

42ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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FEATURES 90+ EVENTS



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

# Village of Care makes healthcare fun

By Mary Stamp

A Village of Care is coming to Liberty Park in East Central Spokane, which sits in a health-care desert.

“A freeway cuts through the neighborhood. Clinics are sparse and, for many residents, the healthcare system is something to avoid, a place they encounter only in crises, often in fear,” said Anna Franklin, who founded Maji Rising to change that.

In one summer weekend, a PopUp Village of Care will give a glimpse of those larger changes.

With Maji Rising, Anna’s long-term vision is to create a housing community that advances wellness, healing and justice through culturally grounded care and collective action.

In the two-day community event on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 22 to 23, at Liberty Park, attendees can access free healthcare screenings, back-to-school exams, dental and mental health care, housing and resource navigation, nutritional support services and holistic health offerings in a setting with music, cultural storytelling and activities for children to elders.

“It is a living vision of what



Anna Franklin founds Maji Rising to create housing community with a clinic.

becomes possible when people are cared for like family and communities are given the resources they need to thrive—not just survive,” she said. “The Village of Care is not just an event. It’s a prototype.

“We will meet people seeking health care, acknowledging their fears of judgment and high costs, and fears of feeling unseen or dismissed,” Anna continued. “Our goal is to replace fear with joy by providing what each individual needs the way they need it, not the way we think they need it.”

To demonstrate community care as a collective act, the Village of Care will bring together health-care providers, wellness practitioners, cultural leaders and small businesses with nonprofits and neighbors in a temporary “village” where people can access support without shame, fear, barriers or judgment.

In the weekend village, there will be free healthcare and wellness services, housing and employment support, youth and family programming, food access, cultural performances, healing spaces, music, art and movement.

“This is what care from the community looks like when it

*Continued on page 4*

# Teacher finds niche to help students facing socioeconomic struggles learn

By Mary Stamp

The dissonance between teaching students and students’ ability to learn because of socioeconomic factors led Jene Ray into nonprofit efforts to support students’ learning readiness.

She made the switch after 20 years as a K-12 teacher in low-income neighborhoods of Tacoma.

Now in Spokane as executive director of both The ZONE and the Northeast Community Center (NECC), she implements

programs on a campus that includes Shaw Middle School, Lisa Mattson On Track Academy, the Hillyard Library and New Tech Skills Center.

Linked by crosswalks over Cook St. to the center at 4001 N. Cook, the campus integrates education with the services of The ZONE and the community center.

The NECC campus also includes Akin child counseling and family support services, Hillyard Senior Center, Man-

zanita House language and community-building programs for immigrants, MultiCare Behavioral Health Clinic outpatient services, Northeast Child Development Center Head Start and Early Head Start, the Northeast Support Team (NEST Coalition) substance use programs, SNAP financial and energy assistance, Unify Community medical, dental and pharmacy, and Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

For 10 years, The ZONE has supported youth programs in the nine neighborhoods the NECC serves—where residents started advocating in 1976, after SNAP opened to help people in Hillyard. They are Chief Garry Park, Hillyard, Logan, Bemiss, Whitman, Nevada Heights, Shiloh Hills, Minnehaha and Riverside. In 1982, the center building was built to house SNAP, a senior center and other programs serving neighbors’ needs.

The ZONE embeds staff in schools and the community. The Youth Wellness Zone at On Track Academy students have

*Continued on page 6*

# Resource Directory goes to print the end of June

Deadlines drive the final content for the annual publication that comes with the double awareness of what a powerful tool it is for resource seekers and service providers, and awareness that once it is in print there are updates. There are always revisions because the nonprofit, faith, human service, communities and governments are in continual flux with never-ending changes in staff and services to meet the ever-shifting needs.

**June is directory editor** Malcolm Haworth’s time to include final updates, ads and community partners in the print edition. The plan is to print 18,000 to 22,000 depending on funds.

“**Uncertainty nonprofits** and businesses are facing with funding has led some to hold back on advertising, so we are asking some who have said no to larger ads to consider smaller ads, or a donation,” said Marijke Fakasiieiki, development and editorial associate. “We would like commitments from community partners before printing, to include their logos, but if some cannot meet the deadline, there will be other ways to recognize them.

“In addition, we invite all directory supporters to consider an extra donation to be sure we can print enough copies to meet the demand,” she added.

“We are now able to publish the sections online so we can update the online version soon after printing,” said Malcolm.

“**We remind the faith and nonprofit** community in particular to envision themselves as a small town. The more times funds circulate and stay within that community, the more robust its economy will be,” said Fig Tree editor Mary Stamp. “That’s not just for our appeal, but also a call to keep supporting all faith and nonprofit communities.”

**To support**, call 535-1813, mail donations to The Fig Tree, 1323 S. Perry St., Spokane, WA. 99202, or donate online at [thefigtree.org/donate.html](http://thefigtree.org/donate.html).

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## Religion News Briefs

### Around the World

World Council of Churches News, PO Box 2100  
CH - 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland Tel: +41-22 791 6111  
Fax: +41-22 788 7244 www.oikoumene.org

#### WCC leaders praise 'Magnifica Humanitas'

Upon publication of "Magnifica Humanitas," Pope Leo XIV's new encyclical on artificial intelligence and human dignity, World Council of Churches (WCC) central committee moderator Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm expressed gratitude for it addressing "the rapid technological developments in the age of digitalization, which find their most advanced expression in artificial intelligence."

"AI holds great opportunities, but also great risks," said Heinrich. "Technological development has gained such momentum that the rules ensuring its responsible use have not kept pace."

This makes a global public discussion about needed rules urgent, he said. "One of the goals is to establish effective mechanisms to protect freedom and human dignity against data corporations whose monopoly power seems uncontrollable."

The WCC has engaged in discussion of AI in recent years, and Heinrich is grateful that Pope Leo is furthering this discussion with his new encyclical. Churches need to raise their voices

WCC general secretary Jerry Pillay noted that the WCC has long recognized the advancement and benefits of technology and AI in many areas of life but equally cautioned against the challenges it brings to spiritual, moral and ethical values if not carefully checked and monitored.

Jerry said the theological approach of the encyclical provides a firm position on why churches need to raise their voices of discernment and caution about the risks and consequences that come with AI.

He finds that the encyclical "helps us to understand the call to love, grace and peace, as it poses the question that should always be in our minds, hearts and lips: 'What kind of world are we trying to build?' The WCC applauds and commends "Magnifica Humanitas" to all people, not just people of faith, for study, reflection and action as we seek to build a better world for all people and creation."

#### WCC head condemns treatment of activists

World Council of Churches general secretary Jerry Pillay condemned the reported humiliation, manhandling and degrading treatment of activists detained by Israeli authorities following the interception of the Gaza-bound flotilla.

"Such treatment of civilians and peace activists constitutes a serious violation of human dignity and of international human rights and humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. No security consideration can justify abuse," he said, demanding the immediate release of all detained activists and calling for an independent investigation and full accountability for all reported violations. He affirmed that humanitarian solidarity and peaceful civic action must never be criminalized.

#### Ecumenical Institute study applications open

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, part of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and attached to the University of Geneva, is accepting applications for its 2027-2028 academic programs in ecumenical studies through October 31. These programs offer unique opportunities for theological formation, intercultural exchange, and ecumenical engagement.

"Bossey is celebrating 80 years of ecumenical engagement this year. We continue to inspire transformative study and formation rooted in a rich and shared community life," said Lawrence Iwuamadi, academic dean of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.

Offerings include a semester study on the ecumenical movement's history, a certificate in ecumenical missiology, social ethics, theology or biblical hermeneutics, and a one-year master in ecumenical studies.

For information, visit oikoumene.org/what-we-do/the-ecumenical-institute-bossey.

## REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

### Fig Tree prepares for its annual meeting

The Fig Tree will hold the Annual Meeting of its Board of Directors from 1 to 3 p.m., Thursday, June 4, on Zoom.

At the meeting, there will be elections of new board members and the officers for the coming year, and members will review last year and look ahead.

"As of press time, we have two new board member candidates confirmed and are waiting to hear back from several others who have been invited to serve as liaisons for their denominations or organizations," said

editor-publisher Mary Stamp.

"We will also look at our financial standing in the midst of the uncertainty of these times affecting the funding of other organizations," she added. "We are pleased to be maintaining our income through the year, but realize some find it hard to make commitments."

The Fig Tree's goal is to reach \$60,000 in sponsor donations by the end of June, a month when many donors provide support through the summer months. Nearly \$50,000 of that amount

has been received.

The Resource Directory has commitments for \$41,800 of \$44,500 budgeted for advertising and for about \$15,000 of \$21,000 budgeted from community partners.

"We seek to confirm directory income as soon as possible in June to decide if we need to print fewer pages or copies," said Mary. "We are re-approaching some we already asked and pursuing new sources."

For information, call 951-2860 or email mary@thefigtree.org.

### Habitat-Spokane's Blitz Build is June 3 to 12

Habitat for Humanity Spokane celebrates its 25th annual Blitz Build June 3 to 12 in Spokane Valley, brings together hundreds of volunteers, sponsors, businesses, future homeowners and local leaders to build and to celebrate the milestone in building safe, decent, permanently affordable homes.

The build at 228 S. Carnahan Rd. on land donated by Spokane Valley and with support from the Washington State Department of Commerce through the Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program and Housing Trust Fund ends with a community block party and barbecue lunch

with neighbors and partners on Friday, June 12.

"Blitz Build shows what it takes to create affordable homeownership in today's Market," said Michelle Girardot, CEO of Habitat-Spokane, adding that for two weeks the community sees homeowners preparing for the purchase, volunteers giving their time, sponsors investing, and public partners removing barriers.

Habitat builds year round but a Blitz Build makes the work visible. Participating individuals, groups and businesses pay \$50 to help cover construction and other costs.

Later in the month, Habitat-Spokane's third annual Pride Build will be held Friday to Saturday, June 26 to 27, with local members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and allies working together to build a home and bring awareness to the systemic discrimination that has barred LGBTQIA2S+ families from equitable homeownership.

Habitat-Spokane's Pride Build seeks to create a more inclusive community and highlight everyone's need for affordable housing and the power it has to change lives.

For information, visit habitat-spokane.org.

### Area Jewish Family Services raises funds

Spokane Area Jewish Family Services (SAJFS) annual Julie Morris Memorial Benefit Brunch is from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Sunday, June 7, at Fête, A Nectar Co., 120 N. Stevens St. The event, which celebrates compassion, community and local service, will present Meryl Gersh and Joan Berkowitz with

the Julie Morris Outstanding Service Award.

It seeks to raise \$25,000 for SAJFS programs that serve individuals and families, guided by Jewish values of *tikkun olam*—repairing the world; *chesed*—loving kindness, and *L'dor V'dor*—connection across generations.

In 2025, SAJFS provided

nearly 2,800 services to more than 350 clients—including monthly senior luncheons, transportation to medical appointments, rent and utility assistance, a food bank, a medical equipment lending closet and a peer caregivers support group.

For information, call 413-8254 or email director@sajfs.org.

### LCSNW presents foster family information

Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW) is presenting a Refugee Foster Care Information Session at 5 p.m., Tuesday, June 30, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 316 E. 24th Ave.

The LCSNW Unaccompanied

Refugee Minor program serves teenage youth seeking refuge in the U.S. who do not have a family to provide care. It assures that youth are placed in a safe home.

The foster care provides shelter for these refugee youth and an opportunity for them to achieve

their dreams.

LCSNW welcomes foster families of diverse religions, sexual orientations, gender identities and citizenship.

For information, call 747-8224 or email theirhope@lscnw.org.

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**Spokane Riverkeeper kicks off cleanup**

The Spokane Riverkeeper's Summer Kickoff Cleanup will be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Saturday, June 13, at 820 E. Spokane Falls Blvd., at the University of Washington's School of Medicine parking lot.

This is an opportunity to keep the Spokane River clean by volunteering to remove litter and debris from the downtown river corridor, to give back to the river that gives so much to the community and to connect with fellow river stewards.

Participants are to wear sturdy walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring sunscreen, gloves, a reusable water bottle and—if possible—a trash picker.

For information, visit [spokaneriverkeeper.org](http://spokaneriverkeeper.org).

**MLK Center hosts Juneteenth celebration**

The Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center will host the annual community Juneteenth celebration, commemorating June 19, 1865, when formerly enslaved people in Texas learned they were free—two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, June 20, at the center, 500 S. Stone, it will include food, music, prizes, and vendors offering resources and activities. There will also be time for reflecting on the continued march toward justice.

For information, visit [mlkspokane.org](http://mlkspokane.org).

**NAMIWalks raises support for mental health**

NAMIWalks Spokane 2026, which starts at 10 a.m., Saturday, June 20, at Riverfront Park's North Bank Shelter, is a community celebration of hope, connection and support for mental health.

Individuals, families, friends and partners come together in a fun afternoon to raise awareness, reduce stigma and fund free mental health programs, said Chauntelle Lieske, executive director of NAMI Spokane.

For information, call 838-5515 or visit [namispokane.org](http://namispokane.org).

**B.C. Canoe journey highlights Sinixt culture**

The Kootenay Lake Canoe Journey, a Sinixt cultural event, will take place from Kaslo to Nelson, B.C., from Friday to Wednesday, June 26 to July 1, with Indigenous paddlers stopping at Garland Bay and Kokanee Creek before community celebrations at Lakeside Park in Nelson on Wednesday.

The multi-day celebration features traditional Sinixt cultural sharing, paddling and gatherings.

For example, a workshop from 3 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, at Capitol Theatre will demonstrate plant remedies used for millennia to treat ailments and maintain health. Sinixt knowledge keepers Faith Zacherle and Kalaya Love Zacherle will lead this workshop to share about the medicinal properties of local plants and three processes to make salves, tinctures and toners.

For information, visit [nelsonkootenaylake.com/events/sinixt-canoe-journey-lakeside-park/2026-07-01](http://nelsonkootenaylake.com/events/sinixt-canoe-journey-lakeside-park/2026-07-01).

**Thrive hosts youth soccer camp in July**

Thrive International will hold its Thrive Nation Youth Soccer Camp for children from kindergarten through the 12th grade Monday through Thursday, July 27 to 30, at Franklin Park.

Spokane's 90+ Project youth soccer organization will provide leaders to manage the daily camp with the support of Rayonier, Spokane Police Foundation, CHAS Health, Numerica Credit Union, Bethany Presbyterian and volunteers.

The event is limited to 250 youth on a first-come-first-served basis.

For information, email [connie@thriveinternational.org](mailto:connie@thriveinternational.org) or visit [thriveint.org/thrive-nation-youth](http://thriveint.org/thrive-nation-youth).

**Local groups coordinate World Refugee Day**

In observance of the United Nations designated World Refugee Day, Refugee and Immigrant Connections Spokane (RICS) plans to celebrate the refugee and immigrant community members in the Spokane region.

The free, family-friendly celebration takes place from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, June 20, at the Lair Student Center at Spokane Community College on the theme "Everyone Belongs."

Former refugee chefs from Feast World Kitchen will prepare foods for attendees to sample.

Other festivities include a

cultural marketplace selling crafts and art created by former refugees, traditional songs and dances from around the world, speeches by local leaders, a new citizen ceremony, a community agency fair to share resources and services in the area and activities for kids.

Refugee and Immigrant Connections Spokane convenes the planning committee which includes ASAP Translations, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran Community Services Northwest, Manzanita House, Spokane Colleges and World

Relief Spokane.

RICS has a safety and security plan to ensure the comfort and safety of World Refugee Day participants. Updates will be posted on RICS' social media in the days leading up to the event, said Renee Kenney, marketing and development director.

RICS empowers refugee and immigrant communities by providing services, fostering community bonds and advocating for refugee and immigrant rights in the Inland Northwest.

For information, email [renee@ricspokane.org](mailto:renee@ricspokane.org).

**United Methodists awards peace grants**

The Pacific Northwest Conference Board of Church and Society awarded The Fig Tree a \$1,000 Peace with Justice Grant to recognize their work promoting media literacy through peace and solutions journalism. The funds will help highlight voices often overlooked in other media.

Other recipients include:

- Leavenworth Community United Methodist Church (UMC) Backpack Program for 75 K-12 students facing food insecurity.

- Mason UMC United Women in Faith programs, including "Blessing Bags" for unhoused

persons and work with the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center.

- Aldersgate UMC's "Love Thy Neighbor" project, holding a speaker series on inclusion and providing advocacy materials.

The Fig Tree received one of three stand-alone grants along with Village Cohousing Works of Spokane and Boundary County Victim Services (BCVS).

The Village Cohousing grant supports a leadership development intern to build financial literacy and leadership for first-time homeowners and the community.

The BCVS grant funds volunteer advocate training in trauma-

informed skills for its 24/7 crisis line serving those experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, elder and child abuse, bullying and suicidality.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award recipient is the Rev. K. James Davis for decades of ministry and leadership advocating for peace, justice and inclusion in the conference. He will select a congregation or non-profit to receive a \$1,000 Peace with Justice Grant.

For information, visit [greater-nw.org/news/2026-pnw-peace-with-justice-grants-mlk-award-announced](http://greater-nw.org/news/2026-pnw-peace-with-justice-grants-mlk-award-announced).

**Women's relief society serves, builds faith**

Women of faith from North Idaho and Western Montana gathered for a Morning of Service and Connection, Saturday, May 2, hosted by the Bonners Ferry Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Participants came from Sand-

point to Libby to serve others, strengthen friendships and build faith. The relief society worldwide brings together generations of women around its mission of charity, compassion and Christ-like service.

The morning included mul-

tiple projects to help community members, including assembling socks and care items for seniors, organizing a clothing exchange and supporting a "Just Serve" station to meet community needs.

The keynote, Sister Sarah Tobey Roos, a marriage and family therapist, spoke on creating places where individuals feel "seen, valued and loved," emphasizing the importance of meaningful connection in homes, communities and churches.

For information, call 879-5608.

**SNAP names Amber Johnson CEO**

The Boards of SNAP and SNAP Financial Access (SFA) announce that Amber Johnson is the next Chief Executive Officer of both organizations. She brings 19 years of nonprofit management experience and understanding of the agencies.

"Amber's experience, leadership and commitment make her the right person," said SNAP

and SFA board chairs Rose Wear and Nancy Isserlis.

Amber will serve as incoming SNAP/SFA CEO from June 1 to Sept. 30 and becomes CEO on Oct. 1. Current CEO Julie Honekamp will stay on staff, in a new role from Sept. 30 to Jan. 1, 2027, to support Amber.

For information, visit [snap-wa.org](http://snap-wa.org).

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# Healthcare consultant reveals long-term vision for a community of care

Continued from page 1 comes,” said Anna. “We believe care should find us before the crisis does.

“The Village of Care is about connection and belonging. It’s about joy. It’s about creating spaces where our community feels seen, valued and poured back into,” she continued.

The weekend event is designed to be a living demonstration of Beloved Kijiji, Maji Rising’s long-term vision for a 72-unit, mixed-use affordable housing community in East Central Spokane, centered around healthcare, wellness, culture, food and community healing.

“The name is a direct nod to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s vision of the beloved community, a world where every person is seen, receives the care they deserve as a human being and where neighbors are compelled to show up for one another,” Anna explained. “That vision is not abstract. It is the blueprint.”

“Kijiji, the Swahili word for ‘village,’ expresses our belief that healing happens best in community,” added Anna. “It is designed to help people feel alive, welcomed and human

while they access whole-person wellness resources.”

Maji Rising envisions building Beloved Kijiji with Take Up the Cause, founded by Chauncey Jones. It combines his work and expertise in affordable housing and generational wealth with Anna’s vision for and expertise in understanding healthcare systems and delivery.

The Village of Care weekend is supported by Waters Meet, Spokane Parks and Recreation, Catholic Charities, Arcora, Washington Women’s Commission, Avista Foundation and individual donations.

Joy and education are built into the event.

For example, someone coming for dental care will be greeted by a tooth fairy with a magic wand.

In addition, every service at the Village of Care will be paired with a STEM activity.

“We will meet people where they are,” she said. “We want every person who comes to feel like we have been waiting just for them, like they are loved and seen.”

For the PopUp Village of Care, Anna is still working on recruiting volunteers, sponsors

and local providers.

Anna brings 34 years of healthcare experience rooted in Spokane and extending across the country through her work in Lean Six Sigma process improvement, clinical systems, and finance and health equity.

Anna grew up in Michigan before settling in Spokane where she graduated from Rogers High School.

Thinking she would be a city planner, Anna studied urban and regional planning at Eastern Washington University, graduating in 1998.

In 2016, she earned Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt Certification and a master of business administration from West Texas A & M University in Canyon, Texas.

Since then, she has woven her planning background into her healthcare career, spanning what she calls the patient continuum of care in the laboratory, imaging, outpatient, clinic, hospital, rehabilitation, long-term care and assisted living settings.

Bringing together her education, lived experiences and professional experiences, Anna analyzes systems to reduce struc-

tural inefficiencies in delivery of care.

Now she also works with healthcare teams to identify disparities and build more equitable systems and structures.

Three years ago, she founded Maji Rising to offer a new healthcare approach based on what she has learned by listening to people at community meetings, focus groups, church gatherings, encounters at sports events and one-on-one.

“I have heard people’s fears about seeking health care and learned about gaps, perceptions and lived experiences. The fears are about the inaccessibility of health care, the mixed quality of outcomes and the need of individuals and families to be able to afford the health care they desire,” said Anna, who has also heard people’s fears about moving from primary care to specialists and, when aging, about moving to assisted living.

A recent trip to South Africa expanded Anna’s vision of what healthcare can look like.

There, she connected with Indigenous and modern healing practitioners who use touch, scent and sound—including

drumming and singing—as part of care.

She witnessed healthcare woven into the fabric of daily community life, including a surgery center inside a shopping mall.

“Healing doesn’t happen only behind closed doors or at the end of a long referral chain,” she said. “It can meet people where they are.”

Beloved Kijiji, which is projected to open in 2028, will include a healthcare clinic serving both residents and the surrounding community along with providing other wraparound services.

Anna said she chose East Central Spokane for it, because it’s where she felt most comfortable when she moved here.

“It’s where I belonged, where I laughed, where I cried and where I loved,” she said. “Some places choose us.

“Spokane is a beautiful community, and we must open our eyes, hearts and imaginations to new ways to deliver care here that is culturally responsive, accessible and trusted,” said Anna.

For information, email maji1619@outlook.com or visit majirising.org.

## Spokane 3 find support

Supporters of the “Spokane 3” showed up throughout the federal trial to express solidarity in court from May 18 to 27, at rallies with speakers and by making public statements to share online.

On May 28, the jury found the three guilty of federal conspiracy charges. Their defense attorneys say they will ask for a judgment of acquittal and appeal the verdict.

In a press conference on the opening day, the Rev. Walter Kendricks of Spokane Coalition Against Racism and City Council member Paul Dillon called the charges against Bajun Mavalwalla II, Jac Archer and Justice Forral unjust.

They joined hundreds from Spokane in a spur-of-the moment protest on June 11, 2025, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents detained

two young asylum-seekers. Both were since released because they were here legally. Community members gathered nonviolently to demand their release. ICE refused and physically interacted with protesters.

Walter and Paul praised the community support for the constitutional rights of citizens and immigrant neighbors.

The Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane invited people to make videos stating why they support them. Information is at pjals.org/spokane3.

Jeff DeBray of Fuse Washington encouraged supporters to donate to local immigrant and refugee groups. For information, email jeff@fusewashington.org.

As a monthly, The Fig Tree will follow up, but for details suggests spokesman.com/stories/2026/may/28/former-leader-of-federal-prosecutors-in-spokane-cr.

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# Ideas to reduce homelessness are now being implemented for families

By Mary Stamp

When Joe Ader came to Family Promise of Spokane, he brought with him ideas about how to end poverty. Since then, he has used his position to implement those ideas of ways to prevent and reduce homelessness.

The program in early 2016 was then serving 43 people through rotational church shelters. By December 2016, Family Promise started Open Doors, a 24/7 emergency shelter for families at Emmanuel Family Life Center.

In 2017, it started using Joe's ideas for eviction prevention and housing stabilization to prevent families from becoming homeless.

**Today, 63 percent** of the families Family Promise serves are those they keep from becoming homeless, and 37 percent are being rehoused—with 10 percent of those housed in the emergency shelter and 27 percent rehoused while they are staying with families and friends.

Navigating today's homelessness environment is in flux, said Joe, who pointed out that policies at the federal level impact Family Promise indirectly, through changes in funding for the safety net, refugees and Section 8 vouchers for people with disabilities. As a result, families who were once served by other agencies are coming to their shelter and staying longer.

**Because families** on the verge of homelessness can be identified earlier through the schools, Family Promise has housing case managers assigned to work alongside six high school campuses. In those schools and their connected feeder schools, they intervene when they identify students whose families are at risk of homelessness, Joe explained.

Housing case managers are currently working with Central, East and West Valley, University, North Central and Shadle Park high schools. Family Promise plans to expand next year to Rogers and Lewis and Clark, and eventually to Mead and Mount Spokane. Case managers also take referrals from the elementary and middle schools that feed into those schools.

**"Through talking** with school staff, officials and teachers, the case managers find families before they show up at a shelter," said Joe. "We serve families before they are evicted or right after they lose housing and are with family and friends. We house them before they need a shelter."



Joe Ader shows some of the new playground equipment.

Family Promise's emergency shelters serve families in the city, suburbs, small towns and rural areas in Spokane County.

While there is much construction of new housing in the I-90 corridor east to Idaho and in Mead, Joe is unsure how much of it is affordable.

"We continue to see high levels of need," he said. "We are serving more families than ever and have seen a 37 percent increase in the number of families served in all programs—from 800 families last year to more than 1,100 families with 4,160 people."

**Joe said Family Promise** has been able to rehouse people by developing good relationships with landlords and property managers.

The case managers meet with each family, learn their needs and try to find housing near where the children go to school, but that does not always work.

They help the family prepare documents and secure income. Then they work with the landlords to accept the families and keep payments down.

**"Landlords like to work** with us because we provide stabilization and support for the families. If a landlord has a problem with a family, they know they can contact us, so we can work with the family and they don't feel they have to evict them," Joe explained.

Joe finds more challenges working with corporate-owned housing that establish blanket policies about not accepting someone with a criminal record, a poor credit history or a previous eviction.

**"It's easier for me to talk** with property owners who have a few units and ask them to work with us," he said.

"The prevention side of helping families keep housing is a critical part of what we do," said Joe, "because children who experience homelessness are 46.9 times more likely to be homeless as an adult."

"I have said for years that the downtown street homelessness happens because of what was not done for kids earlier. What starts with kids in homeless families ends downtown," he said.

**"It starts with newborns.** Last year we had 25 newborns come through the house we have as a shelter for five families in separate rooms," Joe said.

Family Promise now serves up to 70 people a night in its three locations. The emergency walk-in mass congregate shelter at 2002 E. Mission is where families with children come. All the families first come to that shelter. If there is an opening, they can go to one of the houses.

Aside from the main shelter, two houses are located near the Gonzaga University campus. In each house, they share a common kitchen and living room. One house is for five families with newborns, and the other house is for four families.

**"I see hope and resilience** in our kids, despite their challenges navigating trauma," he said. "More than half of our families have experienced domestic violence, yet the kids still play on the playground we opened last year, still sing songs and still do crafts. I see hope for their future if we can stabilize them and their families."

Joe said Family Promise has two programs.

On the "Keep Housing" side, they offer rental assistance and stabilization programs.

On the "Get Housing" side, they have the shelters and high

school case managers.

Some case managers are based in schools; some work out of the shelter, and some work in the office with families living around the county. There are 12 case managers each in the get-housing and keep-housing programs.

In addition to shelter staff and case managers, the nonprofit's 54 staff work in client assistance programming, raise funds and do administration.

**"In the long run,** we want to close shelters, to make them unnecessary through prevention, reaching people before they are evicted," said Joe.

Family Promise's focus on families with children—or expecting a child—overlaps with other agencies. Volunteers of America's Crosswalk serves unaccompanied youth and young adults, but youth and young adults with children come to Family Promise. Catholic Charities' House of Charity houses single men and women in emergencies. The Union Gospel Mission shelters men, especially those seeking substance use disorder treatment. It also has a shelter for women and children. Family Promise is the only shelter taking single fathers with children.

Joe works with Catholic Charities to house some families in Sisters Haven near Spokane Falls Community College, at Gonzaga Haven and at Pope Francis Haven in Spokane Valley.

**"Our first priority is** to house families wherever we can, but my preference is to house them in mixed socio-economic neighborhoods, so they are entwined with a community with people of different backgrounds," said Joe.

"We want families to be part

of the community fabric, not just with other low-income families. It's challenging to find," he said, "but it's better for family stability for them to be in a diverse income community. When we put everyone of one socioeconomic class into the same community, we create two-sides-of-the-tracks mindsets."

"For the community, schools and people, it's better that people live together so they know and understand different people," he continued. "I appreciate mixed socioeconomic developments."

**In 10 years** of implementing his ideas about ending poverty, Joe has learned and adapted as he has navigated the challenges presented by changes in the national administration, state policies and city ordinances.

To share his commitment to engage with people and help them break out of generational poverty he has published a book, *The Ghetto, The Garden and the Gospel: What Every Christian Needs to Understand about Poverty in America*. An updated edition with a workbook will come out this summer on Amazon, he said.

For information, call 747-5487, email [office@familypromiseofspokane.org](mailto:office@familypromiseofspokane.org) or visit [familypromiseofspokane.org](http://familypromiseofspokane.org).

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# Neighbors are the experts on knowing what they need to thrive

*Continued from page 1*  
 defined what wellness means to them, opened a schoolyard forest, distributed produce to families and presented their work to the Washington State Senate Human Needs Community.

This is the type of integration of nonprofit community services with education that Jene realized was essential to ensure that students will succeed and that educators can educate.

**Jene grew up** on a remote farm in Pierce County, 20 minutes from the inner-city Tacoma high school where she eventually taught students struggling to learn and manage all life was throwing at them outside school.

She taught preschool, then grade school, before moving into curriculum development with the school district.

On the farm, Jene had no radio or TV. Her mother went to the store only once a month for paper products. They raised sheep for meat, goats for milk, chickens and gardens, and even ground their own wheat for bread.

While she was in some ways sheltered from the nearby city, because her parents had lived in France while her father was in the military, the family visited and had visits from French friends. That led her to study French at Willamette University in Salem, Ore., and spend a year after graduation teaching high school English in Nice, France, before earning a master's degree in education at Willamette in 1994.

**"I envisioned teaching** French to expose students to different world views and ways of thinking," said Jene.

Sheltered from the challenges of inner-city students until she began teaching, she found it hard to implement her vision. Students struggled in school because of housing and food insecurity or violence in their neighborhoods and homes.

Jene's efforts to push children to do assignments without addressing their needs motivated her to shift to nonprofit leadership to address the missing pieces through social services.

Now she coordinates wrap-around services for students so that when they go to school they



**Jene Ray helps NECC strengthen neighborhood ties.**

can learn.

**Jene is influenced** by her Jewish heritage and its teaching on healing the world—*tikkun olam*.

"It refers to picking up and putting the broken pieces of the world back together. Everyone has skills to help. Mine are working with kids and creating neighborhoods in which they can thrive," she said. "I love to see what happens when I encourage them to find their voice so they can be successful."

"My practice of Jewish faith is about how I walk through life day by day," said Jene.

**After leaving teaching** in 2013, she advocated for education and workforce reform at the Washington State Legislature. Then she directed operations for the Center for Strong Schools with the University of Washington in Tacoma.

Soon after Jene moved to Spokane in the summer of 2018 to marry Dave Ray, she met Amber Waldref and began to volunteer at the NECC and The ZONE, which embody her vision. In January 2019, Jene was hired by The ZONE and eventually became executive director of the NECC/ZONE in October 2025.

The ZONE works to understand needs of families and youth. With data from that work, it partnered with Ballmer Group in Seattle, which funded their after-school and summer youth programs.

In 2023, Ballmer Group also contributed to funding for mental health care, while NECC remodeled the former Northeast Li-

brary building to open in October 2024 as a behavioral health clinic where neighbors and students can go for counseling.

With hall passes, students can go to other buildings for dental, medical or behavioral health care during the day, so families don't have to take off work to transport them to appointments.

Jene coordinates efforts of the NECC and The ZONE with the agencies and staff at the center to offer "resident-facing programs" with people to walk beside neighbor children, youth and adults.

**"Neighbors know** what they need and are experts in how to create thriving households and community," she said.

For example, a neighbor showed up at the NECC not sure where to begin. Her rent was due, her work hours were cut, and her kids were watching her try to figure out what to do.

"She wasn't looking to be fixed. She was looking for someone to walk beside her," said Jene. "That's what we do at the NECC."

The center is more than a place to go for a class or appointment with one of the partner agencies. "We sit down with people and

ask what they need to thrive," she said. "Our programs and services are shaped by the people who live here."

**The Resident Steering Committee** of youth and adults sets priorities, asks questions, identifies needs and determines staff and program direction. Current priorities are employment, life skills and belonging.

For employment, case managers work one-on-one with families to build financial stability and map out careers. The Economic Mobility Program helped 27 individuals secure jobs, three launch businesses and 11 enroll in GED or ESL classes at Spokane Community College.

NECC has led community-voiced advocacy, partnering with the Northeast Public Development Authority and raised \$2.65 million to build 24/7 childcare in Hillyard for those working evenings and weekends.

**Programs help neighbors** find affordable housing through below market-rate rent or home ownership. Other programs build confidence through classes and internships. For example, Jean's Beans Coffee Shop, named for former executive director Jean Farmer, offers workforce training.

**NECC staff listen** and then offer skills in finances, parenting, mental health, nutrition or communication.

They organize community events and block parties with food, activities, resources, education and crafts so neighbors meet and build trust.

**Since starting** at the NECC/ZONE, Jene has read books by Father Greg Boyle, a Gonzaga alum and Jesuit priest who served gangs in California.

"His emphasis on building kinship over doing charity helped me see that when we position ourselves as helpers, standing

above those who need help, we get it wrong. It's not us and them. We belong to each other," Jene said. "Fr. Greg reintegrated gang members into society through awareness that God loves all of us and we, in God's image, are to love each other."

**"We all know** what we need to thrive. At NECC, we hold space, ask questions and move out of the way of people's own strength," she said. "Some barriers are based on the impact on our well-being of the family, zip code and environment we are born into, but we are all inherently whole."

"People heal and return to themselves through love and being accepted, not judged. We are a safe space where people can come and ask for support. When we genuinely see each other, something shifts. Families stabilize. Children show up at school. Neighbors look out for one another. Neighborhoods become the places we hoped they could be," Jene explained.

For information, call 209-7227 or 487-1603, email [jray@necommunitycenter.com](mailto:jray@necommunitycenter.com) or visit [thezonespokane.com](http://thezonespokane.com) or [necommunitycenter.com](http://necommunitycenter.com).

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- Help expand access to safe transportation for youth
- Support youth-centered community planning
- Support safe, welcoming spaces where youth can connect, learn, and belong

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Summer Camps 2026

# N-Sid-Sen encourages ownership by campers of all ages giving back

The enthusiasm of campers and volunteers coming to N-Sid-Sen has been inspiring as they work bit by bit to help with the extensive cleanup since a Dec. 17 storm tore out 35 trees in a swath from the outdoor beach chapel through cabin 12, with little damage to buildings.

A logger took out the big trees, but left branches. Campers and volunteers have helped clear them from the trails and grounds.

A third grader in a Montessori camp likened the cleanup to the adage about how to eat an elephant—“one bite at a time.”

“We previously called our spring and fall volunteer camp weeks Work Camp. Now we call it ‘Giving Back Camp,’” said Linda Crowe, who has spent the last year as a volunteer co-manager with her husband, Randy, who was camp managing director from 1990 to 2012.

Each group holding retreats and camps this spring have taken



Campers of all ages help with cleanup after winter storm.

some time to help carry branches to burn piles to give back.

When the power was out in the storm, sprinklers in the welcome lodge turned on, damaging the flooring.

Participants in June and October dance camps, who have come for more than 40 years, donated more than \$7,000 toward

repairs beyond what was covered by insurance.

In addition to the grounds cleanup, Randy and Linda have worked with volunteers to replace carpets and repaint in Spirit Lodge.

Some participants in a March Textile Camp made 10 quilt tops that will be completed by Textile

Camp participants and later by a quilters group.

This spring, there were also retreats and camps with Temple Beth Shalom, a yoga group, three Montessori schools and Catholic youth.

Randy said the N-Sid-Sen has a full season from July 1 to Aug. 8 with United Church of Christ (UCC) for elementary, middle and high school kids, family and intergenerational camps. The 2026 theme is “In the Wilderness.”

While many weeks and weekends from June into fall are reserved, Randy said that there are still a few openings.

“Our program has happened because of incredible gifts of time, talent and money in the last 10 months,” Randy said.

As an example of the generosity, he told of a man visiting to prepare for details for the dance camp. When he learned one lodge needed a washer and dryer, he pledged Randy a donation for

the total cost.

Along with many long-term camp supporters keeping the camp well cared for, newcomers, like one who came from Colbert to the May Women’s Retreat, are appreciating the site.

“I wonder why it has taken me so long to get here,” she said.

Another woman, who came from Seattle and went to N-Sid-Sen as a camper years ago, decided to send her children to Kids Camp and to come with them as a volunteer.

The Pacific Northwest Conference of the UCC, which owns and operates N-Sid-Sen on the eastern shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene, is in the process of hiring a new managing director to provide a ministry of hospitality, for all who come to N-Sid-Sen, including for UCC folks and congregations.

For information, call 208-689-3489, email randy@n-sid-sen.org or visit n-sid-sen.org.

# Lutherhaven sets kids outdoors and away from the noise of screens

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Lutherhaven, as its name suggests, is a camp in the Lutheran tradition. It has operated for more than 75 years on Lake Coeur d’Alene, by Shoshone Creek and in McPherson Meadows in north Idaho. It offers year-round events and retreats for youth and adults.

The 2026 summer camp theme for Lutherhaven Ministries is “Run,” based on 1 Timothy 6:11: “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” The theme draws attention to running away from distractions and toward a life of faith, righteousness, love and endurance in Christ.

Summer camping sessions run in six-day, five-night or half-week (three-day) formats between late June and mid-August for youth of all ages, with the shorter programs for the youngest campers. Their programs, staffed largely by college students, feature swimming, campfires and Bible studies.

Lutherhaven believes that kids need space to breathe. Getting kids outdoors and un-plugged is more important than ever. Both at Camp Lutherhaven and Shoshone Mountain Retreat, programs help un-plug campers of all ages from the noise of screens to draw them into creation, community, service and Jesus.

In their approach to the ministry of camping, they affirm that



Campers help each other, worship together. Photos courtesy of Lutherhaven

“kids were made for dirt, lakes, laughter and belonging.”

At Lutherhaven, faith formation becomes lived service, forming leaders who serve the world.

Besides traditional camp programs, Lutherhaven also features Champ Camp from June 21 to 24 for students with disabilities and Family Champ Camp Weekend from July 31 to Aug. 2 for families whose students have special needs.

In July, Lutherhaven offers seventh to 12th graders several six-day TREK programs. They feature three off-site outdoor experiences. Depending on the

week, campers climb natural rock walls, bike the Hiawatha Trail, do off-site hikes, sail or kayak on Lake Coeur d’Alene or raft the Clark Fork River in Montana.

The camp also offers a program called Idaho Servant Adventures, a week-long, faith-filled, service leadership camp. It combines the elements of a service trip and the energy of summer camp into one week. In this program, youth groups from across the United States come together to grow in Christian faith, love and service.

For information, visit lutherhaven.com.

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Summer Camps 2026

# Camp Cross' new cabins will expand numbers of people it can serve

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

Camp Cross, the camp of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane accessible by a short boat ride from Lost Bay on Lake Coeur d'Alene, is building 16 new cabins and a retreat house to expand during its camp season.

"In August, we hope to have them available and begin to welcome people with different accessibility needs," explained Alex Flannagan, who is now in his third year as camp executive director, noting that currently the cabins are served by only two central bathrooms.

Each new cabin will have two twin beds and a private bathroom. Eventually, the diocese hopes the camp can be open for a longer season, except when it becomes too difficult to access by boat.

Alex described his hopes for campers who come there.

"We want each person to come



Camp Cross has building underway to expand cabins.

Photo courtesy of Camp Cross

as they truly are and know they are received and accepted as they are. In other settings, some campers might feel they have to play a role, but camp is a place where they can safely put down their masks and be themselves," he said.

Alex believes this summer's theme at Camp Cross, "Sing to the Lord a New Song," opens up many possibilities for designing the summer programs to campers

to reflect on what their calling is and how they are called to use their gifts.

Camp Cross is open from May through October, with the summer staff on deck for nine weeks beginning June 14. Each five-day, four-night session for campers in a particular age range includes favorite camp activities such as arts and crafts, marshmallow roasting, hiking, canoeing and faith development activities

appropriate for that age group.

Camp Cross is strongly supported by the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane and Bishop Gretchen Rehberg, said Alex.

Besides the traditional camping sessions for young people, Camp Cross also has an art and music session for fourth through ninth graders. It strives to blend faith and spirituality with the beauty of the creative arts, building on a formation in writing, drawing and music for all skill levels.

This camp will also use the 2026 theme and include traditional camp activities like hiking and swimming.

Towards the end of June, Alex said that Camp Cross will be hosting Camp No Limits, which is a special program for children with limb loss or limb difference and their families.

"Our staff pivots from running the program to provid-

ing the support for others who make this experience possible for children and families who otherwise might not be able to have an outdoor experience. In this environment, parents often are surprised at what their children are able to do when guided in trying new things," he said.

This summer, Camp Cross also has events for adults and families to be outdoors and deepen their faith. They include an adult faith formation and retreat session in June, days at the lake in July, a clergy camp in August and a Labor Day Family Camp in September.

At the end of the season, Camp Cross also features Queer Camp, an LGBTQ+ affirming space where families can build community, enjoy activities in nature and grow closer to God.

For information, visit [campcross.org](http://campcross.org).

# New Ross Point director has passion for church camps

By Catherine Ferguson SNJM

James "Goody" Goodman is the new executive director at Ross Point, a summer camp in the Baptist tradition located near Post Falls on the Spokane River.

Its 2026 summer theme "Unshakable" is inspired by a quote from Psalm 62, "He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken."

Goody has been on the job since the first week of February. In 2025, while working in his previous job as facilities manager at the Port of Bremerton, he saw an ad for the executive director position in the American Camp Association newsletter and applied.

He is passionate about camps and had worked in two different camps in Western Washington before COVID.

Because of the pandemic, those camps were not able to continue, so Goody took the job with the Port of Bremerton.

He is excited to bring his passion for camps to Ross Point, where he has come with his wife, Angela, and his children, Hannah, a graduate of Western Washington University, Heidi, a graduate of Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, and Heath, a high school student. They will participate in the work at Ross Point.

"What I hope for most this summer is that all of us, campers and staff, build an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ and authentic relationships with each other," said Goody.



Campers experience games that encourage cooperation.

Photo courtesy of Ross Point

"We have a lot of changes here this year along with me as a new executive director, a new kitchen manager and other new faces, but we are still the same family that made Ross Point such a special place over the years," he said.

Regular camp sessions run from one to six days starting July 5 for a family camp and ending on July 25. There are camps available for all ages.

"In all of them, we will focus on helping students discover what it means to stand firm in a shifting world," Goody affirmed. "Through biblical teaching, small group conversations and meaningful experiences, campers will learn that, while circumstances change, God remains steady and faithful. We

desire that when our students leave, they know they don't have to navigate life alone—they can build their lives on the solid foundation of Christ."

In early August, Ross Point hosts Camp Journey, which provides a community of hope for children and their families touched by cancer. In a nurturing, medically supervised home-away-from-home, young cancer survivors can leave their worries behind for a week and immerse themselves in a fun-filled outdoor camp experience tailored expressly to their needs. A trained oncology staff is onsite 24/7.

For information, visit [rosspoint.org](http://rosspoint.org).



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Summer Camps 2026

# Camp Gifford includes youth who might not otherwise come to camp

For more than 100 years, Camp Gifford on Deer Lake has provided life-changing outdoor experiences for youth who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend summer camp, according to Captain David Cain of The Salvation Army.

**This year marks** a milestone for Camp Gifford: accreditation by the American Camp Association (ACA), a nationally recognized organization that sets rigorous standards for safety, staffing, programming and camper care.

“ACA accreditation reflects our commitment to providing not only a fun and meaningful camp experience, but one that families can trust,” said David. “The standards cover everything from staff training and emergency preparedness to health care, age-appropriate programming



Counselors deploy soap-bubble ‘snow’ for kids to play in. photo courtesy of Camp Gifford

and activity safety.”

**ACA standards include** areas such as appropriate staff-to-camper ratios, trained first-aid personnel, emergency transportation availability and developmentally focused activities. Camps

are also evaluated in specialized activity areas such as waterfront recreation, adventure programming and travel experiences.

**This summer,** Camp Gifford will offer several camp experiences for children and teens from

June 22 to July 31: four five-day sessions of Discovery Camp for ages 7 to 12, and four five-day sessions of Wilderness Camp for ages 13 to 17.

**The Salvation Army camp** experience fosters seven core goals: 1) deepening faith and a relationship with Jesus, 2) cultivating new friendships, 3) growing socially and emotionally, 4) experiencing new adventures, 5) building self-esteem by discovering their God-given potential, 6) developing skills and 7) experiencing those values in a safe, supportive environment.

One way Camp Gifford encourages connection and personal growth is by asking campers to leave electronics at home.

**“This gives them** the opportunity to build friendships face-to-face, try new activities and engage with the camp experience,” David explained.

Because Camp Gifford exists to serve youth who may not otherwise have access to summer camp, scholarships play a critical role. While all families contribute a registration fee, about 90 percent of campers receive partial or full tuition scholarships.

“We never want finances to be the reason a child misses out on camp,” David said.

**Many campers come** from families facing financial hardship, while others are in foster care or navigating difficult life circumstances. Through donor support and scholarships, Camp Gifford works to ensure every child has the opportunity to experience the encouragement, adventure and belonging camp provides.

For information, call 233-2511 or visit [campgifford.com](http://campgifford.com).

# Day camps are popular at two United Methodist camp locations

Alan Rogstad, executive director of Pacific Northwest United Methodist camps, has seen an uptick in registrations early in the season for the United Methodist Conference’s camps at Twinlow near Rathdrum, Lazy F near Ellensburg, Indianola in Indianola and Ocean Park near Long Beach.

**Since registrations** dropped in COVID, day camps and family camps have become more popular. Alan said day camps draw 45 to 50 elementary and middle school children from nearby communities. Because they introduce kids to camp, some come back for overnight camps.

“The traditional age-level, five-night camps that were standard for many years are not growing like day camps and family camps,” Alan observed.

“There has been a cultural shift since COVID, changing parents’ decisions about where to send kids for the summer,” he said. “Those at day camps come home each evening. Those at family camps are there with parents and grandparents, who are more protective than they used to be.”

**For 35 years,** Alan has served in camp ministry leadership, first with Lutheran camps in North Carolina and California and then 18 years with the United Methodist Church in Seattle, where he grew up and went to Boy Scout camps. He worked at church camps during and after college. After two years as seasonal staff, he decided it was what he wanted to do for a career.

“I found church camping was a deeper, more meaningful experience,” said Alan, who took two years away from camp ministry to go to Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley but then decided not to be a pastor.



Twinlow campers prepare for water games. Photo courtesy of Alan Rogstad

“I loved camp ministry, so I went back to do that as a career,” he said. “I was drawn to camp ministry because I loved the outdoors—hiking, climbing and skiing. I love being out in the wilderness and helping kids do that in the context of faith.”

**“My first experience** of church camp solidified my faith through connection to the natural world and God’s creation,” he said. “It’s a remarkable transformation for people.”

“The experience of community and hearing lessons in the outdoors still happens in day camps, but it’s not as profound as at overnight camps. They have the same crafts, games and hikes, but the community time and cabin times provide more intimate experiences in which more profound faith building happens,” Alan said.

**“We hope** that those who come to day camps will decide to come to overnight camps,” he continued. “Young kids at day camps see older kids’ activities on the same site.”

While the day camps are at two of the four UMC camp sites—Twinlow and Lazy F—

they may be added in future years at other sites.

Day camps for kids from second through eighth grades run 10 weeks at both camps, two weeks more than the overnight camps. The day camps fit family needs and schedules. Kids eat breakfast before coming at 9 a.m. and have dinner with their families after leaving at 4 p.m.

**“Many come** for multiple weeks,” Alan said, clarifying that it’s much more than day care, but many parents use day camp in the summer when kids are not in school.

Day camps reach kids who would not normally come to a church camp, but the experience introduces them to one facet of

church life. Some families have come to a United Methodist Church as a result of experiences at camp, Alan said, adding that “overnight camps provide the quintessential camp experience and the most growth for kids.”

**Lazy F and Twinlow** day camps have dedicated program directors and counselors.

For the overnight camps, Lazy F and Twinlow pay college-aged staff, but Indianola and Ocean Park camps are volunteer-led by local pastors and teams that run a camp for one week at a time.

Within the eight weeks of camps, there are two weeks each when those in grades one

to three, four and five, middle school and high school can come.

For information, visit [pnw-camps.org](http://pnw-camps.org).

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# Camp Spalding has 'unprecedented' interest in its camps

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest, which operates Camp Spalding on Davis Lake near Newport, Andy Sonneland, executive director of the camp for 36 years, told how running a camp that draws campers into relationships with Jesus "never gets old."

Over the years, especially in the last four years, he has found that the level of interest in the camps, especially the teen camps, has been "unprecedented."

He opened registration at midnight March 9 and by 9 a.m., all 204 slots for high school girls were filled. By noon, there were more than 1,000 registrations and 40 on a waiting list.

By early May, six of nine camps were sold out, including Junior and Senior High. are 137 kids on a waiting list.

Andy believes the main draw for campers is their summer staff of 40 college and just-graduated college students.

"I look for staff who set aside time to be with Jesus each day in Scripture and prayer, and who are learning to listen to him, as the Holy Spirit brings to mind words that align with the timeless truth of Scripture," said Andy. "As they do, God will be sure to stir their hearts by what's on His heart."

"Those who intentionally cultivate daily time with Jesus reflect the joy of Christ. It's attractive.

Campers want what their cabin counselor has—a fully alive faith, moving toward greater wholeness, freedom and purpose walking with Jesus on the narrow road that leads to life," he said.

"The counselor's relationship with Jesus is attractive, yes, but also inviting, growing, attractive, authentic and real," he added

Andy said teens desire to attend Camp Spalding because they "see Jesus in a summer staff member who lives out a counter-cultural, growing faith."

The camp's activities include "boating, swimming, horseback riding, rock climbing, craft projects, hilarious skits, one-of-a-kind camp games, new friends

and lasting memories."

To meet the increased demand and bring more kids off waiting lists, Camp Spalding is planning to expand its facilities.

It set a goal of raising \$810,000 for Phase I of its capital campaign to build two more cabins and a bathhouse. To date, it has exceeded its goal, raising \$1.2 million, which puts the camp into Phase II of the campaign—to replace its 1957-era cabins.

"It's an amazing blessing to see God work in kids' lives week after week, summer after summer, as God draws campers into relationships with Jesus," he said.

For information, visit camp-spalding.org.

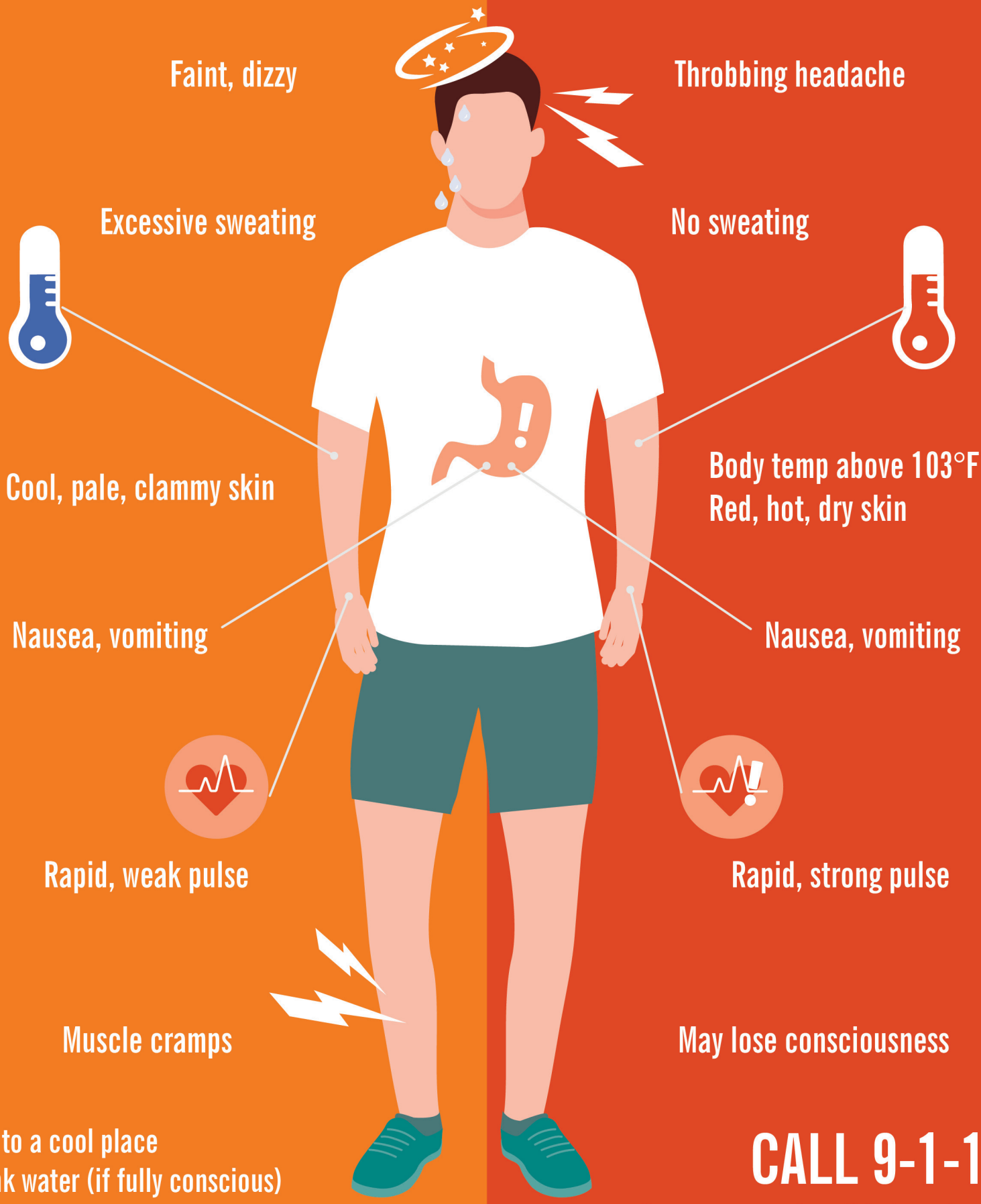
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# Reardan Presbyterian connects with community to find new outreach

By Molly Ertel

When members of Reardan First Presbyterian Church and the Reardan community want to accomplish something, they innovate and collaborate, said Katie Thirupal, who became the pastor in 2020 during COVID.

Reardan is a town of 637 in Lincoln County about 30 minutes west of Spokane.

At a time when many congregations were longing to return to normal, the church folks asked themselves, "How will God do something new through us in the midst of this?"

The mixed-age congregation with 30 to 40 attending on Sundays includes some involved since childhood, as well as young families raising children.

"Care for the community is the congregation's heartbeat," said Katie.

Reaching out to neighbors beyond its walls is a core value of First Presbyterian.

They help run the nonprofit, We C.A.R.E., which stands for We Care About Reardan Edwall, a project covered in an October 2025 Fig Tree article.

First Presbyterian is one of four churches that collaborate to run We C.A.R.E. The others are Reardan Bible Fellowship, Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran and St. Michael Catholic.

We C.A.R.E. funds the school district's Bite2Go program, providing food to more than 70 kids so they don't go hungry over weekends. We C.A.R.E. also dispenses school supplies, clothing and holiday gifts.

Through We C.A.R.E., First Presbyterian helps stock the local food pantry and provides gas vouchers and food vouchers for staples such as milk, bread and eggs to be used at Raj Singh's grocery store. They also offer rental assistance as needed.

Through ecumenical get-togethers, shared services and a vacation Bible school, the four congregations strive to be the church together.

In 2024, the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest received a grant from Lilly for the Ezra 3 Project, designed to guide churches to use their space to better serve their communities. The presbytery disbursed \$10,000 seed money to each church that participated in a cohort and completed the curriculum, "Good Futures Accelerator" and submitted an application detailing how they would use the funds to improve their buildings and lands to support the community.

Through the Ezra 3 discernment process, First Presbyterian



Katie Thirupal

Photo courtesy of Katie Thirupal

decided to use their gathering space to develop an after-school program and hired Rebecca Mischel as program director.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10 to 12 elementary children attend this nonreligious program in the church's gathering space.

The after-school program, called Creating Community After School (CCAS), is the fruit of the Ezra 3 discernment process. It grew out of input from the school superintendent, police, parents, business owners and school staff.

While these stakeholders did not determine what the program would look like, they agreed it was needed. Grant funds from the Ezra 3 Project and Innovia Foundation gave CCAS its start with the hope that it will last for years.

CCAS's focus is to build healthy relationships with trusted adults through wholesome activities such as field trips, science and art projects, and safety and first aid workshops. Family dinners are another way kids and families can connect with one another through the program.

Church members are also invited to these dinners, giving them the opportunity to meet community members they might not otherwise know.

Reardan Presbyterian has another mission partner, Adult and Teen Challenge PacWest. This yearlong, intensive addiction recovery program in Airway Heights serves men aged 18 and older struggling with addiction to substances and other destructive behaviors. The church supports them with worship, potlucks, relationship-building and Christmas gifts.

"The more I think about it, the more amazed I am at how much this tiny church does," said Katie.

In addition to serving Reardan and its environs, First Presbyterian has been involved for 13 years in bringing awareness to the scarcity of clean water in developing countries, refugee camps and disaster areas through the inter-

national Christian charity Water Mission at [watermission.org](http://watermission.org).

On April 26, First Presbyterian congregants and area residents joined together in the Reardan Community Walk for Water. They started at the city park and walked two miles with empty buckets to a gully in a field. There they filled their buckets and then walked back the same two miles with full buckets as a way to connect with people across the world who do this every day just to exist.

Donations were encouraged, though not required. The Reardan community collected more than \$4,500 to provide clean water where it is most needed.

Looking to the future, Katie sees the church continuing its commitment to serve local youth. The after-school program is part of that.

In addition, a Wednesday night youth group meets at the church. Most are community kids, not from the church. Participants who identify as LGBTQ+ find it a welcoming space.

"Kids are drawn to relationships more than programing," said Katie. "Church is meant to be a place where both kids and adults can share their gifts."

In that spirit, the church uses one Sunday service a month to experiment with intergenerationally accessible forms of worship. They invite both kids and adults to lead readings or prayers and to choose songs. During the sermon time, they offer moments for the congregation to move, shout out ideas or act out scriptural characters.

Church has always been a second home for Katie. She was born in Fairbanks, Alaska, but when she was three her family moved to Post Falls, Idaho, where her father, Doug Waltar, was pastor of Community Presbyterian Church. Her mother was a speech therapist in local schools. Katie, the oldest of three sisters, described her childhood as "beautiful."

Katie graduated from Whitworth University in 2016 with a double major in English literature and theology. As an undergraduate, she knew she wanted to continue her studies after college but was unsure which discipline to pursue. She chose theology when she realized most papers she wrote dealt with theological questions.

In 2019, she earned a master of divinity at Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C.

On returning to the Pacific Northwest, she took an interim position as pastor of the Reardan

church. When the permanent position opened, she and the congregation felt that she was a good fit.

"I felt at peace being here," Katie said.

She was ordained in the summer of 2020 in an outdoor ceremony because of the pandemic.

That year, she also met her husband, Manoj Thirupal, professor of leadership studies at Gonzaga University, on a dating app. Katie had experience with the app, but it was a new experience for Manoj. They met for a walk. Because they wore COVID masks, they only caught a glimpse of each other's face when they lowered their masks to sip coffee.

They have been married four years now. Katie's family has taken Manoj in as a son and a brother, and the members of Reardan Presbyterian have been welcoming.

Now that Katie and Manoj are parents to 15-month-old twins, Micah and Naomi, both are juggling to balance their careers and family life.

To support Katie's family responsibilities and reduce their expenses, the church reduced Katie's work week to 28 hours.

To help with childcare when Katie is at work, Patsy Soliday, the oldest active church member, takes care of the twins on Tuesdays. She even read Manoj's thesis during the twins' naptime.

Manoj is a Dalit, the lowest caste in India, and has done the heavy lifting in overcoming the

cultural divide, according to Katie.

He has adapted to life in a country vastly different from the one he grew up in. Assuming Manoj's citizenship papers come through in time, the family plans to visit his family in India in January 2027.

Having previously lived in cities, Katie has also been adapting to and appreciating life in a rural community, and she notes that "folks here take care of one another."

For information, call 796-2141 or email [reardanpres@gmail.com](mailto:reardanpres@gmail.com).

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# Rise in diesel prices affects Second Harvest donations, deliveries

Even though food and fuel prices are high, Second Harvest Inland Northwest continues to rescue food donations from farmers and grocery stores. To transport and store that food, they rely on financial gifts from individual donors.

On May 13, Second Harvest team member Eric Williams of Spokane rode with driver John Fisher to Gebbers Farm in Brewster to pick up a semi-truck load of apples.

It was one of two semi loads—80,000 pounds combined—of apples Gebbers donated that day. One went to the Pasco warehouse and the other to the Spokane warehouse.

Gebbers' donation of more than 1 million pounds of fruit last year makes them a major donor," said Eric. "They run an efficient, caring, sustainable operation.

"It was rewarding to see the smiles on the faces of the farm operators as they loaded several pallets of apples," he commented. "The bounty shared by the ag community renews my faith in humanity.

"We work with about 65 farmers who, like Gebbers, are on the cutting edge of the generosity that fuels our ability to get good, nutritious Washington-grown food to people in our 26-county network of 21 counties in Central and Eastern Washington and five in North Idaho," he remarked.

When Eric returned to the warehouse in Spokane, John filled the diesel tank.

It cost \$744, one-third more than it cost a year ago.

"Our fiscal year 2026 fuel budget—mostly diesel—is \$134,000, and we're currently projecting a 4 percent increase for FY2027, aware it may exceed that," he commented. "Fuel is only one part of our expenses."

Other costs include salaries for the 58 staff who are at the Pasco and Spokane warehouses.

"With the increase in fuel costs, we have to figure out ways to stretch every dollar. We drive many miles to retrieve donated food. We rely on the generosity of other folks who donate money so we can buy diesel and distribute the millions of pounds of food farmers donate," Eric explained.

"Last year, we distributed 37.5 million pounds of food, a bit more than the previous year. That's the equivalent of just over 31 million meals," he said, clarifying that they pick up about 17 to 18 semi-truck loads a week.

"Nearly 90 percent of that was privately donated," Eric added.

When the boxes of apples arrive in the Spokane and Pasco warehouses, volunteers are on



Second Harvest semi-truck fills up with diesel.

Photo courtesy of Second Harvest

hand to check and sort them.

"While Gebbers gives us quality apples, volunteers double check each," he said.

Eric said that if they find any bad apples they pull them out. A hog farmer comes to pick them up.

"We get out every ounce of nutrition from the farmers' donations, including feeding hogs," Eric commented.

Once the boxes are sorted, Second Harvest distributes them to their partners, down the street in Spokane at the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center or to food pantries in Bonners Ferry,

Cusick or Curlew.

"We distribute apples quickly into the network," said Eric, who will have been with Second Harvest six years in August.

The food donations from farmers vary with the season.

In the late spring, they usually receive fresh squash, cucumbers and tomatoes.

Later, they receive carrots, onions and potatoes.

"We receive many potatoes because Idaho is the first in production of potatoes nationally and Washington is second," Eric noted. "We also are given many apples because Washington pro-

duces more apples than the rest of the U.S. combined."

Farmers also donate pears, cherries and watermelons.

"The apples picked up from Gebbers were from last fall and had been stored in climate-controlled facilities that keep them fresh," he said.

To rescue and distribute food donations, Second Harvest has a fleet of three semi-trucks, six straight (or box) trucks and nine vans.

The semi-trucks are driven by staff who require special training and licenses. The other vehicles are driven by staff and volunteers.

Straight trucks are used for grocery store pick-ups and mobile markets.

Last year, Second Harvest served more than 500 mobile markets, which target underserved areas that do not have grocery stores or pantries—rural areas or lower income urban neighborhoods.

Food pantries are offered by a variety of nonprofits and congregations and staffed by volunteers.

"We could not do this work without the help and devotion of reliable volunteers in the warehouse and food distribution sites," Eric observed.

"The need has been steady in recent years, but steady is too high. There has been a high level of anxiety about access to food," he said. "Part of our job is to reduce that anxiety for folks so they know they can get good healthy food."

On the giving side are people who know friends and neighbors who need help. That motivates them to pitch in and give.

For information call 534-6678 or visit 2-harvest.org.

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## Golden picha used to break ground for school

Children from the Salish School of Spokane sing and drum during the groundbreaking for the future campus buildings at 2720 W Elliott Dr. beside the Spokane River.

They used a golden picha, a traditional root digging stick, to break the ground.

LaRae Wiley, co-founder, announced that the new school will be named after Sarah Sʕamtícaʔ (Sam-teet-sa) Peterson, who welcomed LaRae and her husband Chris Parkin to live with her in British Columbia for two years to teach them Colville-Okanogan Salish and to develop curriculum and recordings to keep the endangered language alive.

The groundbreaking on May 21, was five years after the day Sarah died. Some of her family joined students at the school.

The school and cultural center will be named Sʕamtícaʔ



Salish School singers and drummers join ceremony.

Photo by Gary Jewell

iʔ sɪmamáyaʔtɪs, (Sam-teet-sa Ees-semah-mai-eh-tens) or Sʕamtícaʔʔs School.

The school has \$2.5 million more to raise to add to government grants and donations needed to reach the \$17.5 million needed.

Rob McCann, CEO of Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington, presented a deed to the land.

The 3.4 acres was donated as a reparations gift from Catholic

Charities of Spokane because the Salish language was diminished when children were forced to go to boarding schools to be cut off from their culture.

In addition, on May 31 before construction began, Growing Neighbors came to rescue native plants for local gardens and community gardens.

For information, call 325-2018 or visit salishschoolspokane.org.

## MLK energy hub for every day and emergencies

On Tuesday, May 12, Avista Utilities launched the region's first community-based microgrid at the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Family Outreach Center, 500 S. Stone in Spokane.

The project highlights how innovative energy solutions—with solar, battery storage and natural gas backup—strengthen reliability, support critical services during outages and show the power of community partnership.

It was developed with grants from the Washington Department of Commerce and Avista's Named Communities Investment Fund (NCIF). The NCIF program was created by the Clean Energy Transformation Act to support projects in communities facing greater challenges.

The MLK Center invites people to volunteer, donate or help on the microgrid operation team. The system supports the center's year-round food bank, childcare and family services as it provides backup power, so those services continue and the center can re-



Avista workers inspect battery installed at MLK Center.

Photo courtesy of Avista

main open as a shelter during extended, unplanned power outages.

Using power from the solar system and battery every day also helps reduce the MLK Center's energy bills so more resources can be used for critical programs.

The center is in East Central Spokane, one of Spokane's most ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

"We're here for families every day, and during emergencies, people rely on us even more. This energy system helps us

continue that work and keep our doors open for the neighborhood," said Freda Gandy, MLK Center executive director.

"We believe the best energy solutions come from working hand in hand with the community. When we listen first and build together, we can create systems that support people today and into the future," said Heather Rosentrater, Avista CEO and president.

For information, call 868-0856 or email info@mlkspokane.org.

## Scale House Market opens its summer season

The Scale House Market at 4422 E. 8th Ave. in Spokane Valley opened its 2026 Outdoor Market Season in May, welcoming visitors to enjoy local farms, food, artisans and small businesses.

Open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through October 11, it offers space for farm stands, artisan goods, hand-crafted products, prepared food,

baked goods and small businesses rooted in Spokane.

It also offers live music and gathering spaces.


The Scale House Market indoor merchants are open year-round, from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday to Friday, and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

For information, email brittany@fourroots.org or visit thiscalehousemarket.com.




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## Sharing and reading stories of innovation, ingenuity gives us hope

While it's discouraging to follow the news coverage of war in Iran and ignoring "post war" Gaza, following the political ups and downs of candidates on edge about midterms, seeing the daily disregard for the rule of law, usual protocols and expected morality, it's heartening preparing this issue of The Fig Tree.

The stories remind me that our mid-size city of Spokane and surrounding rural and small towns are places of innovation, not waiting for some dictator to solve our problems.

**First, we'll name The Fig Tree** because we know of no other publication in the region, nation or world doing anything similar—exemplifying credible communication simply by sharing stories of people who are making a difference because of their faith and values. That alone exposes us and our readers to many ideas being implemented by creative people who are solving problems.

**Look at what Maji Rising** is doing not only to have a weekend Village of Care providing health care to the community but also in its long-term plan to build Beloved Kijiji that combines affordable housing with affordable, accessible healthcare right in East Central Spokane.

**Move a bit north** to 2002 E. Mission and Family Promise of Spokane is stretching outside its walls to identify families through high schools before they

are homeless, to work with landlords to keep them housed and then to receive those who are homeless and supported by Family Promise back into apartments.

**Heading up to Northeast Spokane**, the Northeast Community Center tied with The Zone youth programming and the Hillyard Community Campus with a middle school and alternative high schools is tackling socioeconomic issues that often mean students struggle with studies. They're doing it in the context of strengthening their ties with neighbors.

**To the west, the Salish School** of Spokane just broke ground on their new campus, linked with affordable housing on land that Catholic Charities of Spokane has turned over to them as a step in reparations.

**Not far from the Salish School** in West Central Spokane, The NATIVE Project is looking for more staff because it is growing, looking for wellness programs director, a health coordinator, a medical assistant, patient services representative, NATIVE Youth Council coordinator, chief medical officer, behavioral health director and building custodian. There's a story.

**We'll be checking on more** about that as well as what's happening at the West Central Community Center and following plans for the new American Indian Community Center home.

Throughout Central and Eastern Wash-

ington and North Idaho, Second Harvest continues receiving food donations, passing them through volunteer sorters and distributing them to hungry people.

**Just take a journey** to thefigtree.org. Click on "Articles" and go through each year and be heartened by the innovation, ingenuity, insights, instigation, insistence and integrity of the people of this region and the programs they have created or are carrying on: Joya Child and Family Development, MLK Center's extensive programs and energy hub, Gonzaga's efforts to communicate across diversity, the Catholic diocese's ties with Guatemala for 67 years, a Good Friday pilgrimage, rural and small town ecumenism, the Spokane Alliance community organizing, Lidgerwood Presbyterian's community garden, SNAP efforts for 60 years and our Eastern Washington Legislative Conference.

**That's just a taste** of three Fig Tree issues. If we're feeling down, we can go online and read those stories. As I write this I feel overwhelmed and blessed to be engaged in publishing this newspaper. Our staff share that vision and commitment.

**Then, historically** and through the years, there's the story of how all the human rights task forces of the region overcame the Aryan Nations white supremacy for which the region has a reputation. Out of that were spawned the Human Rights Education Institute, Gonzaga's Hate Stud-

ies Center and the efforts to challenge racial and religious hate. Recently Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience stood in solidarity outside the Islamic Center of Spokane during Friday prayers after a shooting at another mosque.

**It's hard to keep up!** We just keep on keeping on. We persist together and inspire miracles!

**Okay, I could have written** a downer editorial about the state of the nation on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, but quite clearly many people have taken that declaration to heart and are not waiting for some magician to solve their problems, so they are dependent on someone else. We know what we need and are creating avenues to thrive.

**What a joy to be a bearer** of good news supported by the generosity of people articulating their stories and the generosity of our readers and partners who are fed by the stories.

**We are what we eat.** We are what we do. We are what we read. We are what we support. We offer the nutrition of hope, through information to inspire us to be involved to challenge the systems of power that would disempower us.

**Instead of claiming exceptionalism**, I assume this is happening across the region, nation and world because people care, have ideas and act on them.

Mary Stamp - Editor



## Program cut by USAID continues to influence work with women

During the Cultural Revolution in China, it was said that women hold up half the sky. Since then, it has been applied in various contexts to raise the profile of women and their foundational work around the world. Too often in agrarian communities for those outside cities and towns, the day in, day out work of maintaining a household, child rearing and participating in subsistence farming is left to women. This is particularly true in patriarchal societies and faith traditions.

**In Morocco, the High Atlas Foundation** (HAF) seeks to shift cultural assumptions and empower women, while respecting cultural and religious traditions. In sustainable agriculture projects, teaching skills in trade and empowering women, HAF transforms small villages in barren landscapes outside Marrakech. While on our sabbatical, David and I saw the transformational power of one project.

We started the day at the HAF offices in Marrakech, meeting Youssef Ben-Meir, the founder of HAF, and Mariam, our translator, guide and women's program staff. Youssef made it clear the purpose of HAF, which was funded by USAID for 25 years until 2025, is to support efforts in Morocco to be more Moroccan.

**During the drive**, we learned about 24-year-old Mariam, who joined HAF

staff after graduating college and while discerning whether to pursue a law degree in France. She grew up in a modest village with parents who supported her education, as they supported her brother's education. Fluent in Arabic, French, Berber—the indigenous language of Morocco, officially recognized in 2014—and English, Mariam hopes to be a human rights lawyer or lead development work like HAF.

**We drove 45 minutes** to the villages of Akrich and Achbaro. At Akrich, we visited a plant nursery created by HAF on land shared with an old Jewish cemetery. We traveled to the nearby village of Achbaro to see the Zarbiat Achbaro women's cooperative HAF supports. Its leader, Samira Driouch, met us at the door of the new two-story, reinforced cinder-block building.

On the first floor were new sewing machines used to make biodegradable bags to support the plant nursery and other projects, looms for handmade rugs and other handicrafts cooperative members make.

**The upstairs community space** has a restroom, kitchen and dining areas with traditional low seating and also a European dining table and chairs.

We met a dozen village women who are part of the cooperative. Most were older and spoke Berber. Samira, who is in her late 30s and has three sons aged eight to

22, and spoke Berber, Arabic and knew some French and English phrases. They chose Samira as their leader.

**Through Mariam, Samira shared** her story of joining the collective and how transformative the HAF's IMAGINE workshop program is for her. The four-day workshop empowers women in seven areas: emotions, relationships, sexuality, body, money, work and spirituality, so that they expand their confidence, develop self-agency, and identity personal goals and priorities.

The workshop gave her a chance to use her voice to benefit her family, community and herself.

**Samira showed us a photo** of her wedding day. I asked why she married so young—at 15. When she was 12, her mother died. She had to leave primary school to watch her younger siblings. As family finances fell on hard times, all but the youngest went to harvest vegetables.

At first, marriage was a way for Samira to have more stability for herself and her siblings. She clearly loves her husband and family. As an adult with children, she attended the IMAGINE workshop. Although it took time, he became supportive of her participating in the collective and workshop, and learning to read at a higher level, write and earn her driver's license.

As a grown woman with children, Samira, participated in the IMAGINE workshop. Earlier, she would never have imagined the life and leadership role she has now. I asked about her hopes as a women's collective leader. With fierceness, she said, she hopes the collective can offer education, training and financial support so no girl needs to marry so young.

**When we asked about her dream** for the collective, she said it is to have a photo of the women and their building in an important museum in Tangiers. That would show that their group is transformational for Morocco, as well as lasting.

Over a meal, we saw the friendship of Mariam and Samira across different levels of education, experiences and home lives. We shared of our lives and prayed God's blessings and guidance on them. Samira put one of the bracelets the collective makes on my wrist. It has a bead with the hand of Fatima—also known as the hand of Miriam—a symbol of protection in both Islamic and Jewish traditions. I wear it daily and hold in my heart these women in my heart who are changing their country for the better.

**The Very Rev. Heather VanDeventer**  
Episcopal Cathedral of St. John  
with **The Rev. David Gortner**  
St. Luke's Episcopal - Coeur d'Alene

## SLIHC sums up statistics on implications of federal cuts on housing

Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium (SLIHC) hosted a recent gathering of agencies concerned about affordable-housing issues to share updated statistics and data on affordable housing and the impact of the proposed federal budget on regional housing issues.

Ben Stuckart, executive director, SLIHC, reported on impacts of the proposed changes in the region if they are passed.

- They eliminate HOME low-income housing funds that draw more than \$3 million annually.

- They end Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), which provide

more than \$3 million annually for neighborhoods and other projects.

- They cut Continuum of Care (CoC) funding, replacing part of it with Emergency Solutions Grants, reducing more than \$5 million homeless funds.

- They reduce Fair Housing. As a result, the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance, serving more than 1,000 individuals, may be shut down.

- They decrease local flexibility in Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) and the ability to issue new vouchers for many groups.

The House Appropriations Committee has proposed cutting HOME and Fair

Housing funds in half, continuing CDBG and CoC, and HCV adjustments. The Senate Appropriations are not yet determined.

Ben told of local conditions.

- Waitlists for low-income housing are an average of three years.

- There is a decrease in permanent supportive housing for homeless people.

Population figures recently adopted by the county and cities show a need for more than 20,000 units of low-income housing in the next 20 years.

"Spokane produces 200 units of low-income housing a year. We need to produce five times more than that. Funding is a

major issue, and costs are increasing. Insurance rates are seeing double-digit increases every year. Construction inflation averages more than 5 percent a year. Funds are not increasing. Land prices are increasing, and land is becoming scarce," said Ben.

For information, visit [slihc.org](http://slihc.org).

### Letter on Joya story...

Thank you for the wonderful article on Joya and its wonderful Executive Director Colleen Fuchs. I'm always impressed with the wonderful work The Fig Tree does for our community. Bravo!

Dick Boyesen - former Guild's

# Calendar of Events

Area codes are (509) unless otherwise listed

- Ongoing • Second Harvest Food Sorting and Mobile Markets, 2-harvest.org
- Mons • Culture Nights, American Indian Community Center, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., aiccinc.org
- Tues/Fris • **A Language of Life**, Non-Violent Communication Practice Group, NAACP Spokane - Building Restorative Communities Initiative, Tues 10 to 11:30 a.m., Liberty Park Library, Fri 12:30 to 2 p.m. zoom, brcspokane@gmail.com
- Tues to July 28 • **Global Food and Art Market**, The Gathering House, 733 W. Garland, 4 to 8 p.m., global foodandartmarket@gmail.com
- Weds • **Centering Yoga**, Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (MAC), 2316 E. First, ages 16+, 1:30 p.m., sales.northwestmuseum.org
- **Beginning Buddhism**, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 927 S. Perry, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 447-5549, sravastiabbey.org
- Thurs • **Mindfulness Practice**, South Hill Library, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., 444-5300, telref@spokanelibrary.org
- **Heartistry**: Artistic Wellbeing, Spark Central, 1214 W. Summit Pkwy, 3 to 5 p.m., 279-0299
- **Passage Meditation Group**, Spokane Buddhist Temple, 6 to 7:30 p.m., 534-7954, spokanebuddhisttemple.org, easwaran.org
- Fris-Suns to Aug 30 • **Lilac City Vendor Fair**, Little Local Artist, outdoors at Northtown Mall, 4750 N. Division, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., littlelocalartist@gmail.com
- Jun 1-30 • **Palouse Art Walk** and PopUP Gallery, Palouse Arts Council, Main St, Palouse, 863-5733, palouseart@gmail.com
- June 3 • **Vanessa Promise Benefit Luncheon**, Convention Center 12 to 1 p.m., vanessabehan.org/luncheon/
- June 3-12 • **Blitz Build, Habitat for Humanity Spokane**, habitat-spokane.org/blitz-build
- June 4 • **The Fig Tree Development** noon and **Annual Meeting**, 1 to 3 p.m., Zoom, kaye@thefigtree.org
- **Gently Embrace Grief Day of Prayer**, Deacon John Ruscheinsky, Immaculate Heart Retreat Center (IHRC), 6910 S. Ben Burr, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Advocacy Building Blocks**, Nonprofit Association of Washington (NAWA), The Philanthropy Center, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., nonprofitwa.org
- **We Love Our Refugee Neighbors**, East Side Gladiators at Manzanita House, 222 W. Mission Ste 201, tour 3:30 p.m., rally 4:30-5:30 p.m.
- **Opening Ceremony**: Pride History and Remembrance Project, Central Library, 906 W. Main, 3rd Floor, 5 p.m., spokanelibrary.org
- June 4-16 • **Bridging Community** Americans with Disabilities Act Celebration, virtual workshops, Disability Action Center NW, dacnw.org
- Thurs • **Taizé Prayer**, Zoom, 4:15 p.m., bartletts@gonzaga.edu
- June 5 • **Spring Market**, Northeast Youth and Family Services, 19 E. Queen, 3 to 7:30, 475-6793, spokaneneysf@gmail.com
- **Neighbor Day**, A.M. Cannon Park, 1603 N. Belt, 4 p.m., 323-7486, westcentralcc.org/neighbor-day
- June 5-6 • **Creative Conflict Resolution** Workshop, AVP Spokane, Unity Center North, 4123 E. Lincoln, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., 939-1233, avpspokane.org
- June 6 • **Pullman Pride**, Intersectional Advocacy Coalition of Whitman County, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., info@intersectionaladvocate.org
- **Girl Scout Car Wash**, 6804 N. Nevada, 9 a.m., gsewni.org
- **Healthy Kids Day**, YMCA, 2421 N. Discovery Pl. Spokane Valley, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., 777-9622 x 2430
- June 7 • **Julie Morris Memorial Benefit Brunch**, Spokane Area Jewish Family Services, 120 N. Stevens St., 10 a.m. to 12, sajfs.org/benefitbrunch
- **Reardan Mule Days Community Worship**, We C.A.R.E. congregations, Reardan City Park, 10 a.m.
- **Ecumenical Peace Prayer Vigil**, in solidarity with refugees and immigrants in detention, Matthew 25 Ministries, Feast World Kitchen, 1321 W. 3rd, 4 p.m.
- June 7, 14, 21, 28 • **Coffee and Community** on the Front Stoop, St. Andrew's Episcopal, 2404 N. Howard, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- June 7, Jul 19, Aug 9 • **Sharing the Dharma Day**, Sravasti Abbey, 692 Country Ln, Newport, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., 447-5549, sravastiabbey.org
- June 10 • **ED Coffee Hour**, NAWA, online, 9 a.m.,
- **Rural Nonprofit Gathering**: Advocacy in Rural Washington, NAWA, online, 1 p.m., nonprofitwa.org
- **The Farm Is Here**, Rooted & Rested Urban Farm film, Garland Theater, 924 W. Garland, doors open 5:30 p.m., rootedandrestedurbanfarm.com
- June 10, July 14 • **Postcard Parties**, Eastside Gladiators, Spokane Valley Library, 22 N. Herald, 2 to 4 p.m.
- June 11 • **Connecting for Community**, PJALS & Veterans for Peace, register for location, 5:30 to 7 p.m., pjals.org
- June 12-13 • **Spokane Pride Fest**, Rally for Trans Rights, Riverfront Park 3 p.m., Show and Vendor Fair, 4 to 9 p.m., facebook.com/spokanepride/events
- June 12-19 • **Young Adults Explore Buddhism**, ages 18-29, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 9 to 5 p.m., 447-5549, sravastiabbey.org
- June 13 • **Summer Kickoff River Cleanup**, Spokane Riverkeeper, 820 E. Spokane Falls Blvd., 10 a.m., spokaneriverkeeper.org
- **Spokane Pride Parade**, River Front Park, 507 N. Howard, 12 to 1 p.m., 822-7910, spokanepride.org
- June 13, Jul 11, Aug 8 • **Second Saturday Contra Dance**, Spokane Folklore Society, East Spokane Grange, 1621 N. Park, Spokane Valley, 7 to 10 p.m., 838-2160, spokanefolklore.org
- **2026 Spokane Watercolor Society** National Juried Show, NW MAC, T-Sun 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., 208-661-

- 7717, northwestmuseum.org
- June 14 • **Dad's Day Dash**, SNAP fundraiser, Manito Park, 21 W. 18th, 9 a.m., snapwa.org/ddd5k
- **Community Volunteer Day**, The Woman's Club of Spokane, 1428 W. 9th, 12 to 4 p.m., 868-1885, engagement@thewomansclubofspokane.org
- **Summertime Spiritual Moment**, Fr. David Kruse, IHRC, 3 to 5 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Salish Sea Concert**, Johann Sebastian Bach, St. Augustine's Catholic Church, 428 W. 19th, salishseafestival.org
- June 16 • **CHAS Mobile Clinic**, Goodwill Industries, 130 E. 3rd, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., 838-4246, giin.org
- **Eastern Washington Legislative Conference** Planning, 3:30 p.m., Zoom, kaye@thefigtree.org
- **"Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"**, barbeque, Fr. Ed Mariet, IHRC, 5:30 to 8 p.m., ihrc.net
- **Spokane Summer Parkways**, Manito-Comstock Neighborhoods, 6 to 9 p.m., summerparkways@gmail.com
- June 18 • **Board Basics - SIMBA**, Saranac Building Learning Studio, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., spokaneindependent.org
- **Riverview Block Party**, 1801 E. Upriver, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., riverview.org
- **All It Takes Is One**, Experiential Volunteer Fair, Launch NW, Northeast Community Center (NECC), 4001 N. Cook, 3 to 7 p.m., thezonespokane.org
- June 18, July 16, Aug 20 • **NAACP Spokane**, General Meeting, SCC Bldg 6, The Lair, 6:30 p.m., naacpspokane.org
- June 19, 20 • **Juneteenth Park Celebration**, Inland Northwest Juneteenth Coalition (INWJC), Riverfront Park North Bank, 12 to 4 p.m.; 20th: Pillar Awards, Fox Theatre, 1001 W. Sprague, program 6 p.m., inwjc.org
- June 20 • **NAMI Walks**, Riverfront Park North Bank Shelter, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 838-5515, namiwalks.org/spokane
- **World Refugee Day**, Refugee and Immigrant Connections Spokane, SCC Lair, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., facebook.com/events/spokane-community-college/world-refugee-day/1372530421638574/
- **Juneteenth**, Soul Food/Resource Fair, MLK Center, 500 S. Stone, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., mlkspokane.org
- **Taste of Asia/Night Market**, Riverfront Park, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. 590-6613, 240-9932, aanhpspokane.org
- **Summer Solstice Celebration**, St. David's Episcopal, 7315 N. Wall, 7 p.m., stdavidsspokane.org
- June 23-26 • **"Repairers of the Breach"**, Whitworth Ministry Summit, worship 8:45 a.m., Office of Church Engagement, whitworth.edu/summit
- June 24-July 2 • **"Getting Unstuck: Ignatian Spirituality and Internal Family Systems"**, 8-Day Silent Ignatian Retreat, Fr. Jeff Putthoff, SJ, IHRC, 4:30 p.m. to 1 p.m., ihrc.net
- June 25 • **Fysprt Resource & Self Care Fair**, Passages, Spokane County Fairgrounds, 404 N. Havana, Bay 3, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 892-9241
- **Lutheran Community Services Northwest** Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Refugee Forster Care, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 5 to 6 p.m., lcsnw.org
- June 25, Jul 30, Aug 27 • **The Third Cup**: Community Tea, The Woman's Club of Spokane, 1428 W. 9th, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., 499-6686, info@mahimainternational.org
- June 26 • **Inclusive Carnival Field Day**, West Central Community Center, A.M. Cannon Park, 323-7517, trickard@westcentralcc.org
- June 27 • **"Living with Less**, St. Therese of Lisieux," Summertime Spiritual Moment, Fr. Ed Mariet, IHRC, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., ihrc.net
- **Multicultural Celebration**, Thrive International, 220 E. 4th, 10 am. to 1 p.m., thriveinternational.org
- **Pride in Perry**, Odyssey Youth Movement, vendors, entertainment, 12 to 5 p.m., odysseyyouth.org
- **Red, White & Blue Hawaii**, celebrating America's 250th Anniversary, Corbin Senior Activity Center, 827 W. Cleveland, 6 p.m., 327-1584
- June 27, July 25, Aug 29 • **El Mercado**, Latino Market, Latinos En Spokane, 402 S. Pittsburg, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., latinosenspokane.org
- June 28 • **Intentional Community Gathering**, Harmony Woods Retreat Center, 11507 S. Keeney, 1 to 4 p.m., harmonywoods.org
- July 3-9 • **Jowo Atisha's Lamp for the Path**, Sravasti Abbey, Newport, 3 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., sravastiabbey.org
- July 5 • **Beautiful Liberations**, Harmony Woods, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., marylaya1@comcast.net
- July 19 • **Obon Festival**, Spok. Buddhist Temple, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- July 26 • **DAC NW** Community Event, Riverfront Park 11 a.m.
- July 31 • **Kelly Hughes Band Christian Concert**, benefit for IHRC, 5:30 to 9 p.m., ihrc.net
- July 31-Aug 2 • **Art on the Green**, North Idaho College, Coeur d'Alene, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., iartonthegreencda.com
- **Kalispel Tribe of Indians Pow-wow**, Powwow Grounds, Usk, kalispeltribe.com
- Aug 1 • **Family Promise Fun Run**, Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard, 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., (206) 659-2222, familypromiseofspokane.org/funrun
- Aug 13 • **Back to School Literacy Fair**, NECC, 2 to 5 p.m., thezonespokane.org/flyers/
- Aug 15 • **Unity in the Community**, Riverfront Park, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., nwunity@icloud.com, nwunity.org
- Aug 22-23 • **Spokane Permaculture Symposium**, Harmony Woods, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., harmonywoods.org
- **Village of Care**, Liberty Park, majrising.org
- Aug 25-26 • **"Rooted in Purpose: Cultivating a Strong Foundation for What's Next"**, Idaho Nonprofit Conference, Boise, idcomfdn.glueup.com
- To Aug 30 • **1 Million Page Challenge**, Literacy Project of North Idaho, 420 N. College, Coeur d'Alene, (208) 450-2669, theliteracyprojectni.org



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# Episcopal churches explore ways to build bridges in their communities

Seven churches across the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane have been participating in a learning cohort as part of the “Building Bridges: Healing Divides” five-year grant under the Thriving Congregations Initiative from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. A second cohort began in May.

The churches in the first group were St. Luke’s in Coeur d’Alene, St. James in Pullman, All Saints in Richland, Resurrection in Roslyn, and the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, St. Andrew’s and St. Stephen’s in Spokane.

The congregations are building community relationships to connect across and heal social, cultural and political divisions by listening, learning and developing new ministries. The project seeks to improve relationships among groups with differing views.

“One of our biggest fears when we engage with people who are different from us is that we may be changed,” said Mallory Davis, the grant program director. “Of course, we will be changed.”

Mallory explained that the cohort teams are composed of three to five people from each congregation—including a cleric, the warden of the vestry or bishop’s committee and a lay leader.

Teams in the second cohort are guided by a coach.

In the fall of 2023, the Episcopal Diocese was awarded the grant as part of Lilly’s Thriving Congregations initiative to encourage congregations to flourish by helping them deepen their relationships with God, strengthen their connections with each other and contribute to the vitality of their communities and the world.

The grant’s purpose is to forge new practices of ministry and relationships that heal, rather than ignore or exacerbate wounds from social, cultural and political divisions of the current times and context, Mallory described.

Cohort teams meet in person and on Zoom every other month over two years. The next cohort meets through the fall of 2028.

As examples, Mallory described projects of three of the first cohort. Each church has worked with its community to develop and report back on their ministry experiment.

First, St. Stephen’s knew there were organizations doing similar work on Spokane’s South Hill, but they had a curiosity around how to break down those silos.

The church decided to host four community conversations, “Many Voices: Shared Story,” for South Hill residents to gather for meals and converse on what



New cohort met in May at St. Martins in Moses Lake.

Photo courtesy of Mallory Davis

people love, what they have lost, where they hurt and what they dream. From those sessions the church hopes to learn how better to serve together.

St. Stephen’s gathered people for presentations led by Nicole Bishop of SNAP, Derrick Jennings of the Carl Maxey Center, Scott Cooper of Catholic Charities and Ross Carper of FEAST World Kitchen—to help them identify and heal political, social and cultural divides and develop skills to be healers.

“It has been wonderful to watch how St. Stephen’s and other congregations have learned about their contexts,” said Mallory.

In addition to learning about their communities, cohorts have met for two years to help each identify divides and ways to be healers by developing new ministries based on community needs.

Second, the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection in Roslyn, which is among the churches continuing their projects, began a new contemplative community called Terra Divina that gathers and practices immersing themselves in the rhythms of the natural world through presence and contemplation.

At the Roslyn church, the average Sunday attendance is 12 and an average of 20 to 25 attend Terra Divina, which includes church and community members.

Resurrection had a hunch that

many in their community were fed by the natural world around them, and they wondered how they could offer up the sacred rhythms they experienced in their Sunday liturgies to help their community explore and honor the land and nature surrounding them, Mallory described.

Third, St. Andrew’s Episcopal had started in Spokane’s Emerson-Garfield neighborhood when many of its members lived in the single-family neighborhood homes. Now few live in the neighborhood.

Members wanted to know neighbors and in the process of making connections, they learned about the neighborhood’s deep desire for community.

To open conversation, St. Andrew’s has offered Coffee and Community conversations for

neighbors on their front porch, where they set up tables and chairs and snacks.

Mallory said some of the projects are internal to the congregations, identifying ways for members to be healers and bridgebuilders with those around them, overcoming obstacles to conversations over differences with people they know and love.

“Projects come out of practicing deep listening, which has been part of the diocese’s strategic priority to create a culture of listening, learning and development. Our mission is to form disciples of Jesus Christ in strong communities of faith to transform ourselves, our communities and the world,” she said.

“To be a disciple in a community of faith is to be open, adaptive and possess a holy curiosity to reach out to our neighbors and be responsive to our contexts,” she continued.

Mallory was diocesan program manager after working 17 years as the diocesan office assistant, bishop’s assistant and administrative coordinator. Caroline McCall, her predecessor as grant program director, and the bishop applied for the grant in 2023.

Mallory moved to Spokane in 2004 to study theatre at Eastern Washington University. After graduating in 2008, she moved back to Gig Harbor for a year and a half but returned as program

staff at Camp Cross on Lake Coeur d’Alene, where during college she had met “crazy Episcopalians living Christianity in a way I had not seen,” she said.

In diocesan administrative work, she became aware that churches do not face difficulties alone, “but are part of a network of people experiencing similar difficulties and discovering opportunities to grow and deepen faith with God,” she said.

“There is a common thread among the 34 congregations as they respond to joys and pains,” Mallory said. “While there is some fear across the church that the church is dying, there are also stories of transformation and reconciliation in the face of that fear.

“Maybe we are being called to adapt and to be transformed ourselves,” she commented.

After the next cohort will be an evaluation period and the possibility to expand the program.

With discussion at diocesan meetings on the grant, churches not in a grant cohort are invited to celebrate what the churches involved are experiencing.

“We see relationships being built or deepened where there were none, and people in relationship can’t help but be changed,” she said.

For information, call 624-3191 or visit [nb2023-spokane.my.canva.site/buildingbridges-healingdivides#home](https://nb2023-spokane.my.canva.site/buildingbridges-healingdivides#home).

  
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