

# WOTS | WORD ON THE STREET

a paper for the people

## WOTS UP?

A MILLION REASONS WHY!  
BREAKING GROUND  
MAD MARTHA IS BACK



By Gerri Graves

*Gerri Graves, an Interfaith Sanctuary guest and WOTS contributor, wrote this speech for Interfaith Sanctuary's April 18 groundbreaking on State Street. Interfaith broke ground on its new State Street shelter after a nearly three-year-long battle through the city of Boise's zoning process.*

The news is soul crushing these days. It keeps me in a perpetual circle of despair.....and my life. My life has been blown right up over health issues.....health issues whilst being poor. The ultimate crime. How much worse can it get?

For 1000's of us, possibly millions, across this nation, we're living that last sentence. Our numbers are rising.....and our inner cities are failing to keep up with the demand.



As tent cities pop up, overnight.....all across this nation, we respond with distaste, disgust and policing. We tear them down over and over.....removing the only barrier between a human being and the cold, frigid winter. Somewhere, in our recent history, we've lost our collective compassion.

Isn't it obvious.....this drastic, careless response isn't working?

Our cities are villainizing our most vulnerable citizens. Citizens that fought in wars, served your coffee, constructed your garments, booked your vacations, schooled your children, nursed your sick.....birthed your neighbors.

We come from all walks of life.

I hear a lot of hypotheses and conjecture on just who inhabits these shelters.....and who is worthy of help. I hear a whole lot about dependency issues and mental illness. I even had a woman tell me to my face that we will ruin neighborhoods and destroy businesses by our mere presence.

Gosh, if I had that kind of power, I'd wizard myself right out



of this situation and aboard a yacht.....where I'd be served cheesecake by an endless supply of cabana men. Lol.

All joking aside, I think the people of Boise deserve to hear some hard truths. We do have folks with dependency problems.....and I'm going to propose a couple of thoughts for you to chew on.

Point 1 – Why is there a drug problem in the US? What would cause someone to run from their demons to the point of upending their life? The one thing I have learned, from many conversations, is that.....there is always an underlying cause. Usually a painful one.

Point 2 – Regardless of WHY someone ends up dependent on substances.....are they so undeserving of a second chance? Is there a cap on our compassion?

Here's the shocker. Folks with dependency issues only make up 30-35 percent of the homeless population. I found this stat a few months ago.....and I was shocked. That means the rest of us are just folk and family that have been priced right out of a home. People dependent on SSI, stagnant wages and disability. People that are diseased and dying.....that had to make the hard choice of keeping a roof over their head or paying for those life saving medications.

Families where only one can work.....because childcare has gotten so expensive, it altogether canceled out a second income.

People like me who have serious health issues.....and nowhere to go. No savings. Can't work.....and can't seem to stop fighting with disability. After five years of back and forth, I've just now gotten a lawyer to take my case.

It's easy to dump us all into one category, deem us disposable, but the scary thing is.....we aren't just one scenario. And we are only the first wave. More is on the way.

The face of the homeless community is changing. No longer are we just individuals on the fringe, we're your co-workers,

your neighbors, your fellow church goers.....your family.

As long as wages stay stagnant....rent, utilities, and food skyrocket.....and employers can push you out in this right to work state when your body and mind can no longer compete with someone in their 20s, this crisis will continue to escalate. Leaving senior citizens, veterans, families, the mentally and physically disabled.....SOMEONE YOU KNOW, with no alternative but to seek refuge in a place like the Sanctuary.

Thank goodness Interfaith has the foresight to see the changing needs of its community and fought tooth and nail to see it to its fruition. With no agenda but to serve the people within its community, they move forward with original and well thought out answers to the problems and strife we deal with on a daily basis.



When no one else was paying attention, they listened, they heard.....and they're meeting that challenge head on.

Being homeless has been the hardest job I've ever known.....and I used to load trailers for UPS, so that's saying something. I'm a tough ol' broad.....but was incapable of understanding just how much work it takes to be out here with zero income.

With all these new inclusions built into the new shelter, it's clear they've been taking notes and figured them into the design to make our lives easier. So we can devote more time into digging ourselves out of the hole we find ourselves in, and less time hauling laundry, finding somewhere cool in the summer and warm in the winter, finding money, finding food and the most elusive.....a public restroom.

On behalf of everyone you help, thank you for seeing us invisible people. Thank you for evaluating every individual circumstance and meeting that need. Thank you for your compassion and dogged determination.....and personally, thank you for seeing me as a deserving human being.

You can get lost out here in every way a person can get lost.....it feels good to be seen.

# Q&A: North End Organic Nursery

This month, our editorial staff sat down with Lindsay Schramm, owner and founder of North End Organic Nursery, to talk about the importance of organic gardening. Schramm and NEON help supply the materials for Interfaith Sanctuary's garden each spring and will partner with our shelter to help set up the community garden spaces at our State Street shelter.



**Q: Why do you choose to support Interfaith Sanctuary with your work?**

**A:** Interfaith Sanctuary has been such an amazing centerpiece to the sustainability of housing in Boise, ID. Just in the name itself it's welcoming. There are no strings attached, everybody can come here and not only find shelter, but also be helped to change their situation if they want it to be changed. They have the support here if they need it. I've always been a big fan of Interfaith and I want to do whatever I can to not only support it, but also to see to it that the people here are living their best lives.

**Q: What's the importance of gardening?**

**A:** It is the most primal thing that we as an evolved species have learned how to do in order to sustain ourselves. Without gardening, we're nomads and we have to find our food wherever we go. Learning how to grow food was the thing that transitioned us from a nomadic species to a species that created community, homes, and cities. So gardening, at its very core, is not only therapeutic, but is also sustainable.

The closer you can grow your food to home, the less you're shipping things, the more nutrition you're retaining. The seasonality you're introducing into your diet is better for health, nutrition, and well-being. It's a great way to disconnect yourself from the things that are constantly distracting us in the world. Just getting your hands in the dirt has been scientifically proven to increase the amount of positive chemicals in your brain. So, I'm very passionate about gardening because it's one of the most wholesome, natural and life-affirming activities that one can do. Nobody really says, "You should garden less!" My other favorite saying is, "Eat fewer vegetables," said no doctor ever."

**Q: How long has NEON been around and how did it start?**

**A:** I started NEON myself on Hill Road and it's coming up on 14 years. We were on Hill Road for five years and we're about to be at our current location in Garden City for nine years!

**Q: Did you know that when I moved to Garden City, my parole officer actually told me I have to have a garden?**

**A:** He said, "You're one of those people that's going to end up in trouble if you don't have projects." I spent most of my paychecks over there for like two years to stay out of trouble. You taught me a lot about potted planting!

**A:** What's that quote? "Gardening is the best therapy. And then you get tomatoes!"

**Q: Have you ever thought about how gardening is a really subtle manifestation tool?** You can have a plant in a room, you can check how your energy is doing by growing plants. It applies more oxygen to the environment. And what about the bees? They protect the planet!

**A:** In a way, the mission of NEON is to demystify the idea that growing organically is just for tree huggers and hippies – that it's actually the better way to grow. It's not just something that you do because you care. You do it because when you grow organically, you're actually using the plant's needs as the basis of how you're growing.

If you need energy right now, you have two choices. You could go eat a whole grain sandwich with organic ingredients and lots of fiber and protein, and you'll feel sustained throughout the day. Or, you can go grab an energy drink, feel great now, and then later won't feel great. Organic gardening is giving your plants a four course meal with all the nutrients they need. What happens

when you live on a junk food diet? You end up getting sick more often, you end up more vulnerable to all kinds of mood swings and energy things. Organic gardening is, how do you get the things in your world, your landscape, and your garden to do well in the long term?

That is minimizing your costs. People say organic gardening is expensive, but it's only expensive on the front end, because you're paying attention to what you're putting down. You're not just putting down the cheapest thing, but in the end, the inputs should be less. You should need fewer sprays, fewer expensive fertilizers. You should be composting and adding organic matter to your soil so it's self-regenerating. You have to pay attention to the pollinators. You have to create a habitat that supports the good guys as they support your gardening endeavors.

My background is actually in nutrition. My passion for gardening began at the soil level. If you grow a tomato on vapid soil that has been depleted and all you're doing is feeding it synthetic nitrogen, and phosphorus, and chemicals, then you might grow something that looks like a tomato, but it doesn't really taste that great, and it's not really sustaining your body. It all goes full cycle. A lot of people feel like gardening stuff is very bougie. But it's not. It's just the basics of understanding, what does this plant need? What does this person need?

Comment: It's kind of like the philosophy of how we serve our guests at Interfaith. What do you need? And how do we give it to you in the most fertile, healthy, organic, sustainable way possible? It's how you take care of life.

**A:** Right. And you can't do it in a drive-by kind of way. You can't just see an aphid on a plant, go down to the hardware store and find the thing that kills aphids, spray it on there, and say you took care of the problem. The problem is still there. The reason why the aphid showed up in the first place is because that plant was sending out distress signals. And those distress signals attract more pests, and weeds, and then all of a sudden that plant gets crowded out, because it can't live on killing that one little pest that was sucking out some of its energy.

**Q: So organic gardening is a lifestyle, not a hobby?**

**A:** Exactly. It's a way of living. Going back to the second question – I really feel like gardening is one of the most empowering things you can do. Even if you don't have a huge yard to do it in, you can still get a pot and you can grow something. Once you understand that you have the power to grow food – the thing that sustains all life – you understand that you can do a lot of things.

# Art by April

April Kuper is a member of Interfaith Sanctuary's Homeless Art Collective, an illustrator, mom, and author of two books, *Shadow Side* and *A Nightmare's Point of View*. Her jewelry and artwork is part of the Homeless Art Collective's permanent retail space at St. Vincent de Paul's State Street Thrift Store. Find her work on social media under the name @Winterblade1980.

Learn more about Interfaith Sanctuary's art collective here: <https://interfaithsanctuary.networkforgood.com/projects/137523-interfaith-sanctuary-s-homeless-art-collective>



# Spring Flowers

By Gerri Graves

Photos of spring flowers and friendly woodland creatures taken around Boise by WOTS contributor Gerri Graves. Included is a photo of Gareth, a squirrel Graves has befriended named after a Knight of the Round Table in Arthurian legend.



## ROSES ARE NOT ALL RED

By Critter

Roses are not all red,  
Violets are not blue,  
Let's start there.

## ISLE OF MISFITS

By Molly Nunamaker

Here on the isle of misfit toys, wandering,  
squandering simple joys. All the girls and  
boys, struggling to maintain poise.  
Wanderlust, walking out of the dust,  
renewing trust and dropping the lust for others stuff.  
Replacing it with a lust for life, leaving  
behind passivity and strife, misfits lingering  
and mingling rebuilding new lives.

## MAY FLOWERS

By Molly Nunamaker

April showers bring May flowers.  
In the spring we all go green. Green with luck. Green with envy, green with growth, whatever floats your boat.  
New hues transpiring. Ripe for admiring. Fruits and veggies all planted in the garden. Not allowing your heart to harden.  
Letting the dirt soothe you, smooth you over like the earth. Everyone is filled with mirth. In this time of generative rebirth.

# → Dear Gabby

Life can be challenging, funny, frustrating, enlightening, ridiculous, lovely, and everything in between! Would you like advice from Gabby, our Word on the Street advice columnist? Ask and you shall receive! Send your questions to [erin@interfaithsanctuary.org](mailto:erin@interfaithsanctuary.org) and our WOTS staff will convene with Gabby to provide the answers you need most.

# CURBING THE SPREAD

By WOTS Staff

Central District Health visited our shelter in April to talk about preventing the spread of syphilis in the unhoused community through education and screening clinics. Within the counties in CDH's jurisdiction (Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley counties), there were 52 cases of syphilis in 2018 and 155 in 2022. Approximately 30% of those cases were in the population of residents experiencing homelessness.

Syphilis, an STI spread through sexual contact or pregnancy, affects people of all ages. CDH staff told WOTS that in the last 12 months, the youngest case documented in our area affected a 15-year-old and the oldest an 87-year-old.

The STI can be tricky to diagnose, so prevention is important. Jessica McClenahan, a CDH staff

epidemiologist, said it's important to get screened for syphilis regularly if you're sexually active and don't use condoms. Syphilis is often called "the great imitator" due to its ability to mimic other illnesses. People might first suspect bed bugs, scabies, or allergies. "A lot of times you don't know you have it," McClenahan said.

Symptoms within the first year of exposure include painless sores where contact with the bacteria was made, full body rash, torso rash, or rash on the hands or soles of your feet. The next symptoms are patchy hair loss, swelling lymph nodes, fever and fatigue. Syphilis spread through childbirth can cause irreversible harm to the child. The illness spread through sexual contact is treatable. However, it's important to get screened so that the infection doesn't progress. It can lurk in the body for years and later cause heart and other organ problems, vision loss, hearing loss, and more.

Screenings are offered at Terry Reilly Health, Full Circle Health, and the Ada County Jail. If you have questions or think you or a loved one might need to get tested, CDH and other healthcare providers can answer all questions confidentially.

CDH: 208-375-5211

Terry Reilly Health Services: (208) 344-3512

Full Circle Health: (208) 514-2500

## Mad Martha



Comic by Critter

Mad Martha, our hostile mother moose, is at it again. This winter, we learned that Martha terrorizes members of the homeless community who camp in a park in Hailey, ID. Now, Martha has partnered with officials in Portland, OR to help clear the Laurelhurst Park encampment. The city wanted the tents gone in order to build pickleball courts for residents who already have housing. When will Martha learn!!

## Life On The Streets

By Gypsy Wind

WOTS contributor Gypsy Wind's photographs and interactions with people and nature document the realities, contradictions, and humanity of life on the streets.



## Film Review – Puss In Boots: The Last Wish



By Davis Ohman

Animation is a medium that is so often underestimated before anyone sees a single frame. An animated narrative, unfortunately, has become instantly associated with childlike maturity and a lack of depth and impact on the viewer. This mindset is cutting off the opportunity to see some of the most resonant and emotional films of our time. Animation surprises, terrifies and

unifies us. Puss in Boots: The Last Wish embodies these in a beautifully intellectual, heartfelt and extremely furry package.

The Shrek franchise has been the subject of countless memes and pop culture pivot points throughout the time since its original release, with it being a cornerstone of countless children's childhoods - including my own. Given how much those movies impacted my young cranium, one could assume that I would be jumping at the opportunity to run out and see the newest Shrek-adjacent movie. That was not the case this time around, with me only being made aware of the existence of a new Puss in Boots movie because of the one off advertisement here and there. Now, my experience getting to see this movie was one that started slightly as a joke, with two of my closest friends and I just wanting to hop in and test the waters of what the next talking, adventuring cat movie

could provide for us in our time of dire boredom. BOY, could I have not been more surprised by how utterly captivating and emotionally investing this movie was.

If you have seen the Shrek movies or are familiar with the feline phenom himself, Puss in Boots: The Last Wish - upon first glance - will not seem like unfamiliar territory. However, immediately the movie subverts your expectations, and I was along for the ride I didn't know I was going to be embarking on. From the moment the opening monologue comes to a close and the title card flashes onto the screen, I was hooked. The animation, to put it lightly, is absolutely jaw dropping. The only fitting comparison I could make in terms of its artistic style is to the animated Into The Spider-Verse movie which has some of the best animation I have ever seen EVER, so Puss in Boots starts off on the right foot from the get-go and stays firing on all cylinders for the entire runtime. Without getting too

much into spoilers for the plot of the movie, the overall story is not completely new at its most basic level: a talking cat goes on a journey to find what his true purpose in life is and learns to truly appreciate the life he has been given, rather than seeking to one-up himself and his adventures of cat-years past. It seems pretty familiar, looking back on it, but the way in which the writers and voice actors choose to take you on the journey is truly unique and delightful.

Javier Bardem (Puss in Boots) and Salma Hayek (Kitty Softpaws) reprise their roles once again and have amazing chemistry with one another and create such a strong emotional dynamic between one another that is felt on the exact same level as one that would be represented in live action. Their character's relationship is complicated, like many in our own lives, and they add so much emotional depth to these two characters that seem so cut and

dry on their furry exteriors. When you first see two anthropomorphic cats talking to each other about not showing up to their wedding, it can bring a chuckle or two if you do not buy into the world that Dreamworks creates. With Puss in Boots: The Last Wish, you do not have to second guess anything in the film despite its wacky concept and funky world.

It can be incredibly easy to go into Puss in Boots 2 with trepidation, as it is, on the surface, just another animated kids movie. However, Puss in Boots: The Last Wish is the epitome of subverting the audience's expectations, with each aspect of this movie being handled with the utmost care and respect at every possible turn. When it comes to leaving the reader with any final thoughts before diving in tail first to the next chronicle of the eccentric cat himself, I will leave them with this: hold on tight because Puss in Boots will take you on a journey you will never forget - feline guitar playing and all.



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## ONE MILLION REASONS TO DONATE TODAY!

Your gift will be matched up to 1 million dollars to help us build our new shelter of hopes and dreams!



All donations received by 08/31/2023 will be eligible for the matching funds.

# Poetry Slam

Poems written by WOTS staff during an April editorial meeting focused on social issues.

## Davis Ohman:

Where there is trauma  
There is hope  
Where there is sorrow  
We only have the option to drown it in dope  
When we have to do what we must  
There are intolerant individuals on the scope  
When you are searching for the solution  
Simple hits are the only way we can cope  
But while religion can guide us  
The true solution is within all of the hearts that give us hope

## Gypsy Wind:

The legend of the sea of glass  
Has been lost in the time long past  
Only pieces of glass in the sand does prove  
The sea of glass was near you  
When the sun gave off an awful Blast  
and hit the earth with such fiery wrath  
The sky rolled up and the fire came through  
Turning the same into the glass King Tut used  
The dunes turned into tidal waves  
frozen in time a sea of glass was made

## Molly Nunamaker:

Homeless and abandoned, the world doesn't seem to care, homeless and hopeless, in a world in desperate need for repair.  
Sacrificing rights for safety. When minding My own business you still come for me. You play the martyr enforcing laws that don't make sense at all because I am not fortunate  
Enough to even have a few cents. Is this what we've come to? Is this what we stand For? Hating the poor for not having more? Why are you so biased? Why do you dislike us? Many of us have done nothing but still we are scorned for not having more.  
A trauma bond with the ones sworn to protect us, now being treated like we are defective.

## SherryJo Crandall:

Bang! Boom!  
Little arrives.  
Saying our protest was a health hazard.  
Little did he know the real danger was no to the public  
He and the state sued me and others for exercising our rights to protest  
His minions came into our camp like a bad case of hemorrhoids  
Tearing our tents down  
Throwing our belongings away  
Only to kybosh their case  
Here we stand still and tall and proud  
We stood up to Smols and slayed him like a dragon  
Still to this day 14 months later  
Stand tall knowing Little and gang wear the poop they flung on the face of further proof  
That homeless can stand tall

## Jodi Peterson-Stigers:

Hey politicians, it's Jodi  
A hotel shelter is a home so our guests no longer need to roam.  
They are safe and in Place to receive support and care but it is something you don't want to hear.  
If I told you it saves you money would you then call me and learn more?  
Sustainable, stable, permanent solutions, get back to work, not my problem, it's warmer in April all words that you share to show how little you care.  
I'm coming to you to talk the way you need me to so that you will be a part of the solution and not just add to the noise pollution.

## dAni Drake:

How can you expect That all of the masses Who have taken so much Abuse, trauma, rinse, repeat, would stay complacent and docile...  
How Can You expect the people with melted Ambitions to stay quiet about the whole thing  
How can you expect us Not to bray against And to resist  
A BULL\*\*\*\* SYSTEM!  
When all we have been is lied to...  
What is truth even?  
Do we even know?  
So Many Layers, of so MANY LIVES!  
Corporate A\*\*holes telling So Many Lies!!!  
How Can You expect...  
How Can You really expect. Us to continue to Bow To your Blue Blood A\*\*!  
Pay us more or charge us Less...or kiss my a\*\*hole you vermin pest!!!

## Karen Folk:

Irony –  
Trapped in our Bordering countries borders hold up  
Humans caught in between Babies dropped at the border by coyotes  
Who are we to keep humans in cages as hostages  
We are all human beings.  
War –  
Women holding babies to ease Their pain  
Destruction all around us  
Cooing of a baby. Eyes storming  
Life begins again  
Cherish that lie  
Drop your insanity  
Give up shooting in anger – crazy  
Selling lots of war equipment  
Are you now?

## Pick Up A Copy Of Wots At These Locations:

Red Rock Church - 1124 S Roosevelt St, Boise, ID 83705  
The Record Exchange - 1105 W. Idaho St.  
Downtown Boise Public Library - 715 S. Capitol Blvd.  
Downtown Boise YMCA - 1050 W. State St.  
Corpus Christi House - 525 S. Americana Blvd.  
The District Coffee - 219 N. 10th St.  
Laundry Haus - 222 S. Orchard St.  
Washing Time Laundry - 4744 W. State St.  
Americana Pizza - 304 S. Americana Blvd.  
Neckar Coffee - 117 S. 10th St.  
Guru Donuts - 928 W. Main St #100  
Interfaith Sanctuary - 1620 W. River St.

## A MILLION REASONS TO DONATE TODAY!

By Jodi Peterson-Stigers

Interfaith Sanctuary has stretched and grown so much the past three years to ensure that as needs arose in our community in the aftermath of the pandemic and the housing crisis, our services would lift up our unhoused population to help keep them safe, warm and nourished. We went from serving 164 guests in one shelter to serving up to 220 guests in two different shelter settings. We created a senior and medically fragile program, a food service training program, and our homeless art collective. We offer on-site mental health and recovery programming. Our families stay together. We give a

voice to the unhoused community with our newspaper, Word on the Street, which is delivered to 30,000 households per month. This million dollars will be used to keep building hopes and dreams for our guests through innovative and creative solutions. We will continue to push the envelope in a million different ways to keep fighting for solutions, then share those solutions from city to city to expand our reach to make real change happen for many.

We have a one million dollar match donation!

Every dollar raised from now until August 31, 2023 will be matched up to \$1 million—that means we will

have raised \$2 million at the end of this donation drive.

Your gift will be used to build our new State Street shelter, where our seniors will be safely housed, our families with children will have a safer setting, and all of our guests will have more meaningful space. This new and reimagined shelter will bring community, case management, medical support, and learning spaces to one location. In addition, the shelter will create much needed space for our work training, art, mental health, and recovery programming.

Donate at [www.interfaithsanctuary.org](http://www.interfaithsanctuary.org)

## 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.

Our writers, poets, artists, activists, and creatives appreciate your support! Readers can also visit this link to donate:

<https://interfaithsanctuary.networkforgood.com/projects/183936-word-on-the-street>



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