6:00 p.m.  Welcome and Introduction  
Dr. Heidi Wayment, Director of NAU’s Compassion Project and Psychology Department Chair

6:15 p.m.  Andrea Houchard, Director, Philosophy in the Public Interest

- What is violence, and how are different types of violence related to one another?
- How do violent acts impact individuals and communities? Should we seek to minimize violence? If so, in what instances and how?
- Where is violence in Flagstaff? Why is it there? What, if anything, should we do?

7:20 p.m. Recap of discussion

We are grateful for support from NAU’s McKenzie Endowment for Democracy and the Richard Wood Fund.
The City of Flagstaff

Crimes of all kind in Flagstaff have dropped in the past three to four years, just like in most every other city, large and small, in the U.S. during the recession. The rate here, however, remains higher than most small and midsize cities in the Southwest, Mountain West and West, according to research the Daily Sun conducted for a story earlier this year. Among similar-sized university cities, only Ogdun had a higher violent crime rate and Eugene a higher property crime rate. Violent crime in Flagstaff falls into several categories. Aggravated assaults are the most numerous, and they come from transient fights, bar brawls and domestic violence – increasingly the last. All three types of assault usually involve alcohol abuse.

Violence and Demographics in Flagstaff

Drug-Related Violence

Drug-related crime and violence usually involve younger males 18-29 – some are younger. A high-profile murder five years ago of a 16-year-old dealer by other low-level dealers involved a ring of Sinagua High students and recent grads – most of them recently living on their own for the first time. They were unusual in that they came from middle-class families and operated outside the youth gang culture associated primarily with Sunnyside, Lower Greenlaw and Southside and with school loyalties.

Flagstaff’s Response

Some of the drug crimes are related to criminal youth gangs, and police say there are a number of small gangs operating in the region. Their violence is primarily directed against themselves, but the public risk increasingly is from stray bullets from drive-by shootings and brawls in parks with firearms. Police say the youth gangs here in no way approach the level of violence and the scale of drug transactions of the gangs of Southern California, but the number of recent brawls, injuries and now a death are higher than usual.

A decade ago, a low-level dealer was shot and killed by police in Sunnyside as he sped his car toward them after a traffic stop. This was the Kyle Garcia case, and it was the turning point in community-police relations in Flagstaff. The single mothers raising sons in Sunnyside pleaded with police and the news media to see their side before pulling the trigger – literally and figuratively. They felt isolated and stressed by working several jobs while trying to raise their children. They despaired of seeing their sons risk arrest and jail as some turned to drugs and petty crime to have some spending money. The police chief retired and Brent Cooper, an advocate of community policing, came in. The police department formed closer ties with the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association and its Weed and Seed program, moved a police substation into Sunnyside, championed a “Broken Windows” strategy of neighborhood cleanup days and used a Silent Witness fund to track down and bust meth houses. Police also moved transient alcoholics out of the Fourth Street business corridor. Today, Sunnyside can claim a lower crime rate than some other more affluent Flagstaff neighborhoods, although gangs in Lower Greenlaw east of Fourth Street have emerged.

Police have also formed close ties with Southside leaders, who have worked with the city to launch a community center and control the petty crimes, litter and anti-social behavior of the transient alcoholics. Although Cooper died of a heart attack, his successor, Kevin Treadway, has opened a substation in the Murdoch Center and put police on the streets on foot patrol. Transient alcoholics are being rousted more frequently, but the closures of South Beaver Elementary and Our Lady of Guadalupe have reduced neighborhood cohesiveness and the homeless shelter continues to be a magnet for transient alcoholics.

Connections in Violence

Some of the young men in gangs are growing up to be violent partners – some of the most serious domestic violence has come from the same demographics but also is found more frequently across income strata. The alcohol abuse that comes with the violence has also led to some high-profile traffic deaths and manslaughter convictions. Youth advocates in Flagstaff note that most young people in transient, low-income neighborhoods are on the path to success while acknowledging there are a substantial number who are at risk of falling into crime and other anti-social behavior as gangs take the place of cohesive families with adult role models. They note that intervention programs are primarily available only after a crime has been committed, and they call on the Flagstaff community to redouble its efforts to provide meaningful recreational, cultural and social programs for at-risk youths along with part-time jobs.

We are grateful to Randy Wilson, the Editor of the Arizona Daily Sun, for this historical perspective on violence in Flagstaff. The articles on the next page provides further information of this important community concern.


Hot Topics Café, November 6, 2013
The Problems


http://azdailysun.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/flagstaff-crime-rate-higher-than-other-cities/article_2f5db4b0-ff1d-11e0-ae94-001cc4e002e0.html


Some Solutions


Museum of Northern Arizona
The “hot topics” in the Hot Topics Cafés are selected by community members representing diverse constituencies and viewpoints. We thank our committee for their participation.

Flagstaff & Winslow

Allan Affeldt  
Owner, La Posada; Founder, Winslow Arts Trust; Former Mayor, City of Winslow; Board Member for: Arizona Town Hall, Arizona Citizens for the Arts  
Joe Boles  
Professor Emeritus, Northern Arizona University  
Scott Deasy  
Deacon of Epiphany Episcopal Church, semi-retired OB/GYN  
Coral Evans  
Flagstaff City Council  
Jean Friedland  
Compassion Project  
Patty Garcia  
Coconino Community College District Governing Board, Nuestras Raíces, Raymond Educational Foundation Board, US Geological Survey  
Jacque Gencarelle  
Prevention Program Manager, Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority  
Tim Kinney  
President and CEO of Kinney Construction Services  
Wayne Ranney  
Geologist, Author, Grand Canyon river and trail guide, Board Member for: Flagstaff Festival of Science, Grand Canyon Historical Society (President), and Museum of Northern Arizona (Emeritus)  
Craig Van Slyke  
Dean, NAU Franke College of Business  
Michael Vincent  
Dean, NAU College of Art and Letters  
Mary K. Walton  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Flagstaff Unified School District  
Del Weston  
Y.M.C.A. Board, Sedona  
Nat White  
Lowell Observatory- Retired, Governing Board Coconino Community College  
Randy Wilson  
Editor, Arizona Daily Sun  
Harriet Young  
First Vice Chair of the Arizona Democratic Party, President, Flagstaff AAUW

Ex officio

Robert Breunig  
Museum of Northern Arizona  
Andrea Houchard  
NAU, Philosophy in the Public Interest  
Ron Hubert  
Hozho International  
Scott Sanicki  
Sedona Public Library  
Robin Weeks  
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Yavapai College, Sedona Center

Sedona & the Verde Valley

Jennifer Epperson  
Executive Director, Imagiventure Foundation  
Jane Hausner  
Executive Director, Verde Valley Sanctuary  
Angela LeFevre  
Board and past president of the Democrats of the Red Rocks, Board Member for: Arizona Planned Parenthood and Keep Sedona Beautiful  
Dan McIlroy  
Sedona City Council  
Elemer Magaziner  
Sedona Citizens for Civil Dialogue  
John Neville  
Executive Director, Sustainable Arizona  
Judy Reddington  
NAU’s Arts and Letters Advisory Council, Board Member for: Museum of Northern Arizona, Sedona International Film Festival  
Doug Von Gausig  
Mayor of Clarkdale, Executive Director of Verde River Institute  
Del Weston  
Marketing, Hypertherm, Inc., Board Member for: Sedona Y.M.C.A.  
Jessica Williamson  
Sedona City Council

NAU’s Philosophy in the Public Interest is non partisan, and does not endorse any position with respect to the issues we discuss. Philosophy in the Public Interest is a neutral convener for civil discourse.

Next Flagstaff Hot Topics Café
Community: What Is It?

Date: Wednesday, December 4, 2013
Location: The Museum of Northern Arizona