As Holocaust survivors die, Cora learns to forgive without forgetting or hating.

While living in Israel and studying to be a nurse in the army from 1953 to 1956, one of her classmates was Miriam Zeiger. Eva’s twin sister, who had also been involved in Mengele’s experiments in Auschwitz.

“I didn’t know Miriam’s story until one day she became very sick and told me,” Cora said, noting that many Holocaust survivors just wanted to live “normal lives” and did not want to speak about the horrors they experienced.

Cora realizes some survivors cannot forgive. She remembers that Eva’s sister Miriam often cried, but a classmate from Belgium never smiled. Her mood was always “like fool weather,” Cora said.

During their studies, Cora met Eva, who served in a different branch of the military. “I felt close to both of them, because I was born in 1934, three days before they were born. Like me, they were born in Romania, but in Transylvania. We joked that we were almost triplets,” said Cora, whose great-grandparents had fled pogroms persecuting Jews in Russia in the 1840s and had settled in Romania.

Through World War II and the Holocaust, her family lived in Bucharest, bribing local officials in order to survive. Two brothers were sent to labor camps in 1942. In 1950, after Communists took power in Romania, she and her twin left to live in Israel where she met Miriam and Eva.

Cora later worked with the World Health Organization in Brazil before marrying an American foreign service officer. They settled in Manchester, N.H.

Cora last saw Eva in April 2014 at Manchester, where Eva had spoken at a Cora’s invitation at an interfaith gathering with two Jewish synagogues and a Presbyterian church.

“The room was packed. As she spoke for an hour, it was so silent you could hear a pin drop,” Cora said.

The year after she spoke, Cora brought 18 copies of Eva’s book, Surviving the Angel of Death, to take with her to a reunion of classmates in Israel. Eva had signed every book with the names of her sister’s classmates, half of whom were also Holocaust survivors.

Cora told Eva’s story. Eva and Miriam were 10 when they were taken to Auschwitz. Dressed alike, they were identified as twins. They were separated from their parents and two older sisters, whom they never saw again. They were among 1,500 sets of twins Josef Mengele used in doing genetic medical experiments. He changed the color of eyes, transplanted uteruses, did experiments without anesthesia and more. Many died as a result of the experiments.

At first, Eva was chosen as the “control” and Miriam underwent experiments on her kidneys. Then Miriam was the control when they inoculated Eva with a bacteria or virus that made her very ill for several months. Eva survived “by sheer will power,” Cora said, and helped Miriam survive.

When the Soviet Army liberated the camp on Jan. 12, 1945, only 180 children, most of them twins, were alive. Many had died from experiments. Miriam became a nurse, lived in Israel and had three children. Later, when her kidneys were giving out, Eva gave Miriam one of her kidneys, so she could live longer. Miriam died in 1993 at the age of 59.

For many years, Cora did not know where Eva was. Eva married Michael Kor, an American citizen and Holocaust survivor, and came to United States in 1960. In 1965, she became a U.S. citizen.

In 1978, after an NBC miniseries, “The Holocaust,” Eva and Miriam, who were living in Israel, began locating other twins. They located 170 surviving twins living around the world.

In 1984, Eva, who has two children, founded the CANDLES Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Terre Haute, Ind. The center, which her son now runs, educates people about eugenics, the Holocaust and the power of forgiving.

In 2007, Eva persuaded Indiana state legislators to require Holocaust education in secondary schools. She was featured in a 2015 CNN documentary, “Voices of Auschwitz,” and a 2016 production, “Incredible Survivors.”

Eva appreciated that he testified truthfully about what had happened, and she thanked him. For information, call 838-3304.
Center for Justice responds to vulnerable people, community’s needs

A fter 15 years in Seattle as a bankruptcy, consumer, creditor, foreclosing lender, foreclosure, real estate and tax attorney, Dainen Penta came to head the Center for Justice in Spokane in January 2019 to address the “sea of need” he met in those cases.

“I wanted to have impact on the bigger world as a ‘community lawyer’ to resolve community problems,” he said. “Legal work should be led and informed by the community.”

The Center for Justice both provides free legal services for people living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or struggling with mental health or addiction, and advocates for changes in the criminal justice system.

“The pressing issue in Spokane and the U.S. is for criminal justice reform, which involves both helping people return to society after incarceration, and working for police and government accountability,” Dainen said.

A 2013 state survey found that one in five low-income people help have help when they have legal problems.

“It’s not just low-income people. Few realize there are legal components to problems they face, and a lawyer can help,” he said. “We serve people from 0 to 400 percent of the poverty level.”

In 1994, Dainen, the Korean-born son of a Longview veterinarian, first came to Spokane to study at Whitworth on recommendation of a bishop to whom he went to Bible church he attended. While majoring in international studies and French, he studied for a semester in southern France.

Being open with friends at the Christian university about being gay, he valued the acceptance he experienced.

In 1997, Dainen worked with the Oregon Health Sciences University while applying to Lewis and Clark Law School. He graduated in 2000 and completed a master’s in tax law in 2002 at the University of Washington.

He went home to Longview to work as a lawyer with his father, passed the bar exam and started work as a lawyer with his father, Larsen, a 73-year-old attorney, and the two of them formed their own practice and handled mostly estate and tax matters. Larsen still works out of the office.

For 10 years, Virla Spencer, a non-lawyer advocate, has worked with courts to set payments of $25 to $50 a month so people can have their licenses restored. She also helps drivers find insurance and understand what they need to do to keep their licenses. She serves as “a pickup truck” for people who have not driven for years.

Other groups around the U.S. see this Center for Justice program as a model they want to replicate.

• The Smart Justice Coalition believes jails are an expensive, ineffective way to reduce crime and make the community safe, said Cam Zarrozzuto, who heads the Smart Justice and Criminal Justice Reform Programs. They work for a just, effective regional criminal justice system with alternatives to incarceration, including treatment and support services to break the cycle of crime, save money and re-engage needs.

The center helps people erase—vacate or expunge—past convictions, and reduce legal financial obligations because laws let people overcome their past, Dainen said. “People are amazed that’s possible after they have been prosecuted, convicted and served time. It opens doors to jobs and housing.”

The Spokane City Council in 2017 and Washington state in 2018 passed ban-the-box laws, prohibiting employers from asking job applicants about past arrests or convictions until it’s determined if the person is qualified. Employers and landlords would not first see a person’s record.

“For every day, we ask, ‘What can we do to help make Spokane a better place?’ We do not lose hope, because we know we help people and make a difference for the community,” he said.

For information, call 835-5211 or email dpenta@cforjustice.org.

The tradition of Fat Tuesday (Shrove Tuesday) is to feast on fat things before the lean weeks of Lent.

Dainen Penta guides efforts for criminal justice reform.

Dainen left his private practice as a non-lawyer advocate and opened a legal office where he had his own practice and pass-age the bar exam and started

Penta’s full-time job.

“The housing justice program holds legal clinics on landlord-tenant relations and tenants’ right to safe, healthy, habitable homes. Housing attorney Matthew Larsen serves about 60 people a week. He helps tenants avoid evictions and negotiates with landlords to resolve problems—like doing repairs to meet health and safety standards to avoid going to court.”

• The relicensing program resolves unpaid tickets to end indefinite suspension of licenses for failure to pay traffic fines people can’t afford.

“It’s hard to live in Spokane without a driver’s license,” said Dainen. “People need to drive to go to work, pick up their children and shop for groceries. When people drive with a suspended license and are pulled over, they are ticketed for driving with a suspended license, compounding fines. Suspended licenses add to poverty, unemployment and incarceration.”

Dainen realizes that even when police and schools change poli-cies, education is needed to change the culture and people’s hearts.

He respects that police officers and first responders put their lives on the line every day as they encounter people struggling with mental health and addiction. He knows that many officers want accountability spelled out, so he urges the Police Guild to work with the Police Ombuds Office and participate in implicit bias training.

“Just because someone is a suspect or accused of a crime does not mean his/her rights go away,” he said.

The center includes Spokane Riverkeeper, which protects the river’s health through education, river cleanup and trash pickups, and advocacy to hold polluters and governments accountable. It also works with police officers and people camping by the river, going with representatives of SNAP and Frontier Behavioral Health to connect them to services.

Dainen told of two cases the Center for Justice recently liti-gated.

Representing homeless groups and nonprofits, it took the case of Camp Hope, the tent city on the sidewalk outside Spokane City Hall in December 2018. The Ninth Circuit Court in Boise had ruled if there were no shelters open, police could not tear down such camps.

“In that case, we asked the City of Spokane to be sensitive when clearing encampments,” Dainen said. “Usually they pick up all personal belongings and throw them in a trash truck, as they did with Camp Hope. That practice raises issues about due process.”

The second case challenged the city not to put Proposition 1 on the ballot. The measure said city employees or police were to ask people for their immigration or citizenship status, and report to immigration authorities.

The center won in Spokane Superior Court in 2017. The State Appeals Court ruled it was unjust and should be kept off the ballot. The State Supreme Court decided not to hear the case, upholding the appeals court.

“Therefore, it is not a check on illegal aliens,” Dainen said.

The center, unlike some non-profits, accepts no federal and little or no state funding, so it is “free to respond to community needs quickly and can sue the government,” said Dainen, whose Center includes grants and donations.

In 1999, Jim Sheehan founded the Center for Justice to help people falling through the cracks. It began as legal services for those who could not afford an attorney. Many know it for challenging police in the 2006 fatal beating of Otto Zehm, bringing changes in police policy.

“Every day, we ask, ‘What can we do to help make Spokane a better place?’ We do not lose hope, because we know we help people and make a difference for the community,” he said.

For information, call 835-5211 or email dpenta@cforjustice.org.
Who will challenge injustices, inequities? Our neighbors right here!

Who’s going to step out of their comfort zones and speak out for justice and equality as Martin Luther King Jr. did? Who’s going to be the voice for freedom in these times? Who’s going to challenge corruption, deceit and hegemony?

Who is going to step out and step up? Who in God’s name will God raise up? and hegemony? to be the voice for freedom in these times?

What are we doing? What will we do? Questions from the upcoming Holocaust exhibit are relevant today. Martin Luther King Jr. risked his life to tell the truth to white racists, and many others through the centuries. We need movement leaders, educators and advocates.

Who will challenge pipelines, polluters and plastic to stand up for climate justice? Who will challenge racial inequities in our community?

One area resources help us ask: How will we adapt our agriculture practices as climate change occurs? What are new patterns of run-off? How does living under the cloud of climate change affect psychological wellbeing? What are effects of climate change on health? What species in our area are at risk? What technologies are available today to draw down CO2 in the air?

Can Spokane build a circular economy to minimize waste? How is the water quality of Coeur d’Alene River affected? Can we capture methane from waste treatment facilities? What needs to be done to clean up the tailings of the Midnite uranium mine? High school students and young adults will discuss the future natural environment they will live in—their hopes, priorities and actions when we take the reins.

The last session is for the faith community: What does faith teach about care for our environment? How can faith give us hope and direction? How does faith call us into action? Leaders from Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Native American and Islamic faith communities will share on the centrality of faith to uphold Hope for Creation. The formal program ends Saturday afternoon with sharing ideas and proposals for consideration by elected leaders. Throughout the Conference, the Catholic diocesan art guild will host an environmental art exhibit of works by Spokane area artists.

The event is for civic leaders, nonprofit organizations, faith communities, business people and engaged citizens, young and old, conservative and liberal—all points of view are welcome, and the dignity of each person will be respected.

The Hope for Creation Conference is a year-round lead up to re-examine Spokane’s leadership on the environment to celebrate Expo ’74’s 50th anniversary. The Conference provides a venue to develop networks of persons with common interests for subsequent work.

The steering committee includes, Elizabeth Addy of Whitworth University; Bregg Beggs and Lori Kinnear of Spokane City Council; Pat Munts, WSU extension education coordinator; and Betsy Holsen, the column; Jennifer Ogden, Spokane Park Board vice president and St. John’s parishioner; Mike Petersen, Lands Council executive director; Lenore Three Stars (Oglala Lakota), Reconciliation Calling Community, Native American community member; Pastor Dolores Ford, interim pastor; Tom Mounts, Spokane’s leader at John Wallfing Catholic Church; and Joe Wittwer, pastor Life Center Church.

John Wallfing Catholic Church
whitewhirt@whitewhirt.edu
hopeforcreation
jewiford@gmail.com

Comments offered on indigenous women, Australia’s fires, open doors, Methodist unity

I enjoyed reading the article in the January edition of the Fig Tree high-lighting the efforts of Margo Hill with the Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement. The Fig Tree’s report was more extensive than an earlier article in the Inlander. Through it, I gained a better appreciation of the gravity of the circumstances indigenous women face.

I have known Margo for several years through my work with the Eastern Washington University’s Urban and Regional Planning program and have always admired her dedication to her profession and the students at the university.

The Fig Tree did an outstanding job giving us the story as well as the contributions to her tribe, her people and the greater community. We should all be proud to have her serving this region.

Karl Otterstrom, Spokane

As part of the Presbyterian Di- vision of Disaster Relief, our Team, I’ve been asked about assistance to Australia. Australia is a highly developed country with a wealth of its own resources. With so many disasters around the world every dollar must be managed wisely so we do not send help until churches involved make specific requests. Working through the churches, we make

Mary Stamp - editor

Faith community shares hope for creation leading to Expo ’74’s 50th

Just after Easter this year, Whitworth University’s Office of Church Engagement and Missing Indigenous Women (MMIW) will be holding a conference called “Hope for Creation.” It is designed to share a vision of hope for creation, showcase local caretakers of land, water and air, and renew Spokane’s leadership on environmental care.

As we near the 50th anniversary of Expo ’74, we now live with daily news about climate change. What wonder we can do to preserve the natural environment for our children and their children. We need to be informed so we can act. What would have done in the Holocaust?

What is the future? What are harmonious living communities doing to put us back into harmony with nature; reduce our plastic footprint. There’s also the need for habitat, reduce food waste, turn waste into energy, restore salmon migration and reduce our plastic footprint. There’s also a purchaser’s guide to environmentally friendly companies.

Let’s strive for a “Green”ing contemplative service on Friday, the Spokane Tribe and Dean Heather VanDeventer will open the program. That evening, Bill Youngs, professor of history at Eastern Washington University and author of The Fair and the Falls, will speak on “Expo ’74: The Enviroment Then and Now.” The Spokane post foundations for care of the air, land and water.

The event will include theological reflections to put us back into harmony with nature; a conversation with author Kara Obergd will present “A Report on the Spokane Community Adaptation Project.” The just-completed study commissioned by the City of Spokane was released is “The Protocol,” in which a group of 16 theologically diverse United Methodists from around the world proposed a way to either walk more loosely with each other—and accepting our theological diversity at some level—or part ways with a blessing for those unable to “walk with” those they disagree with on these issues.

Some national and local news articles are available online or in actual print in the UMC was announced, leading to many misunderstandings, but this is merely one more plan that we will need to hear before the General Conference in May 2020. Whatever the future will hopefully become cleaner.

I encourage folks to stay informed by United Methodist news released about the Methodist unity. A con- ference newsletter detailed many resources pertaining to the plan. The newsletter can be requested at land@pnwumc.org.

Gregg Sealey, Inland District

Sounding Board

Letter to the Editor

Editorial Reflections

Soundings Commentary
Jan 30 • **Homeless Connect,** Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., sneakemhot.com

**Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival,** “Folder: A Miracle of Miracles,” Wolff Auditorium in Jepson, Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., sjcfilm.org/our-programscpff

Jan 31-Feb 9 • **Dancing at Lughnasa,** Evening with Patricia Cutler, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7 to 9:30 p.m., tickets on sale now.

Feb 2 • **Spokane Jewish Cultural Film Festival,** “Building Community by Dialoguing There,” Patsy Clark Mansion, 2208 W. Second Ave, 6 to 8 p.m., patsyclarkmansion.org

Feb 6 • **“Living Faithfully: Writing Group,”** Spark of Mindful Living, 7 p.m., sparkofliving.com

Feb 7 • **Meals on Wheels,** Gonzaga University, 7 p.m., mealsonthewheels.org

Feb 7-8 • **Celebrating the Miracle of Freedom** at the Sean Collier Community Center, 35 W. of Spokane Cinn-A-Gram

Feb 8 • **“Being Muslim in Spokane** at the Spokane University Center, 320 W. Garfield, 7 p.m., shakopee.org

Feb 9 • **Choral Evensong,** St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, 24th and Division, 7:30 p.m., stmarkstucson.org

Feb 10 • **“Black Panther** at the Minor, 208 N. Division, 8 p.m., theminorofspokane.com

Feb 13 • **Cabin Fever Series: An African Safari** at the Northrim Inn, Northrim Mall near Kohls, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Feb 14 • **Dallas String Quartet Electric,** Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., nwspokane.org

Feb 15 • **“The Soul of Food**” at the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Dec 30-03 • **“Symposium: The History of the Civil Rights Movement** in America,” Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center, Gonzaga, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Jan 13-14 • **“Honoring River Flow Champions”** at the Gathering House, 737 W. Second Ave, 6 to 9 p.m., forthewholetime.org

Feb 21-22 • **Black Lens as we celebrate our 5th year in print.** The Gathering House 737 W. Garland Ave - Spokane

Stop by for a minute to say hi or stay for the whole time. Hope to see you there. Thank you Spokane.
By Kaye Hult

If the walls of the Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) in Coeur d’Alene could talk, executive director Jeanette Laster believes they would have much to share about the joy, pain, challenge, tears, emotions, grief and most of all—hope they have seen through conversations elicited by exhibits they have held.

Educational exhibits invite people to engage in tough conversations about justice, equality, human rights, race and more, she said. “Out of conversations come hope, strength and belief that all people belong. Conversations encourage humility, kindness and acceptance. HREI is a place for safe conversations.”

Jeanette, who became executive director in December 2018, continues what she had been doing for four years as administrative program manager.

“I’ve spent much time team-building and building capacity for our long-term vision,” she said. HREI’s vision comes from the board of directors in collaboration with staff, said Jeanette, who focuses on raising funds to keep the doors open.

HREI’s doors first opened in 1998. “It’s vital to HREI for all human rights groups have a unified voice,” she said. “We need to be on guard when white supremacist activities come in the area.”

While the task force primarily focuses on advocacy, HREI was formed to educate. They worked closely, sharing information and many members.

“It’s vital to HREI for all human rights groups have a unified voice,” she said. “We need to be on guard when white supremacist activities come in the area.”

She enumerated goals that have guided the institute’s work.

First, HREI wants to maintain its presence in the community to build awareness of human rights for all and the value of diversity. Many visitors feel its presence shows that this is a diverse community, she said.

The second goal is education. HREI offers programs for K-12 students and supports opportunities for college students through internships and work study.

“Each day, we usually have 12 people in the building,” she said. Students can gain experience in accounting, marketing, program development, event planning and administrative work as they support HREI’s mission.

“We provide a variety of experiences, she said, “and they help us maximize our K-12 programs.”

The K-12 program focuses on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations in response to the experience of World War II. HREI partners with the diversity program at North Idaho College (NIC) and with the Idaho Commission on Human Rights.

They offer cultural education around such themes as Asian American and Pacific Islander Month in May, Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Month in the fall. HREI also offers a multicultural summer camp. Elementary students attend the “Around the World” camp. Middle schoolers focus on advocacy.

On Tuesday, April 14, the annual North Idaho College Diversity Symposium for NIC students has a cultural identity theme. HREI partners with NIC to support a variety of opportunities that day.

“Each year, we also bring students, volunteers and others to the Hate Studies Conference at Gonzaga University,” she added.

HREI’s third goal is to facilitate challenging conversations in the community.

When CA$A2030 and Envision CA joined and held panel discussions on the city’s future, they asked Jeanette for suggestions to include people not generally seen as part of the conversation. HREI will partner with Safe Passage and North Idaho Now to bring awareness to the rape kit backlog, providing a safe space for this community conversation. HREI will host the video “I Am Evidence” on Thursday, April 23.

The fourth goal is funding sustainability. The biggest challenge is to maintain operations, pay salaries and cover the building costs. Despite the overhead of renting from the city, the building is relevant to HREI’s work. In 2002, Greg C. Carr Foundation awarded HREI a $1,000,000 grant as seed money to establish a human rights center. This allowed HREI to move in 2005 into its present space, a former railroad substation. The grant was not endowed, so that money is now gone.

“People and foundations love to give money to programs, not sustainability,” she said. HREI has previously had no long-term vision for an endowment, making the $15,000 budget each year a challenge.

“The time is right for an endowment campaign,” she said. “We hope to raise $20,000. We can do much more if we can continue operations. Then we can concentrate programs.”

Jeanette’s passion for working on human rights stems from her upbringing in the diverse population of the San Fernando Valley. It had school districts with many extracurricular cultural programs. Her friends came from many different cultural backgrounds.

California State University at Northridge, where she studied on a swimming and diving scholarship, was a melting pot.

“I never thought about differences. The people were my sisters, brothers and friends,” she said.

In college, she worked in the Camarillo Parks and Recreation Department, running programs at different elementary schools. After college, she returned to that program to teach aquatics and manage a park with an aquatic center, a Boys and Girls Club and a baseball park. She values mentoring teens to college age, because they say what they think and accept responsibility.

“When the housing market fell, her husband, who was a builder, lost his job, then found work in Coeur d’Alene. After moving from California, she became the aquatics director at the Kroc Center.

“It was a God thing,” she said.

“Each day, we usually have 12 people in the building,” she said. "Out of conversations come hope, strength and belief that all people belong. Conversations encourage humility, kindness and acceptance. HREI is a place for safe conversations."