

W O T S | WORD ON THE STREET

a paper for the people

SAVE THE DATE *
 INTERFAITH SANCTUARY'S
GALA
 AT IDAHO SHAKESPEARE

MONDAY 10.02.2023
 EVENT START 6PM
 DINNER * MUSIC PROGRAM * AUCTION
 All proceeds benefit Interfaith Sanctuary

W O T S
 GOING ON?

501 C-3 JEANS PLEASE!



501(c)(3) JEANS

By Erin Sheridan

One day, while going through donations, Interfaith Sanctuary Executive Director Jodi Peterson-Stigers stumbled upon a bag of vintage Levi 501 jeans. Then, she had an idea. We would have artists in the shelter's Homeless Art Collective put their art onto the jeans to make a new clothing line to help raise funds for the shelter. While explaining the idea to the Word on the Street staff, Jodi accidentally called them 501(c)(3) jeans. We all had a good laugh, and that's when the homeless art collective's very first clothing line was born!

For the past few weeks we have been embroidering, painting, and sewing these 501(c)(3) Jeans to make them beautiful and unique. Check out our first fashion spread here!

We would like to invite our community to help us add to our 501(c)(3) Jeans collection. Here are three ways in which you can be a part of Project 501 C3 Jeans:

1. If you have jean products lying around that could use a new home, these can be donated to the Homeless Art Collective where our artists will create more of these magical jean creations to be added to the 501 C3 Jean collection. (Jean donations can be dropped off at Interfaith Sanctuary's shelter at 1620 W. River St. Monday-Sunday 8am-8pm.)
2. Bring your jeans on any Tuesday and join The Homeless Art Collective as we craft the jeans together. The Homeless Art Collective meets at 511 S. Americana in Interfaith Sanctuary's program building from 9am-11am.

3. Craft your jeans at home and donate your works of art to help us raise funds through our 501 C-3 Jean Collection Auction. (Crafted jeans can be dropped off at Interfaith Sanctuary Shelter at 1620 W. River St. Monday-Sunday 8am-8pm)

The 501 C3 Jean collection will be auctioned off at Interfaith Sanctuary's Gala on October 2 at Idaho Shakespeare and at The 18th Annual Xtreme Holiday Xtravaganza which will be December 17th and 18th at our new event location JUMP!



Dystopian Cornucopia

A Speech By Gerri Graves

I'm a mom of four (seven if you count my exes children), an artist and repurpose extraordinaire, a writer, one of those highfalutin women with an opinion, disabled and currently.....homeless.

I don't look homeless you say? YeahI get that all the time. But I'm about to blow your mind- I'm a fair representation of the currently unhoused.

The face of the community is changing.

In recent weeks, a comprehensive study was done amongst the homeless in California. I think we all can agree, and the numbers support it, that California is being hit the hardest. Their numbers are disproportionately higher than the rest of the states. 30% of the nation's homeless population reside in California, despite making up only 12% of the nation's population.

I'm going to quote you some stats from this study, so you can get an idea of the actual crisis our country is in. (For the record, this information was collected from ABC news and the LA times.)

Approximately 11,000 people are currently unhoused in the state, according to the 2022 State of Homelessness in Idaho report by the Idaho Housing and Finance Association. (I, being on the inside of this conversation, know this number is most likely A LOT higher.) 22% report loss of or reduced income due to COVID, illness, disability, discrimination, death in the immediate family, etc. 90% lost their housing due to rental increases, loss of (or reduced) work, etc. 47% are over the age of 50 (this one shocked me). 90% were single adults – one income households. 3% were aged between 18-24, which was another unexpected statistic. And this last one, wow – 13% of the community report addiction as the cause for their situation.

I cannot tell you how often I have – all of us have – been lumped in that last category.

I don't have dependency issues. I worked until I couldn't. With every surgery I became worse. Luckily, I co-parented with my ex and was able to have a roof over my head until my last child went off to college in South Korea.

With no savings, no income, and no one in state that I could stay with while I fought the never ending battle with trying to obtain disability, I walked to the shelter.

It was scary. I was completely out of my element.

It's a full-time job. It's a never-ending rotation of finding food, finding a place where I could stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Finding a public restroom. Finding clothing, shoes, socks and outerwear that allow you to be in the elements all day. Finding my way through paperwork, outreach programs, housing programs – right down to knowing where a decent meal could be had. Dealing with obvious and blatant discrimination in every aspect of my life, in every place I frequented.

Nothing can prepare you for an existence on the street.

You lose your pride and self-worth. You learn to be humble. You learn gratitude. You actually see genuine empathy in people and also see those that are faking it. You see the best in humanity, but also the very worst.

I began to write about the community. I wanted folks to dash their misconceptions about who the community is as a whole. I wanted Boise to see what I see. And what I saw, the one thing Boise is lacking, heck – the whole of the United States is lacking – adequate housing.

Our community consists of the elderly and the disabled (both physically and mentally), whole families and single-income families, veterans, and the working who are priced right out of housing and the minority of those suffering from addiction.

We need housing for everyone, not just the wealthy. 'Cause the truth of the matter is we cannot survive as a state, or as a nation, without our everyday workers within and without our city proper.

Joe the doctor isn't going to serve your coffee. Mary the lawyer isn't going to work the counter at the convenience store where you get your gas. George the CEO isn't going to stock your organic veggies. Monica the corporate banker isn't going to 'daycare' your children.

You get my drift.

We need these everyday workers, as well as those that give to this city in other ways. Like, say, artists – what would Idaho be without our artists, musicians and small businesses? Pretty bland, actually.

All this made me really think –

I'm an avid reader. Hundreds of books over my lifetime, if not thousands. For years I carried around a well-worn list of classic novels I wanted to read. I made it a good chunk of the way through before I eventually lost my list. Let me rattle off a few titles:

A Tale of Two Cities
Sense and Sensibility
The Count of Monte Cristo
Anna Karenina
Tess of the d'urbervilles
Howards End
The Scarlet Letter
Jane Eyre
12 Years a Slave
The Color Purple
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl
The Adventures of Robin Hood
Les Misérables

Do you see their commonality? Do you understand the correlation? Let me enlighten a bit – discrimination, separation of class, misogyny, bigotry, racism, slavery, and the absolute Grand Canyon chasm between the wealthy and the destitute.

But this is referencing the past, right? This is all in our rearview, right? Certainly, we've grown as a people. We've evolved.....right?



I recently read that the Grand Canyon chasm that existed in our history – say for instance, the gilded age, the industrial age, or even the period of time where most of our labor was free and enslaved – that chasm that existed then between the haves and have nots pales in comparison to the divide that exists today.

Seems incomprehensible, doesn't it?

Let's fast forward a bit and dive into the fictional, post apocalyptic, sci-fi stuffs. Books like 'The Road', 'The Hunger Games' trio, 'The Stand' (which is my favorite Stephen King book), or even shows like Battlestar Galactica, The Walking Dead, and the latest.....The Last of Us.

All of these deal with an apocalyptic event that causes most of humanity to perish, leaving a handful of people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, colors, capabilities, languages, and religions, to band together and find a way forward. Together.

I laughingly call it the "Dystopian Cornucopia" – the chaos of many for the betterment of all.

I mean, is that what it's going to take? Do we have to lose most of us before we start appreciating all that's left? Before we acknowledge that every living, breathing human being deserves even the bare minimum of nourishment, understanding, healthcare AND housing?

Is that really where we're going to leave this conversation.....relegated to the fiction section?

Surely I can't be the only person pointing out the obvious – that housing for all is a necessity. That Rolex? It's an unnecessary expenditure. Luxuries are nothing but keeping up with the Joneses.

People's lives are not a commodity and affordable housing is the very least we can do, pre-post apocalyptic scenarios.

You don't have to like me or any of the 37.9 million of 'JUST' the Americans living below the poverty line, but that doesn't change the fact that we are thinking, living, feeling, human beings that at least, deserve the very bare minimum of shelter from the cold.

Preferably, before we get to the Dystopian Cornucopia part. Lol



Just Mad With Janet:

Are you ever Just Mad? Come get curious about anger... What does it want to say to you? What do you want to say back to it? Anger often tries to help us care for something important, or protect us. In this group, we'll practice ways to sail through the storm of anger so we can care for our very important needs.



Just Mad: Anger Transformation! **ARE YOU EVER JUST MAD????**

Come get curious about anger...

What does it want to say to you? What do you want to say back to it? Anger often tries to help us care for something important, or protect us. In this group, we'll practice ways to sail through the storm of anger so we can care for our needs with safety and dignity.

Better Step On It, Boise

A Speech by Karen Folk

Hello, my name is Karen.

I'm a 78-year-old female, a mother, and a grandmother who is homeless.

I have worked all my life. I hold a college degree. I have lived and worked in the U.S. and Norway. In the last three-and-a-half years, I have looked for housing in four different states. I am still searching.

Because of my age and experience, I recognize that time is short and that we, as a community, a city, and a world, must be better prepared to take on the hard tasks to care for each other properly. All of us – we are all human beings. We literally are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

And so I ask: how is it that we understand or perceive other humans?

If they are camping out on a street, are they there for a reason? Loss of jobs, their homes, physical or mental health issues, or substance abuse?

What do we think of when we see a young mother or father with young children living in a car?

Possibly the parents have lost their jobs or homes due to low wages not keeping up with inflation?

Or do we immediately pass judgment and call them stupid or evil for having "messed up" their lives? We know that when there is a gap – a human, "broken" place – it is a broken place in our entire system. Unless, of course, we want to create a society of haves and have nots, as we have seen in the western European world down through time?

Here we are in the 21st century and still must fix our communities – here and in the world, in an affordable,

equitable way – both now and for the future.

- Housing – affordable housing – is a major part of the puzzle.
- Physical and mental health challenges are another piece of this puzzle.
- Substance abuse is another piece.
- Another is aging without family or support, or losing a place in assisted living, or the loss of social security or medicaid.

The more states refuse federal aid for political reasons, or marginalize humans by taking away their medical or family connections, the worse it becomes.

On a personal level, some of the most difficult parts of being homeless are:

- The total lack of privacy and boundaries.
- The lack of respect from others.
- Having only a carton in which to put my clothing.
- Having my entire life segmented into a handbag, a zip-lock bag, or a small locker.
- Communal living, communal eating, communal being – because we are from very different backgrounds, political opinions, and understandings.
- For many (luckily not me), the extremes of weather – summer and winter, for example, can weigh so heavily.
- Extremely difficult personal hygiene circumstances.
- Despair over "the system" being unable to change.
- Feeling as if I have no control over my life.

I have struggled with Generalized Anxiety Disorder since

the age of seven. Along with PTSD, it has caused me to make some bad choices.

Joining Project Well-Being (a mental health program at Interfaith Sanctuary that provides 24/7 access to the shelter and daily support groups) last fall provided a safe place where I could begin to work on my issues, including medical management, which has been a true gift.

Project Well-Being has supported my mental, emotional, and physical well-being and has offered a separate, safe space during the day. The program also provides a connected support group in which we join together to share experiences, solve problems, learn coping strategies, strengthen communication skills, and take concrete steps to change our lives.

We each work with a caseworker to connect to community resources.

Perhaps because I am 78 years old and have lived very differently while in Norway, I am deeply concerned that it is long past time to take a truly all-encompassing, compassionate look at those of us who struggle, for all of our various reasons, to come up with viable and sustainable solutions. Not least among the pieces of this puzzle is the issue of seriously affordable, inclusive housing. The U.S. doesn't provide the true social safety nets that the Scandinavian countries do. Surely we can use models that work and do a much better job of providing for all human beings?

Our children and grandchildren look to us for this commitment. Our survival as a city, country, and world depend on us to improve our human welfare approach and our dedication to truly being the keepers of our brothers and sisters.



**JOIN US FOR
PROJECT SING**
HOSTED BY BERNIE REILLY
BERNIE WILL BRING HIS GUITAR AND ALL ARE WELCOME TO COME SING
ALONG AND CONNECT WITH OUR MUSICAL COMMUNITY!

**SINGING MAKES
EVERYTHING BETTER!**

EVERY TUESDAY FROM 6:00PM-7:30PM BEGINNING AUGUST 8TH
PROJECT SING WILL BE HOSTED AT INTERFAITH SANCTUARY IN THE OVER FLOW ROOM

Bernie Reilly is a multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, piano, accordion, cello, mandolin, banjo, and harmonica. He is also a singer/songwriter who has been playing and touring the country for over 30 years. Career highlights include playing at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, playing cello on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, and playing a set with the late, great Tom Petty. He has also taught students of all ages for more than 30 years.

Photos By Gypsy Wind

Photographs taken by Gypsy Wind, a photographer experiencing homelessness in Boise. Included in this set are photos of people in the Cooper Court community. Some photos depict people living on the streets or staying in shelters. One photograph shows a woman holding a photo of her husband, who is currently in prison.



LET'S TALK HOUSING GAPS PANEL:



Word on the Street contributors Gerri Graves and Karen Folk joined the Boise/Ada County Homeless Coalition on a panel in July to discuss their experiences navigating the existing homelessness service system. They read prepared speeches (included in this issue of WOTS!) to share their insights on how to best address gaps in the system while people struggle to access affordable housing.



SUNDAY VOLUNTEERS

Interfaith Sanctuary is looking for volunteers to help us do outreach on Sundays for our unsheltered neighbors. Due to Corpus Christi being closed on Sunday, there can be an increase of people spending time outside in the heat in Cooper Court alley and around the Americana corridor. We are looking for help to do

welfare checks and help hand out water and popsicles to those in need during the day on Sundays. If you are interested, **please email matt@interfaithsanctuary.org**.

Thank you for helping us keep our friends safe and cool during this intense heat!

A Tale of Two Shelters- The Gala

Interfaith Sanctuary will be hosting their annual gala at the beautiful Idaho Shakespeare Festival Site on Monday, October 2nd starting at 6pm. This year's gala will feature a very special musical program with the always fabulous Curtis Stigers and Bill Coffey along with Interfaith Sanctuary's Project Sing featuring Interfaith Sanctuary Guests. The evening will include a delicious meal prepared by City of Good along with our guests participating in Interfaith Sanctuary's Food Service Training Program.

This year's gala theme, "A Tale of Two Shelters", will bring together stories of our work at our current shelter along with exciting updates on the remodel of our new shelter on State St. The gala will also feature a silent auction featuring Interfaith Sanctuary's new clothing line- The 501 C3 Jean Collection which offers jeans that have been recreated with our Homeless Art Collectives words, paintings and embroidery. (See story and photos in this issue)

Gala Pricing:

Table for 8 under the shade sails- \$1800

Picnic Table Seating- \$180 per ticket

For details please email

info@interfaithsanctuary.org

HOMELESS ART COLLECTIVE



Artists with Interfaith Sanctuary's Homeless Art Collective have been hard at work creating new pieces for the collective's retail space the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store on State Street. Proceeds from each purchase go directly to the artists to provide supplemental income as they go through the process of trying to find housing.

Support their art and their hearts by checking out their work at 6464 W State Street in Boise!



Habitat For Humanity

By Gerri Graves

I attended a Habitat for Humanity event recently, hosted by Cathedral of the Rockies and Help build Hope, held at their Amity Campus.

When I say, it's not what I expected... well, that would be an understatement.

I'm trying to write this in a more professional format, instead of the emotional laden pieces I normally do but my enthusiasm is completely in the way. Lol

See.....I'd always thought these houses were built on site. I'd always wanted to volunteer, but there had never been one locally (that I knew of). What this actually was, was something completely ingenious!

Let me explain.....

The lumber is purchased by the church through donations. One to two days is set aside for cutting the lumber. This particular day was set for building.

Almost 200 souls showed up to participate.

Separated into groups, headed by someone knowledgeable in construction, they were given the plans for their group's build.

Each group completed several portions of the framework. Every completed piece, loaded into a semi for transport to the actual build site.



In this instance, it was headed for Twin Falls to a wonderful family who needed a house with features for a disabled child. Wheelchair accessible.

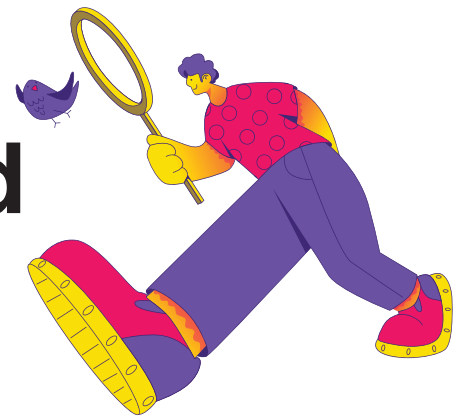
They built a completed framework for a whole house, in about 4-5 hours. Absolutely amazing to watch.

Men, women, children, elderly.....or even folks with disabilities (like me) could lend a helping hand. Well organized, fun and a great family experience.

I absolutely loved the idea of including children. Forming humanitarian habits at an early age, is a win for Boise as well as humanity itself.

Thank you, Cathedral of the Rockies, for including everyone in this venture. It felt good to be a part of giving back to our community, even when my body feels incapable.

Where To Find Word On The Street



Limited print copies of Word on the Street are available at:

The Record Exchange.....1105 W. Idaho St.

Downtown Boise Public Library.....715 S. Capitol Blvd.

Downtown Boise YMCA1050 W. State St.

Corpus Christi House525 S. Americana Blvd.

The District Coffee.....219 N. 10th St.

Laundry Haus.....222 S. Orchard St.

Washing Time Laundry4744 W. State St.

Americana Pizza304 S. Americana Blvd.

Neckar Coffee.....117 S. 10th St.

Guru Donuts928 W. Main St #100

Interfaith Sanctuary.....1620 W. River St.

Hillview United Methodist Church8525 W Ustick Rd.

Cathedral of the Rockies717 N 11th St #4.

Red Rock Christian Church1124 S Roosevelt St.

Liberating Spirit Metropolitan.....1088 N Orchard St.

Community Church

Collister United Methodist Church4400 W Taft St.

First Congregational United2201 W Woodlawn Ave.

Church of Christ

Once and Future Books1310 W State St