Two women open The Way to Justice

By Marijke Fakasieki

Virla Spencer and Camerina (Cam) Zorzona, formerly with the Center for Justice, opened The Way to Justice, in February to provide representation, impact litigation, reform policies and do advocacy.

From Sept. 25 to 30, The Way to Justice is hosting a Week open house to introduce their services to the community and to offer assistance through their driver’s relicensing and post-conviction programs.

The community law firm created and led by women of color addresses barriers facing individuals negatively impacted by the justice system. It seeks to remove barriers to access to lawyers, who are among the highest paid professionals in the country, Cam said.

Many lack the thousands of dollars needed to pay retainers. The Way to Justice offers relief to clients who can’t afford an attorney.

Virla worked for the Center for Justice for more than 10 years and Cam for more than two years. When it closed, Virla told Cam, “Let’s start our own center.” They knew their clients needed the programs that the center had offered for 20 years.

“As women of color, we see things through the lens of race equity, because it is our life. What we do now is influenced by everything we have done up until now and everyone we’ve interacted with,” Cam said.

The Center for Justice’s anti-racism mission drew them there. When no one else advocated for students of color, they stepped in. When people ran out of resources, they called it discrimination.

“When no one else was listening or paying attention, they did. They approached such situations as advocates and attorneys. If programs and services we offered were not enough, we connected clients with community partners,” Virla said.

“We are unapologetically driven by principles of racial justice. We announce ourselves as an anti-racist organization,” Cam said.

Partnering with Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, their office is at 845 S. Sherman, the MLK Center’s former site.

Their client-centered, holistic approach means they meet with

Continued on page 6

World Relief gears up to resettle Afghan refugees

E ntrouge to Ft. Lee in Virginia, Mark Finney, executive director of World Relief Spokane, saw the news that Afghanistan had fallen to the Taliban.

He was joining staff from refugee resettlement offices around the country in “Operation Allies Rescue” to welcome and complete the applications for thousands of Afghan interpreters and other allies trying to escape to freedom as their country crumbles.

Every day I speak with Afghan friends who tell me of their family members fearing for their lives and desperate to escape,” Mark said, anticipating that 18,000 people are in process to receive “Special Immigrant Visas” (SIV’s), in addition to 50,000 of their dependent family members.

“It seems like a daunting task to evacuate and resettle that many people, but I’m convinced that we can do it,” he affirmed.

In resettling more than 10,000 refugees, he said that Spokane has succeeded because “everyone has pitched in.”

“World Relief will be welcoming Afghan allies to rebuild their lives in U.S. communities. Thousands of troops, non-profit workers and volunteers across our nation are ready to spring into action, just as we did in the 1970’s when the modern refugee program was birthed from the evacuation of Vietnam,” he said.

“Over the next few months, we will be welcoming new neighbors from Afghanistan and other parts of the world to Spokane. We are asking the community to stand alongside these refugees and other immigrants in our community,” Mark said.

He suggested three ways to help:

Continued on page 5

Intercultural contacts embody theology

By Mary Stamp

Ross Carper’s half-time jobs as director of Feast World Kitchen and as director of missional engagement at First Presbyterian Church intersected with plans for Feast to cater the church’s 32nd annual Jubilee Marketplace.

However, those plans changed as organizations began canceling events with the local surge in COVID cases in August.

With pandemic protocols in mind, it was going to be held for one day, in person, outdoors on Sept. 5—instead of two days inside in November.

Now organizers ask people to shop fair trade vendors online throughout the fall for back-to-school to holiday gift shopping. Links to fair trade vendors are posted at spokanepe.org/jubilee-international-marketplace.

For five years, Ross has helped the church plan the Jubilee Marketplace.

“It’s important for people to make purchases from fair trade vendors, because they have been hit by a lack of fair trade festivals,” he said. “Buying fair trade goods supports communities that are affected by the pandemic, as well as being impacted by ongoing poverty and oppression.

“Our commitment to and celebration of fair trade is a big part of who we are as a church, because it supports people who make a livelihood creating beautiful handicrafts,” he added.

Ross’ work with Feast World Kitchen also expresses his commitment to work for justice across cultures with refugees and immigrants.

When in 2016, his full-time work at the church dropped to half-time, he started a food truck business, Compass Breakfast Wagon, which brought together his neighbors on the Lower South Hill.

As he did that, and connected with former refugees, many approached him about how to start a food truck or find a commercial kitchen.

In 2019, the restaurant across the street from First Presbyterian— an Arctic Circle from the 1960s to 2009 and then a sushi restaurant—was for sale. First Presbyterian owns other nearby buildings—rented by Stepping Stones, a COP Shop and an architecture firm.

An elder, who is a real estate agent, helped the church purchase the restaurant.

Continued on page 4
FAN names new director, sets clusters

As the Faith Action Network (FAN) celebrates its 10th year, current co-director Elise DeGooyer will become the new FAN executive director, beginning Jan. 1, 2022, following the retirement of FAN’s founding co-director, Paul Bez in the end of 2021. Rooted in Christian and inter-faith justice traditions, Elise has been FAN co-director for more than seven years. She has given strategic, administrative and programmatic leadership to FAN and helped the organization grow and budget grow. She knows the organization well and has the skills and vision to help move FAN forward.

Elise, a long-time resident, grew up in Yakima where her family live. She understands and is committed to FAN’s board-wide and multi-faith identity.

FAN’s public policy work, led by Paul for 10 years, will continue under a policy engagement director.

A search process is underway. Since June 11, 2011, FAN has grown into a multifaith body of communities and individuals—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Unitarian and Unitarian—across Washington. It advocates for public policy changes to uphold justice and compassion, with those whose rights and safety are under assault and is a partnership for the common good.

FAN plans and has held several Cluster Meetings with its Network of Advocating Faith Communities. Clusters help members with relationships, decide on advocacy plans and share advocacy updates. The Pullman Cluster met Aug. 29. The Spokane Cluster meets Saturday, Oct. 23, at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ, 411 S. Washington.

For information, visit fanwa.org.

Groups seek human rights award nominees

The City of Spokane’s Human Rights Commission (SHRC), the Spokane Human Rights Task Force (SCHRFT) and Gonzaga’s Institute for Hate Studies (GIHS) invite people to submit nominees for the 2021 Spokane Human Rights Award Champions.

They are planning a gala Hu-
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day, Nov. 6, if conditions allow, and the Institute for Hate Studies (GIHS) invite people to submit
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“We work, live and play with others, find ways day in and
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to let go of the lies they tell us that separate us. We must recognize and
give up the evil that holds us captive—
the evil of our hearth and home, and
the evil that is so often the result of
the lies we tell ourselves,” said Kristine Hoover of GIHS.

This is how we can thank and honor them, promoting who and what is good in the world. During September, the
group in person or on Zoom, with others, find ways day in and
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GSSAC recruits speakers on DUI impact

Across the region, there have been many impaired driving-related crashes resulting in deaths, injuries and trauma for innocent victims.

In response, Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC) seeks victims, survivors and family members to join the Spokane County DUI Panel (Driving Under the Influence) Victims Panel to “share their stories of the lifelong impact from drug/alcohol-related impaired related crashes.”

The panel facilitates opportunities for people to speak to people ordered by courts to learn about the impacts and increase understanding of “how the choice to drive impaired affects others.”

“This is not by point fingers or place blame,” said Amandu Dugger, GSSAC’s community outreach coordinator, a panelist who shares how her life was impacted three times by impaired driving crashes. “It is about making a different choice next—designating a driver, staying rather than taking the wheel, and making a plan before going out.”

GSSAC helped start the Spokane County DUI Victims Panel in the fall of 1992, working with leaders in traffic safety. Since then, many speakers have shared about losing a career, losing a spouse and raising children on their own, finding a brother’s smashed-up truck and the lifelong impact from drug/alcohol-related impaired related crashes.

The panel facilitates opportunities for people to speak to people ordered by courts to learn about the impacts and increase understanding of “how the choice to drive impaired affects others.”

“The care of our planet crosses all cultures, classes, religions and non-religions,” said Gen Heywood, co-president of FLLC and pastor of Veradale United Methodist Church, in Spokane. “No matter what the circumstance, hearts are broken and lives are shattered by the tragedy of a loved one’s life lost,” she said. “Sharing our stories ensures our loved one’s lives make a difference. The Spokane County DUI Victims Panel saves lives.”

For information, call 408-593-8333 or email  lthompson@gssac.org.
Feast World Kitchen connects local community with cuisine and cultures

Continued from page 1
Ross conversed with former refugees and Daniel Todd, who ran Inland Curry and wanted to have a commercial kitchen that empowers international cooks. “We decided to start Feast World Kitchen to offer international dishes with a series of chefs cooking their cuisine and playing their music to share their cultures,” said Ross, who sold the food truck.

Now Feast World Kitchen is an independent nonprofit renting the space from First Presbyterian at below market value. Chefs share their food and culture, but also learn small business skills.

The first year, Feast World Kitchen was all volunteers. Now Ross is half-time executive director and former Jordanian asylum seeker Ma’isa Abudayha, a co-founder, is program director and organizer. They started with eight chefs, cooking once a month and others cooking one to four times a year.

Some monthly chefs have started their own businesses, applied the skills to other food-related careers because the restaurant business is hard to enter, Ross said. Six have started catering businesses.

Feast World Kitchen also employs refugees as custodians and dishwashers.

Now families have shared food through its take-out-to-go menu, patio dining and catering. Chefs rent the kitchen for a day to prepare and sell meals.

On Mondays, weekly menus are posted on feastworldkitchen.org. Patrons order meals, which are served Wednesdays through Sundays, so chefs can buy the amount of ingredients they need. Patrons can also walk up to the take out window in the patio and make orders from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. or 4 to 8 p.m.

“It’s a way some to make extra money,” Ross said. “Some learn to start small businesses. Some find it an avenue to job training. Universities and others reach out to us seeking people with experience cooking for large groups. Those are less stressful careers than the restaurant business—but immigrants often successfully run restaurants.

The chef families are from 35 countries, reflecting the former refugees and immigrants in the community—including Syrian, Iraqi, Sudanese, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Kenyan, Senegalese, Cuban, Venezulean, Colombian, Mexican, Guatemalan, Bhutanese, Nepalese, Vietnamese, Thai, Hong Kong, Pakistani, Ukrainian, Eastern European and more.

“I learned to be flexible, have grace and love folks who have different experiences than I do,” said Ross. “I have learned how beautiful and different each culture is. I have also learned the power of food to bring people together.”

Organizers chose the name “Feast World” because each culture and religion has such a word for their celebrations.

“In a feast, people come to the table from different backgrounds and experiences. A feast provides a loving space for people to engage with each other around a table,” the said.

Volunteers—youth to retirees—help at Feast World Kitchen, getting to know families as they serve at the restaurant or for events.

“Feast embodies anti-racism in action,” said Ross. “Some of those who founded Feast look like me, but were concerned about anti-refugee rhetoric, because we knew the positive impact refugees and immigrants have.

“We emphasize relationships, meeting around the table and breaking down barriers as we come to know another and improve relationships in the city. It’s fun seeing people of different cultures, especially those who have been isolated, trying to survive in a new place, working together at Feast with people from around the world.”

Ross said the values expressed at Feast World Kitchen and First Presbyterian Church were instilled growing up Catho-

lic in Spokane.

While studying philosophy at Western Washington University, he mentored teens at Blaine High School through Young Life, working with a family who had settled in Spokane in 2014.

“Feast World Kitchen to offer inter-

dest to Spokane in 2014.

“It was a profound experience working with a family who had struggled so much,” he said.

In 2016, he shifted from youth ministry to be director of service engagement, now “missional” engagement, involving the con-

gregation in service, mission and justice work.

Ross sees service as both a part of and an extension of worship—the lab work, the hands-on work of following Jesus as neighbors with the marginalized, poor and vulnerable.

“We have clear marching or-

ders from Jesus,” he said.

In 2018, he and others began a series of monthly Thursday evening justice forums, inviting speakers on social justice issues. He offered a few on Zoom and hopes to do more when it’s safe to gather, because “a big component along with the content is relationship,” Ross said.

Several sessions have been on racism and anti-racism, includ-

ing looking at experiences of the Latinx community and refugees in the Inland Northwest, and others have focused on David Swanson’s Rediscipling the White Church.

A spring 2021 session was on “Building the Beloved Community.”

Other topics include Christi-

anity and war, and other “sticky topics in society” that have been at the forefront in recent years, Ross said.

For information, call 279-8388 or email rosscarper@gmail.com.

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Barry Barfield coordinated Spokane Homeless Coalition

“She passed that on to me. As long as I can remember, I’ve just had both an interest in and heart for those concerns,” Barry said.

His work with people experiencing homelessness began in 1976, when he was teaching at a Catholic high school in Los Angeles where a nun ran a community outreach center for undocumented immigrants and homeless people. He started volunteering at the shelter, loved it and ended up on the center’s board.

When he first moved to Spokane, Barry taught social justice themed classes at Gonzaga Preparatory School, where he helps students find volunteer service placements in the community.

Barry moved to Spokane about 30 years ago, and about five years ago he began going to Spokane Homeless Coalition meetings to find out what they were doing and how he could help.

A year and a half ago, the administrator position opened up on the coalition’s leadership team, and Barry volunteered.

As administrator, he helps with email lists, responding to emails and maintaining the website. He also helps run the group’s monthly Zoom meeting.

The leadership team decides what they think coalition members would want to learn about and discuss, then finds topics and speakers they believe members would benefit from.

Monthly public meetings are from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. on first Thursdays at the Gathering House, 733 W. Garland.

Meeting attendance is 60 to 100 people each time, he said.

Barry’s interest in social justice causes began in his childhood.

After his father died when Barry was one year old, he was raised by his mother, who had a heart for those living on the margins of society.

Barry Barfield coordinated Spokane Homeless Coalition

By Lillian Piel

Barry Barfield coordinated Spokane Homeless Coalition

“Human contact had the most impact,” he said.

Although the Urban Plunge stopped when the pandemic hit, Barry said he will revive it this fall.

Raised Catholic, Barry said his faith and values influence who he is and why he does the work he does.

He believes the gospel says Jesus spent a lot of time with those on the margins, and that is what Jesus would want him to do. His mother raised him with a heart for others tied in with his Catholic faith, he said.

Barry said that the Spokane Homeless Coalition recently formed an action group. After its virtual meeting in March, the group talked about a recent police sweep of a homeless camp.

They decided to do something about it. Barry encouraged them to keep working and plan something together.

The result was the action group, which is currently advocating for places for unhoused individuals to stay and store their belongings and find ways to improve their living conditions. The Spokane Homeless Coalition has also involved with Homeless Connect, a day when agencies and groups that serve people experiencing homelessness gather in one location downtown to provide services, such as haircuts, clothing, food, housing resources and unemployment.

Depending COVID-19, the event will resume on Jan. 27, 2022, at the Convention Center. The coalition provides many ways for people in faith groups and other organizations to learn more about the lives of homeless people and to be inspired to act. Barry invites faith groups or other organizations to contact him or the Spokane Homeless Coalition to explore options.

For information, call 999-1200, email barrybarfield@gmail.com or visit spokanecom.he.
Law firm addresses barriers people face in the justice system

Continued from page 1

clients where they are, listening, understanding their experience, and protecting them.

COVID precautions make it difficult to serve clients, because some “face-to-face, personal interaction is required, listening with no judgement as people tell their stories so we engage with them as partners,” Cam said.

Few of their clients have technology, limiting their ability to work online.

The Way to Justice partners with Pioneer Counseling Services at the Emerson Clinic, where clients are referred by therapeutics. Many courts work with clinic staff to offer clients housing and employment resources.

Many cases involve vacating convictions, which means withdrawing a guilty plea so a case is dismissed.

The Feb. 25 State Supreme Court ruled that convictions for “simple personal possession of a controlled substance” was unconstitutional, but did not automatically vacate the convictions of thousands.

Cam helps vacate convictions and reduce sentences for defendants who ask for relief. She also requests refunds for fines people paid. The Office of Civil Legal Aid funds that work.

“We have to educate the public on this decision,” Cam said.

Data shows that, while people of color are no more likely to use substances, they are disproportionately convicted, Cam said.

The Way to Justice also vacates records. For city or county misdemeanors, it takes three years to clear a record. For felonies, depending on the class, it takes five to 10 years, she said.

“By the time clients come, they have had years of crm-free lives. They are entitled to relief. It helps them access better employment, housing and education opportunities,” Cam said.

The Way to Justice’s reclassification program helps people whose drivers’ licenses were suspended for unpaid fines. A new law means anyone with a non-criminal moving violation may get their licenses back automatically, but it does not wipe away debt.

They help clients with first-, second- and third-degree suspensions that happen because many risk driving on a suspended license, Virla said. For example, low-income people in rural areas with no buses or in cities with limited bus connections need to take a child to childcare and then go to work in another area of town. They also need to go to grocery stores or doctor’s appointment. So they drive.

Virla’s journey led her to this work. She raised her children on TANF, lived in section 8 housing and used food stamps. She learned “to keep going no matter what,” she said.

“As a black woman, I experienced discrimination in the education, employment, housing and criminal justice systems. I have been homeless, a single mother raising seven children and having nowhere to go,” Virla said.

As a victim of domestic violence, she can relate to clients who experience it. She knows what it’s like to choose between paying the light bill or feeding the family. She knows what it’s like to catch a bus at 5 a.m. to drop her children at daycare and catch a bus to be at community college on time, and then to return to the daycare before they call Child Protective Services.

While she was considering working with AmeriCorps Vista, a caseworker told her, “AmeriCorps Vista is a joke, not a real job. Your food stamps and TANF are running out. After 60 months, what are you going to do?”

Virla chose to do AmeriCorps Vista and “use it to turn over every rock.”

She then called a WorkSource counselor with whom she had a good relationship. The counselor said, “I believe in you. You’ve come so far. You will get through this.”

That gave Virla her push. With AmeriCorps Vista, she volunteered at the Center for Justice and worked her way up from volunteering, to part-time then full-time as outreach coordinator, then as assistant director of driver relicensing, running that program and now having her own organization.

“My experiences allow me to meet clients where they are. Often out of the trauma people suffer, greatness comes,” said Virla who attributes her success to faith.

“I believe in Jesus Christ and rely on my faith for everything,” said Virla a member of the Church of Berachah.

Cam’s journey began when her parents named her for her grandmother, Camerina, who was born in Mexico during the 1907 revolution, experienced political upheaval, witnessed injustice and decided to come to this country,” Cam said.

“She had a hard life there and here, but was a living saint, driven by faith,” said Cam, telling of her grandmother’s influence.

As a child, Cam attended St. Aloysius in Spokane and St. Rose of Lima in Cheney. She said her spirituality was influenced by going to a Saturday evening Catholic mass at St. Aloysius, led by Indigenous people.

“I have a personal relationship with our Creator. Every day, I say a rosary of the Holy Spirit for my clients,” she said. “Because we are called to do work that isn’t done yet, we chose the name The Way to Justice.”

Her social worker/therapist counselor with whom she had a good relationship. The counselor said, “I believe in you. You’ve come so far. You will get through this.”

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“My experiences allow me to...
Pullman parish’s Social Justice Ministry serves in multiple ways

At Sacred Heart Catholic Parish in Pullman, parishioners are invited to serve others through social justice action—housing, hunger and environmental projects, and advocacy. Five members of the parish’s Social Justice Ministry—Bill Engels, Kat Harris, Francy Pavlas Bose, Tim Paulait and Bonita Lawhead—recently told of their motivations and described some of the projects.

“We use ‘ministry’ not ‘committee’ because a ministry is about doing God’s justice work,” Francy clarified. “A ministry serves others,” Kat said.

The Social Justice Ministry began a year after Francy came to Pullman in 1993. In 1994, she at- tended the Catholic Conference in Spokane where she learned about the “Moving Faith into Action” program. In Pullman, she invited 12 members of Sacred Heart to participate in a six-week program to move faith into action.

“I was Catholic all my life but had no real understanding of social justice teachings,” she said.

Tim and Bill were inspired to do peace and justice work and the 36-week Just Faith Program, Tim in 2001 after moving to Pullman in 2000, and Bill at St. Joseph’s in Seattle.

Transformative experiences about another common factor for them. Born in Seattle, Bill lived in Europe and around the United States and was a Wesleyan. He studied English literature at the University of Arkansas and did graduate studies at St. Louis University.

After earning his doctorate in 1998, Bill taught mostly in Asia: four years in Mongolia, three in South Korea and six at a university in Bangladesh. He also served as principal of an elementary school he helped start in Bangla-des. In 2014, he came to teach at Washington State University (WSU). His wife, who is from Mongolia, is now a U.S. citizen.

Kat, who experienced little diversity growing up in Wy- oming, did not have an interest in social justice until moving in 2016 from Nebraska to Pullman. After graduating in accounting in 2007 from the University of Wyoming, she went from being a CPA to teaching accounting.

Catholic all her life, she en-counter ed other perspectives because her husband is Jamaican and the grandson of a Baptist deacon. Her interest in social justice grew as she began to see the world through others after visiting his family. “As a minority for two weeks, I gained a new perspective,” Kat said.

Her husband grew up in a farm village, where people had little or no interaction with white people. His family hand-washed their clothes. They had running water, while few others did.

“Seeing people live in survival mode, I am no longer quick to judge. We need grace to see others where they are. Life is complex,” Kat said. “Social jus-tice is walking the talk of faith.”

The pandemic led me to look for the good,” she said. “Now we are discussing racial justice. Racism is an issue. We need to talk about it and act.”

Tim also has international ties. He came to Pullman as a wheat researcher with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, after teaching 10 years at McGill University in Quebec.

For him, social justice is inter- woven with his faith and keeps him involved in the church. He appreciates that Sacred Heart’s pastor, Fr. Steve Dublinski, encourages parishioners to talk about issues and then act.

“The social justice aspect of Jesus’ message fits to what we do every day,” he said. “My so-cial justice work makes my faith concrete rather than cerebral.”

His research led him to subbati-cal in Switzerland and Australia, and to teaching in Morocco and Turkey. As an adjunct professor at the Department of Plant Pathology at WSU, he works with international graduate students.

Bonita, who grew up in South Dakota, moved to Vancouver and then to Tekoa, north of Pullman, where she lived 40 years. She worked with The Inland Catholic Register, registering priests, teaching parishioners and writing on the many ways people bring Jesus’ love into the world.

Bonita studied to be a sub- stance abuse counselor and began working in 2005 with a counseling agency in Pullman, 13 years before moving there in 2018.

“Jesus calls us to the Gospel of loving our neighbor as our selves. Social justice is seeing children fed and having shoes, and there being equal opportu-nity for people of all skin colors and dispositions,” Bonita said.

For Bill, Social Justice Min- istry is a way to put his faith into action in a group context. Knowing he is accountable to a group means he has deadlines and the support of a group with similar goals.

Through the ministry, Francy, Tim and Bill seek to bring Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato si: Caring for Our Common Home,” to the parish. Through Zoom meetings, participants learn about and commit to addressing climate change and creation care as indi- viduals and as a parish.

“Move Out, Pitch In” is a spring project, coordinated by the university with many churches and community groups.

When students leave campus, they throw away what they can’t take, so churches and a thrift shop set up bins in residence halls and put up signs, “Don’t throw things away. Put them in the bin in the lobby.” Students put in food, clothing, dishes, bedding, toast- ers, microwaves, other appliances and storage bins.

Groups of 15 to 20 Sacred Heart volunteers in teams of two or three go to the halls twice a day to load items into cars and pickup trucks. They take items to Sacred Heart’s basement to sort to distribution in individuals in need through agencies in Pullman, Moscow and beyond. Several other churches and groups do that in other residence halls.

“IT saves 50,000 pounds from the landfill,” Francy said.

Another ecology project is collecting clear plastic bags for Trex, a recycling company that makes railings and decking. Sacred Heart members bring bags to the church, which takes the bags to Safeway in Pullman.

If they recycle 500 pounds in six months, Trex gives them a bench. The church has four benches and will donate future benches to care facilities.

Francy urges other churches to join them, “because it’s better to recycle plastic than have it end up in the ocean.”

When Pullman Disposal Ser- vice stopped accepting glass a few years ago, the Social Justice Ministry began collecting glass at the church and taking it to Whitman County Transfer, which grinds it for road construction.

Tim described the housing programs. Sacred Heart has been active for seven years in Family Promise of the Palouse, an out- pantries of the Parish Council with homeless families. In Pullman and Moscow, 15 core churches rotated housing families in their facilities four times a year and 13 support churches provided meals in pre-COVID times. Now homeless families stay in hotels while Family Promise helps people find jobs, put their lives together and find housing.

The Social Justice Ministry connects with the Community Action Center (CAC), which of- fers emergency and low-income housing, giving bus tickets to Spokane shelters. Neighbors Alliance in Moscow has an emergency shelter. Habitat of the Palouse builds one house a year.

For hunger, there are two food banks—one at the CAC and one at Pullman Child Welfare. St. James Episcopal, Community Congregational United Church of Christ and the campus have outreach in the community. Sacred Heart’s Parish Council is considering having one.

Kat’s outreach includes orga-nizing people to send cards to iso-lated residents in care facilities.

Last fall, Bonita was in a group praying for civility. It did a ser- vice with music and scripture on Jesus’ call to love God and love neighbors, bringing awareness that “we are all one and need to be civil to those who are different.”

About 12 parishioners at- tended the 2021 Eastern Wash- ington Legislative Conference in January on Zoom, learning about issues before the state legislature. Bill and Francy co-ordinate an action alert network for peace and justice advocacy at Sacred Heart.

They email or text parishioners about actions on the death penal- ty, environment and other issues. For information, call 332-5114 or email francy@pavlasbose.com.
Over the summer, Catholic Charities began efforts to expand housing with services to residents—opening a permanent supportive housing complex and partnering to share a grant to provide similar housing.

On July 30, Catholic Charities opened a 50-unit permanent supportive housing complex named for Beatriz and Ed Schweitzer of Schweitzer Engineering Laboratories. It combines affordable housing assistance with support services to address needs of people exiting chronic homelessness, helping them build independent living and tenant skills with case management, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and assistance in locating and maintaining employment.

Ed and Beatriz assisted poor and vulnerable people in Eastern Washington for many years. Schweitzer Haven is Catholic Charities’ 15th tax-credit property completed since 2010, now offering more than 700 units of housing in Eastern Washington for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Later this year, in partnership with Gonzaga Preparatory School and Gonzaga University, Catholic Charities will open Gonzaga Family Haven, a 73 unit affordable housing complex for families.

In addition, on Aug. 2, a Federal District Court Judge awarded a $6,877,823 grant to Frontier Behavioral Health (FBH), Catholic Charities Eastern Washington (CCEW) and Pioneer Human Services (Pioneer) to provide housing and behavioral healthcare services to at-risk adults.

As the lead, FBH will ensure tenants meet eligibility requirements of the grant. CCEW and Pioneer, which provide permanent supportive housing, will manage and staff apartment units with onsite case managers and other resources.

Pioneer provides 10 single-room occupancy units or family-sized rooms and an onsite case manager to help residents obtain treatment and resources to help them live productive lives.

CCEW will provide 24 studio and one-bedroom units as part of a larger affordable housing community near Spokane Falls Community College, funded by long-term contracts for project-based rental assistance.

Case managers will assist residents with rental obligations, therapy resources, transportation, legal assistance and other services.

Funding for the grant comes from the 2018 settlement of Trueblood vs. Department of Social and Health Services, which challenged unconstitutional delays in competency evaluations and restoration services for people detained in jails. Since the settlement, the state has been disbursing more than $80 million in contempt sanctions to fund community diversion programs statewide.

The housing grant is part of Phase IV of the Trueblood Diversion Plan. A total of $22 million in housing grants was awarded throughout the state.

For information, call 838-4651 or email csavalli@fbhwa.org, call 206-766-7034 or email nanette.sorich@p-h-s.com, call 455-3039 or email sarah.yerden@ceeasternwa.org.

Catholic Charities opens more permanent supportive housing units

If you know someone who seems to be

Struggling Emotionally

here are some steps you can take to help:

Ask

It’s OK to ask a friend or loved one directly if they are struggling emotionally.

Be There

Listen with compassion and empathy and without dismissing or judging.

Keep Them Safe

If your friend is in crisis or considering self-harm, separate them from anything they could use to hurt themselves.

Follow Up

Check in with the person on a regular basis. Contacting a friend who is going through a time of emotional pain can make a big difference.

Help Them Connect

Help connect your loved one to a support system, whether it’s family, friends, clergy, coaches, or therapists. You can also give them information about calling WAlistens, 1.833.681.0211, to speak to a support specialist or the regional crisis line, 1.877.266.1818, if they need immediate help.

health.srhda.org/mental-health-and-coping

Spokane Regional Health District ensures nondiscrimination in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. To file a complaint or to request more information, reasonable accommodations, or language translations contact 509.432.1602 or email shd.org. Created September 2022. Adapted from https://www.braveworks.org/promote-mental-healthy-at-the-workplace/
At the Core seeks churches, businesses to feed region’s 18,000 hungry children

A t the Core and Second Harvest have recruited 120 congregations, businessess and family groups as supporters for the Bite2Go program that provides weekend meals for more than 4,500 hungry Spokane area students in 73 elementary and 35 middle and high schools.

Knowing that 18,000 school children in Eastern Washington and North Idaho communities face weekend hunger, At the Core, which started seven years ago, is ready to recruit more churches, businesses and family groups outside Spokane to feed hungry children over weekends.

Chris and Brenna Sloan, who were active in Timberview Church in North Spokane, started the program in 2014 when the church reached out to Meadowridge Elementary School and asked how they could “be a blessing to the community.”

“We asked Debbie Wiechert, the counselor, who said the school had a United Way grant to help them feed children over weekends,” said Brenna, program associate for At the Core. “She asked if we would help with logistics of picking up food from Second Harvest and delivering it to schools.

“We enthusiastically said ‘yes’ to helping provide the weekend food for 15 children on free breakfast and lunch,” she said.

A fter a year, the grant expired, and the counselor said the school was unable to continue the program.

By then church members and the youth group wanted to continue doing it. So individuals and families in the church sponsored children for the next school year.

“We loved being able to make an impact on our community. We ended up with 25 children and it grew from there,” said Brenna, who graduated with Chris from Shadle Park High School.

She started studying in Bellingham and Chris in Walla Walla. Both finished at Eastern Washington University in 1997, she in teaching and he in marketing. Before raising her family, she helped “plant” Timberview in 1992, they attended there. The senior pastor encouraged Chris to do online studies with Northwest Nazarene University in 1999 and 2000 and mentored him to be licensed an elder.

After the program was going for a while, Chris talked to pastor colleagues in North Spokane encouraging them to adopt a local school and feed children.

Within two years, four churches adopted local schools.

At high schools, eligible students use their student number to order food from an online menu. They select a teacher from whom they will pick up their order. Students in the schools’ DECA (business) class, leadership class or other group pack the food and take it to the teachers.

“It makes a difference that children are fed over the weekend and they do not return to school Mondays hungry and unable to focus in class,” Tom said.

Last year, they were concerned the program would not work because children were not in school. However, many churches, businesses and teachers delivered Bite2Go food directly to children and their families at their homes.

Deliveries dropped from 5,000 to 4,500–3,500 in elementary schools and 1,000 in middle and high schools.

Re al izing we were feeding 20 percent of children on free meals in Spokane and that Second Harvest covers Eastern Washington and North Idaho, we figured there were 18,000 children food insecure in the whole region—another 13,000,” Tom said.

“So we want more people to know about Bite2Go in outlying and rural areas,” he said. “We are looking for community champions who will help us start the program in their communities.”

In October, At the Core is offering opportunities for people to visit Second Harvest, a school and meet with an adoptive church or business to see if the program might be a good fit for their communities.

“We have a wonderful model. Kids should not be going to school hungry on Mondays,” Tom said. “There are many people like me who are retired and seeking something to do. We are ready to coach more groups to start adopting schools.

For information, email tom.stevenson@gmail.com or visit athecoreonline.com.

Tom Stevenson and Brenna Sloan are recruiting more churches, businesses and family groups to adopt schools.

Tom Stevenson, who retired from the Mosa Adams CPA firm in 2011 after 35 years. When Tom was chair of the Spokane County United Way board in 2013, he went on his own nickel to Amarillo, Texas, to learn about a poverty program.

“That didn’t fit Spokane, but I met Dyron Howell who ran a SNAP PAK 4 KIDS program. That program inspired me to think about such a program for Spokane,” he said.

On returning, he met with Spokane school superintendent Shelly Redinger, who spoke about the need for a similar program. She referred him to the Sloans to learn what they had been doing for two years in the Mead School District.

He joined them and together they helped nearly 120 churches, businesses and family groups adopt a school.

As the Bite2Go feeding program grew, Chris began working full time at Second Harvest.

At the Core formed as a nonprofit with Tom as volunteer board chair, Brenna as volunteer, Catherine Klingle as program coordinator and a Gonzaga intern.

“Our role is to recruit, inspire and maintain adoptive organizations—businesses, churches and nonprofits—that adopt a school in their neighborhood,” Brenna said.

“We are coaches for those organizations,” Tom said. “We make it easy for a group to adopt a school and start the program. Then we support them while they successfully serve a school with little turnover in groups.”

The organizations raise funds, pick up food, deliver it and wrap their arms around the school, offering mentoring and tutoring to students, too.

Volunteers from churches and businesses are in the schools each week to deliver the food and often do more.

One church does an “Un-die Sunday,” collecting socks, underwear and sweatpants for children they sponsored.
People of faith gleam glimmer of hope against the bad news any day

With a summer of hurricanes and heat, tornadoes and forest fires, and the ongoing COVID and climate change, new refugees and new leaders, many seek to overcome feelings of hopelessness and desperation to help those who have suffered and are still suffering.

Local, state/regional, national and global faith communities offer channels for responding with opportunities to donate, volunteer, pray and advocate.

One might be easily discouraged by the list of tragedies and by the self-centered focus of many who push their liberty over the life, health and wellbeing of the community, but seeing the responses of the faith and nonprofit communities in face of these events, one can be heartened and even hopeful.

Many media focus on conflicts, the unusual and the violence of weather and people. Decision makers, this editor visited the websites of several national faith communities to see if they offer channels to combat racism, to address the rise in hate crimes or to help with rescue operations and assess the damage. They are working to meet immediate needs. Our partners are also planning for longer term response, including construction; community-based psychosocial support and trauma recovery; reconstruction of damaged water infrastructure, and livelihood support. 

These are just a hopeful sample of people putting their faith into action.

Mary Stamp  Editor

Letters to the Editor

Guest Editorial

Pacific Islanders hope everyone will come together to protect the Earth

Climate change devastates not only the Pacific Islands but also the whole world.

As a Pacific Islander from the small islands of Tonga, climate change is one of the life, health and safety of the students as well as our American Dream.

In 2020, 13 hurricanes battered Vanuatu, leading to the death of 16 people. In 2009, a major earthquake of 8.1 led to a tsunami striking Samoa, including American Samoa and Tonga and wiping out many houses, killing more than 189 people and injuring hundreds. In 2015, the island of Kiribati hit the Island of Niue and devastated most of the infra-structure of this little island.

In 2015, the UN launched the Sustainable Development Goals, with winds that reached up to 174 mph per hour devastated the Island of Vanuatu leading to the death of 16 people.

In 2016, Fiji witnessed one of the strongest recorded tropical storms, Tropical Cyclone Winston, with winds reaching up to 178 miles an hour, that left a wake of destruction and caused damage that Winston killed 44 people and left more than 40,000 people homeless.

The El Niño drought of 2016 brought famine and illness to hundreds of thousands of people in Papua New Guinea. In New Guinea, the low-lying island of Morobe and the assets of Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands are already at the frontline of climate change.

The rising of the sea level and the temperature mean that more cyclones will happen, and they are likely to be more intense.

When the sea is warmer, fish will move into deeper waters, which means only the countries with resources are able to fish. As most of the Pacific Islands depend heavily on the ocean for both food and economy, now they will rely on bigger islands for that purpose.

We fully support the board in following Washington state law and changing the history factually and honestly. Teachers can tell the truth about when our country lived up to its ideals of racial and social justice for all and when we have fallen short. We can speak truthfully about our learning from history and to stamp out, continues.

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We welcome the USDoD’s stance of the Fig Tree includes this story because editor Mary Stamp and development/editorial associate Marijke Fakasiieiki met and conversed with Philip Potter at ucc.org

• Bärbel said her husband

• Konrad Raiser, WCC

• Annegret Schilling, researcher in ecumenical and intercultural theology

• Lynne deLaubenfels Peace Many Paths

• Barry Fox, executive director of United Methodist Communications

• Joni Eareckson Tada, Paralyzed by an acrobatic accident in 1970, told of Philip’s belief in a dialogue of cultures.

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By Kaye Hult

The 75th Anniversary celebration for St. Vincent de Paul North Idaho (SVDP) in Coeur d’Alene on Thursday, Sept. 9, was sold out, has been postponed. It was planned as an opportunity to learn of the agency’s history, reflect on the years and invite the audience to examine how they have helped or can help the community.

Development director Barbara Smalley attributes the response to the role it has played serving the community over those years.

Since coming to SVDP 10 years ago, she has been telling the story of St. Vincent de Paul, which is known for its thrift stores in Post Falls, Coeur d’Alene and Osburn in the Silver Valley, but is much more.

St. Vincent de Paul in North Idaho is also a social service agency, offering housing, shelters and services for seniors and families with children. Most services are offered at the H.E.L.P. Center, 121 E. Harrison Ave, in Coeur d’Alene.

“Beyond the homeless, we work with all those who struggle, such as the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) population,” she said, noting that includes veterans and people with disabilities.

SVDP also offers parenting classes through ICARE Parenting Support, which also offers child sexual abuse prevention workshops.

In 1946, Coeur d’Alene was a small lumber and mining community. Members of the St. Thomas parish saw neighbors in need and started a clothes closet. That grew into St. Vincent de Paul, which is now the largest organization in North Idaho serving low-income and homeless people.

As they seek to provide support and compassion along with services to help people be self-sufficient, their vision is to offer “a hand up, not a hand out,” as they “clothe the naked, feed the hungry and shelter the homeless.”

They also help people enrich and rebuild their lives with dignity, said Barb. When she encounters people with a judgmental view of SVDP clients, she urges them to realize clients did not have a goal of being homeless or low income.

Barb said housing is increasingly hard to locate. SVDP helps people find jobs more readily. Its men’s and women’s shelters offer information and referral to services, job counseling and life skill classes.

Clients are expected to volunteer at the thrift store and help with chores at the shelters. They are to save half their income so they will have money for their own residence when they leave. They are expected to find employment within 30 days of their maximum 90 days of residence, when they are to move from the shelter into a stable situation.

For those seeking work, St. Vincent de Paul provides career counseling and a voucher program for job search. Job seekers gain skills and confidence for job interviews.

SVDP operates more than 300 units of permanent senior and low-income housing in the five counties of North Idaho.

Its Trinity Group Homes are semi-independent homes in Coeur d’Alene and Post Falls for those with mental health issues who need life skills training. Their goal is for residents to graduate into community living. The head of household must have a documented disability. The goal is for residents to be trained, gain self-sufficiency and move into independent living within two years.

SVDP also offers rent and utility assistance for people in their own homes, facing eviction or utility cut-off. Individuals may apply for this help. If Social Security requires it, SVDP helps with representative payee services.

For people with limited access to food, SVDP offers meals at Father Bill’s Kitchen, a community dining hall that serves a free meal Monday to Friday evenings.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides children in day care with food.

Barb said a lack of transportation makes the many area food banks difficult for many to access, except people who live nearby.

“Father Bill’s Kitchen is centrally located and on the bus line, as is the Coeur d’Alene SVDP campus,” Barb said. “Throughout the pandemic, we

Barbara Smalley educates community on work of agency.

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