

FREE

SPOKANE SENIOR TIMES

Issue #2

April 2026



Sean Jonz and Jordan Hunter provide support to seniors through the Alzheimer's Association in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho. Photo credit: Sheila Fritts

Volunteers Paint Spokane Purple for the Alzheimer's Association all Year Round

By Sheila Fritts

Each fall, hundreds of people gather in Spokane wearing purple, carrying flowers, and walking together for a cause that touches nearly every family in some way. The **Walk to End Alzheimer's**, hosted by the Alzheimer's Association, has become one of the most meaningful community events in our region—raising awareness, building connections, and funding critical work to fight Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia. Today, more than **7 million Americans age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's**, a number projected to nearly double in the coming decades. The impact is deeply felt in Washington state, where **more than 126,000 people are living with Alzheimer's and nearly 247,000 caregivers provide unpaid care** to loved ones.

Funds raised through the Walk to End Alzheimer's support the Association's mission in three key areas: **research, care, and support services**. Donations help fund global research aimed at prevention and treatment, while also

supporting local services such as education programs, support groups, and a **24/7 helpline (800-272-3900)** available to anyone facing memory loss or caregiving challenges. These services are offered **free of charge** to individuals and families.

Locally, the work of the Association is strengthened by dedicated leaders. **Sean Jonz**, Program Manager for Eastern Washington, helps coordinate education and outreach across the region, ensuring families know where to find help and information.

The Spokane walk itself is coordinated by **Jordan Hunter**, Walk Manager for the region. Community members can connect with Hunter to **start a team, join an existing team, volunteer, or sponsor the event**. The Spokane Walk to End Alzheimer's is typically held each October at **Riverfront Park**, where participants gather for the Promise Garden ceremony and a community walk honoring those affected by Alzheimer's. *continued on pg. 2)*



SPOKANE SENIOR TIMES

Serving Spokane's 50+ Community since 2026

Spokane • Eastern Washington • North Idaho

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ABOUT SPOKANE SENIOR TIMES

Spokane Senior Times is a community journal dedicated to thoughtful storytelling, practical insight, and local perspectives on aging, care, leadership, and life in the Inland Northwest.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Published quarterly

Free print and digital distribution

ADVERTISING

Advertising in Spokane Senior Times supports free access for seniors and must meet standards of accuracy, transparency, and relevance to the senior community. Advertising inquiries may be directed to the email above.

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(Volunteers... continued from pg. 1)

While the walk is a powerful one-day event, the movement lasts all year. Teams organize fundraisers, educational programs, and community gatherings throughout the year—building

friendships while advancing the fight against Alzheimer’s.

Every purple shirt, every step, and every dollar raised brings us closer to better care, stronger support, and ultimately a world without Alzheimer’s.

The 2026 Spokane Walk to End Alzheimer’s will take place Saturday, October 3 at Riverfront Park, where hundreds of community members will gather to honor those living with Alzheimer’s and raise funds for research, care, and support services.

When Retirement Prioritizes Purpose

By Lisa Tyson

For many people, retirement is a long-awaited season of rest. For Mike Noland, it began with a question. “Lord,” he prayed, “now that I’m retired and have all this extra time, what do you want me to do?” Mike didn’t know then that this simple prayer would take him halfway around the world and spark a movement that continues to change lives today.

A Need Half a World Away



Not long after retiring, Mike struck up a friendship with a young man from Africa named Rogers. Through casual

conversations, Mike began hearing stories that unsettled his heart—stories of deep poverty in Uganda, children going days without meals, and families desperate for education and hope.

The statistics were shocking. In Uganda, the average life expectancy is short, and the number of orphans is high. The challenges in this country can seem almost insurmountable. Women often suffer complications during childbirth, and both adults and children lose their lives daily to respiratory infections, HIV, malaria, poor sanitation, and limited access to healthcare.

For countless children, the two greatest struggles are simple but devastating: lack of food and lack of access to education (often due to long walking distances and required school fees their families cannot afford.) Plus, schools are few and far between and Uganda continues to face one of the highest elementary school dropout rates in the world. Most

rural families are subsistence farmers who trade and barter their garden produce, forcing them to make a decision many in America could scarcely imagine: feed their family, or send one child to school?

As his friendship with Rogers grew, Rogers shared his deep passion to help children in a rural area he knew well. Mike couldn’t shake the feeling that he wasn’t meant to just hear about these needs and when Rogers invited him to come and see for himself, Mike knew he was meant to go.

Around the same time, what seemed like an unrelated opportunity appeared. A neighbor introduced Mike and his wife, Pam, to a couple who needed to rent a room. The rental income became unexpected provision, exactly enough to fund a trip to Uganda. Mike took it as confirmation. If God was opening the door, he would walk through it.

(continued on pg. 3)

When Retirement... (continued from pg. 2)

After making his decision, Mike shared the idea with a close friend from church, Karsten Mickelson. Karsten was also retired, a Vietnam veteran who had served in the U.S. Marines. When Mike told him he felt God was inviting him to Uganda, Karsten didn't hesitate. "If you're going," he said, "then I'll go with you."

Compassion Moves Friends to Action



In a move that surprised everyone around them, Mike and Karsten set off on a ten-day journey to Uganda in May/June 2019. Rogers, showed them the dire conditions in Zirobwe Sub-County, a rural area north of Kampala, the capital city.

There, they met two single mothers volunteering their time, doing their best to teach nearly 40 children with what little they had. The makeshift "school" was an open stick structure with a rusted, leaking metal roof, dirt floors, no electricity, no running water, inadequate sanitation, no school supplies and no food for the children's lunches. It was the kind of place no child should have to learn... but for these children, it was their only option.

What Mike and Karsten encountered during their visit would change them forever. After taking hundreds of photos and video clips, they returned to the United States deeply moved by what they had seen and were determined to help these children and the community they lived in.

When the two men arrived home and shared their story at church, the response was immediate. People were amazed, not only by the need, but by the passion of these two retired friends. Their age made their obedience even more powerful.

"These children need help!" Mike told the congregation.

Surely, they thought, there must already be an organization that could step in. Mike's wife, Pam, began searching, but found no organizations willing to take on such a huge need. That's when Mike said the words Pam still remembers clearly: *"We can't continue to live the way we live and not help these children. There has to be something we can do."*

An Organization Is Born

Soon after, an accountant friend stepped in and encouraged them, saying, "You need to become a 501(c)(3) charity. I'll do all the paperwork and cover the costs. This is what I do for a living, and I would love to help establish this charity."

With backgrounds in construction, military service, teaching, and decades of community leadership, Mike, Pam, Karsten and a core group of friends decided to move forward.

In 2019, Loving Hearts Foundation for Africa (LHFA) was born, and the friends committed to building something lasting: a Christian school that would meet both the physical and spiritual needs of children in Uganda. They shared the vision with friends, family, churches, and their local community—and once again, God moved hearts, bringing together a team of committed people.



Behind the scenes, and often on the ground in Uganda, is Mike's wife, Pam Noland, the driving force who keeps Loving Hearts Foundation for Africa moving forward with integrity and heart. As Director of LHFA, Pam leads mission trips, travels to Uganda once or twice a year, and works hand in hand with the local team to ensure that critical administrative work is done and that support reaches exactly where it is needed.

Known for her loyal friendships, deep compassion, and tireless dedication, Pam organizes donations, coordinates supplies carried by American volunteers, and meets personally with supporters to steward every gift with care. She shares the story of LHFA everywhere she goes, often inviting others to join the mission with warmth and conviction.

What began as a flame ignited in her heart by her husband's obedience has grown into a lifelong calling. Today, Pam serves alongside her husband on the Board of Directors, offering steady leadership, faithful oversight, and a living example of what it looks like to serve Jesus and others with love, purpose, and unwavering commitment.



Jireh Primary School: Built One Step at a Time

Since its founding, LHFA has grown into a fully operational Christian school with two campuses (preschool through 6th grade), local employment for 15 people, and a ten-acre farm that helps sustain daily meals for the school.

The children are sewing, gardening, and most importantly, learning. The organization is helping break the cycle of poverty by providing accessible education, daily meals, and hope for the next generation.

In a powerful example of faith in action, the team learned one spring that the village's only water well had become completely unusable. Residents were forced to drink pond water, and illness began spreading throughout the area. A quote came in: a deep borehole well would cost \$12,000, an amount far beyond what the new charity had available.

After contacting several other charities and finding no help in sight, Pam was devastated to learn that two of the local children had died. The task felt impossible. As the board of directors prayed fervently, Pam felt God nudging her to simply trust Him and begin speaking out, sharing with others the desperate need for clean water. And miraculously, God moved hearts. In just 11 days, all the needed funds came in and the well was built.

Today, over 200 children (80 of them orphans) are receiving education, love, and care through Loving Hearts Foundation for Africa. Many of these children still live without electricity, running water, or flushing toilets. For them, the school is their only consistent source of food, learning, encouragement and hope for a brighter future.

You Can't Help Everyone – But Everyone Can Help Someone

The Noland's story is an exciting reminder that purpose doesn't end at retirement. In fact, sometimes, retirement is where it begins.

The journey of LHFA shows what can happen when seniors say yes...when experience, faith, passion and COMPASSION come together.

Are you looking for a meaningful way to make a difference? We invite you to partner with Loving Hearts for Africa and help change a child's future. For just \$25 a month, you can ensure that a child living in extreme poverty receives an education and vital daily meals. Even more powerful, 100% of every dollar given goes directly to Uganda. Everyone serving stateside is a volunteer, motivated purely by a deep commitment to the mission.

You don't have to travel across the world to change a life, your generosity does that. You have something valuable to offer. LHFA is planting seeds that grow far beyond the classroom, proving that no season of life is ever wasted when it is placed in God's faithful and trusted hands.

To learn more about Loving Hearts Foundation for Africa, visit www.lovingheartsfoundationforafrica.org

Learn how your generosity can change a child's life forever: www.givebutter.com/LovingHeartsFoundationforAfricaMonthlypartner



A Hand Up, Not a Handout: Dignified Workday Builds Stability Through Employment

By Kenny Carlson- Dignified Workday Business Development Director



“Dignified Workday gives me purpose. I really enjoy my job. It keeps me busy and out of trouble.”

Kenny Evans- former crew lead, now employed full-time in private sector

Dignified Workday is a rapidly growing low-barrier employment program in Spokane, Washington that is reshaping how the community supports individuals experiencing homelessness and instability. Founded by Tresa and Steve Schmautz after an unexpected encounter in 2023, the organization officially launched in 2024 through a partnership with Career Path Services and the support of SDS Realty. Built on the belief that everyone deserves the dignity of meaningful work, the program

offers daily employment opportunities that help people rebuild their lives one shift at a time.

Participants earn above minimum wage, work flexible four- to five-hour shifts, and receive bi-weekly paychecks—all while contributing to local projects that benefit neighborhoods and businesses. The crews handle a wide range of tasks, including construction, demolition, cleanup, landscaping, hauling, painting, snow removal, and even assisting elderly residents with moves. More than 70 people have voluntarily joined the work crew, with 23 gaining stable housing, 13 securing full-time jobs, and 15 entering sobriety to date.

Demand is increasing dramatically. By late 2025, local news outlets reported that over 500 people were on the waitlist for employment through Dignified Workday, reflecting both the program’s growing reputation and the urgency of need in Spokane’s homeless community. The Spokane Journal of Business notes that the nonprofit now employs around 60 people and is

continuing to expand its partnerships with organizations such as Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, Avista Corp., and the cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley as well as seeking work contracts with all other surrounding municipalities.

For many participants, Dignified Workday is more than a job—it is a path toward stability, community, and pride. As the organization works toward financial self-sustainability, its impact on Spokane continues to deepen, one dignified workday at a time.

“Dignified Workday lets me be me, and I thrive when I can be myself at work. It makes me want to be there and work hard.”

Karina Wlodarzewski- crew lead



To learn more about Dignified Workday or how you can participate in reshaping the future contact **Kenny Carlson** at **(509)-954-7023**.

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Location:

Fairwood Retirement Village & Assisted Living
312 W Hastings Rd, Spokane, WA 99218
Building #10 Dining Room

Workshop Dates & Times

Thursdays from 1:00–3:00 PM

- March 19, 2026- Getting Started Without Getting Stuck
- July 23, 2026- Room by Room Clarity
- October 15, 2026- Sell it, Donate it, Digitize it
- December 10, 2026- Letting Go with Grace



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I'm a Senior Real Estate Specialist – Call me at 509-294-1085 or email me, LauraZahn@Windermere.com!



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Call: 509-467-2365 or Email: sheila@fairwoodretirement.com

 Location: 312 W Hastings Rd.
Spokane WA 99218 Building #10-
Independent Living Dining Room



2026 Workshop Dates (Thursdays) 12pm-2pm

February 05, 2026	July 02, 2026
February 12, 2026	July 09, 2026
March 05, 2026	August 06, 2026
March 12, 2026	August 13, 2026
April 02, 2026	September 03, 2026
April 09, 2026	September 10, 2026
May 07, 2026	October 01, 2026
May 14, 2026	October 08, 2026
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