

On December 3, Spokane UD hosted its annual holiday gathering and presented its **8th Annual Impact Award** to **Thayne McCulloh** and **Ana Mari Cauce**, the recently retired presidents of **Gonzaga University** and the **University of Washington**, in recognition of their leadership in establishing the **UW–GU Health Partnership**.

In 2016, Presidents McCulloh and Cauce took a rare and consequential step—bringing two distinct institutions into alignment around a shared commitment to medical education and regional health. Their partnership marked a pivotal moment for the Inland Northwest, creating a durable pathway to educate, attract, and retain the next generation of healthcare professionals in the region.

The evening also included remarks from past Impact Award recipients **Scott Morris (2024)**, **Dean Allen (2020)**, and **Dave Clack (2017)**, each reflecting on the significance of leadership that looks beyond institutional boundaries to serve the broader public good.

"Thayne and Ana Mari recognized early that collaboration—not competition—was essential to strengthen healthcare across Washington," said **Scott Morris**, retired CEO of Avista Corp and Gonzaga University emeritus board member. "Their leadership laid the groundwork for a program that continues to prepare physicians and healthcare providers to serve patients, advance solutions, and expand access to quality care, particularly in rural communities."

Dean Allen, CEO of McKinstry, noted, "From the outset, Thayne and Ana Mari articulated a clear and practical vision for expanding medical education in Spokane. Their steady leadership created the conditions for long-term investment in the region's health sciences ecosystem—an investment that continues to benefit communities across the state."

Since the partnership's launch, Spokane has become a sought-after destination for students in medicine, physician assistant studies, dentistry, human physiology, and public health. To date, approximately **600 medical students** and **300 MEDEX Northwest physician assistant students** have completed their training through the program. Students consistently cite the strength of Gonzaga's campus community, as the UW School of Medicine continues to see growing interest and applications nationwide.



The UW–GU Health Partnership stands as an example of what becomes possible when leadership is rooted in trust, shared purpose, and a long view of service—values that continue to shape the health and vitality of Spokane and the University District.

In closing I would like to thank the speakers for making time and traveling to this event; Bouten Construction for event sponsorship; Catherine Brazil and Christine DePriest for facilitating logistics and planning; the Emerald Initiative/McKinstry for providing space and facilities support via Haley LaSharr; Gonzaga University's Kate Vanskike for help with photography and musicians, and the UD's Alden Jones for overall event coordination, management, and vision.

Juliet Sinisterra, CEO



Above: Thayne McCulloh and Ani Mari Cauce at the UW-GU Health Partnership ribbon cutting.

Board Focus: Stacia Rasmussen



Stacia Rasmussen is the Innovation Economy Development Manager at Greater Spokane Inc. (GSI), the Spokane region's next-generation business development organization. Before joining GSI, Rasmussen held the position of Project Manager for the Office of the CEO at PAML, LLC and PAML Ventures, a healthcare solutions company with a focus on diagnostics.

Prior to PAML, she held numerous administrative and executive positions at companies such as Next IT and Agilent Technologies / Hewlett-Packard. In addition, Ms. Rasmussen founded and operated STARL Enterprises, a certified contract training company for the information technology industry.

Rasmussen is a graduate of Eastern Washington University with combined degrees in mathematics, computer science, and business administration. She has extensive experience in information technology, customer services, software development, mergers and acquisitions, and business development, and has held a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification since 2012. Rasmussen is a member of numerous non-profit community-based organizations, is a 2022 Leadership Spokane graduate, serves as a board member and past chair of Priority Spokane, is a past chair and board member of Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Inland Northwest, and continues to volunteer in the community.

Noteworthy Community Events



FRIENDS

January: Friends of Saranac

Through January 31

Saranac Art Gallery presents the work of artists Annalisa Bookstrom, Cozette Phillips, Tybre Newcombe, Taylor Perkins, Delaine Greene, Carly Ellis, Patty Haag, Michelle Robertson, Eva Silverstone, and Amalia Fisch.



Abstract Landscape Collage with Sheri Medford

February 1

Spokane Art School presents an intro to using paper and fabric scraps to create abstract landscape collage.

GSI Leadership: Strengthen your Grant Strategy

January 20

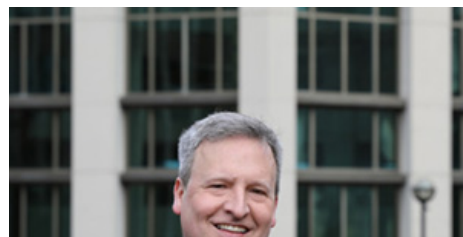
GSI featured speaker, **Staci Nelson**, founding principal of Nelson Stevenson Consulting, brings more than 25 years of experience as a nonprofit leader, communications professional, and fundraiser.



Emergent Horizons: A Generational Strategy “At Work in the Ruins” of US Democracy to Revitalize Environmental Law

February 3

Gonzaga Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment presents Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, the executive director of the Western Environmental Law Center, working from Taos, New Mexico. He is a seasoned litigator and policy advocate at the federal and state levels whose work centers on protecting ecological resilience and a just transition from fossil fuels.



The Power of Storytelling



Becky Barnhart



Kate Hudson



Dr. Melissa Mace



Yvonne E. Smith

Amplifying Women's Voices

Feb. 24
4:30 - 6:30 pm
Steam Plant

Sponsored by



with support from



Amplifying Women's Voices

February 24

The conversation will center on how storytelling transforms communication into relatable experiences that build trust and inspire action.



Holding to Our Values in a Changing Climate

February 24

Gonzaga Institute for Climate, Water, and the Environment presents Dave Upthegrove, Commissioner of Public Lands at the Washington Department of Natural Resources, who will discuss ways that the DNR is working to defend Washington's public lands, waters, and forests in the face of climate change.

Follow the UD on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#)!

Welcome to the University District's e-newsletter. You are on our email list as a University District partner, collaborator, community member, or interested party. If you would like to opt-out of future mailings, please use the Unsubscribe link.

© 2026 University District
120 N Pine St, Ste 252
Spokane, WA 99202
info@spokaneudistrict.org
www.spokaneudistrict.org

[View web version](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)