

WORDS | **WORD ON THE STREET**  
 a paper for the people

**WOTS UP?**  
 MEET MAD MARTHA  
 FURNISHING HOPE  
 BECOMING HOMELESS

INTERFAITH SANCTUARY  
 HOMELESS ART COLLECTIVE  
**GRAND OPENING**  
 02/11/2023  
 ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
 STATE ST. THRIFT STORE

# The Longest Night



By Gerri Graves

December 21, 2022. Its been a little over a year now, that I found my way out here. It was more than a hard choice....it was a life changing one One that left an indelible mark. A line between 'before and after'.

I had medical problems. My last job nipped my exit, after spine surgery. No savings. No insurance. I'd just sent my youngest off to school in South Korea. My other children were grown and leading lives of their own. My ex went Oregon. He's getting married soon. Bought a new house. We still talk often. After all, we've known each other for over 32 years.

I had always done volunteer work over my lifetime. Worked with the homeless community. Handed out money. Made full meals for folks camping under the bridge. Volunteered in a soup kitchen in Indiana. Senior Citizen facilities. Head Start volunteer. Donated to local schools. Blood drives. School money raising events. Etc.

I'd always done my part. Tried to, anyway. Never felt like I was doing enough. I wanted to do more.

I wanted to understand WHY people ended up on the street. I wanted to know what they went through, how they got there. I wanted to hear their

dreams and ambitions.....realized or lost. I wanted to comprehend the anguish they felt, when their lives took this downward turn.

I made the very rash decision to find my way into the homeless community.

I wouldn't be a monetary burden to my children/family and I could get the insurance I so desperately needed. But the most important part to me, was understanding the community I had always wanted to help. I mean, you can't enact change unless you understand those living in the trenches.

Scratching the surface of the issue, looking in from the outside, has never fixed the utterly tragic human condition of labeling and discarding 'disposable people'.

It was impossible to have an erudite discussion on the homeless, unless I was one of them and I refused to allow myself to dismiss them as a class of recalcitrant anarchists, and move on.

The only way to greater understanding is through it.

My family urged me to be rational. Some were upset. Some used it against me....."This is how far down she's come." Some even used a note of levity.

However, us Taurus's are famously stubborn.....and I am such a damn Taurus. (So stubborn!) I packed up, cleaned and locked the door to our residence in Hyde Park and walked to the shelter.

I was terrified. Absolutely terrified.

I came into it with all my faults and flaws: I discriminated against individuals struggling with dependence issues. I thought the police only jailed bad hombres. I thought the police/court system would work with those without any money. I thought people who lost their children were bad parents. I thought the system took care of those individuals with mental and physical handicaps. I believed unhoused senior citizens were where they wanted to be. I truly believed there was enough low income housing to accommodate everyone.....I thought I'd have housing 6 months ago.

I found myself making excuses for why I was there, as if a medical reason was somehow more worthy. As if it made my cause more just. If I was there for all the right reasons, why was my thinking skewed?

Even with all my bleeding heart ways, I was blind.

I gave myself an internal slap, and began talking to the community. I sat about swallowing the last ounce of my ego and pride.....and absorbed every morsel of intel I could muster.

I learned. My mind changed. I laughed. I cried so many tears.....to myself, and with others. I opened my vault of secrets.....and became more open to discussing them. Terrified of public speaking, I talked in front of crowds. I began sharing my writing, my views and my experiences. I became a listener. I hugged so many necks.

Continued on page 3



## What is a Spiritual Family to Me?

By Viola Crowley  
 (Photo Credit: Boise Faith Group)

What is a spiritual family? For me, it's a group of people that walk a spiritual path that is cohesive with mine. A spiritual family loves you for you, lifts you up when you are down, prays with you and for you, helps you when you need help, loves you when you feel unlovable, lights a fire under you when you're stuck, takes care of you when you're sick, brings you food when you are hungry, sits with you when you are lonely or sad and helps in ways you feel like there is no help. I found that at Collister United Methodist church. I was welcomed as I am by everyone there. I feel like Pastor is speaking directly to me from our Heavenly Father. I came to Collister United to offer the congregation the Word on the Street newspaper from Interfaith Sanctuary through their vendor program. I was living at IFS and attending the Project Wellbeing program. I was in the process of major life changes but I never suspected that I would land in such a wonderful spiritual family. I may only make it there once a month due to transportation but this is my home church. The church where I fully feel at home. Thank you Collister United Methodist Church!

“ I have no mercy or compassion in me for a society that will crush people, and then penalize them for not being able to stand up under the weight. - Malcom X ”

“ When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered - Martin Luther King, Jr. “Revolution of values,” 1967 ”

# Help Fund the Arts and their Hearts at the Homeless Art Collective Retail Space Grand Opening

We're excited to announce that Interfaith Sanctuary's Homeless Art Collective was selected as one of this year's TEGNA Foundation Grant Recipients. TEGNA, the parent company of KTVB, offers this funding to help address local needs in each of the regions they serve.

The art collective is a program at Interfaith Sanctuary that reconnects artists experiencing homelessness with the resources needed to do creative work again. Our staff hosts weekly workshops and artist hours at the shelter and anyone is welcome to come create, learn, and connect.

This \$1,400 dollar donation is being put to good use helping bring art supplies and materials to the artists in the collective as they work on new inventory for an upcoming show. These artists now have a chance to move their art out into the community, share their stories, and receive funding from the sale of their pieces at a new retail space inside the St. Vincent de Paul State Street Thrift Store located at 6464 W. State Street, Boise, ID 83714.

"The Homeless Art Collective provides artists with a creative outlet and an avenue to be paid for their work. We are honored to work with Interfaith Sanctuary and share these wonderful works of art with the community," said Ralph May, executive director at St. Vincent de Paul.

The official opening of the collective retail space is scheduled for Saturday,

February 11 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Artists will be present to discuss their paintings, jewelry, photography, and more. The community is invited to come meet the artists and purchase handmade local art pieces and jewelry that are sure to warm the hearts of your loved ones on Valentine's Day!

To add even more sweetness to this special event, Betsy's Cookie Co. will be hosting a pop-up bake shop where you can purchase beautiful Valentine's Day cookies handcrafted by the one and only Betsy Wells.

Please join us and Help fund the arts and their hearts!

For more information on Interfaith Sanctuary visit [www.interfaithsanctuary.org](http://www.interfaithsanctuary.org)

For more information on St. Vincent de Paul visit [www.svdpid.org](http://www.svdpid.org)

## Art

by Karen Folk

I was terrified. Absolutely terrified.

Karen's art celebrates the cultural resistance of Ukrainian women during the Russian invasion in 2021, explores generational trauma passed down through families, and focuses on the wisdom and beauty of the natural world.



## Dream Catchers

by Ashley Parks

Ashley is a member of Interfaith Sanctuary's Homeless Art Collective. Her handmade jewelry and dreamcatchers will be on sale at the art collective's new retail space at St. Vincent de Paul's State Street Thrift Store on February 11 and beyond.



# SHOW YOUR LOVE

BUY THE ONE YOU LOVE A VERY SPECIAL VALENTINE'S DAY GIFT WHILE SUPPORTING THE ARTS AND HEARTS OF OUR UNHOUSED ARTISTS!

**ST. VINCENT de PAUL'S STATE ST. THRIFT STORE**  
INTERFAITH SANCTUARY

HOMELESS ART COLLECTIVE GRAND OPENING



**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH FROM 11AM-2PM**  
**6464 W. STATE ST.**

MEET THE ARTISTS AND SHOP FOR THE ONE YOU LOVE!  
LOCAL ART & JEWELRY SALE PLUS...  
BETSY'S COOKIE CO. VALENTINE POP-UP SHOP

DETAILS AT [WWW.INTERFAITHSANCTUARY.ORG](http://WWW.INTERFAITHSANCTUARY.ORG)

# More Murals in Boise



By dAni

A few months ago, Boise City commissioned a mural under the footbridge by the Anne Frank Memorial in response to antisemitic graffiti. The excitement and response to the project was exceptionally high.

Weeks after the finishing of the project, the 9th street tunnel directly west of the footbridge mural, an anonymous graffiti artist wrote “do your art here” the city responded to that piece by rolling it over with a

very thin, mismatched coat of paint.

A few weeks later, assuredly the same tagger put another joy up. This one said, “Where my art at?” This one was also covered up in a thin white layer of mismatched paint.

I pose this question to all citizens of Boise. Do we want to see more art on these tunnel walls, or do we want to keep seeing these ugly splotches of paint that barely cover up graffiti. If you would like to see more art in and around Boise, especially from local talent, please help to be the voice of progressive Boise by contacting the city of Boise and letting your wishes be known. [artsandhistory@cityofboise.org](mailto:artsandhistory@cityofboise.org).

Let your voice be heard!

# Police sensitivity, when dispatched



By dAni

Oftentimes when police are called to respond to a situation, where persons with trauma or mental

disabilities are the “reason” for being called. When the police show up with their bulky bulletproof vests, and their belt full of weapons usually show up with more than two officers, sometimes escalates the situation even more.

Though it is not necessarily the intention to further raise the tension, but often with trauma victims, PTSD, and mental disabilities, the excessive and sheer intimidation factor needs

to be taken into account. These ways are less than effective, and antiquated, and can often trigger individuals to an even more heightened state of panic.

Sensitivity and de-escalation training is an effective, and noteworthy suggestion. One possibility is to employ more specialized mental health workers trained to handle de-escalation, and sensitivity training. This would greatly help persons in need of mental health help out of our jails and prisons. This would further help by opening beds in the correctional facilities for criminals who deserve to be there.

# Portraits

by Jose Bocanegra

Jose’s portraits of U.S. presidents and members of Boise’s homeless community are intricately detailed and will be on display at the Homeless Art Collective’s retail space at St. Vincent de Paul’s State Street Thrift Store in Boise on February 11 and beyond.



## The Longest Night from page 1

I learned. My mind changed. I laughed. I cried so many tears.....to myself, and with others. I opened my vault of secrets.....and became more open to discussing them. Terrified of public speaking, I talked in front of crowds. I began sharing my writing, my views and my experiences. I became a listener. I hugged so many necks.

I flew a sign (panhandling, to those not of the community)....and it was the most humiliating thing I’ve ever done in my life. I had to dispose of the very last modicum of my pride You have no idea how vulnerable you feel, standing there....holding a sign, begging for money from strangers.

I grew as a person, in all the right ways. This group, who had nothing left to give but their stories and their friendship..... raised me up. They made me feel like someone that can finally lend a voice to the uncomfortable conversation of the displaced, broken and unhoused communities.

On a personal level, I’ve had one of the worst years of my life. Both my parents passed away. My immediate family went through a bout of crises. Sexual assault, and the impact statement I’m now writing. Discrimination. Sorrow. Extreme depression. Suicidal ideation. Fatigue from a broken body. Doctor’s appointments upon doctor’s appointments. Surgery. Physical therapy. Hiding from the heat. Hiding from the cold. Walking.....mile after mile with a broken back and messed up leg. (So much so, that I actually wore a hole clean through my shoe. 1st for me). Carrying groceries & laundry. Fear for my son who was in South Korea during North Korea’s failed rocket launches. Sleepless nights from worry, fatigue and pain.

There were days I was sure I couldn’t go on. It was all just.....too much. I would cry so hard it bordered on hysteria. Until a staff member picked me up, or one of the community.....and when I was strong, I picked someone else up.

It’s what a community does. I had forgotten. We all have forgotten.

It’s taken a year for me to include myself in this community.

I’ve told some of their stories. I’ll tell more next year. You’ll come to understand, their stories are alot like mine. We’ve made mistakes, but we own them. We grow as individuals. No one is asking for sympathy.....we just want you to meet our eyes. To be acknowledged. Understood. To be part of your community.

As this longest night of a year comes to a close, I look towards ancient symbology for a bit of comfort. Imbolc is on its way. The Mother Brigid brings forth her fire, and the earth begins to warm again. The sun begins his climb and the days grow longer. The wheel turns.

I am optimistic that this year will bring me greater joy, happier times, eyes that see with elevated compassion and the ability to learn from even the deepest sorrow filled events that life brings us.

“Dawn is a sort of dance of the nine veils. One by one, she removes the opaque silk, as layer by layer the pigment bleeds from the night sky. Her brilliance, powerful, because of her slow seduction to revelation. She is the peony who’s beauty is not only in the bloom, but found in every degree of opening.”

# Shining Star of the Month: Terrence Jr.

Terrence, Jr. is a bright ray of sunshine in our shelter even during the hardest times. He never fails to make other staff members and guests smile with his never ending positivity and humor. His heroism in times of need as he bravely administered naran to prevent overdose of our guests showed such courage and literally saved lives. Thanks to Terrence Jr, our swing shift operations run smoothly each night (as he always says, “staff slays”). He shows empathy, patience, and ongoing support to all of our guests at the shelter. We are so lucky to have him.



# Furnishing Hope

Furnishing Hope, an initiative to help families exiting homelessness furnish their homes launched by the Boise Faith Group in partnership with Interfaith Sanctuary, is bringing hope to Treasure Valley families and building lasting community ties through a coordinated effort to turn houses into homes.

Interfaith Sanctuary's Executive Director Jodi Peterson-Stigers worked with case managers in the shelter's family program this winter to develop Furnishing Hope. Members of the Boise Faith Group, a coalition of nearly 40 faith organizations that helped found the shelter in 2005, are matching with families in need of furnishings to make their new housing comfortable and welcoming as they transition out of the shelter system.

"Furnishing Hope is designed to bring congregations together with people who are newly housed to

help them turn their house into a home with donated furnishings and needed items," Peterson-Stigers said of the program. "Oftentimes, our guests get the good news that they have received a voucher and have found housing, but they don't have the necessary things to turn a house into a home, like beds, nightstands, kitchen tables, couches, or art. Their excitement for their new housing quickly turns into despair, because they're not comfortable." Furnishing Hope brings congregations together to help create home sweet homes by collecting gently-used, pre-loved furniture & household essentials for our newly housed neighbors through a partnership with Boise Faith Group and their congregations.

Pastor Rob Tulloch of Boise First Congregational United Church of Christ, said his congregation has thoroughly enjoyed being part of the program as they work with the first participating family, who became homeless after resettling in Idaho as refugees. "We have a chance to help make a 'home sweet home' for this family and we hope that other communities of faith can come together to be the best neighbors we



can be," Tulloch said.

Collister United Methodist Church and Cathedral of the Rockies in Boise have also started the process of helping families furnish their new homes, and more faith communities will join the effort as families move into housing.

Those who participate in the program fill out a décor needs sheet with the church along with an Interfaith Sanctuary Case Manager. The church then does a call out to their congregation to begin gathering items and makes arrangements for pick-up and delivery of items to the new home.

Furnishing Hope is just getting started. If your community is interested in getting involved, please email [jodi@interfaithsanctuary.org](mailto:jodi@interfaithsanctuary.org) for more information.

# Comfort Zone

By Jaidin Greer

In my teens and twenties I remember snorting lines of dozens of crushed up Klonopin, drinking until blackout. I took 20 or more parachutes of molly in one sitting... driving in the height of ecstasy... Nothing was off limits and it was never enough. I had so much fear and anxiety, I was afraid of myself, always running from going deep down to the root causes of my addiction. Coming to the Sanctuary, I immediately fell in love. People saying anything they felt like saying – their thoughts, out loud. People finally having the time of day for one another, people talking out loud seemingly to no one but somehow to everyone. They did these things with no fear of judgment or unacceptance. People shouting, saying random things, sometimes genuinely

debating and arguing with each other. People playing music with great beats in alleys. People calling me the wrong name, and me not correcting them. Don't get me wrong, I was terrified. Not of being homeless but of knowing almost no one and finding myself living with strangers again. I would hardly say anything to anyone. I would just nod and quickly walk by. At one point, I felt like I was in a festival of creativity and like every day was becoming Fashion Week, watching people walk down the street with the best and most interesting and unique clothing and style. I began realizing I was in the midst of some of the most creative minds in the city. How did I get here...

Thankfully, here and there I'd cross paths with people I had known from before and from school, and that was comforting. I learned how to be around people for very long amounts of time again, for the most part of

every day, and to live with and be around so many people at a time. It became like a 24-hour school. Or god forbid I say, Work! This community, I could tell, was a family. People come and go here. I myself have come and gone. Between hospital stints or a time or two in jail. Seeing and hearing these things, I began to feel comfortable with my own mental health issues. I have schizoaffective bipolar type disorder. Sometimes I just wanna say some things out loud even if it's just to myself. And I found out that was perfectly okay here. What I learned more deeply was how to communicate, be part of a community and to genuinely have time for people again. There's so much rushing about, shopping, driving, almost no one has time for each other anymore. I found all of this out by peeling back the layers of my comfort zones, one at a time, and this began showing me I belonged. This was a place and I could call home. It's cheesy but true!

# Dream Island

By Gypsy Wind

Photos of Dream Island, a spot on the Boise River where members of Boise's homeless community survived the winter, made art, connected with nature, and built a dream world of their own.



# SOBER ANNIVERSARY

By Viola Crowley

I just had my 5 years clean off drugs birthday on January 1st and this birthday was hard. Lots of intrusive thoughts. Using dreams. It's really getting to me. I was sitting in group this morning and Nicki asked me what keeps me sober. My answer is this, I like who I am now and I don't like who I am when I'm using. I like being a better person. A better mom. A better Nana. A productive member of society. This keeps me going. Keeps my eyes open. When I think about getting high, I remember why I got clean. When I have using dreams and I wake up asking myself if I'm still sober, I remember why I got clean. When I'm in tears because the urge are so strong, I remember why I got clean. I may be struggling with this but this is another reason to stay connected to my group from the shelter. I still go to group a couple days a week. This helps keep me going. I'm still sober by my strength but I get my strength from my group.

## 2023



By dAni  
(Photo Credit: ESA/Hubble)

we have all been brainwashed...  
we have ALL been manipulated...  
2023 we DON'T HAVE TO!  
it is now a choice  
to use your Beautiful Voice!  
if you so choose to do so...  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## Mad Martha



Comic by Chris Alvarez

Mad Martha, a hostile mother moose, terrorizes unhoused people trying to sleep in public parks in Hailey, ID. Clearly, Martha has never heard of Martin v Boise. Filed in 2009 by Idaho Legal Aid attorney Howard Belodoff and settled in 2018 with the city of Boise, the lawsuit made it illegal for cities in the jurisdiction of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to ticket unhoused people for sleeping in public spaces when the shelter system is full. Martin v Boise was a huge step forward in recognizing the civil rights of people without homes, though cities within the jurisdiction have found other ways to continue criminalizing homelessness instead of providing adequate access to shelter, affordable housing, and supportive services. Mad Martha is breaking the law and Howard is just the person to inform her of the error in her ways. Knock it off Martha!

**DONATE TO WORD  
ON THE STREET!**

Scan this QR code using the camera app on your smartphone or a QR code reader to visit our new WOTS donation page. Once you reach the page, click on [interfaithsanctuary.org/networkforgood.com](https://interfaithsanctuary.org/networkforgood.com) to make a donation.

Our writers, poets, artists, activists, and creatives appreciate your support!



SCAN ME