

WORD ON THE STREET

a paper for the people

WOTS ELECTION EDITION



MEET SOME OF THE CITY OF BOISE CANDIDATES AND READ WHERE THEY STAND ON ISSUES INCLUDING; AFFORDABLE HOUSING, MODERN ZONING CODE REWRITE, MARTIN V BOISE, IFS SHELTER ON STATE ST, HOUSING-FIRST AND MORE...



Jacquelyn's Voter ID

By Jodi Peterson-Stigers

This story uses a pseudonym to protect the subject's privacy.

Jacquelyn, 21, has been unable to get a GED, a job, or housing for over two-and-a-half years. She lost her identity – and most of the documents that would be required to obtain an ID again – after an abusive partner burned her belongings.

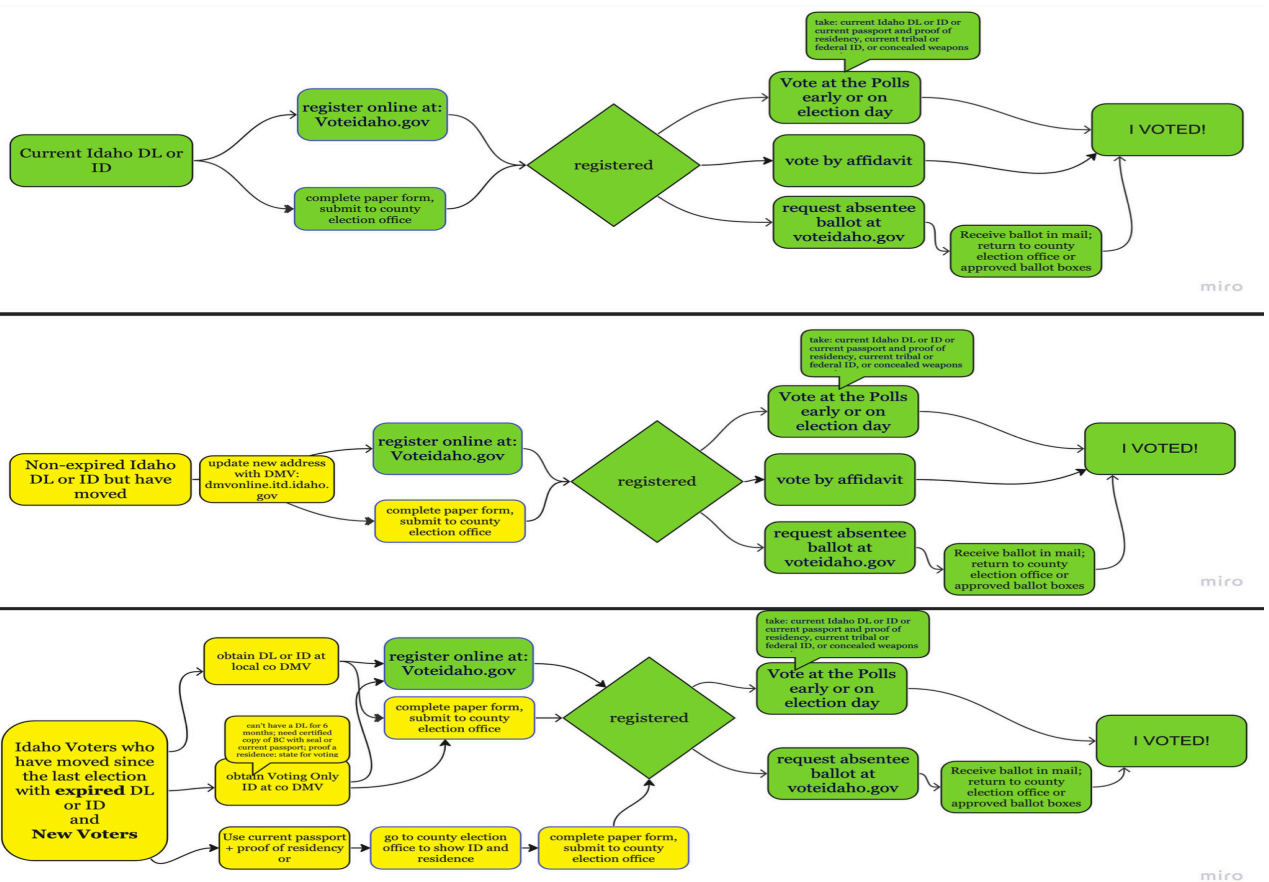
Without community support, Jacquelyn struggled to re-obtain the documents required to get a state ID, rendering her unable to vote. The experience of losing her identity for such a long period of time caused her to become suicidal. Many people experiencing homelessness face the same challenges re-obtaining identification and are denied opportunities for housing, jobs, education, and more as a result of a system that makes it extremely difficult for people without identification to re-enter society.

Jacquelyn finally received her Star Card, Idaho's secure ID established under the federal REAL ID Act, last month, but not without the help of advocates. Her journey is an illustration of how Idaho's new voter ID law, which requires photo identification with current address to cast a ballot, disenfranchises some of Idaho's most vulnerable residents as they try to participate in the electoral process.

Jacquelyn, who did not have any form of identification, initially tried to obtain a vote-only ID as outlined under Idaho's new law, which went into effect in July of this year. Idaho's vote-only ID is supposed to be an alternative option for voters who either do not have identification or have expired identification. However, Jacquelyn found out at the Ada County DMV that the documents she had were not enough to prove residency and secure a voter ID, forcing her to go through the arduous process of obtaining her Star Card anyway.

Below are the steps it took to get Jacquelyn's identity back so she could vote in this year's election.

- Jacquelyn's family had managed to obtain a birth certificate with a raised seal. But for years, they could not figure out how to replace the other missing documents necessary to get her an ID.
- After advocates stepped in, they worked to get a letter addressed from a local hospital system, proof of residency based on medical records, and old transcripts from an out-of-state high school.
- An advocate drove Jacquelyn to the DMV to apply for a vote-only ID. But at the DMV, staff said the letter, proof of address from medical records, and transcripts were not enough to qualify for a vote-only ID. She would need a verified school photo, vaccination records, parent verification, or a social security card to complete the process.



- At this point, it made more sense for Jacquelyn to go through the process of obtaining a Star Card.
- Advocates called Jacquelyn's old high school in Indiana searching for an old photo. The school had switched its records system and could not locate a photo with transcripts to prove identity.
- Fortunately, Jacquelyn's elementary school in Kuna, which she attended over a decade ago, was able to do so. The school also provided vaccination records.
- Without a photo ID, there is no way to get a replacement social security card. If Jacquelyn's elementary school had gotten rid of her transcripts, yearbook photo, or vaccination records, the process would have stalled completely.
- Advocates drove Jacquelyn to the DMV with her new documents, where she successfully got her identity back.

Even with advocates involved, the process of gathering all missing documents took over a month. Jacquelyn would not have been able to afford transportation to and from the DMV during each visit without assistance. She also would not have been able to afford the cost of obtaining a

Star Card. For those who do not have an address, access to a cell phone or a computer, have disabilities, or already lack certain documents, it's a feat to get an ID in Idaho.

Idahoans have a right to vote in free and fair elections. To make this possible, all Idahoans, regardless of socioeconomic status, should be able to navigate the system with ease.



REGISTER TO VOTE IN IDAHO AT:
<https://voteidaho.gov/>

TO REPORT ELECTION PROBLEMS, REACH OUT TO VOTE 411 AT:
1-866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683)
<https://www.vote411.org/>

Questions For Boise City Candidates

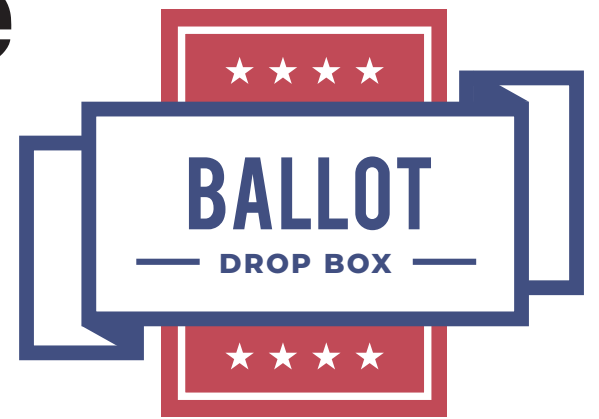
By WOTS Staff

Staff members of Word on the Street, all of whom are experiencing homelessness in Boise, got together this month to develop a list of questions for candidates running for public office in Boise related to homelessness.

- 1) Is it possible for the city of Boise to provide permanent funding to the private organizations it is relying on to assist unhoused community members? If not, why doesn't the city provide these services for its citizens? In our view, taking care of people is a responsibility, not an option.
- 2) If the city of Boise is concerned with eliminating tent cities and maintaining a good quality of life for residents, then why is there not enough shelter space in our city that is low-barrier, non-discriminatory, non-religious, with adequate space and storage, that allows families to stay together, accepts pets, has parking, has inclusive programming, and is open 24/7?
- 3) Do you support a zoning code that allows shelters and low-income housing by right? Are you aware of the history of racial and class discrimination behind the exclusionary zoning codes which limit where these buildings can exist? How will this history inform your work as a policymaker?
- 4) Boise's elected officials talk a lot about affordable housing, but where is the low-income housing? Are you aware of the difference?
- 5) How will you help the city find ways to implement rent control?
- 6) Do you believe that access to safe housing and shelter is a human right? A civil right? If not, why? If yes, why is our city not treating it as such? How can this be addressed?
- 7) Waitlists for housing vouchers are years long and the vouchers expire if you can't find a place that will accept them. The city council recently passed an ordinance

that prohibits landlords from discriminating based on income source or eviction history. How will this be enforced at the city level, particularly for those who can't afford legal assistance?

- 8) Would you be willing to advocate for and fund safe camping and parking sites? What about safe storage for belongings? Why or why not? Do you understand that people frequently lose all of their belongings (including medication, documents, and IDs) when law enforcement clears campsites?
- 9) What is the data that continues to support the Boise Police Department writing tickets for an unhoused population that has nowhere else to go, for behaviors that would not be crimes if the people being ticketed had adequate access to housing and shelter?
- 10) Are you aware that while *Martin v Boise* made it illegal to ticket unhoused people for sleeping in public spaces when no shelter beds are available, the ticketing has continued in various other forms since then? Are you aware that the shelters in town are not accessible to everyone?
- 11) Are you aware that many of the people being ticketed have no means of paying those tickets, don't have access to transportation, and are frequently incarcerated on FTA warrants as a result?
- 12) Do you believe that the criminalization of unsheltered homelessness helps to resolve the issues that the unhoused are experiencing, such as providing access to jobs, housing, or safe communities? What are some other ways to respond to this rather than pushing unhoused people into jails and Idaho's overcrowded prison system?
- 13) Boise recently did an audit of its police department for racial discrimination. Would it be possible to request a similar audit looking into discriminatory practices based on housing and disability status?



- 14) How can we implement harm reduction strategies at the city level instead of arresting people with addiction issues, then throwing them back onto the streets when they're released from prison? Similarly, how can we bolster mental health services so that people in crisis don't cycle in and out of hospitals with limited access to treatment and no place to go?
- 15) Can the city work to address the issue of senior citizens and people with medical issues being dumped in the Cooper Court alleyway from emergency rooms and nursing homes? Are you aware that this happens on a regular basis and that emergency shelters need to have the funding to provide private spaces, so that these people can receive home health and hospice compliant with HIPAA?
- 16) Do you know that homeless shelters are a critical part of a housing-first model? If not, are you willing to research this and learn more about it so that you are informed? (Example: <https://tinyurl.com/579dnf7m>)
- 17) Homelessness has been politicized by a variety of candidates running for elected office in Boise. Frequently, we see officials taking credit for providing services to the unhoused while failing to advocate for us when it's not politically popular. This becomes particularly noticeable when housed individuals don't want to see us in their neighborhoods. How will you put our rights before votes? How will you work to counter stereotypes?

Q&A: City Council Candidate Meredith Stead

By WOTS Staff

WOTS asked Meredith Stead, who is running for (and currently represents) District 5, to answer some of our 'Questions For City Candidates'. Here are her responses!



3) The state prohibits us from mandating when it comes to low-income and affordable housing but I do support integrating low-income housing into our existing neighborhoods. I would

love to see a variety of housing in every neighborhood, from single family homes to townhouses and duplexes, and even dense apartment complexes. We know that neighborhoods and communities are stronger when folks of all backgrounds, incomes, and experiences live side-by-side, enjoying access to shared amenities and resources. I support affordable housing in each of these uses and neighborhoods.

4) Affordable housing is federally defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities, whereas "low-income" is defined as 80 percent of the median family income for the area. Much of the funding that Boise has to invest in affordable housing comes in the form of grants from the Federal Government. It is their expectation that the funds are used for HUD designated affordable housing that

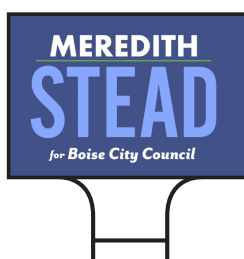
ranges between 30% to 80% of the Area Median Income.

10) I am aware of our lack of shelter space and that beds are not accessible for everyone. Religious beliefs, gender specific separation, and other factors can be limiting for some families and individuals. Being unhoused should not be treated as a crime. I do not support spending tax dollars to ticket folks for fulfilling the needs of simply living in an unhoused environment. This continues to oppress and add burden to an already oppressed community.

12) I do not support criminalizing the unhoused. I would rather invest in comprehensive services that allow folks to break out of the cycle of homelessness and connect individuals with benefits and services that improve housing stability. I would additionally like to see further collaboration between law enforcement, behavior health and social service providers. I do not believe that jailing unhoused folks does good for any parties.

17) I have stood alone when making tough decisions before and I'm not afraid to do it again, when it's the right thing to do. When Interfaith's new facility project came to the City of Boise's Planning and Zoning commission, I was the only commissioner that did not vote to deny the project. It was unpopular with the neighborhood and even my fellow commissioners but I thought it was the right thing to do. I need to

live with myself at the end of the day and I will always choose what I think is the right thing to do over what is the popular decision. I price myself on a high level of integrity and if that means I am voted out of office, that is a risk I'm willing to take to keep my integrity intact.



First Time Being Homeless

By Julie Loomis

We have many first-time experiences — the first time you ride a bike, get your heart broken, and have your first child. Some first times are wonderful, some painful. Most of the time we learn and grow. At 57, this is my first time being homeless.

How did I end up homeless? Well, I had a first-time breakdown while facing homelessness. I felt alone and overdosed. I ended up for the first time in a mental hospital for 10 days. The system doesn't have a safe place for people coming out of a mental hospital. If you have nowhere to go, you end up on the street.

So I spent the first time at a homeless shelter. It was not as I feared. Interfaith Sanctuary gave me a roof over my head and a

place to help get me back on my feet. It is very surprising how people don't judge. You can be yourself. The staff is wonderful and really kept me from just disappearing. I mean, it is not a great place to be — it is crowded and hard to get privacy, not everyone is trying to get help, many people have physical and mental health issues, and there are people that have serious alcohol and drug issues.

But, I found a family of great people that understood what I am going through. Interfaith offers wellness and recovery programs and that really help us get back on our feet. People are good and bad. It doesn't matter where you are. I, for the first time, am learning to help myself with assistance from the programs and staff. It is the first time I am wanting to get myself healthy.

Creatures of The Night

By Gypsy Wind

In the darkness of the night, I have seen beings that would give even the bravest person such a fright that they would never enter a forest again and never leave the house at night. It took me 10 years to enter the forest and badlands, and even then I have to fight the fear of werewolves, dogman, bigfoot, and the like. Whoever said they do not exist is not right. A few

days camping in Portlock, Alaska and they would tell you that I am right, if they had not disappeared in the night.

People that have lived their whole lives under the city lights, safely sleeping in their homes at night, have no clue what exists in the wilderness. They have not spent a single night. To the stars, this mystery grows, as people live in ignorance of things they should know.

Discussion With Mayor Lauren McLean

By WOTS Staff

WOTS Staff sat down with Boise Mayor Lauren McLean, who is running for another term against former Boise police chief Mike Masterson, to discuss issues impacting the homeless community. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



INTERFAITH GUEST: We have a serious lack of restrooms here in downtown Boise. What are the plans for the public restroom system?

INTERFAITH STAFF: For us, it falls under harm reduction because urination in public is one of the major tickets that the police write, because access to bathrooms is difficult.

MAYOR MCLEAN: We do have them in our parks, but in the winter they often close because of the cold plumbing. But yes, we need more bathrooms downtown and we're looking at how to do that systematically in the public spaces we have. A few weeks ago we approved a bathroom for the CW Moore Plaza – that got a lot of vocal pushback. The council did approve that. Now that it has been approved, the process starts. Our parks department knows and is looking at other places where bathrooms were installed. Had we been able to purchase this building (the former home of The Phoenix on Americana), part of the plan would have been to provide bathrooms and other things. That didn't work out, but that was part of the plan, because we recognize that it's important.

INTERFAITH GUEST: Within the community we have people with cancer, Huntington's, bipolar, addiction issues, epilepsy, schizophrenia, people with wheelchairs and walkers who have amputations, senior citizens. How do we prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place, especially people who have disabilities? There are no long-term funds to help people pay their rent. Why is this?

MAYOR MCLEAN: There's a couple things that we've been doing to try to address this, but I'll start by saying that I acknowledge that it's not enough to meet the entire need. And as a city with limited resources, it's really hard to meet the entire need, so partnerships are so important. We were in many ways lucky during the pandemic to have emergency rental assistance dollars that we could use to help anybody. We helped 10,000 families stay housed. We knew that when that ran out, there would be a cliff, there would be a lot more difficulty. As a city we partnered with Jesse Tree, which has limited resources but we help them as well – they advocate for people in court to keep them housed. At the same time, we as a city are working on permanent supportive housing partnerships that would be for folks that are exiting homelessness, and that's in the planning process right now.

INTERFAITH STAFF: We definitely need to make sure that our city leans into all solutions, even if a short-term solution doesn't seem practical in the beginning, while we look at long-term solutions. That's my greatest concern – you have to actually aid the people now, even though the long-term solutions might be a little further down the road.

MAYOR MCLEAN: And that's the approach that we've taken – that you have to both meet the needs of today and plan for the long-term and the future. And as a city we're committed to doing that.

INTERFAITH STAFF: How are we addressing housing in the short-term and long-term?

MAYOR MCLEAN: Right now we're trying to keep those in the hotel – medically fragile and families – housed. We're actively in the planning stages for housing with wraparound services for families exiting homelessness.

We just purchased the Park Apartments. The parking lot next to Fire Station 5 is in the design stages, and we're working with a trauma-informed designer to design the homes in that building. And all of these will be in partnership where developers build, service providers provide service, and we're providing the land and location. The other one is what I call New Path 2.0 – it's right next to New Path and the same service providers at New Path will provide service to the people who will be housed there.

INTERFAITH STAFF: Are these being planned under a housing-first model?

MAYOR MCLEAN: Yes. When I say housing with wraparound services or permanent supportive housing, that's the program that we use in our housing-first commitment. We know housing, housing, housing is the answer, and so the city has not walked away from this. And we are committed that we are ensuring that we keep the partners that we have, strengthen the partnerships, and continue to provide the services that folks need in a housing-first model.

INTERFAITH STAFF: People that are recovering and coming out of homelessness, they tend to get into an apartment and get isolated. We try to do the best we can to keep them connected, but we've lost a bunch of people that just lock themselves up, isolate, and drink themselves to death. We've lost six in probably the last two years. So it's a matter of having funding or housing available for people in a transitional sense – having zoning for private organizations like us to build transitional housing, where we're not going to have a fist fight with the neighborhood, metaphorically speaking.

MAYOR MCLEAN: This is interesting because this is where the county is somewhat interested in engaging – in the creation of transitional housing, and our city staff continues to talk with their staff about what ways we can partner to meet some transitional housing needs.

INTERFAITH STAFF: Martin v Boise it has become quite the discussion during this mayoral race. What is your position on that?

MAYOR MCLEAN: As long as I'm mayor, we will not be signing onto anybody else's lawsuits. I said this at a forum at Boise State – let those failed cities take this cause up if they so choose. There is no reason for us to do that when we are demonstrating as a compassionate community, leading with common sense, that we can provide service, keep folks housed, create partnerships for housing and housing-first, and not see what's happening in other cities happen here in the same way. There's no reason for us to be distracted by that when we are beating the odds, have partnerships and work in place, and are executing on the vision that Our Path Home has to meet the needs of everyone in Boise.

INTERFAITH STAFF: The zoning code for siting shelters wasn't addressed in the rewrite. Is that going to be addressed and how?

MAYOR MCLEAN: So right now we are implementing the new zoning code on December 1, and we are going to move into that, and then a year later look into what's worked and what hasn't. We don't have timing for when we will pick up additional pieces, including shelter. First we've got to do this implementation as it is, see what yields, learn if there are things that could be done better, learn if there are things that are working really well and double down on that, make changes in the next year, and from there we'll determine what else needs to be done.



Discussion With Colin Nash

By WOTS Staff

State Representative Colin Nash, who is running for (and currently represents) Boise City Council District 2, sat down with Interfaith Sanctuary to discuss issues impacting Boise's homeless community. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.



COLIN NASH: In the legislature, I primarily focused my work on health and welfare budgets. Before I went to law school, I was a Medicaid crisis planner. So when individuals had a serious health problem, I would help them find public benefits to go to long term care. I realized how many barriers exist to get any type of public resources in the system. These barriers are intentional, to reduce the amount of people that we have utilizing public benefits. At the legislature, I was the sole democrat put on the House Appropriations Committee. I did a lot of work to try to defend the public resources that we have, especially around mental health and substance use treatment.

I supported Lauren McLean in 2019, because it felt like she was dialed into the concerns that people like I and my family had about housing and realizing that there's going to be a huge, generational divide here when it comes to who can afford a home and who can't. And I'm really happy that we were able to use the money that was put forth towards the library and reappropriate that towards the development of affordable housing.

Now, we're not doing enough to keep up with the demand that we have and what we are doing. We can get even more serious about it. One of the projects I'm most happy with – Orchard and Franklin – that's the largest and affordable housing development we have. But that is at 80% AMI. For a family of four, that's still \$1,700 a month. I know a lot of people in this city that have \$800,000-\$900,000 homes and aren't paying a \$1,700 a month mortgage. I'm really happy that we were able to use the rental assistance funds to buy down the Denton Street project to get it to 60% AMI. I want to be doing more like that.

INTERFAITH STAFF: We're super glad that you've come to talk directly to us because the work is really hard. And we see at the ground level what system failure looks like.

INTERFAITH STAFF: The housing programs that exist right now, they're not enough. And then when we're talking about affordable housing projects, it doesn't touch our client base. We need low-income housing projects. Everyone keeps talking about affordable housing, so we don't qualify for most of the new development.

INTERFAITH STAFF: When we're looking at trying to house more people, and we keep looking at these big apartment complexes where everyone has their own kitchen, there's no main areas for congregation – that's great for people who are actually living on their own and they're self sufficient, but when they've been chronically homeless and they've actually overcome and now they have the income to move out, they really want just a room of their own with storage. But they're very, very comfortable with common shared space. And so a model that we think would work is like a dormitory.

COLIN: Do we have a good handle on what type of unsheltered population exists in Boise?

JODI: We have the Point in Time Count. That's done nationwide, none of us think it's a good count. It's just on one night every year, you count and see how many people are in your shelter system, out on the streets that are easy to see. When it's freezing cold out, some people will go into motels, stay at friends' houses, and things like that. I think your total count for outside was 648, this year, with our shelter being at 250. And the Boise Rescue

Mission, I don't know what their shelter bed count for that night was but their total shelter bed inventory is 400 beds, rarely filled. So your two fastest growing populations are families with children and seniors at this point. And that's why you know, they're doing the family housing project on Vista. You guys are getting the Lusk district, which could be a great benefit to us. Because when we open up the new shelter, we're losing family beds, because we were held at 205 for the new shelter. So what we're hoping is that by the time we open our doors, we'll get our count down because we have found housing for 45.

COLIN NASH: So you'll be restricted at 205 at the new shelter, but you're currently serving how many?

INTERFAITH STAFF: 250. The building capacity was 307. What we wanted was a shelter for 250 to account for each bed that we had. A condition city council added for the neighborhood was that they would hold that count down to 205. And so at this point, it's a hard number. Right now, we put up a heated tent on the back side of our property when it's freezing cold and there's people that can't get beds. We have no ability to overflow the new building.

COLIN NASH: What's the average length of stay?

INTERFAITH STAFF: About two years. And those are for people who are staying in the shelter system and utilizing the services to get to permanent housing.

COLIN NASH: And is there like an industry standard for what that would be in an ideal circumstance?

INTERFAITH STAFF: 90 days. It used to be 30. It's called rapid re-housing. But it's no longer a thing within the work that we do, because housing is an issue across the country. And so then came housing-first, which was a way to try and get people off the street and into housing, but then the access to that inventory doesn't exist. And so now, housing-first is supposed to be how we develop new shelters. So the new shelter on State Street is a housing-first model that allows guests to stay 24 hours a day – offer them a place to be, a place to store their stuff, and to really create a temporary home to improve their quality of life through homelessness, so there's not so much long-term damage.

COLIN NASH: How many people are at the hotel right now?

INTERFAITH STAFF: Right now it's about 43 children with 30 as a parent count. 16 VIPs, which means they're receiving respite care through the hospitals, we do direct discharge. And then we have a total of 87 there. The rest are seniors that have lost their assisted care, skilled nursing.

COLIN: You have how many that have lost assistant care and nursing?

INTERFAITH STAFF: About probably 27 of them.



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VOTING WITH A CRIMINAL CONVICTION IN IDAHO

If you've been convicted of a felony, your right to vote in Idaho is limited for a period of time. Below is a graphic by the American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho (ACLU) detailing if, when, and how Idahoans with past criminal convictions can vote in the state of Idaho.



Voting in Idaho with a Criminal Conviction

What if I have been convicted of a felony?

If you are convicted of a felony, your right to vote is restored once you complete your sentence, including prison time, any probation, parole, or extended supervision.

To be a successful voter, make sure to do the following:

- Register to vote 25 days prior to the election either by mail or register in-person on Election Day
- Verify your voter registration status
- Identify your polling place and note the hours of operation
- Make sure to bring a photo identification card or be prepared to sign the Personal Identification Affidavit

What if I have been convicted of a misdemeanor?

If you are convicted of a misdemeanor, you never lose your right to vote. If you think you will be in jail on Election Day, you can write to your county clerk in advance and request an absentee ballot. Follow the Absentee Ballot Process guidelines to request your ballot and vote.

Absentee Ballot Process

To request an absentee ballot, you will need to:

- Apply in writing to the County Clerk to request an absentee ballot.
- Complete the application form and personally sign it.
- Submit the form early enough that the County Clerk gets it at least six days before Election Day.

Mail in absentee ballots must be received by 8:00 pm on Election Day.

If you're experiencing problems voting, either in-person or by mailing in your absentee ballot, or if you have questions about the voting process, contact the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE. If you feel your right to vote was violated, file a complaint by contacting the ACLU of Idaho at 344-9750 or at P.O. Box 1897, Boise, ID 83701.

ACLU of Idaho
P.O. Box 1897 | Boise, ID 83701
(208) 344-9750 | www.acluidaho.org



Found Poem

By Karen Folk

Rain trickles among the
Stones,
Rain has pierced my
Temples
It's as if the rain
The reedy voice
Becomes a gleaming
Comet from constant
Rubbing
Showing me a senseless
World, voracious
Abbyss
But I keep loving it
Because I do
I have loved it without
Without knowing why



Changing Times

By Julie Loomis

Shifting winds
ending times
one life goes
left behind
Cold wind blows
Shivers outside
Wish I was home
Not a drifting tide
Friendly smiles
a bunk to sleep
Homeless, not alone
Not a defeat



Home

By Viola Crowley

You go to your kitchen, open the fridge and pull out leftovers.
Someone doesn't get to eat a home cooked meal because they don't have housing.
You go to your living room and sit on your couch and turn on the TV.
Someone sits in a crowded day room with nothing to do.
Because they live in a shelter.
You go to your bathroom and soak in the tub.
Someone takes a rushed 5 minute shower because they're not housed.
You go to your bedroom and climb in your big comfy bed.
Someone sleeps outside because they're unhoused.
All these things we take for granted seem beyond the reach of so many unhoused individuals, couples, and families. They all want what we want – the opportunity to have their own space to call home. Let's all do our little part to create something big. We all deserve housing. It's a human right that is often overlooked. Unhoused individuals are human individuals that deserve a chance to change their lives.

Discussion With Mike Masterson

By WOTS Staff

Former Boise Police Chief Mike Masterson is running to unseat Mayor Lauren McLean. He sat down with us to discuss issues impacting the homeless community. This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

INTERFAITH STAFF: How would you direct your job in supporting our homeless community?



MIKE MASTERSON: I do have some experience from my tenure as police chief. I did serve on Mayor Bieter's 10-year plan to end homelessness. I was a member of that team for the entire 10 years. We accomplished some things, like Valor Pointe, the Adare housing was created under the concept of Mayor

Bieter – basically putting city land in a trust to bring in developers to create low-income and moderate-income housing. Many of you folks are familiar with my bicycle officers. There are people who pay a lot in property taxes who don't know the first names of the police officers and never get to know them personally, but I think the homeless population has gotten to know the officers. And they know your situations – I think that they've tried to get people into assistance. I remember one day coming into work in the morning and I got a call from the VA saying hey, you have an officer that's calling – the bottom line is that he had a homeless Vietnam veteran that was suffering from dementia, and by working with the VA we ended up getting that veteran into a secured shelter down in Mountain Home.

So that's the type of effort that I see with police helping. There's a variety of things that come to my mind with homelessness – one is that we have to figure out how to assist those from emerging into homelessness. We know that there are a number of people who rely on assistance who live paycheck to paycheck, who need a monthly boost for a short period of time. They may need an apartment down payment that they can't afford. Jesse Tree and CATCH have always been very supportive of those efforts. So we need to continue that work, we need to continue to find funding sources and figure out a solution for the high rents that we pay in this community. Valor Pointe – we thought we would be able to rotate veterans in, get them jobs, get them more employable, and then they'd be able to move out into the community on their own. They haven't been able to because rents are high.

We need emergency shelters in this community. I think that the mayor and I have a difference in agreement with just what the best strategy is to accomplish that. I worked with all partners when I was a police chief in the community and I don't sense that we've brought all of our key community resources to the table. We can set aside our religious beliefs, but the Boise Rescue Mission has been an important player, and they continue to do so...I think there's capacity at places like the River of Life and the women's shelter on Bannock Street and I think we need to use those resources more wisely.

We're not going to end homelessness – every year people get out of prison, they're going to have mental health episodes, they're going to have loss of jobs, they're going to have families that no longer want to care for them, and we're always going to be in this situation...we have to be responsive to those issues.

It is not a secret, I was not a big fan of the Interfaith Sanctuary over on State Street. It was not a process that we involved our community with, and I think you're seeing the aftermath now...we didn't come up with a solution, or at least a strategy, on how we want to address homelessness in the community – does it have to be in one large facility, or are there other key players in this community that have a role in providing that shelter? That we don't have to do it all in one neighborhood, we can do it in clusters. And as I go around the city I see all different locations like that...the old, dilapidated motels or buildings that we can renovate.

INTERFAITH STAFF: Our Path Home, the continuum of care for the city of Boise, which includes all of the collaborative partners – the agencies that all serve within the homeless population – so I'm curious why you think there's not collaborative conversation going on?

MIKE MASTERSON: Well, when I talk to Boise Rescue Mission, when I talk to Jean and Bill Roscoe, they do not believe their voices are being heard.

INTERFAITH STAFF: Siting the State Street shelter took over two years of community conversations, including the mayor's task force, totaling approximately 80 hours of public testimony and engagement. There are only four zones in the city where a shelter can be sited, all of which require that same public process. VPNA received a court decision in which a judge upheld the city council's decision, now they've decided to take it to the Idaho Supreme Court. There were concessions made – the reason that the shelter won't be large enough when it opens is because the number of beds was brought down to appease the neighbors. How much more public engagement can there be?

MIKE MASTERSON: The neighborhood residents that were there, they thought they had a voice in the process, they thought that the Planning & Zoning Commission

did the right thing on the vote of 5-1, and that the mayor turned that around and with a council vote approved it against Planning & Zoning. That's why I say that we have not involved everyone in the discussion and we continue to see crisis and controversy in the aftermath. I'm not here to argue, just point out something from the other side that maybe you don't hear that I do.

GUEST ATTENDEE: It sounds like you've done a lot of research and have been paying a lot of attention, and I wonder what you would do differently besides talk more with others? Because for some of us, it feels like we've been talking a really long time, and you probably know that a number of people at the Interfaith facility will be limited to just over 200, that we now have people at the hotel who have a very limited contract on, and even adding both of those together, we still have more people that needs housing or shelter that don't have it.

MIKE MASTERSON: Part of this is that I do believe that we have adequate shelter in the community as far as resources available. We do have resources at River of Life, at City Light. I've been there, I've talked about their vacancies.

INTERFAITH STAFF: The Rescue Mission – the concept of putting religion aside – ok, great. But I mean a couple of days ago I went to their website, where I found an application for the men's recovery program. It contained a section called "Sexual Activity," At the bottom of that section it asks the applicant to check a box in which they accept that the program teaches that a heterosexual lifestyle is the only one acceptable to god. There was a news story about this a few years back in which a young queer woman couldn't apply to the women's recovery program for this very reason. That section has now disappeared from the women's application on the website. So when you hear from the homeless community that the shelter is not accessible to everyone, there are a variety of valid reasons, and that's one of them.

INTERFAITH STAFF: Our new shelter is a housing-first model that attempts to remove existing barriers to entry so that more people will want and be able to come inside.

MIKE MASTERSON: California has had a housing-first model for many years and it hasn't worked real well down there. Governor Newsom has just created this system that they're calling Care Support, where they're actually trying to change the laws so that concerned individuals or family members have more authority to get people into drug treatment or mental health treatment courts.

INTERFAITH GUEST: I think some ideas that you have are great, some of them are interesting, some of them are progressive. What I'm not seeing is what you are planning to implement for things in the meantime. What I'm seeing is yes, we're trying to prevent homelessness, but how are you going to help us in the meantime?

MIKE MASTERSON: Back when I was police chief we had one bad year in which people were setting up tents, and we ended up not knowing what the capacity was to shelter our homeless in emergency situations, and we ended up giving tickets out. There were very few. We stopped that practice in 2009 and then implemented a practice that involved Interfaith Sanctuary, Boise Rescue Mission, etc – where they would call us at 11 p.m. and tell us if they had shelter, and that would trigger the fact that we could not write tickets.

INTERFAITH STAFF: That was Martin v Boise case.

MIKE MASTERSON: I don't know if they still do it today...

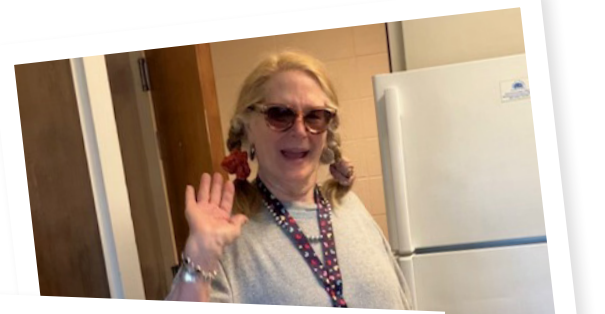
INTERFAITH STAFF: They bypass it.

MIKE MASTERSON: That was a practice that we did, we wanted to know if you had capacity to provide shelter, and I think that's amongst the best practices.

INTERFAITH GUEST: It's a start, I will say that. It has helped. However, it's hard when you can't provide shelter for yourself...Two weeks ago I lost everything. Because they gave me a notice, which I usually abide by – 24 hour notice. They actually gave me 12 hours. They came in force. I had everything packed up and ready to go. I was loading my trailer and getting ready to strap it down and put it on my bike. They gave me five minutes. They set a timer, said I had just enough time to grab what I could and go. They set this timer and the alarm went off. They will not allow me to move the stuff. They make me leave my trailer there. I left with nothing but my bicycle, which I had to fight for. They had a third party civilian pack up all of my stuff – my medications for my mental health, my gold seal paperwork – I just finished my time on parole for a drug charge back in 2015. The paperwork for my daughter's adoption. Everything I owned. All my gear, my hygiene, my clothes – I have nothing.

MIKE MASTERSON: That does not sound like it's normal protocol – taking your possessions and medications. If that is the case, I would file a complaint with the police.

INTERFAITH GUEST – We need to see all voices brought together, but we need to be as one. The judgment, the ridicule, the gaslighting – we need to have people come with an open mind. If you can do that as mayor, more power to you.



Getting Housed

By WOTS Staff

If you get the privilege of meeting Karen, you will immediately notice that she fills the room with her sweet smile and melodic laugh. But you would not know that this artist and 78-year-old mother and grandmother has been homeless for the past 2 1/2 years.

Even though life got messy and Karen lost her home, she did not lose her hope. She just needed a safe place to regroup and find her way back to housing of her own—which happened last month!

Now she's excited to start decorating and making her new place her own home sweet home.

"I want to thank everyone at the shelter...there have been so many people that have been incredibly helpful...I just can't even imagine that people keep coming together to help us when we find places to live. It's an amazing, beautiful thing," Karen said.

PROJECT SING KICKS OFF AT INTERFAITH SANCTUARY

By WOTS Staff

Members of the community can sit together and sing each night at 6 p.m. with Interfaith Sanctuary's Project Sing, hosted by Bernie Reilly. The program kicked off last month and is already sparking much joy.



Ice Cream Social With City Council Candidate Jeremy Gugino:

By WOTS Staff

Jeremy Gugino, a candidate running for District 5 on the Boise City Council, offered to host an ice cream social at Interfaith Sanctuary in August. The goal was to hear from the community about the problems they're facing and what solutions might be. District 5 covers the area where most of Boise's shelters are located.



Guest: "The city gives out loitering tickets to people who have nowhere to go during the day and criminalizes things people are doing to survive. People have to be in cars or on the street. We don't want to be out here"

Guest: "A lot of us want to be part of the system and participate but we're not in the best shape mentally, emotionally, or physically. If you were to pay homeless people to collect a bag of trash, do you know how many people here would keep the streets clean? We want to find ways to participate."

Gugino: "I think that's key – there are a lot of fearful people out there. Because what do we fear? We fear the unknown. And not a lot of people come down here and talk one on one with folks, to know these are decent people. These are people who have jobs. These are people who don't have enough, for whatever different reasons, to have a permanent place to stay."

Gugino: "How favorable are you toward the city's efforts to provide affordable homes?"

Guest: "When I have gone to apply for housing I can afford and have the money, they look at me and when they recognize that from this area – and I've heard other people talk about this as well – they don't rent to us. They'll either use our credit or where we're staying as a discriminatory practice."

Gugino: "There is a proposal about these new protections for renters that does eliminate certain types of discrimination and retaliatory action. In other words, they can't discriminate against you based on the source of your income. So if you get federal housing assistance..."

Guest: "But they can raise the rent. They can price you right out of existence. There was a lady down here at the library I was talking to, an elderly lady in her 70s. I asked her if she had tried to get housing, she said, 'I tried that a long time ago, I'm going to wait 'till I die.'"

Gugino: "So I know that there's a plan – and there's over \$88 million dedicated to it – to building, basically, a couple thousand affordable homes between now and 2026."

Shelter Staff: "For people who are experiencing homelessness, affordable housing is not what we're looking for. We're looking for low-income housing. We can't afford affordable housing."

Guest: "That's what we want. We want to find a home, feel safe. We want to be a part of this community. If we have housing we could access – we're not going to want to leave that. Also, a lot of people come in here after they've been camping and the cops take all their belongings. Those people just want a nice area to be. It would do a lot for their inner souls to provide that, to help them relax. A safe camping area where others can walk by and they can feel safe too."

Guest: "Wouldn't it make more sense to have a community housing-type deal instead of trying to get us into apartments?"

Shelter Staff: "Based on what I've learned through how we house our guests, community matters to this group. Dorm-style living is a really good example of how you build a community and raise a building affordably. Every time an affordable housing project comes up, we barely qualify for the units as a population."

Guest: "This time last year I had my own apartment. The building was too old. So they came up with a reason to evict me so they could sell it. I lost everything that I owned. We're not all drug addicts and alcoholics. That's what people don't understand."

Guest: "People discriminate against those of us out here with a criminal past. For example, my father is retired Navy. He got judged because of his past and a lot of places won't rent to him. So here he is now, almost a full year out of prison, sitting in a halfway house, having a hard time finding a place to live. He might end up out here too."

Guest: "We need second chances. We're not bad people. Some of us have just made bad choices in life."

Guest: "It's not fair. And the way they're trying to address the housing crisis for us – they're going about it all wrong. All these fancy complexes that they're building – that's not going to do anything for us. That's just going to create more of us."

Guest: "I went to the housing authority and they do have a list of apartments based on your income. But the waiting lists for housing vouchers are two to six years long. I knew a guy who had been on the waiting list for four years. He had to go to a mental health person and say he was going to check out and give up. How can you be on the list for that long?"

Guest: "The shelters should be open all day because of the cold and heat."

Staff Member: "The new shelter on State Street will be open 24/7 to address that, but it has a limited number of guests due to the conditions the city placed on its permit."

Guest: "The shelters should also be non-religious. The shelters that are religious in town discriminate like crazy."

Guest: "Not all of the shelters are welcoming. Places like the River of Life do not feel welcoming, in my experience. If you don't fit into their category, they'll sort you out."

Gugino: "How many folks here have jobs?"

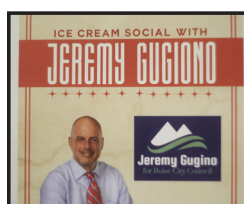
Staff Member: "Out of our current population here right now, roughly 53 of our 160 to 170 guests are employed full-time. More are part-time. Many can't get jobs because no one will give them a second chance. A lot of employers use online application services that require you to check a box, and if you have a past conviction, you're sorted out."

Guest: "If you give them this address, there are a lot of employers who will suddenly go, 'Sorry, we're not hiring.' Restaurants, retail, places with signs in the window. Even if you have experience."

Guest: "For the homeless community, a lot of our problems could be solved, a lot of our work could be done around where we live. We can take care of the area, do maintenance and yard work. People want to maintain the community they live in."

Gugino: "The program the city had to hire unhoused people to work in the parks, how was that?"

Staff Member: "The city changed the barrier to get hired by Parks and Recreation. When we started the program, they lowered the hiring barrier because they needed employees. As the program progressed, the bar got higher and higher, and our guests started to get screened out."



PHOTOS FROM INTERFAITH SANCTUARY'S 2023 GALA

Interfaith Sanctuary's October 2, 2023 gala sponsored by Kendall GM of Nampa.



Annie, Git Yer Ghost On

By Gerri Graves

Grab your full spectrum cameras, EMF readers and EVP recorders.....cause it's that time of year again!! Can I get a HOOOOORAY? To help you on your way to your own ghostly encounter, I've accumulated a small list of places where you might.....just maybe, cross over the veil and shake hands with a Victorian grandma, a cantankerous old miner or perhaps, a naughty child or two. Idaho is occupied with several of the disobedient disembodied.....and here, so I'm told, is where ye can seek them out:

Fort Boise Military Cemetery, Boise

Deeded to the City of Boise in 1947 at the request of the U.S. Army, the military cemetery is host to ghostly children and one tall drink of an eerie female spook..... but surprisingly, lacking any uniformed men. It's said, on a windless evening.....you can see orbs, flickers of light, the blackened absence in the shape of a female form or see AND hear the children playing amongst the tombstones. Perhaps, looking for their next victim? (YOU!!)

The Old Penitentiary, Boise

Touted as one of the most haunted places in Idaho, the old pen is said to be the home of many restless phantoms. Considering where it's at, I can't say I blame them at all. If an earthly prison was the only open door left to me within the mortal realm..... I'd "Mwahahaha" for all eternity.

Likened to more of a dungeon, than a prison, this old building juts out of the earth like a pustule from your worst nightmare. It's surrounding, toothsome walls waiting to chew you up and swallow a portion of your soul. It's the perfect backdrop for any horror novel. Many have witnessed various apparitions, but the resident most often seen is one, Raymond Snowden.

Known as "Idaho's Jack the Ripper", he was one out of the prison's only ten execution victims. Found guilty for the murder of Cora Dean of Garden City on September 23, 1956, (I'm leaving out the details of the incident, but let's just say.... his moniker is well earned) he was hanged in October of 1957. But..... it didn't come quickly. On the day of his reckoning, the lever was pulled, the trap doors gave way and slammed against the walls, shattering the viewing glass window. The barrier now removed, witnesses were privy to an up close, horrifyingly slow death.....with all the sights and sounds that the barrier would have muted. It took approximately 15 minutes for him to meet his end. It's said audible choking sounds can still be heard today, echoing through the corridor.

Visitors have also reported unexplained images on their cameras, being physically touched or scratched, phantom voices and footsteps. Ghostly jests from former guests or malicious specters bent on maximum mental terror? I'll let you be the judge.

Diamond Lil's Steakhouse & Saloon, Idaho City

Christopher Smith owned his own business down the way from the saloon and stopped by nightly, after a day's work.

A creature of habit....he always sat at the same table and always required the same three items within the perimeter of that table: a shot of whiskey, an ashtray and a flower. (I assume the latter was in a vase). The owners, Ric and Holly Call, were friends with Chris when he was alive and so it seems, after his death. His presence has been witnessed by more than just the couple, wearing a hat and a long duster, within the saloon.

His presence in the beginning, could be at times, destructive. He didn't seem to like the remodeling the couple had begun. Someone suggested that perhaps he might be upset because his only three requirements were not being met. The owners acquiesced, and sat a shot of whiskey, a clean ashtray and a flower at his favorite table before they left for the evening. The next morning, the glass was empty, the ashtray contained ashes and the flower was gone.

Things have quieted, but there's still the occasional shenanigan.....like glasses moving of their own accord, disembodied voices, whispers and full bodied apparitions of former residents. Stop by for a good meal and a strong drink, but if you see an unoccupied table with the three aforementioned items resting on its surface, it's best to let Mr. Smith imbibe his spirits quietly.....lest he shows you his.



The Idanha, Boise

Built in 1900, this fine establishment played host to many a snazzy occupant, such as Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, but its infamy lays in its not-so-famous 'guests'.

The basement housed a speakeasy during prohibition, which was hidden from view behind a false wall. The dumbwaiter was used to transfer bootleg booze from the third floor down to the hidden establishment. There are no records from that time, I only mention it as a reason as to why this hotel is packed full of hauntings. Alcohol fueled

speakeasy + folks thumbing their nose at the law = unrest. Lots of unrest. Like the phantom bellboy who was gunned down in the hotel, who loves to scare guests by peeking around corners and stopping the elevator. Or the woman who was murdered and found buried in the basement.... who can't seem to move on. Or the aggressive entity that rules over the 3rd and 4th floor with a spectral iron fist and has been known to pull guests from their beds.

Lights go on and off by themselves. Moaning can be heard at night. Tapping on the windows.....five floors up. Footsteps. Apparitions. Items flying across rooms. Pets stare, bark and scratch at empty closets, doors and corners. Doors opening on their own. Ice cold spots.

It's a smorgasbord of activity. It's now an apartment building and the upper floors are off limits, but there is a donut shop and an Indian restaurant on the first floor that you can visit. Also a bar in the basement, which is said to be the most haunted area of the hotel. I might add, the restrooms are also located in the basement for all three businesses. Anyone up for a little porcelain throne EVP session?

The Egyptian Theatre

The site of my son's first Star Wars movie and also host to my daughter and twelve of her High School friends, all in costume, who I accompanied to a viewing of LOTR: The return of the King. Have the elf ears to prove it! Lol. As if that wasn't scary enough, this theater is said to be haunted by an employee who died in the building as well as a woman decked out in 1920's attire. Lights go off and on. Doors open and close on their own. Strange sounds and footsteps. Phantom tapping on shoulders. Laughter with no source. Items move of their own accord. Odd aromas. Ticks off every box in your "Is this place haunted?" checklist. It's open for seasonal spooky flicks during the month of October.

Pete's Tavern, Nampa

This Tavern has a room in the back, which was also once a speakeasy during the prohibition, called 'The Cave'. It's home to several unknown ghoulish ghosties who respond to questions intelligently. Sometimes nicely, sometimes anger bent.....as items have been known to fly across the room. There are documented recordings of responses by local paranormal groups, as well as audible voices witnessed by staff and guests alike. Also reported at this location: temperature fluctuations. Touching. Whispering. Tapping on the wooden bar. And overall invasion of your personal space. Must be inebriated phantoms unfamiliar with us modern day women who won't tolerate that nonsense! Go give 'em a what for, girls!!

I stuck mainly to sites you can visit. There are many more, but they're schools and personal residences (etc). I'm unwilling to call them out within this article. But.....here's a few honorable mentions: Owyhee Plaza (Boise), River Road Bridge (Caldwell), and Boot Hill Cemetery (Idaho City).

Info sources: Boiseghost.org, Hauntedplaces.org, *Haunted Idaho* by Andy Weeks, *The Idanha* by Dick D'Easum, *Travel Channel's "Ghost Adventures"* (*The cheese we all want to squeeze*).

BOISE PROUD

By Gerri Graves

I was asked to walk in the Pride Parade this year, by Hillview Methodist.....and gave them a resounding YES! As a staunch ally, I go every year.....but this year? Blown away. It was the biggest crowd I've



ever seen. And families. Loads of families.

Being the incessant bleeding heart, it made me almost teary to see so many families advocating and supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Raising our youth to be tolerant and understanding of everyone's life paths is a huge win for Boise, as well as our world. I may not know world peace in my lifetime, but our youth give me such hope.



Super proud of you, Boise. You're wearing your big girl panties now.....all grewed up, like.



